

transforming lives and communities worldwide

AGENDA FOR SYNOD

2010

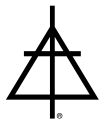


CHRISTIAN
REFORMED
CHURCH

transforming lives and communities worldwide

AGENDA FOR SYNOD

2010



CHRISTIAN
REFORMED
CHURCH

June 12-18, 2010
Martin & Janet Ozinga Chapel
Trinity Christian College
Palos Heights, Illinois

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Synod 2010 begins its sessions on Saturday, June 12, at 9:00 a.m. in the Martin and Janet Ozinga Chapel at Trinity Christian College, Palos Heights, Illinois. Grace Community CRC, Oak Lawn, Illinois, will serve as the convening church. The pastor of the convening church, Reverend Michael J. Kooy, will serve as the president pro-tem until synod is duly constituted and its four officers have been elected. Rev. Kooy will also deliver the message at the synodical Service of Prayer and Praise that will be held Sunday, June 13, 2010, at 3:00 p.m. at Grace Community CRC, 10415 S. Kedvale Ave., Oak Lawn, Illinois.

All delegates, advisers, and observers to synod are encouraged to take time to listen to the audio orientation for synod, accessed on the synod website at www.crcna.org/synod. There will be a reception for first-time delegates as well as the advisers and youth observers on Friday, June 11, at 7:00 p.m. Opportunity will be given to be introduced to denominational staff, agency and ministry directors, college presidents, and seminary faculty advisers during the reception.

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.

Gerard L. Dykstra
Executive Director of the CRCNA

I. Welcome

Thank you for serving as a delegate to Synod 2010. Whether you are a returning delegate or whether you are coming for the first time, we sincerely hope and pray that you will find synod to be a pleasant and blessed experience. You come together as disciples of Jesus Christ, as members of the CRC, and as representatives of the classes that delegated and appointed you to serve. Synod is more than just a gathering of church leaders or a governing body. It is a reflection of the church and a time for reflection and celebration of what God is doing in and through the Christian Reformed Church in North America. God has richly blessed us and you have been given a unique privilege to serve him and his kingdom by your work at synod.

The synodical services staff, under the leadership of Ms. Dee Recker, is available to assist you in whatever way they are able. Please feel free to contact the synodical services office if you need information or have any questions before arriving by writing drecker@crcna.org, calling 800-272-5125 or 616-224-0827, or you may visit the synod website at crcna.org/synod.

II. Confidentiality of the executive sessions of synod

The Board of Trustees calls the matter of confidentiality to the attention of Synod 2010 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, privately, 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 recorded. 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 executive director 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)

IV. Proposed daily schedule

Although each new assembly is free to alter the schedule, the following general schedule is tentatively in place for Synod 2010:

Friday orientation

- | | |
|------------------|--|
| 5:30 - 6:30 p.m. | Orientation for ethnic advisers, faculty advisers, and youth observers |
| 7:00 - 8:00 p.m. | Reception for first-time delegates, advisers, and observers |
| 7:30 - 8:30 p.m. | Orientation for chairs and reporters of advisory committees and their alternates |

Opening Saturday

- | | |
|--------------------|---|
| 9:00 - 11:00 a.m. | Opening session of synod
Election of officers
Finalization of committee assignments |
| 11:15 - 12:15 p.m. | Advisory Committees meet for introductions |
| 12:15 - 1:15 p.m. | Lunch |
| 12:15 p.m. | Orientation for Officers of Synod |
| 1:30 - 3:00 p.m. | Advisory committee meetings |
| 3:00 - 3:20 p.m. | Break |
| 3:30 - 5:00 p.m. | Advisory committee meetings |
| 5:30 - 6:30 p.m. | Dinner |
| 7:00 - 9:00 p.m. | Advisory committee meetings |

Sunday

- | | |
|-----------|---------------------------|
| 3:00 p.m. | Synodical worship service |
|-----------|---------------------------|

Monday

- | | |
|------------------------|-----------------------------|
| 8:15 - 8:45 a.m. | Opening worship |
| 8:45 - 9:15 a.m. | Brief plenary session |
| 9:15 - 11:45 a.m. | Advisory committee meetings |
| 11:45 a.m. - 1:00 p.m. | Lunch |
| 1:15 - 5:00 p.m. | Advisory committee meetings |
| 5:00 - 6:30 p.m. | Dinner |
| 7:00 - 9:00 p.m. | Plenary session |

Tuesday-Friday

8:15 - 8:45 a.m.	Opening worship
8:45 - 11:45 a.m.	Plenary session
11:45 a.m. - 1:00 p.m.	Lunch
1:15 - 5:00 p.m.	Plenary session
5:30 - 6:30 p.m.	Dinner
7:00 - 9:00 p.m.	Plenary session

Note: Due to the convening of the Uniting General Council of the World Communion of Reformed Churches on Friday, June 18, and the participation of the CRC as the host denomination, by way of exception, final adjournment is scheduled to take place by noon on June 18.

DELEGATES TO SYNOD 2010

Classis	Delegates	Alternates
Alberta North		
Ministers	Daniel Meinema Henry F. Steenbergen	Ministers John W. Luth Karen L. Norris
Elders	August Guillaume Co J. VanderLaan	Elders Henry Vogelaar Ryan L. Wyngaarden
Alberta South/Saskatchewan		
Ministers	Philip F. Reinders Kevin L. Jordan	Ministers Geoffrey A. Vandermolen Brian D. Kuyper
Elders	Peter De Boer William W. Greenwood	Elders Roy Bil <hr style="width: 10%; margin-left: 0;"/>
Arizona		
Ministers	Eduardo A. Gonzalez Derek Van Dalen	Ministers Randall C. Raak John J. Berends
Elders	Jacob Jacobs Rodney Huguen	Elders José Rayas Larry L. Edsall
Atlantic Northeast		
Ministers	Christopher P. Mitchell Nicholas W. Monsma	Ministers James C. Kirk William S. Johnson
Elders	William M. Hanchett Timothy C. Brown	Elders Bernard Huussen <hr style="width: 10%; margin-left: 0;"/>
B.C. North-West		
Ministers	Peter Lim E. Alan van der Woerd	Ministers Mary-Lee Bouma Joel Ringma
Elders	Elisabeth TerMaat Chris Hamming	Elders John A. Buikema Joel Pel
B.C. South-East		
Ministers	Paul C. Lomavatu Carel Geleyne	Ministers Joseph Chen Sidney Couperus
Elders	Sam Wind John Bandstra	Elders Calvin Breukelman Roland O. Storteboom
California South		
Ministers	Jimmy Han Charles M. Hong	Ministers Mark D. Vermaire William Verhoef
Elders	Ron L. Glass John Jansen	Elders John Palmer Kyu S. Paek
Central California		
Ministers	Lloyd S. Wicker George G. Vink	Ministers Bruce A. Persenaire <hr style="width: 10%; margin-left: 0;"/>
Elders	Donald W. DeWitt Fernando del Rosario, Jr.	Elders James Schuller Stan Plooy

Classis	Delegates	Alternates
Central Plains		
Ministers	Thomas E. Pettinga James T. Petersen	Ministers Sheldon Starkenburg Edward J. Laarman
Elders	Morry Blankespoor Greg Westra	Elders Paul R. Van Beek _____
Chatham		
Ministers	Dirk Miedema Michael R. Wagenman	Ministers Robert J. Loerts Norman J. Visser
Elders	Stewart Van Schepen Alice Kooy	Elders Sharon D. Broersma DeVries Willy Nywening
Chicago South		
Ministers	Julius T. Medenblik Gerry G. Van Dam	Ministers Michael J. Kooy Gerald R. Erffmeyer
Elders	Hilda M. Ragon Elsa M. Fennema	Elders _____ _____
Columbia		
Ministers	Virgil L. Michael Daniel R. Wolters	Ministers Jude J. Reardon Thomas A. De Does
Elders	Ivan R. Imig David R. Stewart	Elders Marvin P. Anderson Randy B. McCreith
Eastern Canada		
Ministers	Winston J. Visser Chad M. Vandervalk	Ministers Kenneth M. Gehrels Michael F. Miedema
Elders	Louise C. Boutin Jacob Rook	Elders Jessica R. Schuringa Katherine M. Vandergrift
Georgetown		
Ministers	Robert Huisman Larry J. Doornbos	Ministers Terry L. Scholten Jerry Van Groningen, Jr.
Elders	John Lambers Richard D. Kennedy	Elders _____ _____
Grand Rapids East		
Ministers	Michael F. Abma Jack Kooreman	Ministers Beth Guikema-Bode Ruth Boven
Elders	Stedford Sims Lori A. Keen	Elders Edward L. Hoeksema Timothy J. Slager
Grand Rapids North		
Ministers	Jack D. DeJong William G. Vis	Ministers Jonathan L. Huizenga Richard L. Pinckney
Elders	Martin Boersma Marvin De Boer	Elders _____ _____
Grand Rapids South		
Ministers	Kenneth E. Van Wyk Robert L. Boersma	Ministers David J. Deters Dan A. Gritter
Elders	Nancy L. Bolt Paul R. LaGrand	Elders _____ _____
Grandville		
Ministers	Daniel B. Mouw G. Duane Nieuwsma	Ministers Timothy A. Kuperus Steven C. Elzinga
Elders	Tom Vryhof Robert J. Schippers	Elders _____ _____

Classis	Delegates	Alternates
Greater Los Angeles		
Ministers	Erick D. Westra Richard A. Jones	Ministers Dionisio Aguhob Paul R. Hoekstra
Elders	Richard G. Haagsma Art Lapre	Elders Stan Cole _____
Hackensack		
Ministers	Norman B. Steen Paul J. Van Dyken	Ministers Brian Bolkema Gary Roest
Elders	Karen J. Abbas Stan R. Tyvoll	Elders Peter J. McLallen Glenn P. Palmer
Hamilton		
Ministers	Stephen F. Terpstra Kevin P. DeRaaf	Ministers Kenneth F. Benjamins Andrew Zantingh
Elders	Mark Vandervliet Timothy Sheridan	Elders John Van Amerongen Ed P. Scharringa
Heartland		
Ministers	Robert D. Drenten Paul A. Hansen	Ministers Norlyn J. Van Beek Tom Van Engen
Elders	Erv Hibma Kevin A. Schutte	Elders Verlyn J. Schaap Jeff J. Heerspink
Holland		
Ministers	James M. Boer Jeffrey M. Meyer	Ministers Vern D. Swieringa Mark A. Quist
Elders	Bill Ryckbost Wes Lemmen	Elders Calvin J. Hoogstra _____
Hudson		
Ministers	Albert Sideco Norman F. Brown	Ministers Kook Sung Kim Craig E. Broek
Elders	Peter Hagedoorn Steven B. Eichhorn	Elders _____ _____
Huron		
Ministers	Darren C. Roorda Harry J. Frielink	Ministers Vicki Verhulst Cok Adrian G. Van Giessen
Elders	John Ridder John K. Oosterhof	Elders Clarence Bos Clarence Sol
Iakota		
Ministers	Calvin Hoogendoorn Aldon L. Kuiper	Ministers Jeffery W. Scripps Bernard J. Haan, Jr.
Elders	Wilbert J. Vanden Bos Orlan Gulker	Elders _____ _____
Illiana		
Ministers	Gerald L. Hoek Kristin J. Vos	Ministers Joel W. Zuidema Laryn G. Zoerhof
Elders	Jerry McClurg Richard A. Smits	Elders Edwin T. Mulder Gary Dykstra
Kalamazoo		
Ministers	Kenneth A. Baker Timothy L. Raakman	Ministers Jacob Weeda Richard H. Verkaik
Elders	David J. Wagner George Vander Wey	Elders Bill Fernhout Cindi A. Veenstra

Classis	Delegates	Alternates
Lake Erie		
Ministers	Rolf T. Bouma Bret L. McAtee	Ministers Clayton Libolt _____
Elders	George F. Vander Weit Bruce W. Holleboom	Elders _____ _____
Lake Superior		
Ministers	Robert W. Vance Harrison A. Newhouse	Ministers Calvin J. Friend Steven A. Zwart
Elders	Jim Lipscomb Ken Douma	Elders Duane J. Zwagerman Steven J. Ahrenholz
Minnkota		
Ministers	LeRoy G. Christoffels Roger W. Sparks	Ministers Timothy J. Brown Joseph Vanden Akker
Elders	Chester Vander Zee Dave Mohlenkamp	Elders _____ _____
Muskegon		
Ministers	David J. Sieplinga Michael Borgert	Ministers Alvin L. Hoksbergen Bruce T. Ballast
Elders	Michael Wissink Carol R. Spelman	Elders Arthur E. Ruitter Michael F. Sodini
Niagara		
Ministers	Rudy W. Ouwehand Derek A. Bouma	Ministers Gregory A. Fluit Ryan W. Braam
Elders	Louis den Bak Ineke Bezuyen	Elders Sylvan E. Gerritsma Janet deVries
Northcentral Iowa		
Ministers	Thomas J. Niehof Kyle E. Haack	Ministers Russell W. Boersma Steven L. Schulz
Elders	John G. Verkade Douglas W. Kallemeyn	Elders _____ _____
Northern Illinois		
Ministers	Gregory D. Schuringa Merle Den Bleyker	Ministers James E. Wolff Jon E. Hoekema
Elders	Allen J. Van Der Dyke Richard S. Wright	Elders Charles Slinkman _____
Northern Michigan		
Ministers	Bryan D. Berghoef Steve J. Van Noort	Ministers Brian D. Seifert Keith A. Mannes
Elders	Paul J. Hizelberger Marilyn Visser	Elders _____ _____
Pacific Hanmi		
Ministers	Hyung Ju Park Roger Y. Ryu	Ministers Sung Chang Choi Taek Ho Yang
Elders	Paul Im Jae Young Kim	Elders Dong il Kim Sungjae Park
Pacific Northwest		
Ministers	Ladan A. Jennings David N. Snapper	Ministers Robert Woodyard Ho C. Song
Elders	Stuart R. Johnson Roger H. Butz	Elders Jay Hibma Don L. Korthis

Classis	Delegates	Alternates
Quinte		
Ministers	Peter Slofstra B. Bernard Bakker	Ministers Kevin te Brake Ed W. Visser
Elders	Gregg C. Lawson Johanna F. Buwalda	Elders Pete Oussoren Hank A. Nieuwstraten
Red Mesa		
Ministers	Bobby Boyd Robert J. Byker	Ministers W. Keith Bulthuis Michael J. Meekhof
Elders	Ronald Donkersloot Mike Hekman	Elders N. Theresa Rottschafner Ester Voss
Rocky Mountain		
Ministers	B. Joy Engelsman Kenneth Vander Horst	Ministers Robert L. Westenbroek David A. Hornor
Elders	Edward J. Schans Terry M. Gray	Elders Steve Hester Barb Bulthuis
Southeast U.S.		
Ministers	Scott A. Vander Ploeg Robert R. Broekema	Ministers Randall J. Dieleman Stanley J. Workman
Elders	_____	Elders _____
Thornapple Valley		
Ministers	Paul R. De Vries James A. Kralt	Ministers Ben J. Ridder Thomas J. De Vries
Elders	Chris L. Van Spronsen John Vander Wall	Elders James E. Van Lopik _____
Toronto		
Ministers	A. Dirk Evans Samuel Cooper	Ministers Gary Van Leeuwen John Meiboom
Elders	A. Henry Eygenraam Wendy Gritter	Elders _____
Wisconsin		
Ministers	Daniel J. Roeda Karl H. Bratt	Ministers Mark J. Pluimer Leslie J. Kuiper
Elders	Christopher J. Ganski Cheu Thao	Elders David Van Buren Kevin Gesch
Yellowstone		
Ministers	Peter J. DeVries Jack Huttinga	Ministers Maurice Vander Veen _____
Elders	Donald L. Jabaay Dan Lubbers	Elders Dick C. Flikkema _____
Zeeland		
Ministers	Ronald D. De Young William J. Renkema	Ministers Aaron J. Vriesman Steven J. Mulder
Elders	Mike Meyer Tim Miedema	Elders Lester Langeland Paul De Vries

BOARD OF TRUSTEES

BOARD OF TRUSTEES REPORT

The Board of Trustees of the Christian Reformed Church in North America (the Board or BOT) presents this report as a summary of the activities carried out on behalf of synod during the interim between Synod 2009 and Synod 2010.

I. Introduction

A. General

Our Lord Jesus Christ, upon his ascension into heaven, entrusted the proclamation of the gospel of the kingdom to his disciples and commanded them to be his witnesses, teaching all nations to obey everything he had commanded.

As followers of Jesus Christ, the church corporately and each of its members individually, led by the Holy Spirit, are called to share this gospel of the kingdom within the fellowship of the church and with people throughout the world by proclaiming God's Word and giving God the worship and honor that are his due, in the confidence that Christ is building up the church and is establishing the kingdom.

To carry out this mission, the synod of the Christian Reformed Church in North America (hereinafter synod) has created the Board of Trustees of the Christian Reformed Church in North America and such agencies, committees, and institutions as are listed in its bylaws. These agencies, committees, and institutions function primarily within Canada and the United States, where the Christian Reformed Church is committed to being a binational denomination. Each organizational entity and each national expression of the Christian Reformed Church in North America makes its own unique contribution to God's mission in the world as the whole denomination strives to live the fullness of the gospel.

(Preamble, Constitution of the Board of Trustees)

The Board, a synodically elected and appointed governing body, whose members also serve as the directors of the CRCNA-Canada Corporation and the CRCNA-Michigan Corporation, has met two times since Synod 2009 (September 2009 and February 2010) and is scheduled to meet again in April 2010. The Board's agenda normally consists of agency matters (program review, personnel appointments, focus of the agency, and so forth), polity matters (study reports, board appointments, interim committee of synod concerns), as well as normal organizational matters that come up in a complex organization such as the CRCNA. In addition, the Board oversees the work of the executive director.

Nearly all the matters addressed by the Board impact the full CRCNA as a binational church, but, in compliance with Canadian regulations governing Canadian registered charities, the Canadian trustees review and approve all actions taken by the full Board and, as necessary, address any matters that

relate directly to uniquely Canadian issues and matters of law. The Board, as synod's agent, is grateful for the opportunity to serve the entire church.

B. Membership

The members of the Board from the United States are Mr. Mark Charles (member-at-large), Mr. James Clousing (member-at-large), Ms. Joan Flikkema (Region 11), Rev. Sheila Holmes (Region 12), Rev. Robert A. Lyzenga (Region 9), Rev. Daniel B. Mouw (Region 11), Rev. Eleanor M. Rietkerk (member-at-large), Rev. John Rop, Jr. (Region 10), Mr. Roy Stallworth (Region 11), Rev. John Terpstra (Region 7), Rev. Rodney Vander Ley (Region 5), Mr. Gary Van Engelenhoven (Region 8), Ms. Suzanne Van Engen (Region 10), Mr. Loren J. Veldhuizen (Region 8), and Rev. Mark D. Vermaire (Region 6).

The members of the Board from Canada are Ms. Janette Bax (Lake Superior), Rev. Kenneth D. Boonstra (B.C. South-East), Mr. Wiebe Bylsma (Quinte), Mr. Bruce Dykstra (member-at-large), Ms. Lisa Heuving (Niagara), Rev. Dale Melenberg (Alberta South/Saskatchewan), Mrs. Grace Miedema (Chatham), Mr. Marten Mol (Toronto), Ms. Gayle Monsma (member-at-large), Mrs. Patricia Storteboom (member-at-large), Mr. Rick Struik (Alberta North), Mr. Gary VanArragon (Huron), Rev. Paul Vanderkooy (Eastern Canada), Rev. Trevor Vanderveen (B.C. North-West), and Rev. Arie G. Van Eek (Hamilton).

The executive director (Rev. Gerard L. Dykstra) serves ex officio as a corporate trustee and member of the Board of Trustees (without vote).

Following are the officers of the Board and respective corporations for the 2009-2010 term:

1. Board officers: Rev. M.D. Vermaire, president; Mr. G. VanArragon, vice president; Rev. G.L. Dykstra, secretary; Mrs. P. Storteboom, vice-all.
2. Corporation officers:
 Canadian Corporation: Mr. G. VanArragon, president; Rev. K.D. Boonstra, vice president; Mrs. P. Storteboom, secretary.
 Michigan Corporation: Rev. M.D. Vermaire, president; Rev. R.A. Lyzenga, vice-president; Rev. G.L. Dykstra, secretary; Ms. S. Van Engen, vice-all.
3. Executive Committee: Rev. K.D. Boonstra, Rev. R.A. Lyzenga, Mrs. P. Storteboom, Mr. G. VanArragon, Ms. S. Van Engen, and Rev. M.D. Vermaire, chair. Rev. G.L. Dykstra serves ex officio.

C. Salary disclosure

At the directive of synod, the Board reports the following salaries for levels 15 and above:

Job level	Number of positions	Compensation quartile (includes housing allowance)
20	1	2nd
19	2	2nd and 3rd
18	2	2nd
17	1	2nd

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

The Christian Reformed Church in North America
2009-2010 Salary Grade and Range Structure

Level	U.S. Range			Canadian Range		
	Minimum	Midpoint	Maximum	Minimum	Midpoint	Maximum
20	\$115,291	\$144,113	\$172,936			
19	\$103,936	\$129,921	\$155,905			
18	\$92,638	\$115,798	\$138,957	\$102,262	\$127,828	\$153,394
17	\$83,144	\$103,930	\$124,716	\$88,853	\$111,066	\$133,279
16	\$74,835	\$93,544	\$112,253	\$77,756	\$97,195	\$116,634
15	\$67,840	\$84,800	\$101,760	\$68,492	\$85,616	\$102,739
14	\$59,271	\$74,089	\$88,906	\$60,406	\$75,507	\$90,609
13	\$52,105	\$65,132	\$78,158	\$53,907	\$67,384	\$80,861

II. Activities of the Board

A. Polity matters

1. Interim appointments

On behalf of synod, the Board has ratified the following appointments made by classes:

Board	Classis	Member	Alternate	Term
Synodical Deputies	Central Plains	Rev. Gilbert J. Kamps		2012(1)
	Chatham		Rev. Vic Vandermolen	
	Eastern Canada	Rev. Jacob M. Van de Hoef	Rev. Pieter A. Heerema	2012(1)
	Hackensack	Rev. Douglas H. Bratt	Rev. Clair Vander Neut	2012(1)
	Heartland	Rev. Paul A. Hansen (finishing out term of Rev. Ouwinga)	Rev. Robert D. Drenton	2010(1)
	Holland	Rev. Michael De Vries	Rev. Douglas Fauble	2012(1)
	Huron	Rev. Ronald G. Fisher	Rev. Ray Vander Kooij	2013(1)
	Lake Erie		Rev. George F. Vander Weit	
	Northern Illinois		Rev. John R. Huizinga	
	CRWRC	Eastern Canada	Mr. Nick Van Dyke	
	Northern Illinois	Ms. Bonnie Zigterman		2012(1)
	Zeeland	Mr. Ryan Kruithof		2012(1)

2. Classes that have declared that women officebearers (ministers, elders, deacons) may not be delegated to classis

In accordance with the instructions of Synod 2007, the executive director keeps a list of those classes that, in keeping with their understanding of the biblical position on the role of women in ecclesiastical office, declare that women officebearers (ministers, elders, deacons) may not be delegated to classis. 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 that women officebearers may not be delegated to classis:

Central Plains	Minnkota
Georgetown	Northcentral Iowa
Heartland	Wisconsin
Iakota	Yellowstone

3. Board nominations

a. Regional members

Whenever a new Board of Trustees 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. Nominations are then prepared by the Board and are forwarded to synod for election. Generally, all first-term elections are from a slate of two nominees, and all second-term elections are from a slate of single nominees (see Rules for Synodical Procedure, VI, D, 2).

Due to a recent move from the Classis Lake Superior area, the Board recommends that synod by way of exception allow Ms. Janette Bax to fill out her first term on the BOT and that the Board seek nominees from within the classis for election by Synod 2011.

Grounds:

- 1) Allowing Ms. Bax to complete her first term on the BOT will provide more continuity to the Board.
- 2) Both Ms. Bax and Classis Lake Superior are in agreement with the proposal to synod.

The following slates of names from various geographic regions are coming to synod for election of a first term:

Region 5

Rev. Peter DeVries is pastor of Mountain Springs Community CRC, Salt Lake City, Utah, and has served several churches throughout the United States and Canada. He has a passion for smaller church ministry and is involved with Sustaining Congregational Excellence as a consultant and coach. Rev. DeVries has served the denomination as a member of the board of Home Missions, as stated clerk, and as smaller church specialist.

Rev. Timothy Toeset is pastor of Cascade CRC, Marysville, Washington. He has served as pastor and as president of church council for almost all of thirty-six years. Rev. Toeset has served on the local Christian high school board and on the classical interim committee, student fund committee, and classical Home Missions committee. He currently serves as the stated clerk of Classis Pacific Northwest. He is said to be a "wise man" of the churches.

Region 11

Dr. Scott Greenway is pastor of Caledonia CRC, Caledonia, Michigan. He is a graduate of Calvin College and Calvin Theological Seminary and he received a D.Min. from Trinity Evangelical Divinity School. He has served as a member of the Back to God Ministries International board, three of those years as its president. He has taught Developing a Christian Mind at Calvin College for the past six years and presently serves on the classical student fund committee and the classis outreach committee. Rev. Greenway has been a delegate to synod three times.

Dr. Clayton Libolt is senior pastor of River Terrace CRC, East Lansing, Michigan. He received a M.Div. degree from Calvin

Theological Seminary and holds a M.A. and a Ph.D. degree from the University of Michigan. Dr. Libolt is a five-time delegate to synod and has served on numerous denominational boards and committees, including Faith Alive Christian Resources, restorative justice, the Contemporary Testimony revision, and the Bible Translation Committee. In addition, Dr. Libolt has served on the strategic plan and executive committees of Classis Lake Erie.

Classis Eastern Canada

Ms. Katherine M. Vandergrift is a member of Calvin CRC of Ottawa, Ontario, where she has served as elder. She holds a B.A. degree from Calvin College and a M.A. degree in public ethics from St. Paul's University and is an instructor in public ethics at Trinity Western University and a consultant in the field of children's rights and development. Ms Vandergrift has served as both a delegate and woman adviser to synod. In addition to serving as the chair of the Abuse Victims Task Force, she has served on many synodical, classical, and local committees both within the church and in the community.

Dr. John Valk is a member of Fredericton CRC, New Brunswick. He is the professor of worldviews at Renaissance College. Mr. Valk has served on the Committee for Contact with the Government, the Aboriginal Ministries Committee, and the CRC Campus Ministry Committee. He served as an elder in his previous church, First CRC in Toronto, Ontario. Mr. Valk has served his community through involvement in Habitat for Humanity, the Citizens for Public Justice Committee, and the United Church National Campus Ministry Committee.

Classis Hamilton

Dr. Joanne van Dijk is a member of Meadowlands Fellowship CRC, Ancaster, Ontario, where she has served as deacon. She holds a Ph.D. in sociology, specializing in gerontology as well as the sociology of Dutch Canadian Calvinists and Catholics. Dr. van Dijk is retired from lecturing at McMaster University. She has served on the board of directors, the relations committee, and the building and property committee for Shalom Manor. Dr. van Dijk has also served as the secretary of the board of directors for Hamilton Christian High School.

Rev. William C. Veenstra is the lead pastor of Ancaster CRC, Ontario. He served as the director of Canadian ministries for three years and was a member of the Canadian Ministries Board and the Committee for Contact with the Government. In addition to being a delegate to synod three times, and serving as its vice president and second clerk, he has served on the CRC Publications board, the Ecumenical Relations Committee, and a number of planning and program development committees. Rev. Veenstra is also actively involved in various classical and local boards, committees, and ministries.

The following nominees from various classes or geographic regions are coming to synod for election (ratification) to a second term:

Region 8

Mr. Gary Van Engelenhoven

Toronto

Mr. Marten Mol

Ms. Suzanne Van Engen (Region 10) has moved from the region and is unable to stand for a second term on the Board. The Board will present a slate of nominees to fill this vacancy by way of its supplementary report to synod.

b. At-large members

At-large members for the Board (a total of six) are also appointed directly by synod and exist to help create balance and/or provide expertise on the Board.

The following slate of names for a U.S. at-large position is coming to synod for election of a first term:

Rev. Christian Y. Oh, pastor of Han-Bit Korean CRC, Rochester Hills, Michigan, holds a M.Div. degree from Calvin Theological Seminary. Rev. Oh has served on the boards of Christian Reformed Home Missions and Calvin Theological Seminary, as well as serving on the synodical Pastoral Care for Homosexual Members Committee. He currently serves on the Sustaining Congregational Excellence advisory committee.

Rev. Rick Kim is the senior pastor of First Harvest Chapel in Tustin, California. He holds a M.Div. from Westminster Theological Seminary and a M.A. from the School of World Missions of Fuller Theological Seminary. Rev. Kim currently serves as a member of the new church development team of Classis Southern California as well as the Korean ministry team.

The following slate of names for a Canadian at-large position is coming to synod for election of a first term:

Ms. Irene Bakker is a member of Hebron CRC in Whitby, Ontario. She holds a M.A. degree from Westminster Theological Seminary and is a certified teacher, presently working as a substitute elementary school teacher. Ms. Bakker has served the denomination as an ethnic adviser to synod and presently serves as stated clerk for Classis Quinte. She has served on the classical ministries committee and the synodical Faith Formation Committee. In addition she has served on various local worship and outreach committees. Ms. Bakker is completing her second term on the Faith Alive board, including serving as board secretary.

Mr. Peter Noteboom is a member of First CRC, Toronto, Ontario. He holds a degree in dialogue and negotiation from the Simon Fraser University, a M.A. degree in European studies, a B.A. in business administration and philosophy, and has worked toward the Ph.D. program in political theory through the Institute for Christian Studies in Toronto. Mr. Noteboom currently works as an associate secretary for justice and peace with the Canadian Council of Churches and is a senior partner and director of finance for Global Learning Partners,

Inc. He has served on the Classis Toronto ministry team, classis Race Relations committee, and the governing board (ex officio). Mr. Noteboom has been a member of the visioning and vision realization committees and has been a frequent facilitator of church council retreats and congregational meetings.

4. Ethnic advisers to synod

The policy for the appointment of ethnic advisers to synod follows:

At each synod, up to seven members, but not less than two, from various ethnic communities in the CRC will serve as advisers to synod. The position of ethnic adviser is continued "as long as the number of ethnic minority delegates is fewer than twenty-five, after which it shall be discontinued. The BOT should appoint as many ethnic advisers as are needed to reach twenty-five, except that no more than seven (and no fewer than two) shall be appointed."

At this writing the number of ethnic minority delegates appointed to Synod 2010 by classes is 13. To round out that number to reach twenty-five, the BOT appointed the following persons to serve as ethnic advisers to synod on an as-needed basis (* indicates service in 2009):

Ms. Pearl Banks	Mrs. Verney Kho
Mr. John Gonzales	Mr. Thurman Rivers
* Mr. Andrew Woja Henry	Ms. Alice Rivers

5. Youth observers at synod

In an effort to engage youth and young adults (18-26 year olds) in the current issues faced by our denomination, for the first time in CRC history, Synod 2009 enjoyed the addition of youth observers to the annual assembly. Youth observers to synod bring a valuable and unique perspective to the issues we face as a denomination by listening, observing, engaging delegates during advisory committee meetings, and offering feedback to the process, agenda, and decisions upon the adjournment of synod. The BOT appointed the following persons to serve as youth observers at Synod 2010 (* indicates service in 2009):

* Mr. Paul DeWeerd	Ms. Violet Mutoigo
Mr. Mark Eekhoff	* Ms. Amy Vander Vliet
Ms. Elizabeth Jennings	Mr. Robert Van Lonkhuyzen
* Mr. Peter Keep	

6. Youth advisers to synod

The Board realizes the importance of giving voice to youth during synod deliberations and thus recommends that Synod 2010 adopt the practice of appointing seven youth *advisers* to each meeting of synod beginning in 2011.

Ground: Youth bring a valuable and unique perspective to the issues we face as a denomination and, as the future leadership of the church, should be engaged as we deliberate regarding these issues.

Upon the adoption of the practice of appointing youth advisers to synod, the BOT recommends that the Guidelines for Youth Advisers as found in Appendix A be included in the Rules for Synodical Procedure.

7. Agency presentations at synod

Synod 1995 adopted a three-year rotation cycle for agency presentations at synod. The following roster for agency presentations is scheduled for Synod 2010:

- Calvin College
- Faith Alive Christian Resources
- Specialized Ministries of the CRCNA

8. Convening churches of synod

The Board received, on behalf of synod, the following invitations for the convening of future synods:

- a. The invitation of Madison Square CRC, Grand Rapids, Michigan, to be the convening church of Synod 2011 and that Synod 2011 be held at Calvin College.
- b. The invitation of Ancaster CRC, Ancaster, Ontario, to be the convening church of Synod 2012 and that Synod 2012 be held at Redeemer University College.

9. Synod worship planning

The Board recommends to synod that a special team of worship planners, appointed by Faith Alive Christian Resources, serve on the synodical Worship Planning Committee for Synods 2011, 2012, and 2013, supplementing the membership appointed each year by the Program Committee. Faith Alive will propose a team of planners from the RCA and CRC to be supported by the editorial committee of *Lift Up Your Hearts: Psalms, Hymns, and Spiritual Songs* (the CRC/RCA hymnal to be released in 2013) and the Calvin Institute of Christian Worship.

Grounds:

- a. The hymnal committee is seeking to test the songs in live worship settings and seek feedback from key leaders and potential users in the CRCNA.
- b. Part of Faith Alive's mandate is to support the worship and music needs of the Christian Reformed Church.
- c. This participation will make use of the hymnal committee's knowledge of and familiarity with Reformed congregational songs from multiple genres.
- d. This collaboration supports synod's mandate to find ways to cooperate with the RCA, strengthening the ties between the two denominations.

10. Address of current matters of interest by synod

Synod historically has been a deliberative body engaging in discussion and debate that affect the covenant relationship among the churches. In addition synod is tasked with oversight of the creeds, confessions, Church Order, the CRC ministries, and the overall mission of the denomination. Normally matters come to synod for its address by way of reports or overtures. The BOT believes that it is also valuable that synod engage larger issues that the church faces today, even before such matters become the topic of communication and overture. Examples of

such topics might include youth engagement in the church, denominational loyalty, the results of the denominational survey, and so forth. It is important for synodical delegates to hear each other, to deliberate together, to discern how an increasingly diverse denomination best lives together. One such way for this to be achieved is to incorporate a conversation time—a “work session”—a time to wrestle with large issues without the pressure of a vote or a decision. The topics discussed in any one year might not be matters on synod’s official agenda but, rather, could be topics that need several years of discussion and deliberation in order to gain understanding, consensus, and appreciation.

The Board recommends to synod that time be designated at each synod early in the week to deliberate on some topics of church-wide interest without the pressure of a vote or decision and that these topics be proposed by the BOT, current synodical study committees, and CRC agencies to the synod Program Committee.

Ground: Such discussion time would enhance the work of synodical delegates as well as the overall work of the church.

11. Judicial Code Committee

The Judicial Code Committee hears appeals from actions taken by a classis or by an agency of the Christian Reformed Church in such cases where the actions are alleged to violate the Church Order or the agencies’ mandates. The procedures followed by the Judicial Code Committee are set forth in Church Order Supplement, Article 30-c. The committee’s nine members include people with legal expertise and both clergy and nonclergy. Members are from different parts of the United States and Canada.

Three members of the Judicial Code Committee are completing their second terms. We thank Mr. Robert L. DeJong and Ms. Susan Keesen for their faithful service and recognize the contribution they have made to the life of the church during their years on the committee.

In addition, Mr. Gordon Vander Leek completes his second three-year term on the committee; however, for the sake of continuity of this nine-member committee, it is recommended that synod by way of exception extend the term of Mr. Vander Leek by one year and that another member of the committee assume the chairmanship during the coming year.

On behalf of the committee the Board presents the following two slates of nominees for election to the Judicial Code Committee:

Position 1

Mr. Andrew P. Geisterfer is a member of Ottewell CRC in Edmonton, Alberta. He holds a Bachelor of Law degree and a B.A. degree from the University of Alberta. He has an audio visual media diploma and is currently practicing law. Mr. Geisterfer has served on a board of directors for the Institute of Christian Studies and the Urban Spirits Rotary. He has served his church as deacon and in small group ministries, cadets, and on a visioning implementation team. Mr. Geisterfer currently serves as an elder at his church and on the student fund committee of classis.

Dr. John Van Schepen is the pastor of Bethel CRC in Lynden, Washington. He holds an M.Div. degree from Calvin Theological Seminary

and a D.Min. degree from Fuller Theological Seminary. Dr. Van Schepen has served on the Youth Unlimited board, the Board of Trustees of the CRCNA, the World Missions board, and several classical committees. He served as a synodical deputy for six years and currently serves on the executive committees of the Dordt College Board and the Kidstown International board. In addition, Dr. Van Schepen has served on a hospital bioethics board and a community education board in California.

Position 2

Mr. Charles C. Adams is a member of Calvin CRC in Sheboygan, Wisconsin. He holds a J.D. from the University of Wisconsin-Madison and a B.A. from Dordt College. Currently Mr. Adams works as an assistant city attorney and a city prosecutor. His past experience includes service on the boards of the Christian Reformed World Relief Committee, Wisconsin Deacons Conference, Christian Schools International, Sheboygan Christian School, Wisconsin Christian Schools Health Insurance Plan, and Dordt College Alumni. He has also been a member of the Sheboygan County Judicial Advisory Council and the City of Waupun Housing Authority. Mr. Adams currently serves on the boards of the Sheboygan Salvation Army Advisory, Sheboygan County Christian High School, and Sheboygan Neighborhood Pride, Inc. He has served several terms as a deacon.

Ms. Pamela Hoekwater is a member of Eastern Avenue CRC in Grand Rapids, Michigan, where she has served as deacon. She holds a J.D. from the Notre Dame School of Law and a B.S.W. from Calvin College. She is presently employed as an attorney. Ms. Hoekwater has served on the classis renewal committee for Classis Grand Rapids East and on the Grand Rapids Christian School Focus Planning Committee. In addition, she has served as district board president for Evergreen Christian School.

12. National Association of Evangelicals Immigration Resolution

The National Association of Evangelicals (NAE) requested that member denominations endorse the "Resolution on Immigration" document to be used in political arenas. On behalf of synod the Board of Trustees at its meeting in September 2009 endorsed the Resolution on Immigration as presented by the National Association of Evangelicals. A copy of the resolution is included as Appendix B for information.

13. Declaration on Creation Stewardship and Climate Change

The Office of Social Justice and Hunger Action (OSJ) prepared and presented to the Board a report and recommendations regarding Creation Care in the CRCNA, highlighting the Micah Network "Declaration on Creation Stewardship and Climate Change" that was recently endorsed by the CRWRC Joint Ministry Council. The report and recommendations are included in Appendix C for synod's information. The Board of Trustees at its February 2010 meeting endorsed the Micah Network declaration and requests CRCNA staff to prioritize the issue of climate change in its efforts among CRC members and congregations and in its advocacy efforts at the local, national, and global levels.

14. Report of the Denominational Survey

At a meeting of the combined denominational boards in September 2009, a summary report of the results of the 2007 Denominational Survey was presented and discussed in roundtable sessions. The survey results reveal much about the health of CRC congregations and its membership and provides direction that future work of the Board and synod may take. The Board requests that synod allow time in its schedule to receive a presentation regarding the Denominational Survey summary, followed by a time of discussion to help raise the awareness of the data.

15. Leadership Exchange

Mr. Chris Pullenayegem, the director of the Leadership Exchange, began his tenure in September 2009. His time has been spent focusing on the future plans for the Exchange. Responses to the Exchange have been very positive, and Mr. Pullenayegem is actively engaged in conversations with pastors, churches, educators, and leaders across North America.

16. Abuse Victims Task Force Report

The BOT reviewed and endorsed the significant report of the Abuse Victims Task Force and noted with appreciation the work that has been done. The report was then distributed to the churches for their study, review, and response prior to the address of the recommendations by Synod 2010.

17. Diversity in leadership development

Upon the request of Synod 2009 that the BOT be “relentless and faithful advocates in promoting multiethnic communication, dialogue, and leadership development at the denominational, classical, and congregational levels,” the Board instructed the executive director to convene an ethnically inclusive group to develop a statement of vision and strategy for increasing multiethnic representation within the leadership of the denomination. The Diversity in Leadership Planning Group met for the first time in February 2010, and it is anticipated that an initial report will be ready in time for inclusion in the Board’s supplementary report to synod.

18. Guidelines for Proposed Structure Changes

Synod 2009 asked the Board of Trustees to develop guidelines for processing proposed structure changes and to report back to Synod 2010 with a proposal. The report and recommendations of the BOT-appointed task force are found in Appendix D.

19. Pacific Hanmi Appeals Committee

Synod 2009 received two personal appeals (Appeals 3 and 4) and were unable to resolve the matters presented in the appeals, given the time frame for the advisory committee. It then adopted a motion that instructed the denominational executive director

to appoint an ad hoc committee to meet with the appellants and leaders in Classis Pacific Hanmi to further review this matter. The committee would provide opportunities for a complete hearing of all parties involved in matters raised in Personal Appeals 3 and 4 that Synod 2009 was unable to accomplish. This committee would make recommendations to Synod 2010

as to whether or not to sustain these appeals or, if possible and desirable, to make these recommendations to the Board of Trustees of the CRCNA for interim resolution.

(*Acts of Synod 2009*, p. 612)

The Board of Trustees at its February meeting received an update on the work of the committee, which had spent many hours with both the appellants and representatives of Classis Pacific Hanmi to come to a resolution for both appeals. The report of the committee's work is being completed for inclusion in the Board of Trustees supplementary report to synod. However, the Board is pleased to share the following with synod, asking that it receive this as information:

- a. The BOT noted that because of a resolution document signed by the appellants, Revs. J.J. Choi, P. Han, T. Lim, and C. Yoon, and the leaders of Classis Pacific Hanmi, Personal Appeal 4 submitted to Synod 2009 has been withdrawn.
 - b. The BOT noted that Mr. A. Jae and Mr. Y. Min have withdrawn Personal Appeal 3 submitted to Synod 2009.
 - c. The BOT encourages all parties to work toward reconciliation so that the pain caused by this matter does not cause permanent alienation between fellow Christians and does not hinder the ministries of classis and the congregation to fellow members and to Korean immigrants who may consider affiliation with the Christian Reformed Church in the future.
20. Publications and services
- a. *Yearbook*

The *Yearbook*, published annually, 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.

The *Yearbook* is published each January and reflects denominational and local-church information up to approximately August 31 of the calendar year preceding publication.

Among some of the statistics printed in the *Yearbook* are the total number of members (baptized and confessing) in a local congregation, number of families, number of professing members over eighteen years of age, total number of professing members, total number of baptized members, and the total number of members received from other CRCs through evangelism and from other denominations.

The database that stores *Yearbook* data is used in many ways, such as calculating ministry shares and pension assessments, mailing list requests, updating the list of churches on the CRC website, and handling requests for information that is not published in the *Yearbook*.

To better serve the churches and members by providing the most up-to-date data available, plans for an online version of the *Yearbook* are being developed. Present budget restrictions have delayed the

process, but it is hoped that this online version will be available in the near future.

b. *Church Order and Rules for Synodical Procedure*

An updated *Church Order and Rules for Synodical Procedure* was published, incorporating the changes adopted by Synod 2009. The Church Order is updated by the Office of Synodical Services and reprinted annually, when necessary, and a copy is sent to each church. It is anticipated that given the recommended changes of the Church Order Revision Task Force for adoption by Synod 2010, there will be a significant number of changes that will require publication of a 2010 version.

c. *Agenda for Synod and Acts of Synod*

The publication of the *Agenda for Synod* and *Acts of Synod* is the responsibility of the director of synodical services under the direction of the executive director. 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. Resources available on the Christian Reformed Church website

With the greater use of electronic media and a significant decline in requests for printed material, the CRCNA website (www.crcna.org) has become a valuable tool for congregations and their staff in accessing denominational resources. The website is regularly updated, and the information and forms provided are the most current available.

e. *Manual for Synodical Deputies*

The *Manual for Synodical Deputies* is distributed to synodical deputies, their alternates, and stated clerks of classes. A revision of the manual was completed in Summer 2009 by the Office of Synodical Services, reflecting the decisions of Synod 2009. Anyone desiring to read a copy of this tool for the classes may download a copy from the stated clerk web page at www.crcna.org/pages/classis_clerks.cfm.

B. *Program matters*

A good deal of the Board of Trustees' (BOT) work relates to the ministry programs, personnel, and finances of the denomination. The program and personnel details are reported to synod by way of the reports of the agencies and this section of the BOT's report in this agenda. Additional information regarding financial matters is contained in the *Agenda for Synod 2010—Financial and Business Supplement* that is distributed at synod. The final budget and the ministry share request will be presented to synod by way of the finance advisory committee.

The BOT provides denominational oversight on behalf of synod throughout the year. The office of the executive director serves as the primary link between the BOT and the denomination's ministries. He is assisted in this work by the director of Canadian ministries (DCM), the director of denominational ministries (DDM), and the director of finance and administration (DFA). The Ministries Leadership Team (MLT), under the leadership of the

DDM, is the interagency administrative team that has responsibility for implementation of the Ministry Plan of the Christian Reformed Church (formerly the Denominational Ministries Plan), the collaboration of the agencies, strategic planning for the ministries of the church, and the review of program matters. The MLT, convened by the DDM, is composed of the six agency directors and the director of the Network. At its September 2009 meeting the Board adopted a new Mandate of the Ministries Leadership Team (see Appendix E).

The program and financial matters that were processed by the Board from July through February are presented to synod as information. Any matters that require action by synod are clearly identified within the body of this report.

1. Ministry Plan of the Christian Reformed Church (formerly Denominational Ministries Plan)

The Board of Trustees is mandated by synod to lead in developing and implementing the Ministry Plan of the Christian Reformed Church (formerly Denominational Ministries Plan) that provides strategic direction for the agencies and institutions of the Christian Reformed Church. The plan provides a framework for the Board's supervision of the management of the agencies; the planning, coordinating, and integrating of their work; and the integration of the respective missions of the denomination's educational institutions into the denominational ministry program.

The Ministry Plan focuses on biblical and theological identity and the core values that unite us in ministry. The Board of Trustees in September 2009 mandated a task force to review the present plan (last updated in 2006) and to present to the Board any recommended changes for revision. The revised Ministry Plan of the Christian Reformed Church as adopted by the Board in February 2010 is presented in Appendix F for synod's information. Some highlights of the changes made to the new plan include

- the use of the term *ministry* rather than the plural *ministries* for the plan
- the application of the first six sections of the plan to the denomination as a whole, and the last two sections specifically to the agencies and institutions
- the repositioning of the denominational priority from the objectives section to a separate section where it clearly applies to the CRC as a whole
- the insertion of the denominational mission statement previously adopted by synod but absent in earlier versions of the plan
- the renaming of the objective, "transform lives and communities . . ." to "engage in global mission"

Also take note that the section of the plan regarding the "Identity Statement" (now referred to as an appendix to the plan) has not been included in this printing because that section has not undergone a revision at this time. However, the Board in February approved the appointment of a new task force that will do an in-depth study of what compels people to belong to the CRC today and will propose a new statement to the Board.

In order to effectively implement the Ministry Plan throughout our ministries, the Board has adopted a tool widely used in business, government, and non-profit organizations, called the Balanced Scorecard. Our own term for it is the Ministry Plan Scorecard (MPS). The MPS gives us the means to ensure that all of our ministries are pulling together in a coordinated, collaborative way to fulfill the plan's ten objectives. The MPS is operational at the agency and ministry level, and ministries align their own plans and targets with both its content and its format. Consequently, the Board is better able to use the plan as a dynamic instrument for oversight of our ministries.

The Board is thankful to report that collaboration among the agencies and educational institutions continues to grow. The Ministry Plan Scorecard has served to focus the ministries on common objectives. This effort has served the church well and continues to raise the awareness of our responsibilities around service *to* the churches as well as serving *for* the churches. Such efforts have led to greater emphasis on our denominational priority of creating and sustaining healthy local congregations so that we may become even more effective in our purpose of transforming lives and communities worldwide.

2. The Network: Connecting Churches for Ministry

The Network: Connecting Churches for Ministry, directed by Rev. Michael Bruinooge, was launched in spring 2009. It is a denominational initiative to help congregations more quickly get the answers, tools, and resources they need for ministry. Through nearly fifty online networks and discussion forums, the Network demonstrates that often the best help comes from peers and neighbors. These networks and forums make it possible for ministry leaders to connect with others in CRC churches across North America who have similar roles or passions. Another focus of the Network is regional networks. These teams, still in formation, will bring together classical leaders, mission professionals, and volunteers to foster locally appropriate, collaborative ministry.

The Network was formed to add strength and momentum to the CRC's denominational priority of creating and sustaining healthy congregations. For this reason, it administers two innovative programs that have been welcomed by churches in recent years: Sustaining Pastoral Excellence (SPE) and Sustaining Congregational Excellence (SCE), both directed by Ms. Lis Van Harten. SPE is a resource to pastors, providing grants that enable them and their spouses to join peer learning groups. SCE provides grants to smaller churches in two categories: the first stimulates creative thinking about ministry, and the second enables these churches to purchase needed technology and equipment. SCE also hosts retreat-like events around North America for smaller church pastors, ministry leaders, and their spouses. A more complete report on the Network is contained in Appendix G.

3. CRC agency, institution, and specialized ministry reports

Each year the Board of Trustees submits a *unified* report to synod composed of individual parts provided by the agencies, educational institutions, and ministries of the Christian Reformed Church. The individual

reports of the CRC ministries appear in the following pages of this *Agenda for Synod*.

These reports paint a picture of the ministry of the Christian Reformed Church at home and around the world. As you read the material, we invite you to praise God for ministry opportunities and for the many fine people who faithfully serve the church.

4. Appointment of the director of Chaplaincy and Care Ministry

The search process for a director of Chaplaincy and Care Ministry to replace the interim director, Rev. Mark Stephenson, has been completed, and the Board is pleased to announce that Rev. Ronald Klimp began serving in this position on March 1, 2010. The Board will introduce Rev. Klimp to synod when it meets.

5. Christian Reformed World Relief Committee – Ecuador

Over the past year CRWRC has completed significant restructuring in order to adjust to recent financial challenges. In order for CRWRC to align its expenditures with 2010-2011 revenue projections, the CRWRC Joint Ministry Council requested and the Board of Trustees endorsed the closing of the Ecuador program. The recommendation by CRWRC was reached through a self-analysis done by CRWRC's Latin America Team, and the Latin America Administrative Council and the Ministries Leadership Team concurred. Ecuador programs target the indigenous tribal poor, so the action was a difficult decision. At the same time CRWRC will leave in place model institutions that can continue the collaborative efforts of CRWRC and these national institutions.

C. *Financial matters*

In order to assure that synod has the most up to date and accurate information, detailed financial data will be included in the *Agenda for Synod 2010—Business and Financial Supplement* that will be distributed to the delegates at the time synod convenes. This supplement will include financial disclosure information, agency budgets for fiscal year 2011 (July 1, 2010 – June 30, 2011), and the recommended ministry-share amount for the year 2011. In addition, synod will be asked to approve a schedule for one or more above-ministry-share offerings for the ministries of the denomination, a quarterly offering for CRWRC (in lieu of ministry-share support), and the approval of new requests for accredited agency status for recommendation to the churches. Additional financial information and/or recommendations will also be included in the supplementary report.

1. Ministry-share program

- a. Synod 2009 requested that the executive director, through the office of Denominational Advancement, encourage and educate the churches regarding participation in the ministry-share system and resulting ministry. Under the direction of Dr. Peter Harkema, director of denominational advancement, new educational initiatives and materials have been developed and additional materials and processes are being developed to enhance ministry-share awareness and participation.
- b. Synod 2009 requested “that the executive director develop a plan for new church plants and emerging churches to more actively participate

in the ministry-share program" (*Acts of Synod 2009*, pp. 580). Christian Reformed Home Missions, upon request of the ED, presented to the BOT in February an action plan that will further engage new church plants and emerging churches in the ministry-share program. The plan has been developed, and the Christian Reformed Home Missions church planting and development leadership team has made the following observation:

Based upon our experience in CRHM and our conversations with Church Planting Network leaders worldwide, we observe that the resources are in the harvest. Churches get planted, generate internal resources that sustain them, and if there are healthy networks (denominational entities), these new churches also give back to the network that funded them, whether it is a denomination or mission agency. This practice has been shown to be tried and true, literally since the time of the apostles. At the same time, we recognize the reality of high need/low resource communities where churches experience a slower process to develop a resource base that is smaller than in other churches. If we can increase overall ministry share participation enough, we compensate for the exceptions and catalyze a broader, nimbler, and more aggressive and innovative church planting movement within the CRCNA.

2. Christian Reformed Church Foundation

The Christian Reformed Church Foundation began in the early 1990s, when several Christian Reformed Church members and the CRCNA executive director of ministries began the Fellowship Fund to support uniquely denominational programs and needs. Synod 1996 approved a binational Christian Reformed Church Foundation, now a tax-exempt 501(c)(3) organization in the United States. Its counterpart is the tax-exempt registered charity Canadian Christian Reformed Foundation. Both the binational and Canadian foundations have their own bylaws and board of directors.

Since the Foundation's inception, it has distributed funds received to various offices and agencies of the CRCNA or to closely affiliated organizations, including the Timothy Institute, Partners Worldwide, and Christian Reformed Church agencies such as Back to God Ministries International and Christian Reformed Home Missions. The Foundation in 2005 received funds from the Canadian Sea to Sea across Canada ride and is distributing those funds with the guidance of Home Missions to church growth projects across Canada. Similarly in 2008, the Foundation was given approximately \$360,000 of the funds received through the Sea to Sea ride across the United States and parts of Canada, designated for distribution to organizations with poverty alleviation ministries.

Under the leadership of Dr. Peter Harkema, director of denominational advancement since 2007, and the Foundation Board of Directors, the Foundation remains committed to strengthening the ministries of the CRC that contribute to the implementation of the Ministry Plan of the Christian Reformed Church. The Foundation seeks financial support for new ideas and programs that fall outside the mandates of the denominational agencies and are not funded through budgets of synod, classis, or agencies. Currently the Foundation is raising funds for the Leadership Exchange, the Network: Connecting Churches for Ministry, and the Timothy Institute.

The Christian Reformed Church Foundation does not offer estate planning services but partners with Barnabas Foundation and, in Canada, with Christian Stewardship Services to help families make planned gifts and develop estate plans.

III. Recommendations

A. That synod grant the privilege of the floor to Rev. Mark D. Vermaire, chair of the Board of Trustees; Rev. Gerard L. Dykstra, executive director; and members of the executive staff as needed when matters pertaining to the Board of Trustees are discussed.

B. That synod approve all requests for privilege of the floor by the BOT, agencies, educational institutions, standing committees, and study committees of synod contained within the reports to Synod 2010.

C. That synod approve all requests for special offerings for the agencies, ministries, and educational institutions of the CRC that are contained within the reports to Synod 2010.

D. That synod approve the interim appointments made by the Board to the agency and institution boards (II, A, 1).

E. That synod by way of the printed ballot elect members for the Board of Trustees from the slate of nominees presented (II, A, 3).

F. That synod by way of exception allow Ms. Janette Bax to fill out her first term on the BOT and that the Board seek nominees from within the classis for election by Synod 2011 (II, A, 3, a).

Grounds:

1. Allowing Ms. Bax to complete her first term on the BOT will provide more continuity to the Board.
2. Both Ms. Bax and Classis Lake Superior are in agreement with the proposal to synod.

G. That synod by way of the printed ballot reappoint to a second term members for the Board of Trustees from the slate of nominees presented (II, A, 3).

H. That synod adopt the practice of appointing seven youth advisers to each meeting of synod beginning in 2011 (II, A, 6).

Ground: Youth bring a valuable and unique perspective to the issues we face as a denomination and, as the future leadership of the church, should be engaged as we deliberate regarding these issues.

I. That synod, upon the adoption of the practice of appointing youth advisers to synod, include in the Rules for Synodical Procedure the Guidelines for Youth Advisers as found in Appendix A (II, A, 6).

J. That synod accept the invitation from Madison Square CRC, Grand Rapids, Michigan, to be the convening church of Synod 2011 and that Synod 2011 be held at Calvin College (II, A, 8, a).

K. That synod accept the invitation from Ancaster CRC, Ancaster, Ontario, to be the convening church of Synod 2012 and that Synod 2012 be held at Redeemer University College (II, A, 8, b).

L. That synod invite a special team of worship planners, appointed by Faith Alive Christian Resources, to serve on the synodical Worship Planning Committee for Synods 2011, 2012, and 2013, supplementing the membership appointed each year by the Program Committee. Faith Alive will propose a team of planners from the RCA and CRC to be supported by the editorial committee of *Lift Up Your Hearts: Psalms, Hymns, and Spiritual Songs* (the CRC/RCA hymnal to be released in 2013) and the Calvin Institute of Christian Worship (II, A, 9).

Grounds:

1. The hymnal committee is seeking to test the songs in live worship settings and seek feedback from key leaders and potential users in the CRCNA.
2. Part of Faith Alive's mandate is to support the worship and music needs of the Christian Reformed Church.
3. This participation will make use of the hymnal committee's knowledge of and familiarity with Reformed congregational songs from multiple genres.
4. This collaboration supports synod's mandate to find ways to cooperate with the RCA, strengthening the ties between the two denominations.

M. That synod allow for time at each synod early in the week to deliberate on some topics of church-wide interest without the pressure of a vote or decision and that these topics be proposed by the BOT, current synodical study committees, and CRC agencies to the synod Program Committee (II, A, 10).

Ground: Such discussion time would enhance the work of synodical delegates as well as the overall work of the church.

N. That synod by way of the printed ballot appoint two members to the Judicial Code Committee (II, A, 11).

O. That synod by way of exception extend the term of Mr. Gordon Vander Leek on the Judicial Code Committee by one year (II, A, 11).

Ground: Doing so will help bring continuity to this nine-member committee.

P. That synod allow time in its schedule to receive a presentation regarding the Denominational Survey summary, followed by a time of discussion to help raise the awareness of the data (II, A, 14).

Q. That synod address the following recommendations by the Task Force to Develop Guidelines for Proposed Structure Changes (Appendix D and II, A, 18):

1. That synod grant the privilege of the floor to the members of the BOT executive committee when the report of the Task Force to Develop Guidelines for Proposed Structure Changes is addressed.

2. That synod affirm that *significant structural changes* refers to any alterations in the mandate of the BOT or the mandate of the CRC agencies and/or ministries as established by synod, or any alteration to specific instructions given to the BOT by synod.
 3. That synod encourage all classes to provide time upon request for BOT members to address each classis so that the churches may be informed about and can interact with BOT members regarding important denominational developments.
 4. That synod receive this report as the response to concern expressed by Synod 2009 regarding the BOT and consideration of significant structural changes that affect the ministries and congregations of the CRCNA.
- R. That synod take note of the revised Ministry Plan of the Christian Reformed Church and receive it as information (II, B, 1 and Appendix F).
5. That synod address the following recommendations by the Office of Chaplaincy Ministries (see *Agenda for Synod 2010*, pp. 392-93):
1. That synod approve the change in the name of the Office of Chaplaincy Ministries to the Office of Chaplaincy and Care Ministry.

Grounds:

- a. The change in name will better reflect the revised job description already adopted for the director, whose purpose is “to develop and promote the strategic ministry of Christian Reformed chaplains and to advance and facilitate ministries of care with Christian Reformed pastors, congregations, and other CRCNA ministries.” The new job description includes various components for enhancing the caring ministry of the churches of our denomination: to promote and facilitate opportunities for training in care in CR churches, classes, and ministries; to develop and maintain a bi-national list of spiritual directors and mental health consultants adept at serving ordained professionals; and to advocate for clinical pastoral education as a significant educational opportunity for people studying for ministry and for people already serving in ministry.
- b. By the nature of their work, chaplains engage in ministry at the margins of society with people who are dying, people who are at war, people who face limitations due to age, and so forth. In addition, our denomination has placed a higher value on preaching than on pastoral care, further isolating chaplains from the heart of church life. By emphasizing the caring nature of the work of chaplains, this name change will highlight the value that chaplains add to the overall ministry of our denomination, the expertise they bring to our denomination, and the opportunity for additional training they can give to the churches of our denomination.
- c. Since other offices of our denomination are involved in enhancing the caring ministries of churches (for example, Disability Concerns, Pastor-Church Relations, and Safe Church Ministry), the name change affirms Chaplaincy’s connection with these ministries.

2. That synod urge parents, the youth and education ministries in our churches, and Christian schools to encourage our young people to prayerfully consider a wide range of ministry options, including chaplaincy ministries and other specialized Christian vocations.

T. That synod encourage Christian Reformed churches, classes, ministries, and institutions to sponsor events to observe Disability Week from October 11 through 17, 2010, with a suggested focus on mental health issues (see *Agenda for Synod 2010*, pp. 396-97).

Grounds:

1. As the covenant people of God, the Bible calls us to be a caring community. We recognize that our Lord Jesus Christ requires the involvement of all his people in the ministry of his church. We have not always made it possible for people with disabilities to participate fully in the community and have often isolated them and their families.
2. In 1985 we committed ourselves as a denomination to eliminate barriers of architecture, communication, and attitude “in order to use the gifts of all people in our life together as God’s family.” Although many CRC congregations, classes, ministries, and institutions have made significant progress in including people with disabilities in their work and ministry, much more can and should be done.
3. About 25 percent of the North American population experiences a diagnosable mental disorder in a given year. Like the population at large, members of Christ’s body struggle with a variety of mental health issues. A much smaller population, about 6 percent, live with a serious mental illness. Due to its prevalence among younger people, mental disorders are the leading cause of disability in the United States and Canada for people ages 15 to 44. Disability Week, with a focus on mental health issues, will provide opportunities to educate congregations of the prevalence and nature of mental illnesses and help congregations to learn better ways to minister to people with mental illnesses when they are in a season of suffering. Disability Concerns will make a variety of resources available to assist congregations in this.
4. Specific and intentional events that recognize the importance of breaking down barriers and including people with disabilities in congregational life will remind God’s people of the welcome our Lord gives to all of his people (Luke 14:15-24) and will encourage them to press on toward becoming a community in which every member knows that he or she is indispensable (1 Cor. 12:12-27).

U. That synod encourage churches, classes, and CRC institutions to celebrate All Nations Heritage Week from September 27 through October 3, 2010, with an invitation to celebrate All Nations Heritage Sunday with special services on October 3, 2010 (see *Agenda for Synod 2010*, p. 400).

Grounds:

1. The struggle against prejudice, discrimination, and racism needs to be balanced by celebrating and affirming God’s gift of unity in diversity through our Savior and Lord Jesus Christ (cf. Ephesians 2). The congregations that also celebrate World Communion Sunday can

find a meaningful Christian Reformed way of celebrating All Nations Heritage Sunday by combining both celebrations.

2. The financial support our ministry receives from the All Nations Heritage Sunday celebrations dramatically increases Race Relations' ability to award scholarships and grants to promote leadership of people of color in the life of our denomination.

V. That synod allow time to recognize Rev. Ronald Klimp, the new director of Chaplaincy and Care Ministry (II, B, 4).

W. That synod take note that the Board of Trustees endorsed the request of the CRWRC Joint Ministry Council for the immediate closure of the Ecuador program due to financial challenges (II, B, 5).

X. That synod take note of the action plan developed in response to the request of Synod 2009 that will further engage new church plants and emerging churches in the ministry-share program (II, C, 1).

Y. That synod receive as information the condensed financial statements for the agencies and educational institutions (see Appendix H).

Board of Trustees of the
Christian Reformed Church in North America
Gerard L. Dykstra, executive director

Appendix A

Proposed Youth Adviser to Synod Guidelines

A. General considerations

1. At each synod up to seven young adults (between the ages of 18-26) in the CRC will serve as advisers to synod.
2. An attempt will be made to appoint some advisers (up to three) who are able to serve two-year terms. This means that there will be some experienced advisers and some new advisers at each synod.
3. Expenses for travel, lodging, and meals will be paid by synod.
4. In keeping with the practice of some classes, remuneration (at a rate set by the executive director from time to time) will be available for a youth adviser who is financially disadvantaged through service to synod.

B. Qualification

Youth advisers shall be members in good standing of the Christian Reformed Church with demonstrated leadership capabilities within their church communities.

C. Responsibilities

1. Youth advisers shall serve on the advisory committees of synod. They shall have the privilege of the floor but not the right to vote.
2. Youth advisers may appear before any advisory committee for the purpose of speaking to the committee about any matter referred to it.

3. Youth advisers shall be present at plenary sessions of synod, where they shall have the privilege of the floor for the purpose of advising synod on matters before it, subject to the accepted rules governing discussion. On important questions the chair or any other members of synod may request their advice.

D. Appointments

1. The Board of Trustees shall appoint the youth advisers each year at its February meeting. Nominations for the youth adviser positions shall be gathered by the executive director from suggestions offered by the churches and the CRC-related educational institutions.
2. Youth advisers will be assigned their committee assignments by the Program Committee of synod.

Appendix B

National Association of Evangelicals Resolution on Immigration (2009)

The significant increase in immigration and the growing stridency of the national debate on immigration compel the National Association of Evangelicals to speak boldly and biblically to this challenging topic. The complexity of immigration issues provides an opportunity to mine Scripture for guidance. A biblically informed position provides a strong platform for the NAE to make a contribution in the public square that will be explicitly Christian. Out of commitment to Scripture and knowledge of national immigration realities comes a distinct call to action.

I. Biblical foundations

Discussion of immigration and government immigration policy must begin with the truth that every human being is made in the image of God (Gen. 1:26-28). Immigrants are made in the image of God and have supreme value with the potential to contribute greatly to society. Jesus exemplifies respect toward others who are different in his treatment of the Samaritans (Luke 10:30-37; John 4:1-42).

The Bible contains many accounts of God's people who were forced to migrate due to hunger, war, or personal circumstances. Abraham, Isaac, Jacob and the families of his sons turned to Egypt in search of food. Joseph, Naomi, Ruth, Daniel and his friends, Ezekiel, Ezra, Nehemiah, and Esther all lived in foreign lands. In the New Testament, Joseph and Mary fled with Jesus to escape Herod's anger and became refugees in Egypt. Peter referred to the recipients of his first letter as "aliens" and "strangers," perhaps suggesting that they were exiles within the Roman Empire. These examples from the Old and New Testaments reveal God's hand in the movement of people and are illustrations of faith in God in difficult circumstances.

Migration was common in the ancient world. Outsiders were particularly vulnerable. They stood outside the kinship system that regulated the inheritance of property. They did not have extended family to care for them in case of need. The Law recognized their helplessness and stipulated measures that served as a safety net. The motivations behind this generous spirit were that

the people of God were not to forget that they had been strangers in Egypt (Ex. 22:21; Lev. 19:33-34) and that God loved the foreigner (Deut. 10:18-19). The New Testament adds that all believers are spiritual sojourners on earth (Phil. 3:20; 1 Pet. 2:11). Christians should show compassion and hospitality to outsiders (Rom. 12:13; Heb. 13:2).

The Bible does not offer a blueprint for modern legislation, but it can serve as a moral compass and shape the attitudes of those who believe in God. An appreciation of the pervasiveness of migration in the Bible must temper the tendency to limit discussions on immigration to Romans 13 and a simplistic defense of “the rule of law.” God has established the nations (Deut. 32:8; Acts 17:26), and their laws should be respected. Nevertheless, policies must be evaluated to reflect that immigrants are made in the image of God and demonstrate biblical grace to the foreigner.

II. National realities

Immigration is a worldwide phenomenon. People migrate due to economic globalization, armed conflicts, and a desire to provide for their families. The United States of America is a country founded by immigrants, and its history has been characterized by waves of immigrants from different parts of the world. Immigrants will continue to be an essential part of who we are as a country. Our response to immigration must include an understanding of this immigrant history and an awareness of the positive impact of multiple cultures on national life over the last 250 years. The challenge today is to determine how to maintain the integrity of national borders, address the situation with millions of undocumented immigrants, devise a realistic program to respond to labor needs, and manifest the humanitarian spirit that has characterized this country since its founding.

The problems related to immigration are many and complicated. In many instances the arrival of a large number of immigrants has compromised the border. Some communities now struggle with significant stress on infrastructures in education, health care, social services, and the legal system. At the same time, many jobs and industries rely on immigrant workers. Current quotas do not grant enough visas to meet these needs, nor does federal immigration law provide sufficient opportunities to others who also come seeking gainful employment. Many immigrants who obtain legal entry yearn to be reunited with families, but backlogs under family-based immigration law result in excessive periods of family separation.

Due to the limited number of visas, millions have entered the United States without proper documentation or have overstayed temporary visas. While these actions violate existing laws, socioeconomic, political, and legal realities contribute to the problematic nature of immigration. Society has ignored the existence of an unauthorized work force due to the economic benefits of cheap immigrant labor. Without legal status and wary of reporting abuses, immigrants can be mistreated and underpaid by employers. Deportation of wage-earners has separated families and complicated the situation for many. Most undocumented immigrants desire to regularize their legal status, but avenues to assimilation and citizenship are blocked by local, state, and federal laws. This has generated an underground industry for false documentation and human smuggling.

These quandaries offer fresh opportunities for the church. Immigrant communities offer a new, vibrant field for evangelism, church planting, and ministry. Denominations have launched efforts to bring the gospel to these newcomers, establish churches, and train leaders for immigrant believers. Millions of immigrants also come from Christian backgrounds. These brothers and sisters in Christ are revitalizing churches across the country and are planting churches and evangelizing. Their presence is a blessing of God. These spiritual realities remind evangelicals that an evaluation of recent immigration cannot be reduced to economics and national security issues.

III. Call to action

Motivated by the desire to offer a constructive word for the country's complicated immigration situation and guided by the Scripture, the National Association of Evangelicals calls for the reform of the immigration system. We believe that national immigration policy should be considerate of immigrants who are already here and who may arrive in the future and that its measures should promote national security and the general welfare in appropriate ways. Building upon biblical revelation concerning the migration of people and the values of justice and compassion championed in *For the Health of the Nation: An Evangelical Call to Civic Responsibility*, we urge:

- That immigrants be treated with respect and mercy by churches. Exemplary treatment of immigrants by Christians can serve as the moral basis to call for government attitudes and legislation to reflect the same virtues.
- That the government develop structures and mechanisms that safeguard and monitor the national borders with efficiency and respect for human dignity.
- That the government establish more functional legal mechanisms for the annual entry of a reasonable number of immigrant workers and families.
- That the government recognize the central importance of the family in society by reconsidering the number and categories of visas available for family reunification, by dedicating more resources to reducing the backlog of cases in process, and by reevaluating the impact of deportation on families.
- That the government establish a sound, equitable process toward earned legal status for currently undocumented immigrants, who desire to embrace the responsibilities and privileges that accompany citizenship.
- That the government legislate fair labor and civil laws for all residing within the United States that reflect the best of this country's heritage.
- That immigration enforcement be conducted in ways that recognize the importance of due process of law, the sanctity of the human person, and the incomparable value of family.

Resources

"Blessed are the Courageous." *Christianity Today*, April 3, 2006.
<http://www.christianitytoday.com/ct/2006/aprilweb-only/114-12.0.html>. Vol. 50, April (Web-only) 2006.

Carroll R., M. Daniel. *Christians at the Border: Immigration, the Bible and the Church*. Baker Academic, 2008.

Galli, Mark. "Blessed is the Law - Up to a Point." *Christianity Today*, April 7, 2006.

<http://www.christianitytoday.com/ct/2006/aprilweb-only/114-53.0.html?start=1>. Vol. 50, April (Web-only) 2006.

Soerens, Matthew and Jenny Hwang. *Welcoming the Stranger: Justice, Compassion & Truth in the Immigration Debate*. InterVarsity, 2009.

NAE Resolutions on Immigration

Compassion for Immigrants and Refugees 1995

Immigration 2006

National Hispanic Christian Leadership Conference

World Relief

Resolutions on immigration by NAE member denominations:

Evangelical Free Church of America

Vineyard Church

Wesleyan Church

Appendix C

Creation Care in the CRCNA

I. Background

The CRCNA has a long history of making significant intellectual, theological, and spiritual contributions to environmentally responsible living. According to our Reformed world and life view, CRC members affirm a commitment to work vigorously to protect and heal the creation for the glory of the Creator, as we wait for the restoration of the creation to wholeness. Long before ecology and environmental protection became buzzwords, CRC members have lived out a deep commitment to the respectful treatment of God's earth, honoring the claim of Psalm 24:1 that "the earth is the Lord's, and everything in it." However, the prophetic voice calling us to fulfill our appointment as "earthkeepers and caretakers to tend the earth, enjoy it, and love our neighbors" has often come from faithful individuals, congregations, and scholars rather than from the denomination (*Our World Belongs to God* [2008], para. 10).

For decades CRC members and congregations have examined their behavior in this time of great affluence in light of the biblical calling to be stewards of God's creation and resources. They have found both small and large ways to resist the allure of wastefulness and overconsumption by making personal lifestyle choices to reduce, reuse, and recycle. CRC scholars have also had a prophetic voice for creation care, producing much helpful information, and have suggested many practices for sustainable development and responsible living. Already three decades ago, the Calvin Center for Christian Scholarship researched and produced *Earthkeeping: Stewardship of Creation* (Loren Wilkinson, Peter DeVos, Calvin DeWitt, et al., Eerdmans, 1980), a pioneer in the field of Christian environmental studies.

At the official denominational level, the CRCNA has followed well behind the lead of its members on creation care, making few official statements. This

is exemplified by the notable absence of “stewardship of creation” from the CRCNA website that summarizes the denomination’s official position on forty other issues.

All three of synod’s actions on creation care over the past two decades served to help the denomination catch up with the work already undertaken by many individuals and congregations. First, in response to various overtures in the early 1990s, the synodical Task Force on CRC Publications and the Environment examined the use of resources at the denominational level, and synod commissioned CRC Publications to produce study guides on the ethical framework of environmental stewardship. Second, Synod 1997 alerted churches to the Reformed Ecumenical Council’s report, “The Just Stewardship of Land and Creation,” which includes guidelines and recommendations that can be used by churches, classes, and institutions. Finally in 2008, synod instructed the BOT to establish and maintain a webpage with up-to-date eco-justice resources.

Synod’s action in 2008 was a particularly weak response to the concerns and actions of CRC members. The overture requested clear guidelines for CRC institutions, agencies, and congregations to implement practices that respect God’s creation. Such a request came out of the strong concerns that CRC members, congregations, and institutions engage in excessive levels of consumption similar to the rest of our affluent society. This overture highlights not only a concern that the CRC is failing in its stewardly role, but also that there are deep divisions within the CRC over what constitutes *sinful* treatment of the environment. Synod 2008 clearly skirted these crucial concerns by limiting its action to the establishment of a webpage with eco-justice resources.

II. Climate Change

Despite the strong tradition of stewardship in our Reformed worldview, the denomination has also not engaged one of the most pressing stewardship issues of today—climate change. The calling to combat climate change stems not only from our role as earthkeepers but also from the most basic command that we love our neighbors and treat all with justice. We have failed in the scriptural calling that “love does no harm to its neighbor” (Rom. 13:10), because our carbon emissions from years of over-consumption are already hurting our neighbors. The people who suffer the most from climate change are the poorest of the poor in both industrialized and developing countries and are often those with the smallest carbon footprint.

As has recently been observed firsthand in Bangladesh, for the world’s poorest, climate change will result in life-threatening problems. Erratic rainfall will cause droughts, floods that wash away crops and homes, food shortages, and a rapid increase in malnutrition. The growing severity of droughts and floods, the loss of drinking water sources, and rising sea levels are already displacing thousands. Soon it will be millions, creating a huge number of environmental refugees in search of food, water, and shelter. The mounting scarcity of resources will place tremendous pressure on vulnerable regions, leading to tension and conflict.

Climate change threatens to completely overwhelm and reverse the relief and development work of organizations like CRWRC. In the face of such devastating consequences, the cautious and prudent way forward is to take

immediate action; it is reckless to wait inactively until anthropogenic climate change is scientifically proven. Uncertainty about the causes of climate change demands strong action, not negligence.

However, we are not completely uncertain about the causes of climate change: there is a very high probability that global warming is human induced. The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC)—which gives authoritative assessments of published scientific literature on climate change—has concluded a greater than 90 percent probability that global warming is caused by human activities, and a less than 5 percent probability that it is due to natural variation. Such probabilities give an even stronger impetus for immediate action, making it the only stewardly path in this context.

CRC members, congregations, and scholars are once again leading the way in raising awareness and combating climate change. At the denominational level, CRWRC and the Office of Social Justice and Hunger Action (OSJ) are also working on this critical issue along with other CRCNA partners such as the Micah Network. In July 2009, Mr. Andrew Ryskamp of CRWRC and Mr. Peter Vander Meulen of OSJ signed the Micah Network Declaration on Creation Stewardship and Climate Change. The declaration recognizes that our failure to be faithful stewards of God's creation has produced the current environmental crisis and led to climate change, which has already had devastating impacts, especially on the poorest and most marginalized groups. It then reaffirms our commitment to follow God's calling to participate in the renewal of all creation.

At its September 2009 meeting, the CRWRC board approved a motion to endorse the Micah Network Declaration on Creation Stewardship and Climate Change and to encourage the co-directors to move this declaration forward at the denominational level.

The Office of Social Justice respectfully urges the BOT of the CRCNA to lead the denomination in taking action against climate change by endorsing this declaration.

Declaration on Creation Stewardship and Climate Change

We, members of the Micah Network¹, gathering together from 38 countries on all five continents, met at Limuru, Kenya, from 13–18 July 2009 for its 4th Triennial Global Consultation. On the matter of *Creation Stewardship and Climate Change*, we sought God's wisdom and cried out for the Holy Spirit's guidance as we reflected on the global environmental crisis. As a result of our discussions, reflections and prayers, we make the following declaration:

1. We believe in God—Father, Son, and Holy Spirit in community—who is the creator, sustainer, and Lord of all. God delights in his creation and is committed to it (Col. 1:15-16; Rom. 11:36).
2. In the beginning God established just relationships among all of creation. Women and men—as imagebearers of God—are called to serve and love the rest of creation, accountable to

¹ Micah Network is a global network of Christian agencies and churches involved in relief, development and advocacy, and responding to poverty and injustice.

God as stewards. Our care for creation is an act of worship and obedience toward the Creator (Gen. 1:26-30; 2:15).

3. We, however, have not always been faithful stewards. Through our ignorance, neglect, arrogance, and greed we have harmed the earth and broken creation's relationships (Gen. 3:13-24). Our failure to be faithful stewards has caused the current environmental crisis, leading to climate change, and putting the earth's ecosystems at risk. All creation has been subjected to futility and decay because of our disobedience (Rom. 8:20).
4. Yet God remains faithful (Rom. 8:21). In Christ's incarnation, life, death, and resurrection God is at work to reconcile all of creation to himself (Col. 1:19-20; Phil. 2:6-8). We hear the groaning of creation as in the pains of childbirth. This is the promise that God will act, and is already at work, to renew all things (Rom. 8:22; Rev. 21:5). This is the hope that sustains us.
5. We confess that we have sinned. We have not cared for the earth with the self-sacrificing and nurturing love of God. Instead, we have exploited, consumed, and abused it for our own advantage. We have too often yielded to the idolatry that is greed (Col. 3:5; Matt. 6:24). We have embraced false dichotomies of theology and practice, splitting apart the spiritual and material, eternal and temporal, heavenly and earthly. In all these things we have not acted justly toward each other or toward creation, and we have not honored God.
6. We acknowledge that industrialization, increased deforestation, intensified agriculture and grazing, along with the unrestrained burning of fossil fuels, have forced the earth's natural systems out of balance. Rapidly increasing greenhouse gas emissions are causing the average global temperature to rise, with devastating impacts already being experienced, especially by the poorest and most marginalized groups. A projected temperature rise of 2°C within the next few decades will significantly alter life on earth and accelerate loss of biodiversity. It will increase the risk and severity of extreme weather events, such as drought, flood, and hurricanes, leading to displacement and hunger. Sea levels will continue to rise, contaminating fresh water supplies and submerging island and coastal communities. We are likely to see mass migration, leading to resource conflicts. Profound changes to rainfall and snowfall, as well as the rapid melting of glaciers, will lead to more water stress and shortages for many millions of people.
7. We repent of our self-serving theology of creation and our complicity in unjust local and global economic relationships. We repent of those aspects of our individual and corporate lifestyles that harm creation, and of our lack of political action. We must radically change our lives in response to God's indignation and sorrow for his creation's agony.

8. Before God we commit ourselves and call on the whole family of faith to bear witness to God's redemptive purpose for all creation. We will seek appropriate ways to restore and build just relationships among human beings and with the rest of creation. We will strive to live sustainably, rejecting consumerism and resulting exploitation (Matt. 6:24). We will teach and model care of creation and integral mission. We will intercede before God for those most affected by environmental degradation and climate change, and we will act with justice and mercy among, with, and on behalf of them (Mic. 6:8).
9. We join with others to call on local, national, and global leaders to meet their responsibility to address climate change and environmental degradation through the agreed intergovernmental mechanisms and conventions and to provide the necessary resources to ensure sustainable development. Their meetings through the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change process must produce a fair, comprehensive, and adequate climate deal. Leaders must support the efforts of local communities to adapt to climate change and must act to protect the lives and livelihoods of those most vulnerable to the impact of environmental degradation and climate change. We recognize that among the most affected are women and girls. We call on leaders to invest in the development of new, clean technologies and energy sources and to provide adequate support to enable poor, vulnerable, and marginalized groups to use them effectively.
10. There is no more time for delay or denial. We will labor with passion, persistence, prayer, and creativity to protect the integrity of all creation and to pass along a safe environment and climate to our children and theirs.

For those with ears to hear, let them hear (Mark 4:23).

(17 July 2009)

III. Recommendation

That the Board of Trustees of the Christian Reformed Church in North America

- *recalling* our appointment to be “earthkeepers and caretakers to tend the earth, enjoy it, and love our neighbors” (*Our World Belongs to God* [2008], para. 10),
- *expressing grave concern* for the failure in stewardship constituted by the current levels of carbon and greenhouse gas emissions,
- *cognizant* that the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change has concluded there is a greater than 90 percent probability that global warming is caused by human activities, and there is a less than 5 percent probability that it is due to natural variation,

- *troubled* by the significant threat that climate change—whether natural or anthropogenic—is to millions in the world, especially the poorest and most marginalized groups,
- *affirming* that immediate action to mitigate climate change is needed to fulfill our calling as earthkeepers as well as the command that we love our neighbors,
- *recognizing* the consensus among CRCNA partners in the Global South—including the synod-endorsed Micah Challenge International, the Micah Network, and the World Alliance of Evangelicals—that substantial and immediate international action is required to protect those vulnerable to the threat of climate change,
- *responding* to the action taken to develop a global evangelical statement on climate change through the Micah Network and Micah Challenge International, titled “Micah Network Declaration on Creation Stewardship and Climate Change” and signed by 182 church leaders from 52 countries at the 4th Triennial Global Consultation on Creation Stewardship and Climate Change,
- *noting* that the board of the Christian Reformed World Relief Committee—a member of the Micah Network—at its September 2009 meeting, approved the motion to “endorse the Micah Network Declaration on Creation Stewardship and Climate Change and to encourage the co-directors to move this declaration forward at the denominational level,”

A. Endorse the Micah Network Declaration on Creation Stewardship and Climate Change.

B. Request that the staff of the Christian Reformed Church in North America prioritize the issue of climate change in its education efforts among CRC members and congregations and its advocacy efforts at local, national, and global levels.

Appendix D Report of the Task Force to Develop Guidelines for Proposed Structure Changes (December 2009)

I. Our mandate

Synod 2009 approved the following:

1. That synod instruct the BOT to develop guidelines on how to involve the broader church community, especially through synod, in consideration of significant structural changes that affect the ministries and congregations of the CRCNA.

Grounds:

- a. Such guidelines would be in keeping with the BOT’s desire to “include the broader church community in determining many of the details of the implementation process” (*Agenda for Synod 2009*, p. 82) for structural change.
- b. Such guidelines would promote greater ownership of denominational change.
- c. Such guidelines would foster trust and enhance transparency.
- d. Such guidelines would allow changes to be evaluated on their own merit rather than being clouded by questions of process.

- e. Such guidelines would clarify the relationships between the BOT and synod.
 - f. The BOT is in the best position to develop such guidelines.
2. That synod instruct the BOT to submit these guidelines to Synod 2010 for approval.

(Acts of Synod 2009, p. 615)

As we considered this request, we thought it important to

- review the role of the Board of Trustees and the meaning of the phrase *significant structural changes*,
- reflect on what the BOT presently does to fulfill synod’s request,
- suggest some additional ways the BOT could serve synod and the denomination.

II. The role of the BOT and change

The task of the BOT is to

transact all matters assigned to it by synod; to supervise the management of the agencies and committees established by synod and designated in the bylaws of the Board, including planning, coordinating, and integrating of their work; and to cooperate with the educational institutions affiliated with the denomination toward integrating the respective missions of those institutions into the denominational ministry program.

(Constitution of the Board of Trustees of the CRCNA, Article II, Purposes)

At times, in its work, the BOT may sense the need for *significant structural changes* to better fulfill their purpose or task. We understand that a *significant structural change* is any alteration in the mandate of the BOT or the mandate of the CRC agencies and/or ministries as established by synod, or any alteration to specific instructions given by synod. Should such *significant structural changes* be suggested by the BOT, it is incumbent on the BOT to work broadly with synod, CRC agencies, and churches to receive input and promote dialogue so that those affected by such changes do not feel caught off-guard, hence fostering an atmosphere of trust.

III. The BOT’s present actions

We recognize the value of effective and clear communication in order to promote broad ownership of our denominational mission and to encourage our pursuit of this mission. Each year synod is a new entity, with both returning and first-time participants. Therefore, it is vital that the BOT provide consistency of communication, helping to create an understanding of how the BOT seeks to manage the work assigned by synod toward the fulfillment of our mission.

Presently there are a number of ways that synod and/or the BOT work together to assure such communication and ownership.

1. The BOT membership is a broad, synod-elected cross-section of the denomination, composed of twelve (12) members from Canada (corresponding to the Canadian classes) and twelve (12) members from the United States (corresponding to the U.S. regions). In addition, there are three (3) at-large members from both Canada and the United States, for a total of thirty (30) members. At-large members bring balance and diversity to the Board (e.g., financial or legal expertise).

2. Each BOT member is asked to develop a relationship with the classis or classes in their region so that they will be invited to report at a classis meeting to communicate denominational developments.
3. Following each meeting of the BOT (three times per year), the stated clerk of each classis in the CRC receives the BOT Highlights and is asked to distribute this summary to the churches within their classis.
4. The BOT ensures that all synodical study committee reports are distributed to each church council well in advance of our annual synod so that churches can deliberate on these topics in their local settings. More recently, members of the study committees have made themselves available to classis meetings for further presentation and dialogue.
5. At the annual synod, advisory committees process the BOT report being presented to synod. This encourages ownership of the material the BOT brings to synod.

IV. Improving BOT communication

1. The BOT could set aside time at its February meeting to brainstorm the most effective ways to communicate with the churches and classes within the CRC regarding matters for the coming synodical agenda. It is important for the BOT to consider the more significant issues with an understanding and openness to how the church might respond. Doing so would assist the BOT, when necessary, in communicating the background and context of the matters it brings to synod.
2. Synod may wish to allow time in its agenda for a more formal report from the BOT. The president of the BOT could address synod early in the week to report on the work the BOT has been doing on synod's behalf and what it has done to help prepare delegates for the present synod as well as offer background/context for specific agenda matters.
3. Further, it may prove fruitful to ask the BOT executive committee (three from Canada and three from the United States) to attend synod. The members could sit with the advisory committees that review the report of the BOT and be available to clarify any questions. The presence of the executive committee members would serve to build a positive relationship between the BOT and synodical delegates.

V. Recommendations

A. That synod grant the privilege of the floor to the members of the BOT executive committee when the report of the Task Force to Develop Guidelines for Proposed Structure Changes is addressed.

B. That synod affirm that *significant structural changes* refers to any alterations in the mandate of the BOT or the mandate of the CRC agencies and/or ministries as established by synod, or any alteration to specific instructions given to the BOT by synod.

C. That synod encourage all classes to provide time upon request for BOT members to address classis so that the churches may be informed about

and can interact with BOT members regarding important denominational developments.

D. That synod receive this report as the response to concern expressed by Synod 2009 regarding the BOT and consideration of significant structural changes that affect the ministries and congregations of the CRCNA.

Task Force to Develop Guidelines for
Proposed Structure Changes
Kenneth D. Boonstra, chair
Gerard L. Dykstra, staff
Marten Mol
Gayle Monsma
Daniel B. Mouw

Appendix E

The Ministries Leadership Team Mandate

I. Mandate

The Ministries Leadership Team (MLT) is a team of ministry leaders of the Christian Reformed Church in North America (CRCNA) convened by the director of denominational ministries (DDM) to advance the vision, mission, values, and strategic objectives of the Ministry Plan of the Christian Reformed Church. Its functions and responsibilities are as follows:

A. The MLT reviews, coordinates, and monitors the implementation of the Ministry Plan and recommends changes to it. It ensures that both its decisions and those of individual CRCNA ministries are in alignment with the plan.

B. The MLT initiates, reviews, discusses, and endorses recommendations concerning issues of strategic importance to denominational ministries or to the denomination as a whole.

C. The MLT reviews and comments as necessary on the administrative and strategic decisions of the agencies, specialized ministries, and institutions of the CRCNA.

D. The MLT reviews and endorses policy recommendations advanced by CRCNA agencies, specialized ministries, and institutions to the Board of Trustees (BOT) for its consideration.

E. The MLT, with the participation of other senior leaders, prepares and proposes a unified budget for consideration by the BOT, including but not limited to a recommendation for the allocation of financial resources.

II. Composition

The membership of the MLT consists of the following positions:

- The director of denominational ministries, who shall be its convener and chair
- The director of Back to God Ministries International

- The director of CR Home Missions
- The directors of CRWRC
- The director of CR World Missions
- The director of Faith Alive Christian Resources
- The director of "The Network"
- The director of ministry planning
- Other advisers may be appointed at the discretion of the DDM

III. Relationship of the MLT to the ED

The MLT in its work as the primary strategic planning arm of CRCNA ministries will provide minutes to the executive director of the CRCNA (ED) for BOT review. While it is expected that the MLT decisions shall be considered as significant input by the ED, the ED is an agent of the BOT and is accountable to the BOT on all matters related to that function. When the ED disagrees with a decision of the MLT, the ED will inform both the MLT and the BOT of the disagreement, communicating to the BOT not later than the time that an MLT decision is reported to or placed before it.

IV. Guiding principles

The Ministries Leadership Team is the primary strategic planning arm of the CRCNA in the matters related to its ministries and is responsible for all matters related to agencies and specialized ministries.

The Ministries Leadership Team executes and advances the Ministry Plan by

- discerning God's leading for the ministries of the denomination
- developing action plans for each objective in the plan
- recommending changes in the plan objectives
- providing accountability for action plans and Ministry Plan Scorecard measures
- fostering collaboration and coordination in the management of CRCNA ministries
- monitoring the implementation of the plan and alignment to it
- identifying and defining the administrative needs for the ministries
- managing the communication and implementation of strategic plans to all the ministry areas
- proactively relating to classes and congregations for information and feedback on the denominational ministries and how they are perceived

In order to do this well, the Ministries Leadership Team strives to be a place

- where time is given for discernment of God's leading and strategic discussions
- where strategic as well as tactical and administrative issues are included
- where there is ongoing learning
- where there is mutual respect
- where there is a spirit of collaboration
- where members seek both the good of the whole and each of its parts
- where there is mutual accountability
- where we strive for consensus
- where, above all, Christ is honored and his Spirit obeyed

The Ministries Leadership Team is especially grateful when it is able to

- contribute to transforming lives and communities worldwide
- contribute to congregational health and vitality
- generate ideas and plans for better administration
- generate ideas for new forms of collaboration or coordination
- deepen our understanding of pastoral issues that need tending in the CRCNA's ministries
- strengthen services to the Christian Reformed Church and other constituents

Adopted by the BOT September 2009

Appendix F

The Ministry Plan of the Christian Reformed Church

Adopted February 2010

I. Introduction

Over the more than 150 years of its existence, God has blessed the Christian Reformed Church (CRC) with many opportunities for united ministry through its congregations, classes, and ministry organizations.

Since its creation in 1991, the Board of Trustees (BOT) of the Christian Reformed Church has been entrusted with the responsibility of overseeing, coordinating, and integrating the work of its diverse denominational ministries.

In 1997 the BOT adopted, and synod endorsed, a Denominational Ministries Plan, which responded to the ministry visions and ideas of church leaders and local congregations from across the denomination. That plan, which was a product of two extensive listening tours, focused on detailed goals and objectives. In 2002, and again in 2006, revisions of the ministries plan focused more on the CRC's theological identity and core values. This arose out of the BOT's growing conviction that the church as a whole, and its agencies and institutions in particular, needed greater clarity about the CRC's identity and purpose. Various factors contributed to this conviction, summarized as follows:

- Many CRC members, including elders, deacons, pastors, and other church leaders, have difficulty articulating what it means to be a Reformed Christian and a Reformed church in a North American religious environment of declining biblical and theological literacy.
- As the CRC becomes more diverse in culture, education, ethnicity, and the religious background of its members, the CRC needs a positive biblical and theological vision that communicates across these and other differences.
- Clarity regarding the church's identity and purpose is necessary in order for the church to set precise goals and develop effective ministries.
- The CRC is often uncertain how to view itself in relationship to the broader church. At times, the CRC is too self-congratulatory, failing to appreciate the richness and diversity of the broader Christian church. At other times, the CRC is too apologetic, even embarrassed that it has a particular theological identity.

- The CRC often has difficulty in dealing with change. At times, the CRC is too resistant to change, unnecessarily rigid and inflexible. At other times, the CRC is too quick to change, lacking discernment about what has enduring value and significance.

This ministry plan retains the 2002 and 2006 plans' important attention to biblical and theological identity. However, by using the word "ministry" (singular) rather than "ministries" (plural), the plan is now intentionally addressed to the CRC as a whole, rather than only to denominationally owned ministries (with the exception of two sections as noted below). Consequently, the plan now also includes the mission statement adopted by Synod 1997 for the whole denomination. Other changes include an update of the internal and external context for ministry, separate standing for the denomination's ministry priority adopted in 2004, and a new objective for the CRC's agencies and institutions: Engage in Global Mission.

The order of the ministry plan as regards the CRC as a whole is

- I. Introduction
- II. Vision statement
- III. Mission statement
- IV. Core values
- V. Context for ministry
- VI. Ministry priority

Two additional sections apply specifically to the ministry agencies and institutions of the CRC:

- VII. Mission statement of CRC ministry agencies and institutions
- VIII. Objectives

An appendix to this ministry plan contains an identity statement for the Christian Reformed Church. The purpose of this identity statement is to offer to all CRC leaders, members, agency and institution personnel, and board members (1) a concise statement of what it means to be a Reformed Christian and a Reformed church in North America, and (2) an expanded biblical and theological foundation for the vision, mission, and core values in this plan.

II. Vision statement

The Christian Reformed Church is a diverse family of healthy congregations, assemblies, and ministries expressing the good news of God's kingdom that transforms lives and communities worldwide.

III. Mission statement

As people called by God, we gather to praise God, listen to him, and respond. We nurture each other in faith and obedience to Christ. We love and care for one another as God's people. We commit ourselves to serve and to tell others about Jesus. We pursue God's justice and peace in every area of life.

IV. Core values

A. We affirm Scripture as interpreted in the Reformed tradition

This means

- We treasure the gospel as God’s good news for the world
- Discipleship is at the heart of our life and faith
- Theological clarity and consistency are integral to our ministries
- Our family and church relationships spring from covenants of trust and accountability
- In good times and bad we rest in the sovereignty and providence of God

B. We affirm a kingdom perspective

This means

- The world belongs to God, and we participate in God’s great kingdom work within it
- We uphold justice and mercy as attributes of God and requirements for humanity
- We oppose racism and work to counter its effects
- We are stewards of God’s resources
- We embrace all people as God’s imagebearers

C. We affirm the church as God’s new community

This means

- We affirm the church’s key role in God’s mission to redeem the world
- We recognize that our corporate vitality depends on healthy local congregations
- We cultivate leaders and members who are biblically formed, competent, trustworthy, and committed to following Jesus Christ
- We seek leaders who reflect the range of voices and people in the church
- We work collaboratively with others through worldwide networks and partnerships
- We are one in purpose, identity, and ministry
- We are a source of stability for members and partners

D. We affirm Christian vocation

This means

- We act in ways that place God at the center of our lives and give him glory
- We find opportunity to serve God in multiple occupations and settings
- We are faithful in service in the face of obstacles
- We strive for ministry excellence
- We want children and young people to see that they belong to Christ and to find their place of service within the church and community

V. Context for ministry

A. The external environment

Understanding the current cultural context in which the church does its ministry is important for the church in determining priorities and

approaches to ministry. This ministry plan observes the following external forces at work in the world:

1. The pace and scope of change

People are being pressured by rapid changes in almost every area of life. Church ministries must be flexible in order to deal with the new calls for service that these changes produce.

2. New forms of spirituality

People are seeking meaning in their lives. Their search takes place in the context of the forces of globalization on the one hand and the fragmentation of traditional societies and institutions on the other. Many people are reaching out for something lasting and fulfilling that transcends their daily lives.

3. Self-centeredness

A proliferation of choices within a consumer-oriented society is fueling the drive toward individual survival and personal fulfillment. However, when people put themselves at the center, they often use or ignore others, exploit creation, and dishonor God. In a climate of shrinking denominational loyalty and widespread mistrust of authoritarian institutions, the church must find new ways to promote God-centered, other-oriented ways of living.

4. Globalization and the influence of technology

Technological advances are making national economies interdependent and are bringing about rapid and immense cultural change. These changes are influencing employment, communication, lifestyles, and medical and other choices. The opportunities and difficulties afforded by these changes require informed pastoral care, diaconal responsiveness, and a dedication to justice by the church, as well as familiarity with ever-changing innovations in technology itself.

5. Economic realities

At times even wealthy economies reel from the collapse of banks and businesses. Stock market and housing values fall. Many lose their jobs and homes. Poverty extends its reach worldwide. In such circumstances, we see that trust in the marketplace is misguided. So is trust in government, although it can help to restore stability and provide needed services. Christians put their trust in the providence of a loving God, whatever the circumstances.

6. Violence

Political, social, and religious grievances, both real and imagined, are causing groups to lash out with campaigns of violence—killing and maiming the innocent. Meanwhile, violence as a way of dealing with everyday conflict is encouraged by stories and images from the news and entertainment industries that seem to condone it. Governments must uphold high moral standards and practice statesmanship, justice, and restraint in confronting evil and violence. Christians, as agents of reconciliation, are called to model forgiveness and to demonstrate respect for the God-given value of every person.

7. Coherence in Christian witness

There is a growing convergence between branches of the Christian church that emphasize personal conversion and morality and those that emphasize social outreach and a Christian worldview. The CRC has been shaped by both views, equipping it to play an important role in the witness of the larger Christian community. By encouraging members to participate in ecumenical initiatives, we can be yeast and salt in the world.

8. Shifts in the religious environment

The population center of Christianity is moving. Increasingly, Christian beliefs are expressed through a multitude of cultural contexts instead of being dominated by Western culture. Meanwhile, immigration is rapidly reshaping neighborhoods, schools, and businesses, bringing Christians face to face with other religions on a daily basis. Churches need to remain faithful to Christ while practicing compassion and respect toward adherents of other religions.

9. Distrust of institutions and search for authenticity

There is distrust of institutions and yearning for personal engagement, particularly among young adults. Increasingly, young and old prize manageable networks that have real, measurable and visible focus and outcomes. They turn away from the church when it is perceived as impersonal and resistant to change. Particularly, they reject glib answers and easy formulas, while being drawn to those whose faith in Christ is authentic, and to churches where that faith is consistently practiced.

B. The internal environment

It is also important for the congregations, assemblies, institutions, and agencies of the Christian Reformed Church to understand their internal denominational context as they plan and implement their ministries. This ministry plan observes the following internal forces at work in the denomination:

1. Congregational emphasis

Congregations are increasingly focused on local ministries. Churches work with other churches, organizations, or individuals, regardless of denominational affiliations, to achieve their ministry goals. Denominational affairs hold less interest than local church affairs. Denominational agencies and institutions must provide ministry resources that congregations see as relevant and useful.

2. Church shopping

People tend to join churches that meet their personal and family needs rather than focusing on doctrinal positions. In addition to seeking inspiring worship and pastoral care, people are looking for churches that enable them to develop and use their gifts.

3. Demography

The demographics of the CRC are changing.

- The CRC has increasing material abundance. Demographic analysis of the CRC shows that *real* household income of CRC members continues to grow more rapidly than that of average North Americans.

- The CRC is an aging church, with the median age of members rising from 44 years in 1987 to 50 years in 2002 and 52 in 2007.
- The CRC is becoming more diverse in terms of race and ethnicity.

4. Diversity of ministry

The CRC is becoming increasingly diverse in its styles of worship, in the range and scope of its ministries, and in the background and training of its leaders. The number of ethnic and multiethnic congregations continues to grow.

5. Ministry planning

Many congregations are engaging in strategic planning and the development of vision and mission statements as a basis for ministry. Some are doing so as a matter of survival while others use the planning process to promote growth by identifying and responding to ministry opportunities.

6. The Reformed perspective

There is growing confusion in the CRC about what it means to be Reformed, while at the same time there is growing interest in Calvinism among evangelical leaders. Although most CRC members claim to appreciate the church's creeds and confessions, their knowledge of the creeds and their ability to apply them to today's world and in their own lives are declining. The CRC can no longer rely upon a strong ethnic identity for its cohesion. It must be guided by a positive biblical and theological vision that communicates across lines of culture, education, and ethnicity.

7. Collaboration and networking

Our assemblies, offices, agencies, and institutions are increasingly aware that they can empower the church for ministry most effectively when they work together, with each contributing what it does best. However, current organizational structures and cultures do not lend themselves well to joint planning and action.

8. Leadership opportunities and decision-making

Incorporating more persons of ethnic minority and more women at every level of denominational leadership and decision-making is a continuing challenge. Efforts to make all levels of denominational ministry more inclusive and accessible must continue.

9. Generational changes

Many of the denomination's most generous donors are in the legacy generation that is rapidly passing on. Meanwhile, huge numbers of the baby-boom generation are starting to retire. They want to stay productive—and have tremendous social, financial, educational, and personal capital to offer the church—all the more so if they can find volunteer roles that offer relationships, an educational dimension, new cultural experiences, and diversity.

VI. Ministry priority

The ministry priority of the Christian Reformed Church is to create and sustain healthy congregations for the purpose of transforming lives and communities worldwide.

By focusing on the health of the local congregation, the CRC has recognized both need and opportunity. Many congregations are struggling. They need attention—and they need resources. Yet the purpose of this attention—and the fruit of congregational health—is that they see and seize opportunities to be agents of God’s transforming mission locally, nationally, and throughout the world.

VII. Mission statement of CRC ministry agencies and institutions

The ministries of the Christian Reformed Church support and unite the efforts of CRC congregations and assemblies to implement the vision, mission, values, and ministry priority of the Christian Reformed Church. (See sections above.)

VIII. Objectives

In light of the vision and mission statements and core values above, and in view of the particular challenges and opportunities presented by the current context of ministry, the Board of Trustees identifies the following objectives that should guide all CRCNA ministries as they set goals and propose programs. Although they affect each ministry differently, depending on its particular mandate, the board identifies the objectives below as those that all agencies and institutions must support and share as they plan for and conduct their ministries and work collaboratively with one another.

As they act upon the denominational priority, CRC ministry agencies and institutions will, through responsiveness to the expressed requests and needs of congregations, offer resources that foster congregational health and enhance ministry, including stronger local ministries and a church planting movement.

A. Engage in global mission

Recognizing that God rules over all, CRC ministries will

- proclaim redemption, forgiveness, and new life in the cross and resurrection of Jesus Christ
- profess the lordship of Christ over individuals, churches, ministry organizations, and societies
- live by the word and deed nature of the church’s mission
- seek stewardship of all God’s creatures as well as the environment
- work for justice for the poor, the socially marginalized, and oppressed people and communities.

B. Transcend boundaries

CRC ministries will work with assemblies and congregations to help the Christian Reformed Church be a denomination that respects boundaries—ecclesiastical, regional, national, organizational, or cultural—yet is also able to transcend them. This includes

- assisting the CRC to collaborate both internally and externally so that it maximizes learning and implements ministry with broader impact and greater efficiency
- assisting the CRC to build and learn from its networks and coalitions while maintaining a good sense of itself and its own theological heritage
- exploring how to build unity among CRC denominations worldwide.

C. Disciple believers

CRC ministries will nurture a culture of discipling in the CRC so that members of all ages and members of partner organizations worldwide are helped to

- live out their Christian vocation in all dimensions of life
- develop a biblical understanding of Christian discipleship that includes practice of the spiritual disciplines, witnessing, stewardship, earth-keeping, discipling of others, and parenting and doing business with integrity and wisdom
- grow as disciples and in a sense of hospitality toward one another within the bond of the covenant.

D. Develop leaders

CRC ministries will

- identify, develop, and support both volunteer and professional (paid) church leaders, including pastors, ministry associates, youth leaders, worship leaders, church educators, community workers, and administrators
- train, mentor, and disciple them so that they are biblically formed, prayerful, and competent and display a Christlike character
- join partner organizations in developing leaders in churches and communities worldwide.

E. Nurture children and youth

CRC ministries will assist the churches to become a body of Christ in which

- children and youth are nurtured in a dynamic relationship with the Lord and his people, are equipped to understand, experience, and express the good news of God's kingdom, and are integrated into the church's life and ministries
- parents are encouraged and supported in their role of spiritual development of children and youth
- Christian schools and colleges flourish in a mutually supportive relationship between schools, colleges, and youth organizations that nurtures the faith of our children and youth.

F. Become ministries of choice

CRC ministries will provide support and resources for congregations so effectively and responsively that

- in an environment where CRC leaders and members are able to choose from a variety of ministry resource providers, they will actively desire to support and participate in the denomination's own ministries
- CRC ministries are valued and supported by others beyond the denomination.

G. Develop staff capacity

CRC ministries will build a culture of employee development that excels at providing CRC agency and denominational office staff—both paid and volunteer—with quality training, supervision, and mentoring. This development will encourage, influence, and support them so that their interest and

passion for the CRC vision and mission grow and each CRC staff person becomes an authentic ambassador for the CRC and its ministry.

H. Ignite generosity

CRC ministries will foster the recognition in the CRC that stewardship is the supreme challenge of the Christian life and a key to Christian gratitude, with the effect that churches understand and support better the CRC's local, national, and international ministries, celebrate their impact, and support them with unprecedented personal and financial involvement.

I. Partner for impact

CRC ministries will partner with each other and with congregations for greater impact in ministry both in North America and around the world, enabling the CRC to stretch and leverage God's resources and achieve greater impact in ministry than they can by acting independently.

Note: The Identity Statement (Appendix to the Ministry Plan) has not undergone a revision at this time. The text can be found on the CRC website at www.crcna.org/MinistryPlan.

Appendix G

The Network: Connecting Churches for Ministry (Rev. Michael Bruinooge, director)

I. Introduction

In September 2008 the Board of Trustees endorsed an initiative by the executive director, Rev. Jerry Dykstra, the goal of which was to mobilize denominational resources for congregational health and vitality—by focusing on congregations, listening to them, advocating for them, and better connecting them. The aim was to do this primarily through regional and other networks, so the resulting ministry came to be called simply “The Network.”

The Network finds ways for CRC congregations to quickly get answers, resources, and support they need—whether online, by phone, in person, or via regional networks and teams. Because it operates on the premise that the best ministry help often comes from peers and neighbors, the Network aims to better connect local church leaders with each other as well as with other partners in ministry. The Network does not provide and administer so much as connect, facilitate, and mobilize among the resources the CRC already has. The goal is to break down isolation between congregations, foster peer and regionalized approaches to ministry, and reduce obstacles in the way of creative ministry.

The first three years for the Network (July 1, 2009, through June 30, 2012) is a time for learning—a time to test hypotheses, values, and projects; observe the impact of strategies; and generate case studies of healthy congregational practices. In everything it does, the Network intends to be an advocate for the local church.

II. Scope of the Network

A. *The four strategies of the Network are*

- to convene groups for the sharing of best practices, networking, and training.
- to use the Internet and new technologies to develop networks of learning.
- to use regional networks and teams to connect churches, plan collaboratively, and contextualize ministry.
- to simplify access to denominational resources by creating new points of contact for churches and integrating the services provided.

A good part of the Network's early work will take place on the Internet. The Network has created a variety of online peer networks on the CRCNA website (www.crcna.org/network). These are places where ministry leaders can connect with each other; where, for example, elders can learn from other elders and worship leaders from other worship leaders.

Another Network project is to create "regional resource networks" that are geographically based across Canada and the United States. These will convene classis leaders, local pastors, and representatives of CRC agencies and their partners to plan how to assist churches in regionally appropriate ways.

Still another project is to improve telephone access to CRC resources so that callers from churches get even quicker answers to their questions and needs.

B. *Other Network ministries*

The Network also administers two programs that have effectively "connected churches for ministry" in recent years: Sustaining Congregational Excellence and Sustaining Pastoral Excellence—both directed by Ms. Lis Van Harten. The Network also serves as a point of contact for classes and churches interested in classis renewal, youth ministry, and prayer and discipleship resources.

1. Sustaining Congregational Excellence

In July 2007, Sustaining Congregational Excellence (SCE) began its work encouraging and walking alongside smaller CRC congregations as they seek to foster health in their ministries. Of the 1,050 congregations, 58 percent are eligible for SCE programming—those who have 150 adult professing members or less. As of December 2009, 60 percent of eligible Canadian churches and 51 percent of eligible U.S. churches have participated in SCE. This strong participation is encouraging. Not only is the denomination able to partner with smaller congregations in enhancing healthy ministry, but it is helping to make a positive impact on many of our churches and their communities.

SCE offers grants in three areas: Health and Renewal (HR), Technology and Equipment (TE), and Coaching. The majority of projects funded through HR grants have an outreach component. SCE is resulting in significant impact. Participating churches are reaching out into their communities—to residents of nursing homes in New Mexico and women inmates in South Dakota. Teens in British Columbia are sharing their musical talents in the local farmers' market. Community moms and their preschoolers are being loved and cared for in Ontario. But it is not just

the communities who are benefiting. The congregations themselves are as well. Church members are supporting their health and renewal projects and, in many cases, feeling reenergized and newly enthusiastic about their church and its ministry. A congregation in Arizona had a number of different pieces to their SCE project. A group of men from this congregation saw all of the activity and excitement this was causing and decided to birth their own new ministry—supplying wood for needy families. They called it “Chainsaws and Pickup Trucks.”

Many HR projects focus on ministry within their local congregations such as worship, leadership training, youth, small groups, and vision casting. Having a strong base from which to do ministry is key for a healthy congregation. Several Korean churches are addressing generational challenges that are common in their immigrant congregations. A number of churches in British Columbia have focused on healthy marriages. The CRC in Guam had parenting and finance classes. As a result of their HR project, a church in Minnesota gained three new council members who were eager to begin their work.

Technology and equipment purchased with TE grants is also resulting in healthier congregations. Those who are hearing impaired are better able to participate in church services thanks to new equipment—from speakers and microphones to hearing assistance equipment. Pastors are able to use video clips, PowerPoint presentations, and other visuals by using projectors and laptops. Community folks are receiving welcome visits/cards more often, thanks to new software tracking their contact with a church.

The newest part of SCE is the coaching grant. Within the last year about twenty congregations have begun to work with an SCE coach. In this relationship, the coach walks alongside the pastor and one ministry leader as together they explore ministry. The mutual learning is bearing fruit.

Each year SCE also holds a number of regional learning events. These are opportunities for representatives of twelve smaller congregations (the pastor, one ministry leader, and their spouses) to share in a time of mutual learning, support, and encouragement over a period of two days. A variety of topics focusing on healthy congregations are presented in a creative and engaging format. Attendees share best practices, meet with denominational personnel, and are given some tools to take back to their ministries.

A key part of these events is the collaboration that takes place with folks from other CRCNA agencies/ministries. Presenters from Home Missions Regional Teams, Calvin Theological Seminary, or the Office of Pastor-Church Relations participate in each event.

The following are quotes from grantees that give a glimpse into their SCE experience:

- “We have become more vocal about our church to others in our circle of connections, and this has increased our sense of value and purpose as a congregation.”
- “Our congregation has grown closer. There seems to be a sense of the Holy Spirit moving among our members due to a certain excitement coming from their enthusiasm over this project.”

- “Our congregation has grown since the start of the study. We have seen four new families come and join in our Sunday worship with us. We have also seen a renewed interest in our faith.”
- “The project has helped unite the 2nd generation kids (young adults who were born here) with 1st generation adults (Korean adults who come to church but were born in South Korea).”
- “We have seen more people coming into church. We have become more open-minded and open-hearted in our attitudes, and people can sense this. They realize that we are more inclusive and sensitive, so people from different backgrounds feel welcome here.”
- “Our youth leader has fallen in love with the Heidelberg Catechism and has been using it in the teaching of our new youth group.”
- “The overall self-esteem of the people of the church has increased, resulting in deeper fellowship, greater joy, and more service for Christ.”

Having just completed its third year, SCE has really just begun. It has had an encouraging beginning and anticipates walking alongside many CRC congregations in the years to come.

2. Sustaining Pastoral Excellence

The Sustaining Pastoral Excellence (SPE) project, funded by a generous grant from the Lilly Endowment, is in its eighth year. Current programming focuses on pastors and pastors’ spouses. It allows them to request grants for peer groups, attend learning events, and participate in biannual conferences (for spouses). SPE’s goal is to support and encourage pastors and their spouses as they lead their congregations.

As of the end of December 2009, over 70 percent of all CRC pastors and ministry associates have participated in an SPE peer group. One of the goals stated in the 2007 proposal submitted to the Lilly Endowment was that by the end of 2012 (the end of the current grant period) 75 percent of CRC pastors would have participated in a peer group.

The impact of this participation is significant. Increasingly, councils are not only aware of SPE but are encouraging their pastors to participate. One church in the mid western United States asked their pastor to form a group of colleagues and submit a proposal. Once the group was formed, the council was very interested in updates from the pastor. In the process of searching for a new pastor, another council asked candidates if they intended to join a peer learning group.

Isolation experienced by pastors is a reality, whether the closest pastor is two blocks or 200 miles away. SPE programming goes a long way to reduce isolation—for both pastors and their spouses. Peer groups provide an opportunity for participants to come together with people like themselves who understand the joys and challenges of ministry. The results can be significant. More than one pastor has said, “The peer group has encouraged me through some very tough times—I’m not sure where I’d be without it.”

Changes in the ministry of the local church have come about from pastors’ peer group participation. One group explored how to do ministry in the context of the large congregation and realized that some practices needed to change in their churches in order for them to function in a

healthier way. Other groups have fostered positive results in congregational worship, leadership, and staff relationships.

Since SPE began in 2003, Calvin Theological Seminary (CTS) and SPE have collaborated on a week-long course called “The Theology and Practice of Pastoral Ministry.” It is held in Grand Rapids every June and, in most years it has also been held offsite during the winter. Much of the course material has been incorporated into a new CTS course that all seminarians are required to take.

SPE and CTS are currently working together on the creation of a DVD to train leaders of CRC *Leadership Development Networks* to interpret Scripture well in their teaching, leading, and preaching. Conversations with Home Missions have contributed to this project.

Over the past several years, SPE has worked with a variety of folks in the writing of training tools that are valuable resources for pastors and congregations. SPE recently partnered with the Office of Pastor-Church Relations on a new training tool that addresses pastor and/or church staff evaluation called *Evaluation Essentials for Congregational Leaders—Setting the Table for Healthy Conversations*. The tool was published earlier this year.

SPE holds annual learning events for pastor couples. This time of refreshment and encouragement is enhanced by the participation of Pastor-Church Relations’ staff and their presentations on being healthy in the pastorate and/or parsonage.

The following quotes are a sample of those received.

- “It has been one of the most rewarding and interesting experiences of my ministry. I have functioned in ministry alone for twenty some years. Now I have colleagues whom I discovered were dealing with the same sorts of issues I had. And now we could talk about it together. I grew from the group professionally and personally” (a pastor).
- “We would all agree that at each of our peer group meetings something unexplainable happens as we share and discuss and pray. And all of us leave those meetings with our thanks full” (a pastor).
- “Each of us felt an increased sense of community and belonging and decreased feelings of isolation from belonging to this group” (a pastor’s spouse).
- “I feel like this peer learning group has been more helpful to my long-term sustainability as a pastor than any conference I’ve attended or book I’ve read over my sixteen years as a pastor” (a pastor).

Full Lilly Endowment funding for SPE will come to an end in December 2011. It is a priority of the Network to find a way to sustain peer learning groups and other key elements of the current SPE program.

Appendix H Condensed Financial Statements of the Agencies and Institutions

Back to God Ministries International Balance Sheet (000s)

	June 30, 2009				Total
	Unrestr.	(note 2) Ag. Desig.	(note 3) Temp. Restr.	(note 4) Perm. Restr.	
Cash	\$ 1,749		309		2,058
CDs, Time Deposits	-	-	-	-	-
Marketable Securities	3,807	-	495	99	4,401
Receivables & Advances	24	-	-	-	24
Inventory	-	-	-	-	-
Prepays & Advances	-	-	-	-	-
Investments (note 1):					
Bonds	-	-	-	-	-
Equities	-	-	-	-	-
Partnerships	-	-	-	-	-
Property (nonoperating)	-	-	-	-	-
PP & E	633	-	-	-	633
Other	-	-	-	-	-
Total Assets	6,213	-	804	99	7,116
Accounts Payable	507	-	-	-	507
Notes/Loans Payable	624	-	-	-	624
Capital Leases	-	-	-	-	-
Annuities Payable	975	-	-	-	975
Deferred Income	-	-	-	-	-
Other	252	-	-	-	252
Total Liabilities	2,358	-	-	-	2,358
Net Assets	\$ 3,855	-	804	99	4,758
Footnotes:					
Note 1: List details of property not in use.					
Note 2: List details of designations.					
Note 3: List details of restrictions.	Isaac Jen endowment fund and Media Reach Fund.				
Note 4: List details of restrictions.	Permanently restricted endowment funds.				

**Back to God Ministries International
Income and Expenses (000s)**

		Fiscal 07-08 Actual		Fiscal 08-09 Actual
INCOME:				
Ministry Share	\$	4,009	\$	3,622
% of Total Income		35.0%		40.1%
Other Gift Income:				
Gifts and Offerings	\$	5,072	\$	3,954
Estate Gifts	\$	2,194	\$	1,483
Total Gift Income		<u>7,266</u>		<u>5,437</u>
% of Total Income		63.4%		60.2%
Other Income:				
Tuition & Sales	\$	-	\$	-
Grants-Animation	\$	-	\$	-
Miscellaneous	\$	188	\$	(30)
Total Other Income		<u>188</u>		<u>(30)</u>
% of Total Income		1.6%		-0.3%
TOTAL INCOME		<u><u>11,463</u></u>		<u><u>9,029</u></u>
EXPENSES (FTE = Full Time Employee):				
Program Services:				
English	\$	2,508	\$	2,468
FTEs		10		10
International	\$	5,927	\$	5,050
FTEs		13		13
	\$	-	\$	-
		-		-
Total Program Service \$	\$	<u>8,435</u>	\$	<u>7,518</u>
Total Program Service FTEs		<u>23</u>		<u>23</u>
% of Total \$		73.9%		72.3%
% of Total FTEs		67.6%		67.6%
Support Services:				
Management & General	\$	1,051	\$	957
FTEs		4		4
Plant Operations	\$	-	\$	-
FTEs		-		-
Fund-raising	\$	1,933	\$	1,923
FTEs		<u>7</u>		<u>7</u>
Total Support Service \$		<u>2,984</u>		<u>2,880</u>
Total Support Service FTEs		<u>11</u>		<u>11</u>
% of Total \$		26.1%		27.7%
% of Total FTEs		32.4%		32.4%
TOTAL EXPENDITURES	\$	<u><u>11,419</u></u>	\$	<u><u>10,398</u></u>
TOTAL FTEs		<u><u>34</u></u>		<u><u>34</u></u>
NET INCOME / (EXPENSE)	\$	<u><u>44</u></u>	\$	<u><u>(1,369)</u></u>

**Calvin College
Balance Sheet (000s)**

	-----June 30, 2009-----				Total
	Unrestr.	(note 2) Ag. Desig.	(note 3) Temp. Restr.	(note 4) Perm. Restr.	
Cash	\$ 3,354	-	-	-	3,354
CDs, Time Deposits	-	-	-	-	-
Marketable Securities	-	-	-	-	-
Receivables & Advances	34,385	-	-	-	34,385
Inventory	652	-	-	-	652
Prepays & Advances	1,311	-	-	-	1,311
Investments (note 1):					
Bonds	10,534	-	1,617	8,951	21,101
Equities	71,027	-	10,902	60,353	142,282
Partnerships	-	-	-	-	-
Property (nonoperating)	4,148	-	637	3,525	8,310
PP & E	221,322	-	-	-	221,322
Other	1,750	-	-	-	1,750
Total Assets	348,483	-	13,155	72,829	434,467
Accounts Payable	6,927	-	-	-	6,927
Notes/Loans Payable	140,014	-	-	-	140,014
Capital Leases	-	-	-	-	-
Annuities Payable	6,335	-	-	-	6,335
Deferred Income	1,014	-	-	-	1,014
Other	37,686	-	-	-	37,686
Total Liabilities	191,976	-	-	-	191,976
Net Assets	\$ 156,507	-	13,155	72,829	242,491
Footnotes:	<p>Note 1: List details of property not currently in use.</p> <p>Note 2: List details of designations.</p> <p>Note 3: List details of restrictions.</p> <p>Note 4: List details of restrictions.</p> <p>Over 1,094 accounts for instruction, scholarships, grants, research, public service, student services, etc., funded by outside sources.</p> <p>Endowed gifts.</p>				

**Calvin College
Income and Expenses (000s)**

	Fiscal 07-08 Actual	Fiscal 08-09 Actual
INCOME:		
Ministry Share	\$ 2,731	\$ 2,603
% of Total Income	2.3%	2.2%
Other Gift Income:		
Gifts and Offerings	\$ 2,701	\$ 2,450
Estate Gifts	\$ 27	\$ 12
Total Gift Income	<u>2,728</u>	<u>2,462</u>
% of Total Income	2.3%	2.1%
Other Income:		
Tuition & Sales	\$ 108,531	\$ 113,408
Grants	\$ -	\$ -
Miscellaneous	\$ 2,918	\$ 1,121
Total Other Income	<u>111,449</u>	<u>114,529</u>
% of Total Income	95.3%	95.8%
TOTAL INCOME	<u><u>116,908</u></u>	<u><u>119,594</u></u>
EXPENSES (FTE = Full Time Employee):		
Program Services:		
Education	\$ 97,960	\$ 100,720
FTEs	611	612
	\$ -	\$ -
	-	-
	\$ -	\$ -
	-	-
	\$ -	\$ -
	-	-
	\$ -	\$ -
	-	-
	\$ -	\$ -
	-	-
Total Program Service \$	<u>\$ 97,960</u>	<u>\$ 100,720</u>
Total Program Service FTEs	611	612
% of Total \$	86.1%	85.0%
% of Total FTEs	77.4%	76.1%
Support Services:		
Management & General	\$ 6,556	\$ 7,743
FTEs	71	76
Plant Operations	\$ 6,736	\$ 7,179
FTEs	71	78
Fund-raising	\$ 2,580	\$ 2,796
FTEs	36	38
Total Support Service \$	<u>15,872</u>	<u>17,718</u>
Total Support Service FTEs	178	192
% of Total \$	13.9%	15.0%
% of Total FTEs	22.6%	23.9%
TOTAL EXPENDITURES	<u><u>\$ 113,832</u></u>	<u><u>\$ 118,438</u></u>
TOTAL FTEs	<u><u>789</u></u>	<u><u>804</u></u>
NET INCOME / (EXPENSE)	<u><u>\$ 3,076</u></u>	<u><u>\$ 1,156</u></u>

**Calvin Theological Seminary
Balance Sheet (000s)**

	June 30, 2009				Total
	Unrestr.	(note 2) Ag. Desig.	(note 3) Temp. Restr.	(note 4) Perm. Restr.	
Cash	\$ 1,830	-	-	-	1,830
CDs, Time Deposits	-	-	-	-	-
Marketable Securities	319	-	1,403	-	1,722
Receivables & Advances	61	1,865	1,749	-	3,675
Inventory	-	-	-	-	-
Prepays & Advances	355	-	4	-	359
Investments (note 1):					
Bonds	-	-	-	-	-
Equities	-	-	-	-	-
Partnerships	-	-	-	-	-
Property (nonoperating)	-	-	-	-	-
PP & E	10,727	-	-	-	10,727
Other		-		-	-
Total Assets	13,292	1,865	3,156	-	18,313
Accounts Payable	238	2,138	-	-	2,376
Notes/Loans Payable	25	293	-	-	318
Capital Leases	-	-	-	-	-
Annuities Payable	-	-	-	-	-
Deferred Income	178	-	-	-	178
Other	1,486			-	1,486
Total Liabilities	1,927	2,431	-	-	4,358
Net Assets	\$ 11,365	(566)	3,156	-	13,955
Footnotes:					
Note 1: List details of property not currently in use.	NOT INCLUDED ABOVE: Endowment, Annuity and Trust funds \$24.682M, Annuity payable \$228M; Any balance due to other funds for these assets is included under "other" as unrestricted in Ag. Desig.				
Note 2: List details of designations.	Construction liabilities, student loan receivables and liabilities.				
Note 3: List details of restrictions.	Donor designated, program, scholarship, grants, and construction pledges.				
Note 4: List details of restrictions.					

**Calvin Theological Seminary
Income and Expenses (000s)**

		Fiscal 07-08 Actual		Fiscal 08-09 Actual
INCOME:				
Ministry Share	\$	3,178	\$	2,876
% of Total Income		47.4%		43.5%
Other Gift Income:				
Gifts and Offerings	\$	668	\$	668
Estate Gifts	\$	13	\$	-
Total Gift Income		681		668
% of Total Income		10.2%		10.1%
Other Income:				
Tuition & Sales	\$	2,106	\$	2,056
Grants	\$	635	\$	981
Miscellaneous	\$	98	\$	38
Total Other Income		2,839		3,075
% of Total Income		42.4%		46.5%
TOTAL INCOME		6,698		6,619
EXPENSES (FTE = Full Time Employee):				
Program Services:				
Instructional	\$	2,688	\$	2,880
FTEs		29		29
Public Service	\$	44	\$	62
FTEs		1		1
Academic Support	\$	1,100	\$	1,300
FTEs		4		4
Student Services	\$	505	\$	577
FTEs		4		4
Student Aid	\$	662	\$	567
FTEs		2		2
	\$	-	\$	-
		-		-
Total Program Service \$	\$	4,999	\$	5,386
Total Program Service FTEs		40		40
% of Total \$		73.5%		73.9%
% of Total FTEs		76.9%		76.9%
Support Services:				
Management & General	\$	905	\$	655
FTEs		7		7
Plant Operations	\$	497	\$	531
FTEs		1		1
Fund-raising	\$	396	\$	713
FTEs		4		4
Total Support Service \$		1,798		1,899
Total Support Service FTEs		12		12
% of Total \$		26.5%		26.1%
% of Total FTEs		23.1%		23.1%
TOTAL EXPENDITURES	\$	6,797	\$	7,285
TOTAL FTEs		52		52
NET INCOME / (EXPENSE)	\$	(99)	\$	(666)

**Consolidated Group Insurance - U.S.
Balance Sheet (000s)**

	-----December 31, 2009-----				
	Unrestr.	(note 2) Ag. Desig.	(note 3) Temp. Restr.	(note 4) Perm. Restr.	Total
Cash	\$ 403	-	-	-	403
CDs, Time Deposits	-	-	-	-	-
Marketable Securities	-	-	-	-	-
Receivables & Advances	1,029	-	-	-	1,029
Inventory	-	-	-	-	-
Prepays & Advances	390	-	-	-	390
Investments (note 1):					
Bonds	3,635	-	-	-	3,635
Equities	-	-	-	-	-
Partnerships	-	-	-	-	-
Property (nonoperating)	-	-	-	-	-
PP & E	-	-	-	-	-
Other	-	-	-	-	-
Total Assets	5,457	-	-	-	5,457
Accounts Payable	86	-	-	-	86
Notes/Loans Payable	-	-	-	-	-
Capital Leases	-	-	-	-	-
Annuities Payable	-	-	-	-	-
Deferred Income	901	-	-	-	901
Other	-	-	-	-	-
Total Liabilities	987	-	-	-	987
Net Assets	\$ 4,470	-	-	-	4,470
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.					

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

	2008 Actual	2009 Actual
ADDITIONS:		
Ministry Share	\$ -	\$ -
% of Total Income	0.0%	0.0%
Other Gift Income:		
Gifts and Offerings	\$ -	\$ -
Estate Gifts	\$ -	\$ -
Total Gift Income	-	-
% of Total Income	0.0%	0.0%
Other Income:		
Participant Premiums	\$ 10,578	\$ 10,785
Grants	\$ -	\$ -
Miscellaneous	\$ 203	\$ 198
Total Other Income	10,781	10,983
% of Total Income	100.0%	100.0%
TOTAL ADDITIONS	10,781	10,983
DEDUCTIONS (FTE = Full-Time Employee):		
Program Services:		
Claims Expense	\$ 9,561	\$ 9,309
FTEs	-	-
Insurance Premiums	\$ 698	\$ 818
FTEs	-	-
TPA & PPO Fees	\$ 623	\$ 628
FTEs	-	-
	\$ -	\$ -
	\$ -	\$ -
	\$ -	\$ -
	\$ -	\$ -
Total Program Service \$	\$ 10,882	\$ 10,755
Total Program Service FTEs	-	-
% of Total \$	98.2%	97.7%
% of Total FTEs	0.0%	0.0%
Support Services:		
Management & General	\$ 199	\$ 251
FTEs	3	3
Plant Operations	\$ -	\$ -
FTEs	-	-
Fund-raising	\$ -	\$ -
FTEs	-	-
Total Support Service \$	199	251
Total Support Service FTEs	3	3
% of Total \$	4.3%	4.3%
% of Total FTEs	100.0%	100.0%
TOTAL DEDUCTIONS	\$ 11,081	\$ 11,006
TOTAL FTEs	3	3
NET ADDITIONS / (DEDUCTIONS)	\$ (300)	\$ (23)

**Denominational Services
Balance Sheet (000s)**

	June 30, 2009				Total
	Unrestr.	(note 2) Ag. Desig.	(note 3) Temp. Restr.	(note 4) Perm. Restr.	
Cash	\$ 2,670	-	741	-	3,411
CDs, Time Deposits	-	-	-	-	-
Marketable Securities	-	-	-	-	-
Receivables & Advances	1,309	-	-	-	1,309
Inventory	128	-	-	-	128
Prepays & Advances	179	-	-	-	179
Investments (note 1):					
Bonds	856	-	-	-	856
Equities	-	-	-	-	-
Partnerships	-	-	-	-	-
Property (nonoperating)	-	-	-	-	-
PP & E	10,126	-	-	-	10,126
Other	-	-	-	-	-
Total Assets	15,268	-	741	-	16,009
Accounts Payable	1,733	-	-	-	1,733
Notes/Loans Payable	4,146	-	-	-	4,146
Capital Leases	-	-	-	-	-
Annuities Payable	-	-	-	-	-
Deferred Income	-	-	-	-	-
Other	-	-	-	-	-
Total Liabilities	5,879	-	-	-	5,879
Net Assets	\$ 9,389	-	741	-	10,130
Footnotes:					
Note 1: List details of property currently in use.	Canadian Cash Concentration and Netting for Interest Program.				
Note 2: List details of designations.					
Note 3: List details of restrictions.	Includes: \$642,000 of Lilly SPE2 grant, \$54,000 of AOYC, and \$45,000 other.				
Note 4: List details of restrictions.					

**Denominational Services
Income and Expenses (000s)**

	Fiscal 07-08 Actual	Fiscal 08-09 Actual
INCOME:		
Ministry Share	\$ 3,215	\$ 2,817
% of Total Income	68.3%	56.3%
Other Gift Income:		
Gifts and Offerings	\$ 1,391	\$ 1,294
Estate Gifts	\$ -	\$ -
Total Gift Income	1,391	1,294
% of Total Income	29.6%	25.9%
Other Income:		
Tuition & Sales	\$ -	\$ -
Grants	\$ -	\$ -
Services & Misc	\$ 98	\$ 889
Total Other Income	98	889
% of Total Income	2.1%	17.8%
TOTAL INCOME	4,704	5,000
EXPENSES (FTE = Full Time Employee):		
Program Services:		
Synodical Services & Grants	\$ 1,788	\$ 1,678
FTEs	5	5
Communications	\$ 327	\$ 405
FTEs	3	3
CRC Plan	\$ 126	\$ 145
FTEs	1	1
Sea to Sea payout	\$ -	\$ 1,749
FTEs	-	-
Total Program Service \$	\$ 2,241	\$ 3,977
Total Program Service FTEs	9	9
% of Total \$	60.0%	74.8%
% of Total FTEs	60.0%	60.0%
Support Services:		
Management & General	\$ 1,000	\$ 889
FTEs	4	4
D.D.M.	\$ 142	\$ 190
FTEs	1	1
Fund-raising (Foundation)	\$ 355	\$ 261
FTEs	1	1
Total Support Service \$	1,497	1,340
Total Support Service FTEs	6	6
% of Total \$	40.0%	25.2%
% of Total FTEs	40.0%	40.0%
TOTAL EXPENDITURES	\$ 3,738	\$ 5,317
TOTAL FTEs	15	15
NET INCOME / (EXPENSE)	\$ 966	\$ (317)

incls \$1,374 Sea to Sea

**Denominational Services (Agency Services)
Income and Expenses (000s)**

		Fiscal 07-08 Actual		Fiscal 08-09 Actual
INCOME:				
Ministry Share	\$	-	\$	-
% of Total Income		0.0%		0.0%
Other Gift Income:				
Gifts and Offerings	\$	-	\$	-
Estate Gifts	\$	-	\$	-
Total Gift Income		-		-
% of Total Income		0.0%		0.0%
Other Income:				
Tuition & Sales	\$	4,953	\$	4,379
Grants	\$	-	\$	-
Services & Misc	\$	6,093	\$	5,723
Total Other Income		11,046		10,102
% of Total Income		100.0%		100.0%
TOTAL INCOME		<u>11,046</u>		<u>10,102</u>
EXPENSES (FTE = Full Time Employee):				
Program Services:				
CS/SL/PS Cost of Goods Sold	\$	5,514	\$	4,911
FTEs		26		26
Finance/Payroll/Advancement	\$	2,551	\$	2,640
FTEs		31		31
Information Technology	\$	1,405	\$	1,121
FTEs		9		9
Human Resources	\$	536	\$	458
FTEs		3		3
Total Program Service \$	\$	10,006	\$	9,130
Total Program Service FTEs		69		69
% of Total \$		90.6%		90.4%
% of Total FTEs		94.5%		94.5%
Support Services:				
Management & General				
FTEs				
Plant Operations/Debt Serv.	\$	1,040	\$	972
FTEs		4		4
Fund-raising (Foundation)				
FTEs				
Total Support Service \$		1,040		972
Total Support Service FTEs		4		4
% of Total \$		9.4%		9.6%
% of Total FTEs		5.5%		5.5%
TOTAL EXPENDITURES	\$	<u>11,046</u>	\$	<u>10,102</u>
TOTAL FTEs		<u>73</u>		<u>73</u>
NET INCOME / (EXPENSE)	\$	<u>-</u>	\$	<u>-</u>

Employees' Retirement Plan - Canada (in Canadian \$)
Balance Sheet (000s)

	December 31, 2009				Total
	Unrestr.	(note 2) Ag. Desig.	(note 3) Temp. Restr.	(note 4) Perm. Restr.	
Cash	\$ 142	-	-	-	142
CDs, Time Deposits	-	-	-	-	-
Marketable Securities	-	-	-	-	-
Receivables & Advances	-	-	-	-	-
Inventory	-	-	-	-	-
Prepays & Advances	-	-	-	-	-
Investments (note 1):					
Bonds	332	-	-	-	332
Equities	2,225	-	-	-	2,225
GICs / Stable Asset Fund	157	-	-	-	157
Property (nonoperating)	-	-	-	-	-
PP & E	-	-	-	-	-
Other	-	-	-	-	-
Total Assets	2,856	-	-	-	2,856
Accounts Payable	-	-	-	-	-
Forfeitures Due Agencies	-	-	-	-	-
Capital Leases	-	-	-	-	-
Annuities Payable	-	-	-	-	-
Deferred Income	-	-	-	-	-
Other	-	-	-	-	-
Total Liabilities	-	-	-	-	-
Net Assets	\$ 2,856	-	-	-	2,856
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.					

Employees' Retirement Plan - Canada (in Canadian \$)
Changes in Net Assets (000s)

	2008	2009
	Actual	Actual
ADDITIONS:		
Ministry Share	\$ -	\$ -
% of Total Income	0.0%	0.0%
Other Gift Income:		
Gifts and Offerings	\$ -	\$ -
Estate Gifts	\$ -	\$ -
Total Gift Income	-	-
% of Total Income	0.0%	0.0%
Other Income:		
Employer Contributions	\$ 324	\$ 190
Participant Contributions	\$ 26	\$ 13
Miscellaneous	\$ (355)	\$ 406
Total Other Income	(5)	609
% of Total Income	100.0%	100.0%
TOTAL ADDITIONS	(5)	609
DEDUCTIONS (FTE = Full-Time Employee):		
Program Services:		
Distributions	\$ 759	\$ 184
FTEs	-	-
FTEs	-	-
FTEs	-	-
FTEs	-	-
FTEs	-	-
FTEs	-	-
FTEs	-	-
Total Program Service \$	\$ 759	\$ 184
Total Program Service FTEs	-	-
% of Total \$	100.0%	100.0%
% of Total FTEs		
Support Services:		
Management & General	\$ -	\$ -
FTEs	-	-
Plant Operations	\$ -	\$ -
FTEs	-	-
Fund-raising	\$ -	\$ -
FTEs	-	-
Total Support Service \$	-	-
Total Support Service FTEs	-	-
% of Total \$	0.0%	0.0%
% of Total FTEs		
TOTAL DEDUCTIONS	\$ 759	\$ 184
TOTAL FTEs	-	-
NET ADDITIONS / (DEDUCTIONS)	\$ (764)	\$ 425

**Employees' Savings Plan United States
Balance Sheet (000s)**

	-----December 31, 2009-----				Total
	Unrestr.	(note 2) Ag. Desig.	(note 3) Temp. Restr.	(note 4) Perm. Restr.	
Cash	\$ -	-	-	-	-
CDs, Time Deposits	-	-	-	-	-
Marketable Securities	-	-	-	-	-
Receivables & Advances	-	-	-	-	-
Inventory	-	-	-	-	-
Prepays & Advances	-	-	-	-	-
Investments (note 1):					
Bonds	3,444	-	-	-	3,444
Equities	12,724	-	-	-	12,724
GICs / Stable Asset Fund	2,844	-	-	-	2,844
Property (nonoperating)	-	-	-	-	-
PP & E	-	-	-	-	-
Other	-	-	-	-	-
Total Assets	19,012	-	-	-	19,012
Accounts Payable	21	-	-	-	21
Forfeitures Due Agencies	-	-	-	-	-
Capital Leases	-	-	-	-	-
Annuities Payable	-	-	-	-	-
Deferred Income	-	-	-	-	-
Other	-	-	-	-	-
Total Liabilities	21	-	-	-	21
Net Assets	\$ 18,991	-	-	-	18,991
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.					

**Employees' Savings Plan United States
Changes in Net Assets (000s)**

		2008 Actual		2009 Actual
ADDITIONS:				
Ministry Share	\$	-	\$	-
% of Total Income		0.0%		0.0%
Other Gift Income:				
Gifts and Offerings	\$	-	\$	-
Estate Gifts	\$	-	\$	-
Total Gift Income		-		-
% of Total Income		0.0%		0.0%
Other Income:				
Employer Contributions	\$	1,656	\$	1,513
Grants	\$	-	\$	-
Miscellaneous	\$	(5,965)	\$	3,656
Total Other Income		(4,309)		5,169
% of Total Income		100.0%		100.0%
TOTAL ADDITIONS		(4,309)		5,169
DEDUCTIONS (FTE = Full-Time Employee):				
Program Services:				
Distributions	\$	1,601	\$	1,691
FTEs		-		-
FTEs	\$	-	\$	-
FTEs		-		-
FTEs	\$	-	\$	-
FTEs		-		-
FTEs	\$	-	\$	-
FTEs		-		-
FTEs	\$	-	\$	-
FTEs		-		-
Total Program Service \$	\$	1,601	\$	1,691
Total Program Service FTEs		-		-
% of Total \$		89.9%		90.0%
% of Total FTEs		0.0%		0.0%
Support Services:				
Management & General	\$	180	\$	188
FTEs		1		1
Plant Operations	\$	-	\$	-
FTEs		-		-
Fund-raising	\$	-	\$	-
FTEs		-		-
Total Support Service \$		180		188
Total Support Service FTEs		1		1
% of Total \$		10.1%		10.0%
% of Total FTEs		100.0%		100.0%
TOTAL DEDUCTIONS	\$	1,781	\$	1,879
TOTAL FTEs		1		1
NET ADDITIONS / (DEDUCTIONS)	\$	(6,090)	\$	3,290

FAITH ALIVE CHRISTIAN RESOURCES
Balance Sheet (000s)

	-----June 30, 2009-----				Total
	Unrestr.	(note 2) Ag. Desig.	(note 3) Temp. Restr.	(note 4) Perm. Restr.	
Cash	\$ (77)	-	24	-	(53)
CDs, Time Deposits		-	-	-	-
Marketable Securities	-	-	-	-	-
Receivables & Advances	417	-	-	-	417
Inventory	2,189	-	-	-	2,189
Prepays & Advances	9	-	-	-	9
Investments (note 1):					
Bonds	-	-	-	-	-
Equities	2,940	-	-	-	2,940
Partnerships	-	-	-	-	-
Property (nonoperating)	-	-	-	-	-
PP & E	54	-	-	-	54
Other	-	-	-	-	-
Total Assets	5,532	-	24	-	5,556
Accounts Payable	563	-	-	-	563
Notes/Loans Payable	-	-	-	-	-
Capital Leases	-	-	-	-	-
Annuities Payable	-	-	-	-	-
Deferred Income	60	-	-	-	60
Other	-	-	-	-	-
Total Liabilities	623	-	-	-	623
Net Assets	\$ 4,909	-	24	-	4,933
Footnotes:					
Note 1: List details of property not currently in use.					
Note 2: List details of designations.	Funds for new curriculum development cost.				
Note 3: List details of restrictions.	Leadership project.				
Note 4: List details of restrictions.					

FAITH ALIVE CHRISTIAN RESOURCES
Income and Expenses (000s)

		Fiscal 07-08 Actual		Fiscal 08-09 Actual
INCOME:				
Ministry Share	\$	1,234	\$	1,090
% of Total Income		19.4%		19.5%
Other Gift Income:				
Gifts and Offerings	\$	393	\$	309
Estate Gifts	\$	-	\$	-
Total Gift Income		393		309
% of Total Income		6.2%		5.5%
Other Income:				
Tuition & Sales	\$	4,410	\$	4,038
Grants	\$	238	\$	197
Miscellaneous	\$	73	\$	(30)
Total Other Income		4,721		4,205
% of Total Income		74.4%		75.0%
TOTAL INCOME		6,348		5,604
EXPENSES (FTE = Full Time Employee):				
Program Services:				
Banner	\$	1,270	\$	1,326
FTEs		4		3
Education	\$	3,422	\$	3,393
FTEs		17		19
World Literature	\$	282	\$	326
FTEs		1		2
Teacher Training	\$	140	\$	140
FTEs		1		1
	\$	-	\$	-
	\$	-	\$	-
	\$	-	\$	-
Total Program Service \$	\$	5,114	\$	5,185
Total Program Service FTEs		23		25
% of Total \$		85.1%		85.6%
% of Total FTEs		92.0%		92.6%
Support Services:				
Management & General	\$	897	\$	869
FTEs		2		2
Plant Operations	\$	-	\$	-
FTEs		-		-
Fund-raising	\$	-	\$	-
FTEs		-		-
Total Support Service \$		897		869
Total Support Service FTEs		2		2
% of Total \$		14.9%		14.4%
% of Total FTEs		8.0%		7.4%
TOTAL EXPENDITURES	\$	6,011	\$	6,054
TOTAL FTEs		25		27
NET INCOME / (EXPENSE)	\$	337	\$	(450)

**Home Missions
Balance Sheet (000s)**

	-----June 30, 2009-----				Total
	Unrestr.	(note 2) Ag. Desig.	(note 3) Temp. Restr.	(note 4) Perm. Restr.	
Cash	\$ 368	-	-	-	368
CDs, Time Deposits	-	-	-	-	-
Marketable Securities	-	-	-	-	-
Receivables & Advances	191	-	-	506	697
Inventory	-	-	-	-	-
Prepays & Advances	-	-	-	-	-
Investments (note 1):					
Bonds	-	387	-	-	387
Equities	225	4,178	129	155	4,687
Partnerships	-	-	-	-	-
Property (nonoperating)	43	-	-	-	43
PP & E	13	-	-	-	13
Other	-	-	-	-	-
Total Assets	840	4,565	129	661	6,195
Accounts Payable	331	-	-	-	331
Notes/Loans Payable	24	-	-	-	24
Capital Leases	-	-	-	-	-
Annuities Payable	260	-	-	-	260
Deferred Income	-	-	-	-	-
Other	-	-	-	-	-
Total Liabilities	615	-	-	-	615
Net Assets	\$ 225	4,565	129	661	5,580
Footnotes:					
Note 1: List details of property not currently in use.					
Note 2: List details of designations.	Mission Trg Fund: \$772; Hawaii: \$1,460; Other: 2,049				
Note 3: List details of restrictions.	NA Trng: 49; Can Legacy: \$68; Other: 9				
Note 4: List details of restrictions.	Short term loan: \$507; Emerging Leader Trust: \$155				

**Home Missions
Income and Expenses (000s)**

		Fiscal 07-08 Actual		Fiscal 08-09 Actual
INCOME:				
Ministry Share	\$	4,216	\$	3,665
% of Total Income		60.1%		68.2%
Other Gift Income:				
Gifts and Offerings	\$	1,782	\$	1,430
Estate Gifts	\$	543	\$	300
Total Gift Income		2,325		1,730
% of Total Income		33.1%		32.2%
Other Income:				
Tuition & Sales	\$	-	\$	-
Grants	\$	178	\$	147
Miscellaneous	\$	300	\$	(170)
Total Other Income		478		(23)
% of Total Income		6.8%		-0.4%
TOTAL INCOME		7,019		5,372
EXPENSES (FTE = Full Time Employee):				
Program Services:				
Ministry Teams				
FTEs				
Ministry Devel & Planning				
FTEs				
FTEs				
Total Program Service \$	\$	6,170	\$	6,363
Total Program Service FTEs		26		26
% of Total \$	\$	1,023	\$	907
% of Total FTEs		6		6
	\$	-	\$	-
Support Services:				
Management & General				
FTEs	\$	7,193	\$	7,270
FTEs		32		32
Plant Operations		78.3%		79.3%
FTEs		74.4%		74.4%
Fund-raising				
FTEs				
Total Support Service \$	\$	965	\$	895
Total Support Service FTEs		3		3
% of Total \$	\$	-	\$	-
% of Total FTEs		-		-
	\$	1,023	\$	1,005
TOTAL EXPENDITURES		8		8
TOTAL FTEs		1,988		1,900
		11		11
NET INCOME / (EXPENSE)		21.7%		20.7%
		25.6%		25.6%
	\$	9,181	\$	9,170
		43		43

**Loan Fund
Balance Sheet (000s)**

	-----June 30, 2009-----				Total
	Unrestr.	(note 2) Ag. Desig.	(note 3) Temp. Restr.	(note 4) Perm. Restr.	
Cash	\$ 8,744	-	-	-	8,744
CDs, Time Deposits	-	-	-	-	-
Marketable Securities	-	-	-	-	-
Receivables & Advances	28,684	-	-	-	28,684
Inventory	-	-	-	-	-
Prepays & Advances	-	-	-	-	-
Investments (note 1):					
Bonds	-	-	-	-	-
Equities	-	-	-	-	-
Partnerships	-	-	-	-	-
Property (nonoperating)	-	-	-	-	-
PP & E	-	-	-	-	-
Other	-	-	-	-	-
Total Assets	37,428	-	-	-	37,428
Accounts Payable	-	-	-	-	-
Notes/Loans Payable	31,320	-	-	-	31,320
Capital Leases	-	-	-	-	-
Annuities Payable	-	-	-	-	-
Deferred Income	-	-	-	-	-
Other	-	-	-	-	-
Total Liabilities	31,320	-	-	-	31,320
Net Assets	\$ 6,108	-	-	-	6,108
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.					

**Ministers' Pension Fund and Special Assistance Fund - Canada
Balance Sheet (000s) in Canadian \$**

	-----December 31, 2009-----			
	Pension	S.A.F		Total
Cash	\$ 1,075	262	-	1,337
CDs, Time Deposits	-	-	-	-
Marketable Securities	-	-	-	-
Receivables & Advances	189	4	-	193
Inventory	-	-	-	-
Prepays & Advances	-	-	-	-
Investments (note 1):				
Bonds	8,241	-	-	8,241
Equities	20,461	-	-	20,461
Partnerships	-	-	-	-
Property (nonoperating)	-	-	-	-
PP & E	-	-	-	-
Other	-	-	-	-
Total Assets	29,966	266	-	30,232
Accounts Payable	310	-	-	310
Notes/Loans Payable	-	-	-	-
Capital Leases	-	-	-	-
Annuities Payable	-	-	-	-
Deferred Income	-	-	-	-
Other	-	-	-	-
Total Liabilities	310	-	-	310
Net Assets	\$ 29,656	266	-	29,922
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.				

Ministers' Pension Fund and Special Assistance Fund - Canada
Changes in Net Assets (000s) in Canadian \$

	MPF 2008 Actual	MPF 2009 Actual	SAF 2008 Actual	SAF 2009 Actual
ADDITIONS:				
Ministry Share	\$ -	\$ -	42 \$	36
% of Total Income	0.0%	0.0%	89.4%	97.3%
Other Gift Income:				
Gifts and Offerings	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	-
Estate Gifts	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	-
Total Gift Income	-	-	-	-
% of Total Income	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
Other Income:				
Participant Assessments	\$ 1,996	\$ 2,094	\$ -	-
Grants	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	-
Miscellaneous	\$ (6,030)	\$ 3,809	5 \$	1
Total Other Income	(4,034)	5,903	5	1
% of Total Income	100.0%	100.0%	10.6%	2.7%
TOTAL ADDITIONS	(4,034)	5,903	47	37
DEDUCTIONS (FTE = Full-Time Employee):				
Program Services:				
Distributions	\$ 2,128	\$ 2,291	13 \$	12
FTEs	-	-	-	-
FTEs	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	-
FTEs	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	-
FTEs	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	-
FTEs	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	-
FTEs	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	-
FTEs	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	-
Total Program Service \$	\$ 2,128	\$ 2,291	13 \$	12
Total Program Service FTEs	-	-	-	-
% of Total \$	83.5%	82.6%	100.0%	100.0%
% of Total FTEs	0.0%	0.0%		
Support Services:				
Management & General	\$ 421	\$ 483	\$ -	-
FTEs	1	1	-	-
Plant Operations	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	-
FTEs	-	-	-	-
Fund-raising	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	-
FTEs	-	-	-	-
Total Support Service \$	421	483	-	-
Total Support Service FTEs	1	1	-	-
% of Total \$	16.5%	17.4%	0.0%	0.0%
% of Total FTEs	100.0%	100.0%		
TOTAL DEDUCTIONS	\$ 2,549	\$ 2,774	13 \$	12
TOTAL FTEs	1	1	-	-
NET ADDITIONS / (DEDUCTIONS)	\$ (6,583)	\$ 3,129	34 \$	25

Ministers' Pension Fund and Special Assistance Fund - United States
Balance Sheet (000s)

	-----December 31, 2009-----				
	Pension	S.A.F			Total
Cash	\$ 3,927	213	-	-	4,140
CDs, Time Deposits	-	-	-	-	-
Marketable Securities	-	-	-	-	-
Receivables & Advances	500	-	-	-	500
Inventory	-	-	-	-	-
Prepays & Advances	-	-	-	-	-
Investments (note 1):					
Bonds	14,894	-	-	-	14,894
Equities	57,638	-	-	-	57,638
Diversified / Alternative	8,129	-	-	-	8,129
Property (nonoperating)	-	-	-	-	-
PP & E	263	-	-	-	263
Other	-	-	-	-	-
Total Assets	85,351	213	-	-	85,564
Accounts Payable	155	11	-	-	166
Notes/Loans Payable	-	-	-	-	-
Capital Leases	-	-	-	-	-
Annuities Payable	-	-	-	-	-
Deferred Income	-	-	-	-	-
Other	-	-	-	-	-
Total Liabilities	155	11	-	-	166
Net Assets	\$ 85,196	202	-	-	85,398
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.					

Ministers' Pension Fund and Special Assistance Fund - United States

Changes in Net Assets (000s)

	MPF 2008 Actual	MPF 2009 Actual	SAF 2008 Actual	SAF 2009 Actual
ADDITIONS:				
Ministry Share	\$ -	\$ -	\$ 85	\$ 95
% of Total Income	0.0%	0.0%	93.4%	97.9%
Other Gift Income:				
Gifts and Offerings	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -
Estate Gifts	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -
Total Gift Income	-	-	-	-
% of Total Income	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
Other Income:				
Participant Assessments	\$ 4,758	\$ 4,729	\$ -	\$ -
Grants	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -
Miscellaneous	\$ (33,551)	\$ 16,062	\$ 6	\$ 2
Total Other Income	(28,793)	20,791	6	2
% of Total Income	100.0%	100.0%	6.6%	2.1%
TOTAL ADDITIONS	(28,793)	20,791	91	97
DEDUCTIONS (FTE = Full-Time Employee):				
Program Services:				
Distributions	\$ 7,242	\$ 7,577	\$ 88	\$ 102
FTEs	-	-	-	-
FTEs	-	-	-	-
FTEs	-	-	-	-
FTEs	-	-	-	-
FTEs	-	-	-	-
FTEs	-	-	-	-
FTEs	-	-	-	-
FTEs	-	-	-	-
Total Program Service \$	\$ 7,242	\$ 7,577	\$ 88	\$ 102
Total Program Service FTEs	-	-	-	-
% of Total \$	88.1%	88.5%	100.0%	100.0%
% of Total FTEs	0.0%	0.0%		
Support Services:				
Management & General	\$ 978	\$ 984	\$ -	\$ -
FTEs	1	1	-	-
Plant Operations	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -
FTEs	-	-	-	-
Fund-raising	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -
FTEs	-	-	-	-
Total Support Service \$	978	984	-	-
Total Support Service FTEs	1	1	-	-
% of Total \$	11.9%	11.5%	0.0%	0.0%
% of Total FTEs	100.0%	100.0%		
TOTAL DEDUCTIONS	\$ 8,220	\$ 8,561	\$ 88	\$ 102
TOTAL FTEs	1	1	-	-
NET ADDITIONS / (DEDUCTIONS)	\$ (37,013)	\$ 12,230	\$ 3	\$ (5)

INCLUDED IN DENOMINATIONAL SERVICES

**Specialized Ministries
Income and Expenses (000s)**

		Fiscal 07-08 Actual		Fiscal 08-09 Actual
INCOME:				
Ministry Share	\$	3,348	\$	3,292
% of Total Income		66.6%		82.1%
Other Gift Income:				
Gifts and Offerings	\$	414	\$	474
Estate Gifts	\$	26	\$	-
Total Gift Income		440		474
% of Total Income		8.7%		11.8%
Other Income:				
Tuition & Sales	\$	204	\$	185
Grants	\$	1,000	\$	-
Miscellaneous	\$	38	\$	61
Total Other Income		1,242		246
% of Total Income		24.7%		6.1%
TOTAL INCOME		5,030		4,012
EXPENSES (FTE = Full Time Employee):				
Program Services:				
Chaplaincy Services	\$	185	\$	139
FTEs		1		1
Race Relations	\$	433	\$	384
FTEs		3		3
Pastor-Church Relations	\$	552	\$	620
FTEs		3		3
Safe Church Ministry	\$	172	\$	174
FTEs		1		1
Disability Concerns	\$	271	\$	250
FTEs		2		2
Social & Restorative Justice		396		580
FTEs		4		4
Sust. Pastoral & Cong. Excel.		957		919
FTEs		2		2
Ministries in Canada	\$	1,033	\$	941
FTEs		4		4
Total Program Service \$	\$	3,999	\$	4,007
Total Program Service FTEs		20		20
% of Total \$		99.0%		98.8%
% of Total FTEs		95.2%		95.2%
Support Services:				
Management & General	\$	7	\$	9
FTEs		-		-
Plant Operations	\$	-	\$	-
FTEs		-		-
Fund-raising	\$	32	\$	40
FTEs		1		1
Total Support Service \$		39		49
Total Support Service FTEs		1		1
% of Total \$		1.0%		1.2%
% of Total FTEs		4.8%		4.8%
TOTAL EXPENDITURES	\$	4,038	\$	4,056
TOTAL FTEs		21		21
NET INCOME / (EXPENSE)	\$	992	\$	(44)

\$ Lilly grant

**Network
Income and Expenses (000s)**

	Fiscal 07-08 Actual	Fiscal 08-09 Actual
INCOME:		
Ministry Share	\$ -	\$ 12
% of Total Income		
Other Gift Income:		
Gifts and Offerings	\$ -	\$ -
Estate Gifts	\$ -	\$ -
Total Gift Income	<hr style="border-top: 1px solid black;"/>	<hr style="border-top: 1px solid black;"/>
% of Total Income		
Other Income:		
Tuition & Sales	\$ -	\$ -
Grants	\$ -	\$ -
Miscellaneous	\$ -	\$ -
Total Other Income	<hr style="border-top: 1px solid black;"/>	<hr style="border-top: 1px solid black;"/>
% of Total Income		
TOTAL INCOME	<hr style="border-top: 1px solid black;"/>	<hr style="border-top: 1px solid black;"/>
EXPENSES (FTE = Full Time Employee):		
Program Services:		
Network	\$ -	\$ 12
FTEs		1
Total Program Service \$	<hr style="border-top: 1px solid black;"/>	<hr style="border-top: 1px solid black;"/>
Total Program Service FTEs	-	1
% of Total \$		
% of Total FTEs		
Support Services:		
Management & General		
FTEs		
Plant Operations		
FTEs		
Fund-raising		
FTEs		
Total Support Service \$	<hr style="border-top: 1px solid black;"/>	<hr style="border-top: 1px solid black;"/>
Total Support Service FTEs	-	-
% of Total \$		
% of Total FTEs		
TOTAL EXPENDITURES	<hr style="border-top: 1px solid black;"/>	<hr style="border-top: 1px solid black;"/>
TOTAL FTEs	<hr style="border-top: 1px solid black;"/>	<hr style="border-top: 1px solid black;"/>
NET INCOME / (EXPENSE)	<hr style="border-top: 1px solid black;"/>	<hr style="border-top: 1px solid black;"/>

\$ Lilly grant

**World Missions
Balance Sheet (000s)**

	-----June 30, 2009-----				Total
	Unrestr.	(note 2) Ag. Desig.	(note 3) Temp. Restr.	(note 4) Perm. Restr.	
Cash	\$ 199	134	321	-	654
CDs, Time Deposits	-	-	-	-	-
Marketable Securities	-	-	-	-	-
Receivables & Advances	1,383	263	1	3	1,650
Inventory	15	-	-	-	15
Prepays & Advances	70	-	-	-	70
Investments (note 1):					
Bonds	104	986	122	523	1,735
Equities	104	986	122	523	1,735
Partnerships	-	-	-	-	-
Property (nonoperating)	-	-	-	-	-
PP & E	535	-	-	-	535
Other	-	-	-	-	-
Total Assets	2,409	2,369	566	1,049	6,393
Accounts Payable	685	147	-	-	832
Notes/Loans Payable	555	-	-	-	555
Capital Leases	-	-	-	-	-
Annuities Payable	216	-	-	-	216
Deferred Income	-	-	-	-	-
Other	1,344	-	-	-	1,344
Total Liabilities	2,800	147	-	-	2,947
Net Assets	\$ (391)	2,222	566	1,049	3,446
Footnotes:					
Note 1: List details of property not currently in use.					
Note 2: List details of designations.	Resettlement fund \$1,000 - Legacy fund \$599 - Insurance fund \$66 - Endowment/annuities \$165 - Japan note \$475.				
Note 3: List details of restrictions.	Restricted Gifts, missionary support and program support.				
Note 4: List details of restrictions.	Endowments.				

**World Missions
Income and Expenses (000s)**

		Fiscal 07-08 Actual		Fiscal 08-09 Actual
INCOME:				
Ministry Share	\$	5,024	\$	4,602
% of Total Income		37.1%		35.2%
Other Gift Income:				
Gifts and Offerings	\$	6,980	\$	6,853
Estate Gifts	\$	1,253	\$	1,125
Total Gift Income		8,233		7,978
% of Total Income		60.8%		61.0%
Other Income:				
Tuition & Sales	\$	-	\$	-
Grants	\$	-	\$	-
Miscellaneous	\$	281	\$	489
Total Other Income		281		489
% of Total Income		2.1%		3.7%
TOTAL INCOME		13,538		13,069
EXPENSES (FTE = Full Time Employee):				
Program Services:				
Africa	\$	4,088	\$	3,992
FTEs		31		29
Eurasia	\$	2,975	\$	2,965
FTEs		24		24
Latin America	\$	4,036	\$	4,357
FTEs		27		27
Global/other Int'l program	\$	-	\$	-
FTEs		-		-
Education	\$	640	\$	682
FTEs		8		8
	\$	-	\$	-
		-		-
Total Program Service \$	\$	11,739	\$	11,996
Total Program Service FTEs		90		88
% of Total \$		84.0%		84.6%
% of Total FTEs		85.6%		85.4%
Support Services:				
Management & General	\$	1,066	\$	1,004
FTEs		5		5
Plant Operations	\$	-	\$	-
FTEs		-		-
Fund-raising	\$	1,175	\$	1,172
FTEs		10		10
Total Support Service \$		2,241		2,176
Total Support Service FTEs		15		15
% of Total \$		16.0%		15.4%
% of Total FTEs		14.4%		14.6%
TOTAL EXPENDITURES	\$	13,980	\$	14,172
TOTAL FTEs		105		103
NET INCOME / (EXPENSE)	\$	(442)	\$	(1,103)

**Christian Reformed World Relief Committee
Balance Sheet (000s)**

	-----June 30, 2009-----				Total
	Unrestr.	(note 2) Ag. Desig.	(note 3) Temp. Restr.	(note 4) Perm. Restr.	
Cash	\$ 301	106	4,803	-	5,210
CDs, Time Deposits	-	-	-	-	-
Marketable Securities	-	-	-	-	-
Receivables & Advances	625	2,000	2,003	-	4,628
Inventory	-	-	-	-	-
Prepays & Advances	310	-	668	-	978
Investments (note 1):					
Bonds	23	-	-	-	23
Equities	327	704	2,126	23	3,180
Partnerships	444	-	-	-	444
Property (nonoperating)	-	-	-	-	-
PP & E	399	-	119	-	518
Other	-	-	-	-	-
Total Assets	2,429	2,810	9,719	23	14,981
Accounts Payable	2,124	-	-	-	2,124
Notes/Loans Payable	-	-	-	-	-
Capital Leases	-	-	-	-	-
Annuities Payable	305	-	-	-	305
Deferred Income	-	-	-	-	-
Other	-	-	-	-	-
Total Liabilities	2,429	-	-	-	2,429
Net Assets	\$ -	2,810	9,719	23	12,552
Footnotes:					
Note 1: List details of property not currently in use.					
Note 2: List details of designations.	7-year term endowments as stipulated by board = \$1,350 Disaster relief gifts for specific sites = \$1,460				
Note 3: List details of restrictions.	Mission home = \$119; Purpose-restricted gifts = \$8,581; 7-year term endowments as stipulated by donors = \$1,019				
Note 4: List details of restrictions.	Pure endowments = \$23				

**Christian Reformed World Relief Committee
Income and Expenses (000s)**

		Fiscal 07-08 Actual		Fiscal 08-09 Actual
INCOME:				
Ministry Share	\$	-	\$	-
% of Total Income		0.0%		0.0%
Other Gift Income:				
Gifts and Offerings	\$	16,952	\$	14,721
Estate Gifts	\$	2,487	\$	1,447
Total Gift Income		19,439		16,168
% of Total Income		51.2%		51.3%
Other Income:				
Tuition & Sales	\$	-	\$	-
Grants	\$	16,721	\$	14,140
Miscellaneous	\$	1,820	\$	1,224
Total Other Income		18,541		15,364
% of Total Income		48.8%		48.7%
TOTAL INCOME		37,980		31,532
EXPENSES (FTE = Full Time Employee):				
Program Services:				
Overseas programs	\$	12,101	\$	12,748
FTEs		56		32
North America programs	\$	1,579	\$	1,690
FTEs		5		7
Disaster relief programs	\$	18,048	\$	1,582
FTEs		14		14
Above-budget relief costs	\$	-	\$	12,925
FTEs		-		-
Education	\$	1,034	\$	1,320
FTEs		5		11
	\$	-	\$	-
		-		-
	\$	-	\$	-
		-		-
Total Program Service \$	\$	32,762	\$	30,265
Total Program Service FTEs		80		64
% of Total \$		89.4%		88.8%
% of Total FTEs		75.5%		75.3%
Support Services:				
Management & General	\$	2,115	\$	1,886
FTEs		8		6
Plant Operations	\$	-	\$	-
FTEs		-		-
Fund-raising	\$	1,775	\$	1,917
FTEs		18		15
Total Support Service \$		3,890		3,803
Total Support Service FTEs		26		21
% of Total \$		10.6%		11.2%
% of Total FTEs		24.5%		24.7%
TOTAL EXPENDITURES	\$	36,652	\$	34,068
TOTAL FTEs		106		85
NET INCOME / (EXPENSE)	\$	1,328	\$	(2,536)

REPORT OF AGENCIES, INSTITUTIONS, AND MINISTRIES

Introduction

Each year the Board of Trustees submits a *unified* report to synod composed of individual parts provided by the agencies, educational institutions, and ministries of the Christian Reformed Church. The individual reports appear in alphabetical order using the name of the agency, educational institution, or ministry. Supplementary reports may be provided, if needed, at the time that synod convenes.

Writing these reports is an exercise of accountability that is appropriate in our life together as a denomination. Much of what is written is provided as information for synod. Some of the material provides a background for decisions that synod will be asked to make. In either case, these reports are the story of how God is blessing our ministry through the agencies of the Christian Reformed Church. As you read the material, we invite you to join us in thanksgiving for ministry opportunities and for the many fine people who serve on your behalf at home and around the world.

Gerard L. Dykstra
Executive Director of the CRCNA

I. Introduction

Back to God Ministries International (BTGMI) is the media ministry of the Christian Reformed Church in North America. BTGMI operates with the following mandate:

The mission of Back to God Ministries International is to lead the church into international media witness through media programming and related activities that communicate the Reformed faith in response to the need for conversion, discipleship, and cultural transformation.

Back to God Ministries International employs appropriate media tools that effectively communicate the message of God's redemptive work within specific cultural contexts, building strong ministry partnerships that nurture the transformation of lives, communities, and societies.

II. Ministries of Back to God Ministries International

Through the use of media, Back to God Ministries International proclaims the story of God's unfailing love worldwide in order that lives and communities might be transformed by God's grace. Ministry leaders, who broadcast in their native languages, provide leadership in the production of culturally relevant programs and related ministry in order to present Jesus Christ and help people grow in faith. BTGMI seeks to be "fluent within the cultures where its voice is heard" and is committed to be an agent of personal and cultural transformation as the message of Christ's reign is proclaimed.

The work of BTGMI is empowered by a vision of lives and communities transformed through strong ministry partnerships that make use of contextualized media tools to build the church by communicating the life-embracing story of God's redemptive work. Operating in ten major world languages, in the past year BTGMI has brought the good news of Christ to people in more than 200 countries via radio, television, print and digital media, the Internet, and telephone messaging. BTGMI receives approximately 6 million responses each year! Staff and trained volunteers worldwide offer discipleship, spiritual guidance, and prayer, and they help connect seekers to local churches. Networks of prayer partners pray regularly for those who respond to our media outreach.

This has been another challenging year financially. BTGMI responded to the challenge through careful stewardship of resources, scaling back our work as necessary. But thanks to faithful ministry partners who gave generously in the midst of the global economic downturn, we were able to continue strategic programs and position new ministries for fresh outreach in the future. This included launching our first new major language ministry in 29 years. Hindi-language ministry, reaching across India, became the tenth major language for BTGMI media witness. We now reach a potential worldwide audience of 4.8 billion people. BTGMI also strengthened its discipleship ministry by becoming an official partner with Timothy Leadership Training Institute. This partnership helps our ministry to provide leadership training to communities of faith that are being formed in response to our media work.

A. *Arabic-language ministry*

Back to God Ministries International maintains a cooperative ministry with Words of Hope (the media ministry of the Reformed Church in America) and Middle East Reformed Fellowship (MERF) for electronic media ministry to Arabic-speaking people. The joint ministry maintains production studios and discipleship centers in Larnaca, Cyprus; Cairo, Egypt; and Beirut, Lebanon. As people seek truth, we have seen a significant increase in visits to our Arabic website and downloads of the Arabic Bible text. Our partnership with MERF allows BTGMI to pursue broadcasting in the context of holistic mission. In addition to broadcasting, MERF also trains church leaders, supports church plants, and provides relief support. MERF director Rev. Victor Atallah provides leadership for BTGMI Arabic broadcast ministry.

B. *Chinese-language ministry*

The Chinese-language ministry, led by Rev. Jimmy Lin and his ministry team, provides programming and discipleship through nine programs for China's 1.3 billion people and millions of Chinese immigrants worldwide. In some of these areas, the programming is bilingual.

The Internet is an increasingly important delivery system for Chinese programming. China is on the verge of having more Internet users than any country on earth. The Chinese-language ministry now produces six Chinese websites, including two new websites launched in 2009 and a children's website with programming specifically targeted to Chinese-speaking children and their parents. Additional avenues of media distribution for the Chinese ministry include print, CDs, and DVDs.

For the first time ever, BTGMI Chinese discipleship materials are being duplicated and distributed by ministry partners in mainland China through a unique opportunity that could only be described as God-directed. Pray that these doors will continue to remain open and Chinese people will come to know Christ.

C. *English-language ministry*

BTGMI English-language outreach, led by Rev. Steven Koster, was renamed ReFrame Media in 2009 to more effectively build bridges with those being discipled through our expanding family of programs. ReFrame Media produces eight unique ministries, including a new website, ChurchJuice.com, launched in the fall of 2009 to assist congregations with media outreach. ReFrame programming, designed to reach a growing and diverse audience of various ages and at various steps in their faith journey—in North America and around the world, includes

1. *Church Juice*—a new web-based ministry to connect with media volunteers, many of them younger members of the churches who assist the media ministries of their congregations. The goal of this new ministry is to empower local churches to use media effectively to minister within their congregation and to reach out to their communities.
2. *Think Christian*—a web-based ministry that receives an average of 17,000 hits each month. Think Christian (www.thinkchristian.net) is a collaborative blog that seeks to engage conversation about the intersection of Christianity and culture. Articles posted by ReFrame writers guide conversations that help visitors “think Christian” from a Reformed perspective in

their daily lives. The site receives worldwide traffic, with a large number of visitors coming from Great Britain and Australia.

3. *Under the Radar*—a music-based program that combines the best “undiscovered” and underplayed music from Christian artists, along with interviews and stories, in order to share the gospel. In its first year the program grew from 40 broadcast outlets to 125, reaching a unique niche in Christian programming.
4. *Today*—daily devotions in a bimonthly format. Budget constraints forced the ministry to reduce the number of devotional booklets distributed to 310,000 bimonthly. At the same time, distribution of *Today* through podcast, email, and RSS feed increased. *Today* is still distributed worldwide, including approximately 5,000 printed and distributed bimonthly in Nigeria. *Today* is also available for automatic placement on websites of local churches. For the first time in 35 years, *Today* is scheduled to launch a “new, updated look” with the May/June 2010 issue.
5. *Spotlight*—a simplified English program that uses a limited vocabulary, basic grammar, and a slowed delivery rate to target an international audience of those who speak English as a second language. BTGMI continues to partner with Words of Hope in the production of *Spotlight*. In addition to radio broadcasting, listeners increasingly are connecting to the program through the *Spotlight* website. Several areas of significant traffic are in Eastern Europe and Southeast Asia. Through a partnership with HCJB, a growing number of international *Spotlight* Listeners’ Clubs were established for listeners to come together to practice English and interact with Christians from their local communities.
6. *Walk the Way*—a daily one-minute audio and companion video program. *Walk the Way* offers a brief story or point to consider and directs listeners to the *Walk the Way* website where additional Christian resources are available. This radio program is meant to engage younger adults in thinking through the implications and claims of the gospel of Christ. *Walk the Way* is now carried on more than 600 media outlets throughout North America.
7. *Kids Corner*—a radio program now heard on approximately 400 stations in North America and through the Internet at www.KidsCorner.net. Children can listen to programs and request music CDs, bookmarks, and other attractive disciple-making tools. There is also a section on the website to help parents become spiritual mentors to their children. *Kids Corner* is a significant outreach to children. Each month more than 11,000 people visit the website, and in one month 1,000 visitors left prayer requests, and 95 requested information about our children’s Bible study correspondence program.
8. *Groundwork*—recognizing the changing listening needs of today’s audiences, ReFrame Media and Words of Hope (RCA) have combined resources to launch a new half-hour audio program that proclaims the Christian faith. The programs known as *The Back to God Hour* and *Words of Hope* have been brought together into a new program called *Groundwork* that explores

Scripture indepth from a Reformed perspective. *Groundwork* is hosted by Rev. David Bast (Words of Hope) and Dr. Robert Heerspink (BTGMI).

D. French-language ministry

The main focus of the French-language ministry is in Africa, Haiti, and parts of Europe where the population includes French-speaking immigrants from Africa. Rev. Paul Mpindi, a native of the Democratic Republic of the Congo, gives leadership to this ministry along with a team of 48 indigenous staff members and more than 125 international volunteers. Joining Rev. Mpindi in radio programming is his wife, Mrs. Charlotte Mpindi, who hosts a popular program devoted to a biblical perspective on women's issues pertinent to the African context.

Pastors in Africa continue to report increased visitors seeking discipleship following the March 2009 evangelistic rally held in Bangui, Central African Republic. This rally and pre-event leadership training helped build strong connections to local churches for providing ongoing discipleship for those who responded. 15,000 people attended the rally, and 8,000 people came forward as new believers or to recommit their lives to following Jesus.

In 2009 a new ministry center opened in Port-au-Prince, Haiti, in collaboration with Christian Reformed World Missions. A healthy response from volunteers trained to work with our Bible study correspondence program has enabled much-needed discipleship work with listeners in Haiti. At the time this report was prepared, staff were assessing the effect of the major earthquake in Haiti and its implications for the work being conducted there.

E. Indonesian-language ministry

Indonesia is the largest Muslim country in the world, and Christians there have experienced significant pressure because of their faith in Christ. In spite of these obstacles, BTGMI Indonesian ministry is witnessing with boldness to the gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ. In Indonesia, BTGMI works in partnership with the Indonesian Christian Church, an established denomination of 300,000 committed to the Reformed faith. Rev. Untung Ongkowidjaya leads a team that produces six radio programs, publishes four devotional booklets bimonthly (targeting different age groups), and maintains an active Internet ministry. *Evergreen House*, a children's television program that has been well received, gave inspiration to a new television program for adults, now broadcast on four key stations in Indonesia.

In partnership with Christian Reformed World Missions, the Indonesian-language ministry has been successful in establishing 121 "Listener Communities" in rural areas where radio broadcasting is the main source of spiritual nurture. These "Listener Communities" gather monthly for fellowship, prayer, and Bible study. At present, more than 13,500 listeners from across Indonesia participate in this program, and more than 500 students are enrolled in a new Bible study correspondence program.

F. Japanese-language ministry

Rev. Masao Yamashita gives leadership to the electronic media ministry in the Japanese language. Although budget challenges necessitated a reduction in the number of radio stations on which programs are broadcast, Internet allows for web delivery of six audio programs. Highly advanced cell phone

technology allows for effective text messaging of devotions to nearly 16,000 subscribers.

The Japanese ministry also hosts an active website that offers the opportunity for Internet users to engage staff in online social networking conversations. More than 288,000 devotional messages and sermon transcripts were downloaded from our website. Nearly 600 Bible study students have completed the correspondence course offered by our Japanese ministry. Several annual events are also held to allow isolated listeners to gather for face-to-face encouragement and Bible instruction.

G. *Portuguese-language ministry*

Radio, television, telephone, print, and the Internet are important components of the media ministry in Brazil. The office in Campinas is responsible not only for production and distribution of all the Portuguese-language programs but also for production of BTGMI Spanish-language media programs. A new media center, scheduled to be completed and dedicated in March 2010, will significantly increase the impact of Latin American ministry and allow for work in other languages as well. In addition, the Portuguese ministry continues to explore outreach to Portuguese-speaking countries in Africa.

The Presbyterian Church of Brazil is a significant partner in this ministry, helping to fund television programs and providing support for a telephone ministry that reaches more than 300,000 people each month. The completion of 120 recorded Bible messages in a similar format gives children access to daily devotional messages through the telephone. A new website, www.plataforma.net.br, reaches a growing audience of younger adults.

After thirty years, Rev. Celsino Gama stepped down as Portuguese ministry leader in 2009. Rev. Hernandes Lopes was affirmed as his successor by the BTGMI board in January 2010. As the new ministry leader, Rev. Lopes brings to BTGMI's Portuguese-language outreach a wealth of theological and media experience, including 28 years as a pastor in Brazil, leadership in the Presbyterian Church of Brazil, production of BTGMI's Portuguese TV program *Verdade e Vida (Truth and Life)*, and publication of 78 books and Bible commentaries.

H. *Russian-language ministry*

Rev. Sergei Sosedkin gives leadership to the Russian media ministry. Rev. Sosedkin divides his time between North America and Russia, where he is able to engage in live radio broadcasting as well as personal contact with listeners who respond to this ministry. The Russian-language ministry has three primary delivery sources: radio broadcasting, Internet, and print media conducted in collaboration with several Russian Christian periodicals. Short-wave broadcasting of Rev. Sosedkin's program covers all of Russia and Russian-speaking countries in Eastern Europe, with live call-in programs occurring weekly in Moscow and St. Petersburg. A new talk show in Moscow, hosted by a Christian blogger who also writes for our Russian website, is reaching a younger audience with the gospel's transforming message. A text-messaging response system has been launched to reach younger listeners.

The BTGMI Russian staff are located in both St. Petersburg and Moscow, with some discipleship work carried out in St. Petersburg in cooperation with Christian Reformed World Missions. Rev. Sosedkin and his Russian

staff have also established an excellent working relationship with St. Petersburg Christian University, often conducting classes there in the effective use of media in church settings. The Internet site not only ministers to people within the country but increasingly is becoming a point of contact with Russian speakers around the world.

I. *Spanish-language ministry*

Nearly 400 radio stations and 100 television stations carry BTGMI Spanish-language programming, including a TV series for children aired in three countries. Our broadcast ministry reaches Central and South America as well as Spain. In addition, broadcasts within North America reach Spanish-speaking populations north of the Mexican border. Rev. Guillermo Serrano gives leadership to the Spanish ministry. Responses to a 5-minute devotional broadcast, *Reflexión*, doubled in the past year.

Due to budget cutbacks, workshops in homiletics and in the use of media were canceled in 2009, but a new website provided an avenue for building partnerships with local pastors as well as those who staff radio and television stations throughout Latin America. Through new local contacts in Cuba, a significant distribution of the *Cada Dia* daily devotional was made possible in 2009.

Like the Portuguese ministry, our Spanish ministry will be strengthened through the completion of the new ministry center in Campinas, Brazil.

J. *Ministry in Hindi and related languages*

With Synod 2009's endorsement, Back to God Ministries International entered into a partnership with Words of Hope and Good Books Ministries, moving our media witness into northern India through broadcasting in the Hindi language. Good Books also produces programming in four additional local languages that reach people throughout India and nearby countries. The added resources from BTGMI enabled the Hindi ministry to hire additional staff to strengthen the infrastructure of the local ministry for expanded evangelism and discipleship in India. A new program in the Hindi language is slated for launch in 2010.

K. *Korean-language ministry*

Back to God Ministries International continues to partner with the Korean Council (organized group of Korean CRC churches) to produce a bilingual *Today* in both the Korean and English languages. Initiated in 2008, production has grown from 7,000 to 10,000. The Korean-English *Today* not only nurtures Korean-speaking members of the Christian Reformed Church but is an effective evangelism tool both in North America and beyond.

L. *Cooperative organizations*

Back to God Ministries International cannot carry out its mission unilaterally. Strong partnerships create synergy for mission and allow resources to be invested wisely. Among the organizations with which BTGMI cooperates are the following:

- Christian Reformed World Missions—joint ministry in Haiti, Indonesia, Japan, Russia, Mexico, and Nigeria.
- Korean Council—publication of Korean-English *Today* devotionals.
- CRC Proservices—publication of selected materials.

- CRWRC—diaconal training for Listener Community leaders in Indonesia.
- Christian Reformed Home Missions and Christian Reformed congregations—media outreach assistance for new church plants as well as established congregations who wish to employ the use of electronic media for ministry.
- Words of Hope—partnership in the production of two English programs: *Spotlight* and *Groundwork*; additional partnerships in Hindi and Arabic ministries.
- Middle East Reformed Fellowship—media outreach to the Arabic-speaking world.
- Reformed denominations worldwide—major joint-ministry partnerships in Japan (Reformed Church in Japan), Brazil (Presbyterian Church of Brazil), and Indonesia (Indonesian Christian Church).
- Timothy Leadership Training Institute—leadership training in Indonesia and other potential ministry sites.
- Crossroad Bible Institute—discipleship ministry through a Bible study correspondence program.

III. The Back to God Ministries International board

A. *Function*

Back to God Ministries International is governed by a regionally representative board that meets three times a year to set policy and to evaluate the work of the staff.

B. *Officers of the board*

The officers of the board for 2009-2010 are Rev. Bruce Persenaire, president, Mrs. Ellen Hamilton, vice president, Mrs. Carol Woltjer, secretary, and Mr. Harry Boessenkool, treasurer.

C. *Board member nominees*

Rev. Timothy Brown (Region 8) and Mrs. Alice Klamer (Region 4) are completing their first term on the board and are eligible for a second term. The Back to God Ministries International board recommends that synod reappoint these members to a second three-year term.

Rev. Ezra Shui Cheung Ng (Region 1) and Mrs. Ellen Hamilton (Region 9) are completing their second three-year terms on the board and are not eligible for reelection.

At the time of writing this report, the nominee for Region 1 has withdrawn from nomination, and there are no additional nominees. Nominees will be sought over the coming year and presented to the classes and Synod 2011. The following slate of nominees will be presented to the respective classes within the region for vote and the results presented to synod for ratification:

Region 9

Rev. Dr. Calvin J. Aardsma, pastor of Bethel CRC, Lansing, Illinois, has served three churches in the past twenty-nine years. He was a church planter for CR Home Missions in Oregon for eleven years. Rev. Aardsma has served as stated clerk of classis, regional pastor, and chair of the synodical advisory committee on Third Wave Pentecostalism. He presently serves as a synodical

deputy and on the classical home missions committee and Race Relations Advisory Committee.

Rev. Mark J. Pluimer is pastor of Covenant CRC in Appleton, Wisconsin, having previously served as associate pastor at Brookfield (Wis.) CRC. He is presently serving on the classical home missions committee and has been a member of the classical nominations committee.

D. Salary disclosure

The following information is provided to synod as requested:

Job level	Number of positions	Compensation quartile (includes housing allowance)
18	1	2nd
16	5	1st, 2nd, and 3rd
15	2	3rd and 4th

IV. Recommendations

A. That Rev. Bruce Persenaire, president, and Rev. Robert C. Heerspink, director of Back to God Ministries International, be given the privilege of the floor when BTGMI matters are discussed.

B. That synod by way of the ballot ratify the election and reelection of board members from the slates of nominees presented.

Note: Recommendations on financial matters are included in the report of the denominational Board of Trustees and will be presented to synod by way of the Finance Advisory Committee.

Back to God Ministries International
Robert C. Heerspink, director

I. Introduction

This report reflects information derived from, and actions taken at, the October 2009 and the February 2010 meetings of the Calvin College Board of Trustees.

Board officers elected for 2009-2010 are Mr. Bastian A. Knoppers, chair; Mr. Ronald Baylor, vice-chair; and Ms. Thelma Venema, secretary; Ms. Darlene K. Meyering, assistant secretary; and Dr. Henry DeVries, vice president for administration, finance and information services, treasurer.

II. General college matters

Time was given during the October 2009 meeting for the appointment of the trustees to board committees for each division of the college, as well as approval of the membership of the executive committee and on six college standing committees.

At the February 2010 meeting the board conducted twenty-three faculty interviews for reappointment or for tenure and received committee reports. The board also attended a dinner with faculty for presentation of the President's Award for Exemplary Teaching. Ms. Joan Flikkema, member of the Board of Trustees of the CRCNA, attended the meeting as an observer.

III. Faculty

A. Faculty interviews

Twenty-three faculty interviews were the highlight of the February 2010 meeting. Seven interviews were for reappointments with tenure (see Recommendations), and sixteen were for two- or three-year regular reappointments.

B. Presidential Award for Exemplary Teaching

Dr. James Vanden Bosch, professor of English, was presented the eighteenth annual Presidential Award for Exemplary Teaching. This award is given to a tenured professor whose Christian commitment is readily apparent in exemplary teaching in the classroom. In addition, a cash award is provided for educational opportunities and life experiences that will enrich the recipient's teaching and scholarship.

Three new additional teaching awards were also presented: Innovative Teaching Award to Dr. Frans van Liere, history; Advising and Mentoring Award to Dr. Amy Patterson, political science; and Student-Faculty Research Award to Dr. Roger De Kock, chemistry.

IV. Election of college trustees

A. Regional trustees

Board members from the following regions are completing their second three-year terms. Nominees will be presented to the classes in these regions for vote and the results presented to synod for ratification. We are grateful for the service of retiring members Mr. Peter Schuurman (Region 4), Mrs. Karen Wynbeek (Region 6), Rev. David Zylstra (Region 8), and Mr. William Ryckbost (Region 10).

Region 4

Dr. André F. Basson, B.A., Johannesburg University (South Africa); B.D., University of Pretoria (South Africa); D.E.A., Université de Provence (France); Ph.D., Université de Provence.

Dr. Basson has served as a chaplain for the South African Navy and has taught classics and medieval and renaissance studies at the University of Zululand and the Rand Afrikaans University (South Africa), at Calvin College, at the University of Buffalo (New York), and at Brock University in St. Catharines (Ontario). He pastored the Rehoboth CRC (Niagara Falls) and is currently the CRC campus minister at Brock University. Dr. Basson has served on boards and committees in South Africa and Canada, including the Research Ethics Board, Brock University, and the youth leader support team, Classis Niagara. He has served as elder in four churches.

Dr. Wytse van Dijk, B.S., M.A., and Ph.D., McMaster University.

Dr. van Dijk has enjoyed a long and distinguished career in nuclear physics, teaching at Dordt College, Redeemer University College, and McMaster University. He has served several terms on church council and has been a frequent delegate to classis. Dr. van Dijk is currently serving on the presidential search committee for Redeemer University College and has a strong knowledge and appreciation for the Reformed Christian liberal arts colleges. His daughter, Deanna, is a professor of biology at Calvin College. He is a member of Ancaster CRC.

Region 6

Mr. Daniel Meester, B.A., Calvin College; M.A. Educational Leadership, National University.

Mr. Meester graduated from Calvin's teacher education program with a major in English and a minor in coaching. He played tennis during his four years at Calvin, serving as team captain and receiving MVP honors along with an MIAA scholarship. Mr. Meester taught at Illiana Christian School (Lansing, Illinois) for five years before moving back home to San Jose, California, to teach at Valley Christian High School. He taught English for four years and then became a counselor. In 2008 he was called to be the superintendent of San Jose Christian School. Mr. Meester and his family are members of San Jose CRC, where he has served on the pastoral search team, as chair of deacons, and on the personnel and staffing team.

Dr. Joseph (John) Steigenga, B.A., Calvin College; M.A. and Ph.D., Fuller Theological Seminary.

Dr. Steigenga is the owner of John Steigenga Paint in Ripon, California. He is a member of First Ripon CRC and currently has one son at Calvin College. Mr. Steigenga has served his home church as chair of the education committee and as a deacon. He currently serves on the Board of Trustees of the Bethany Home Society of San Joaquin County. He has a strong interest, history, and passion for Christian education in the church and in Christian schools (K-12) as well as Christian higher education.

Region 8

Ms. Andrea (Harms) Van Kooten, B.A., Calvin College.

Ms. Van Kooten graduated from Calvin's teacher education program with a concentration in elementary education. She taught for three years at

Rehoboth Christian School (New Mexico) and then took a leave from teaching while raising her family. Ms. Van Kooten and her husband, Dan, served for World Missions for four years in Jos, Nigeria, where she was a houseparent. She moved to Pella, Iowa, where she served as ministry coordinator at Second CRC, and she currently works for the Vermeer Corporation. Ms. Van Kooten has been active with youth programs in Gallup, New Mexico, and Pella, Iowa, and was a main-stage speaker for a Youth Unlimited Convention in 2001. She has served on the board of Pella Christian School. The Van Kootens have one child at Calvin.

Ms. Rachele (Kramer) Wiersma, B.A., Calvin College; M.A., University of South Dakota.

Ms. Wiersma is a native of Edgerton, Minnesota. She graduated from Calvin, majoring in English, and served on the Knollcrest Worship Committee with Rev. Dale Cooper. She has taught at Sylvan Christian School (Grand Rapids, Michigan) and Unity Christian High School (Orange City, Iowa). Ms. Wiersma left teaching to develop curriculum and textbooks for Christian Schools International, including the Bible language arts materials. She has taught English and education at Dordt and Northwestern Colleges, and she served for six years on Dordt's Board of Trustees. Ms. Wiersma has served her community on the boards of the Northwest Iowa Symphony Orchestra, the Leo Kucinski Academy of Music, and the Orange City Arts Council. She has also been involved in the GEMS and catechism programs at First CRC, Orange City, Iowa.

Region 10

Rev. Michael D. Koetje, B.A., Calvin College; M.Div, Calvin Theological Seminary.

Rev. Koetje served as pastor of Hope CRC in Hull, Iowa, upon graduation from Calvin Seminary until 2004, when he was called to be senior pastor at Second CRC, Grand Haven, Michigan. He was a delegate to synod two times and has served as a member of the classical student fund committee. He was previously a member of the Siouxland Diaconal Conference and was the alternate stated clerk. Rev. Koetje is currently president of council and of the board of elders at Second CRC and is a member of the stewardship team and the worship ministry team. He is deeply grateful for his years at Calvin and is eager to lead students to lives of love and justice in the name of Christ.

Mr. Philip R. Poel, B.A., Western Michigan University; AMP, PMP, Harvard Business School in Professional Leadership Diversity and Inclusiveness.

Mr. Poel is a graduate of Western Michigan University and the retired chairman of Michigan Medical Technology. He currently serves as the chief operations officer at Polycem, LLC. Mr. Poel is a member of the alumni society of the Harvard Business School and believes that his insights and training in the professional disciplines and diversity and inclusiveness training within sound traditional beliefs would bring value to board service. He is a member of Covenant Life CRC, Grand Haven, Michigan.

Region 11

The second term for Mr. Craig Klamer will expire in 2010. However, his first year filled an unexpired term, so he served a total of four years rather than the full six. The Trusteeship Committee recommends that synod

appoint Mr. Klamer for two additional years (until 2012), which will provide continuity in leadership for the Calvin College Board of Trustees and the classes represented.

B. Alumni trustee

The first term for Mr. Ralph Luimes expires in 2010, and he is eligible for a second term. The Trusteeship Committee recommends Mr. Luimes for a second three-year term.

C. At-large trustees

The first terms for Mr. Terry VanderAa and Ms. Thelma Venema expire in 2010. The board recommends these two members for a second three-year term.

V. Finance

The board approved the 2010-2011 tuition and room and board rates. Tuition and fees will increase by 3.5 percent to \$24,645, and the room and board rate will increase by 3 percent to \$8,525. Financial aid is proposed to increase by at least 6.5 percent. The final 2010-2011 budget will be adopted at the May board meeting when the fall enrollment numbers are more certain.

VI. Recommendations

A. That synod grant the privilege of the floor to the chair of the board, Mr. Bastian A. Knoppers, and to the president of the college, Dr. Gaylen J. Byker, when matters pertaining to education are presented.

B. That synod ratify the following reappointments with tenure (*italics* indicate promotion to that rank):

1. Pennylyn Dykstra-Pruim, Ph.D., *associate* professor of German
2. Chad Engbers, Ph.D., *associate* professor of English
3. Todd Kapitula, Ph.D., *associate* professor of mathematics
4. Linda Naranjo-Huebl, Ph.D., *associate* professor of English
5. Marcie Pyper, Ph.D., *associate* professor of Spanish
6. John Ross, Ph.D., *associate* professor of physical education
7. David Urban, Ph.D., *associate* professor of English

C. That synod by way of the printed ballot reappoint members and ratify the results of the elections held in the classes for the Calvin College Board of Trustees.

Note: Recommendations on financial matters are included in the report of the denominational Board of Trustees and will be presented to synod by way of the Finance Advisory Committee.

Calvin College Board of Trustees
Thelma Venema, secretary

The Calvin Theological Seminary Board of Trustees presents their report to Synod 2010 with gratitude to God for his provision this past year. The seminary has experienced God's faithfulness and looks toward the future with hope and anticipation.

I. Board of Trustees

The board met in plenary sessions in October 2009 and February 2010.

The board officers are Rev. Julius T. Medenblik, chair; Dr. Henk Van An-
del, vice-chair; and Rev. Kevin J. Adams, secretary.

The board recommends that synod reappoint the following seminary trustees who have completed one term of service and are eligible for a second term: Rev. William Renkema (Region 10), Ms. Susan Keesen, and Ms. Jinny Bult De Jong (at-large).

The board also recommends that synod approve an extension of one year to the terms of Rev. Kevin Adams (Region 6) and Rev. Julius T. Medenblik (Region 9).

Grounds:

1. The presidential transition calls for strong and experienced board leadership.
2. Rev. Adams and Medenblik both serve as officers and members of the executive committee and provide the continuity and depth of board leadership necessary for this transitional year.

Completing a second term on the board are Mr. Curt Gesch and Rev. Joan DeVries. We are grateful for their service to the seminary. In addition, the seminary board grieves the loss of Rev. Andrew Chun, who died unexpectedly in July 2009. The following nominees were submitted to classes in their respective regions for voting at the spring meetings. The results of those elections will be ratified by Synod 2010.

Region 1

Rev. Johannes Schouten is the pastor of Nelson Avenue Community CRC in Burnaby, British Columbia. He is a member of the classical ministry leadership team and the All Nations Heritage Committee. Rev. Schouten is a graduate of Redeemer College and Calvin Theological Seminary.

Rev. Andrew Vander Leek is pastor of East Hill Community CRC in Vernon, British Columbia. Having been ordained into the ministry in 1986, he has pastored congregations in Edson-Peers, Alberta; Prince George, British Columbia; and Calgary, Alberta.

Region 3

Ms. Wendy Gritter is a member of Community CRC of Meadowvale, Ontario, where she has served as a governing elder. She earned a master of divinity degree and is the executive director of New Directions Ministries, where she has been extensively involved with restructuring the organization's governance model. Ms. Gritter has had valuable experience in interfacing with the broad spectrum of the Christian community, particularly at the growing edges of mission and ministry.

Mr. John Struyk is a member of Ebenezer CRC in Trenton, Ontario. He earned his Ph.D. in German language and literature from the University of Waterloo and taught for thirty-one years at Dordt College, Sioux Center, Iowa. Mr. Struyk currently serves on the board of the Quinte Seaway Ministry and as an elder.

Region 12

Dr. Donald G. Belanus, a member of Washington, D.C., CRC, serves as associate for Media Ministries, Washington, D.C. He previously served as a U.S. Navy chaplain corps commander-in-chief of the Atlantic Fleet. Dr. Belanus is a graduate of Calvin Theological Seminary and earned his Ph.D. at Walden University. He currently serves on the board of the Norfolk, Virginia, Seafarers' Ministry and as vice president of the National Genocide Education Committee.

Rev. Paul Szto is a member of Queens CRC, Jamaica, New York, where he served as pastor from 1973-1986. He earned a Doctor of Ministry degree and has served on the board of Christian Reformed World Missions and as a delegate to synod. Rev. Szto has served many years in ministering to the Chinese and other nationalities in New York City.

At-large

Mr. Douglas L. Kool completes a third term as at-large member on the board. We are thankful for his many years of service to the seminary. The board recommends the following single nominee as an at-large member:

Mr. Sidney Jansma, Jr., is president of Wolverine Gas and Oil and a former member of the Calvin Theological Seminary Board of Trustees. He is a graduate of Calvin College and of the University of Michigan. He is a member of Plymouth Heights CRC in Grand Rapids, Michigan, where he has served as an elder and deacon.

Grounds:

1. CTS has particular need for a person with financial awareness and expertise and with connections to the business community for the at-large position at this time.
2. CTS has need for strong board leadership in the coming years—Mr. Jansma has provided exceptional leadership in the past and can offer it again at this time.
3. Mr. Jansma feels called to serve on the seminary board. In a situation of such particular need, exceptional giftedness, and particular calling, the CTS board judged it to be appropriate to submit a single nomination.

II. Administration

The seminary administration includes Dr. Cornelius Plantinga, Jr., president; Rev. Duane K. Kelderman, vice president for administration; and Dr. David Rylaarsdam, acting vice president for academic affairs. Dr. Ronald J. Feenstra serves as the director of the Ph.D. program; Dr. Donald E. Byker as the director of ministry formation; Mr. Philip Vanden Berge as chief financial officer; and Rev. Richard Sytsma as dean of students, director of alumni relations, and international student advisor.

III. Faculty

The seminary's faculty continues to serve the church in numerous ways. Although teaching and preparing students for various forms of ministry continues to lie at the heart of their work, members of the faculty also provide education and counsel to many local congregations and broader assemblies, preach regularly, publish scholarly books and articles, attend significant conferences, and in various ways seek to stay attuned to developments in ministries in the Christian Reformed Church and the church of Christ worldwide.

The board addressed the reappointment of two faculty members subject to ratification by Synod 2010:

Mary S. Hulst, assistant professor of preaching (part time) for two years
Darwin K. Glassford, associate professor of church education for two years

The board declared a vacancy for the administrative position of president to be filled as soon as possible with responsibilities commencing July 1, 2011.

The board acknowledged the years of faithful service of Dr. Henry De Moor, Jr., and approved conferring upon him the title of professor of church polity, *emeritus*, effective August 31, 2010, and requests that Synod 2010 also acknowledge this action with gratitude to God.

IV. Program highlights

Calvin Theological Seminary adopted a new three-year M.Div. curriculum that began in the fall of 2009. The curriculum retains the strengths of a classical theological education with renewed emphases upon preaching, spiritual formation, contextualized ministry, and congregational leadership.

In September 2009 the seminary moved from a quarter system to a semester system (two semesters with a January term and a May term). The semester system offers teaching and learning advantages, better coordination with many other colleges and seminaries, and increased flexibility for students who wish to build additional off-campus ministry experiences into their education.

The Calvin Theological Seminary *Forum* magazine continues to be highly appreciated. The Fall 2009 issue on *Money* and the Winter issue on *Discipleship* struck a chord in a wide range of *Forum* readers. The *Forum* is available online at www.calvinseminary.edu/pubs/forum.

In order to prepare future CRC pastors and other ministry leaders, the seminary desires to know the names of people who are considering vocational ministry or who, in the estimation of local pastors and other church leaders, have gifts for ministry and should be considering vocational ministry. Please send an email to the director of admissions, Rev. Greg Janke (gjanke0@calvinseminary.edu), with such names. Trust the seminary staff to be very sensitive in how they communicate with such persons. The more information you provide, the more sensitively the seminary is able to build bridges to potential seminarians.

The Calvin Theological Seminary and the Center for Excellence in Preaching (CEP) websites continue to offer pastors and other church leaders excellent online resources. The number of web visitors who listen to lectures and sermons continues to increase. These and many other ministry resources are available at www.calvinseminary.edu.

V. Students

The composition of the seminary's student body indicates a growing national and ethnic diversity. The following statistics suggest the impact the seminary is having beyond the Christian Reformed Church:

Christian Reformed students: 157

Non-Christian Reformed students: 115

International students (other than Canadian): 43

Programs:

M.Div.: 118

M.A.: 36

M.T.S.: 15

Th.M.: 38

Ph.D.: 36

* EPMC: 15

Certificate/Diploma: 3

Unclassified: 7

Auditors: 4

Male students: 205

Female students: 67

* Ecclesiastical Program for Ministerial Candidacy

VI. Recommendations

A. That synod grant the privilege of the floor to Rev. Julius T. Medenblik, chair; and Rev. Kevin J. Adams, secretary, when seminary matters are presented.

B. That synod by way of the printed ballot ratify the election and reelection of trustees from the slate of nominees presented.

C. That synod approve the following faculty reappointments:

Mary S. Hulst, assistant professor of preaching for two years (part time)

Darwin K. Glassford, associate professor of church education for two years

D. That synod, with gratitude to God, acknowledge the years of faithful service of Dr. Henry De Moor, Jr., and acknowledge the new title conferred upon him by the Calvin Theological Seminary Board of Trustees: professor of church polity, *emeritus*, effective August 31, 2010.

E. That synod approve two offerings for Calvin Theological Seminary (the Facing Your Future program and the Ministry Incentive program).

Note: Recommendations on financial matters are included in the report of the denominational Board of Trustees and will be presented to synod by way of the Finance Advisory Committee.

Calvin Theological Seminary Board of Trustees
Kevin J. Adams, secretary

I. Introduction

A. *Our mandate*

Synod has mandated Christian Reformed Home Missions (CRHM) “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 these aspects:

- a. Encourage and assist churches, classes, and regions in the work of developing and sustaining missional churches.
- b. Initiate, support, and guide church planting and development in cooperation with local churches, classes, and regions.
- c. Initiate, support, and guide educational ministries in cooperation with local churches and classes.

(*Home Missions Order*, Art. 2, 1992)

B. *Home Missions’ mission and vision*

Home Missions pursues its mandate under the leading CRC ministry objective: “transforming lives and communities worldwide” by “creating and sustaining healthy churches” (see section IV, G below: 2009-2010 Home Missions Ministries Plan Scorecard Budget).

Mission – Christian Reformed Home Missions serves the churches, ministries, and members of the Christian Reformed Church through partnerships that work to fulfill Christ’s mission.

Vision – Every Christian Reformed church, ministry, and member follows Christ in reconciling the world to God.

C. *Renewing communities together*

Home Missions pursues its mandate under the leading CRC ministry objective: “transforming lives and communities worldwide.” It is Home Missions’ task to provide leadership so that Christian Reformed churches are part of the movement of the Holy Spirit as he works in neighborhoods and communities in the lives of people with the power of the gospel to change lives and transform communities. The gospel is a power to change lives and transform communities, and it is especially through local churches and mission communities where this power gets expressed.

The staff of Home Missions want to work in partnership to help see this mandate become a reality in neighborhoods and communities throughout North America. CRHM sees its work as part of the mission in which God is working not only in North America but throughout the world with the same powerful gospel. As a result, Home Missions works in significant partnership with agencies who share in this mission.

Home Missions wants to re-NEW | COMMUNITIES | TOGETHER through the renewing power and movement of God’s Spirit. This can happen especially through the launching of new churches and communities that have a measurable community impact in their own context. Home Missions aims to facilitate by walking alongside local partners who take the lead in collaborating with agencies that share in this mission.

One of the most striking accents of Home Missions’ work is its intentionality to work inter-culturally with various people groups so that the whole gospel comes to all people in all contexts. CRHM is especially excited when

the majority of the leadership roles in new churches, for example, include persons representing various cultures throughout the world.

Home Missions has been through a time of transition since September 2009. During this transition, we have focused on the following four significant areas:

- Developing a fresh focus for the organization, as well as clear priorities.
- Designing a balanced budget and eliminating our deficit.
- Working with partners, agencies, and local partners as the *way* we do work, not *in addition to* our regular work.
- Developing a plan for leadership succession in senior positions within Home Missions.

II. Ministries of Christian Reformed Home Missions

A. *Providing leadership to the Christian Reformed Church in its domestic mission*

Home Missions believes that its unique contribution to the overall denomination's ministry in North America is to provide leadership in the area of launching new churches, campus ministries, and missional efforts in local churches.

Home Missions has a vision for

- a multiplication of new churches and new campus ministries planted, nurtured, and contributing to gospel movements;
- a fresh movement of missional leaders raised on every level, generation, and ethnic background in cultural contexts; and
- churches working in partnership to plant churches, campus ministries, and other local missional initiatives.

In all of this, CRHM is part of a denominational effort to “create and sustain healthy congregations for the purpose of transforming lives and communities worldwide.” The role of Home Missions is to put an accent on the word *create*, providing a unique contribution by creating congregations and communities. At the same time, Home Missions will partner to sustain congregations so that this too can be part of transforming lives and communities worldwide.

1. Church planting and development

New churches that grow the fastest and continue to thrive year after year are those born out of a partnership between local, regional, and international partners. Experience has taught us that a local cluster of churches—hosted by an existing congregation or congregations, supported by other churches in the classis or region, and coached, trained, or mentored by Home Missions—is the right context and environment in which to start new churches. Currently, seventy-five new CRCs receive financial assistance from Home Missions through such partnerships, with many more in the planning stages.

Home Missions' Church Planting and Development Leadership Team, which includes Rev. Jul Medenblik, Rev. Randy Rowland, Mr. Kevin Schutte, Mr. Javier Torres, Ms. Laura Posthumus, and Ms. Julee Holcomb, works to help foster church planting and development throughout North

America. Home Missions assists church planting through the following strategies:

a. Prayer mobilizing and communication

Communicating the vision for a church-planting movement and mobilizing prayer for enfolding people into fellowship with Christ and his church is a vital part of the process of church planting and development.

b. Resourcing partners, planters, and new churches

1) Home Missions helps classes and congregations cast vision and develop specific strategies and plans for starting new churches. One of the primary factors is selecting a qualified leader and helping that leader make a good beginning. Some of the key parts of that process are

- assessment
- residency (for persons new to ministry or lacking planting experience)
- coaching (wisdom, accountability, and support)
- bootcamp (an intensive planning and training week)
- orientation (3.5 days at a site in Grand Rapids)

2) As new churches develop, various denominational helps are available. Home Missions' services include

- small group training and consultation
- peer church planter learning forums
- regional team resourcing

3) Home Missions thanks God for the church planters and their families who have answered God's call to plant new churches. The following table shows church planting results for 2009-2010 as of February 24, 2010:

Church planting/development	
Churches reporting	50
Main worship attendance	3,583
Total confessing members	1,690
Growth by evangelism	248

4) Cultural diversity of church planting ministry is shown below:

Home Missions grant-funded ministry leaders – 2009

European-American	Ethnic minority	Total	% Ethnic minority
138	70	208	34%
New churches – 2009			
European-American	Ethnic minority	Total	% Ethnic minority
12	18	30	60%

c. Financial partnering for church planting

Home Missions provides grant funding for up to six years to church plants located in majority-culture communities and ethnic-language communities.

2. Educational mission

Denominational campus ministries are placed at the gateways of leadership in our culture. They call college students, our future leaders, to consider God’s mission in their own pursuits and to seek the nurture of God’s church.

a. Campus ministries

On campuses across North America, students, staff, and faculty are gathering together to grow in faith, build community, and engage God’s world. Christian Reformed Campus Ministry seeks to bear witness to the renewing grace of Jesus Christ in a beautifully diverse but complicated world.

Campus ministry foundational documents, a current list of campus ministry locations, and a list of the personnel serving in those locations can be found on the website of the Christian Reformed Campus Ministry Association at www.crcma.com.

The Christian Reformed Church is involved in campus ministry on campuses in Canada and the United States. As of January 2010, twenty campus ministries are supported by Home Missions’ partnership-assistance grants. They are

Chicago State University (Black)	University of Guelph
Dalhousie University	University of Iowa
Fanshawe College	University of Michigan
Ferris State University	Univ. of Northern British Columbia
Iowa State University (Korean)	University of Toronto
Kennedy-King Community College	University of Waterloo
McMaster University	University of Western Ontario
Queen’s University	Western Michigan University
University of Alberta	William Paterson University
University of Calgary	York University

Regular campus ministry activities include weekly Bible studies for students and faculty, one-on-one counseling; large group worship and/or teaching events; small group discussions; social activities; leadership formation; special lectures and retreats; and, in some cases, a Sunday student worship service on campus. Although many of these gatherings are small, others include hundreds of students.

b. Educational mission leadership

Through the work of the Christian Reformed Campus Ministry Association, Home Missions supports annual campus ministry conferences, regional campus ministry gatherings, and other leadership development activities. The agency also supports the CRC’s ongoing work toward developing and refining the vision and goals of CRC campus ministry across North America.

c. Educational mission support for Red Mesa schools

Home Missions assists Rehoboth Christian School and Zuni Christian School in New Mexico.

3. Developing missional health in churches

Home Missions focuses on developing partnerships with those churches that are eager to discover more about what it means to be missional and focused on multiplication of churches and leaders for the mission. Home Missions partners with and interacts with churches, leaders, classes, and other ministry agencies and in particular The Network for Congregations in this work. Each partner will assist in convening groups, discerning strategic initiatives, cultivating coaching networks, and catalyzing clusters of ministry partners according to unique gifts, strengths, and resources to the shared denominational priority of creating and sustaining healthy churches for the purpose of transforming lives and communities worldwide.

- a. We are working with partners to develop a menu of resources for **congregational assessment and renewal processes** and share these with congregational leaders. We will also offer coaching and consulting support in collaboration with various agencies to make the most effective use of these tools.
- b. Home Missions takes a lead role to develop a **network of coaches** to walk with leaders, pastors, staff, and small group ministry developers. Our particular role is gathering effective resources, co-hosting equipping events, and assisting in providing ongoing support and accountability.
- c. Home Missions also supports **clustering** for ministry growth, through which churches on a journey of self-assessment and renewal will be gathered together in clusters for mutual learning, support, and accountability. Home Missions particularly assists in developing leadership for these clusters and support for persons hosting them so that the most fruitful experience can be provided for participants.
- d. **Small group coaches** will walk with churches in their small group deployments to stimulate discipleship, provide community, and engage in mission service in the community. Resources are available on the web.
- e. Home Missions will also work to provide **communication technology**. We will work with partners to develop readily available websites, blogs, webinars, and other technology in order to share information about effective resources, create communities of learning, and tell stories.

B. *Home Missions' regional teams*

Since 2003, Home Missions has been working throughout the regions of the CRCNA through twelve ministry teams. Home Missions' regional team members collaborate with local and classis leaders to cast mission vision and set goals and to support and encourage church planting, local church mission, and campus outreach. Regional leaders and teams utilize partnership grants to provide funds to resource church plants and mission opportunities through established churches. Ethnic diversity is a core value

for Home Missions. Four regional teams have represented Black and Urban, Korean, Hispanic, and Native American mission development.

Home Missions is currently reconfiguring the regional teams to align with the denominational regions used for the various CRCNA boards. By combining several of these regions, Home Missions will now have seven regions. The former ethnic regions are now integrated with the geographical regions. The four ethnic ministry leaders together form the Ethnic Ministries Council of Home Missions. They will continue to cast vision, provide contextualized resources, and advocate for the respective ethnic constituencies. These ethnic leaders will have a lead role in ethnic leader selection and development of new ethnic ministries.

The current ministry teams and team leaders are

- Chicagoland/North Central, Rev. Peter C. Kelder
- Eastern Canada, Rev. Adrian G. Van Giessen
- Eastern U.S., Mr. Drew Angus
- Great Lakes, Rev. Benjamin J. Becksvort
- West Central U.S., Rev. Jerry A. Holleman
- West Coast, Rev. Peter J. Holwerda
- Western Canada, Rev. Martin J. Contant

Home Missions helps revitalize existing Christian Reformed churches through mission-focused ministries and grants. Working through mission-focused partnerships, we provide seminars, festivals, leadership coaching, assessment centers, support networks, and consulting to local churches.

The seven regional ministry teams are widely involved in mission-focused church and leader support through partnerships in which Home Missions provides

- encouragement to pastors through workshops and consultation.
- leadership to congregations as they discern God’s leading for the future.

In addition to the regional ministry team staff, several of the teams have classis partner teams aligned with the classes of their region. These partner teams multiply regional efforts with a larger number of partners who are working with CRHM to accomplish goals and strategic initiatives. The impact is greater awareness and momentum for engaging in Christ’s mission through mission-focused churches, educational mission, and church planting.

Specialists on the teams give leadership to small group development, spiritual formation and prayer, and leadership development. Capacity to serve the churches and classes of the regions has increased significantly as regional leaders and teams experience the synergy of teamwork.

Specialized leaders who focus on church planting and mission-focused churches bring expertise, passion, and leadership to the work of Home Missions. We are blessed and well served as these leaders help to mobilize the CRC in North America for mission, adding many workers for the harvest.

Home Missions’ prayer and small group ministry developers connect and supply resources to churches and ministries through consultation with and training of church leaders and members. As part of their role on regional teams, these developers interact with pastors, councils, ministry team leaders, and other leaders to model and promote renewed vision and relationship-based ministry.

Prayer and small group ministry includes leadership and training events in small groups, Coffee Break, Story Hour, Little Lambs, prayer, and evangelism.

The regional teams also serve one another with what we call best practices as well as the overall efforts of CRHM as a unified and distributed organization. Home Missions is beginning to experience the benefit of receiving “leadership from the edge.”

The chart below shows how grants are allocated in Ministry Year (MY) 2010.

Church planting	
Residency	158,375
New churches	1,528,125
Fundraising	4,000
Subtotal	\$1,690,500
Mission-focused churches	
Churches	205,200
Mission-focused Coaching Center	17,000
Mission-focused smaller churches	92,150
Subtotal	\$314,350
Leadership	
Internships	225,000
Leadership Development Networks	86,750
Subtotal	\$311,750
Educational Mission	
New Mexico schools	297,034
Campus ministry grants	325,476
Emerging leadership initiative	29,000
Subtotal	\$651,510
Total grant budget amount	\$2,968,110

C. *Home Missions' collaborative efforts*

Home Missions supports a program of emerging leaders in campus ministries and partners with Calvin Theological Seminary to support ministry internships on campuses. Calvin College partners with Home Missions' campus ministry to cosponsor an annual academic and mission-focused lecture tour on major university campuses throughout North America.

In addition, Home Missions is actively partnering with CRWRC in the regional ministry teams and is working closely with World Missions in communications and fundraising efforts in North America.

D. *CRC evangelizing growth*

Numerical growth is one measure of mission effectiveness. By God's grace, the Christian Reformed Church added 3,246 persons through evangelism in 2009, compared to 3,252 persons in 2008.

The reported membership of the Christian Reformed Church totals 262,588 (*Yearbook 2010*, p. 181), compared to 264,330 last year. Factors other than members added or lost also impact the total membership number. For example, not all congregations report their membership numbers.

E. Stories of lives changed through Home Missions' ministries

The Lord is working through Home Missions' diverse ministries to change lives with the power of the gospel in North America. Here are a few examples from the past year:

- Although it officially launched in 2008, MosaicHouse Community Church in Edmonton, Alberta, made great strides in 2009. What began as an attempt to reach out to this ethnically diverse Canadian city has turned into regular worship services that attract Chinese, East Indian, Venezuelan, Costa Rican, and Korean American people. The church also features an active, growing network of small groups.
- Home Missions' campus ministers used creative approaches to introduce students to the gospel this past year. For example, the campus ministry at William Paterson University in Paterson, New Jersey, launched an outreach program called Garbage Evangelism. Students go into residence halls, knock on doors, offer to take out garbage, and invite people to share prayer requests. The program has helped bring students to Christ.
- Twenty-two North American university students received new Home Missions Emerging Leaders grants at the start of the fall semester.

F. New ministry development

The CRC goal of increasing our capacity to plant twenty-five churches a year is in response to the potential harvest in North America. These new churches need our prayers of intercession—prayers that the Lord will send laborers to the harvest field. From a denominational perspective, ten to twenty new churches are needed annually to offset the loss created by congregational merges, closures, and departures. From a kingdom perspective, adding twenty to thirty new churches annually would aid the massive challenge to reach the more than 200 million unchurched and under-churched people in Canada and the United States.

Home Missions is establishing new and continuing partnerships for ministry years 2010 through 2011. Frequently, as noted below, the actual start is preceded by a period of grant funding for residency prior to the launch of the new church. New-church starts and residencies for the following periods are listed below:

New work: Ministry year 2010

Location/ministry	Key*	Ministry leader	Grant start	Funding end
Boulder, CO/(new church)	A	Doug Kennedy	2010	2013
Buena Park, CA/Glory Chr. Church	K	WonSeok Song	2010	2011
Calgary, AB/River Park Korean Residency	K	Harrison Cho	2010	2011
Cerritos, CA/God's Dream Center	K	Tim Kwon	2010	2011
El Paso, TX/Montana Vista	M	Samuel Estala	2010	2010
Kansas City, KS/New City Church	A	Ryan Pelton	2010	2010
Kenosha, WI/Ra-Ken Latino Ministry	H	Francisco Golon	2010	2010
Kentwood, MI/Encounter Residency	A	Dirk VanEyck	2010	2010
Lincoln, NE/Lincoln Residency	A	John Knoester	2010	2010
Philadelphia, PA/One Hope Comm. Church	M	Matthew Lin	2010	2011
Plainfield, IL/N. Chicago (new church)	A	Fred DeJong	2010	2013
Rancho Cucamonga, CA/ Iglesias Chris. El Sembrador	H	John H. Caicedo	2010	2010

Wenatchee, WA/Comunidad Evangelica Cristiana	H	Sergio Castillo	2010	2010
Woonsocket, RI/Sacred Journey	A	Todd Murphy	2010	2011

*Key: A = Anglo, H = Hispanic, K = Korean, M = Multiethnic

III. Recruitment and training

A. Leadership development networks

Home Missions is working hard to train and raise up the next generation of diverse missionaries and ministry leaders. In classis-based partnerships, Home Missions supplies fourteen leadership development networks (LDNs). An LDN is a three- to four-year, in-ministry training program available in Spanish or English. The current networks are as follows:

Location	Leader
Alberta	Curtis Korver
British Columbia	Wilma VanderLeek
California	Kevin Adams
California	Al Breems
California	Daniel Mendez
Colorado	Pete VanElderen
Illinois	Pedro Aviles
Maine	Bill Johnson
Michigan	Dave Beelen
New Hampshire	Brent Averill
Ontario	Norm Sennema
South Dakota	Jim Hoogeveen
Texas	Mike Johnson
Washington	Betsy Turnbull

B. Internships

On-site training takes place through one of several forms of internships. *Formal* internships are crafted in conjunction with seminaries. *Informal* internships are not tied with a formal education program.

C. Assessment center

Once a mission-focused leader has been identified and trained, Home Missions helps determine where this person can best fulfill a missionary calling. "Assessment Center: Helping to Identify Your Calling" is an evaluation process that includes a three-day intensive assessment to determine the passion and giftedness of the individual. Home Missions also provides assessment interviews.

IV. Board matters

A. Board membership

The Board of Home Missions is mandated by synod to guide and carry out the domestic mission of the CRCNA. The board includes twelve regionally based members (matching CRCNA regions), with the primary functions of governance and strategic direction. Five at-large board members balance expertise, gender, racial diversity, and clergy or nonclergy requirements set by the Board of Trustees of the CRCNA.

Three board members are completing their first term and are eligible for reappointment to a second three-year term: Ms. Beth Fylstra (Region 12),

Ms. Shashi De Haan (at-large), and Ms. Rosetta Polk-Pugh (at-large). Mr. David Koetje (at-large) has elected not to be nominated for reappointment to a second term on the Home Missions board.

The following slates of nominees from the respective regions were submitted to the classes for vote (a single nominee is being presented for Region 11), and the results are being forwarded to synod for ratification of a three-year term:

Region 6

Rev. Doug Bouws has served as pastor of hospitality at Granite Springs CRC in Lincoln, California, since September 2002. He has served on an ad hoc committee to restructure classis and is very involved in the support of church planters in the Sacramento cluster.

Rev. Daniel Brink is senior pastor at Rosewood CRC in Bellflower, California. He has served on the boards of Calvin College, Calvin Theological Seminary, the Wholistic Health Center, and Roseland Christian Ministries, as well as on several classical committees. Rev. Brink is an insightful leader and has a heart for church planting, evangelism, and revitalization in post-transitional, urban, multicultural churches.

Region 8

Ms. Gaye Mellema is a member of Willmar CRC, Willmar, Minnesota. She is currently serving on the classical Home Missions committee and the evangelism committee. Ms. Mellema has served as a deacon in her local church and on the prayer team. She has also served on the local Christian school board and community arts council.

Mr. Don Muilenburg is a member of Bridgewood CRC, Savage, Minnesota, serving as its non-ordained pastor of congregational life. Bridgewood is a church plant partnership between Home Missions and Wooddale Church (Dr. Leith Anderson). Currently Mr. Muilenburg serves as church visitor in Classis Lake Superior, on the classical home missions committee, and on the board of Holy Trinity Ministries (food pantry and outreach ministries). He was a delegate to Synod 2005. Mr. Muilenburg served in senior management as vice president of Information Systems for several HMOs around the United States.

Region 11

Mrs. Donna Meyer is a member of Oakdale Park CRC, Grand Rapids, Michigan. She is currently serving as deacon and is involved in local neighborhood ministries. Mrs. Meyer is a resource teacher at Grand Rapids Christian Middle School. She is passionate about ministry and developing relationships with the local community. Mrs. Meyer and her (late) husband served as foster parents for many teenage kids through Bethany Christian Services.

At-large member

The following nominee is being presented for election by synod for the at-large position:

Mr. Allan Kramer is a member of Living Water CRC, Orange City, Iowa, and currently serves as president of council. He is president and COO of Sioux Pharm, Inc. Mr. Kramer currently serves on the boards of Atlas of Sioux Center and Orange City and of Dordt College. He previously served as

a member-at-large on the Home Missions board. Mr. Kramer has a passion for the church and outreach, and he enjoys leadership, vision casting, and church planting.

B. Board officers

The officers of the Board of Home Missions are Rev. Paul H. Vander Klay, president; Mr. Rodney Huguen, vice president; Ms. Beth Fylstra, secretary; Mr. Harley Verbeek, treasurer; and Dr. Mary Buteyn, vice all.

C. Salary disclosure

Executive persons are being paid within the approved salary ranges.

Job level	Number of positions	Compensation quartile (Includes housing allowance)
18	1	2nd
16	2	2nd
15	1	2nd

D. Financial gifts

Home Missions’ revenues from ministry share dropped 13 percent (\$551,000) totaling \$3,665,000. Above-ministry-share gifts (non-estate) decreased 19.7 percent to \$1,430,000, and estate gifts experienced a decrease of \$243,000 (44.7%). Conference and registration fees dropped 3.1 percent to \$114,000. A decrease in revenues from reserves in the amount of \$452,000 further affected the overall CRHM income. Total revenue was down \$1,647,000 (24%). Fortunately Home Missions had some reserves to absorb the shortfall for the year. Home Missions is extremely thankful for the support of all ministry partners this year and gives thanks to God for them and their faithfulness to Home Missions.

E. Personnel

Mr. Ben Vandezande, the interim director of Home Missions, leads the agency and reports to the CRC director of denominational ministries, Ms. Sandy Johnson, as well as to the Home Missions board. The Advancement Team, also led by Mr. Vandezande, leads Home Missions’ fundraising and communications efforts. The Grand Rapids-based Ministry Team, led by Rev. Allen Likkel, supports Home Missions’ regional ministry teams throughout Canada and the United States. Rev. Likkel and Lois Haagsma administer all Home Missions’ grants.

Mr. Tom Bratt left his position as Advancement Director in October 2009. On December 31, development officer Mr. Rick VanTil left Home Missions to take a position with Rehoboth Christian Schools. Currently, Home Missions director Ben Vandezande serves as interim advancement director. Mr. Al Karsten, development officer for World Missions, also works jointly on behalf of Home Missions and World Missions in Canada. Home Missions is currently recruiting a development officer to work in the United States. Mr. Ben Van Houten continues as senior writer of Home Missions. Rev. Jack Stulp, in his 52nd year of ministry in the CRC, serves as manager of church relations. A number of volunteers and CRHM staff also continue to support God’s mission both in the binational office and with funded ministries.

E. *Communications*

Home Missions uses a variety of means to communicate with its audiences. The Internet has become an increasingly important part of the communications mix. Home Missions' website (www.crhm.org) provides resources and equips churches through print and electronic publications. Several publications are sent to churches, individuals, and staff by way of email. The website, updated weekly with news stories and resources, is also used to convey prayer needs and other information.

Worship bulletins and related material in English and Spanish are available to the churches for Easter and Reformation Day when many churches receive an offering for Home Missions. This past year four *On a Mission* newsletters and several other promotional materials were published. Home Missions used the pages of *The Banner* to communicate stories of God's mission work throughout North America. In addition, weekly ministry stories were posted to www.crcna.org, and material for the Prayer Guide and for bulletin announcements was provided to CRC churches and members.

Home Missions board members and board alternates receive a monthly email newsletter called *First Friday Focus*. Church planters receive the monthly *Pastor's Memo* e-newsletter.

V. **Recommendations**

A. That synod grant the privilege of the floor to Rev. Paul H. Vander Klay, board president; and Mr. Ben Vandezande, Home Missions interim director, when matters pertaining to Home Missions are discussed.

B. That synod by way of the printed ballot ratify the elections of and reappoint board members for a three-year term.

C. That synod encourage all Christian Reformed churches to recognize Easter Sunday and Reformation Day Sunday as significant opportunities to receive an offering for Christian Reformed Home Missions.

Home Missions considers it both a challenge and a privilege to join in God's mission with Christian Reformed congregations, ministry agencies, and schools.

Note: Recommendations on financial matters are included in the report of the denominational Board of Trustees and will be presented to synod by way of the Finance Advisory Committee.

Christian Reformed Home Missions
Ben Vandezande, interim director

I. Introduction

Christian Reformed World Missions (CRWM) supports and unites the diverse family of Christian Reformed congregations in their response to our Lord's commission to witness to the good news of God's kingdom and make disciples of all nations. Our purpose is to encourage vigorous Christian Reformed participation in Spirit-led mission with churches and other Christian organizations throughout the world, so that together we are proclaiming the gospel to more and more people who have not heard it, healthy churches are emerging, and the kingdom of God is advancing. CRWM has three key areas of action, or strategies:

- Mobilizing Christian Reformed churches and their members for greater missions involvement.
- Strengthening the CRC and international partners in our mutual capacity for Christian life and missions.
- Participating in global networks and movements to advance the reign of Christ.

II. Ministries of Christian Reformed World Missions

A. *Ministry that is transforming lives and communities worldwide*

Through various means, CRWM sends more than 200 missionaries to over 20 countries. Through partnerships, our work extends to more than 30 countries. Although our main focus is on gospel proclamation and church planting; missionaries also work in leadership training and development, Christian education, and regional networking centers.

We give thanks for what the Lord has accomplished through World Missions missionaries and partners in the last year and look forward to what he will bring about in the coming year. Here are a few highlights:

- The Spirit has moved more than 9,000 people to become Christians through the direct work of World Missions, including some in the most resistant people groups on the face of the earth.
- Nearly 50 new worshipping communities were established.
- Fifteen new missionaries joined CRWM staff.
- Thirteen Christian Reformed young adults spent the summer serving in countries around the world.
- Eighty-five teachers and administrators served in international schools.
- World Missions Special Projects began work with partners in Africa and Latin America to create a learning program for Christian educators.
- In cooperation with Christian Reformed Home Missions, Back to God Ministries International, and CRWRC, World Missions continues to work to develop strategies to reach Muslims in North America and around the world.
- World Missions launched a youth initiative project, Hope Equals, as a way to encourage Christian college-aged youth to become actively involved in a peaceful, just, and mutually respectful resolution to the Palestinian/Israeli conflict.

B. Ministry to and with local congregations

CRWM's Missions Education and Engagement department encourages local congregations to become more actively involved in global ministry. They walk alongside local congregations to assist the church leaders in stimulating a deeper vision for and involvement in missions. This coaching provides a way for a church to evaluate its global outreach ministry and to work toward a greater impact.

C. Collaborative efforts

World Missions has increasingly engaged in synergistic ministry, especially with other agencies of the Christian Reformed Church. Here are a few examples. World Missions and Christian Reformed Home Missions are working together to develop an Easter to Pentecost celebration of mission in 2010, calling congregations to reach their communities and the world with the power of the gospel. World Missions, CRWRC, and Back to God Ministries International work together in Haiti as *Sous Espwa* (Source of Hope) in church, school, and community development as well as in follow-up on French-language radio broadcasts. World Missions provides internship opportunities for Calvin Theological Seminary students so that they can gain their required cross-cultural experience in ministry. World Missions partners with Calvin College in their semester in China program. World Missions, Christian Reformed Home Missions, and Faith Alive Christian Resources are looking into global use of the Coffee Break program. Partners Worldwide has participated in World Missions GO conferences in various regions of North America.

Collaborative efforts also extend to other agencies. CRC members serving under Wycliffe Bible Translators can become CRWM partners with support and connection to their denominational agency. This is similar to the long-standing relationships we have with a number of agencies that send teachers to universities and day schools around the world. World Missions and Timothy Leadership Training are working with partners to train church planters in India. Nine international agencies and many Nicaraguan partners are involved in the work of the Nehemiah Center in Managua. World Missions is present almost everywhere; it works jointly with one or more of our dozens of international partners. This kind of collaboration often involves adjustments in the way we do things, but it also results in more effective and longer lasting ministry.

D. Recognition of service

Each year, World Missions recognizes missionary employees and office staff who are celebrating significant anniversaries of service. In December 2009 World Missions honored the following for their years of service to the Lord through World Missions:

Years of service	Name	Location
5 years	David and Blanca Gifford	Mexico
	Mary Kaldeway (as an associate)	South Africa
10 years	Julie Ebels	CRWM Office
	Ken and Jeannie Lee	Japan
	Sung Soo (Abraham) and Elaine Lee	Mexico
	John and Anne Span	West Africa

15 years	Michael and Kimberly Essenburg Calvin and Jamie Hofland Cheryl and Dale Ramsey (marriage 1/09)	Japan West Africa West Africa
20 years	David and Joyce Campbell Brenda Vander Schuur	West Africa West Africa
25 years	Cecelia Drenth Joel Hogan	Argentina, Costa Rica Philippines, CRWM Office
30 years	Albert Hamstra	Sri Lanka, Bangladesh, Thailand, Hong Kong, CRWM Office
40 years	Michael and Victoria Van Der Dyke	Nigeria
	John and Shirley Wind	Honduras, Mexico
	George and Ruth Young	Japan
	Paul and Barbara Bergsma	Mexico, Honduras, Costa Rica
	Gerald and Jackie Hogeterp Christine Roos	Pastorates in Canada, Nigeria Nigeria

E. Sharing stories

The following stories communicate just some of the ways in which God has used his servants over the past year.

1. Asia: New Beginnings—a missionary story from Japan

In the middle of April we moved from our home of 16 years in Koshigaya, Saitama Prefecture. Higashi Kawaguchi Reformed Church, which we helped to start with Rev. and Mrs. Sakurai during those years, grew to the point where it was able to become independent of the Christian Reformed Japan Mission, established a consistory with elders and deacons, and officially joined the Reformed Church in Japan. It was a joyful climax to years of evangelism and preaching of the Word.

Now we live three hours by car northeast of Tokyo in the fishing port city of Choshi, and have started working with a newly developing Reformed church and its pastor that has asked us to help them with evangelism. Choshi is a city that is totally different from where we used to live. Koshigaya and Kawaguchi were “bedroom communities” next to train lines that radiated like spokes from the heart of Tokyo. Choshi is too far from Tokyo for anyone to commute there to work. The neighborhood of our new house is full of fish canneries, and just three blocks from our house is the port where commercial fishing boats dock. Everywhere you look, you see men repairing nets, and the smell of fish permeates the area. Farming is big in the area and, if the wind is right, we are regaled by what people here call “the perfume of the countryside” (cow manure). However, you must not get the impression that Choshi is a one traffic-light town. In Japan where fish is a mainstay of everyone’s diet, fishing is big business. Choshi, on the west bank of the Tonay River where it pours into the Pacific, and Hasaki, across the river on the east bank of the Tonay, have a combined population of about 120,000 people.

Rev. Kobayashi, my new co-worker in Choshi, is giving me a thorough orientation to the work here. We have long conversations about what the focus of my part of our teamwork should be. On top of that, during the next five years that we work here, I very much want to write tracts and distribute them in Choshi, Hasaki, and the surrounding towns, as well as to people I meet on the street. I get excited about Paul’s words in Romans 15:20, “It has always been my ambition to preach the gospel where Christ was not known.” To me, the joy of evangelism means expressing the

gospel as clearly and simply as possible to a people who know nothing better than a myriad of little gods that they are afraid to forsake lest the nets come up empty or the harvest be poor.

Please pray for us as we get to know people, as we begin writing and distributing tracts, and as we adjust to living in a fishing port. The British poet Tennyson wrote a hymn in which he spoke of Jesus' disciples as "simple fishermen." It sounds to me as if he was romanticizing about them. The people in Choshi and Hasaki are ordinary folk, no more simple and no more complex than Peter, James, and John, or you and me. Only they have not met Jesus yet. Please pray that they do. And pray for Glory Reformed Church in Choshi, as its members and pastor, Rev. Kobayashi, tell their circle of friends about Christ.

2. Europe: A Celebration in Ministry—a missionary story from Hungary

This year marks the first graduation of students in the new programs of church education and pastoral assistant work and elders' training at the Sárospatak Theological Academy in Hungary. These new programs mark an exciting step for the seminary and the Hungarian church after years of Communist rule.

The Sárospatak Theological Academy, established in 1531, was closed by the ruling Communist party/government in 1951 for forty years. After the collapse of communism in Eastern Europe, the seminary reopened in 1991.

Since its reopening, the seminary has undergone significant changes and has been able to offer more programs for its students. Now local Hungarian students as well as students from Ukraine and other neighboring countries attend the seminary.

Many of the students grew up under communism and did not have an opportunity to study Christian education, so the expanded seminary programs now include continuing adult education for people interested in understanding and practicing more in relation to the Bible, the church, and Christian outreach in society.

During the Communist regime, only the pastor was allowed to do any spiritual work—and that under much pressure and restriction, for a pastor could really only do things within the church walls.

Home Bible studies and other outreach programs were forbidden. With these restrictions, many of the laypeople have had limited exposure to and/or experience in ways to reach out to their communities.

It is significant that these new Sárospatak Theological Academy graduates are able to develop as active church members, elders, and deacons to reach out to society. We have seen many churches here that are already active in these ways without these courses, but these courses are meant to provide some helpful training along the way.

Teaching at the seminary is not just a day job—it is a calling. As we travel with our students to visit church congregations, often pastored by our former students, we say, "These are our letter of reference and reward for many years of endeavor."

3. East and South Africa: Leadership Development—a story from Uganda, East Africa

With contextual challenges threatening to hamper the progress of training within the Pentecostal Assemblies of God (PAG), the partnership of

Christian Reformed World Missions and the Pentecostal Theological College (PTC)/Pentecostal Assemblies of God came at a perfect time. Within the last year CRWM has engaged in several activities with PTC that have contributed to erasing a pessimistic attitude toward training within the organization, induced mainly by the cost of training. As a result of the partnership with CRWM and PTC focus on leadership training and capacity building, the PTC community is full of hope and confesses a bright future for the institution and the organization at large.

Through the support of CRWM, PTC has enjoyed the visits of several people who facilitated lectures on a wide range of topics. More visits were planned for the last quarter of 2009. PTC has established a Department of Community Transformation. They look forward to making this a vibrant department that will play a key role in instilling kingdom values to the staff and student body who work in many diverse fields. Their ultimate objective is to develop role models for Ugandan communities, beginning with the Pentecostal Assemblies of God.

The scholarships sponsored by CRWM have enabled the weak church districts to develop leadership as they benefit by having their prospective leaders at the college.

As an initial step in seeking to be agents of transformation, the establishment of a dairy farm is in progress. This will ultimately become a research center, a place where knowledge and skills of dairy farming will be disseminated to the entire fellowship of PAG and other communities as well. Under the Department of Community Transformation, PAG looks forward to initiating projects of a similar nature with a view to maximizing their ability to transform societies using a Christian world-and-life-view.

4. West Africa: Shameless One—a missionary story from West Africa

A wiry man in a flowing blue and gold robe pinned me to my seat with a vigorous handshake. “Salaam alaykum, tubaaku! Peace be with you, white man! Don’t you know who I am? I am a griot. Not just any ordinary griot. I am le Grand Griot International. I have played my hoddu for your white brothers from France. Come now, do you have any tea money for me?” A griot is a West African poet, praise-singer, and wandering musician.

I gulped, scrambling for a reply. Talking to a griot can be like talking to a telemarketer—saying no is not always as easy as it ought to be. While griots merely stress me out a bit, most Fulani are petrified of running into a griot on the prowl.

Griots are the Fulani equivalent of lawyers in the United States—despised, yet also feared and respected. Griots are feared because they wield the power to shame.

For the Fulani, shame is the result of not measuring up to the Fulani ideals of character and behavior. Griots can either draw attention to a Fulani’s inadequacies or bury their failures with fine words. What they ultimately decide to do depends on how amply they have been paid.

When my griot neighbor asked me for tea money, he was implying that he would return the favor by saying complimentary things about me in front of all my neighbors. That is what griots do. He figured that I would be as honored as any Fulani would be to have him sing my praises, or at

least that I would fear the shameful consequences of not paying him. I did not give him any tea money.

A few weeks ago, I paid a visit to my griot neighbor. I thought he might be mad at me because I never gave him any tea money, but he was honored that I had come to his home, and he introduced me to his family. Instead of money, I gave him a cassette with some hoddu music and an introduction to the Way of Righteousness. He was very pleased with this gift.

To the griots of West Africa and all those who feel the bite of shame, may God reveal himself as the “chosen and precious cornerstone,” and may “the one who trusts in him . . . never be put to shame” (1 Pet. 2:6).

In this predominantly Muslim region pray that God’s Spirit will work among one of the most resistant people groups on the face of the earth and that a griot will become a Christ follower and take on the role of a wanderer singing God’s praises.

5. Latin America: Coming to Christ, One by One—a missionary story from Mexico

This past week I had one of those experiences that reminds one to never give up on people. The reminder came through seeing the conversion of Santiago (42), the father of a clan. His daughter Dalia, a recent convert in Santa Cruz de Valle who has started a new church group, has taken God at his word and begun sharing the gospel with her family. One by one during the last month, her family members have become Christians as she has brought them to the new church group.

Five weeks ago Dalia became a Christian. She invited us to have the worship services at the house that she and her husband Mario rent. Their home is out in the country where the cows graze and where airplanes land almost every five minutes.

Four weeks ago both Dalia’s mother, Jobita, who lives around the corner, and her thirteen-year-old son, Joel, became Christians. Joel is a wonderful teen who has a heart of gold and is so respectful. Three weeks ago Dalia’s 10-year-old-daughter, Christina, became a believer.

Two weeks ago Dalia’s brother, Omar, who had been hospitalized with schizophrenia but is now out of the psychiatric hospital, came to the group, and his eyes were opened.

This week the head of the clan, Dalia’s father, Santiago, who is what most people would call a hopeless alcoholic but whom God would call a great candidate for Christ’s salvation, turned his broken life over to Jesus.

The biggest surprise for me was seeing the change in Santiago. Last week, I happened to visit him when he was drunk, and he basically cussed me out. I never would have thought that this week he would become a Christian. He has a long way to go to be free of the sin in his life, but we will trust that to the Keeper of hearts. Now he is surrounded by Christians who are filled with the Holy Spirit and have a new love for him.

Our next step of reaching out to the larger community will be a spiritual battle. In the new housing community where Dalia’s family lives, no church exists except for this small group of new Christians. But God is able, and, through their faith and yours, he will bring this beginning to a wonderful conclusion.

6. Hope Equals

Hope Equals is a new CRWM initiative intended to encourage Christian college-aged young people to become more actively involved in a peaceful and just resolution to the Israeli/Palestinian conflict. The outpouring of interest in Hope Equals from many different sectors, in North America and Israel/Palestine, continues to amaze us. An American student studying in Palestine is enthusiastically helping CRWM and has introduced World Missions to some of her connections in the West Bank. Her image of CRWM changed dramatically after she got to know Hope Equals and the vision of CRWM for working with young people in North America. We have had over forty North American universities and/or colleges express interest in creating a Hope Equals cell group on their campus.

Many young people in North America are learning in a new way that CRWM is an agency that responds to their interests. The interest in Hope Equals at its launch at Urbana was incredible. World Missions is very excited about the potential for this new ministry!

7. The strategy of transformation

Over the last ten years Christian Reformed World Missions has pioneered the development of transformation networks as an innovative, highly collaborative, approach to missions that bridges such historic dichotomies as those of word and deed, church development and community development, or personal transformation and societal change.

The Nehemiah Center in Nicaragua, Seeds of a New Creation in El Salvador, and the Daniel Center in Nigeria are successful examples of transformation networks that span denominational and agency boundaries. Each of these transformation networks focuses on forming agents of transformation with an integral biblical world-and-life-view in all areas of society (church, education, business, government, the arts, and media) as well as nurturing networks of these leaders of change for church renewal and community and societal transformation.

Based on this experience, Christian Reformed World Missions, CRWRC, Back to God Ministries International, Timothy Leadership Institute, Partners Worldwide, and Christian Reformed Home Missions are working together to develop transformation networks in as many as twelve countries over the next ten years, including at least two sites in North America.

III. Placement, learning, and care

A. *Placement*

Through its Placement, Learning, and Care (PLC) department, CRWM connects CRC members with mission opportunities around the world. Currently these opportunities include career appointments, short-term volunteer assignments and positions with partner organizations. The majority of these partner positions are one to three years in duration and are teaching positions in schools.

In order to fulfill the placement task well, CRWM partners with several North American agencies. For example, the partnership with Wycliffe Bible Translators allows CRC members who serve with Wycliffe to be designated

as CRWM partner missionaries. A number of people have taken advantage of this opportunity for increased collaboration.

Through our partnership with Calvin Theological Seminary, CRWM provides cross-cultural internships for a few of their students each summer. These internships place seminarians alongside CRWM career missionaries and their national ministry partners and provide a valuable learning experience to students with an interest in missions.

World Missions also works with Youth Unlimited (YU) to engage the youth of the CRC in missions. We participate in YU's convention for high school students and work together to provide opportunities for young people who would like a foreign mission learning experience.

B. Learning

CRWM is in the process of structuring our orientation program for career and partner missionaries. To better serve career missionaries, we will be outsourcing part of their orientation to an organization which specializes in missionary orientation and debriefing. Doing so will provide a comprehensive orientation that will be done with excellence by those who do this work professionally.

The orientation for CRWM career and partner missionaries in Grand Rapids will, therefore, be much shorter than it was before and will cover only issues specific to our agency and denomination. This shorter, in-house orientation will focus on our agency mission, vision, and values and will enable orientees to become acquainted with our office staff and their support roles. There will be general sessions on building a dynamic team with prayer and financial supporters, personal security, including a hostage simulation exercise, and spending time with their regional leaders for an overview of CRC work in their regions of assignment. Other sessions will address more personal issues relating to family and marriage and care of children when living internationally. Orientation also covers issues faced specifically by those who are single. Finally, orientation clarifies the roles, benefits, and responsibilities of career and partner missionaries, including those which are unique to Canadians.

The establishment of a binational denominational volunteer management office (ServiceLink) is now a reality. CRWM is in the process of working out the details of the transition as ServiceLink assumes most of the functions of recruiting and orienting World Missions volunteers. We are happy to see ServiceLink come into being in the United States as well as in Canada because having a program that is devoted entirely to volunteers will better enable World Missions to meet opportunities worldwide. Beginning in 2010-2011, all CRWM volunteers, including those in our formerly called Summer Mission Program (SMP), will receive orientation facilitated by ServiceLink.

C. Care

The Care component of PLC's ministry consists primarily in providing logistical assistance (travel, visas, car rentals, and many other practical services), pastoral and medical consultation, and support. Pastoral and medical services are provided through the ministries of retired volunteer professionals shared with CRWRC.

IV. Board matters

A. CRWM board nominations

Region 9

Mr. David C. Droege is a member of Calvin CRC in Sheboygan, Wisconsin. He serves as chair of the deacons, as chair of education, and as a member of his church council. Mr. Droege has a good knowledge of computers—Microsoft Office Word, Excel, and PowerPoint. He is very organized with good administrative skills. Mr. Droege has served on the Placement and Transitions Committee in the Northeast Association and other denominational and ecclesiastical boards and committees while attending the United Church of Christ.

Ms. Lois Ooms is a member of Bethel CRC in Lansing, Illinois. She has a BA from Calvin College with numerous courses related to development. Ms. Ooms was a missionary in Africa for thirty-nine years and currently serves as a Missionary Transformational Development Trainer and Consultant in Africa and in the Middle East, advising groups using non-formal adult education principles. The material that she uses in training leaders and teaching those in poverty are biblical and written for communities of limited literacy. Ms. Ooms has had previous experience serving on various boards. She is still a full-time missionary, even though formally “retired,” and does extensive travel to lead workshops or consultant work with groups, in addition to mentoring people both in the United States and Africa.

U.S. at-large

Mr. Randy Freeland is a member of Crownpoint CRC in New Mexico. He spent a few years at Reformed Bible College, has had a lot of experience working with youth on many of the local reservations, and is licensed to preach. Currently Mr. Freeland is working as a first grade teacher in a government school in Crownpoint (Borrego Pass School – Bureau of Indian Education), a school funded by grants. He serves as an associate pastor of Crownpoint CRC and is the part-time pastor of Toyee’ Mission Church, a daughter congregation of Crownpoint CRC. Mr. Freeland has served on the boards of Rehoboth Christian School, The Legacy of a Kidbrother of St. Frank, and Inner-city Youth. Currently he serves as an elder at Crownpoint CRC, on the Crownpoint Christian School board, and on the steering committee of Toyee’ Mission Church.

Rev. Dr. William (Bill) Svelmoel is a member of the South Bend CRC, Indiana, and teaches at St. Mary’s College. He is an expert in the history of missions and has published a book and several articles on the topic. The title of his book is *A New Vision for Missions: William Cameron Townsend, the Wycliffe Bible Translators, and the Culture of Early Evangelical Faith Missions*. The articles can be found in academic journals in the fields of history, missiology, anthropology, and linguistics. His academic background focuses on American religious history, and his undergraduate degree was in English literature and creative writing. Mr. Svelmoel is a son of Wycliffe missionaries and lived in the Philippines with his parents who served as Bible translators. He has also served as an elder at South Bend CRC.

Canada at-large

Ms. *Andrea Bootsma*, a member of Palmerston CRC, Ontario, is a former CRWRC missionary who provided consultation assistance to CRWRC Zambia church partners and recently returned to Canada with her husband and family. She is a stay-at-home mom and does occasional contract work with CRWRC. She has strengths in development and planning and has the ability to look beyond problems and see solutions. Ms. Bootsma has a Master of Arts degree in organizational leadership and a Bachelor of Social Work degree.

Ms. *Jean Vander Kooy* lives in Harriston, Ontario, and attends Palmerston CRC. She and her husband served with CRWM in Nigeria from 1972-1977. Ms. Vander Kooy is a mission advocate for CRWM in her church, where she and her husband have led the Alpha program with good response and participation from the community. Currently she is a secretary in her husband's medical office and a pastoral care worker in her local church. Ms. Vander Kooy has served as a coordinator of Coffee Break for twenty-five years and as a board member of the local high school.

The following nominees are completing their first term on the board and are being recommended for a second three-year term: Rev. Edward Jager (Region 2), Mr. Jay Sankey (Region 6), Mr. Chuck Powell (Region 7), and Mr. Craig Pollington (U.S. member at-large).

B. Salary information

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

V. Recommendations

A. That synod grant the president of World Missions-Canada, Mrs. *Jacoba (Ko) Spyksma*; the president of World Missions-U.S., Mr. *Colin Watson*; and the director of World Missions, Dr. *Gary J. Bekker*, the privilege of the floor when matters pertaining to Christian Reformed World Missions are addressed.

B. That synod elect by way of the printed ballot those slates of nominees presented for election or for ratification to the Board of World Missions.

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

Note: Recommendations on financial matters are included in the report of the denominational Board of Trustees and will be presented to synod by way of the Finance Advisory Committee.

Christian Reformed World Missions
Gary J. Bekker, director

I. Introduction

As Christians of Reformed faith, we are called to help bring in God's kingdom on earth. As such, the Christian Reformed World Relief Committee's (CRWRC) mandate is to help to build the kingdom by providing aid to survivors of disaster, empowering communities in need, and advocating justice for the oppressed. As CRWRC engages a worldwide community in living justice and loving mercy, we also look to Christian Reformed Church (CRC) congregations for prayer, financial support, advocates, and volunteers.

As economies in North America and Europe struggle with reduced financial resources and a consumerism mindset that diminishes God and his creation, those in developing nations face a global food crisis, an HIV and AIDS pandemic, and natural disasters that are alarming in number and severity. These are the burdens on our hearts today as we seek to fulfill our mandate to the hungry and hopeless as our God commands.

Looking back over what God has done through CRWRC during the past year, we thank him for blessing our programs and our partners. We are also grateful to you for your continuing support of this ministry.

Through God's grace and your faithfulness, last year CRWRC

- strengthened and equipped leaders from 193 local churches and community organizations in 3,853 communities.
- provided training and programs to 581,246 people to help them improve their lives in lasting ways.
- assessed the needs of 40,559 disaster survivors in the United States.
- repaired or rebuilt 562 disaster-damaged homes in the United States.
- provided food, shelter, and emergency assistance to 817,509 people around the world.
- helped 3,594 volunteers serve in 22 countries as God's hands and feet to those in need.
- used its donations from churches and individuals, totaling \$6,078,550 (U.S.) to leverage an additional \$14,140,431 (U.S.) in grants from government and other Christian international agencies.

As you read through this report, please accept our gratitude for all you've done. Please also join CRWRC in prayer that God will bless this work despite financial challenges, and provide sufficient resources to continue to build the kingdom in his name in the poorest places on earth.

II. Ministries of CRWRC

A. *International community transformation*

CRWRC is working in 44 countries around the world through 193 churches and community organizations to alleviate poverty and hunger. CRWRC helps leaders within these churches and organizations involve their own communities in identifying needs, developing solutions, and carrying out programs that lead to positive, permanent change. With CRWRC's help, communities are transformed in partnership with churches and Christian development organizations.

CRWRC helps its partners improve community health, increase agricultural production, boost literacy rates, access clean water, and develop micro-enterprise projects that increase family incomes. Because not one of these programs alone is enough to assure lasting change, CRWRC emphasizes integrated development that builds up local leadership, fosters community ownership, and helps communities address systemic issues that keep people in poverty. As a result, individuals and communities experience physical, spiritual, and social transformation based on biblical principles.

CRWRC's **Free A Family®** program, a cost-effective alternative to child sponsorship, gives North Americans an opportunity to support entire communities living in poverty. These families learn how to read and write, start a business, send their children to school, and better care for their health. Meanwhile, North American supporters learn about a representative family and follow their progress over a four-year period.

B. HIV and AIDS programming

The Embrace AIDS Campaign, launched in December 2007, raises funds to expand CRWRC's existing AIDS programs and introduce new programs in other regions. Many of CRWRC's community development programs have been set back by the brutality of AIDS. But in 2009, Embrace AIDS projects helped 22 partners in 16 countries gain a better understanding of the disease, overcome stigma, and meet the needs of those affected and infected within their communities.

As a result, many of these partners now have solid programs to care for orphans and vulnerable children, minister to those who are sick or dying, and educate people about abstinence, behavior change, and faithfulness.

Through our justice education and advocacy efforts in North America, CRWRC more comprehensively integrated advocacy into the Embrace AIDS Campaign in 2009 and was pleased to see significant success. Constituents were asked to contact several pharmaceutical companies to provide testing equipment, ARVs, and dosage formats suitable for children and infants in the developing world. In July, GlaxoSmithKline announced its decision to improve the access of HIV and AIDS medicines for children living in poverty.

A special initiative that was launched in December 2008, www.iEmbraceAIDS.com, specifically targets young people (ages 18-25) to raise their awareness about HIV and AIDS and how they, as Christians, can help.

C. U.S. church-based community transformation

In July 2009, CRWRC transitioned its community development work in the United States to the Communities First Association (CFA). The mission of CFA is to provide a supportive learning environment, resources, and tools to local churches and faith-based organizations to revitalize neighborhoods. Its goal is to build communities where residents work together toward a better future through the values and vision of God's kingdom.

Similar to CRWRC's ministry approach, CFA is working to **grow a community development movement by training and coaching local church leaders, thereby** influencing churches and organizations from a variety of denominations. These will then, in turn, help their local communities work together, direct their futures, and get a glimpse of the kingdom right here on earth.

CRWRC continues to support CFA as a charter partner in ministry. CRWRC will also provide financial partnership over the next five years. In addition, CRWRC is contracting with CFA to carry on our development work in North America. Through CFA, CRWRC is helping more than 100 CRC congregations engage their communities and encourage transformational change. In all, CFA is already training and coaching 270 leaders who are praying for and transforming an increasing number of communities around the country—140 communities and growing.

D. Justice education and advocacy

1. In North America

The Congregational Justice Mobilization project, a CRWRC collaboration with the CRC Office of Social Justice and Hunger Action (OSJ), is a growing channel through which CRWRC reaches out to CRC congregations to educate about justice and facilitate involvement in advocacy. Thus far, the project is a U.S.-focused effort that encourages congregations to form justice groups, engage in advocacy, and learn more about key areas of injustice around the world and in their own communities. Through presentations to congregations and groups, CRWRC has been able to engage more CRC members across the United States in conversations ranging from HIV and AIDS to world hunger, immigration policy, creation care, and more.

Through this Congregational Justice Mobilization partnership, OSJ and CRWRC also offer a variety of resources to members of the CRC who wish to seek justice in new ways. These include a new weekly resource called OSJ Prayers, which provides prayer requests from around the world that often highlight CRWRC's international justice work. In addition, daily email devotions were provided for the seasons of Lent (on the subject of creation care) as well as Advent (on the subject of peace-building). A second annual \$500 Congregational Green Grant was awarded in 2009 to one congregation in the United States and to one in Canada, to help them underwrite a creation care project in their communities. Webinar opportunities on various justice related topics have been offered to CRC congregations, including immigration, peace-building, and creation care.

In Canada, CRWRC continues to work with KAIROS: Canadian Ecumenical Justice Initiatives on their climate change campaign. We also continue to work in partnership with the Committee for Contact with the Government and many other networks and coalitions dedicated to engaging Christians in the call to justice.

2. Around the world

Justice education continues to be an important and integral part of CRWRC's global ministry. Building on a 2008 evaluation of its justice program, CRWRC has developed new strategies and directions for its justice work. Regional justice staff members have provided leadership in moving this forward.

In 2009 CRWRC's Justice Education Team continued to focus on appropriate programming and on the necessity of a broader integration of justice into all of CRWRC's work. CRWRC built a renewed focus on peace-building and reconciliation. This focus highlighted the necessity

of pursuing lasting peace as a key influence on the overall effectiveness of development work. CRWRC also continues to explore new ways to encourage advocacy both in our international programs and in North America.

A number of pilot justice projects were initiated in 2009. For example, a community in Bangladesh wanted to respond to a growing human trafficking problem. With CRWRC funding, the community was able to form local groups that raised awareness of, and worked to address, the issue. In Guatemala, an education program was established to instruct indigenous populations about gender and human rights, as well as constitutional rights. Through pilot projects like these, CRWRC encourages the integration of justice into all of our work.

E. Service Learning-U.S. and ServiceLink Canada

CRWRC Service Learning-U.S. helps to create collaborative learning opportunities between North Americans and local communities in the countries where CRWRC works. It is amazing to see God use these opportunities to build relationships and offer encouragement to everyone involved.

1. In 2009 CRWRC Service Learning-U.S. began to work with the denominational ServiceLink volunteer program as it provides support to CRC agencies. Together, we continue to develop processes that will enhance CRWRC's ability to provide learning opportunities around the world.
2. Volunteer placements—Service Learning-U.S. placed 361 non-disaster volunteers in opportunities of learning this past year. These volunteers contributed 62,959 hours of service. Service Learning sent discovery tours; work teams; and partnership teams to Haiti, Honduras, Nicaragua, Dominican Republic, Kenya, Uganda, Tanzania, Malawi, Zambia, West Africa, Nigeria, the Philippines, Cambodia, Laos, and Bangladesh. This past year we saw an increase in post-graduate students seeking internships with CRWRC. We have also seen growth in the number of churches committed to developing long-term relational partnerships in a number of countries. CRWRC Service Learning-U.S. has assisted those churches by facilitating orientations and planning ongoing visits as part of their partnerships.
3. Bridgers—The Bridger Program continues to create effective collaborations between CRWRC's local partner communities and North Americans by facilitating volunteer, discovery tour, and partnership visits to the field. CRWRC Bridgers build partner capacities to mobilize community volunteers and effectively use international volunteers by providing Volunteer Management Capacity Training.
4. International Staff Internships (ISI, formerly "Program HOPE!")—During 2009 CRWRC limited the number of ISI placements and focused on filling one-year, self-funded opportunities that provide a similar experience in community development. We expanded our partnerships with colleges to include semester-long opportunities that help meet students' graduation credit requirements. We look forward to growing our College Partnership Program during the coming year. CRWRC currently has international staff interns in West Africa and Honduras.

5. Partner and Field Volunteer Management Capacity Training—Training for on-the-ground volunteers is divided into four phases: learning needs and resource assessment, strategic planning and skills training, implementation and evaluation, and advanced strategies and best practices.

In 2009 all country partner staff in Honduras completed the learning needs and resources assessment phase in volunteer management during the second year of the training program. CRWRC staff and partners in Uganda, Kenya, and Nigeria are in the process of completing phase one training. The training has been an exciting venture, with partners committing 24 months of staff time to strengthen their reception of international volunteers and to mobilize their local communities to serve each other through volunteering.

F. International disaster response

Around the globe, CRWRC's International Disaster Response team responds to natural and man-made disasters, bringing relief and emergency aid to those who need it most. CRWRC works in cooperation with local and international non-government organizations to respond quickly and effectively to the urgent needs of communities devastated by drought, food insecurity, floods, economic privation, civil unrest, tidal waves, or storms. The global recession of the last few years hit the world's poor first and hardest, meaning that millions more people felt the pain of hunger in 2009.

In addition, the impact of increased food prices continues to be felt acutely in many of the communities that CRWRC serves. In East Africa, particularly in Kenya and Uganda, high food prices coupled with devastating drought decimated livestock and stretched community resources to a breaking point. CRWRC's continued membership in the Canadian Foodgrains Bank (CFGB) has been invaluable in responding to this crisis. Through financial support combined with other CFGB members, such as the United Church of Canada, in 2009 CRWRC provided food to 83,000 people in Kenya and 25,000 people in Uganda.

Membership in Action by Churches Together (ACT) also multiplied CRWRC's international disaster response efforts this year. When an earthquake struck Indonesia in October, CRWRC was included in an ACT appeal that resulted in a CRWRC response of over \$1 million, with much of that funding coming from European organizations. In a year when the financial downturn created many constraints, God provided new resources to respond to his people in need.

CRWRC celebrated God's faithfulness with communities in Aceh, Indonesia, as we marked the end of our tsunami rehabilitation program. When CRWRC began working in Aceh in 2005, the region was in the midst of a civil conflict, and Christian organizations were widely mistrusted in the local communities. But through honesty and transparency, CRWRC was welcomed into the villages, helping to build more than 1,000 homes and restoring livelihoods to over 17,000 people. At the conclusion of the project, a Christian senior manager from another region of Indonesia was invited by one village to continue living among them—a remarkable testimony to God's continuing presence in this community.

While one long-term rehabilitation program ended, another began as CRWRC has launched an agricultural rehabilitation program to assist families recovering from war in southern Sudan. This program targets farm

families who have returned home. Unlike Darfur, southern Sudan is blessed with rich soils, available land, and rainfall patterns that usually allow for two harvests each year. CRWRC's program in southern Sudan is planned to continue through 2012, helping subsistence farmers learn new agricultural techniques and explore opportunities for marketing farm produce in the regional capital city, Juba.

In all, in 2009 CRWRC International Disaster Response was able to bring God's comfort and healing to more than 750,000 people affected by disaster through 77 international relief interventions in 32 countries.

G. Disaster Response Services (DRS)

The mission of CRWRC's Disaster Response Services (DRS) is to show God's love and bring hope to disaster affected communities in North America by restoring the homes and lives of those who are most vulnerable.

Through a cadre of regional and project managers, DRS responds immediately when a disaster strikes in North America and U.S. territories. DRS establishes short-and long-term disaster projects that engage government and non-government organizations with whom we have ongoing relationships. DRS addresses immediate needs of disaster survivors through Rapid Response crews who clear downed trees and gut and sanitize flooded homes. In the past year DRS Rapid Response crews served in Louisville, Kentucky; Fruitport, Michigan; and Holland, Michigan—repairing a total of 138 homes.

In addition, DRS performs needs assessments in disaster-struck areas. DRS sends teams of volunteers to survey disaster damage in communities, interviewing survivors to determine the extent of their losses and identifying local community assets and services to help them move forward. DRS provides these communities with data that helps them set priorities and prepares them to seek funding grants for recovery efforts. In 2009 twenty-four communities benefited from DRS Needs Assessment teams who contacted 40,559 families.

DRS is also committed to long-term recovery efforts that empower communities and leave them more organized and more developed than before the disaster. Reconstruction constitutes the largest portion of DRS programs and is accomplished both with longer-term volunteers and with a multitude of shorter-term work groups from churches and schools.

In 2009, DRS operated sites in Cedar Rapids, Iowa; Slidell, Kenner, and Lake Charles, Louisiana; and Port Arthur, Texas. A total of 97 families received newly constructed or restored homes, thanks to longer-term volunteers from around the United States and Canada. Shorter-term groups worked on 443 family homes in partnership with 35 organizations in nine states. While volunteers spend much of their time doing physical labor to restore homes, they recognize that their calling is to show God's love and bring hope to those whose homes were damaged or destroyed by disaster.

DRS managers also assist with the development of long-term recovery organizations that prioritize the needs of the most vulnerable and see the recovery through to the end. During reconstruction, CRWRC employs state-of-the-art mitigation practices to make homes less vulnerable to future disaster. Whenever possible, community development principles are encouraged

and employed, leaving communities better organized, more just, and better positioned for the future.

Disaster survivors benefit immensely from the efforts of DRS volunteers, and volunteers are blessed by seeing lives touched and God at work. A total of 3,218 volunteers worked 294,362 hours in 2009. Volunteers continue to support the work of DRS, not only with their labor, but also with their prayers and their own financial contributions.

The DRS Groups Program continues to grow in number and impact. Groups of churches from the Chicago and Toronto areas undertook major projects, building multiple new homes over the course of several weeks. A series of videos documenting these projects is available as a model and encouragement to groups considering serving. A special Spring Break promotion resulted in higher-than-ever numbers of groups committing to a week of service through DRS.

III. Resource development

2009 was a challenging financial year for nearly all of us and, as always, CRWRC continued to look to our faithful God to provide for our brothers and sisters in need around the world. Despite major adjustments to programs and staffing, CRWRC's financial challenge mounted in 2009 and CRWRC ended the fiscal year with a significant shortfall.

However, CRWRC remains always thankful for the faithful support of constituents and stakeholders, and praises God for his gracious provision through our churches and supporters, who are saving the lives of millions of people who would otherwise suffer great deprivation and hunger.

CRWRC's Embrace AIDS Campaign began on World AIDS Day, December 1, 2007. With an ambitious goal of raising \$3 million for HIV and AIDS response, CRWRC's resource development staff created a funding campaign of note that, as of October 23, 2009, surpassed the initial goal and collected \$3,145,092! CRWRC is gratefully engaged in more fully addressing HIV and AIDS around the world through 23 new projects in 17 countries where CRWRC is helping to reduce stigma, provide health education, and activate churches and communities in caring for AIDS-affected neighbors, friends, and loved ones.

GoatCanucksGoat was a new grass-roots campaign begun in 2009 in Langley, British Columbia, by a group of gung-ho Vancouver Canucks fans. The idea of purchasing a goat from CRWRC's annual gift catalog each time the Canucks won a game in the play-offs grew into "Goat for the Gold," which encouraged Canadians to buy a goat through CRWRC each time Canada won a gold medal at the 2010 Winter Olympics. Through GoatCanucksGoat, hockey fans purchased 1,073 goats at \$34.50 (CDN) each that blessed the lives of families living in poverty in Africa, Asia, and Latin America with food, milk, income, and fertilizer for crops.

CRWRC's World Hunger Campaign reached its 30th birthday in 2009 with no signs of slowing down. More than 275 churches raised awareness about hunger through their participation and gave more than \$1 million to help hungry people through CRWRC. Since its inception in 1979 with a mandate from synod to bring before Christian Reformed constituents the plight of the world's hungry on a corporate basis, CRWRC has engaged communities in North America and around the world by following Jesus' example in

the lives of people in extreme need. The 2009 “At the Table” World Hunger Campaign emphasized our common bonds with people around the world at the Communion Table and at the dinner table. CRWRC’s orange Peter Fish banks were among the resources created to help churches “buy, speak, eat, and advocate” on behalf of those who live with death due to hunger.

IV. Salary disclosure

In accordance with synod’s mandate to report the executive compensation levels and percentage of midpoint, CRWRC reports the following:

Job level	Number of positions	Compensation quartile (includes housing allowance)
18	2	2nd
16	4	1st
15	7	1st

V. Detailed financial information

Detailed financial information and budgets will be submitted to synod by way of the *Agenda for Synod 2010—Financial and Business Supplement*.

For additional financial information, please see CRWRC’s annual report (available at www.crwrc.org).

VI. Board matters

The CRWRC board informs the direction and vision of CRWRC’s work around the world. Elected governing members, called the Joint Ministry Council (JMC), provide leadership to the rest of the board which is made up of representatives from each CRC classis and up to twenty-seven members-at-large. The JMC is responsible for agency oversight and accountability in the United States and in Canada.

In addition, CRWRC’s board members are a vital link to CRC congregations and classes, championing CRWRC programs and priorities within the denomination and its various structures with vigor and passion on behalf of the world’s poorest people.

A. Board of Directors of CRWRC-Canada

- Dennis Jurjens, president
- Francisco Angulo, vice president
- Quentin Nanninga, treasurer
- Gerda Kits, secretary
- Roy Berkenbosch, pastoral advisor
- John Richey
- Bill VanGeest

B. Board of Directors of CRWRC-U.S.

- Stan Cole, president
- Paul Wassink, vice president
- Carol Ackerman, secretary
- Nancy Visser, treasurer
- Mario Avila, Sr., pastoral advisor
- Lawrence Hoogerhyde, Sr.
- Chris Van Spronsen

C. *Canadian Board of Delegates members-at-large*

Ms. Rebecca Lindell and Mr. Bill Van Geest are completing their first term on the Canadian board of delegates and are eligible for a second three-year term. The board recommends Ms. Lindell and Mr. Van Geest for reappointment.

CRWRC respectfully requests Synod 2010 to elect the following two nominees as a members-at-large to the CRWRC Canada Board of Delegates:

Mr. John DeWilde is a member of Hope Fellowship CRC in Courtice, Ontario. He is employed as a professional engineer and works for a medium-size consulting firm in Oshawa. Mr. DeWilde specializes in the investigation and remediation of contaminated soil and groundwater. He and his wife are dedicated to the work of CRWRC through previous work and experiences, such as service as a training volunteer with CRWRC in Niger, West Africa, in the mid 1990s. Recently his family volunteered with CRWRC in Nicaragua, the Philippines, Bangladesh, and Niger. These opportunities strengthened their commitment to the work and people of CRWRC. Mr. DeWilde currently serves on the executive board of the local school.

Mr. Jason Gehrels, a member of Calvin CRC, Ottawa, Ontario, is a student at the University of Ottawa and active in his church. He is passionate about CRWRC's vision for transformed communities that enable people living in poverty, injustice, and disaster to experience the fullness of God's shalom. A young adult himself, he is very keen to link with other students and young adults to encourage them to understand and support CRWRC's ministry on behalf of the CRC.

D. *U.S. pastoral adviser*

Dr. Mariano Avila has served the U.S. Board of Delegates for the past five years and is unable to complete his term. The U.S. Board of Delegates recommends the following for appointment as the U.S. pastoral adviser:

Rev. Thea Leunk is the senior pastor of Eastern Avenue CRC in Grand Rapids, Michigan. Previously she was the pastor of discipleship at Crosspoint CRC, Cincinnati, Ohio, and served as the classis coach for the denomination's Classis Renewal Ministry Team, a joint ministry created by Christian Reformed Home Missions and CRWRC. Rev. Leunk has been a high school English teacher, literacy tutor, and director of church education. When a deacon at her church in Cincinnati in the late 1980s, Rev. Leunk was appointed to represent Classis Lake Erie on the board of CRWRC for two terms, including two years as secretary of the U.S. executive board. She was also the president of the Classis Lake Erie Diaconal Conference during that time and participated in many diaconal leadership development events offered by CRWRC. With the help of CRWRC she recently participated in a pastor's learning tour in East Africa, serving with the pastor of a rural parish in western Kenya. She has also been able to participate twice with a group from Eastern Avenue in DRS service trips to areas affected by Hurricane Katrina. A passion for helping others in Christ's name has always been part of her ministry. At a conference for deacons she attended in 1995 the keynote speaker spoke of the need for "deacons with theological training and, second best, pastors who have the hearts of deacons." That challenge is one she has sought to embrace first as a deacon and now as a pastor in the CRC.

VII. Recommendations

A. That synod grant the privilege of the floor to Mr. Stan Cole, president of CRWRC-U.S.; Mr. Dennis Jurjens, president of CRWRC-Canada; Mr. Andrew Ryskamp, co-director of CRWRC; and Ms. Ida Kaastra-Mutoigo, co-director of CRWRC, when CRWRC matters are discussed and need to be addressed.

B. That synod commend the work of mercy carried on by CRWRC and urge the churches to take at least four offerings per year in lieu of ministry-share support.

C. That synod by way of the ballot reappoint members-at-large for the CRWRC Canadian Board of Delegates.

Note: Recommendations on financial matters are included in the report of the denominational Board of Trustees and will be presented to synod by way of the Finance Advisory Committee.

Christian Reformed World Relief Committee
Andrew Ryskamp, co-director
Ida Kaastra-Mutoigo, co-director

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 operates exclusively in the United States. The Board of Directors of the Loan Fund oversees the loan approval process, the determination of interest rates, and the setting of Loan Fund policies. The board also establishes interest rates for securities sold—primarily to members, classes, churches, and agencies of the CRCNA.

II. Board of Directors

Ms. Christina Bouwer and Rev. Chad Steenwyk are completing their first term on the board and are eligible for reappointment to a second three-year term. The board requests that synod reappoint Ms. Bouwer and Rev. Steenwyk for a second term.

The remaining members of the Board of Directors are Mr. Ronald Haan (2011), Mr. Calvin Jen (2011), Mr. Jon Swets (2012), and Mr. James Zoetewey (2012).

III. Growth of operations

A. The Loan Fund is qualified to sell notes to investors in twenty-seven states: Alaska, Arizona, California, Colorado, Connecticut, Hawaii, Florida, Illinois, Indiana, Iowa, Maine, Maryland, Massachusetts, Michigan, Minnesota, Montana, Nevada, New Hampshire, New Jersey, New Mexico, Ohio, Rhode Island, South Dakota, Texas, Vermont, Washington, and Wisconsin. Efforts continue to add other states with CRC populations if the cost of registration is reasonable.

B. At the close of the 2009 fiscal year (June 30, 2009), a total of \$31,319,993 of interest-bearing Investment Certificates held by investors was outstanding. Interest rates vary from 1.74 percent to 7.06 percent, with a time-weighted average of 3.73 percent. The variances in interest rates reflect market conditions at the time the notes were issued.

C. Since its inception in 1983, the Loan Fund has made over 175 loans totaling \$58.3 million to churches across the United States. As of June 30, 2009, \$28,537,612 of loans was outstanding. Loan delinquencies do occur from time to time, but they are monitored and are minimal. As of June 30, 2009, there were no impaired loans. The Loan Fund maintains a loan loss reserve to cover potential losses.

D. Growth of operations is also reflected in the following data:

	2007	2008	2009
Cash and equivalent Investments	\$3,088,218	\$4,910,852	\$8,743,731
Loans and accounts receivable	\$2,000,000	\$3,000,000	
Equipment and software, less depreciation	\$25,976,308	\$28,008,863	\$28,675,899
	\$25,238	\$16,825	\$8,413
Total	\$31,089,764	\$35,936,540	\$37,428,043

Notes and accounts payable	\$25,787,850	\$30,224,010	\$31,319,993
Net assets	\$5,301,614	\$5,712,530	\$6,108,050
Total liabilities and net assets	\$31,089,764	\$35,936,540	\$37,428,043

E. A summary of the audited financial report as of June 30, 2009, appears in the Agenda for Synod 2009—Financial and Business Supplement.

IV. Sources of funding

Funds for the Loan Fund operations are derived from the following sources:

- The sale of notes in those states where legal approval to offer them has been obtained.
- Gifts and bequests made to the corporation.
- An unsecured line of credit with a bank that permits borrowing up to \$2 million. The Loan Fund currently does not have any amounts outstanding on this line of credit.

V. Recommendations

A. That the Loan Fund’s 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 by way of the ballot reappoint Ms. Christina Bouwer and Rev. Chad Steenwyk to serve a second three-year term on the board of directors.

Christian Reformed Church Loan Fund, Inc., U.S.
Carl A. Gronsman, director

I. Introduction

The mission of Faith Alive Christian Resources (Faith Alive) is “to provide resources that call people to follow Jesus Christ by helping them to understand, experience, and express the good news of God’s kingdom that transforms lives and communities worldwide.”

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

- Our resources are biblical, relevant, high quality, and stewardly.
- Our resources will faithfully reflect the worldview and interpretation of Scripture articulated in the Reformed confessions.
- We will treat each other and those we serve with love and respect.
- Our organizational structure, working environment, and resources will consistently reflect an antiracist perspective.

These statements undergird our work as we attempt to develop and distribute resources that serve the Christian Reformed Church and the church of Jesus Christ worldwide. The ministry of publishing is becoming an ever-greater challenge as we work in a contemporary world that is rapidly changing, and Faith Alive must change if it is to become a vibrant and relevant ministry to the church and the world.

The choices Faith Alive faces involve not so much technical change of adjusting this or that piece of the budget or this or that product line. We are engaging in *adaptive* change. It is change that is not simply an extension of the way things have always been done. It is change that embodies a new way of doing some things. Our current fiscal year 2010 should be considered a transition year—a year that sees us transition from what was to what will be. Faith Alive is currently working through the following significant areas of change:

- Developing a fresh focus for the organization and strategic priorities for the next chapter of Faith Alive.
- Realigning the long-term budget with our strategic priorities and in light of the long-term financial forecast for Faith Alive.
- Looking at our mission and values through the new lens of our vision and realigning them accordingly.

The convergence of these three things does not come along very often in the life of an organization. When it does, the moment is full of opportunity and challenge. Either way, the organization will be quite different a year from now, based on how it responds.

We are assured by this: Faith Alive is called to this time and this place to do God’s work within the limits of who we are—both as individuals and as an organization. God asks that we give our very best in the field that we have been given to work. Our call is not to someone else’s field, but to our field. And with God’s help, we will produce fruit. In the words of the apostle Paul, “You yourselves are our letter, written on our hearts, known and read by everybody. You show that you are a letter from Christ, the result of our ministry, written not with ink but with the Spirit of the living God, not on tablets of stone but on tablets of human hearts” (2 Cor. 3:2-3).

The following is a summary of the work, governance, and administrative developments of our ministry during the past year. We look to synod for suggestions that may help us provide better service to Christian Reformed churches so that they can enhance their ministries.

II. Faith Alive 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.

The every-household *Banner* continues to be well received by a vast majority and wide variety of CRC members. A new, independent marketing survey completed in December 2009 reveals that *The Banner* continues to be widely read and enjoys a good relationship with its readers. Following are some specifics:

- Ninety-four percent report reading the publication (up from 2006 survey): 26 percent cover to cover; 42 percent look through, stop, and read several articles; 26 percent varies from issue to issue.
- Satisfaction with *The Banner* has also increased: 49 percent very satisfied; 31 percent somewhat satisfied; 6 percent neither satisfied nor dissatisfied; 7 percent somewhat dissatisfied; 7 percent very dissatisfied (this last number has risen from 1% in 2006).
- Two highest reasons for why respondents read *The Banner*: 93 percent, “informs me about what is going on in the CRC”; 79 percent, “informs me about the work of the agencies and ministries of the CRC.” (Total exceeds 100% because survey asked participants to pick all that applied.)

Reader support of the magazine has also remained very high. Annual fundraising efforts in 2009 again met with excellent results despite the faltering economy.

The editor of *The Banner*, Rev. Robert De Moor, continues to provide the overall leadership for the magazine on a 60 percent FTE basis. He also serves as pastor of preaching and administration at West End CRC in Edmonton, Alberta. This arrangement works well. Rev. De Moor continues his blog on *The Banner* website as part of the staff’s attempt to increase readership and accessibility. In addition, the audio version of *The Banner* can be downloaded in MP3 format, and we have a presence on Facebook and Twitter with regular updates.

The Banner staff keeps looking for ways to improve the magazine. In the current year we are replacing “Reformed Matters” with a column titled “True Confessions” that will introduce the confessions to our readers and help them to think through the decisions synod will be faced with in 2012 with respect to adoption of the Belhar Confession and a revised

Form of Subscription. We are also shaking up our FAQ topics and experts to keep that much-read column fresh.

A representative sample of articles that received the most response during the past year includes many that appeared in *The Banner's* "In My Humble Opinion" (IMHO) column, a place where readers air opinions on a variety of topics related to the CRC and Christian living. We're encouraged by that as we seek to promote an ongoing "kitchen-table" dialogue among church members about important issues facing the church. These articles include the following:

- "No Need to Adopt the Belhar" by Rev. Paul Hansen (IMHO, November 2009—along with Bob De Moor's editorial about the Belhar, "Shoes," June 2009)
- "Where Is My Son Welcome?" by Rev. Michael Veenema (IMHO, March 2009—along with Bob De Moor's editorial "What's to Discuss?" in the same issue)
- "Cultural Sensitivity" (gender-inclusive language) by Rev. Beth Guikema-Bode (IMHO, August 2009)
- "Reflection for Independence Day" by Rev. Brian D. Berghoef (June 2009)

Although we receive thanks regularly for many individual articles, readers expressed particular appreciation for the following:

- "Light for a Dark Path" (mental illness, with accompanying reader stories) by Rev. Tony Meyer (May 2009)
- "31 Ways to Pray for Your Children" by Mr. Bob Hostetler (August 2009)
- "Reading the Bible Well" by Aminah Al-Attas Bradford and Dr. Mary Hulst (January 2010)

Readers also enjoyed getting in on the fun of the John Calvin bobblehead's birthday trip around the world last year, photos of which appeared in *Punch Lines* in 2009, many of which were sent in unsolicited. Quite a few folks did not, however, appreciate the "cartoon" cover in January 2009 celebrating Calvin's 500th.

This year *The Banner* staff is developing plans to expand our online presence. The recent market survey shows clearly that more and more CRC members are interested in, and expect to find, a robust web presence for *The Banner*. While we wish to be careful not to erode the quality of the print magazine in any way, we do recognize the need to communicate effectively with a more diverse audience. Interestingly enough, we found that not only younger generations but older generations as well are significantly represented as preferring to find us online. Reasons vary, but one significant reason is the amount of interest in more two-way communication. Our audience enjoys hearing from our authors, staff, and also from each other. We want to honor that by building a high quality web community that offers meaningful communication in the context of our shared denominational commitment.

2. *Voice of the Reformed*

For a number of years, synod has helped fund *Voice of the Reformed*, a monthly periodical published by the CRC Korean Council through a ministry-share allocation to Faith Alive. The purpose of this publication is to provide a bridge between the Anglo and Korean CRC communities. Accordingly, the magazine often includes translations of articles and news stories from *The Banner*.

B. Editorial Department

The goal of this department is to be the first-stop resource provider for CRC and RCA churches and a significant resource provider for other churches in the Reformed/Presbyterian tradition.

1. Curriculum

a. For children

Developing and producing church-school curriculum materials (for Sunday school, catechism classes, adult small groups, and so on) continues to be the major activity of our curriculum ministry.

The most important activity of this ministry is publishing curriculum for children. The *Walk With Me* curriculum and the *Kid Connection* curriculum (intended for smaller churches) are the flagship curricula we currently publish for children. A total of about 2,000 churches, 660 of them CRC, use at least one of our core curricula for children. *Walk With Me*, in its sixth year, is currently performing below expectations largely due to the economy. *Kid Connection*, now in its third year, will be complete this year. Sales are lagging just slightly behind, also due to a depressed U.S. economy. An entirely new curriculum for children is currently in development with a planned release in Fall 2011.

Newly released in August 2009, the flexible five-session *Hand in Hand* curriculum helps kids in grades K-6 learn to appreciate and celebrate the diversity in God's family. Sessions address issues of differences, prejudice, inclusion, unity, and how to celebrate diversity.

The number of new customers added each year (over 500) is slightly above the number of drops. Research shows churches drop our curriculum for a variety of reasons, but primarily state a "desire for something new and different" as the main reason for change. Other denominational publishers are experiencing similar trends. This, combined with an increasingly competitive market, will prove challenging in the coming years. Growth will come through an expansion of distribution channels (attracting and retaining new customers) and through innovation. It is not enough to create a "new and improved" curriculum. Faith Alive must reinvent curriculum by establishing a new vision of faith formation in the local church.

b. For youth

The most important curriculum that we offer for youth, in our view, is curriculum that teaches the doctrines of our church to youth. We publish two resources to support this ministry: *Questions Worth Asking*, a two-year course on the Heidelberg Catechism with a cutting edge pedagogy, and *HC and Me*, a two-year course that incorporates more traditional pedagogy.

No Easy Answers is an introduction to Christian ethics based on real-life dilemmas and case studies organized around the Ten Commandments. It is highly interactive and designed for teens and young adults. The new, totally online version released in 2009 includes a downloadable leader guide and student materials. Even when there are no easy answers, this course prepares students to make good decisions grounded in God's Word.

c. For adults

The most significant new series of products for adults published by Faith Alive is the *Disciples* program. This multiyear program, which came out in summer 2007, offers an integrated approach that helps adults at all stages of their spiritual journey grow in their faith walk. The second year of this program focused on some of the spiritual disciplines, such as prayer, Bible reading, and worship. This second year did not perform as well as the first year. A planned third year has been completely reformatted and revised into five titles for a new series focused on putting discipleship into action. The new series will be called *In the Works* and features sessions on sharing one's faith, social justice, and others.

Three of Faith Alive's more traditional Bible study series for adults are *Discover Your Bible*, designed to support the Coffee Break ministry of Home Missions as well as many other types of small groups; *Discover Life*, designed to support men's Bible study as well as groups for women, couples, and singles; and a more intensive Bible study series called *Word Alive* for various groups. *Discover Judges* was released in July 2009 in the Discover Your Bible series. A fresh revision *Discover Romans* will release in July 2010.

An entirely new inductive Bible study series will release in 2010. The new *Infuse Bible Studies* will aim to help people discover where faith and life meet. Three studies are planned for 2010: *Esther* (Feb.), *Jonah* (April), and *Matthew* (July).

Other recently released resources for adults include

- *Bethesda, Come to the Water*—A Bible study for women who have dealt with some form of abuse
- *The Book That Understands You*—A Bible study for people new to the Bible, introducing it as God's story

Other products for adults include

- *The Day Metallica Came to Church* (August 2010) by Rev. John Van Sloten—a fresh look finding the everywhere God in everything including where we least expect him to show up
- *Just One Click* (July 2010) by Drs. Robert Baird and Ronald Vanderbeck—Solutions based with inspiration from Scripture and insight from the behavioral sciences, *Just One Click* presents specific and practical help to assist those struggling with sexual temptation on the Internet
- *Celebrating Milestones* (July 2009)—helps families, individuals, and churches identify faith milestones and celebrate them together

- *Coming Home, Devotions for Advent* (November 2009)—written by Rev. Timothy Brown, president and professor of preaching at Western Theological Seminary in Holland, Michigan
- *Through Tears to Joy: Devotions for Lent* (February 2010)—written by Rev. Stan Mast, minister of preaching at LaGrave Avenue CRC in Grand Rapids, Michigan
- *Daylight: 366 Devotional Readings* (December 2009)—written by Rev. Andrew Kuyvenhoven, this bestselling classic devotional with over 50,000 copies sold has been revised and updated

d. For people with cognitive impairments

The board of Friendship Ministries, an independent ministry, continues to raise funds to support the development and marketing of resources and program support for people with cognitive impairments. The basic curriculum for this program is a three-year curriculum called *Friendship Bible Studies*. In the past year Friendship Ministries and Faith Alive have been working to develop a new course on the Psalms.

e. For people with visual impairments

Working with Pathways International, a ministry in Minnesota, staff continues to expand the list of resources available in Braille. A small ministry-share amount is designated for this work.

f. Training and consulting

Synod 2006 provided for some ministry-share dollars to support a Sunday school training and consulting coordinator. In December 2007 Ms. Jolanda Howe was hired to facilitate training and support and to encourage networking opportunities among church educators and teachers.

Since 2009 online training has become a major focus of our efforts. Webinars, videos, and web meetings now allow us to connect with churches across North America to provide them with convenient, free training and support. In August 2009 Faith Alive launched two children’s ministry blogs full of practical ideas with e-newsletters that alert educators to the most recent postings.

In 2010 Faith Alive will continue to encourage educators to network with one another to share ideas and offer mutual support. Along with serving as the guide for the CRC’s Sunday School Network, Ms. Howe also continues to support the growth and expansion of the Association of Christian Reformed Educators (ACRE). ACRE’s mission is to strengthen educational ministries within the CRC, and it began offering formal membership in August 2008. Faith Alive will continue to partner with ACRE to offer grants to help educators form local networks that meet together regularly with their communities.

2. Resources for church leaders

Considerable planning has continued this past year to develop a more comprehensive plan for providing resources for church leaders. The following resources are in various stages of development or release:

- *Welcome* brochure—several longer and shorter CRC welcome brochures are being replaced with one longer (30 pages) and one shorter

(tri-fold) product for church literature racks for visitors and/or inquirers.

- *Deacon Handbook*—we replaced our two former deacons’ books with this basic handbook in the style of the newly revised *Elder Handbook*.

3. Worship resources

The quarterly magazine *Reformed Worship* continues to provide churches with solid resources for their worship planning. There are approximately 4,200 subscribers, many from denominations other than the CRC. Because of a grant from the Calvin Institute of Christian Worship, we have been able to place all prior issues of the magazine on the web.

Synod 2007 approved the development of a bi-denominational hymnbook developed in cooperation with the Reformed Church in America (RCA). Work continues on this project as we gather the suggestions of the editorial committee, process song lists from various churches, respond to various inquiries from composers and text writers, and begin to receive submissions of newly written music. In addition, a committee made up of RCA and CRC representatives has been formed to develop common texts for our various creeds and confessions. Newly named, *Lift Up Your Hearts* has a scheduled release of June 2013.

Faith Alive is working with the Calvin Institute of Christian Worship to produce some precursor hymnals to *Lift Up Your Hearts*. *Contemporary Songs for Worship* and *Hymns for Worship* are now available; the latter, released in November 2009, includes 250 songs in chronological order according to their text. Work on the final collection, the *Global Songbook* continues with a planned release in June 2009.

We continue to work with the RCA staff to coordinate support for the Children and Worship program used by many of our churches.

C. World Literature Ministries

1. Introduction and overview

World Literature Ministries (WLM) publishes and distributes biblical Christian literature in several languages—primarily Spanish. The Spanish line of products is published under the imprint Libros Desafío. The literature is intended to introduce its readers to and nurture them in a Reformed view of faith and life. Most of the books are translated works from English books in doctrine or biblical studies and are intended for church leaders.

Two significant changes have greatly improved the future of WLM. Mr. Jan Dijkman was hired as director in 2008, and Rev. Alejandro Pimentel was hired as associate editor in 2009. Going forward, Mr. Dijkman will focus his efforts on developing new publishing opportunities and opening new markets for WLM products while Rev. Pimentel will provide critical editorial support. With these two additions WLM is well positioned for ministry growth. Key publishing highlights include the following:

- Translation of John Calvin’s *Institutes of the Christian Religion* in modern Spanish will be finished by next September.
- A Greek course for beginners, written by the dean of the seminary in Medellin (Colombia), has been released and was printed at Buena Semilla in Colombia.

- *Pour une Philosophie Chrétienne des Sciences (A Plea for a Christian Philosophy of Science)*, written by Lydia Jaeger, translated (from French into Spanish) under the responsibility of the seminary of theology in Madrid, has been revised by Rev. Alejandro Pimentel and will be released soon.

Faith Alive is investigating the possibility of a shared distribution center in Miami, Florida, allowing for faster and less expensive distribution of World Literature products into Central and South America. It is also exploring a ministry partnership with Back to God Ministries International's ministry headquarters in Brazil.

2. Korean literature

Several years ago, Faith Alive transferred all publishing in the Korean language to the Korean Council. The Korean Council has moved aggressively in translating and publishing resources, most of them Bible studies from the *Discover Your Bible* series, into Korean. The council works closely with a Korean publisher, called *CRC Publications*, in distributing these materials in Korea. It has also formed relations with people in China to publish and distribute some of these materials in China.

The Korean Council has published other important CRC materials into Korean, such as the Church Order and the Heidelberg Catechism.

D. Marketing and Customer Service Departments

The functions performed by the Marketing Department include promotion, public relations and communications, sales of *Banner* ads, market research and analysis, and sales forecasting.

Although our print catalog remains a key vehicle for communicating with churches about our products, the web and email have become very important in recent years. Since 2004 web visits have increased 33 percent, and web orders have increased 147 percent. Revenue from web orders has increased 160 percent during that same time span. Through December 2009, 35 percent of all Faith Alive orders come through the Faith Alive website. Nearly 10,000 people have signed up for our monthly e-newsletter. Other communication channels include direct mail, conferences, print and web-based advertising, publicity, and order enclosures.

In February 2009 Faith Alive switched to a new e-commerce system. The transition to this new system has gone very well. Features of the new site include

- special promotion codes offering discounts on specific products for certain groups of customers or targeted prospects
- e-newsletter and e-communications features
- much better and faster searches and improved navigation
- real-time shipping rates for UPS
- analytics features and reports showing visits to the sites, purchases, and more

Faith Alive promotes its curricula to churches from a wide variety of Reformed and Presbyterian churches. Curriculum promotions are distributed to nearly 40,000 churches. As indicated in the chart below, Faith Alive's publishing ministry is much broader than the Christian Reformed Church.

More than one-half of Faith Alive’s accounts and sales for English-language products are to non-CRC churches.

Denomination	Active customers	% of total	Sales	% of total
CRC	841	20	\$845,000	44
RCA	601	15	295,000	15
PCUSA	916	22	341,000	18
Bookstores/schools/ distributors	391	9	163,000	8
Other	1,402	34	295,000	15
Total	4,151	100	\$1,939,000	100

Faith Alive’s Customer Service Team continues to provide excellent service to our customers. In a recent survey, respondents gave this department a 4.75 rating on a 5-point scale for their service.

E. Personnel

The Faith Alive staff team is made up of just over thirty employees. Our staff is organized into five departments and an administrative office.

The Publishing Leadership Team is a management group made up of the director, Mr. Mark Rice, and representatives from the following departments: Ms. Jena Vander Ploeg, Periodicals (*The Banner*); Rev. Leonard Vander Zee and Ms. Ruth Vander Hart, Editorial; Mr. Chad Kruizenga, Marketing; Ms. Jane Hilbrand, Customer Service/Operations; Ms. Alina Pellecer, Customer Service; and Mr. Michael Dykema, Financial Services.

E. Finances

The Faith Alive Christian Resources board remains firmly committed to the goal that Faith Alive’s ministry should be, as nearly as possible, financially self-supporting. However, it recognizes that projects may be undertaken (either because our board believes they are necessary or because synod requests them) that cannot be financially self-supporting. This has been traditionally true for our World Literature Ministries Department. We also receive ministry-share dollars for the every-household *Banner*. Given the trend in recent years of churches changing curriculum frequently and its impact on our financial base, the long-term finances of our ministry will be strained. Work has already begun on a long-term financial analysis of Faith Alive and plans are in place for the development of new curricula, new publishing models, and increased distribution channels.

Faith Alive submits (for synod’s information) reviewed financial statements for the fiscal year ending June 30, 2009, and the budget for fiscal year 2011. These reports have been submitted to the denominational director of finance and administration for placement in the *Agenda for Synod 2010—Financial and Business Supplement*.

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

A. Organization

A board of up to eighteen delegates, one from each CRC region, and up to six at-large delegates (three from the RCA) elected by synod, governs Faith Alive. The board ordinarily meets three times annually in September,

February, and April. Each member of the board serves on one of three councils: Administrative, Editorial, or *The Banner*.

B. Officers

The officers of the Faith Alive board for 2009-2010 are Rev. Kenneth Baker, president; Mr. Pieter Pereboom, vice-president; Ms. Irene Bakker, secretary; and Mr. Tom Prince, treasurer.

C. Nominations of board members

1. Regional delegates

The following slate of nominees is being presented for vote at the spring classis meetings. The results of the vote will be presented to synod for ratification.

Region 3

Mrs. Phyllis Alberts-Meijers is a member of First CRC in Barrie, Ontario. She holds a B.A. in secondary education and English from Dordt College. She is currently a full-time high school teacher at a large Catholic high school, teaching religion and philosophy. Previous committee experience includes membership on strategic planning boards at both the school and church level, the local school board, and the First CRC education committee. Mrs. Alberts-Meijers is currently serving as pastoral elder at her church and is ecumenically inclined but deeply committed to the Reformed tradition. She will bring to the Faith Alive board a passion for Reformed theology and a good understanding of Faith Alive's resources and curriculum.

Mrs. Valerie Walker is a member of All Nations CRC in Halifax, Nova Scotia. She holds a bachelor's degree from Dalhousie University. Throughout her career she has found ways to pursue and support spiritual education and faith nurture. Mrs. Walker is very familiar with Faith Alive and has a strong background in education and training, serving as a Sunday school teacher, Christian education director, and camp counselor. She has extensive experience as a trainer for Young Children and Worship, and has been a Faith Alive church education consultant and a writer for Faith Alive's *Walk With Me* curriculum. Mrs. Walker currently holds the position of administrative assistant and has served as an elder in her church.

2. Delegates eligible for a second term

The following delegates are completing their first term and are eligible for a second three-year term: Rev. Joel Ringma (Region 1) and Rev. Elizabeth Brown Hardeman (at-large – RCA). Mr. Cal Jen (at-large) has decided not to serve a second term. Nominees for this position will be presented by way of the supplementary report of the Board of Trustees for election by synod.

3. RCA alternates

The following nominees are recommended as RCA alternates to the Faith Alive Board.

Ms. Nakisha Zwylghuizen grew up in West Michigan and has been a lifetime member of Community Reformed Church in Zeeland. She graduated from Hope College in 2004 with a degree in social work, and also has a

master's degree in social work from Western Michigan University. Ms. Zwyghuizen has been working as the children's director at Community Reformed Church since February 2005. She enjoys networking to find new resources, curriculum, and ideas that she can share with children and their families. She also coordinates a network of children's directors that meet on a monthly basis to share ideas and resources.

Rev. Edgardo Acevedo is a graduate of Central College, Pella, Iowa, and has an M.Div from New Brunswick Seminary, New Brunswick, New Jersey. He is an ordained pastor of youth ministries at Fort Washington Collegiate Church, New York, New York. Rev. Acevedo is also an accomplished gospel rapper and speaker. He has a passion for sharing the truth of Christ in the language of the people and is very energetic.

D. Committee to Propose a Combined RCA/CRC Translation of the Three Reformed Standards

As part of the planning for the bi-denominational hymnal, it was noted that the RCA and CRC have differing versions of the Reformed standards (the Belgic Confession, Heidelberg Catechism, and Canons of Dort). This divergence has also hampered the commitment of Faith Alive to serve as "official resource provider" to both denominations. Therefore, with the approval of the two denominational offices, a small committee was formed by Faith Alive to work toward a common translation of the confessions. The report of the committee and their recommendations are found in the Appendix.

E. Relationship with the denominational structure and denominational plan

As Faith Alive staff does its planning for new resources, it does so with careful attention to the strategic priorities and goals incorporated in the Denominational Ministries Plan (DMP).

Faith Alive staff has also been heavily involved in the development of the balanced Ministries Plan Scorecard, which is designed to help implement the DMP. Faith Alive is committed to working with other denominational agencies and institutions to help ensure the success of this initiative.

In addition to this work directly associated with the DMP, Faith Alive works closely with other CRC agencies and related organizations to assist them in their ministry. Examples of this include the following:

- Faith Alive provides various CRC-developed English-language resources needed by Christian Reformed Home Missions to carry out its ministry. We also work with a number of other agencies in this way.
- World Literature Ministries works with the mission agencies to provide publishing support for their foreign-language literature needs. Most of this work is focused on Spanish-language resources.
- We partner with the Calvin Institute of Christian Worship in a number of ways, including co-publishing resources. For example, we are currently working with the Institute in publishing a number of songbooks as part of the strategy for publishing a new bi-denominational hymnal with the Reformed Church in America.
- *The Banner* regularly publishes information about the ministries of the various CRC agencies and institutions. In fact, each issue of the every-household *Banner* includes eight pages of information about

denominational agencies and ministries in the Church@Work section, as well as regular coverage in the news section.

- We provide order fulfillment services for several of the CRC agencies.

E. *Relationships with other organizations*

During the past few years, Faith Alive has placed an increased emphasis on developing relationships with other Christian organizations in an effort to increase the impact of our ministry and to enable us to broaden the range of resources we offer. Many of these relationships have proven to be very helpful. Following are some of the more significant relationships:

- Reformed Church in America (RCA)—One of the most significant developments in recent years was the agreement to enter into a full partnership with the RCA whereby Faith Alive Christian Resources is the resource provider for the RCA. This agreement was implemented in December 2004 and has been working well.
- Presbyterian Church in the USA (PCUSA)—Several years ago we formed a partnership with the Presbyterians for Renewal organization within the PCUSA. This organization, serving over 3,000 evangelical congregations, is a co-publisher of the *Walk With Me* curriculum. The PCUSA carries our *Friendship* curriculum and our *Kid Connection* curriculum.
- We work closely with the Association of Presbyterian Church Educators (APCE) on their annual conference. We also partner with the nascent Association of Christian Reformed Educators (ACRE).
- Evangelical Presbyterian Church (EPC)—Our entire catalog, along with an endorsement letter from the general secretary of the EPC, and numerous other promotional materials are sent to the churches of this denomination.
- Christian Schools International—We meet regularly with staff members from this organization to discuss shared resources, plans, and other pertinent issues. We also work together on collaborative marketing efforts, providing each other with access to their customer lists for appropriate titles.
- Dynamic Youth Ministries (DYM)—We also meet twice annually with the staff of DYM to discuss plans and opportunities for collaboration.
- Baker Book House—We periodically copublish books with this publisher. *Seeking God's Face* will release in 2010 as a co-published title.

G. *Use of Faith Alive Christian Resources by CRC churches*

Most CRC churches make extensive use of the many resources offered by Faith Alive. In fact, about 95 percent of CRC churches are on our customer list. Approximately 70 percent of CRC churches use one or more of our curricula for children. While that is high compared to many denominations, decreasing loyalty to denominational resources and an increasingly competitive curriculum marketplace will place pressure on Faith Alive to create innovative, new approaches to curriculum publishing, find ways to retain and expand its customer base, and expand its distribution channels. CRC churches place a high value on ensuring that their children are being taught using curriculum written with a Reformed perspective, but they are finding other methods to accomplish this by not necessarily using the Reformed

curricula Faith Alive offers—*Walk With Me* and *Kid Connection*. At the same time we are encouraged that Faith Alive curricula are being positively received by churches from other denominations as high quality, easy-to-use curricula.

H. Antiracism

Faith Alive continues to be an active participant in the effort of the CRC to respond to synod’s directive to initiate a significant response to the issue of racism in the CRC. Faith Alive employees voluntarily participate in bi-weekly gatherings aimed at understanding each other and our perspectives on racism, in an open, non-threatening environment. Faith Alive also has an anti-racism team that reviews staffing levels, job descriptions, and postings to ensure Faith Alive’s hiring and staffing efforts are consistent with its anti-racism policies.

The Faith Alive board also has an active antiracism team committed to achieving the following vision approved by the board: “The Faith Alive board covenants to become an antiracist community by respecting and valuing cultural diversity as a God-given asset of the human family.”

I. Salary disclosure

Faith Alive, in accord with the action taken by synod, submits the following annual compensation data:

Job level	Positions	Compensation quartile (includes housing allowance)
18	1	1st
17	2	1st and 2nd
15	1	3rd

IV. Recommendations

A. The Faith Alive Christian Resources board requests synod to grant the privilege of the floor to the following people when matters of Faith Alive are discussed:

For the board

- Rev. Kenneth Baker, president
- Mr. Mark Rice, director

For *The Banner*

- Rev. Robert De Moor, editor in chief

For the Editorial Department

- Rev. Leonard Vander Zee, director

B. That synod by way of the printed ballot ratify the elections of and reappoint members to the Faith Alive Christian Resources board from the nominees presented.

C. That synod address the following recommendations with regard to the Committee to Propose a Combined RCA/CRC Translation of the Three Reformed Standards (section III, D and Appendix to this report):

1. That synod grant the privilege of the floor to Rev. Leonard Vander Zee, Dr. Lyle Bierma, and Dr. Todd Billings when the combined RCA/CRC translation of the Three Reformed Standards is addressed.
2. That Synod 2010 adopt the new translation of the Belgic Confession, the Heidelberg Catechism, and the Canons of Dort as presented (see Addendum to the Appendix) for use in the CRC.

Grounds:

- a. A common translation of the confessions will greatly help the mission of Faith Alive as an official resource provider to the RCA, as well as generally increase cooperation and partnership between the two denominations.
- b. The participation of the PCUSA in the Heidelberg Catechism translation will make it a truly ecumenical document, especially in anticipation of the celebration of the Heidelberg Catechism's 450th anniversary in 2013.
- c. Since the PCUSA is also a significant customer for Faith Alive products, their participation will expand our market, especially for Heidelberg Catechism materials.

Note: Recommendations on financial matters are included in the report of the denominational Board of Trustees and will be presented to synod by way of the finance advisory committee.

Faith Alive Christian Resources
Mark Rice, director

Appendix

Report of the Committee to Propose a Combined RCA/CRC Translation of the Three Reformed Standards

I. Background

As part of the planning for the bi-denominational hymnal, it was noted that the RCA and CRC have differing versions of the Reformed Standards (the Belgic Confession, Heidelberg Catechism, and Canons of Dort). This divergence has also hampered the commitment of Faith Alive to serve as "official resource provider" to both denominations. Therefore, with the approval of the two denominational offices, a small committee was formed by Faith Alive to work toward a common translation of the confessions. The theologians on the committee brought an uncommon expertise in their familiarity with the confessions and their aptitude with the original languages. The members are Dr. Lyle Bierma, Calvin Theological Seminary; Dr. Todd Billings, Western Theological Seminary; Dr. Eugene Heideman, retired RCA theologian and denominational leader; and Rev. Leonard Vander Zee, editor in chief, Faith Alive.

Faced with a formidable task, and without knowing the possible barriers, the committee soon found that all participants were eager to work out differences in the confessional texts, and a spirit of uncommon unity and commitment pervaded its work. The committee decided that it would not undertake a totally new translation but work from the present translations

in the two denominations. However, where there were discrepancies the committee consulted the original languages to resolve the textual differences. In addition, there were some places in which it was judged that the translation needed improvement, and this, again, was done by looking back to the original language documents.

After the committee was well into its work, it was contacted by a similar committee that had just been formed in the Presbyterian Church (USA) (PCUSA) to do a fresh translation of the Heidelberg Catechism. They asked to see our work and, after studying it for a time, felt that doing a translation of their own was no longer necessary. Over time, they offered some suggestions for further improvement, many of which were readily accepted. Hence, this new translation will also be recommended for adoption in the PCUSA, making it a truly ecumenical document.

The translation committee has now completed its work and wishes to recommend the translations found in the Addendum to the respective synods for approval.

II. Recommendations

A. That synod grant the privilege of the floor to Rev. Leonard Vander Zee, Dr. Lyle Bierma, and Dr. Todd Billings when the combined RCA/CRC translation of the Reformed standards is addressed.

B. That Synod 2010 adopt the new translation of the Belgic Confession, the Heidelberg Catechism, and the Canons of Dort as presented (see Addendums) for use in the CRC.

Grounds:

1. A common translation of the confessions will greatly help the mission of Faith Alive as an official resource provider to the RCA, as well as generally increase cooperation and partnership between the two denominations.
2. The participation of the PCUSA in the Heidelberg Catechism translation will make it a truly ecumenical document, especially in anticipation of the celebration of the Heidelberg Catechism's 450th anniversary in 2013.
3. Since the PCUSA is also a significant customer for Faith Alive products, their participation will expand our market, especially for Heidelberg Catechism materials.

Addendum 1

Introduction for the Reformed Confessions Translation

This translation is the result of the work of a joint task force formed by the Reformed Church in America (RCA) and the Christian Reformed Church in North America (CRC). The task force was commissioned to produce a common text for the Reformed confessions, building upon the work of the previous translations from both denominations. Since a separate introduction will introduce each confession, this general introduction gives a statement of principles used for coming to a common translation.

The task force did not attempt a wholesale retranslation of the confessions but, rather, used the texts of previously approved RCA and CRC translations as a starting point. Where the translations diverged, or where subsequent scholarship called into question both previous translations, the task force returned to the original language documents to resolve textual differences. Sometimes this resolution involved opting for the previous RCA or CRC translation; at other times, the task force developed a fresh translation from the original text.

Some divergences in previous translations had to do with gender usage for humanity and God. The task force adopted the following approach in these cases: in references to humankind, all references to *men* or other exclusive terms have been changed to *human* or to a similar gender-inclusive term. With regard to language about God, the task force sought to reduce the number of male pronouns for God when it could be done with felicity but did not attempt to eliminate them altogether. Several principles guided this process. On the one hand, excessive repetition of the male pronoun for *God* was avoided. On the other hand, excessive repetition of the word *God* as a substitute for the pronoun *him* was also avoided. In addition, when the elimination of a male pronoun for *God* would obscure the theological point of the passage, the pronoun was retained. These principles echo the protocol used by Faith Alive Christian Resources.

For direct quotations from Scripture within the Belgic Confession and the Heidelberg Catechism, the task force used the New Revised Standard Version. In the Canons of Dort, because the text of this confession depends on the particular seventeenth-century biblical translations used at the Synod of Dort, the Scripture quotations are translations from the original Latin and do not always correspond to current versions.

This joint translation does not erase differences remaining between the denominations regarding the confessions. For example, wherever an action of the general synod of one denomination has made a modification of the confession (as with the Belgic Confession, Article 36), it is noted in the text. The discrepancy is not resolved, but simply preserved. Nevertheless, for both denominations, this translation represents a step forward in cooperation and partnership.

Note: Changes in the proposed translations are highlighted for comparison purposes, with the exception of changes in the use of pronouns as explained above.

Addendum 2

Introduction to the Belgic Confession

The oldest of the doctrinal standards of the Christian Reformed Church and the Reformed Church in America is the Confession of Faith, popularly known as the Belgic Confession, following the seventeenth-century Latin designation “*Confessio Belgica*.” “*Belgica*” referred to the whole of the Netherlands, both north and south, which today is divided into the Netherlands and Belgium. The confession’s chief author was Guido de Brès, a preacher of the Reformed churches of the Netherlands, who died a martyr to the faith in the year 1567. During the sixteenth century the churches in this country were

exposed to terrible persecution by the Roman Catholic government. To protest against this cruel oppression, and to prove to the persecutors that the adherents of the Reformed faith were not rebels, as was laid to their charge, but law-abiding citizens who professed the true Christian doctrine according to the Holy Scriptures, de Brès prepared this confession in the year 1561. In the following year a copy was sent to King Philip II, together with an address in which the petitioners declared that they were ready to obey the government in all lawful things, but that they would “offer their backs to stripes, their tongues to knives, their mouths to gags, and their whole bodies to the fire,” rather than deny the truth expressed in this confession.

Although the immediate purpose of securing freedom from persecution was not attained, and de Brès himself fell as one of the many thousands who sealed their faith with their lives, his work has endured and will continue to endure. In its composition the author availed himself to some extent of a confession of the Reformed churches in France, written chiefly by John Calvin, published two years earlier. The work of de Brès, however, is not a mere revision of Calvin’s work, but an independent composition. In 1566 the text of this confession was revised at a synod held at Antwerp. In the Netherlands it was at once gladly received by the churches, and it was adopted by national synods held during the last three decades of the sixteenth century. The text, not the contents, was revised again at the Synod of Dort in 1618-19 and adopted as one of the doctrinal standards to which all officebearers in the Reformed churches were required to subscribe. The confession is recognized as one of the best official summaries of Reformed doctrine.

The text of Article 36 is presented in two forms in this edition because the Christian Reformed Church in 1938 and 1985 decided to revise it from the original text in order to set forth what it judged to be a more biblical statement on the relationship between church and state, and to eliminate language that denounced “Anabaptists, other anarchists . . .” and so on. The Reformed Church in America has not made any amendments to the Belgic Confession. However, when the Reformed Church in America adopted the Belgic Confession in 1792 as one of the three confessional Standards of Unity, it also adopted the Explanatory Articles that reconciled the statements in the three standards and the Church Order of Dort with the situation in which it existed in the newly independent United States of America. With regard to Article 36 dealing with the relation of church and state, it stated that “whatever relates to the immediate authority and interposition of the Magistrate in the government of the Church, and which is introduced more or less into all the national establishments in Europe, is entirely omitted in the constitution now published.” With regard to the harsh words about Anabaptists and others in Article 36, the RCA stated that “in publishing the Articles of Faith, the Church determined to abide by the words adopted in the Synod of Dordrecht, as most expressive of what she believes to be truth; in consequence of which, the terms alluded to could not be avoided. But she openly and candidly declares that she by no means thereby intended to refer to any denomination of Christians at present known, and would be grieved at giving offence, or unnecessarily hurting the feelings of any person.”

1985 Version

Article 1: The Only God

We all believe in our hearts
and confess with our mouths
that there is a single
and simple
spiritual being,
whom we call God—

eternal,
incomprehensible,
invisible,
unchangeable,
infinite,
almighty;

completely wise,
just,
and good,
and the overflowing source
of all good.

Proposed Version

Article 1: The Only God

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and confess with our mouths
that there is a single
and simple
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whom we call God—

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incomprehensible,
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completely wise,
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and good,
and the overflowing source
of all good.

Article 2: The Means by Which We Know God

We know him by two means:

First, by the creation, preservation, and government of the universe,
since that universe is before our eyes
like a beautiful book

in which all creatures,
great and small,
are as letters

to make us ponder
the invisible things of God:

his eternal power
and his divinity,
as the apostle Paul says in Romans 1:20.

All these things are enough to convict men
and to leave them without excuse.

Second, he makes himself known to us more openly
by his holy and divine Word,
as much as we need in this life,
for his glory
and for the salvation of his own.

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God's eternal power and divinity,
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All these things are enough to convict humans
and to leave them without excuse.

Second, God makes himself known to us more clearly
by his holy and divine Word,
as much as we need in this life,
for God's glory
and for our salvation.

Article 3: The Written Word of God

We confess that this Word of God was not sent nor delivered by the will of men, but that holy men of God spoke, being moved by the Holy Spirit, as Peter says.¹

Afterwards our God—
because of the special care he has
for us and our salvation—
commanded his servants,
the prophets and apostles,
to commit this revealed Word to writing.
He himself wrote
with his own finger
the two tables of the law.

Therefore we call such writings
holy and divine Scriptures.

¹ 2 Pet. 1:21

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Article 4: The Canonical Books

We include in the Holy Scripture the two volumes of the Old and New Testaments. They are canonical books with which there can be no quarrel at all.

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In the church of God the list is as follows:

In the Old Testament,

the five books of Moses—

Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, Deuteronomy;

the books of Joshua, Judges, and Ruth;

the two books of Samuel, and two of Kings;

the two books of Chronicles, called Paralipomenon;

the first book of Ezra; Nehemiah, Esther, Job;

the Psalms of David;

the three books of Solomon—

Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, and the Song;

the four major prophets—

Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, Daniel;

and then the other twelve minor prophets—

Hosea, Joel, Amos, Obadiah,

Jonah, Micah, Nahum, Habakkuk,

Zephaniah, Haggai, Zechariah, Malachi.

In the New Testament,

the four gospels—

Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John;

the Acts of the Apostles;

the fourteen letters of Paul—

to the Romans;

the two letters to the Corinthians;

to the Galatians, Ephesians, Philippians, and Colossians;

the two letters to the Thessalonians;

the two letters to Timothy;

to Titus, Philemon, and to the Hebrews;

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the Psalms of David;

the three books of Solomon—

Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, and the Song;

the four major prophets—

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the two letters to the Thessalonians;

the two letters to Timothy;

to Titus, Philemon, and to the Hebrews;

the seven letters of the other apostles—
 one of James;
 two of Peter;
 three of John;
 one of Jude;
 and the Revelation of the apostle John.

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 one of James;
 two of Peter;
 three of John;
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* “Jeremiah” here includes the Book of Lamentations as well as the Book of Jeremiah.

Article 5: The Authority of Scripture

We receive all these books
 and these only
 as holy and canonical,
 for the regulating, founding, and establishing
 of our faith.

And we believe
 without a doubt
 all things contained in them—
 not so much because the church
 receives and approves them as such
 but above all because the Holy Spirit
 testifies in our hearts
 that they are from God,
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<p>For even the blind themselves are able to see that the things predicted in them do happen.</p>	<p>For even the blind themselves are able to see that the things predicted in them do happen.</p>
<p>Article 6: The Difference Between Canonical and Apocryphal Books We distinguish between these holy books and the apocryphal ones, which are the third and fourth books of Esdras; the books of Tobit, Judith, Wisdom, Jesus Sirach, Baruch; what was added to the Story of Esther; the Song of the Three Children in the Furnace; the Story of Susannah; the Story of Bell and the Dragon; the Prayer of Manasseh; and the two books of Maccabees.</p> <p>The church may certainly read these books and learn from them as far as they agree with the canonical books. But they do not have such power and virtue that one could confirm from their testimony any point of faith or of the Christian religion. Much less can they detract from the authority of the other holy books.</p>	<p>Article 6: The Difference Between Canonical and Apocryphal Books We distinguish between these holy books and the apocryphal ones, which are the third and fourth books of Esdras; the books of Tobit, Judith, Wisdom, Jesus Sirach, Baruch; what was added to the Story of Esther; the Song of the Three Children in the Furnace; the Story of Susannah; the Story of Bell and the Dragon; the Prayer of Manasseh; and the two books of Maccabees.</p> <p>The church may certainly read these books and learn from them as far as they agree with the canonical books. But they do not have such power and virtue that one could confirm from their testimony any point of faith or of the Christian religion. Much less can they detract from the authority of the other holy books.</p>

Article 7: The Sufficiency of Scripture

We believe
that this Holy Scripture contains
the will of God completely
and that everything one must believe
to be saved
is sufficiently taught in it.

For since the entire manner of service
which God requires of us
is described in it at great length,
no one—

even an apostle
or an angel from heaven,
as Paul says—²

ought to teach other than
what the Holy Scriptures have
already taught us.

For since it is forbidden
to add to or subtract from the Word of God,³
this plainly demonstrates
that the teaching is perfect
and complete in all respects.

Therefore we must not consider human writings—
no matter how holy their authors may have been—
equal to the divine writings;
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Therefore we must not consider human writings—
no matter how holy their authors may have been—
equal to the divine writings;
nor may we put custom,

nor the majority,
 nor age,
 nor the passage of time or persons,
 nor councils, decrees, or official decisions
 above the truth of God,
 for truth is above everything else.

For all human beings are liars by nature
 and more vain than vanity itself.

Therefore we reject with all our hearts
 everything that does not agree
 with this infallible rule,
 as we are taught to do by the apostles
 when they say,
 “Test the spirits
 to see if they are of God,”⁴
 and also,
 “If anyone comes to you
 and does not bring this teaching,
 do not receive him
 into your house.”⁵

² Gal. 1:8

³ Deut. 12:32; Rev. 22:18-19

⁴ 1 John 4:1

⁵ 2 John 10

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Article 8: The Trinity

In keeping with this truth and Word of God we believe in one God, who is one single essence, in whom there are three persons, really, truly, and eternally distinct according to their incommunicable properties—namely, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

The Father is the cause, origin, and source of all things, visible as well as invisible.

The Son is the Word, the Wisdom, and the image of the Father.

The Holy Spirit is the eternal power and might, proceeding from the Father and the Son.

Article 8: The Trinity

In keeping with this truth and Word of God we believe in one God, who is one single essence, in whom there are three persons, really, truly, and eternally distinct according to their incommunicable properties—namely, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

The Father is the cause, origin, and source of all things, visible as well as invisible.

The Son is the Word, the Wisdom, and the image of the Father.

The Holy Spirit is the eternal power and might, proceeding from the Father and the Son.

Nevertheless,
 this distinction does not divide God into three,
 since Scripture teaches us
 that the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit
 each has his own subsistence
 distinguished by characteristics—
 yet in such a way
 that these three persons are
 only one God.

It is evident then
 that the Father is not the Son
 and that the Son is not the Father,
 and that likewise the Holy Spirit is
 neither the Father nor the Son.

Nevertheless,
 these persons,
 thus distinct,
 are neither divided
 nor fused or mixed together.

For the Father did not take on flesh,
 nor did the Spirit,
 but only the Son.

The Father was never
 without his Son,
 nor without his Holy Spirit,

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 that the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit
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For the Father did not take on flesh,
 nor did the Spirit,
 but only the Son.

The Father was never
 without the Son,
 nor without the Holy Spirit,

<p>since all these are equal from eternity, in one and the same essence.</p> <p>There is neither a first nor a last, for all three are one in truth and power, in goodness and mercy.</p>	<p>since all these are equal from eternity, in one and the same essence.</p> <p>There is neither a first nor a last, for all three are one in truth and power, in goodness and mercy.</p>
<p>Article 9: The Scriptural Witness on the Trinity All these things we know from the testimonies of Holy Scripture as well as from the effects of the persons, especially from those we feel within ourselves.</p> <p>The testimonies of the Holy Scriptures, which teach us to believe in this Holy Trinity, are written in many places of the Old Testament, which need not be enumerated but only chosen with discretion.</p> <p>In the book of Genesis God says, “Let us make man in our image, according to our likeness.” So “God created man in his own image”— indeed, “male and female he created them.”⁶ “Behold, man has become like one of us.”⁷</p> <p>It appears from this that there is a plurality of persons</p>	<p>Article 9: The Scriptural Witness on the Trinity All these things we know from the testimonies of Holy Scripture as well as from the effects of the persons, especially from those we feel within ourselves.</p> <p>The testimonies of the Holy Scriptures, which teach us to believe in this Holy Trinity, are written in many places of the Old Testament, which need not be enumerated but only chosen with discretion.</p> <p>In the book of Genesis God says, “Let us make humankind in our image, according to our likeness.” So “God created humankind in his image”— indeed, “male and female he created them.”⁶ “<u>See, the</u> man has become like one of us.”⁷</p> <p>It appears from this that there is a plurality of persons</p>

within the Deity,
 when he says,
 “Let us make man in our image”—
 and afterwards he indicates the unity
 when he says,
 “God created.”

It is true that he does not say here
 how many persons there are—
 but what is somewhat obscure to us
 in the Old Testament
 is very clear in the New.

For when our Lord was baptized in the Jordan,
 the voice of the Father was heard saying,
 “This is my dear Son”;⁸
 the Son was seen in the water;
 and the Holy Spirit appeared in the form of a dove.

So, in the baptism of all believers
 this form was prescribed by Christ:
 “Baptize all people in the name
 of the Father,
 and of the Son,
 and of the Holy Spirit.”⁹

In the Gospel according to Luke
 the angel Gabriel says to Mary,
 the mother of our Lord:

within the Deity,
 when God says,
 “Let us make humankind in our image”—
 and afterward God indicates the unity
 in saying,
 “God created.”

It is true that God does not say here
 how many persons there are—
 but what is somewhat obscure to us
 in the Old Testament
 is very clear in the New.

For when our Lord was baptized in the Jordan,
 the voice of the Father was heard saying,
 “This is my Son, the Beloved,”⁸
 the Son was seen in the water;
 and the Holy Spirit appeared in the form of a dove.

So, in the baptism of all believers
 this form was prescribed by Christ:
 Baptize all people “in the name
 of the Father,
 and of the Son,
 and of the Holy Spirit.”⁹

In the Gospel according to Luke
 the angel Gabriel says to Mary,
 the mother of our Lord:

“The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you; and therefore that holy one to be born of you shall be called the Son of God.”¹⁰

And in another place it says:

“The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you.”¹¹

“There are three who bear witness in heaven—the Father, the Word, and the Holy Spirit—and these three are one.”¹²

In all these passages we are fully taught that there are three persons in the one and only divine essence. And although this doctrine surpasses human understanding, we nevertheless believe it now, through the Word, waiting to know and enjoy it fully in heaven.

Furthermore, we must note the particular works and activities of these three persons in relation to us. The Father is called our Creator, by reason of his power.

“The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you; therefore the child to be born will be holy; he will be called Son of God.”¹⁰

And in another place it says:

“The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Spirit be with all of you.”¹¹

[“There are three that testify in heaven, the Father, the Word, and the Holy Spirit, and these three are one.”]¹²

In all these passages we are fully taught that there are three persons in the one and only divine essence. And although this doctrine surpasses human understanding, we nevertheless believe it now, through the Word, waiting to know and enjoy it fully in heaven.

Furthermore, we must note the particular works and activities of these three persons in relation to us. The Father is called our Creator, by reason of his power.

The Son is our Savior and Redeemer,
by his blood.
The Holy Spirit is our Sanctifier,
by his living in our hearts.

This doctrine of the holy Trinity
has always been maintained in the true church,
from the time of the apostles until the present,
against Jews, Muslims,
and certain false Christians and heretics,
such as Marcion, Mani,
Praxeas, Sabellius, Paul of Samosata, Arius,
and others like them,
who were rightly condemned by the holy fathers.

And so,
in this matter we willingly accept
the three ecumenical creeds—
the Apostles', Nicene, and Athanasian—
as well as what the ancient fathers decided
in agreement with them.

⁶ Gen. 1:26-27

⁷ Gen. 3:22

⁸ Matt. 3:17

⁹ Matt. 28:19

¹⁰ Luke 1:35

¹¹ 2 Cor. 13:14

¹² 1 John 5:7 (KJV)

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⁶ Gen. 1:26-27

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⁸ Matt. 3:17

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¹⁰ Luke 1:35

¹¹ 2 Cor. 13:14

¹² 1 John 5:7—following the better Greek texts, the NRSV and other modern translations place this verse in a footnote.

Article 10: The Deity of Christ

We believe that Jesus Christ,
according to his divine nature,
is the only Son of God—
eternally begotten,
not made nor created,
for then he would be a creature.

He is one in essence with the Father;
coeternal;
the exact image of the person of the Father
and the “reflection of his glory,”¹³
being in all things like him.

He is the Son of God
not only from the time he assumed our nature
but from all eternity,
as the following testimonies teach us
when they are taken together.

Moses says that God “created the world”;¹⁴
and John says that “all things were created by the Word,”¹⁵
which he calls God.

The apostle says that “God made the world by his Son.”¹⁶
He also says that “God created all things by Jesus Christ.”¹⁷

Article 10: The Deity of Christ

We believe that Jesus Christ,
according to his divine nature,
is the only Son of God—
eternally begotten,
not made or created,
for then he would be a creature.

He is one in essence with the Father;
coeternal;
the exact image of the person of the Father
and the “reflection of God’s glory,”¹³
being like the Father in all things.

Jesus Christ is the Son of God
not only from the time he assumed our nature
but from all eternity,
as the following testimonies teach us
when they are taken together.

Moses says that God created the world;¹⁴
and John says that all things were created through the Word,¹⁵
which he calls God.

The apostle says that God created the world through the Son.¹⁶
He also says that God created all things through Jesus Christ.¹⁷

And so it must follow
 that he who is called God, the Word, the Son, and Jesus Christ
 already existed when all things were created by him.
 Therefore the prophet Micah says
 that his origin is “from ancient times,
 from eternity.”¹⁸
 And the apostle says
 that he has “neither beginning of days
 nor end of life.”¹⁹

So then,
 he is the true eternal God,
 the Almighty,
 whom we invoke,
 worship,
 and serve.

¹³ Col. 1:15; Heb. 1:3

¹⁴ Gen. 1:1

¹⁵ John 1:3

¹⁶ Heb. 1:2

¹⁷ Col. 1:16

¹⁸ Mic. 5:2

¹⁹ Heb. 7:3

And so it must follow
 that ~~the one~~ who is called God, the Word, the Son, and Jesus Christ
 already existed ~~before creating all things~~.
 Therefore the prophet Micah says
 that Christ’s origin is “from ancient ~~days~~.”¹⁸
 And the apostle says
 that the Son has “neither beginning of days
 nor end of life.”¹⁹

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¹⁵ John 1:3

¹⁶ Heb. 1:2

¹⁷ Col. 1:16

¹⁸ Mic. 5:2

¹⁹ Heb. 7:3

Article 11: The Deity of the Holy Spirit

We believe and confess also
that the Holy Spirit proceeds eternally
from the Father and the Son—

neither made,
nor created,
nor begotten,
but only proceeding
from the two of them.

In regard to order,
he is the third person of the Trinity—
of one and the same essence,
and majesty,
and glory,
with the Father and the Son.

He is true and eternal God,
as the Holy Scriptures teach us.

Article 11: The Deity of the Holy Spirit

We believe and confess also
that the Holy Spirit proceeds eternally
from the Father and the Son—

neither made,
nor created,
nor begotten,
but only proceeding
from the two of them.

In regard to order,
the Spirit is the third person of the Trinity—
of one and the same essence,
and majesty,
and glory,
with the Father and the Son,

being true and eternal God,
as the Holy Scriptures teach us.

Article 12: The Creation of All Things

We believe that the Father
 created heaven and earth and all other creatures
 from nothing,
 when it seemed good to him,
 by his Word—
 that is to say,
 by his Son.

He has given all creatures
 their being, form, and appearance,
 and their various functions
 for serving their Creator.

Even now
 he also sustains and governs them all,
 according to his eternal providence,
 and by his infinite power,
 that they may serve man,
 in order that man may serve God.

He has also created the angels good,
 that they might be his messengers
 and serve his elect.

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God has given all creatures
 their being, form, and appearance
 and their various functions
 for serving their Creator.

Even now
 God also sustains and governs them all,
 according to his eternal providence
 and by his infinite power,
 that they may serve humanity,
 in order that humanity may serve God.

God has also created the angels good,
 that they might be messengers of God
 and serve the elect.

Some of them have fallen
from the excellence in which God created them
into eternal perdition;
and the others have persisted and remained
in their original state,
by the grace of God.

The devils and evil spirits are so corrupt
that they are enemies of God
and of everything good.
They lie in wait for the church
and every member of it
like thieves,
with all their power,
to destroy and spoil everything
by their deceptions.

So then,
by their own wickedness
they are condemned to everlasting damnation,
daily awaiting their torments.

For that reason
we detest the error of the Sadducees,
who deny that there are spirits and angels,
and also the error of the Manicheans,
who say that the devils originated by themselves,
being evil by nature,
without having been corrupted.

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and also the error of the Manicheans,
who say that the devils originated by themselves,
being evil by nature,
without having been corrupted.

Article 13: The Doctrine of God's Providence

We believe that this good God,
after he created all things,
did not abandon them to chance or fortune
but leads and governs them
according to his holy will,
in such a way that nothing happens in this world
without his orderly arrangement.

Yet God is not the author of,
nor can he be charged with,
the sin that occurs.

For his power and goodness
are so great and incomprehensible
that he arranges and does his work very well and justly
even when the devils and wicked men act unjustly.

We do not wish to inquire
with undue curiosity
into what he does that surpasses human understanding
and is beyond our ability to comprehend.
But in all humility and reverence
we adore the just judgments of God,
which are hidden from us,
being content to be Christ's disciples,
so as to learn only what he shows us in his Word,
without going beyond those limits.

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But in all humility and reverence
we adore the just judgments of God,
which are hidden from us,
being content to be Christ's disciples,
so as to learn only what God shows us in the Word,
without going beyond those limits.

This doctrine gives us unspeakable comfort since it teaches us that nothing can happen to us by chance but only by the arrangement of our gracious heavenly Father.

He watches over us with fatherly care, keeping all creatures under his control, so that not one of the hairs on our heads (for they are all numbered) nor even a little bird can fall to the ground²⁰ without the will of our Father.

In this thought we rest, knowing that he holds in check the devils and all our enemies, who cannot hurt us without his permission and will.

For that reason we reject the damnable error of the Epicureans, who say that God involves himself in nothing and leaves everything to chance.

²⁰ Matt. 10:29-30

This doctrine gives us unspeakable comfort since it teaches us that nothing can happen to us by chance but only by the arrangement of our gracious heavenly Father,

who watches over us with fatherly care, sustaining all creatures under his lordship, so that not one of the hairs on our heads (for they are all numbered) nor even a little bird can fall to the ground without the will of our Father.²⁰

In this thought we rest, knowing that God holds in check the devils and all our enemies, who cannot hurt us without divine permission and will.

For that reason we reject the damnable error of the Epicureans, who say that God does not get involved in anything and leaves everything to chance.

²⁰ Matt. 10:29-30

Article 14: The Creation and Fall of Man

We believe
 that God created man from the dust of the earth
 and made and formed him in his image and likeness—
 good, just, and holy;
 able by his own will to conform
 in all things
 to the will of God.

But when he was in honor
 he did not understand it²¹
 and did not recognize his excellence.
 But he subjected himself willingly to sin
 and consequently to death and the curse,
 lending his ear to the word of the devil.

For he transgressed the commandment of life,
 which he had received,
 and by his sin he separated himself from God,
 who was his true life,
 having corrupted his entire nature.

So he made himself guilty
 and subject to physical and spiritual death,
 having become wicked,
 perverse,
 and corrupt in all his ways.
 He lost all his excellent gifts
 which he had received from God,

Article 14: The Creation and Fall of Humanity

We believe
 that God created human beings from the dust of the earth
 and made and formed them in his image and likeness—
 good, just, and holy;
 able by the divine will to conform
 in all things
 to the will of God.

But when they were in honor
 they did not understand it²¹
 and did not recognize their excellence.
 But they subjected themselves willingly to sin
 and consequently to death and the curse,
 lending their ear to the word of the devil.

For they transgressed the commandment of life,
 which they had received,
 and by their sin they separated themselves from God,
 who was their true life,
 having corrupted their entire nature.

So they made themselves guilty
 and subject to physical and spiritual death,
 having become wicked,
 perverse,
 and corrupt in all their ways.
 They lost all their excellent gifts
 which they had received from God,

and he retained none of them
except for small traces
which are enough to make him
inexcusable.

Moreover, all the light in us is turned to darkness,
as the Scripture teaches us:

“The light shone in the darkness,
and the darkness did not receive it.”²²

Here John calls men “darkness.”

Therefore we reject everything taught to the contrary
concerning man’s free will,
since man is nothing but the slave of sin
and cannot do a thing
unless it is “given him from heaven.”²³

For who can boast of being able
to do anything good by himself,
since Christ says,

“No one can come to me
unless my Father who sent me
draws him”²⁴

Who can glory in his own will
when he understands that “the mind of the flesh
is enmity against God”²⁵

Who can speak of his own knowledge
in view of the fact that “the natural man
does not understand the things of the Spirit of God”²⁶

and retained none of them
except for small traces
which are enough to make them
inexcusable.

Moreover, all the light in us is turned to darkness,
as the Scripture teaches us:

“The light shines in the darkness,
and the darkness did not overcome it.”²²

Here John calls the human race “darkness.”

Therefore we reject everything taught to the contrary
concerning human free will,
since humans are nothing but the slaves of sin
and cannot do a thing
unless it is given them from heaven.²³

For who can boast of being able
to do anything good by oneself,
since Christ says,

“No one can come to me
unless drawn by the Father who sent me”²⁴

Who can glory in their own will
when they understand that “the mind of the flesh
is hostile to God”²⁵

Who can speak of their own knowledge
in view of the fact that “those who are unspiritual
do not understand the gifts of God’s Spirit”²⁶

In short,
 who can produce a single thought,
 since he knows that we are “not able to think a thing”
 about ourselves,
 by ourselves,
 but that “our ability is from God”?²⁷

And therefore,
 what the apostle says
 ought rightly to stand fixed and firm:
 “God works within us both to will and to do
 according to his good pleasure.”²⁸

For there is no understanding nor will
 conforming to God’s understanding and will
 apart from Christ’s involvement,
 as he teaches us when he says,
 “Without me you can do nothing.”²⁹

²¹ Ps. 49:20

²² John 1:5

²³ John 3:27

²⁴ John 6:44

²⁵ Rom. 8:7

²⁶ 1 Cor. 2:14

²⁷ 2 Cor. 3:5

²⁸ Phil. 2:13

²⁹ John 15:5

In short,
 who can produce a single thought,
 since he knows that we are not able to think a thing
 about ourselves,
 by ourselves,
 but that “our competence is from God”?²⁷

And therefore,
 what the apostle says
 ought rightly to stand fixed and firm:
 “God works within us
 both to will and to do
 according to God’s good pleasure.”²⁸

For there is no understanding nor will
 conforming to God’s understanding and will
 apart from Christ’s involvement,
 as he teaches us when he says,
 “Apart from me you can do nothing.”²⁹

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²⁷ 2 Cor. 3:5

²⁸ Phil. 2:13

²⁹ John 15:5

Article 15: The Doctrine of Original Sin

We believe
that by the disobedience of Adam
original sin has been spread
through the whole human race.

It is a corruption of all nature—
an inherited depravity which even infects small infants
in their mother's womb,
and the root which produces in man
every sort of sin.

It is therefore so vile and enormous in God's sight
that it is enough to condemn the human race,
and it is not abolished
or wholly uprooted
even by baptism,
seeing that sin constantly boils forth
as though from a contaminated spring.

Nevertheless,
it is not imputed to God's children
for their condemnation
but is forgiven
by his grace and mercy—
not to put them to sleep
but so that the awareness of this corruption
might often make believers groan
as they long to be set free
from the "body of this death."³⁰

Article 15: The Doctrine of Original Sin

We believe
that by the disobedience of Adam and Eve
original sin has been spread
through the whole human race.

It is a corruption of all human nature—
an inherited depravity which even infects small infants
in their mother's womb,
and the root which produces in humanity
every sort of sin.

It is therefore so vile and enormous in God's sight
that it is enough to condemn the human race,
and it is not abolished
or wholly uprooted
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but is forgiven
by his grace and mercy—
not to put them to sleep
but so that the awareness of this corruption
might often make believers groan
as they long to be set free
from the "body of this death."³⁰

Therefore we reject the error of the Pelagians who say that this sin is nothing else than a matter of imitation.

³⁰ Rom. 7:24

Article 16: The Doctrine of Election

We believe that—

all Adam's descendants having thus fallen into perdition and ruin by the sin of the first man—

God showed himself to be as he is: merciful and just.

He is merciful

in withdrawing and saving from this perdition those whom he, in his eternal and unchangeable counsel, has elected and chosen in Jesus Christ our Lord by his pure goodness, without any consideration of their works.

He is just

in leaving the others in their ruin and fall into which they plunged themselves.

Therefore we reject the error of the Pelagians who say that this sin is nothing else than a matter of imitation.

³⁰ Rom. 7:24

Article 16: The Doctrine of Election

We believe that—

all Adam and Eve's descendants having thus fallen into perdition and ruin by the sin of the first pair—

God showed himself to be as he is: merciful and just.

God is merciful

in withdrawing and saving from this perdition those who, in the eternal and unchangeable divine counsel, have been elected and chosen in Jesus Christ our Lord by his pure goodness, without any consideration of their works.

God is just

in leaving the others in their ruin and fall into which they plunged themselves.

Article 17: The Recovery of Fallen Man

We believe that our good God,
by his marvelous wisdom and goodness,
 seeing that man had plunged himself in this manner
 into both physical and spiritual death
 and made himself completely miserable,
set out to find him,
though man,
 trembling all over,
was fleeing from him.

And he comforted him,
promising to give him his Son,
 “born of a woman,”³¹
to crush the head of the serpent,³²
and to make him blessed.

³¹ Gal. 4:4

³² Gen. 3:15

Article 17: The Recovery of Fallen Humanity

We believe that our good God,
by marvelous **divine** wisdom and goodness,
 seeing that humans had plunged themselves in this manner
 into both physical and spiritual death
 and made themselves completely miserable,
set out to find them,
though humans,
 trembling all over,
were fleeing from **the divine presence**.

And God comforted them,
promising to give them his Son,
 born of a woman,³¹
to crush the head of the serpent,³²
and to make them blessed.

³¹ Gal. 4:4

³² Gen. 3:15

Article 18: The Incarnation

So then we confess
that God fulfilled the promise
 which he had made to the early fathers
 by the mouth of his holy prophets
when he sent his only and eternal Son
into the world
at the time set by him.

The Son took the “form of a servant”
and was made in the “likeness of man,”³³
 truly assuming a real human nature,
 with all its weaknesses,
 except for sin;
 being conceived in the womb of the blessed virgin Mary
 by the power of the Holy Spirit,
 without male participation.

And he not only assumed human nature
 as far as the body is concerned
but also a real human soul,
 in order that he might be a real human being.
For since the soul had been lost as well as the body
he had to assume them both
to save them both together.

Therefore we confess,
 against the heresy of the Anabaptists
 who deny that Christ assumed human flesh from his mother,

Article 18: The Incarnation

So then we confess
that God fulfilled the promise
 made to the early fathers and mothers
 by the mouth of the holy prophets
when sending the only and eternal Son of God
into the world
at the time appointed.

The Son took the “form of a slave”
and was made in “human form,”³³
 truly assuming a real human nature,
 with all its weaknesses,
 except for sin;
 being conceived in the womb of the blessed virgin Mary
 by the power of the Holy Spirit,
 without male participation.

And Christ not only assumed human nature
 as far as the body is concerned
but also a real human soul,
 in order to be a real human being.
For since the soul had been lost as well as the body
Christ had to assume them both
to save them both together.

Therefore we confess
 (against the heresy of the Anabaptists
 who deny that Christ assumed
 human flesh from his mother)

that he “shared the very flesh and blood of children”,³⁴
 that he is “fruit of the loins of David” according to the flesh,³⁵
 “born of the seed of David” according to the flesh,³⁶
 “fruit of the womb of the virgin Mary”,³⁷
 “born of a woman”,³⁸
 “the seed of David”,³⁹
 “a shoot from the root of Jesse”,⁴⁰
 “the offspring of Judah”,⁴¹
 having descended from the Jews according to the flesh;
 “from the seed of Abraham”—
 for he “assumed Abraham’s seed”
 and was “made like his brothers
 except for sin.”⁴²

In this way he is truly our Immanuel—
 that is: “God with us.”⁴³

³³ Phil. 2:7

³⁴ Heb. 2:14

³⁵ Acts 2:30

³⁶ Rom. 1:3

³⁷ Luke 1:42

³⁸ Gal. 4:4

³⁹ 2 Tim. 2:8

⁴⁰ Rom. 15:12

⁴¹ Heb. 7:14

⁴² Heb. 2:17; 4:15

⁴³ Matt. 1:23

that Christ “shared the very flesh and blood of children”,³⁴
 being the “fruit of the loins” of David “according to the flesh,”³⁵
 “descended from David” according to the flesh,³⁶
 the “fruit of the womb” of the virgin Mary;³⁷
 born of a woman,³⁸
 the seed of David,³⁹
 the “root of Jesse”,⁴⁰
 descended from Judah,⁴¹
 having descended from the Jews according to the flesh;
 descended from Abraham—
 having assumed descent from Abraham and Sarah,
 and was “made like his brothers and sisters,”
 yet without sin.⁴²

In this way Christ is truly our Immanuel—
 that is: “God with us.”⁴³

³³ Phil. 2:7

³⁴ Heb. 2:14

³⁵ Acts 2:30

³⁶ Rom. 1:3

³⁷ Luke 1:42

³⁸ Gal. 4:4

³⁹ 2 Tim. 2:8

⁴⁰ Rom. 15:12

⁴¹ Heb. 7:14

⁴² Heb. 2:17; 4:15

⁴³ Matt. 1:23

Article 19: The Two Natures of Christ

We believe that by being thus conceived the person of the Son has been inseparably united and joined together with human nature,
 in such a way that there are not two Sons of God, nor two persons, but two natures united in a single person, with each nature retaining its own distinct properties.

Thus his divine nature has always remained uncreated, without beginning of days or end of life,⁴⁴ filling heaven and earth.

His human nature has not lost its properties but continues to have those of a creature— it has a beginning of days; it is of a finite nature and retains all that belongs to a real body. And even though he, by his resurrection, gave it immortality, that nonetheless did not change the reality of his human nature; for our salvation and resurrection depend also on the reality of his body.

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Thus his divine nature has always remained uncreated, without beginning of days or end of life,⁴⁴ filling heaven and earth.

Christ's human nature has not lost its properties but continues to have those of a creature— it has a beginning of days; it is of a finite nature and retains all that belongs to a real body. And even though he, by his resurrection, gave it immortality, that nonetheless did not change the reality of his human nature; for our salvation and resurrection depend also on the reality of his body.

But these two natures
are so united together in one person
that they are not even separated by his death.

So then,
what he committed to his Father when he died
was a real human spirit which left his body.
But meanwhile his divine nature remained
united with his human nature
 even when he was lying in the grave;
and his deity never ceased to be in him,
 just as it was in him when he was a little child,
 though for a while it did not show itself as such.

These are the reasons why we confess him
to be true God and true man—
 true God in order to conquer death
 by his power,
 and true man that he might die for us
 in the weakness of his flesh.

⁴⁴ Heb. 7:3

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to be true God and truly human—
 true God in order to conquer death
 by his power,
 and truly human that he might die for us
 in the weakness of his flesh.

⁴⁴ Heb. 7:3

Article 20: The Justice and Mercy of God in Christ

We believe that God—
 who is perfectly merciful
 and also very just—
sent his Son to assume the nature
in which the disobedience had been committed,
 in order to bear in it the punishment of sin
 by his most bitter passion and death.

So God made known his justice toward his Son,
 who was charged with our sin,
and he poured out his goodness and mercy on us,
 who are guilty and worthy of damnation,
giving to us his Son to die,
 by a most perfect love,
and raising him to life
 for our justification,
 in order that by him
 we might have immortality
 and eternal life.

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and raising him to life
 for our justification,
 in order that by him
 we might have immortality
 and eternal life.

Article 21: The Atonement

We believe
that Jesus Christ is a high priest forever
according to the order of Melchizedek—
 made such by an oath—
and that he presented himself
in our name
before his Father,
to appease his wrath
with full satisfaction
 by offering himself
 on the tree of the cross
and pouring out his precious blood
 for the cleansing of our sins,
 as the prophets had predicted.

For it is written
that “the chastisement of our peace”
was placed on the Son of God
and that “we are healed by his wounds.”
He was “led to death as a lamb”;
he was “numbered among sinners”⁴⁵
and condemned as a criminal by Pontius Pilate,
 though Pilate had declared
 that he was innocent.

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We believe
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according to the order of Melchizedek—
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before his Father,
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with full satisfaction
 by offering himself
 on the tree of the cross
and pouring out his precious blood
 for the cleansing of our sins,
 as the prophets had predicted.

For it is written
that “**the punishment that made us whole**”
was placed on the Son of God
and that “**by his bruises we are healed.**”
He was “**like a lamb that is led to the slaughter**”;
he was “**numbered with the transgressors**”⁴⁵
and condemned as a criminal by Pontius Pilate,
 though Pilate had declared
 that he was innocent.

So he paid back
 what he had not stolen,⁴⁶
 and he suffered—
 the “just for the unjust,”⁴⁷
 in both his body and his soul—
 in such a way that
 when he senses the horrible punishment
 required by our sins
 his sweat became like “big drops of blood
 falling on the ground.”⁴⁸
 He cried, “My God, my God,
 why have you abandoned me?”⁴⁹

And he endured all this
 for the forgiveness of our sins.

Therefore we rightly say with Paul that
 we “know nothing but Jesus and him crucified”;⁵⁰
 we consider all things as “dung
 for the excellence of the knowledge
 of our Lord Jesus Christ.”⁵¹
 We find all comforts in his wounds
 and have no need to seek or invent any other means
 to reconcile ourselves with God
 than this one and only sacrifice,
 once made,
 which renders believers perfect
 forever.

So he paid back
 what he had not stolen,⁴⁶
 and he suffered—
 “the righteous for the unrighteous,”⁴⁷
 in both his body and his soul—
 in such a way that
 when he **sensed** the horrible punishment
 required by our sins
 “his sweat became like **great** drops of blood
 falling **down** on the ground.”⁴⁸
 He cried, “My God, my God,
 why have you **forsaken** me?”⁴⁹

And he endured all this
 for the forgiveness of our sins.

Therefore we rightly say with Paul that
 we know nothing “**except Jesus Christ** and him crucified”;⁵⁰
 we “**regard everything as loss**
because of the surpassing value
of knowing Christ Jesus our Lord.”⁵¹
 We find all comforts in his wounds
 and have no need to seek or invent any other means
 to reconcile ourselves with God
 than this one and only sacrifice,
 once made,
 which renders believers perfect
 forever.

This is also why
the angel of God called him Jesus—
that is, “Savior”—
because he would save his people
from their sins.⁵²

⁴⁵ Isa. 53:4-12

⁴⁶ Ps. 69:4

⁴⁷ 1 Pet. 3:18

⁴⁸ Luke 22:44

⁴⁹ Matt. 27:46

⁵⁰ 1 Cor. 2:2

⁵¹ Phil. 3:8

⁵² Matt. 1:21

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⁵² Matt. 1:21

Article 22: The Righteousness of Faith

We believe that
for us to acquire the true knowledge of this great mystery
the Holy Spirit kindles in our hearts a true faith
that embraces Jesus Christ,
with all his merits,
and makes him its own,
and no longer looks for anything
apart from him.

For it must necessarily follow
that either all that is required for our salvation
is not in Christ or,
if all is in him,

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with all his merits,
and makes him its own,
and no longer looks for anything
apart from him.

For it must necessarily follow
that either all that is required for our salvation
is not in Christ or,
if all is in him,

then he who has Christ by faith
has his salvation entirely.

Therefore,
to say that Christ is not enough
but that something else is needed as well
is a most enormous blasphemy against God—
for it then would follow
that Jesus Christ is only half a Savior.
And therefore we justly say with Paul
that we are justified “by faith alone”
or by faith “apart from works.”⁵³

However,
we do not mean,
properly speaking,
that it is faith itself that justifies us—
for faith is only the instrument
by which we embrace Christ,
our righteousness.

But Jesus Christ is our righteousness
in making available to us all his merits
and all the holy works he has done
for us and in our place.
And faith is the instrument
that keeps us in communion with him
and with all his benefits.

then those who have Christ by faith
have his salvation entirely.

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But Jesus Christ is our righteousness
in making available to us all his merits
and all the holy works he has done
for us and in our place.
And faith is the instrument
that keeps us in communion with him
and with all his benefits.

When those benefits are made ours
they are more than enough to absolve us
of our sins.

⁵³ Rom. 3:28

Article 23: The Justification of Sinners

We believe
that our blessedness lies in the forgiveness of our sins
because of Jesus Christ,
and that in it our righteousness before God is contained,
as David and Paul teach us
when they declare that man blessed
to whom God grants righteousness
apart from works.⁵⁴

And the same apostle says
that we are justified “freely” or “by grace”
through redemption in Jesus Christ.⁵⁵
And therefore we cling to this foundation,
which is firm forever,
giving all glory to God,
humbling ourselves,
and recognizing ourselves as we are;
not claiming a thing for ourselves or our merits
and leaning and resting
on the sole obedience of Christ crucified,
which is ours when we believe in him.

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they are more than enough to absolve us
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and that in it our righteousness before God is contained,
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when they declare those people blessed
to whom God grants righteousness
apart from works.⁵⁴

And the same apostle says
that we are “justified by his grace as a gift,
through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus.”⁵⁵
And therefore we cling to this foundation,
which is firm forever,
giving all glory to God,
humbling ourselves,
and recognizing ourselves as we are;
not claiming a thing for ourselves or our merits
and leaning and resting
on the sole obedience of Christ crucified,
which is ours when we believe in him.

That is enough to cover all our sins
and to make us confident,
freeing the conscience from the fear, dread, and terror
of God's approach,
without doing what our first father, Adam, did,
who trembled as he tried to cover himself
with fig leaves.

In fact,
if we had to appear before God relying—
no matter how little—
on ourselves or some other creature,
then, alas, we would be swallowed up.

Therefore everyone must say with David:
"Lord, do not enter into judgment with your servants,
for before you no living person shall be justified."⁵⁶

⁵⁴ Ps. 32:1; Rom. 4:6

⁵⁵ Rom. 3:24

⁵⁶ Ps. 143:2

That is enough to cover all our sins
and to make us confident,
freeing the conscience from the fear, dread, and terror
of God's approach,
without doing what our first parents, Adam and Eve, did,
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In fact,
if we had to appear before God relying—
no matter how little—
on ourselves or some other creature,
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Therefore everyone must say with David:
"Lord, do not enter into judgment with your servant,
for no one living is righteous before you."⁵⁶

⁵⁴ Ps. 32:1; Rom. 4:6

⁵⁵ Rom. 3:24

⁵⁶ Ps. 143:2

Article 24: The Sanctification of Sinners

We believe that this true faith,
produced in man by the hearing of God’s Word
and by the work of the Holy Spirit,
regenerates him and makes him a “new man,”⁵⁷
causing him to live the “new life”⁵⁸
and freeing him from the slavery of sin.

Therefore,
far from making people cold
toward living in a pious and holy way,
this justifying faith,
quite to the contrary,
so works within them that
apart from it
they will never do a thing out of love for God
but only out of love for themselves
and fear of being condemned.

So then, it is impossible
for this holy faith to be unfruitful in a human being,
seeing that we do not speak of an empty faith
but of what Scripture calls
“faith working through love,”⁵⁹
which leads a man to do by himself
the works that God has commanded
in his Word.

Article 24: The Sanctification of Sinners

We believe that this true faith,
produced in us by the hearing of God’s Word
and by the work of the Holy Spirit,
regenerates us and makes us **new creatures**,⁵⁷
causing us to live a new life⁵⁸
and freeing us from the slavery of sin.

Therefore,
far from making people cold
toward living in a pious and holy way,
this justifying faith,
quite to the contrary,
so works within them that
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they will never do a thing out of love for God
but only out of love for themselves
and fear of being condemned.

So then, it is impossible
for this holy faith to be unfruitful in a human being,
seeing that we do not speak of an empty faith
but of what Scripture calls
“faith working through love,”⁵⁹
which **moves** people to do by themselves
the works that God has commanded
in the Word.

These works,
 proceeding from the good root of faith,
 are good and acceptable to God,
 since they are all sanctified by his grace.
 Yet they do not count toward our justification—
 for by faith in Christ we are justified,
 even before we do good works.
 Otherwise they could not be good,
 any more than the fruit of a tree could be good
 if the tree is not good in the first place.

So then, we do good works,
 but nor for merit—
 for what would we merit?
 Rather, we are indebted to God for the good works we do,
 and not he to us,
 since it is he who “works in us both to will and do
 according to his good pleasure”⁶⁰—
 thus keeping in mind what is written:
 “When you have done all that is commanded you,
 then you shall say, ‘We are unworthy servants;
 we have done what it was our duty to do.’”⁶¹

Yet we do not wish to deny
 that God rewards good works—
 but it is by his grace
 that he crowns his gifts.

These works,
 proceeding from the good root of faith,
 are good and acceptable to God,
 since they are all sanctified by God’s grace.
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So then, we do good works,
 but not for merit—
 for what would we merit?
 Rather, we are indebted to God for the good works we do,
 and not God to us,
 since God “is at work in us, enabling us both
 to will and to work for his good pleasure”⁶⁰—
 thus keeping in mind what is written:
 “When you have done all that you were ordered to do,
 say, ‘We are worthless slaves;
 we have done only what we ought to have done.’”⁶¹

Yet we do not wish to deny
 that God rewards good works—
 but it is by grace
 that God crowns these gifts.

Moreover,
although we do good works
we do not base our salvation on them;
for we cannot do any work
that is not defiled by our flesh
and also worthy of punishment.
And even if we could point to one,
memory of a single sin is enough
for God to reject that work.

So we would always be in doubt,
tossed back and forth
without any certainty,
and our poor consciences would be tormented constantly
if they did not rest on the merit
of the suffering and death of our Savior.

⁵⁷ 2 Cor. 5:17

⁵⁸ Rom. 6:4

⁵⁹ Gal. 5:6

⁶⁰ Phil. 2:13

⁶¹ Luke 17:10

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⁵⁸ Rom. 6:4

⁵⁹ Gal. 5:6

⁶⁰ Phil. 2:13

⁶¹ Luke 17:10

Article 25: The Fulfillment of the Law

We believe

that the ceremonies and symbols of the law have ended
with the coming of Christ,
and that all foreshadowings have come to an end,
so that the use of them ought to be abolished
among Christians.

Yet the truth and substance of these things
remain for us in Jesus Christ,
in whom they have been fulfilled.

Nevertheless,
we continue to use the witnesses
drawn from the law and prophets
to confirm us in the gospel
and to regulate our lives with full integrity
for the glory of God,
according to his will.

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Yet the truth and substance of these things
remain for us in Jesus Christ,
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Nevertheless,
we continue to use the witnesses
drawn from the law and prophets
to confirm us in the gospel
and to regulate our lives with full integrity
for the glory of God,
according to the will of God.

Article 26: The Intercession of Christ

We believe that we have no access to God except through the one and only Mediator and Intercessor: Jesus Christ the Righteous.⁶²

He therefore was made man, uniting together the divine and human natures, so that we human beings might have access to the divine Majesty. Otherwise we would have no access.

But this Mediator, whom the Father has appointed between himself and us, ought not terrify us by his greatness, so that we have to look for another one, according to our fancy. For neither in heaven nor among the creatures on earth is there anyone who loves us more than Jesus Christ does.

Although he was "in the form of God," he nevertheless "emptied himself," taking the form of "a man" and "a servant" for us;⁶³ and he made himself "completely like his brothers."⁶⁴

Suppose we had to find another intercessor. Who would love us more than he who gave his life for us, even though "we were his enemies"?⁶⁵ And suppose we had to find one who has prestige and power. Who has as much of these as he who is seated "at the right hand of the Father,"⁶⁶

Article 26: The Intercession of Christ

We believe that we have no access to God except through the one and only Mediator and Intercessor, "Jesus Christ the righteous,"⁶² who

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But this Mediator, whom the Father has appointed between himself and us, ought not terrify us by his greatness, so that we have to look for another one, according to our fancy. For neither in heaven nor among the creatures on earth is there anyone who loves us more than Jesus Christ does.

Although he was "in the form of God," Christ nevertheless "emptied himself," taking "human form" and "the form of a slave" for us;⁶³ and he made himself "like his brothers and sisters in every respect."⁶⁴

Suppose we had to find another intercessor. Who would love us more than he who gave his life for us, even though "we were his enemies"?⁶⁵ And suppose we had to find one who has prestige and power. Who has as much of these as he who is seated at the right hand of the Father,⁶⁶

and who has all power
 “in heaven and on earth”?⁶⁷
 And who will be heard more readily
 than God’s own dearly beloved Son?

So then, sheer unbelief has led to the practice
 of dishonoring the saints,
 instead of honoring them.
 That was something the saints never did nor asked for,
 but which in keeping with their duty,
 as appears from their writings,
 they consistently refused.

We should not plead here
 that we are unworthy—
 for it is not a question of offering our prayers
 on the basis of our own dignity
 but only on the basis of the excellence and dignity
 of Jesus Christ,
 whose righteousness is ours
 by faith.

Since the apostle for good reason
 wants us to get rid of this foolish fear—
 or rather, this unbelief—
 he says to us that Jesus Christ
 was “made like his brothers in all things,”
 that he might be a high priest
 who is merciful and faithful
 to purify the sins of the people.⁶⁸

and who has “all authority
 in heaven and on earth”?⁶⁷
 And who will be heard more readily
 than God’s own dearly beloved Son?

So, the practice of honoring the saints as intercessors
 in fact dishonors them
 because of its misplaced faith.
 That was something the saints never did nor asked for,
 but which in keeping with their duty,
 as appears from their writings,
 they consistently refused.

We should not plead here
 that we are unworthy—
 for it is not a question of offering our prayers
 on the basis of our own dignity
 but only on the basis of the excellence and dignity
 of Jesus Christ,
 whose righteousness is ours by faith.

Since the apostle for good reason
 wants us to get rid of this foolish fear—
 or rather, this unbelief—
 he says to us that Jesus Christ
 was made like “his brothers and sisters in every respect,
 that he might be a merciful and faithful high priest”
 to purify the sins of the people.⁶⁸
 For since he suffered,
 being tempted,

For since he suffered,
being tempted,
he is also able to help those
who are tempted.⁶⁹

And further,
to encourage us more
to approach him
he says,
“Since we have a high priest,
Jesus the Son of God,
who has entered into heaven,
we maintain our confession.
For we do not have a high priest
who is unable to have compassion for our weaknesses,
but one who was tempted in all things,
just as we are,
except for sin.
Let us go then
with confidence
to the throne of grace
that we may obtain mercy
and find grace,
in order to be helped.”⁷⁰

The same apostle says that
we “have liberty to enter into the holy place
by the blood of Jesus.
Let us go, then, in the assurance
of faith....”⁷¹

he is also able to help those
who are tempted.⁶⁹

And further,
to encourage us more
to approach him
he says,
“Since, then, we have a great high priest
who has passed through the heavens,
Jesus, the Son of God,
let us hold fast to our confession.
For we do not have a high priest
who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses,
but we have one who in every respect has been tempted,
as we are,
yet without sin.
Let us therefore approach
the throne of grace
with boldness,
so that we may receive mercy
and find grace,
to help in time of need.”⁷⁰

The same apostle says that
we “have confidence to enter the sanctuary
by the blood of Jesus.”
“Let us approach with a true heart
in full assurance of faith....”⁷¹
Likewise,
Christ “holds his priesthood permanently....

Likewise,
 “Christ’s priesthood is forever.
 By this he is able to save completely
 those who draw near to God through him
 who always lives to intercede
 for them.”⁷²

What more do we need?
 For Christ himself declares:
 “I am the way, the truth, and the life;
 no one comes to my Father
 but by me.”⁷³
 Why should we seek
 another intercessor?

Since it has pleased God
 to give us his Son as our Intercessor,
 let us not leave him for another—
 or rather seek, without ever finding.
 For when God gave him to us
 he knew well that we were sinners.

Therefore,
 in following the command of Christ
 we call on the heavenly Father
 through Christ,
 our only Mediator,
 as we are taught by the Lord’s Prayer,

Consequently, he is able for all time to save
 those who approach God through him,
 since he always lives
 to make intercession for them.”⁷²

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 “I am the way, and the truth, and the life.
 No one comes to the Father
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 let us not leave him for another—
 or rather seek, without ever finding.
 For, when giving Christ to us,
 God knew well that we were sinners.

Therefore,
 in following the command of Christ
 we call on the heavenly Father
 through Christ,
 our only Mediator,
 as we are taught by the Lord’s Prayer,

being assured that we shall obtain
all we ask of the Father
in his name.

⁶² 1 John 2:1

⁶³ Phil. 2:6-8

⁶⁴ Heb. 2:17

⁶⁵ Rom. 5:10

⁶⁶ Rom. 8:34; Heb. 1:3

⁶⁷ Matt. 28:18

⁶⁸ Heb. 2:17

⁶⁹ Heb. 2:18

⁷⁰ Heb. 4:14-16

⁷¹ Heb. 10:19, 22

⁷² Heb. 7:24-25

⁷³ John 14:6

being assured that we shall obtain
all we ask of the Father
in his name.

⁶² 1 John 2:1

⁶³ Phil. 2:6-8

⁶⁴ Heb. 2:17

⁶⁵ Rom. 5:10

⁶⁶ Rom. 8:34; Heb. 1:3

⁶⁷ Matt. 28:18

⁶⁸ Heb. 2:17

⁶⁹ Heb. 2:18

⁷⁰ Heb. 4:14-16

⁷¹ Heb. 10:19, 22

⁷² Heb. 7:24-25

⁷³ John 14:6

Article 27: The Holy Catholic Church

We believe and confess

one single catholic or universal church—

a holy congregation and gathering
of true Christian believers,

awaiting their entire salvation in Jesus Christ
being washed by his blood,
and sanctified and sealed by the Holy Spirit.

Article 27: The Holy Catholic Church

We believe and confess

one single catholic or universal church—

a holy congregation and gathering
of true Christian believers,

awaiting their entire salvation in Jesus Christ
being washed by his blood,
and sanctified and sealed by the Holy Spirit.

This church has existed from the beginning of the world
and will last until the end,
as appears from the fact
that Christ is eternal King
who cannot be without subjects.

And this holy church is preserved by God
against the rage of the whole world,
even though for a time
it may appear very small
in the eyes of men—
as though it were snuffed out.

For example,
during the very dangerous time of Ahab
the Lord preserved for himself seven thousand men
who did not bend their knees to Baal.⁷⁴

And so this holy church
is not confined,
bound,
or limited to a certain place or certain persons.
But it is spread and dispersed
throughout the entire world,
though still joined and united
in heart and will,
in one and the same Spirit,
by the power of faith.

⁷⁴ 1 Kings 19:18

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Article 28: The Obligations of Church Members

We believe that

since this holy assembly and congregation
is the gathering of those who are saved
and there is no salvation apart from it,
no one ought to withdraw from it,
content to be by himself,
regardless of his status or condition.

But all people are obliged

to join and unite with it,
keeping the unity of the church
by submitting to its instruction and discipline,
by bending their necks under the yoke of Jesus Christ,
and by serving to build up one another,
according to the gifts God has given them
as members of each other
in the same body.

And to preserve this unity more effectively,

it is the duty of all believers,
according to God's Word,
to separate themselves
from those who do not belong to the church,
in order to join this assembly
wherever God has established it,
even if civil authorities and royal decrees forbid
and death and physical punishment result.

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according to the gifts God has given them
as members of each other
in the same body.

And to preserve this unity more effectively,

it is the duty of all believers,
according to God's Word,
to separate themselves
from those who do not belong to the church,
in order to join this assembly
wherever God has established it,
even if civil authorities and royal decrees forbid
and death and physical punishment result.

And so,
 all who withdraw from the church
 or do not join it
 act contrary to God’s ordinance.

Article 29: The Marks of the True Church

We believe that we ought to discern
 diligently and very carefully,
 by the Word of God,
 what is the true church—
 for all sects in the world today
 claim for themselves the name of “the church.”

We are not speaking here of the company of hypocrites
 who are mixed among the good in the church
 and who nonetheless are not part of it,
 even though they are physically there.
 But we are speaking of distinguishing
 the body and fellowship of the true church
 from all sects that call themselves “the church.”

The true church can be recognized
 if it has the following marks:
 The church engages in the pure preaching
 of the gospel;
 it makes use of the pure administration of the sacraments
 as Christ instituted them;
 it practices church discipline
 for correcting faults.

And so,
 all who withdraw from the church
 or do not join it
 act contrary to God’s ordinance.

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 the body and fellowship of the true church
 from all sects that call themselves “the church.”

The true church can be recognized
 if it has the following marks:
 The church engages in the pure preaching
 of the gospel;
 it makes use of the pure administration of the sacraments
 as Christ instituted them;
 it practices church discipline
 for correcting faults.

In short, it governs itself
according to the pure Word of God,
 rejecting all things contrary to it
 and holding Jesus Christ as the only Head.
By these marks one can be assured
of recognizing the true church—
 and no one ought to be separated from it.

As for those who can belong to the church,
we can recognize them by the distinguishing marks of Christians:
 namely by faith,
 and by their fleeing from sin and pursuing righteousness,
 once they have received the one and only Savior,
 Jesus Christ.

They love the true God and their neighbors,
 without turning to the right or left,
and they crucify the flesh and its works.

Though great weakness remains in them,
they fight against it
by the Spirit
all the days of their lives,
appealing constantly
to the blood, suffering, death, and obedience of the Lord Jesus,
 in whom they have forgiveness of their sins,
 through faith in him.

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according to the pure Word of God,
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they fight against it
by the Spirit
all the days of their lives,
appealing constantly
to the blood, suffering, death, and obedience of the Lord Jesus,
 in whom they have forgiveness of their sins,
 through faith in him.

As for the false church,
it assigns more authority to itself and its ordinances
than to the Word of God;
it does not want to subject itself
to the yoke of Christ;
it does not administer the sacraments
as Christ commanded in his Word;
it rather adds to them or subtracts from them
as it pleases;
it bases itself on men,
more than on Jesus Christ;
it persecutes those
who live holy lives according to the Word of God
and who rebuke it for its faults, greed, and idolatry.

These two churches
are easy to recognize
and thus to distinguish
from each other.

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more than on Jesus Christ;
it persecutes those
who live holy lives according to the Word of God
and who rebuke it for its faults, greed, and idolatry.

These two churches
are easy to recognize
and thus to distinguish
from each other.

Article 30: The Government of the Church

We believe that this true church ought to be governed according to the spiritual order that our Lord has taught us in his Word.

There should be ministers or pastors to preach the Word of God and administer the sacraments.

There should also be elders and deacons, along with the pastors, to make up the council of the church.

By this means true religion is preserved; true doctrine is able to take its course; and evil men are corrected spiritually and held in check, so that also the poor and all the afflicted may be helped and comforted according to their need.

By this means everything will be done well and in good order in the church, when such persons are elected who are faithful and are chosen according to the rule that Paul gave to Timothy.⁷⁵

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By this means everything will be done well and in good order in the church, when such persons are elected who are faithful and are chosen according to the rule that Paul gave to Timothy.⁷⁵

⁷⁵ 1 Tim. 3

Article 31: The Officers of the Church

We believe that ministers of the Word of God, elders, and deacons ought to be chosen to their offices by a legitimate election of the church, with prayer in the name of the Lord, and in good order,
as the Word of God teaches.

So everyone must be careful not to push one's self forward improperly, but all must wait until called by God, so that they may be assured of their calling and be certain and sure that it is from the Lord.

As for the ministers of the Word, they all have the same power and authority, no matter where they may be, since they are all servants of Jesus Christ, the only universal bishop, and the only head of the church.

Moreover, to keep God's holy order from being violated or despised, we say that everyone ought, as much as possible,

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as the Word of God teaches.

So **all** must be careful not to push themselves forward improperly, but must **wait for God's call**, so that they may be assured of their calling and be certain that **they are chosen by the Lord**.

As for the ministers of the Word, they all have the same power and authority, no matter where they may be, since they are all servants of Jesus Christ, the only universal bishop, and the only head of the church.

Moreover, to keep God's holy order from being violated or despised, we say that everyone ought, as much as possible,

to hold the ministers of the Word and elders of the church in special esteem,
 because of the work they do,
 and be at peace with them,
 without grumbling, quarreling, or fighting.

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 because of the work they do,
 and be at peace with them,
 without grumbling, quarreling, or fighting.

Article 32: The Order and Discipline of the Church

We also believe that
 although it is useful and good
 for those who govern the churches
 to establish and set up
 a certain order among themselves
 for maintaining the body of the church,
 they ought always to guard against deviating
 from what Christ,
 our only Master,
 has ordained
 for us.

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 although it is useful and good
 for those who govern the churches
 to establish and set up
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 for maintaining the body of the church,
 they ought always to guard against deviating
 from what Christ,
 our only Master,
 has ordained
 for us.

Therefore we reject all human innovations
 and all laws imposed on us,
 in our worship of God,
 which bind and force our consciences
 in any way.

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 and all laws imposed on us,
 in our worship of God,
 which bind and force our consciences
 in any way.

So we accept only what is proper to maintain harmony and unity and to keep all in obedience to God.

To that end excommunication, with all it involves, according to the Word of God, is required.

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Article 33: The Sacraments

We believe that our good God, mindful of our crudeness and weakness, has ordained sacraments for us to seal his promises in us, to pledge his good will and grace toward us, and also to nourish and sustain our faith.

He has added these to the Word of the gospel to represent better to our external senses both what he enables us to understand by his Word and what he does inwardly in our hearts, confirming in us the salvation he imparts to us.

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God has added these to the Word of the gospel to represent better to our external senses both what God enables us to understand by the Word and what he does inwardly in our hearts, confirming in us the salvation he imparts to us.

For they are visible signs and seals
of something internal and invisible,
by means of which God works in us
through the power of the Holy Spirit.
So they are not empty and hollow signs
to fool and deceive us,
for their truth is Jesus Christ,
without whom they would be nothing.

Moreover,
we are satisfied with the number of sacraments
that Christ our Master has ordained for us.
There are only two:
the sacrament of baptism
and the Holy Supper of Jesus Christ.

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of something internal and invisible,
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the sacrament of baptism
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Article 34: The Sacrament of Baptism
We believe and confess that Jesus Christ,
in whom the law is fulfilled,
has by his shed blood
put an end to every other shedding of blood,
which anyone might do or wish to do
in order to atone or satisfy for sins.

Having abolished circumcision,
which was done with blood,
he established in its place
the sacrament of baptism.

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Having abolished circumcision,
which was done with blood,
Christ established in its place
the sacrament of baptism.

By it we are received into God's church
and set apart from all other people and alien religions,
that we may be dedicated entirely to him,
bearing his mark and sign.
It also witnesses to us
that he will be our God forever,
since he is our gracious Father.

Therefore he has commanded
that all those who belong to him
be baptized with pure water
"in the name of the Father,
and the Son,
and the Holy Spirit."⁷⁶

In this way he signifies to us
that just as water washes away the dirt of the body
when it is poured on us
and also is seen on the body of the baptized
when it is sprinkled on him,
so too the blood of Christ does the same thing internally,
in the soul,
by the Holy Spirit.

It washes and cleanses it from its sins
and transforms us from being the children of wrath
into the children of God.

This does not happen by the physical water
but by the sprinkling of the precious blood of the Son of God,

By it we are received into God's church
and set apart from all other people and alien religions,
that we may wholly belong to him
whose mark and sign we bear.
Baptism also witnesses to us
that God, being our gracious Father,
will be our God forever.

Therefore Christ has commanded
that all those who belong to him
be baptized with pure water
"in the name of the Father,
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In this way God signifies to us
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when it is poured on us
and also is seen on the bodies of those who are baptized
when it is sprinkled on them,
so too the blood of Christ does the same thing internally,
in the soul,
by the Holy Spirit.

It washes and cleanses it from its sins
and transforms us from being the children of wrath
into the children of God.

This does not happen by the physical water
but by the sprinkling of the precious blood of the Son of God,

who is our Red Sea,
 through which we must pass
 to escape the tyranny of Pharaoh,
 who is the devil,
 and to enter the spiritual land
 of Canaan.

So ministers,
 as far as their work is concerned,
 give us the sacrament and what is visible,
 but our Lord gives what the sacrament signifies—
 namely the invisible gifts and graces;
 washing, purifying, and cleansing our souls
 of all filth and unrighteousness;
 renewing our hearts and filling them
 with all comfort;
 giving us true assurance
 of his fatherly goodness;
 clothing us with the “new man” and stripping off the “old,”
 with all its works.

For this reason we believe that
 anyone who aspires to reach eternal life
 ought to be baptized only once
 without ever repeating it—
 for we cannot be born twice.
 Yet this baptism is profitable
 not only when the water is on us
 and when we receive it

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 who is the devil,
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 anyone who aspires to reach eternal life
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 without ever repeating it—
 for we cannot be born twice.
 Yet this baptism is profitable
 not only when the water is on us
 and when we receive it

but throughout our entire lives.

For that reason we detest the error of the Anabaptists who are not content with a single baptism once received and also condemn the baptism of the children of believers.

We believe our children ought to be baptized and sealed with the sign of the covenant, as little children were circumcised in Israel on the basis of the same promises made to our children.

And truly, Christ has shed his blood no less for washing the little children of believers than he did for adults.

Therefore they ought to receive the sign and sacrament of what Christ has done for them, just as the Lord commanded in the law that by offering a lamb for them the sacrament of the suffering and death of Christ would be granted them shortly after their birth. This was the sacrament of Jesus Christ.

but throughout our entire lives.

For that reason we reject the error of the Anabaptists who are not content with a single baptism once received and also condemn the baptism of the children of believers.

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And truly, Christ has shed his blood no less for washing the little children of believers than he did for adults.

Therefore they ought to receive the sign and sacrament of what Christ has done for them, just as the Lord commanded in the law that by offering a lamb for them the sacrament of the suffering and death of Christ would be granted them shortly after their birth. This was the sacrament of Jesus Christ.

Furthermore,
baptism does for our children
what circumcision did for the Jewish people.
That is why Paul calls baptism
the “circumcision of Christ.”⁷⁷

⁷⁶ Matt. 28:19

⁷⁷ Col. 2:11

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what circumcision did for the Jewish people.
That is why Paul calls baptism
the “circumcision of Christ.”⁷⁸

⁷⁶ Matt. 28:19

⁷⁷ Col.3:9

⁷⁸ Col. 2:11

Article 35: The Sacrament of the Lord’s Supper

We believe and confess
that our Savior Jesus Christ
has ordained and instituted the sacrament of the Holy Supper
to nourish and sustain those
who are already born again and ingrafted
into his family:
his church.

Now those who are born again have two lives in them.

The one is physical and temporal—
they have it from the moment of their first birth,
and it is common to all.

The other is spiritual and heavenly,
and is given them in their second birth;
it comes through the Word of the gospel
in the communion of the body of Christ;
and this life is common to God’s elect only.

Article 35: The Sacrament of the Lord’s Supper

We believe and confess
that our Savior Jesus Christ
has ordained and instituted the sacrament of the Holy Supper
to nourish and sustain those
who are already regenerated and ingrafted
into his family,
which is his church.

Now those who are born again have two lives in them.

The one is physical and temporal—
they have it from the moment of their first birth,
and it is common to all.

The other is spiritual and heavenly,
and is given them in their second birth—
it comes through the Word of the gospel
in the communion of the body of Christ;
and this life is common to God’s elect only.

Thus, to support the physical and earthly life
God has prescribed for us
an appropriate earthly and material bread,
which is as common to all
as life itself also is.
But to maintain the spiritual and heavenly life
that belongs to believers
he has sent a living bread
that came down from heaven:
namely Jesus Christ,
 who nourishes and maintains
 the spiritual life of believers
 when eaten—
 that is, when appropriated
 and received spiritually
 by faith.

To represent to us
this spiritual and heavenly bread
Christ has instituted
an earthly and visible bread as the sacrament of his body
and wine as the sacrament of his blood.
He did this to testify to us that
just as truly as we take and hold the sacraments in our hands
and eat and drink it in our mouths,
 by which our life is then sustained,
so truly we receive into our souls,
 for our spiritual life,

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God has prescribed for us
an appropriate earthly and material bread,
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But to maintain the spiritual and heavenly life
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and wine as the sacrament of his blood.
He did this to testify to us that
just as truly as we take and hold the sacrament in our hands
and eat and drink it with our mouths,
 by which our life is then sustained,
so truly we receive into our souls,
 for our spiritual life,

the true body and true blood of Christ,
our only Savior.
We receive these by faith,
which is the hand and mouth of our souls.

Now it is certain
that Jesus Christ did not prescribe
his sacraments for us in vain,
since he works in us all he represents
by these holy signs,
although the manner in which he does it
goes beyond our understanding
and is incomprehensible to us,
just as the operation of God's Spirit
is hidden and incomprehensible.

Yet we do not go wrong when we say
that what is eaten is Christ's own natural body
and what is drunk is his own blood—
but the manner in which we eat it
is not by the mouth but by the Spirit,
through faith.

In that way Jesus Christ remains always seated
at the right hand of God the Father
in heaven—
but he never refrains on that account
to communicate himself to us
through faith.

the true body and true blood of Christ,
our only Savior.
We receive these by faith,
which is the hand and mouth of our souls.

Now it is certain
that Jesus Christ did not prescribe
his sacraments for us in vain,
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is not by the mouth, but by the Spirit
through faith.

In that way Jesus Christ remains always seated
at the right hand of God the Father
in heaven—
but he never refrains on that account
to communicate himself to us
through faith.

This banquet is a spiritual table
at which Christ communicates himself to us
with all his benefits.

At that table he makes us enjoy himself
as much as the merits of his suffering and death,
as he nourishes, strengthens, and comforts
our poor, desolate souls
by the eating of his flesh,
and relieves and renews them
by the drinking of his blood.

Moreover,
though the sacraments and thing signified are joined together,
not all receive both of them.

The wicked person certainly takes the sacrament,
to his condemnation,
but does not receive the truth of the sacrament,
just as Judas and Simon the Sorcerer both indeed
received the sacrament,
but not Christ,
who was signified by it.
He is communicated only to believers.

Finally,
with humility and reverence
we receive the holy sacrament
in the gathering of God's people,
as we engage together,
with thanksgiving,

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at which Christ communicates himself to us
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Finally,
with humility and reverence
we receive the holy sacrament
in the gathering of God's people,
as we engage together,
with thanksgiving,

in a holy remembrance
of the death of Christ our Savior,
and as we thus confess
our faith and Christian religion.
Therefore no one should come to this table
without examining himself carefully,
lest "by eating this bread
and drinking this cup
he eat and drink to his own judgment."⁷⁸

In short,
by the use of this holy sacrament
we are moved to a fervent love
of God and our neighbors.

Therefore we reject
as desecrations of the sacraments
all the muddled ideas and damnable inventions
that men have added and mixed in with them.
And we say that we should be content with the procedure
that Christ and the apostles have taught us
and speak of these things
as they have spoken of them.

⁷⁸ 1 Cor. 11:27

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and as we thus confess
our faith and Christian religion.
Therefore none should come to this table
without examining themselves carefully,
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and drinking this cup
they "eat and drink judgment against themselves."⁷⁹

In short,
by the use of this holy sacrament
we are moved to a fervent love
of God and our neighbors.

Therefore we reject
as desecrations of the sacraments
all the muddled ideas and **condemnable** inventions
that people have added and mixed in with them.
And we say that we should be content with the procedure
that Christ and the apostles have taught us
and speak of these things
as they have spoken of them.

⁷⁹ 1 Cor. 11:29

Article 36: The Civil Government

We believe that because of the depravity of the human race our good God has ordained kings, princes, and civil officers. He wants the world to be governed by laws and policies so that human lawlessness may be restrained and that everything may be conducted in good order among human beings.

For that purpose he has placed the sword in the hands of the government, to punish evil people and protect the good.

And being called in this manner to contribute to the advancement of a society that is pleasing to God, the civil rulers have the task, subject to God's law, of removing every obstacle to the preaching of the gospel and to every aspect of divine worship.

They should do this while completely refraining from every tendency toward exercising absolute authority, and while functioning in the sphere entrusted to them, with the means belonging to them.

Article 36: The Civil Government

We believe that because of the depravity of the human race, our good God has ordained kings, princes, and civil officers. God wants the world to be governed by laws and policies so that human lawlessness may be restrained and that everything may be conducted in good order among human beings.

For that purpose God has placed the sword in the hands of the government, to punish evil people and protect the good.

LINES 1811-1830 IN PARALLEL COLUMNS (with original RCA/CRC versions)
 Include footnote from Ecumenical Creeds and Reformed Confessions (excluding anti-Biblical clause)

They should do it in order that
the Word of God may have free course;
the kingdom of Jesus Christ may make progress;
and every anti-Christian power may be resisted.*

*The Synod of 1958, in line with 1910 and 1938, substituted the above statement for the following (which it judged unbiblical):

And the government's task is not limited
to caring for and watching over the public domain
but extends also to upholding the sacred ministry,
with a view to removing and destroying
all idolatry and false worship of the Antichrist;
to promoting the kingdom of Jesus Christ;
and to furthering the preaching of the gospel everywhere;
to the end that God may be honored and served by everyone,
as he requires in his Word.

Moreover everyone,
regardless of status, condition, or rank,
must be subject to the government,
and pay taxes,
and hold its representatives in honor and respect,
and obey them in all things that are not in conflict
with God's Word,
praying for them
that the Lord may be willing to lead them
in all their ways
and that we may live a peaceful and quiet life
in all piety and decency.*

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regardless of status, condition, or rank,
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that the Lord may be willing to lead them
in all their ways
and that we may live a peaceful and quiet life
in all piety and decency.*

*The Synod of 1985 directed that the following paragraph be taken from the body of the text and be placed in a footnote:
 And on this matter we denounce the Anabaptists, other anarchists, and in general all those who want to reject the authorities and civil officers and to subvert justice
 by introducing common ownership of goods
 and corrupting the moral order
 that God has established among human beings.

(Note: Add “footnote” for CRC.)
 And on this matter we reject the Anabaptists, anarchists, and in general all those who want to reject the authorities and civil officers and to subvert justice
 by introducing common ownership of goods
 and corrupting the moral order
 that God has established among human beings.

Article 37: The Last Judgment

Finally we believe,
 according to God’s Word,
 that when the time appointed by the Lord is come
 (which is unknown to all creatures)
 and the number of the elect is complete,
 our Lord Jesus Christ will come from heaven,
 bodily and visibly,
 as he ascended,
 with great glory and majesty,
 to declare himself the judge
 of the living and the dead.
 He will burn this old world,
 in fire and flame,
 in order to cleanse it.

Then all human creatures will appear in person
 before that great judge—
 men, women, and children,

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 in order to cleanse it.

Then all human creatures will appear in person
 before the great judge—
 men, women, and children,

who have lived from the beginning until the end
of the world.

They will be summoned there
by the voice of the archangel
and by the sound of the divine trumpet.⁷⁹

For all those who died before that time
will be raised from the earth,
their spirits being joined and united
with their own bodies
in which they lived.

And as for those who are still alive,
they will not die like the others
but will be changed “in the twinkling of an eye”
from “corruptible to incorruptible.”⁸⁰

Then “the books” (that is, the consciences) will be opened,
and the dead will be judged
according to the things they did in the world,⁸¹
whether good or evil.

Indeed, all people will give account
of all the idle words they have spoken,⁸²
which the world regards
as only playing games.

And then the secrets and hypocrisies of men
will be publicly uncovered
in the sight of all.

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They will be summoned there
“with the archangel’s call
and with the sound of God’s trumpet.”⁸⁰

For all those who died before that time
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their spirits being joined and united
with their own bodies
in which they lived.

And as for those who are still alive,
they will not die like the others
but will be changed “in the twinkling of an eye”
from perishable to imperishable.⁸¹

Then the books (that is, the consciences) will be opened,
and the dead will be judged
according to the things they did in the world,⁸²
whether good or evil.

Indeed, all people will give account
of all the idle words they have spoken,⁸³
which the world regards
as only playing games.

And then the secrets and hypocrisies of all people
will be publicly uncovered
in the sight of all.

Therefore,
 with good reason
 the thought of this judgment
 is horrible and dreadful
 to wicked and evil people.
 But it is very pleasant
 and a great comfort
 to the righteous and elect,
 since their total redemption
 will then be accomplished.
 They will then receive the fruits of their labor
 and of the trouble they have suffered;
 their innocence will be openly recognized by all;
 and they will see the terrible vengeance
 that God will bring on the evil ones
 who tyrannized, oppressed, and tormented them
 in this world.

The evil ones will be convicted
 by the witness of their own consciences,
 and shall be made immortal—
 but only to be tormented
 in the everlasting fire
 prepared for the devil and his angels.⁸³

In contrast,
 the faithful and elect will be crowned
 with glory and honor.

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In contrast,
 the faithful and elect will be crowned
 with glory and honor.

The Son of God will “confess their names”⁸⁴
 before God his Father and the holy and elect angels;
 all tears will be “wiped from their eyes”;⁸⁵
 and their cause—
 at present condemned as heretical and evil
 by many judges and civil officers—
 will be acknowledged as the “cause of the Son of God.”

And as a gracious reward
 the Lord will make them possess a glory
 such as the heart of man
 could never imagine.

So we look forward to that great day with longing
 in order to enjoy fully
 the promises of God in Christ Jesus,
 our Lord.

⁷⁹ 1 Thess. 4:16

⁸⁰ 1 Cor. 15:51-53

⁸¹ Rev. 20:12

⁸² Matt. 12:36

⁸³ Matt. 25:14

⁸⁴ Matt. 10:32

⁸⁵ Rev. 7:17

The Son of God will **profess** their names⁸⁵
 before God his Father and the holy and elect angels;
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 and their cause—
 at present condemned as heretical and evil
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And as a gracious reward
 the Lord will make them possess a glory
 such as the **human heart**
 could never imagine.

So we look forward to that great day with longing
 in order to enjoy fully
 the promises of God in Christ Jesus,
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⁸⁶ Rev. 7:17

Addendum 3

The Canons of Dort

The Decision of the Synod of Dort on the Five Main Points of Doctrine in Dispute in the Netherlands is popularly known as the Canons of Dort. It consists of statements of doctrine adopted by the great Synod of Dort, which met in the city of Dordrecht in 1618-19. Although this was a national synod of the Reformed churches of the Netherlands, it had an international character, since it was composed not only of Dutch delegates but also of twenty-six delegates from eight foreign countries.

The Synod of Dort was held in order to settle a serious controversy in the Dutch churches initiated by the rise of Arminianism. Jacob Arminius, a theological professor at Leiden University, questioned the teaching of Calvin and his followers on a number of important points. After Arminius's death, his own followers presented their views on five of these points in the Remonstrance of 1610. In this document and in later more explicit writings, the Arminians taught election based on foreseen faith, the universal application of Christ's atonement available to all who freely choose to accept it, limited human depravity, the resistibility of God's grace, and the possibility of a fall from salvation. In the Canons the Synod of Dort rejected these views and set forth the Reformed teaching on these points with the purpose of offering a deeper assurance of salvation to believers in accordance with the teaching of the Scriptures.

The Canons are thus unique among the Reformed confessions because of their original purpose as a judicial decision on the doctrinal points in dispute during the Arminian controversy. The original preface called them a "judgment, in which both the true view, agreeing with God's Word, concerning the aforesaid five points of doctrine, is explained, and the false view, disagreeing with God's Word, is rejected." The Canons also have a narrower scope than the Belgic Confession and the Heidelberg Catechism in that they do not cover the whole range of doctrine but focus on the five points of doctrine in dispute.

Although in form there are only four points in the Canons of Dort, we speak properly of five points, because the Canons were structured to correspond to the five articles of the 1610 Remonstrance. Main Points Three and Four were combined into one, always designated as Main Point Three/Four. Each of the main points consists of a positive and a negative part, the former being an exposition of the Reformed doctrine on the subject, the latter a repudiation of the corresponding errors. While the Reformed Church in America does not give confessional status to the Rejection of Errors, it nevertheless recognizes that the rejections help interpret the Canons by highlighting the specific errors addressed.

The biblical quotations in the Canons are translations from the original Latin and so do not always correspond to current versions. Though not in the original text, subheadings have been added to the positive articles and to the conclusion in order to facilitate study of the Canons.

The Canons of Dort

Formally Titled

The Decision of the Synod of Dort on the Five Main Points of Doctrine in Dispute in the Netherlands

Previous Version

The First Main Point of Doctrine

Divine Election and Reprobation

The Judgment Concerning Divine Predestination Which the Synod Declares to Be in Agreement with the Word of God and Accepted Till Now in the Reformed Churches, Set Forth in Several Articles

Proposed Version

The First Main Point of Doctrine

Divine Election and Reprobation

The Judgment Concerning Divine Predestination Which the Synod Declares to Be in Agreement with the Word of God and Accepted Till Now in the Reformed Churches, Set Forth in Several Articles

Article 1: God's Right to Condemn All People

Since all people have sinned in Adam and have come under the sentence of the curse and eternal death, God would have done no one an injustice if it had been his will to leave the entire human race in sin and under the curse, and to condemn them on account of their sin. As the apostle says: "The whole world is liable to the condemnation of God" (Rom. 3:19), "All have sinned and are deprived of the glory of God" (Rom. 3:23), and "The wages of sin is death" (Rom. 6:23).*

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Article 2: The Manifestation of God’s Love

But this is how God showed his love: he sent his only begotten Son into the world, so that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life.

Article 3: The Preaching of the Gospel

In order that people may be brought to faith, God mercifully sends proclaimers of this very joyful message to the people he wishes and at the time he wishes. By this ministry people are called to repentance and faith in Christ crucified. For “how shall they believe in him of whom they have not heard? And how shall they hear without someone preaching? And how shall they preach unless they have been sent?” (Rom. 10:14-15).

Article 4: A Twofold Response to the Gospel

God’s anger remains on those who do not believe this gospel. But those who do accept it and embrace Jesus the Savior with a true and living faith are delivered through him from God’s anger and from destruction, and receive the gift of eternal life.

Article 5: The Sources of Unbelief and of Faith

The cause or blame for this unbelief, as well as for all other sins, is not at all in God, but in man. Faith in Jesus Christ, however, and salvation through him is a free gift of God. As Scripture says, “It is by grace you have been saved, through faith, and this not from yourselves; it is a gift of God” (Eph. 2:8). Likewise: “It has been freely given to you to believe in Christ” (Phil. 1:29).

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Article 6: God's Eternal Decision

The fact that some receive from God the gift of faith within time, and that others do not, stems from his eternal decision. For “all his works are known to God from eternity” (Acts 15:18; Eph. 1:11). In accordance with this decision he graciously softens the hearts, however hard, of his chosen ones and inclines them to believe, but by his just judgment he leaves in their wickedness and hardness of heart those who have not been chosen. And in this especially is disclosed to us his act—unfathomable, and as merciful as it is just—of distinguishing between people equally lost. This is the well-known decision of election and reprobation revealed in God’s Word. This decision the wicked, impure, and unstable distort to their own ruin, but it provides holy and godly souls with comfort beyond words.

Article 7: Election

Election [or choosing] is God’s unchangeable purpose by which he did the following:

Before the foundation of the world, by sheer grace, according to the free good pleasure of his will, he chose in Christ to salvation a definite number of particular people out of the entire human race, which had fallen by its own fault from its original innocence into sin and ruin. Those chosen were neither better nor more deserving than the others, but lay with them in the common misery. He did this in Christ, whom he also appointed from eternity to be the mediator, the head of all those chosen, and the foundation of their salvation. And so he decided to give the chosen ones to Christ to be saved, and to call and draw them effectively into Christ’s fellowship through his Word and Spirit. In other words, he decided to

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The fact that some receive from God the gift of faith within time, and that others do not, stems from his eternal decree. For “all his works are known to God from eternity” (Acts 15:18; Eph. 1:11). In accordance with this decree God graciously softens the hearts, however hard, of the elect and inclines them to believe, but by a just judgment God leaves in their wickedness and hardness of heart those who have not been chosen. And in this especially is disclosed to us God’s act—unfathomable, and as merciful as it is just—of distinguishing between people equally lost. This is the well-known decree of election and reprobation revealed in God’s Word. The wicked, impure, and unstable distort this decree to their own ruin, but it provides holy and godly souls with comfort beyond words.

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grant them true faith in Christ, to justify them, to sanctify them, and finally, after powerfully preserving them in the fellowship of his Son, to glorify them.

God did all this in order to demonstrate his mercy, to the praise of the riches of his glorious grace.

As Scripture says, “God chose us in Christ, before the foundation of the world, so that we should be holy and blameless before him with love; he predestined us whom he adopted as his children through Jesus Christ, in himself, according to the good pleasure of his will, to the praise of his glorious grace, by which he freely made us pleasing to himself in his beloved” (Eph. 1:4-6). And elsewhere, “Those whom he predestined, he also called; and those whom he called, he also justified; and those whom he justified, he also glorified” (Rom. 8:30).

And so God decreed to give to Christ those chosen for salvation, and to call and draw them effectively into Christ’s fellowship through the Word and Spirit. In other words, God decreed to grant them true faith in Christ, to justify them, to sanctify them, and finally, after powerfully preserving them in the fellowship of the Son, to glorify them.

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Article 8: A Single Decision of Election

This election is not of many kinds; it is one and the same election for all who were to be saved in the Old and the New Testament. For Scripture declares that there is a single good pleasure, purpose, and plan of God’s will, by which he chose us from eternity both to grace and to glory, both to salvation and to the way of salvation, which he prepared in advance for us to walk in.

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Article 9: Election Not Based on Foreseen Faith

This same election took place, not on the basis of foreseen faith, of the obedience of faith, of holiness, or of any other good quality and disposition, as though it were based on a prerequisite cause or condition in the person to be chosen, but rather for the purpose of faith, of the obedience of faith, of holiness, and so on. Accordingly, election is the source of each of the benefits of salvation. Faith, holiness, and the other saving gifts, and at last eternal life itself, flow forth from election as its fruits and effects. As the apostle says, "He chose us" (not because we were, but) "so that we should be holy and blameless before him in love" (Eph. 1:4).

Article 10: Election Based on God's Good Pleasure

But the cause of this undeserved election is exclusively the good pleasure of God. This does not involve his choosing certain human qualities or actions from among all those possible as a condition of salvation, but rather involves his adopting certain particular persons from among the common mass of sinners as his own possession. As Scripture says, "When the children were not yet born, and had done nothing either good or bad..., she" (Rebecca) was told, "The older will serve the younger." As it is written, "Jacob I loved, but Esau I hated" (Rom. 9:11-13). Also, "All who were appointed for eternal life believed" (Acts 13:48).

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Article 11: Election Unchangeable

Just as God himself is most wise, unchangeable, all-knowing, and almighty, so the election made by him can neither be suspended nor altered, revoked, or annulled; neither can his chosen ones be cast off, nor their number reduced.

Article 12: The Assurance of Election

Assurance of this their eternal and unchangeable election to salvation is given to the chosen in due time, though by various stages and in differing measure. Such assurance comes not by inquisitive searching into the hidden and deep things of God, but by noticing within themselves, with spiritual joy and holy delight, the unmistakable fruits of election pointed out in God’s Word—such as a true faith in Christ, a childlike fear of God, a godly sorrow for their sins, a hunger and thirst for righteousness, and so on.

Article 13: The Fruit of This Assurance

In their awareness and assurance of this election God’s children daily find greater cause to humble themselves before God, to adore the fathomless depth of his mercies, to cleanse themselves, and to give fervent love in return to him who first so greatly loved them. This is far from saying that this teaching concerning election, and reflection upon it, make God’s children lax in observing his commandments or carnally self-assured. By God’s just judgment this does usually happen to those who casually take for granted the grace of election or engage in idle and brazen talk about it but are unwilling to walk in the ways of the chosen.

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Article 14: Teaching Election Properly

Just as, by God's wise plan, this teaching concerning divine election has been proclaimed through the prophets, Christ himself, and the apostles, in Old and New Testament times, and has subsequently been committed to writing in the Holy Scriptures, so also today in God's church, for which it was specifically intended, this teaching must be set forth—with a spirit of discretion, in a godly and holy manner, at the appropriate time and place, without inquisitive searching into the ways of the Most High. This must be done for the glory of God's most holy name, and for the lively comfort of his people.

Article 15: Reprobation

Moreover, Holy Scripture most especially highlights this eternal and undeserved grace of our election and brings it out more clearly for us, in that it further bears witness that not all people have been chosen but that some have not been chosen or have been passed by in God's eternal election— those, that is, concerning whom God, on the basis of his entirely free, most just, irreproachable, and unchangeable good pleasure, made the following decision:

to leave them in the common misery into which, by their own fault, they have plunged themselves; not to grant them saving faith and the grace of conversion; but finally to condemn and eternally punish them (having been left in their own ways and under his just judgment), not only for their unbelief but also for all their other sins, in order to display his justice.

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And this is the decision of reprobation, which does not at all make God the author of sin (a blasphemous thought!) but rather its fearful, irrefragable, just judge and avenger.

Article 16: Responses to the Teaching of Reprobation

Those who do not yet actively experience within themselves a living faith in Christ or an assured confidence of heart, peace of conscience, a zeal for childlike obedience, and a glorying in God through Christ, but who nevertheless use the means by which God has promised to work these things in us—such people ought not to be alarmed at the mention of reprobation, nor to count themselves among the reprobate; rather they ought to continue diligently in the use of the means, to desire fervently a time of more abundant grace, and to wait for it in reverence and humility. On the other hand, those who seriously desire to turn to God, to be pleasing to him alone, and to be delivered from the body of death, but are not yet able to make such progress along the way of godliness and faith as they would like—such people ought much less to stand in fear of the teaching concerning reprobation, since our merciful God has promised that he will not snuff out a smoldering wick and that he will not break a bruised reed. However, those who have forgotten God and their Savior Jesus Christ and have abandoned themselves wholly to the cares of the world and the pleasures of the flesh—such people have every reason to stand in fear of this teaching, as long as they do not seriously turn to God.

And this is the **decree** of reprobation, which does not at all make God the author of sin (a blasphemous thought!) but rather its fearful, irrefragable, just judge and avenger.

Article 16: Responses to the Teaching of Reprobation

Those who do not yet actively experience within themselves a living faith in Christ or an assured confidence of heart, peace of conscience, a zeal for childlike obedience, and a glorying in God through Christ, but who nevertheless use the means by which God has promised to work these things in us—such people ought not to be alarmed at the mention of reprobation, nor to count themselves among the reprobate; rather they ought to continue diligently in the use of the means, to desire fervently a time of more abundant grace, and to wait for it in reverence and humility. On the other hand, those who seriously desire to turn to God, to be pleasing to God alone, and to be delivered from the body of death, but are not yet able to make such progress along the way of godliness and faith as they would like—such people ought much less to stand in fear of the teaching concerning reprobation, since our merciful God has promised **not to** snuff out a smoldering wick or break a bruised reed *. However, those who have forgotten God and their Savior Jesus Christ and have abandoned themselves wholly to the cares of the world and the pleasures of the flesh—such people have every reason to stand in fear of this teaching, as long as they do not seriously turn to God. *Isaiah 42:3

Article 17: The Salvation of the Infants of Believers

Since we must make judgments about God's will from his Word, which testifies that the children of believers are holy, not by nature but by virtue of the gracious covenant in which they together with their parents are included, godly parents ought not to doubt the election and salvation of their children whom God calls out of this life in infancy.

Article 18: The Proper Attitude Toward Election and Reprobation

To those who complain about this grace of an undeserved election and about the severity of a just reprobation, we reply with the words of the apostle, "Who are you, O man, to talk back to God?" (Rom. 9:20), and with the words of our Savior, "Have I no right to do what I want with my own?" (Matt. 20:15). We, however, with reverent adoration of these secret things, cry out with the apostle: "Oh, the depths of the riches both of the wisdom and the knowledge of God! How unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways beyond tracing out! For who has known the mind of the Lord? Or who has been his counselor? Or who has first given to God, that God should repay him? For from him and through him and to him are all things. To him be the glory forever! Amen" (Rom. 11:33-36).

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Rejection of Errors

Rejection of the Errors by Which the Dutch Churches Have for Some Time Been Disturbed

Having set forth the orthodox teaching concerning election and reprobation, the Synod rejects the errors of those

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Who teach that the will of God to save those who would believe and persevere in faith and in the obedience of faith is the whole and entire decision of election to salvation, and that nothing else concerning this decision has been revealed in God’s Word.

For they deceive the simple and plainly contradict Holy Scripture in its testimony that God does not only wish to save those who would believe, but that he has also from eternity chosen certain particular people to whom, rather than to others, he would within time grant faith in Christ and perseverance. As Scripture says, I have revealed your name to those whom you gave me (John 17:6). Likewise, All who were appointed for eternal life believed (Acts 13:48), and He chose us before the foundation of the world so that we should be holy... (Eph. 1:4).

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Who teach that God's election to eternal life is of many kinds: one general and indefinite, the other particular and definite; and the latter in turn either incomplete, revocable, nonperemptory (or conditional), or else complete, irrevocable, and peremptory (or absolute). Likewise, who teach that there is one election to faith and another to salvation, so that there can be an election to justifying faith apart from a peremptory election to salvation.

For this is an invention of the human brain, devised apart from the Scriptures, which distorts the teaching concerning election and breaks up this golden chain of salvation: Those whom he predestined, he also called; and those whom he called, he also justified; and those whom he justified, he also glorified (Rom. 8:30).

III

Who teach that God's good pleasure and purpose, which Scripture mentions in its teaching of election, does not involve God's choosing certain particular people rather than others, but involves God's choosing, out of all possible conditions (including the works of the law) or out of the whole order of things, the intrinsically unworthy act of faith, as well as the imperfect obedience of faith, to be a condition of salvation; and it involves his graciously wishing to count this as perfect obedience and to look upon it as worthy of the reward of eternal life.

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For by this pernicious error the good pleasure of God and the merit of Christ are robbed of their effectiveness and people are drawn away, by unprofitable inquiries, from the truth of undeserved justification and from the simplicity of the Scriptures. It also gives the lie to these words of the apostle: God called us with a holy calling, not in virtue of works, but in virtue of his own purpose and the grace which was given to us in Christ Jesus before the beginning of time (2 Tim. 1:9).

IV

Who teach that in election to faith a prerequisite condition is that man should rightly use the light of nature, be upright, unassuming, humble, and disposed to eternal life, as though election depended to some extent on these factors.

For this smacks of Pelagius, and it clearly calls into question the words of the apostle: We lived at one time in the passions of our flesh, following the will of our flesh and thoughts, and we were by nature children of wrath, like everyone else. But God, who is rich in mercy, out of the great love with which he loved us, even when we were dead in transgressions, made us alive with Christ, by whose grace you have been saved. And God raised us up with him and seated us with him in heaven in Christ Jesus, in order that in the coming ages we might show the surpassing riches of his grace, according to his kindness toward us in Christ Jesus. For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith (and this not from yourselves; it is the gift of God) not by works, so that no one can boast (Eph. 2:3-9).

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Who teach that the incomplete and nonperemptory election of particular persons to salvation occurred on the basis of a foreseen faith, repentance, holiness, and godliness, which has just begun or continued for some time; but that complete and peremptory election occurred on the basis of a foreseen perseverance to the end in faith, repentance, holiness, and godliness. And that this is the gracious and evangelical worthiness, on account of which the one who is chosen is more worthy than the one who is not chosen. And therefore that faith, the obedience of faith, holiness, godliness, and perseverance are not fruits or effects of an unchangeable election to glory, but indispensable conditions and causes, which are prerequisite in those who are to be chosen in the complete election, and which are foreseen as achieved in them.

This runs counter to the entire Scripture, which throughout impresses upon our ears and hearts these sayings among others: Election is not by works, but by him who calls (Rom. 9:11-12); All who were appointed for eternal life believed (Acts 13:48); He chose us in himself so that we should be holy (Eph. 1:4); You did not choose me, but I chose you (John 15:16); If by grace, not by works (Rom. 11:6); In this is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us and sent his Son (1 John 4:10).

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Who teach that the incomplete and **conditional** election of particular persons to salvation occurred on the basis of a foreseen faith, repentance, holiness, and godliness, which has just begun or continued for some time; but that complete and peremptory election occurred on the basis of a foreseen perseverance to the end in faith, repentance, holiness, and godliness. And that this is the gracious and evangelical worthiness, on account of which the one who is chosen is more worthy than the one who is not chosen. And therefore that faith, the obedience of faith, holiness, godliness, and perseverance are not fruits or effects of an unchangeable election to glory, but indispensable conditions and causes, which are prerequisite in those who are to be chosen in the complete election, and which are foreseen as achieved in them.

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 Who teach that not every election to salvation is unchangeable, but that some of the chosen can perish and do in fact perish eternally, with no decision of God to prevent it.

By this gross error they make God changeable, destroy the comfort of the godly concerning the steadfastness of their election, and contradict the Holy Scriptures, which teach that the elect cannot be led astray (Matt. 24:24), that Christ does not lose those given to him by the Father (John 6:39), and that those whom God predestined, called, and justified, he also glorifies (Rom. 8:30).

VII
 Who teach that in this life there is no fruit, no awareness, and no assurance of one's unchangeable election to glory, except as conditional upon something changeable and contingent.

For not only is it absurd to speak of an uncertain assurance, but these things also militate against the experience of the saints, who with the apostle rejoice from an awareness of their election and sing the praises of this gift of God; who, as Christ urged, rejoice with his disciples that their names have been written in heaven (Luke 10:20); and finally who hold up against the flaming arrows of the devil's temptations the awareness of their election, with the question Who will bring any charge against those whom God has chosen? (Rom. 8:33).

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Who teach that it was not on the basis of his just will alone that God decided to leave anyone in the fall of Adam and in the common state of sin and condemnation or to pass anyone by in the imparting of grace necessary for faith and conversion.

For these words stand fast: He has mercy on whom he wishes, and he hardens whom he wishes (Rom. 9:18). And also: To you it has been given to know the secrets of the kingdom of heaven, but to them it has not been given (Matt. 13:11). Likewise: I give glory to you, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that you have hidden these things from the wise and understanding, and have revealed them to little children; yes, Father, because that was your pleasure (Matt. 11:25-26).

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Who teach that the cause for God's sending the gospel to one people rather than to another is not merely and solely God's good pleasure, but rather that one people is better and worthier than the other to whom the gospel is not communicated.

For Moses contradicts this when he addresses the people of Israel as follows: Behold, to Jehovah your God belong the heavens and the highest heavens, the earth and whatever is in it. But Jehovah was inclined in his affection to love your ancestors alone, and chose out their descendants after them, you above all peoples, as at this day (Deut. 10:14-15). And also Christ: Woe to you, Korazin! Woe to you, Bethsaida! for if those mighty works done in you had been done in Tyre and Sidon, they would have repented long ago in sackcloth and ashes (Matt. 11:21).

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<p>* All quotations from Scripture are translations of the original Latin manuscript.</p>	
<p>The Second Main Point of Doctrine <i>Christ's Death and Human Redemption Through It</i></p>	<p>The Second Main Point of Doctrine <i>Christ's Death and Human Redemption Through It</i></p>
<p>Article 1: The Punishment Which God's Justice Requires God is not only supremely merciful, but also supremely just. His justice requires (as he has revealed himself in the Word) that the sins we have committed against his infinite majesty be punished with both temporal and eternal punishments, of soul as well as body. We cannot escape these punishments unless satisfaction is given to God's justice.</p>	<p>Article 1: The Punishment Which God's Justice Requires God is not only supremely merciful, but also supremely just. This justice requires (as God has revealed in the Word) that the sins we have committed against his infinite majesty be punished with both temporal and eternal punishments, of soul as well as body. We cannot escape these punishments unless satisfaction is given to God's justice.</p>
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<p>Article 3: The Infinite Value of Christ's Death This death of God's Son is the only and entirely complete sacrifice and satisfaction for sins; it is of infinite value and worth, more than sufficient to atone for the sins of the whole world.</p>	<p>Article 3: The Infinite Value of Christ's Death This death of God's Son is the only and entirely complete sacrifice and satisfaction for sins; it is of infinite value and worth, more than sufficient to atone for the sins of the whole world.</p>

Article 4: Reasons for This Infinite Value

This death is of such great value and worth for the reason that the person who suffered it is—as was necessary to be our Savior—not only a true and perfectly holy man, but also the only begotten Son of God, of the same eternal and infinite essence with the Father and the Holy Spirit. Another reason is that this death was accompanied by the experience of God’s anger and curse, which we by our sins had fully deserved.

Article 5: The Mandate to Proclaim the Gospel to All

Moreover, 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, to whom God in his good pleasure sends the gospel.

Article 6: Unbelief Man’s Responsibility

However, that many who have been called through the gospel do not repent or believe in Christ but perish in unbelief is not because the sacrifice of Christ offered on the cross is deficient or insufficient, but because they themselves are at fault.

Article 7: Faith God’s Gift

But all who genuinely believe and are delivered and saved by Christ’s death from their sins and from destruction receive this favor solely from God’s grace—which he owes to no one—given to them in Christ from eternity.

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Article 8: The Saving Effectiveness of Christ's Death

For it was the entirely free plan and very gracious will and intention of God the Father that the enlivening and saving effectiveness of his Son's costly death should work itself out in all his chosen ones, in order that he might grant justifying faith to them only and thereby lead them without fail to salvation. In other words, it was God's will that Christ through the blood of the cross (by which he confirmed the new covenant) should effectively redeem from every people, tribe, nation, and language all those and only those who were chosen from eternity to salvation and given to him by the Father; that he should grant them faith (which, like the Holy Spirit's other saving gifts, he acquired for them by his death); that he should cleanse them by his blood from all their sins, both original and actual, whether committed before or after their coming to faith; that he should faithfully preserve them to the very end; and that he should finally present them to himself, a glorious people, without spot or wrinkle.

Article 9: The Fulfillment of God's Plan

This plan, arising out of God's eternal love for his chosen ones, from the beginning of the world to the present time has been powerfully carried out and will also be carried out in the future, the gates of hell seeking vainly to prevail against it. As a result the chosen are gathered into one, all in their own time, and there is always a church of believers founded on Christ's blood, a church which steadfastly loves, persistently worships, and—here and in all eternity—praises him as her Savior who laid down his life for her on the cross, as a bridegroom for his bride.

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For this assertion is an insult to the wisdom of God the Father and to the merit of Jesus Christ, and it is contrary to Scripture. For the Savior speaks as follows: I lay down my life for the sheep, and I know them (John 10:15, 27). And Isaiah the prophet says concerning the Savior: When he shall make himself an offering for sin, he shall see his offspring, he shall prolong his days, and the will of Jehovah shall prosper in his hand (Isa. 53:10). Finally, this undermines the article of the creed in which we confess what we believe concerning the Church.

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For they contradict Scripture: They are justified freely by his grace through the redemption that came by Jesus Christ, whom God presented as a sacrifice of atonement, through faith in his blood (Rom. 3:24-25). And along with the ungodly Socinus, they introduce a new and foreign justification of man before God, against the consensus of the whole church.

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Who teach that all people have been received into the state of reconciliation and into the grace of the covenant, so that no one on account of original sin is liable to condemnation, or is to be condemned, but that all are free from the guilt of this sin.

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Who make use of the distinction between obtaining and applying in order to instill in the unwary and inexperienced the opinion that God, as far as he is concerned, wished to bestow equally upon all people the benefits which are gained by Christ's death; but that the distinction by which some rather than others come to share in the forgiveness of sins and eternal life depends on their own free choice (which applies itself to the grace offered indiscriminately) but does not depend on the unique gift of mercy which effectively works in them, so that they, rather than others, apply that grace to themselves.

For, while pretending to set forth this distinction in an acceptable sense, they attempt to give the people the deadly poison of Pelagianism.

VII

Who teach that Christ neither could die, nor had to die, nor did die for those whom God so dearly loved and chose to eternal life, since such people do not need the death of Christ.

For they contradict the apostle, who says: Christ loved me and gave himself up for me (Gal. 2:20), and likewise: Who will bring any charge against those whom God has chosen? It is God who justifies. Who is he that condemns? It is Christ who died, that is, for them (Rom. 8:33-34). They also contradict the Savior, who asserts: I lay down my life for the sheep (John 10:15), and My command is this: Love one another as I have loved you. Greater love has no one than this, that one lay down his life for his friends (John 15:12-13).

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The Third and Fourth Main Points of Doctrine

Human Corruption, Conversion to God, and the Way It Occurs

Article 1: The Effect of the Fall on Human Nature

Man was originally created in the image of God and was furnished in his mind with a true and salutary knowledge of his Creator and things spiritual, in his will and heart with righteousness, and in all his emotions with purity; indeed, the whole man was holy. However, rebelling against God at the devil's instigation and by his own free will, he deprived himself of these outstanding gifts. Rather, in their place he brought upon himself blindness, terrible darkness, futility, and distortion of judgment in his mind; perversity, defiance, and hardness in his heart and will; and finally impurity in all his emotions.

Article 2: The Spread of Corruption

Man brought forth children of the same nature as himself after the fall. That is to say, being corrupt he brought forth corrupt children. The corruption spread, by God's just judgment, from Adam to all his descendants—except for Christ alone—not by way of imitation (as in former times the Pelagians would have it) but by way of the propagation of his perverted nature.

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Article 3: Total Inability

Therefore, all people are conceived in sin and are born children of wrath, unfit for any saving good, inclined to evil, dead in their sins, and slaves to sin; without the grace of the regenerating Holy Spirit they are neither willing nor able to return to God, to reform their distorted nature, or even to dispose themselves to such reform.

Article 4: The Inadequacy of the Light of Nature

There is, to be sure, a certain light of nature remaining in man after the fall, by virtue of which he retains some notions about God, natural things, and the difference between what is moral and immoral, and demonstrates a certain eagerness for virtue and for good outward behavior. But this light of nature is far from enabling man to come to a saving knowledge of God and conversion to him—so far, in fact, that man does not use it rightly even in matters of nature and society. Instead, in various ways he completely distorts this light, whatever its precise character, and suppresses it in unrighteousness. In doing so he renders himself without excuse before God.

Article 5: The Inadequacy of the Law

In this respect, what is true of the light of nature is true also of the Ten Commandments given by God through Moses specifically to the Jews. For man cannot obtain saving grace through the Decalogue, because, although it does expose the magnitude of his sin and increasingly convict him of his guilt, yet it does not offer a remedy or enable him to escape from his misery, and, indeed, weakened as it is by the flesh, leaves the offender under the curse.

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Article 6: The Saving Power of the Gospel

What, therefore, neither the light of nature nor the law can do, God accomplishes by the power of the Holy Spirit, through the Word or the ministry of reconciliation. This is the gospel about the Messiah, through which it has pleased God to save believers, in both the Old and the New Testament.

Article 7: God's Freedom in Revealing the Gospel

In the Old Testament, God revealed this secret of his will to a small number; in the New Testament (now without any distinction between peoples) he discloses it to a large number. The reason for this difference must not be ascribed to the greater worth of one nation over another, or to a better use of the light of nature, but to the free good pleasure and undeserved love of God. Therefore, those who receive so much grace, beyond and in spite of all they deserve, ought to acknowledge it with humble and thankful hearts; on the other hand, with the apostle they ought to adore (but certainly not inquisitively search into) the severity and justice of God's judgments on the others, who do not receive this grace.

Article 8: The Serious Call of the Gospel

Nevertheless, all who are called through the gospel are called seriously. For seriously and most genuinely God makes known in his Word what is pleasing to him: that those who are called should come to him. Seriously he also promises rest for their souls and eternal life to all who come to him and believe.

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Article 8: The Earnest Call of the Gospel

Nevertheless, all who are called through the gospel are called earnestly. For urgently and most genuinely God makes known in the Word what is pleasing to him: that those who are called should come to God. God also earnestly promises rest for their souls and eternal life to all who do come and believe.

Article 9: Human Responsibility for Rejecting the Gospel

The fact that many who are called through the ministry of the gospel do not come and are not brought to conversion must not be blamed on the gospel, nor on Christ, who is offered through the gospel, nor on God, who calls them through the gospel and even bestows various gifts on them, but on the people themselves who are called. Some in self-assurance do not even entertain the Word of life; others do entertain it but do not take it to heart, and for that reason, after the fleeting joy of a temporary faith, they relapse; others choke the seed of the Word with the thorns of life's cares and with the pleasures of the world and bring forth no fruits. This our Savior teaches in the parable of the sower (Matt. 13).

Article 10: Conversion as the Work of God

The fact that others who are called through the ministry of the gospel do come and are brought to conversion must not be credited to man, as though one distinguishes himself by free choice from others who are furnished with equal or sufficient grace for faith and conversion (as the proud heresy of Pelagius maintains). No, it must be credited to God: just as from eternity he chose his own in Christ, so within time he effectively calls them, grants them faith and repentance, and, having rescued them from the dominion of darkness, brings them into the kingdom of his Son, in order that they may declare the wonderful deeds of him who called them out of darkness into this marvelous light, and may boast not in themselves, but in the Lord, as apostolic words frequently testify in Scripture.

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Article 11: The Holy Spirit's Work in Conversion

Moreover, when God carries out this good pleasure in his chosen ones, or works true conversion in them, he not only sees to it that the gospel is proclaimed to them outwardly, and enlightens their minds powerfully by the Holy Spirit so that they may rightly understand and discern the things of the Spirit of God, but, by the effective operation of the same regenerating Spirit, he also penetrates into the inmost being of man, opens the closed heart, softens the hard heart, and circumcises the heart that is uncircumcised. He infuses new qualities into the will, making the dead will alive, the evil one good, the unwilling one willing, and the stubborn one compliant; he activates and strengthens the will so that, like a good tree, it may be enabled to produce the fruits of good deeds.

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Article 12: Regeneration a Supernatural Work

And this is the regeneration, the new creation, the raising from the dead, and the making alive so clearly proclaimed in the Scriptures, which God works in us without our help. But this certainly does not happen only by outward teaching, by moral persuasion, or by such a way of working that, after God has done his work, it remains in man's power whether or not to be reborn or converted. Rather, it is an entirely supernatural work, one that is at the same time most powerful and most pleasing, a marvelous, hidden, and inexpressible work, which is not lesser than or inferior in power to that of creation or of raising the dead, as Scripture (inspired by the author of this work) teaches. As a result, all those in whose hearts God works in this marvelous way are certainly, unfailingly, and effectively reborn and do actually believe. And then the will, now renewed, is not only

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activated and motivated by God but in being activated by God is also itself active. For this reason, man himself, by that grace which he has received, is also rightly said to believe and to repent.

Article 13: The Incomprehensible Way of Regeneration

In this life believers cannot fully understand the way this work occurs; meanwhile, they rest content with knowing and experiencing that by this grace of God they do believe with the heart and love their Savior.

Article 14: The Way God Gives Faith

In this way, therefore, faith is a gift of God, not in the sense that it is offered by God for man to choose, but that it is in actual fact bestowed on man, breathed and infused into him. Nor is it a gift in the sense that God bestows only the potential to believe, but then awaits assent - the act of believing - from man's choice; rather, it is a gift in the sense that he who works both willing and acting and, indeed, works all things in all people produces in man both the will to believe and the belief itself.

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Article 15: Responses to God's Grace

God does not owe this grace to anyone. For what could God owe to one who has nothing to give that can be paid back? Indeed, what could God owe to one who has nothing of his own to give but sin and falsehood? Therefore the person who receives this grace owes and gives eternal thanks to God alone; the person who does not receive it either does not care at all about these spiritual things and is satisfied with himself in his condition, or else in self-assurance foolishly boasts about having something which he lacks. Furthermore, following the example of the apostles, we are to think and to speak in the most favorable way about those who outwardly profess their faith and better their lives, for the inner chambers of the heart are unknown to us. But for others who have not yet been called, we are to pray to the God who calls things that do not exist as though they did. In no way, however, are we to pride ourselves as better than they, as though we had distinguished ourselves from them.

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Article 16: Regeneration's Effect

However, just as by the fall man did not cease to be man, endowed with intellect and will, and just as sin, which has spread through the whole human race, did not abolish the nature of the human race but distorted and spiritually killed it, so also this divine grace of regeneration does not act in people as if they were blocks and stones; nor does it abolish the will and its properties or coerce a reluctant will by force, but spiritually revives, heals, reforms, and—in a manner at once pleasing and powerful—bends it back. As a result, a ready and sincere obedience of the Spirit now begins to prevail where before the rebellion and resistance of the flesh were completely dominant. It is in this that the true and spiritual restoration and freedom of our will consists. Thus, if the marvelous Maker of every good thing were not dealing with us, man would have no hope of getting up from his fall by his free choice, by which he plunged himself into ruin when still standing upright.

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Article 17: God's Use of Means in Regeneration

Just as the almighty work of God by which he brings forth and sustains our natural life does not rule out but requires the use of means, by which God, according to his infinite wisdom and goodness, has wished to exercise his power, so also the aforementioned supernatural work of God by which he regenerates us in no way rules out or cancels the use of the gospel, which God in his great wisdom has appointed to be the seed of regeneration and the food of the soul. For this reason, the apostles and the teachers who followed them taught the people in a godly manner about this grace of God, to give him the glory and to humble all pride, and yet did not neglect meanwhile to keep the people, by means of the holy admonitions of the gospel, under the administration of the Word, the sacraments, and discipline. So even today it is out of the question that the teachers or those taught in the church should presume to test God by separating what he in his good pleasure has wished to be closely joined together. For grace is bestowed through admonitions, and the more readily we perform our duty, the more lustrous the benefit of God working in us usually is and the better his work advances. To him alone, both for the means and for their saving fruit and effectiveness, all glory is owed forever. Amen.

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<p>I Who teach that, properly speaking, it cannot be said that original sin in itself is enough to condemn the whole human race or to warrant temporal and eternal punishments.</p> <p>For they contradict the apostle when he says: Sin entered the world through one man, and death through sin, and in this way death passed on to all men because all sinned (Rom. 5:12); also: The guilt followed one sin and brought condemnation (Rom. 5:16); likewise: The wages of sin is death (Rom. 6:23).</p>	<p>I Who teach that, properly speaking, it cannot be said that original sin in itself is enough to condemn the whole human race or to warrant temporal and eternal punishments.</p> <p>For they contradict the apostle when he says: "Sin entered the world through one man, and death through sin, and in this way death passed on to all people because all sinned" (Rom. 5:12); also: "The guilt followed one sin and brought condemnation" (Rom. 5:16); likewise: "The wages of sin is death" (Rom. 6:23).</p>
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III

Who teach that in spiritual death the spiritual gifts have not been separated from man's will, since the will in itself has never been corrupted but only hindered by the darkness of the mind and the unruliness of the emotions, and since the will is able to exercise its innate free capacity once these hindrances are removed, which is to say, it is able of itself to will or choose whatever good is set before it—or else not to will or choose it.

This is a novel idea and an error and has the effect of elevating the power of free choice, contrary to the words of Jeremiah the prophet: "The heart itself is deceitful above all things and wicked (Jer. 17:9); and of the words of the apostle: All of us also lived among them (the sons of disobedience) at one time in the passions of our flesh, following the will of our flesh and thoughts (Eph. 2:3).

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Who teach that unregenerate man is not strictly or totally dead in his sins or deprived of all capacity for spiritual good but is able to hunger and thirst for righteousness or life and to offer the sacrifice of a broken and contrite spirit which is pleasing to God.

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IV

Who teach that unregenerate humanity is not strictly or totally dead in sin or deprived of all capacity for spiritual good but is able to hunger and thirst for righteousness or life and to offer the sacrifice of a broken and contrite spirit which is pleasing to God.

For these views are opposed to the plain testimonies of Scripture: You were dead in your transgressions and sins (Eph. 2:1, 5); The imagination of the thoughts of man's heart is only evil all the time (Gen. 6:5; 8:21). Besides, to hunger and thirst for deliverance from misery and for life, and to offer God the sacrifice of a broken spirit is characteristic only of the regenerate and of those called blessed (Ps. 51:17; Matt. 5:6).

V

Who teach that corrupt and natural man can make such good use of common grace (by which they mean the light of nature) or of the gifts remaining after the fall that he is able thereby gradually to obtain a greater grace—evangelical or saving grace—as well as salvation itself; and that in this way God, for his part, shows himself ready to reveal Christ to all people, since he provides to all, to a sufficient extent and in an effective manner, the means necessary for the revealing of Christ, for faith, and for repentance.

For Scripture, not to mention the experience of all ages, testifies that this is false: He makes known his words to Jacob, his statutes and his laws to Israel; he has done this for no other nation, and they do not know his laws (Ps. 147:19-20); In the past God let all nations go their own way (Acts 14:16); They (Paul and his companions) were kept by the Holy Spirit from speaking God's word in Asia; and When they had come to Mysia, they tried to go to Bithynia, but the Spirit would not allow them to (Acts 16:6-7).

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Who teach that in the true conversion of man new qualities, dispositions, or gifts cannot be infused or poured into his will by God, and indeed that the faith [or believing] by which we first come to conversion and from which we receive the name “believers” is not a quality or gift infused by God, but only an act of man, and that it cannot be called a gift except in respect to the power of attaining faith.

For these views contradict the Holy Scriptures, which testify that God does infuse or pour into our hearts the new qualities of faith, obedience, and the experiencing of his love: “I will put my law in their minds, and write it on their hearts (Jer. 31:33); I will pour water on the thirsty land, and streams on the dry ground; I will pour out my Spirit on your offspring (Isa. 44:3); The love of God has been poured out in our hearts by the Holy Spirit, who has been given to us (Rom. 5:5). They also conflict with the continuous practice of the Church, which prays with the prophet: Convert me, Lord, and I shall be converted (Jer. 31:18).

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Who teach that in the true conversion of **men and women** new qualities, dispositions, or gifts cannot be infused or poured into **their** will by God, and indeed that the faith [or believing] by which we first come to conversion and from which we receive the name “believers” is not a quality or gift infused by God, but only a **human act**, and that it cannot be called a gift except in respect to the power of attaining faith.

For these views contradict the Holy Scriptures, which testify that God does infuse or pour into our hearts the new qualities of faith, obedience, and the experiencing of his love: “I will put my law in their minds, and write it on their hearts” (Jer. 31:33); “I will pour water on the thirsty land, and streams on the dry ground; I will pour out my Spirit on your offspring” (Isa. 44:3); “The love of God has been poured out in our hearts by the Holy Spirit, who has been given to us” (Rom. 5:5). They also conflict with the continuous practice of the Church, which prays with the prophet: “Convert me, Lord, and I shall be converted” (Jer. 31:18).

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Who teach that the grace by which we are converted to God is nothing but a gentle persuasion, or (as others explain it) that the way of God's acting in man's conversion that is most noble and suited to human nature is that which happens by persuasion, and that nothing prevents this grace of moral suasion even by itself from making natural men spiritual; indeed, that God does not produce the assent of the will except in this manner of moral suasion, and that the effectiveness of God's work by which it surpasses the work of Satan consists in the fact that God promises eternal benefits while Satan promises temporal ones.

For this teaching is entirely Pelagian and contrary to the whole of Scripture, which recognizes besides this persuasion also another, far more effective and divine way in which the Holy Spirit acts in man's conversion. As Ezekiel 36:26 puts it: I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit in you; and I will remove your heart of stone and give you a heart of flesh....

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Who teach that God in regenerating man does not bring to bear that power of his omnipotence whereby he may powerfully and unfailingly bend man's will to faith and conversion, but that even when God has accomplished all the works of grace which he uses for man's conversion, man nevertheless can, and in actual fact often does, so resist God and the Spirit in their intent and will to regenerate him, that man completely thwarts his own rebirth; and, indeed, that it remains in his own power whether or not to be reborn.

For this does away with all effective functioning of God's grace in our conversion and subjects the activity of Almighty God to the will of man; it is contrary to the apostles, who teach that we believe by virtue of the effective working of God's mighty strength (Eph. 1:19), and that God fulfills the undeserved good will of his kindness and the work of faith in us with power (2 Thess. 1:11), and likewise that his divine power has given us everything we need for life and godliness (2 Pet. 1:3).

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Who teach that grace and free choice are concurrent partial causes which cooperate to initiate conversion, and that grace does not precede—in the order of causality—the effective influence of the will; that is to say, that God does not effectively help man's will to come to conversion before man's will itself motivates and determines itself.

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For the early church already condemned this doctrine long ago in the Pelagians, on the basis of the words of the apostle: It does not depend on man's willing or running but on God's mercy (Rom. 9:16); also: Who makes you different from anyone else? and What do you have that you did not receive? (1 Cor. 4:7); likewise: It is God who works in you to will and act according to his good pleasure (Phil. 2:13).

The Fifth Main Point of Doctrine

The Perseverance of the Saints

Article 1: The Regenerate Not Entirely Free from Sin

Those people whom God according to his purpose calls into fellowship with his Son Jesus Christ our Lord and regenerates by the Holy Spirit, he also sets free from the reign and slavery of sin, though in this life not entirely from the flesh and from the body of sin.

Article 2: The Believer's Reaction to Sins of Weakness

Hence daily sins of weakness arise, and blemishes cling to even the best works of God's people, giving them continual cause to humble themselves before God, to flee for refuge to Christ crucified, to put the flesh to death more and more by the Spirit of supplication and by holy exercises of godliness, and to strain toward the goal of perfection, until they are freed from this body of death and reign with the Lamb of God in heaven.

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Article 3: God's Preservation of the Converted

Because of these remnants of sin dwelling in them and also because of the temptations of the world and Satan, those who have been converted could not remain standing in this grace if left to their own resources. But God is faithful, mercifully strengthening them in the grace once conferred on them and powerfully preserving them in it to the end.

Article 4: The Danger of True Believers' Falling into Serious Sins

Although that power of God strengthening and preserving true believers in grace is more than a match for the flesh, yet those converted are not always so activated and motivated by God that in certain specific actions they cannot by their own fault depart from the leading of grace, be led astray by the desires of the flesh, and give in to them. For this reason they must constantly watch and pray that they may not be led into temptations. When they fail to do this, not only can they be carried away by the flesh, the world, and Satan into sins, even serious and outrageous ones, but also by God's just permission they sometimes are so carried away—witness the sad cases, described in Scripture, of David, Peter, and other saints falling into sins.

Article 5: The Effects of Such Serious Sins

By such monstrous sins, however, they greatly offend God, deserve the sentence of death, grieve the Holy Spirit, suspend the exercise of faith, severely wound the conscience, and sometimes lose the awareness of grace for a time—until, after they have returned to the way by genuine repentance, God's fatherly face again shines upon them.

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Article 6: God’s Saving Intervention

For God, who is rich in mercy, according to his unchangeable purpose of election does not take his Holy Spirit from his own completely, even when they fall grievously. Neither does he let them fall down so far that they forfeit the grace of adoption and the state of justification, or commit the sin which leads to death (the sin against the Holy Spirit), and plunge themselves, entirely forsaken by him, into eternal ruin.

Article 7: Renewal to Repentance

For, in the first place, God preserves in those saints when they fall his imperishable seed from which they have been born again, lest it perish or be dislodged. Secondly, by his Word and Spirit he certainly and effectively renews them to repentance so that they have a heartfelt and godly sorrow for the sins they have committed; seek and obtain, through faith and with a contrite heart, forgiveness in the blood of the Mediator; experience again the grace of a reconciled God; through faith adore his mercies; and from then on more eagerly work out their own salvation with fear and trembling.

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Article 8: The Certainty of This Preservation

So it is not by their own merits or strength but by God's undeserved mercy that they neither forfeit faith and grace totally nor remain in their downfalls to the end and are lost. With respect to themselves this not only easily could happen, but also undoubtedly would happen; but with respect to God it cannot possibly happen, since his plan cannot be changed, his promise cannot fail, the calling according to his purpose cannot be revoked, the merit of Christ as well as his interceding and preserving cannot be nullified, and the sealing of the Holy Spirit can neither be invalidated nor wiped out.

Article 9: The Assurance of This Preservation

Concerning this preservation of those chosen to salvation and concerning the perseverance of true believers in faith, believers themselves can and do become assured in accordance with the measure of their faith, by which they firmly believe that they are and always will remain true and living members of the church, and that they have the forgiveness of sins and eternal life.

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Article 10: The Ground of This Assurance

Accordingly, this assurance does not derive from some private revelation beyond or outside the Word, but from faith in the promises of God which he has very plentifully revealed in his Word for our comfort, from the testimony of the Holy Spirit testifying with our spirit that we are God’s children and heirs (Rom. 8:16-17), and finally from a serious and holy pursuit of a clear conscience and of good works. And if God’s chosen ones in this world did not have this well-founded comfort that the victory will be theirs and this reliable guarantee of eternal glory, they would be of all people most miserable.

Article 11: Doubts Concerning This Assurance

Meanwhile, Scripture testifies that believers have to contend in this life with various doubts of the flesh and that under severe temptation they do not always experience this full assurance of faith and certainty of perseverance. But God, the Father of all comfort, does not let them be tempted beyond what they can bear, but with the temptation he also provides a way out (1 Cor. 10:13), and by the Holy Spirit revives in them the assurance of their perseverance.

Article 12: This Assurance as an Incentive to Godliness

This assurance of perseverance, however, so far from making true believers proud and carnally self-assured, is rather the true root of humility, of childlike respect, of genuine godliness, of endurance in every conflict, of fervent prayers, of steadfastness in crossbearing and in confessing the truth, and of well-founded joy in God. Reflecting on this benefit provides an incentive to a serious and continual practice of thanksgiving and good works, as is evident from the testimonies of Scripture and the examples of the saints.

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Article 13: Assurance No Inducement to Carelessness

Neither does the renewed confidence of perseverance produce immorality or lack of concern for godliness in those put back on their feet after a fall, but it produces a much greater concern to observe carefully the ways of the Lord which he prepared in advance. They observe these ways in order that by walking in them they may maintain the assurance of their perseverance, lest, by their abuse of his fatherly goodness, the face of the gracious God (for the godly, looking upon his face is sweeter than life, but its withdrawal is more bitter than death) turn away from them again, with the result that they fall into greater anguish of spirit.

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And, just as it has pleased God to begin this work of grace in us by the proclamation of the gospel, so he preserves, continues, and completes his work by the hearing and reading of the gospel, by meditation on it, by its exhortations, threats, and promises, and also by the use of the sacraments.

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Article 15: Contrasting Reactions to the Teaching of Perseverance

This teaching about the perseverance of true believers and saints, and about their assurance of it—a teaching which God has very richly revealed in his Word for the glory of his name and for the comfort of the godly and which he impresses on the hearts of believers—is something which the flesh does not understand, Satan hates, the world ridicules, the ignorant and the hypocrites abuse, and the spirits of error attack. The bride of Christ, on the other hand, has always loved this teaching very tenderly and defended it steadfastly as a priceless treasure; and God, against whom no plan can avail and no strength can prevail, will ensure that she will continue to do this. To this God alone, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, be honor and glory forever. Amen.

Rejection of Errors

Having set forth the orthodox teaching, the Synod rejects the errors of those

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 Who teach that the perseverance of true believers is not an effect of election or a gift of God produced by Christ’s death, but a condition of the new covenant which man, before what they call his “peremptory” election and justification, must fulfill by his free will.

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Who teach that God does provide the believer with sufficient strength to persevere and is ready to preserve this strength in him if he performs his duty, but that even with all those things in place which are necessary to persevere in faith and which God is pleased to use to preserve faith, it still always depends on the choice of man's will whether or not he perseveres.

For this view is obviously Pelagian; and though it intends to make men free it makes them sacrilegious. It is against the enduring consensus of evangelical teaching which takes from man all cause for boasting and ascribes the praise for this benefit only to God's grace. It is also against the testimony of the apostle: It is God who keeps us strong to the end, so that we will be blameless on the day of our Lord Jesus Christ (1 Cor. 1:8).

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For this opinion nullifies the very grace of justification and regeneration as well as the continual preservation by Christ, contrary to the plain words of the apostle Paul: If Christ died for us while we were still sinners, we will therefore much more be saved from God's wrath through him, since we have now been justified by his blood (Rom. 5:8-9); and contrary to the apostle John: No one who is born of God is intent on sin, because God's seed remains in him, nor can he sin, because he has been born of God (1 John 3:9); also contrary to the words of Jesus Christ: I give eternal life to my sheep, and they shall never perish; no one can snatch them out of my hand. My Father, who has given them to me, is greater than all; no one can snatch them out of my Father's hand (John 10:28-29).

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Who teach that apart from a special revelation no one can have the assurance of future perseverance in this life.

For by this teaching the well-founded consolation of true believers in this life is taken away and the doubting of the Romanists is reintroduced into the church. Holy Scripture, however, in many places derives the assurance not from a special and extraordinary revelation but from the marks peculiar to God's children and from God's completely reliable promises. So especially the apostle Paul: Nothing in all creation can separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord (Rom. 8:39); and John: They who obey his commands remain in him and he in them. And this is how we know that he remains in us: by the Spirit he gave us (1 John 3:24).

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For these people show that they do not know the effective operation of God’s grace and the work of the indwelling Holy Spirit, and they contradict the apostle John, who asserts the opposite in plain words: Dear friends, now we are children of God, but what we will be has not yet been made known. But we know that when he is made known, we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is. Everyone who has this hope in him purifies himself, just as he is pure (1 John 3:2-3). Moreover, they are refuted by the examples of the saints in both the Old and the New Testament, who though assured of their perseverance and salvation yet were constant in prayer and other exercises of godliness.

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For Christ himself in Matthew 13:20ff. and Luke 8:13ff. clearly defines these further differences between temporary and true believers: he says that the former receive the seed on rocky ground, and the latter receive it in good ground, or a good heart; the former have no root, and the latter are firmly rooted; the former have no fruit, and the latter produce fruit in varying measure, with steadfastness, or perseverance.

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Who teach that it is not absurd that a person, after losing his former regeneration, should once again, indeed quite often, be reborn.

For by this teaching they deny the imperishable nature of God's seed by which we are born again, contrary to the testimony of the apostle Peter: Born again, not of perishable seed, but of imperishable (1 Pet. 1:23).

IX

Who teach that Christ nowhere prayed for an unfailing perseverance of believers in faith.

For they contradict Christ himself when he says: I have prayed for you, Peter, that your faith may not fail (Luke 22:32); and John the gospel writer when he testifies in John 17 that it was not only for the apostles, but also for all those who were to believe by their message that Christ prayed: Holy Father, preserve them in your name (v. 11); and My prayer is not that you take them out of the world, but that you preserve them from the evil one (v. 15)

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VIII

Who teach that it is not absurd that **people**, after losing **their** former regeneration, should once again, indeed quite often, be reborn.

For by this teaching they deny the imperishable nature of God's seed by which we are born again, contrary to the testimony of the apostle Peter: "Born again, not of perishable seed, but of imperishable" (1 Pet. 1:23).

IX

Who teach that Christ nowhere prayed for an unfailing perseverance of believers in faith.

For they contradict Christ himself when he says: "I have prayed for you, Peter, that your faith may not fail" (Luke 22:32); and John the gospel writer when he testifies in John 17 that it was not only for the apostles, but also for all those who were to believe by their message that Christ prayed: "Holy Father, preserve them in your name" (v. 11); and "My prayer is not that you take them out of the world, but that you preserve them from the evil one" (v. 15).

Conclusion

Rejection of False Accusations

And so this is the clear, simple, and straightforward explanation of the orthodox teaching on the five articles in dispute in the Netherlands, as well as the rejection of the errors by which the Dutch churches have for some time been disturbed. This explanation and rejection the Synod declares to be derived from God's Word and in agreement with the confessions of the Reformed churches. Hence it clearly appears that those of whom one could hardly expect it have shown no truth, equity, and charity at all in wishing to make the public believe:

- that the teaching of the Reformed churches on predestination and on the points associated with it by its very nature and tendency draws the minds of people away from all godliness and religion, is an opiate of the flesh and the devil, and is a stronghold of Satan where he lies in wait for all people, wounds most of them, and fatally pierces many of them with the arrows of both despair and self-assurance;
- that this teaching makes God the author of sin, unjust, a tyrant, and a hypocrite; and is nothing but a refurbished Stoicism, Manicheism, Libertinism, and Mohammedanism;
- that this teaching makes people carnally self-assured, since it persuades them that nothing endangers the salvation of the chosen, no matter how they live, so that they may commit the most outrageous crimes with self-assurance; and that on the other hand nothing is of

Conclusion

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- that this teaching makes God the author of sin, unjust, a tyrant, and a hypocrite; and is nothing but a refurbished Stoicism, Manicheism, Libertinism, and Turkism*;
- that this teaching makes people carnally self-assured, since it persuades them that nothing endangers the salvation of the chosen, no matter how they live, so that they may commit the most outrageous crimes with self-assurance; and that on the other hand nothing is of use to the reprobate for salvation even if they have truly performed all the works of the saints;

use to the reprobate for salvation even if they have truly performed all the works of the saints;

- that this teaching means that God predestined and created, by the bare and unqualified choice of his will, without the least regard or consideration of any sin, the greatest part of the world to eternal condemnation; that in the same manner in which election is the source and cause of faith and good works, reprobation is the cause of unbelief and ungodliness; that many infant children of believers are snatched in their innocence from their mothers' breasts and cruelly cast into hell so that neither the blood of Christ nor their baptism nor the prayers of the church at their baptism can be of any use to them; and very many other slanderous accusations of this kind which the Reformed churches not only disavow but even denounce with their whole heart.

Therefore this Synod of Dort in the name of the Lord pleads with all who devoutly call on the name of our Savior Jesus Christ to form their judgment about the faith of the Reformed churches, not on the basis of false accusations gathered from here or there, or even on the basis of the personal statements of a number of ancient and modern authorities—statements which are also often either quoted out of context or misquoted and twisted to convey a different meaning—but on the basis of the churches' own official confessions and of the present explanation of the orthodox teaching which has been endorsed by the unanimous consent of the members of the whole Synod, one and all.

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Moreover, the Synod earnestly warns the false accusers themselves to consider how heavy a judgment of God awaits those who give false testimony against so many churches and their confessions, trouble the consciences of the weak, and seek to prejudice the minds of many against the fellowship of true believers.

Finally, this Synod urges all fellow ministers in the gospel of Christ to deal with this teaching in a godly and reverent manner, in the academic institutions as well as in the churches; to do so, both in their speaking and writing, with a view to the glory of God's name, holiness of life, and the comfort of anxious souls; to think and also speak with Scripture according to the analogy of faith; and, finally, to refrain from all those ways of speaking which go beyond the bounds set for us by the genuine sense of the Holy Scriptures and which could give impertinent sophists a just occasion to scoff at the teaching of the Reformed churches or even to bring false accusations against it.

May God's Son Jesus Christ, who sits at the right hand of God and gives gifts to men, sanctify us in the truth, lead to the truth those who err, silence the mouths of those who lay false accusations against sound teaching, and equip faithful ministers of his Word with a spirit of wisdom and discretion, that all they say may be to the glory of God and the building up of their hearers. Amen.

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*Islam

Addendum 4

Introduction to the Heidelberg Catechism

The Heidelberg Catechism (1563) was composed in the city of Heidelberg, Germany, at the request of Elector Frederick III, who ruled the province of the Palatinate from 1559 to 1576. The new catechism was intended as a tool for teaching young people, a guide for preaching in the provincial churches, and a form of confessional unity among the several Protestant factions in the Palatinate. An old tradition credits Zacharias Ursinus and Caspar Olevianus with being the coauthors of the catechism, but the project was actually the work of a team of ministers and university theologians under the watchful eye of Frederick himself. Ursinus probably served as the primary writer on the team, and Olevianus had a lesser role. The catechism was approved by a synod in Heidelberg in January 1563. A second and third German edition, each with small additions, as well as a Latin translation were published the same year in Heidelberg. The third edition was included in the Palatinate Church Order of November 15, 1563, at which time the catechism was divided into fifty-two sections or Lord's Days, so that one Lord's Day could be explained in an afternoon worship service each Sunday of the year.

The Synod of Dort approved the Heidelberg Catechism in 1619, and it soon became the most ecumenical of the Reformed catechisms and confessions. It has been translated into many European, Asian, and African languages and is still the most widely used and warmly praised catechism of the Reformation period.

Previous Version
Lord's Day 1

Q&A 1

**Q. What is your only comfort
in life and in death?**

A. That I am not my own,¹
but belong—
body and soul,
in life and in death—²
to my faithful Savior Jesus Christ.³

He has fully paid for all my sins with his precious blood,⁴
and has set me free from the tyranny of the devil.⁵
He also watches over me in such a way⁶
that not a hair can fall from my head
without the will of my Father in heaven;⁷
in fact, all things must work together for my salvation.⁸

Because I belong to him,
Christ, by his Holy Spirit,
assures me of eternal life⁹
and makes me wholeheartedly willing and ready
from now on to live for him.¹⁰

Proposed Version***Introduction*****Lord's Day 1**

Q&A 1

**Q. What is your only comfort
in life and in death?**

A. That I am not my own,¹
but belong—
body and soul,
in life and in death—²
to my faithful Savior, Jesus Christ.³

He has fully paid for all my sins with his precious blood,⁴
and has **delivered me** from the tyranny of the devil.⁵
He also watches over me in such a way⁶
that not a hair can fall from my head
without the will of my Father in heaven;⁷
in fact, all things must work together for my salvation.⁸

Because I belong to him,
Christ, by his Holy Spirit,
assures me of eternal life⁹
and makes me wholeheartedly willing and ready
from now on to live for him.¹⁰

¹ 1 Cor. 6:19-20

² Rom. 14:7-9

³ 1 Cor. 3:23; Titus 2:14

⁴ 1 Pet. 1:18-19; 1 John 1:7-9; 2:2

⁵ John 8:34-36; Heb. 2:14-15; 1 John 3:1-11

⁶ John 6:39-40; 10:27-30; 2 Thess. 3:3; 1 Pet. 1:5

⁷ Matt. 10:29-31; Luke 21:16-18

⁸ Rom. 8:28

⁹ Rom. 8:15-16; 2 Cor. 1:21-22; 5:5; Eph. 1:13-14

¹⁰ Rom. 8:1-17

Q&A 2

**Q. What must you know
to live and die in the joy of this comfort?**

A. Three things:

first, how great my sin and misery are;¹

second, how I am set free from all my sins and misery;²

third, how I am to thank God for such deliverance.³

¹ Rom. 3:9-10; 1 John 1:10

² John 17:3; Acts 4:12; 10:43

³ Matt. 5:16; Rom. 6:13; Eph. 5:8-10; 2 Tim. 2:15; 1 Pet. 2:9-10

¹ 1 Cor. 6:19-20

² Rom. 14:7-9

³ 1 Cor. 3:23; Titus 2:14

⁴ 1 Pet. 1:18-19; 1 John 1:7-9; 2:2

⁵ John 8:34-36; Heb. 2:14-15; 1 John 3:1-11

⁶ John 6:39-40; 10:27-30; 2 Thess. 3:3; 1 Pet. 1:5

⁷ Matt. 10:29-31; Luke 21:16-18

⁸ Rom. 8:28

⁹ Rom. 8:15-16; 2 Cor. 1:21-22; 5:5; Eph. 1:13-14

¹⁰ Rom. 8:1-17

Q&A 2

**Q. What must you know
to live and die in the joy of this comfort?**

A. Three things:

first, how great my sin and misery are;¹

second, how I am delivered from all my sins and misery;²

third, how I am to thank God for such deliverance.³

¹ Rom. 3:9-10; 1 John 1:10

² John 17:3; Acts 4:12; 10:43

³ Matt. 5:16; Rom. 6:13; Eph. 5:8-10; 2 Tim. 2:15; 1 Pet. 2:9-10

*Part I: Human Misery***Lord's Day 2**

Q&A 3

Q. How do you come to know your misery?A. The law of God tells me.¹¹ Rom. 3:20; 7:7-25

Q&A 4

Q. What does God's law require of us?

A. Christ teaches us this in summary in Matthew 22—

Love the Lord your God
with all your heart
and with all your soul
and with all your mind
and with all your strength.¹
This is the first and greatest commandment.

And the second is like it:
Love your neighbor as yourself.²

All the Law and the Prophets hang
on these two commandments.

¹ Deut. 6:5² Lev. 19:18

*Earlier and better manuscripts of Matthew 22 omit the words
“and with all your strength.” They are found in Mark 12:30.

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A. Christ teaches us this in summary in Matthew 22:37-40:

“You shall love the Lord your God
with all your heart,
and with all your soul,
and with all your mind.¹
This is the greatest and first commandment.

“And a second is like it:
“You shall love your neighbor as yourself.”²

“On these two commandments hang
all the law and the prophets.”

¹ Deut. 6:5² Lev. 19:18

Q&A 5

Q. Can you live up to all this perfectly?

A. No.¹

I have a natural tendency
to hate God and my neighbor.²

¹ Rom. 3:9-20, 23; 1 John 1:8, 10

² Gen. 6:5; Jer. 17:9; Rom. 7:23-24; 8:7; Eph. 2:1-3; Titus 3:3

Lord's Day 3

Q&A 6

**Q. Did God create people
so wicked and perverse?**

A. No.

God created them good¹ and in his own image,²
that is, in true righteousness and holiness,³
so that they might
truly know God their creator,⁴
love him with all their heart,
and live with him in eternal happiness
for his praise and glory.⁵

¹ Gen. 1:31

² Gen. 1:26-27

³ Eph. 4:24

⁴ Col. 3:10

⁵ Ps. 8

Q&A 5

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¹ Gen. 1:31

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³ Eph. 4:24

⁴ Col. 3:10

⁵ Ps. 8

Q&A 7

Q. Then where does this corrupt human nature come from?

A. From the fall and disobedience of our first parents, Adam and Eve, in Paradise.¹
This fall has so poisoned our nature² that we are born sinners—
corrupt from conception on.³

¹ Gen. 3

² Rom. 5:12, 18-19

³ Ps. 51:5

Q&A 8

Q. But are we so corrupt that we are totally unable to do any good and inclined toward all evil?

A. Yes,¹ unless we are born again, by the Spirit of God.²

¹ Gen. 6:5; 8:21; Job 14:4; Isa. 53:6

² John 3:3-5

Q&A 7

Q. Then what is the source of this corrupt human nature?

A. From the fall and disobedience of our first parents, Adam and Eve, in Paradise.¹
This fall has so poisoned our nature² that we are all conceived and born in a sinful condition.³

¹ Gen. 3

² Rom. 5:12, 18-19

³ Ps. 51:5

Q&A 8

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A. Yes,¹ unless we are born again by the Spirit of God.²

¹ Gen. 6:5; 8:21; Job 14:4; Isa. 53:6

² John 3:3-5

Lord's Day 4

Q&A 9

**Q. But doesn't God do us an injustice
by requiring in his law
what we are unable to do?**

A. No, God created humans with the ability to keep the law.¹
They, however, tempted by the devil,²
in reckless disobedience,³
robbed themselves and all their descendants of these gifts.⁴

¹ Gen. 1:31; Eph. 4:24

² Gen. 3:13; John 8:44

³ Gen. 3:6

⁴ Rom. 5:12, 18, 19

Q&A 10

**Q. Will God permit
such disobedience and rebellion
to go unpunished?**

A. Certainly not.
He is terribly angry
about the sin we are born with
as well as the sins we personally commit.

As a just judge
he punishes them now and in eternity.¹

Lord's Day 4

Q&A 9

**Q. But doesn't God do us an injustice
by requiring in his law
what we are unable to do?**

A. No, God created human beings with the ability to keep the law.¹
They, however, tempted by the devil²
and in deliberate disobedience,³
robbed themselves and all their descendants of these gifts.⁴

¹ Gen. 1:31; Eph. 4:24

² Gen. 3:13; John 8:44

³ Gen. 3:6

⁴ Rom. 5:12, 18, 19

Q&A 10

**Q. Will God permit
such disobedience and rebellion
to go unpunished?**

A. Certainly not.
God is terribly angry
with the sin we are born with
as well as the sins we personally commit.

As a just judge,
God will punish them both now and in eternity,¹
having declared:

He has declared:

“Cursed is everyone who does not continue to do everything written in the Book of the Law.”²

¹ Ex. 34:7; Ps. 5:4-6; Nah. 1:2; Rom. 1:18; Eph. 5:6; Heb. 9:27

² Gal. 3:10; Deut. 27:26

Q&A 11

Q. But isn’t God also merciful?

A. God is certainly merciful,¹

but he is also just.²

His justice demands

that sin, committed against his supreme majesty,
be punished with the supreme penalty—
eternal punishment of body and soul.³

¹ Ex. 34:6-7; Ps. 103:8-9

² Ex. 34:7; Deut. 7:9-11; Ps. 5:4-6; Heb. 10:30-31

³ Matt. 25:35-46

“Cursed is everyone who does not observe and obey all the things written in the book of the law.”²

¹ Ex. 34:7; Ps. 5:4-6; Nah. 1:2; Rom. 1:18; Eph. 5:6; Heb. 9:27

² Gal. 3:10; Deut. 27:26

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³ Matt. 25:35-46

Part II: Deliverance
Lord's Day 5

Q&A 12

Q. According to God's righteous judgment we deserve punishment both in this world and forever after: how then can we escape this punishment and return to God's favor?

A. God requires that his justice be satisfied.¹ Therefore the claims of his justice must be paid in full, either by ourselves or another.²

¹ Ex. 23:7; Rom. 2:1-11

² Isa. 53:11; Rom. 8:3-4

Q&A 13

Q. Can we pay this debt ourselves?

A. Certainly not.
Actually, we increase our guilt every day.¹

¹ Matt. 6:12; Rom. 2:4-5

Part II: Deliverance
Lord's Day 5

Q&A 12

Q. According to God's righteous judgment we deserve punishment both now and in eternity: how then can we escape this punishment and return to God's favor?

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¹ Ex. 23:7; Rom. 2:1-11

² Isa. 53:11; Rom. 8:3-4

Q&A 13

Q. Can we **make this payment ourselves?**

A. Certainly not.
Actually, we increase our **debt** every day.¹

¹ Matt. 6:12; Rom. 2:4-5

Q&A 14

Q. Can another creature—any at all—pay this debt for us?

A. No.

To begin with,

God will not punish another creature for what a human is guilty of.¹

Besides,

no mere creature can bear the weight of God's eternal anger against sin and release others from it.²

¹ Ezek. 18:4, 20; Heb. 2:14-18

² Ps. 49:7-9; 130:3

Q&A 15

Q. What kind of mediator and deliverer should we look for then?

A. One who is truly human¹ and truly righteous,² yet more powerful than all creatures, that is, one who is also true God.³

¹ Rom. 1:3; 1 Cor. 15:21; Heb. 2:17

² Isa. 53:9; 2 Cor. 5:21; Heb. 7:26

³ Isa. 7:14; 9:6; Jer. 23:6; John 1:1

Q&A 14

Q. Can another creature—any at all—pay this debt for us?

A. No.

First,

God will not punish any other creature for what a human has committed.¹

Second,

no mere creature can bear the weight of God's eternal wrath against sin and deliver others from it.²

¹ Ezek. 18:4, 20; Heb. 2:14-18

² Ps. 49:7-9; 130:3

Q&A 15

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² Isa. 53:9; 2 Cor. 5:21; Heb. 7:26

³ Isa. 7:14; 9:6; Jer. 23:6; John 1:1

Lord's Day 6

Q&A 16

Q. Why must he be truly human and truly righteous?

A. God's justice demands that human nature, which has sinned, must pay for its sin;¹ but a sinner could never pay for others.²

¹ Rom. 5:12, 15; 1 Cor. 15:21; Heb. 2:14-16² Heb. 7:26-27; 1 Pet. 3:18

Q&A 17

Q. Why must he also be true God?

A. So that, by the power of his divinity, he might bear the weight of God's anger in his humanity and earn for us and restore to us righteousness and life.¹

¹ Isa. 53; John 3:16; 2 Cor. 5:21**Lord's Day 6**

Q&A 16

Q. Why must he be a true and righteous human?

A. God's justice demands that one who shares our human nature, which has sinned, pay for sin;¹ but a sinful human could never pay for others.²

¹ Rom. 5:12, 15; 1 Cor. 15:21; Heb. 2:14-16² Heb. 7:26-27; 1 Pet. 3:18

Q&A 17

Q. Why must the mediator also be true God?

A. So that the mediator, by the power of his divinity, might bear the weight of God's wrath in his humanity and earn for us and restore to us righteousness and life.¹

¹ Isa. 53; John 3:16; 2 Cor. 5:21

Q&A 18

**Q. And who is this mediator—
true God and at the same time
truly human and truly righteous?**

A. Our Lord Jesus Christ,¹
who was given us
to set us completely free
and to make us right with God.²

¹ Matt. 1:21-23; Luke 2:11; 1 Tim. 2:5

² 1 Cor. 1:30

Q&A 19

Q. How do you come to know this?

A. The holy gospel tells me.
God himself began to reveal the gospel already in Paradise;¹
later, he proclaimed it
by the holy patriarchs² and prophets,³
and portrayed it
by the sacrifices and other ceremonies of the law;⁴
finally, he fulfilled it
through his own dear Son.⁵

¹ Gen. 3:15

² Gen. 22:18; 49:10

³ Isa. 53; Jer. 23:5-6; Mic. 7:18-20; Acts 10:43; Heb. 1:1-2

⁴ Lev. 1-7; John 5:46; Heb. 10:1-10

⁵ Rom. 10:4; Gal. 4:4-5; Col. 2:17

Q&A 18

**Q. Then who is this mediator—
true God and at the same time
a true and righteous human?**

A. Our Lord Jesus Christ,¹
who was given to us
to completely deliver us
and make us right with God.²

¹ Matt. 1:21-23; Luke 2:11; 1 Tim. 2:5

² 1 Cor. 1:30

Q&A 19

Q. How do you come to know this?

A. The holy gospel tells me.
God began to reveal the gospel already in Paradise;¹
later, God proclaimed it
by the holy patriarchs² and prophets³
and foreshadowed it
by the sacrifices and other ceremonies of the law;⁴
and, finally, God fulfilled it
through his own beloved Son.⁵

¹ Gen. 3:15

² Gen. 22:18; 49:10

³ Isa. 53; Jer. 23:5-6; Mic. 7:18-20; Acts 10:43; Heb. 1:1-2

⁴ Lev. 1-7; John 5:46; Heb. 10:1-10

⁵ Rom. 10:4; Gal. 4:4-5; Col. 2:17

Lord's Day 7

Q&A 20

Q. Are all saved through Christ just as all were lost through Adam?

A. No.

Only those are saved who by true faith are grafted into Christ and accept all his blessings.¹

¹ Matt. 7:14; John 3:16, 18, 36; Rom. 11:16-21

Q&A 21

Q. What is true faith?

A. True faith is

not only a knowledge and conviction that everything God reveals in his Word is true;¹ it is also a deep-rooted assurance,² created in me by the Holy Spirit³ through the gospel,⁴ that, out of sheer grace earned for us by Christ,⁵ not only others, but I too,⁶ have had my sins forgiven, have been made forever right with God, and have been granted salvation.⁷

¹ John 17:3, 17; Heb. 11:1-3; James 2:19

² Rom. 4:18-21; 5:1; 10:10; Heb. 4:14-16

³ Matt. 16:15-17; John 3:5; Acts 16:14

Lord's Day 7

Q&A 20

Q. Will all people, then, be saved through Christ just as they were lost through Adam?

A. No.

Only those are saved who through true faith are grafted into Christ and accept all his benefits.¹

¹ Matt. 7:14; John 3:16, 18, 36; Rom. 11:16-21

Q&A 21

Q. What is true faith?

A. True faith is

not only a sure knowledge by which I hold as true all that God has revealed to us in Scripture;¹ it is also a wholehearted trust,² which the Holy Spirit creates in me³ by the gospel,⁴ that, not only to others but to me also,⁵ God has freely granted forgiveness of sins, eternal righteousness, and salvation,⁶ out of sheer grace, solely because of Christ's merit.⁷

¹ John 17:3, 17; Heb. 11:1-3; James 2:19

² Rom. 4:18-21; 5:1; 10:10; Heb. 4:14-16

⁴ Rom. 1:16; 10:17; 1 Cor. 1:21

⁵ Rom. 3:21-26; Gal. 2:16; Eph. 2:8-10

⁶ Gal. 2:20

⁷ Rom. 1:17; Heb. 10:10

Q&A 22

Q. What then must a Christian believe?

A. Everything God promises us in the gospel.¹
That gospel is summarized for us in the articles of our Christian faith—a creed beyond doubt, and confessed throughout the world.

¹ Matt. 28:18-20; John 20:30-31

Q&A 23

Q. What are these articles?

A. I believe in God, the Father almighty, creator of heaven and earth.

I believe in Jesus Christ, his only Son, our Lord, who was conceived by the Holy Spirit and born of the virgin Mary. He suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, died, and was buried; he descended to hell. The third day he rose again from the dead.

³ Matt. 16:15-17; John 3:5; Acts 16:14

⁴ Rom. 1:16; 10:17; 1 Cor. 1:21

⁵ Gal. 2:20

⁶ Rom. 1:17; Heb. 10:10

⁷ Rom. 3:21-26; Gal. 2:16; Eph. 2:8-10

Q&A 22

Q. What then must a Christian believe?

A. All that is promised us in the gospel,¹ a summary of which is taught us in the articles of our universal and undoubted Christian faith.

¹ Matt. 28:18-20; John 20:30-31

Q&A 23

Q. What are these articles?

A. I believe in God, the Father almighty, creator of heaven and earth.

I believe in Jesus Christ, his only begotten Son, our Lord, who was conceived by the Holy Spirit and born of the virgin Mary. He suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, died, and was buried; he descended to hell. The third day he rose again from the dead.

He ascended to heaven
and is seated at the right hand of God the Father almighty.
From there he will come to judge the living and the dead.

I believe in the Holy Spirit,
the holy catholic church,
the communion of saints,
the forgiveness of sins,
the resurrection of the body,
and the life everlasting. Amen.

He ascended to heaven
and is seated at the right hand of God the Father almighty.
From there he will come to judge the living and the dead.

I believe in the Holy Spirit,
the holy catholic church,
the communion of saints,
the forgiveness of sins,
the resurrection of the body,
and the life everlasting. Amen.

Lord's Day 8

Q&A 24

Q. How are these articles divided?

A. Into three parts:

God the Father and our creation;
God the Son and our deliverance;
God the Holy Spirit and our sanctification.

Q&A 25

**Q. Since there is but one God,¹
why do you speak of three:
Father, Son, and Holy Spirit?**

A. Because that is how
God has revealed himself in his Word:²
these three distinct persons
are one, true, eternal God.

Lord's Day 8

Q&A 24

Q. How are these articles divided?

A. Into three parts:

God the Father and our creation;
God the Son and our deliverance;
and God the Holy Spirit and our sanctification.

Q&A 25

**Q. Since there is only one divine being,¹
why do you speak of three:
Father, Son, and Holy Spirit?**

A. Because that is how
God has revealed himself in his Word:²
these three distinct persons
are one, true, eternal God.

¹ Deut. 6:4; 1 Cor. 8:4, 6

² Matt. 3:16-17; 28:18-19; Luke 4:18 (Isa. 61:1); John 14:26; 15:26; 2 Cor. 13:14; Gal. 4:6; Tit. 3:5-6

Part II: Deliverance: God the Father
Lord's Day 9

Q&A 26

**Q. What do you believe when you say,
 "I believe in God, the Father almighty,
 creator of heaven and earth"?**

A. That the eternal Father of our Lord Jesus Christ,
 who out of nothing created heaven and earth
 and everything in them,¹
 who still upholds and rules them
 by his eternal counsel and providence,²
 is my God and Father
 because of Christ his Son.³

I trust him so much that I do not doubt
 he will provide
 whatever I need
 for body and soul,⁴
 and he will turn to my good
 whatever adversity he sends me
 in this sad world.⁵

¹ Deut. 6:4; 1 Cor. 8:4, 6

² Matt. 3:16-17; 28:18-19; Luke 4:18 (Isa. 61:1); John 14:26; 15:26; 2 Cor. 13:14; Gal. 4:6; Tit. 3:5-6

Part II: Deliverance: God the Father
Lord's Day 9

Q&A 26

**Q. What do you believe when you say,
 "I believe in God, the Father almighty,
 creator of heaven and earth"?**

A. That the eternal Father of our Lord Jesus Christ,
 who out of nothing created heaven and earth
 and everything in them,¹
 who still upholds and rules them
 by his eternal counsel and providence,²
 is my God and Father
 because of Christ the Son.³

I trust God so much that I do not doubt
 he will provide
 whatever I need
 for body and soul,⁴
 and will turn to my good
 whatever adversity he sends upon me
 in this sad world.⁵

<p>He is able to do this because he is almighty God;⁶ he desires to do this because he is a faithful Father.⁷</p> <p>¹ Gen. 1 & 2; Ex. 20:11; Ps. 33:6; Isa. 44:24; Acts 4:24; 14:15 ² Ps. 104; Matt. 6:30; 10:29; Eph. 1:11 ³ John 1:12-13; Rom. 8:15-16; Gal. 4:4-7; Eph. 1:5 ⁴ Ps. 55:22; Matt. 6:25-26; Luke 12:22-31 ⁵ Rom. 8:28 ⁶ Gen. 18:14; Rom. 8:31-39 ⁷ Matt. 7:9-11</p>	<p>God is able to do this because he is almighty God,⁶ and desires to do this because he is a faithful Father.⁷</p> <p>¹ Gen. 1 & 2; Ex. 20:11; Ps. 33:6; Isa. 44:24; Acts 4:24; 14:15 ² Ps. 104; Matt. 6:30; 10:29; Eph. 1:11 ³ John 1:12-13; Rom. 8:15-16; Gal. 4:4-7; Eph. 1:5 ⁴ Ps. 55:22; Matt. 6:25-26; Luke 12:22-31 ⁵ Rom. 8:28 ⁶ Gen. 18:14; Rom. 8:31-39 ⁷ Matt. 7:9-11</p>
<p>Lord's Day 10</p> <p>Q&A 27 Q. What do you understand by the providence of God?</p> <p>A. Providence is the almighty and ever present power of God¹ by which he upholds, as with his hand, heaven and earth and all creatures,² and so rules them that leaf and blade, rain and drought, fruitful and lean years, food and drink, health and sickness,</p>	<p>Lord's Day 10</p> <p>Q&A 27 Q. What do you understand by the providence of God?</p> <p>A. The almighty and ever present power of God¹ by which God upholds, as with his hand, heaven and earth and all creatures,² and so rules them that leaf and blade, rain and drought, fruitful and lean years, food and drink, health and sickness, prosperity and poverty.³</p>

prosperity and poverty—³
 all things, in fact, come to us
 not by chance⁴
 but from his fatherly hand.⁵

¹ Jer. 23:23-24; Acts 17:24-28

² Heb. 1:3

³ Jer. 5:24; Acts 14:15-17; John 9:3; Prov. 22:2

⁴ Prov. 16:33

⁵ Matt. 10:29

Q&A 28

**Q. How does the knowledge
 of God’s creation and providence
 help us?**

A. We can be patient when things go against us,¹
 thankful when things go well,²
 and for the future we can have
 good confidence in our faithful God and Father
 that nothing will separate us from his love.³
 All creatures are so completely in his hand
 that without his will
 they can neither move nor be moved.⁴

¹ Job 1:21-22; James 1:3

² Deut. 8:10; 1 Thess. 5:18

³ Ps. 55:22; Rom. 5:3-5; 8:38-39

⁴ Job 1:12; 2:6; Prov. 21:1; Acts 17:24-28

and everything else,
 come to us
 not by chance⁴
 but by his fatherly hand.⁵

¹ Jer. 23:23-24; Acts 17:24-28

² Heb. 1:3

³ Jer. 5:24; Acts 14:15-17; John 9:3; Prov. 22:2

⁴ Prov. 16:33

⁵ Matt. 10:29

Q&A 28

**Q. What benefits do we receive
 from the knowledge of God’s creation and providence?**

A. We can be patient when things go against us,¹
 thankful when things go well,²
 and for the future we can have
 good confidence in our faithful God and Father
 that nothing in creation will separate us from his love.³
 For all creatures are so completely in God’s hand
 that without his will
 they can neither live nor move.⁴

¹ Job 1:21-22; James 1:3

² Deut. 8:10; 1 Thess. 5:18

³ Ps. 55:22; Rom. 5:3-5; 8:38-39

⁴ Job 1:12; 2:6; Prov. 21:1; Acts 17:24-28

Part II: Deliverance: God the Son
Lord's Day 11

Q&A 29

Q. Why is the Son of God called "Jesus," meaning "savior"?

A. Because he saves us from our sins.¹
 Salvation cannot be found in anyone else;
 it is futile to look for any salvation elsewhere.²

¹ Matt. 1:21; Heb. 7:25

² Isa. 43:11; John 15:5; Acts 4:11-12; 1 Tim. 2:5

Q&A 30

Q. Do those who look for their salvation and security in saints, in themselves, or elsewhere really believe in the only savior Jesus?

A. No.
 Although they boast of being his,
 by their deeds they deny
 the only savior and deliverer, Jesus.¹

Either Jesus is not a perfect savior,
 or those who in true faith accept this savior
 have in him all they need for their salvation.²

¹ 1 Cor. 1:12-13; Gal. 5:4

² Col. 1:19-20; 2:10; 1 John 1:7

Part II: Deliverance: God the Son
Lord's Day 11

Q&A 29

Q. Why is the Son of God called "Jesus," meaning "savior"?

A. Because he saves us from our sins,¹
 and because salvation cannot be sought
 or found in anyone else.²

¹ Matt. 1:21; Heb. 7:25

² Isa. 43:11; John 15:5; Acts 4:11-12; 1 Tim. 2:5

Q&A 30

Q. Do those who look for their salvation in saints, in themselves, or elsewhere really believe in the only savior Jesus?

A. No.
 Although they boast of being his,
 by their actions they deny
 the only savior, Jesus.¹

For either Jesus is not a perfect savior,
 or those who in true faith accept this savior
 must have in him all they need for their salvation.²

¹ 1 Cor. 1:12-13; Gal. 5:4

² Col. 1:19-20; 2:10; 1 John 1:7

Lord's Day 12

Q&A 31

Q. Why is he called "Christ," meaning "anointed"?

- A. Because he has been ordained by God the Father and has been anointed with the Holy Spirit¹ to be our chief prophet and teacher² who perfectly reveals to us the secret counsel and will of God for our deliverance;³ our only high priest⁴ who has set us free by the one sacrifice of his body,⁵ and who continually pleads our cause with the Father;⁶ and our eternal king⁷ who governs us by his Word and Spirit, and who guards us and keeps us in the freedom he has won for us.⁸

¹ Luke 3:21-22; 4:14-19 (Isa. 61:1); Heb. 1:9 (Ps. 45:7)

² Acts 3:22 (Deut. 18:15)

³ John 1:18; 15:15

⁴ Heb. 7:17 (Ps. 110:4)

⁵ Heb. 9:12; 10:11-14

⁶ Rom. 8:34; Heb. 9:24

⁷ Matt. 21:5 (Zech. 9:9)

⁸ Matt. 28:18-20; John 10:28; Rev. 12:10-11

Lord's Day 12

Q&A 31

Q. Why is he called "Christ," meaning "anointed"?

- A. Because he has been ordained by God the Father and has been anointed with the Holy Spirit¹ to be our chief prophet and teacher² who **fully** reveals to us the secret counsel and will of God **concerning** our deliverance;³ our only high priest⁴ who has **delivered us** by the one sacrifice of his body,⁵ and who continually pleads our cause with the Father;⁶ and our eternal king⁷ who governs us by his Word and Spirit, and who guards us and keeps us in the deliverance he has won for us.⁸

¹ Luke 3:21-22; 4:14-19 (Isa. 61:1); Heb. 1:9 (Ps. 45:7)

² Acts 3:22 (Deut. 18:15)

³ John 1:18; 15:15

⁴ Heb. 7:17 (Ps. 110:4)

⁵ Heb. 9:12; 10:11-14

⁶ Rom. 8:34; Heb. 9:24

⁷ Matt. 21:5 (Zech. 9:9)

⁸ Matt. 28:18-20; John 10:28; Rev. 12:10-11

Q&A 32

Q. But why are you called a Christian?

A. Because by faith I am a member of Christ¹
and so I share in his anointing.²

I am anointed
to confess his name,³
to present myself to him as a living sacrifice of thanks,⁴
to strive with a good conscience against sin and the devil
in this life,⁵
and afterward to reign with Christ
over all creation
for all eternity.⁶

¹ 1 Cor. 12:12-27

² Acts 2:17 (Joel 2:28); 1 John 2:27

³ Matt. 10:32; Rom. 10:9-10; Heb. 13:15

⁴ Rom. 12:1; 1 Pet. 2:5, 9

⁵ Gal. 5:16-17; Eph. 6:11; 1 Tim. 1:18-19

⁶ Matt. 25:34; 2 Tim. 2:12

Q&A 32

Q. But why are you called a Christian?

A. Because by faith I am a member of Christ¹
and so I share in his anointing.²

I am anointed
to confess his name,³
to present myself to him as a living sacrifice of thanks,⁴
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and afterward to reign with Christ
over all creation
for eternity.⁶

¹ 1 Cor. 12:12-27

² Acts 2:17 (Joel 2:28); 1 John 2:27

³ Matt. 10:32; Rom. 10:9-10; Heb. 13:15

⁴ Rom. 12:1; 1 Pet. 2:5, 9

⁵ Gal. 5:16-17; Eph. 6:11; 1 Tim. 1:18-19

⁶ Matt. 25:34; 2 Tim. 2:12

Lord's Day 13

Q&A 33

Q. Why is he called God's "only Son" when we also are God's children?

A. Because Christ alone is the eternal, natural Son of God.¹
 We, however, are adopted children of God—
 adopted by grace through Christ.²

¹ John 1:1-3, 14, 18; Heb. 1² John 1:12; Rom. 8:14-17; Eph. 1:5-6

Q&A 34

Q. Why do you call him "our Lord"?

A. Because—
 not with gold or silver,
 but with his precious blood—¹
 he has set us free
 from sin and from the tyranny of the devil,²
 and has bought us,
 body and soul,
 to be his very own.³

¹ 1 Pet. 1:18-19² Col. 1:13-14; Heb. 2:14-15³ 1 Cor. 6:20; 1 Tim. 2:5-6**Lord's Day 13**

Q&A 33

Q. Why is he called God's "only begotten Son" when we also are God's children?

A. Because Christ alone is the eternal, natural Son of God.¹
 We, however, are adopted children of God—
 adopted by grace through Christ.²

¹ John 1:1-3, 14, 18; Heb. 1² John 1:12; Rom. 8:14-17; Eph. 1:5-6

Q&A 34

Q. Why do you call him "our Lord"?

A. Because—
 not with gold or silver,
 but with his precious blood—¹
 he has **delivered us**
 from sin and from the tyranny of the devil,²
 and has bought us,
 body and soul,
 to be his very own.³

¹ 1 Pet. 1:18-19² Col. 1:13-14; Heb. 2:14-15³ 1 Cor. 6:20; 1 Tim. 2:5-6

Lord's Day 14

Q&A 35

**Q. What does it mean that he
"was conceived by the Holy Spirit
and born of the virgin Mary"?**

A. That the eternal Son of God,
who is and remains
true and eternal God,¹
took to himself,
through the working of the Holy Spirit,²
from the flesh and blood of the virgin Mary,³
a truly human nature
so that he might become David's true descendant,⁴
like his brothers in every way⁵
except for sin.⁶

¹ John 1:1; 10:30-36; Acts 13:33 (Ps. 2:7); Col. 1:15-17; 1 John 5:20² Luke 1:35³ Matt. 1:18-23; John 1:14; Gal. 4:4; Heb. 2:14⁴ 2 Sam. 7:12-16; Ps. 132:11; Matt. 1:1; Rom. 1:3⁵ Phil. 2:7; Heb. 2:17⁶ Heb. 4:15; 7:26-27

Q&A 36

**Q. How does the holy conception and birth of Christ
benefit you?**

A. He is our mediator,¹
and with his innocence and perfect holiness

Lord's Day 14

Q&A 35

**Q. What does it mean that he
"was conceived by the Holy Spirit
and born of the virgin Mary"?**

A. That the eternal Son of God,
who is and remains
true and eternal God,¹
took to himself,
through the working of the Holy Spirit,²
from the flesh and blood of the virgin Mary,³
a truly human nature
so that he might also become David's true descendant,⁴
like his brothers **and sisters** in every way⁵
except for sin.⁶

¹ John 1:1; 10:30-36; Acts 13:33 (Ps. 2:7); Col. 1:15-17; 1 John 5:20² Luke 1:35³ Matt. 1:18-23; John 1:14; Gal. 4:4; Heb. 2:14⁴ 2 Sam. 7:12-16; Ps. 132:11; Matt. 1:1; Rom. 1:3⁵ Phil. 2:7; Heb. 2:17⁶ Heb. 4:15; 7:26-27

Q&A 36

**Q. How does the holy conception and birth of Christ
benefit you?**

A. He is our mediator¹
and, in God's sight,

he removes from God’s sight
my sin—mine since I was conceived.²

¹ 1 Tim. 2:5-6; Heb. 9:13-15

² Rom. 8:3-4; 2 Cor. 5:21; Gal. 4:4-5; 1 Pet. 1:18-19

he covers with his innocence and perfect holiness
my sinfulness in which I was conceived.²

¹ 1 Tim. 2:5-6; Heb. 9:13-15

² Rom. 8:3-4; 2 Cor. 5:21; Gal. 4:4-5; 1 Pet. 1:18-19

Lord’s Day 15

Q&A 37

**Q. What do you understand
by the word “suffered”?**

A. That during his whole life on earth,
but especially at the end,
Christ sustained
in body and soul
the anger of God against the sin of the whole human race.¹

This he did in order that,
by his suffering as the only atoning sacrifice,²
he might set us free, body and soul,
from eternal condemnation,³
and gain for us
God’s grace,
righteousness,
and eternal life.⁴

¹ Isa. 53; 1 Pet. 2:24; 3:18

² Rom. 3:25; Heb. 10:14; 1 John 2:2; 4:10

³ Rom. 8:1-4; Gal. 3:13

⁴ John 3:16; Rom. 3:24-26

Lord’s Day 15

Q&A 37

**Q. What do you understand
by the word “suffered”?**

A. That during his whole life on earth,
but especially at the end,
Christ sustained
in body and soul
the **wrath** of God against the sin of the whole human race.¹

This he did in order that,
by his suffering as the only atoning sacrifice,²
he might **deliver us**, body and soul,
from eternal condemnation,³
and gain for us
God’s grace,
righteousness,
and eternal life.⁴

¹ Isa. 53; 1 Pet. 2:24; 3:18

² Rom. 3:25; Heb. 10:14; 1 John 2:2; 4:10

³ Rom. 8:1-4; Gal. 3:13

⁴ John 3:16; Rom. 3:24-26

Q&A 38

**Q. Why did he suffer
“under Pontius Pilate” as judge?**

A. So that he,
though innocent,
might be condemned by a civil judge,¹
and so free us from the severe judgment of God
that was to fall on us.²

¹ Luke 23:13-24; John 19:4, 12-16

² Isa. 53:4-5; 2 Cor. 5:21; Gal. 3:13

Q&A 39

**Q. Is it significant
that he was “crucified”
instead of dying some other way?**

A. Yes.
This death convinces me
that he shouldered the curse
which lay on me,
since death by crucifixion was accursed by God.¹

¹ Gal. 3:10-13 (Deut. 21:23)

Q&A 38

**Q. Why did he suffer
“under Pontius Pilate” as judge?**

A. So that he,
though innocent,
might be condemned by an earthly judge,¹
and so free us from the severe judgment of God
that was to fall on us.²

¹ Luke 23:13-24; John 19:4, 12-16

² Isa. 53:4-5; 2 Cor. 5:21; Gal. 3:13

Q&A 39

**Q. Is there something more
in his having been “crucified”
than if he had died some other death?**

A. Yes.
For by this I am assured
that he shouldered the curse
which lay on me,
since death on a cross had been cursed by God.¹

¹ Gal. 3:10-13 (Deut. 21:23)

Lord's Day 16

Q&A 40

Q. Why did Christ have to go all the way to death?

A. Because God's justice and truth demand it:¹
only the death of God's Son could pay for our sin.²

¹ Gen. 2:17

² Rom. 8:3-4; Phil. 2:8; Heb. 2:9

Q&A 41

Q. Why was he "buried"?

A. His burial testifies
that he really died.¹

¹ Isa. 53:9; John 19:38-42; Acts 13:29; 1 Cor. 15:3-4

Q&A: 42

**Q. Since Christ has died for us,
why do we still have to die?**

A. Our death does not pay the debt of our sins.¹
Rather, it puts an end to our sinning
and is our entrance into eternal life.²

¹ Ps. 49:7

² John 5:24; Phil. 1:21-23; 1 Thess. 5:9-10

Lord's Day 16

Q&A 40

Q. Why did Christ have to suffer death?

A. Because God's justice and truth are such that
nothing else could pay for our sins¹
except the death of the Son of God.²

¹ Gen. 2:17

² Rom. 8:3-4; Phil. 2:8; Heb. 2:9

Q&A 41

Q. Why was he "buried"?

A. His burial testifies
that he really died.¹

¹ Isa. 53:9; John 19:38-42; Acts 13:29; 1 Cor. 15:3-4

Q&A: 42

**Q. Since Christ has died for us,
why do we still have to die?**

A. Our death does not pay the debt of our sins.¹
Rather, it puts an end to our sinning
and is our entrance into eternal life.²

¹ Ps. 49:7

² John 5:24; Phil. 1:21-23; 1 Thess. 5:9-10

Q&A 43

Q. What further advantage do we receive from Christ's sacrifice and death on the cross?

- A. Through Christ's death our old selves are crucified, put to death, and buried with him,¹ so that the evil desires of the flesh may no longer rule us,² but that instead we may dedicate ourselves as an offering of gratitude to him.³

¹ Rom. 6:5-11; Col. 2:11-12

² Rom. 6:12-14

³ Rom. 12:1; Eph. 5:1-2

Q&A 44

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.¹

¹ Isa. 53; Matt. 26:36-46; 27:45-46; Luke 22:44; Heb. 5:7-10

Q&A 43

Q. What further benefit do we receive from Christ's sacrifice and death on the cross?

- A. By Christ's power our old selves are crucified, put to death, and buried with him,¹ so that the evil desires of the flesh may no longer rule us,² but that instead we may offer ourselves as a sacrifice of gratitude to him.³

¹ Rom. 6:5-11; Col. 2:11-12

² Rom. 6:12-14

³ Rom. 12:1; Eph. 5:1-2

Q&A 44

Q. Why does the creed add, "He descended to hell"?

- A. To assure me during attacks of deepest dread that Christ my Lord, by suffering unspeakable anguish, pain, and terror of soul, on the cross but also earlier, has delivered me from hellish anguish and torment.¹

¹ Isa. 53; Matt. 26:36-46; 27:45-46; Luke 22:44; Heb. 5:7-10

Lord's Day 17

Q&A 45

Q. How does Christ's resurrection benefit us?

A. First, by his resurrection he has overcome death, so that he might make us share in the righteousness he won for us by his death.¹

Second, by his power we too are already now resurrected to a new life.²

Third, Christ's resurrection is a guarantee of our glorious resurrection.³

¹ Rom. 4:25; 1 Cor. 15:16-20; 1 Pet. 1:3-5

² Rom. 6:5-11; Eph. 2:4-6; Col. 3:1-4

³ Rom. 8:11; 1 Cor. 15:12-23; Phil. 3:20-21

Lord's Day 17

Q&A 45

Q. How does Christ's resurrection benefit us?

A. First, by his resurrection he has overcome death, so that he might make us share in the righteousness he **obtained** for us by his death.¹

Second, by his power we too are **now raised** to a new life.²

Third, Christ's resurrection is a sure pledge to us of our **blessed resurrection**.³

¹ Rom. 4:25; 1 Cor. 15:16-20; 1 Pet. 1:3-5

² Rom. 6:5-11; Eph. 2:4-6; Col. 3:1-4

³ Rom. 8:11; 1 Cor. 15:12-23; Phil. 3:20-21

Lord's Day 18

Q&A 46

**Q. What do you mean by saying,
"He ascended to heaven"?**

A. That Christ,
 while his disciples watched,
 was lifted up from the earth to heaven¹
 and will be there for our good²
 until he comes again
 to judge the living and the dead.³

¹ Luke 24:50-51; Acts 1:9-11² Rom. 8:34; Eph. 4:8-10; Heb. 7:23-25; 9:24³ Acts 1:11

Q&A 47

**Q. But isn't Christ with us
until the end of the world
as he promised us?¹**

A. Christ is truly human and truly God.
 In his human nature Christ is not now on earth,²
 but in his divinity, majesty, grace, and Spirit
 he is not absent from us for a moment.³

¹ Matt. 28:20² Acts 1:9-11; 3:19-21³ Matt. 28:18-20; John 14:16-19**Lord's Day 18**

Q&A 46

**Q. What do you mean by saying,
"He ascended to heaven"?**

A. That Christ
 was taken up from the earth into heaven¹
 before the eyes of his disciples
 and remains there on our behalf²
 until he comes again
 to judge the living and the dead.³

¹ Luke 24:50-51; Acts 1:9-11² Rom. 8:34; Eph. 4:8-10; Heb. 7:23-25; 9:24³ Acts 1:11

Q&A 47

**Q. But isn't Christ with us
until the end of the world
as he promised us?¹**

A. Christ is true human and true God.
 In his human nature Christ is not now on earth,²
 but in his divinity, majesty, grace, and Spirit
 he never leaves us.³

¹ Matt. 28:20² Acts 1:9-11; 3:19-21³ Matt. 28:18-20; John 14:16-19

Q&A 48

Q. If his humanity is not present wherever his divinity is, then aren't the two natures of Christ separated from each other?

A. Certainly not.
Since divinity
 is not limited
 and is present everywhere,¹
it is evident that
 Christ's divinity is surely beyond the bounds of
 the humanity he has taken on,
 but at the same time his divinity is in
 and remains personally united to
 his humanity.²

¹ Jer. 23:23-24; Acts 7:48-49 (Isa. 66:1)

² John 1:14; 3:13; Col. 2:9

Q&A 49

Q. How does Christ's ascension to heaven benefit us?

A. First, he pleads our cause
 in heaven
 in the presence of his Father.¹

Q&A 48

Q. If his humanity is not present wherever his divinity is, then aren't the two natures of Christ separated from each other?

A. Certainly not.
Since divinity
 is not limited
 and is present everywhere,¹
it is evident that
 Christ's divinity is surely beyond the bounds of
 the humanity that has been taken on,
 but at the same time his divinity is in
 and remains personally united to
 his humanity.²

¹ Jer. 23:23-24; Acts 7:48-49 (Isa. 66:1)

² John 1:14; 3:13; Col. 2:9

Q&A 49

Q. How does Christ's ascension to heaven benefit us?

A. First, he is our advocate
 in heaven
 in the presence of his Father.¹

Second, we have our own flesh in heaven—
a guarantee that Christ our head
will take us, his members,
to himself in heaven.²

Third, he sends his Spirit to us on earth
as a further guarantee.³
By the Spirit's power
we make the goal of our lives,
not earthly things,
but the things above where Christ is,
sitting at God's right hand.⁴

¹ Rom. 8:34; 1 John 2:1

² John 14:2; 17:24; Eph. 2:4-6

³ John 14:16; 2 Cor. 1:21-22; 5:5

⁴ Col. 3:1-4

Second, we have our own flesh in heaven
as a guarantee that Christ our head
will also take us, his members,
up to himself.²

Third, he sends his Spirit to us on earth
as a further guarantee.³
By the Spirit's power
we seek not earthly things
but the things above, where Christ is,
sitting at God's right hand.⁴

¹ Rom. 8:34; 1 John 2:1

² John 14:2; 17:24; Eph. 2:4-6

³ John 14:16; 2 Cor. 1:21-22; 5:5

⁴ Col. 3:1-4

Lord's Day 19

Q&A 50

Q. Why the next words:**"and is seated at the right hand of God"?**

A. Christ ascended to heaven,
there to show that he is head of his church,¹
and that the Father rules all things through him.²

¹ Eph. 1:20-23; Col. 1:18² Matt. 28:18; John 5:22-23

Q&A 51

Q. How does this glory of Christ our head benefit us?

A. First, through his Holy Spirit
he pours out his gifts from heaven
upon us his members.¹

Second, by his power
he defends us and keeps us safe
from all enemies.²

¹ Acts 2:33; Eph. 4:7-12² Ps. 110:1-2; John 10:27-30; Rev. 19:11-16**Lord's Day 19**

Q&A 50

Q. Why the next words:**"and is seated at the right hand of God"?**

A. **Because** Christ ascended to heaven
to show there that he is head of his church,¹
the one through whom the Father rules all things.²

¹ Eph. 1:20-23; Col. 1:18² Matt. 28:18; John 5:22-23

Q&A 51

Q. How does this glory of Christ our head benefit us?

A. First, through his Holy Spirit
he pours out gifts from heaven
upon us his members.¹

Second, by his power
he defends us and keeps us safe
from all enemies.²

¹ Acts 2:33; Eph. 4:7-12² Ps. 110:1-2; John 10:27-30; Rev. 19:11-16

Q&A 52

**Q. How does Christ's return
"to judge the living and the dead"
comfort you?**

A. In all my distress and persecution
I turn my eyes to the heavens
and confidently await as judge the very One
who has already stood trial in my place before God
and so has removed the whole curse from me.¹
All his enemies and mine
he will condemn to everlasting punishment:
but me and all his chosen ones
he will take along with him
into the joy and the glory of heaven.²

¹ Luke 21:28; Rom. 8:22-25; Phil. 3:20-21; Tit. 2:13-14

² Matt. 25:31-46; 2 Thess. 1:6-10

Q&A 52

**Q. How does Christ's return
"to judge the living and the dead"
comfort you?**

A. In all distress and persecution,
with uplifted head
I confidently await the very judge
who has already submitted himself to the judgment of God
in my place and removed the whole curse from me.¹
Christ will cast all his enemies and mine
into everlasting condemnation,
but will take me and all his chosen ones
to himself
into the joy and glory of heaven.²

¹ Luke 21:28; Rom. 8:22-25; Phil. 3:20-21; Tit. 2:13-14

² Matt. 25:31-46; 2 Thess. 1:6-10

Part II: Deliverance: God the Holy Spirit
Lord's Day 20

Q&A 53

Q. What do you believe concerning "the Holy Spirit"?

A. First, he, as well as the Father and the Son, is eternal God.¹

Second, he has been given to me personally,² so that, by true faith, he makes me share in Christ and all his blessings,³ comforts me,⁴ and remains with me forever.⁵

¹ Gen. 1:1-2; Matt. 28:19; Acts 5:3-4

² 1 Cor. 6:19; 2 Cor. 1:21-22; Gal. 4:6

³ Gal. 3:14

⁴ John 15:26; Acts 9:31

⁵ John 14:16-17; 1 Pet. 4:14

Part II: Deliverance: God the Holy Spirit
Lord's Day 20

Q&A 53

Q. What do you believe concerning "the Holy Spirit"?

A. First, that the Spirit, with the Father and the Son, is eternal God.¹

Second, that the Spirit is also given to me,² makes me share in Christ and all his benefits³ through true faith, comforts me,⁴ and will remain with me forever.⁵

¹ Gen. 1:1-2; Matt. 28:19; Acts 5:3-4

² 1 Cor. 6:19; 2 Cor. 1:21-22; Gal. 4:6

³ Gal. 3:14

⁴ John 15:26; Acts 9:31

⁵ John 14:16-17; 1 Pet. 4:14

Lord's Day 21

Q&A 54

Q. What do you believe concerning "the holy catholic church"?

- A. I believe that the Son of God through his Spirit and Word,¹ out of the entire human race,² from the beginning of the world to its end,³ gathers, protects, and preserves for himself a community chosen for eternal life⁴ and united in true faith.⁵ And of this community I am⁶ and always will be⁷ a living member.

¹ John 10:14-16; Acts 20:28; Rom. 10:14-17; Col. 1:18² Gen. 26:3b-4; Rev. 5:9³ Isa. 59:21; 1 Cor. 11:26⁴ Matt. 16:18; John 10:28-30; Rom. 8:28-30; Eph. 1:3-14⁵ Acts 2:42-47; Eph. 4:1-6⁶ 1 John 3:14, 19-21⁷ John 10:27-28; 1 Cor. 1:4-9; 1 Pet. 1:3-5

Q&A 55

Q. What do you understand by "the communion of saints"?

- A. First, that believers one and all, as members of this community, share in Christ and in all his treasures and gifts.¹

Lord's Day 21

Q&A 54

Q. What do you believe concerning "the holy catholic church"?

- A. I believe that the Son of God through his Spirit and Word,¹ out of the entire human race,² from the beginning of the world to its end,³ gathers, protects, and preserves for himself a community chosen for eternal life⁴ and united in true faith.⁵ And of this community I am⁶ and always will be⁷ a living member.

¹ John 10:14-16; Acts 20:28; Rom. 10:14-17; Col. 1:18² Gen. 26:3b-4; Rev. 5:9³ Isa. 59:21; 1 Cor. 11:26⁴ Matt. 16:18; John 10:28-30; Rom. 8:28-30; Eph. 1:3-14⁵ Acts 2:42-47; Eph. 4:1-6⁶ 1 John 3:14, 19-21⁷ John 10:27-28; 1 Cor. 1:4-9; 1 Pet. 1:3-5

Q&A 55

Q. What do you understand by "the communion of saints"?

- A. First, that believers one and all, as members of this community, share in Christ and in all his treasures and gifts.¹

Second, that each member should consider it a duty to use these gifts readily and cheerfully for the service and enrichment of the other members.²

¹ Rom. 8:32; 1 Cor. 6:17; 12:4-7, 12-13; 1 John 1:3

² Rom. 12:4-8; 1 Cor. 12:20-27; 13:1-7; Phil. 2:4-8

Q&A 56

Q. What do you believe concerning “the forgiveness of sins”?

A. I believe that God, because of Christ’s atonement, will never hold against me any of my sins¹ nor my sinful nature which I need to struggle against all my life.²

Rather, in his grace God grants me the righteousness of Christ to free me forever from judgment.³

¹ Ps. 103:3-4, 10, 12; Mic. 7:18-19; 2 Cor. 5:18-21; 1 John 1:7; 2:2

² Rom. 7:21-25

³ John 3:17-18; Rom. 8:1-2

Second, that each member should consider it a duty to use these gifts **willingly and joyfully** for the service and enrichment of the other members.²

¹ Rom. 8:32; 1 Cor. 6:17; 12:4-7, 12-13; 1 John 1:3

² Rom. 12:4-8; 1 Cor. 12:20-27; 13:1-7; Phil. 2:4-8

Q&A 56

Q. What do you believe concerning “the forgiveness of sins”?

A. I believe that God, because of Christ’s **satisfaction**, **will no longer remember** any of my sins¹ **or** my sinful nature which I need to struggle against all my life.²

Rather, **by grace** God grants me the righteousness of Christ to free me forever from judgment.³

¹ Ps. 103:3-4, 10, 12; Mic. 7:18-19; 2 Cor. 5:18-21; 1 John 1:7; 2:2

² Rom. 7:21-25

³ John 3:17-18; Rom. 8:1-2

Lord's Day 22

Q&A 57

Q. How does "the resurrection of the body" comfort you?

A. Not only my soul
 will be taken immediately after this life
 to Christ its head,¹
 but even my very flesh, raised by the power of Christ,
 will be reunited with my soul
 and made like Christ's glorious* body.²

¹ Luke 23:43; Phil. 1:21-23² 1 Cor. 15:20, 42-46, 54; Phil. 3:21; 1 John 3:2

Q&A 58

Q. How does the article concerning "life everlasting" comfort you?

A. Even as I already now
 experience in my heart
 the beginning of eternal joy,¹
 so after this life I will have
 perfect blessedness such as
 no eye has seen,
 no ear has heard,
 no human heart has ever imagined:
 a blessedness in which to praise God eternally.²

Lord's Day 22

Q&A 57

Q. How does "the resurrection of the body" comfort you?

A. Not only will my soul
 be taken immediately after this life
 to Christ its head,¹
 but also my very flesh, raised by the power of Christ,
 will be reunited with my soul
 and made like Christ's glorious body.²

¹ Luke 23:43; Phil. 1:21-23² 1 Cor. 15:20, 42-46, 54; Phil. 3:21; 1 John 3:2

Q&A 58

Q. How does the article concerning "life everlasting" comfort you?

A. Even as I already now
 experience in my heart
 the beginning of eternal joy,¹
 so after this life I will have
 perfect blessedness such as
 no eye has seen,
 no ear has heard,
 no human heart has ever imagined:
 a blessedness in which to praise God forever.²

¹ Rom. 14:17
² John 17:3; 1 Cor. 2:9
 *The first edition had here the German word for “holy.” This was later corrected to the German word for “glorious.”

Lord’s Day 23

Q&A 59

Q. What good does it do you, however, to believe all this?

A. In Christ I am right with God and heir to life everlasting.¹

¹ John 3:36; Rom. 1:17 (Hab. 2:4); Rom. 5:1-2

Q&A 60

Q. How are you right with God?

A. Only by true faith in Jesus Christ.¹

Even though my conscience accuses me of having grievously sinned against all God’s commandments and of never having kept any of them,² and even though I am still inclined toward all evil,³ nevertheless, without my deserving it at all,⁴ out of sheer grace,⁵ God grants and credits to me the perfect satisfaction, righteousness, and holiness of Christ,⁶ as if I had never sinned nor been a sinner,

¹ Rom. 14:17
² John 17:3; 1 Cor. 2:9

Lord’s Day 23

Q&A 59

Q. What good does it do you, however, to believe all this?

A. In Christ I am **righteous before** God and heir to life everlasting.¹

¹ John 3:36; Rom. 1:17 (Hab. 2:4); Rom. 5:1-2

Q&A 60

Q. How are you **righteous before God?**

A. Only by true faith in Jesus Christ.¹

Even though my conscience accuses me of having grievously sinned against all God’s commandments, of never having kept any of them,² and of **still being inclined** toward all evil,³ nevertheless, **without any merit of my own,**⁴ out of sheer grace,⁵ God grants and credits to me the perfect satisfaction, righteousness, and holiness of Christ,⁶

as if I had been as perfectly obedient
as Christ was obedient for me.⁷

All I need to do
is to accept this gift of God with a believing heart.⁸

¹ Rom. 3:21-28; Gal. 2:16; Eph. 2:8-9; Phil 3:8-11

² Rom. 3:9-10

³ Rom. 7:23

⁴ Tit. 3:4-5

⁵ Rom. 3:24; Eph. 2:8

⁶ Rom. 4:3-5 (Gen. 15:6); 2 Cor. 5:17-19; 1 John 2:1-2

⁷ Rom. 4:24-25; 2 Cor. 5:21

⁸ John 3:18; Acts 16:30-31

Q&A 61

**Q. Why do you say that
by faith alone
you are right with God?**

A. It is not because of any value my faith has
that God is pleased with me.

Only Christ's satisfaction, righteousness, and holiness
make me right with God.¹

And I can receive this righteousness and make it mine
in no other way than
by faith alone.²

¹ 1 Cor. 1:30-31

² Rom. 10:10; 1 John 5:10-12

as if I had never sinned nor been a sinner,
and as if I had been as perfectly obedient
as Christ was obedient for me.⁷

All I need to do
is accept this gift with a believing heart.⁸

¹ Rom. 3:21-28; Gal. 2:16; Eph. 2:8-9; Phil 3:8-11

² Rom. 3:9-10

³ Rom. 7:23

⁴ Tit. 3:4-5

⁵ Rom. 3:24; Eph. 2:8

⁶ Rom. 4:3-5 (Gen. 15:6); 2 Cor. 5:17-19; 1 John 2:1-2

⁷ Rom. 4:24-25; 2 Cor. 5:21

⁸ John 3:18; Acts 16:30-31

Q&A 61

**Q. Why do you say that
through faith alone
you are righteous?**

A. Not because I please God

by the worthiness of my faith.

It is because the satisfaction, righteousness, and holiness
of Christ alone are my righteousness before God,¹

and because I accept this righteousness and make it mine
in no other way

than through faith.²

¹ 1 Cor. 1:30-31

² Rom. 10:10; 1 John 5:10-12

Lord's Day 24

Q&A 62

**Q. Why can't the good we do
make us right with God,
or at least help make us right with him?**

A. Because the righteousness
which can pass God's scrutiny
must be entirely perfect
and must in every way measure up to the divine law.¹
Even the very best we do in this life
is imperfect
and stained with sin.²

¹ Rom. 3:20; Gal. 3:10 (Deut. 27:26)

² Isa. 64:6

Q&A 63

**Q. How can you say that the good we do
doesn't earn anything
when God promises to reward it
in this life and the next?¹**

A. This reward is not earned;
it is a gift of grace.²

¹ Matt. 5:12; Heb. 11:6

² Luke 17:10; 2 Tim. 4:7-8

Lord's Day 24

Q&A 62

**Q. Why can't our good works
be our righteousness before God,
or at least help make us right with God?**

A. Because the righteousness
which can pass God's judgment
must be entirely perfect
and must in every way measure up to the divine law.¹
**But even our best works in this life
are imperfect
and stained with sin.²**

¹ Rom. 3:20; Gal. 3:10 (Deut. 27:26)

² Isa. 64:6

Q&A 63

**Q. How can our good works
be said to merit nothing
if God rewards them
in this life and the next?¹**

A. This reward is not earned;
it is a gift of grace.²

¹ Matt. 5:12; Heb. 11:6

² Luke 17:10; 2 Tim. 4:7-8

Q&A 64

Q. But doesn't this teaching make people indifferent and wicked?

A. No.

It is impossible for those grafted into Christ by true faith not to produce fruits of gratitude.¹

¹ Luke 6:43-45; John 15:5

Part II: The Sacraments
Lord's Day 25

Q&A 65

Q. It is by faith alone that we share in Christ and all his blessings: where then does that faith come from?

A. The Holy Spirit produces it in our hearts¹ by the preaching of the holy gospel,² and confirms it through our use of the holy sacraments.³

¹ John 3:5; 1 Cor. 2:10-14; Eph. 2:8

² Rom. 10:17; 1 Pet. 1:23-25

³ Matt. 28:19-20; 1 Cor. 10:16

Q&A 64

Q. But doesn't this teaching make people indifferent and wicked?

A. No,

for it is impossible for those grafted into Christ **through** true faith not to produce fruits of gratitude.¹

¹ Luke 6:43-45; John 15:5

Part II: The Sacraments
Lord's Day 25

Q&A 65

Q. It is **through faith alone that we share in Christ and all his benefits: where then does that faith come from?**

A. The Holy Spirit produces it in our hearts¹ by the preaching of the holy gospel,² and confirms **it by the** use of the holy sacraments.³

¹ John 3:5; 1 Cor. 2:10-14; Eph. 2:8

² Rom. 10:17; 1 Pet. 1:23-25

³ Matt. 28:19-20; 1 Cor. 10:16

Q&A 66

Q. What are sacraments?

A. Sacraments are holy signs and seals for us to see. They were instituted by God so that by our use of them he might make us understand more clearly the promise of the gospel, and might put his seal on that promise.¹

And this is God's gospel promise:
to forgive our sins and give us eternal life
by grace alone
because of Christ's one sacrifice
finished on the cross.²

¹ Gen. 17:11; Deut. 30:6; Rom. 4:11

² Matt. 26:27-28; Acts 2:38; Heb. 10:10

Q&A 67

Q. Are both the word and the sacraments then intended to focus our faith on the sacrifice of Jesus Christ on the cross as the only ground of our salvation?

A. Right!

In the gospel the Holy Spirit teaches us and through the holy sacraments he assures us

Q&A 66

Q. What are sacraments?

A. Sacraments are visible, holy signs and seals. They were instituted by God so that by our use of them he might make us understand more clearly the promise of the gospel, and seal that promise.¹

And this is God's gospel promise:
to grant us forgiveness of sins and eternal life
by grace
because of Christ's one sacrifice
accomplished on the cross.²

¹ Gen. 17:11; Deut. 30:6; Rom. 4:11

² Matt. 26:27-28; Acts 2:38; Heb. 10:10

Q&A 67

Q. Are both the word and the sacraments then intended to focus our faith on the sacrifice of Jesus Christ on the cross as the only ground of our salvation?

A. Yes!

In the gospel the Holy Spirit teaches us and by the holy sacraments confirms

that our entire salvation
rests on Christ's one sacrifice for us on the cross.¹

¹ Rom. 6:3; 1 Cor. 11:26; Gal. 3:27

Q&A 68

**Q. How many sacraments
did Christ institute in the New Testament?**

A. Two: baptism and the Lord's Supper.¹

¹ Matt. 28:19-20; 1 Cor. 11:23-26

Part II: The Sacraments: Baptism

Lord's Day 26
Baptism

Q&A 69

**Q. How does baptism
remind you and assure you
that Christ's one sacrifice on the cross
is for you personally?**

A. In this way:
Christ instituted this outward washing¹
and with it gave the promise that,
as surely as water washes away the dirt from the body,
so certainly his blood and his Spirit

that our entire salvation
rests on Christ's one sacrifice for us on the cross.¹

¹ Rom. 6:3; 1 Cor. 11:26; Gal. 3:27

Q&A 68

**Q. How many sacraments
did Christ institute in the New Testament?**

A. Two: baptism and the **holy** Supper.¹

¹ Matt. 28:19-20; 1 Cor. 11:23-26

Part II: The Sacraments: Baptism

Lord's Day 26
Baptism

Q&A 69

**Q. How does holy baptism
remind and assure you
that Christ's one sacrifice on the cross
benefits you personally?**

A. In this way:
Christ instituted this outward washing¹
and by it promised,
as surely as water washes away the dirt from the body,
so certainly his blood and his Spirit

wash away my soul's impurity,
in other words, all my sins.²

¹ Acts 2:38

² Matt. 3:11; Rom. 6:3-10; 1 Pet. 3:21

Q&A 70

Q. What does it mean

to be washed with Christ's blood and Spirit?

- A. To be washed with Christ's blood means that God, by grace, has forgiven my sins because of Christ's blood poured out for me in his sacrifice on the cross.¹

To be washed with Christ's Spirit means that the Holy Spirit has renewed me and set me apart to be a member of Christ so that more and more I become dead to sin and increasingly live a holy and blameless life.²

¹ Zech. 13:1; Eph. 1:7-8; Heb. 12:24; 1 Pet. 1:2; Rev. 1:5

² Ezek. 36:25-27; John 3:5-8; Rom. 6:4; 1 Cor. 6:11; Col. 2:11-12

wash my soul's impurity,
that is, all my sins.²

¹ Acts 2:38

² Matt. 3:11; Rom. 6:3-10; 1 Pet. 3:21

Q&A 70

Q. What does it mean

to be washed with Christ's blood and Spirit?

- A. To be washed with Christ's blood means that God, by grace, has forgiven **our** sins because of Christ's blood poured out for us in his sacrifice on the cross.¹

To be washed with Christ's Spirit means that the Holy Spirit has **renewed and sanctified us to be members of Christ,** so that more and more **we** become dead to sin and live holy and blameless lives.²

¹ Zech. 13:1; Eph. 1:7-8; Heb. 12:24; 1 Pet. 1:2; Rev. 1:5

² Ezek. 36:25-27; John 3:5-8; Rom. 6:4; 1 Cor. 6:11; Col. 2:11-12

Q&A 71

Q. Where does Christ promise that we are washed with his blood and Spirit as surely as we are washed with the water of baptism?

A. In the institution of baptism where he says:

“Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.”¹

“Whoever believes and is baptized will be saved, but whoever does not believe will be condemned.”^{2*}

This promise is repeated when Scripture calls baptism the washing of rebirth³ and the washing away of sins.⁴

¹ Matt. 28:19

² Mark 16:16

³ Tit. 3:5

⁴ Acts 22:16

*Earlier and better manuscripts of Mark 16 omit the words “Whoever believes and is baptized . . . condemned.”

Q&A 71

Q. Where does Christ promise that we are washed with his blood and Spirit as surely as we are washed with the water of baptism?

A. In the institution of baptism, where he says:

“Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.”¹

“The one who believes and is baptized will be saved; but the one who does not believe will be condemned.”²

This promise is repeated when Scripture calls baptism “the water of rebirth”³ and the washing away of sins.⁴

¹ Matt. 28:19

² Mark 16:16

³ Tit. 3:5

⁴ Acts 22:16

Lord's Day 27

Q&A 72

Q. Does this outward washing with water itself wash away sins?A. No, only Jesus Christ's blood and the Holy Spirit cleanse us from all sins.¹¹ Matt. 3:11; 1 Pet. 3:21; 1 John 1:7

Q&A 73

Q. Why then does the Holy Spirit call baptism the washing of rebirth and the washing away of sins?

A. God has good reason for these words.

He wants to teach us that
the blood and Spirit of Christ wash away our sins
just as water washes away dirt from our bodies.¹

But more important,
he wants to assure us, by this divine pledge and sign,
that the washing away of our sins spiritually
is as real as physical washing with water.²

¹ 1 Cor. 6:11; Rev. 1:5; 7:14² Acts 2:38; Rom. 6:3-4; Gal. 3:27**Lord's Day 27**

Q&A 72

Q. Does this outward washing with water itself wash away sins?A. No, only Jesus Christ's blood and the Holy Spirit cleanse us from all sins.¹¹ Matt. 3:11; 1 Pet. 3:21; 1 John 1:7

Q&A 73

Q. Why then does the Holy Spirit call baptism the washing of rebirth and the washing away of sins?

A. God has good reason for these words.

First, God wants to teach us that
the blood and Spirit of Christ take away our sins
just as water removes dirt from **the body**.¹

But more important,
God wants to assure us, by this divine pledge and sign,
**that we are as truly washed of our sins by the Spirit
as our bodies are washed with water.**²

¹ 1 Cor. 6:11; Rev. 1:5; 7:14² Acts 2:38; Rom. 6:3-4; Gal. 3:27

Q&A 74

Q. Should infants, too, be baptized?

A. Yes.

Infants as well as adults
are in God's covenant and are his people.¹
They, no less than adults, are promised
the forgiveness of sin through Christ's blood
and the Holy Spirit who produces faith.²

Therefore, by baptism, the mark of the covenant,
infants should be received into the Christian church
and should be distinguished from the children
of unbelievers.³

This was done in the Old Testament by circumcision,⁴
which was replaced in the New Testament by baptism.⁵

¹ Gen. 17:7; Matt. 19:14

² Isa. 44:1-3; Acts 2:38-39; 16:31

³ Acts 10:47; 1 Cor. 7:14

⁴ Gen. 17:9-14

⁵ Col. 2:11-13

Q&A 74

Q. Should infants also be baptized?

A. Yes,

they, as well as adults,
are included in God's covenant and people,¹
and they, no less than adults, are promised
deliverance from sin through Christ's blood
and the Holy Spirit who produces faith.²

Therefore, by baptism, the **sign** of the covenant,
they too should be incorporated into the Christian church
and distinguished from the children
of unbelievers.³

This was done in the Old Testament by circumcision,⁴
which was replaced in the New Testament by baptism.⁵

¹ Gen. 17:7; Matt. 19:14

² Isa. 44:1-3; Acts 2:38-39; 16:31

³ Acts 10:47; 1 Cor. 7:14

⁴ Gen. 17:9-14

⁵ Col. 2:11-13

Part II: The Sacraments: The Lord's Supper
Lord's Day 28
The Lord's Supper

Q&A 75

Q. How does the Lord's Supper remind you and assure you that you share in Christ's one sacrifice on the cross and in all his gifts?

A. In this way:
Christ has commanded me and all believers to eat this broken bread and to drink this cup. With this command he gave this promise:¹

First,
as surely as I see with my eyes
the bread of the Lord broken for me
and the cup given to me,
so surely
his body was offered and broken for me
and his blood poured out for me
on the cross.

Part II: The Sacraments: The Holy Supper of Our Lord
Lord's Day 28
The Holy Supper of Our Lord

Q&A 75

Q. How does the Lord's Supper remind and assure you that you share in Christ's one sacrifice on the cross and in all his benefits?

A. In this way:
Christ has commanded me and all believers to eat this broken bread and to drink this cup in remembrance of him. He has thereby promised:¹

First,
as surely as I see with my eyes
the bread of the Lord broken for me
and the cup shared with me,
so surely
his body was offered and broken for me
and his blood poured out for me
on the cross.

Second,
as surely as
I receive from the hand of the one who serves,
and taste with my mouth
the bread and cup of the Lord,
given me as sure signs of Christ's body and blood,
so surely
he nourishes and refreshes my soul for eternal life
with his crucified body and poured-out blood.

¹ Matt. 26:26-28; Mark 14:22-24; Luke 22:19-20; 1 Cor. 11:23-25

Q&A 76

**Q. What does it mean
to eat the crucified body of Christ
and to drink his poured-out blood?**

A. It means
to accept with a believing heart
the entire suffering and death of Christ
and by believing
to receive forgiveness of sins and eternal life.¹

Second,
as surely as
I receive from the hand of the one who serves,
and taste with my mouth
the bread and cup of the Lord,
given me as sure signs of Christ's body and blood,
so surely
he nourishes and refreshes my soul for eternal life
with his crucified body and poured-out blood.

¹ Matt. 26:26-28; Mark 14:22-24; Luke 22:19-20; 1 Cor. 11:23-25

Q&A 76

**Q. What does it mean
to eat the crucified body of Christ
and to drink his poured-out blood?**

A. First, it means
to accept with a believing heart
the entire suffering and death of Christ
and thereby
to receive forgiveness of sins and eternal life.¹

But it means more.

Through the Holy Spirit, who lives both in Christ and in us, we are united more and more to Christ's blessed body.² And so, although he is in heaven³ and we are on earth, we are flesh of his flesh and bone of his bone.⁴ And we forever live on and are governed by one Spirit, as members of our body are by one soul.⁵

¹ John 6:35, 40, 50-54

² John 6:55-56; 1 Cor. 12:13

³ Acts 1:9-11; 1 Cor. 11:26; Col. 3:1

⁴ 1 Cor. 6:15-17; Eph. 5:29-30; 1 John 4:13

⁵ John 6:56-58; 15:1-6; Eph. 4:15-16; 1 John 3:24

Q&A 77

**Q. Where does Christ promise
to nourish and refresh believers
with his body and blood
as surely as
they eat this broken bread
and drink this cup?**

A. In the institution of the Lord's Supper:

"The Lord Jesus, on the night he was betrayed, took bread, and when he had given thanks, he broke it and said,
'This is my body, which is for you;
do this in remembrance of me.'

In addition, it means

**to be united more and more to Christ's blessed body²
through the Holy Spirit, who lives both in Christ and in us.**
And so, although he is in heaven³ and we are on earth, we are flesh of his flesh and bone of his bone.⁴ And we forever live on and are governed by one Spirit, as the members of our body are by one soul.⁵

¹ John 6:35, 40, 50-54

² John 6:55-56; 1 Cor. 12:13

³ Acts 1:9-11; 1 Cor. 11:26; Col. 3:1

⁴ 1 Cor. 6:15-17; Eph. 5:29-30; 1 John 4:13

⁵ John 6:56-58; 15:1-6; Eph. 4:15-16; 1 John 3:24

Q&A 77

**Q. Where does Christ promise
to nourish and refresh believers
with his body and blood
as surely as
they eat this broken bread
and drink this cup?**

A. In the institution of the Lord's Supper:

"**that the Lord Jesus** on the night when he was betrayed, took a loaf of bread, and when he had given thanks, he broke it and said,
'This is my body that is broken* for you.
Do this in remembrance of me.'

In the same way, after supper he took the cup, saying,
 'This cup is the new covenant in my blood;
 do this, whenever you drink it,
 in remembrance of me.'
 For whenever you eat this bread and drink this cup,
 you proclaim the Lord's death
 until he comes."¹

This promise is repeated by Paul in these words:

"Is not the cup of thanksgiving for which we give thanks
 a participation in the blood of Christ?
 And is not the bread that we break
 a participation in the body of Christ?
 Because there is one loaf, we, who are many, are one body,
 for we all partake of the one loaf."²

¹ 1 Cor. 11:23-26

² 1 Cor. 10:16-17

In the same way he took the cup also, after supper, saying,
 'This cup is the new covenant in my blood;
 do this, as often as you drink it,
 in remembrance of me.'
 For as often as you eat this bread and drink the cup,
 you proclaim the Lord's death
 until he comes."¹

This promise is repeated by Paul in these words:

"The cup of blessing that we bless,
 is it not a sharing in the blood of Christ?
 The bread that we break,
 is it not a sharing in the body of Christ?
 Because there is one loaf, we who are many are one body,
 for we all partake of the one bread."²

¹ 1 Cor. 11:23-26

² 1 Cor. 10:16-17

*The word "broken" does not appear in the best text traditions, although it was present in original German of the Heidelberg Catechism

Lord's Day 29

Q&A 78

Q. Are the bread and wine changed into the real body and blood of Christ?

A. No.

Just as the water of baptism is not changed into Christ's blood and does not itself wash away sins but is simply God's sign and assurance,¹ so too the bread of the Lord's Supper is not changed into the actual body of Christ² even though it is called the body of Christ³ in keeping with the nature and language of sacraments.⁴

¹ Eph. 5:26; Tit. 3:5

² Matt. 26:26-29

³ 1 Cor. 10:16-17; 11:26-28

⁴ Gen. 17:10-11; Ex. 12:11, 13; 1 Cor. 10:1-4

Q&A 79

Q. Why then does Christ call the bread his body and the cup his blood, or the new covenant in his blood? (Paul uses the words, a participation in Christ's body and blood.)

Lord's Day 29

Q&A 78

Q. Are the bread and wine changed into the real body and blood of Christ?

A. No.

Just as the water of baptism is not changed into Christ's blood and does not itself wash away sins but is simply a divine sign and assurance¹ of it, so too the **sacred** bread of the Lord's Supper is not changed into the actual body of Christ,² even though it is called the body of Christ³ in keeping with the nature and language of sacraments.⁴

¹ Eph. 5:26; Tit. 3:5

² Matt. 26:26-29

³ 1 Cor. 10:16-17; 11:26-28

⁴ Gen. 17:10-11; Ex. 12:11, 13; 1 Cor. 10:1-4

Q&A 79

Q. Why then does Christ call the bread his body and the cup his blood, or the new covenant in his blood? **And why does Paul use the words, a participation in Christ's body and blood?**

A. Christ has good reason for these words.
He wants to teach us that
as bread and wine nourish our temporal life,
so too his crucified body and poured-out blood
truly nourish our souls for eternal life.¹

But more important,
he wants to assure us, by this visible sign and pledge,
that we, through the Holy Spirit's work,
share in his true body and blood
as surely as our mouths
receive these holy signs in his remembrance,²
and that all of his suffering and obedience
are as definitely ours
as if we personally
had suffered and paid for our sins.³

¹ John 6:51, 55

² 1 Cor. 10:16-17; 11:26

³ Rom. 6:5-11

A. Christ has good reason for these words.
First, he wants to teach us that
just as bread and wine nourish the temporal life,
so too his crucified body and poured-out blood
are the true food and drink of our souls for eternal life.¹

But more important,
he wants to assure us, by this visible sign and pledge,
that we, through the Holy Spirit's work,
share in his true body and blood
as surely as our mouths
receive these holy signs in his remembrance,²
and that all of his suffering and obedience
are as definitely ours
as if we personally
had suffered and **made satisfaction** for our sins.³

¹ John 6:51, 55

² 1 Cor. 10:16-17; 11:26

³ Rom. 6:5-11

Lord's Day 30

Q&A 80*

Q. How does the Lord's Supper differ from the Roman Catholic Mass?

A. The Lord's Supper declares to us that our sins have been completely forgiven through the one sacrifice of Jesus Christ which he himself finished on the cross once for all.¹ It also declares to us that the Holy Spirit grafts us into Christ,² who with his very body is now in heaven at the right hand of the Father³ where he wants us to worship him.⁴

[But the Mass teaches that the living and the dead do not have their sins forgiven through the suffering of Christ unless Christ is still offered for them daily by the priests.

It also teaches that Christ is bodily present in the form of bread and wine where Christ is therefore to be worshiped.

Thus the Mass is basically nothing but a denial

Lord's Day 30

Q&A 80*

Q. How does the Lord's Supper differ from the Roman Catholic Mass?

A. The Lord's Supper declares to us that we have complete forgiveness of all our sins through the one and only sacrifice of Jesus Christ, which he himself accomplished on the cross once for all.¹ It also declares to us that the Holy Spirit grafts us into Christ,² who with his true body is now in heaven at the right hand of the Father³ where he wants us to worship him.⁴

But the Mass teaches that the living and the dead do not have their sins forgiven through the suffering of Christ unless Christ is still offered for them daily by the priests.

It also teaches that Christ is bodily present under the form of bread and wine where Christ is therefore to be worshiped.

Thus the Mass is basically nothing but a denial

of the one sacrifice and suffering of Jesus Christ and a condemnable idolatry.]

¹ John 19:30; Heb. 7:27; 9:12, 25-26; 10:10-18

² 1 Cor. 6:17; 10:16-17

³ Acts 7:55-56; Heb. 1:3; 8:1

⁴ Matt. 6:20-21; John 4:21-24; Phil. 3:20; Col. 3:1-3

*Footnote:

Q&A 80 was altogether absent from the first German edition of the Heidelberg Catechism (January 1563) but appeared in a shorter form in the second German edition (March 1563). The translation above is of the expanded text of the third German edition (ca. April 1563). Its strong tone reflects the setting in which the Catechism was written.

In response to a mandate from Synod 1998, the Christian Reformed Church's Interchurch Relations Committee conducted a study of Q. and A. 80 and the Roman Catholic Mass. Based on this study, Synod 2004 declared that "Q. and A. 80 can no longer be held in its current form as part of our confession." Synod 2006 directed that Q. and A. 80 remain in the CRC's text of the Heidelberg Catechism but that the last three paragraphs be placed in brackets to indicate that they do not accurately reflect the official teaching and practice of today's Roman Catholic Church and are no longer confessionally binding on members of the CRC.

Q&A 81

Q. Who are to come to the Lord's table?

A. Those who are displeased with themselves because of their sins, but who nevertheless trust that their sins are pardoned

of the one and only sacrifice and suffering of Jesus Christ and a condemnable idolatry.

¹ John 19:30; Heb. 7:27; 9:12, 25-26; 10:10-18

² 1 Cor. 6:17; 10:16-17

³ Acts 7:55-56; Heb. 1:3; 8:1

⁴ Matt. 6:20-21; John 4:21-24; Phil. 3:20; Col. 3:1-3

*Q&A 80 was altogether absent from the first edition of the catechism but was present in a shorter form in the second edition. The translation here given is of the expanded text of the third edition.

Q&A 81

Q. Who should come to the Lord's table?

A. Those who are displeased with themselves because of their sins, but who nevertheless trust that their sins are pardoned

and that their continuing weakness is covered by the suffering and death of Christ, and who also desire more and more to strengthen their faith and to lead a better life.

Hypocrites and those who are unrepentant, however, eat and drink judgment on themselves.¹

¹ 1 Cor. 10:19-22; 11:26-32

Q&A 82

Q. Are those to be admitted to the Lord's Supper who show by what they say and do that they are unbelieving and ungodly?

A. No, that would dishonor God's covenant and bring down God's anger upon the entire congregation.¹ Therefore, according to the instruction of Christ and his apostles, the Christian church is duty-bound to exclude such people, by the official use of the keys of the kingdom, until they reform their lives.

¹ 1 Cor. 11:17-32; Ps. 50:14-16; Isa. 1:11-17

and that their **remaining** weakness is covered by the suffering and death of Christ, and who also desire more and more to strengthen their faith and to lead a better life.

Hypocrites and those who are unrepentant, however, eat and drink judgment on themselves.¹

¹ 1 Cor. 10:19-22; 11:26-32

Q&A 82

Q. Should those be admitted to the Lord's Supper who show by what they profess and how they live that they are unbelieving and ungodly?

A. No, that would dishonor God's covenant and bring down God's anger upon the entire congregation.¹ Therefore, according to the instruction of Christ and his apostles, the Christian church is duty-bound to exclude such people, by the official use of the keys of the kingdom, until they reform their lives.

¹ 1 Cor. 11:17-32; Ps. 50:14-16; Isa. 1:11-17

Lord's Day 31

Q&A 83

Q. What are the keys of the kingdom?

- A. The preaching of the holy gospel and Christian discipline toward repentance. Both preaching and discipline open the kingdom of heaven to believers and close it to unbelievers.¹

¹ Matt. 16:19; John 20:22-23

Q&A 84

Q. How does preaching the gospel open and close the kingdom of heaven?

- A. According to the command of Christ:

The kingdom of heaven is opened by proclaiming and publicly declaring to all believers, each and every one, that, as often as they accept the gospel promise in true faith, God, because of what Christ has done, truly forgives all their sins.

The kingdom of heaven is closed, however, by proclaiming and publicly declaring to unbelievers and hypocrites that, as long as they do not repent, the anger of God and eternal condemnation rest on them.

Lord's Day 31

Q&A 83

Q. What are the keys of the kingdom?

- A. The preaching of the holy gospel and Christian discipline toward repentance. By these two means, the kingdom of heaven is opened to believers and closed to unbelievers.¹

¹ Matt. 16:19; John 20:22-23

Q&A 84

Q. How is the kingdom of heaven opened and closed by the preaching of the holy gospel?

- A. According to the command of Christ, it is opened by proclaiming and publicly declaring to everyone who believes, that, as often as they accept the gospel promise in true faith, God, because of Christ's merit, truly forgives all their sins.

The kingdom of heaven is closed, however, by proclaiming and publicly declaring to unbelievers and hypocrites that, as long as they do not repent, the wrath of God and eternal condemnation rest on them.

God's judgment, both in this life and in the life to come, is based on this gospel testimony.¹

¹ Matt. 16:19; John 3:31-36; 20:21-23

Q&A 85

Q. How is the kingdom of heaven closed and opened by Christian discipline?

A. According to the command of Christ:

Those who, though called Christians, profess unchristian teachings or live unchristian lives, and after repeated and loving counsel refuse to abandon their errors and wickedness, and after being reported to the church, that is, to its officers, fail to respond also to their admonition—such persons the officers exclude from the Christian fellowship by withholding the sacraments from them, and God himself excludes them from the kingdom of Christ.¹

Such persons, when promising and demonstrating genuine reform, are received again as members of Christ and of his church.²

¹ Matt. 18:15-20; 1 Cor. 5:3-5, 11-13; 2 Thess. 3:14-15

² Luke 15:20-24; 2 Cor. 2:6-11

God's judgment, both in this life and in the life to come, is based on this gospel testimony.¹

¹ Matt. 16:19; John 3:31-36; 20:21-23

Q&A 85

Q. How is the kingdom of heaven closed and opened by Christian discipline?

A. Christ commands that

those who bear the name Christian but profess unchristian teachings or lead unchristian lives should be admonished.

If, after repeated personal and loving admonitions, they do not give up their errors or evil ways, they should be reported to the church, that is, to those ordained by the church for that purpose. If they fail to respond also to the church's admonitions, the church excludes them from the congregation by withholding the sacraments from them, and God excludes them from the kingdom of Christ.¹

However, if they promise and demonstrate genuine reform, they are received again as members of Christ and the church.²

¹ Matt. 18:15-20; 1 Cor. 5:3-5, 11-13; 2 Thess. 3:14-15

² Luke 15:20-24; 2 Cor. 2:6-11

Part III: Gratitude
 Lord's Day 32

Q&A 86

**Q. We have been delivered
 from our misery
 by God's grace alone through Christ
 and not because we have earned it:
 why then must we still do good?**

A. To be sure, Christ has redeemed us by his blood.

But we do good because

Christ by his Spirit is also renewing us to be like himself,
 so that in all our living
 we may show that we are thankful to God
 for all he has done for us,¹
 and so that he may be praised through us.²

And we do good

so that we may be assured of our faith by its fruits,³
 and so that by our godly living
 our neighbors may be won over to Christ.⁴

¹ Rom. 6:13; 12:1-2; 1 Pet. 2:5-10

² Matt. 5:16; 1 Cor. 6:19-20

³ Matt. 7:17-18; Gal. 5:22-24; 2 Pet. 1:10-11

⁴ Matt. 5:14-16; Rom. 14:17-19; 1 Pet. 2:12; 3:1-2

Part III: Gratitude
 Lord's Day 32

Q&A 86

**Q. Since, then, we have been delivered
 from our misery
 by grace through Christ
 without any merit of our own,
 why must we do good works?**

A. Because Christ,

having redeemed us by his blood,
 is also renewing us by his Spirit into his image,
 so that with our whole lives
 we may show that we are thankful to God
 for his benefits,¹
 so that he may be praised through us,²
 so that we may be assured of our faith by its fruits,³
 and so that by our godly living
 our neighbors may be won over to Christ.⁴

¹ Rom. 6:13; 12:1-2; 1 Pet. 2:5-10

² Matt. 5:16; 1 Cor. 6:19-20

³ Matt. 7:17-18; Gal. 5:22-24; 2 Pet. 1:10-11

⁴ Matt. 5:14-16; Rom. 14:17-19; 1 Pet. 2:12; 3:1-2

Q&A 87

Q. Can those be saved who do not turn to God from their ungrateful and impenitent ways?

A. By no means. Scripture tells us that no unchaste person, no idolater, adulterer, thief, no covetous person, no drunkard, slanderer, robber, or the like is going to inherit the kingdom of God.¹

¹ 1 Cor. 6:9-10; Gal. 5:19-21; Eph. 5:1-20; 1 John 3:14

Q&A 87

Q. Can those be saved who do not turn to God from their ungrateful and unrepentant ways?

A. By no means. Scripture tells us that no unchaste person, no idolater, adulterer, thief, no covetous person, no drunkard, slanderer, robber, or the like will inherit the kingdom of God.¹

¹ 1 Cor. 6:9-10; Gal. 5:19-21; Eph. 5:1-20; 1 John 3:14

Lord's Day 33

Q&A 88

Q. What is involved in genuine repentance or conversion?

A. Two things: the dying-away of the old self, and the coming-to-life of the new.¹

¹ Rom. 6:1-11; 2 Cor. 5:17; Eph. 4:22-24; Col. 3:5-10

Lord's Day 33

Q&A 88

Q. What is involved in genuine repentance or conversion?

A. Two things: the dying-away of the old self, and the rising-to-life of the new.¹

¹ Rom. 6:1-11; 2 Cor. 5:17; Eph. 4:22-24; Col. 3:5-10

Q&A 89

Q. What is the dying-away of the old self?

A. It is to be genuinely sorry for sin,
to hate it more and more,
and to run away from it.¹

¹ Ps. 51:3-4, 17; Joel 2:12-13; Rom. 8:12-13; 2 Cor. 7:10

Q&A 90

Q. What is the coming-to-life of the new self?

A. It is wholehearted joy in God through Christ¹
and a delight to do every kind of good
as God wants us to.²

¹ Ps. 51:8, 12; Isa.57:15; Rom. 5:1; 14:17

² Rom. 6:10-11; Gal. 2:20

Q&A 91

Q. What do we do that is good?

A. Only that which
arises out of true faith,¹
conforms to God's law,²
and is done for his glory;³
and not that which is based
on what we think is right
or on established human tradition.⁴

¹ John 15:5; Heb. 11:6

² Lev. 18:4; 1 Sam. 15:22; Eph. 2:10

³ 1 Cor. 10:31

⁴ Deut. 12:32; Isa. 29:13; Ezek. 20:18-19; Matt. 15:7-9

Q&A 89

Q. What is the dying-away of the old self?

A. It is to be genuinely sorry for sin
and to more and more hate
and run away from it.¹

¹ Ps. 51:3-4, 17; Joel 2:12-13; Rom. 8:12-13; 2 Cor. 7:10

Q&A 90

Q. What is the rising-to-life of the new self?

A. It is wholehearted joy in God through Christ¹
and a love and delight to live
according to the will of God in all good works.²

¹ Ps. 51:8, 12; Isa.57:15; Rom. 5:1; 14:17

² Rom. 6:10-11; Gal. 2:20

Q&A 91

Q. What are good works?

A. Only those which
are done out of true faith,¹
conform to God's law,²
and are done for God's glory;³
and not those based
on our own opinion
or human tradition.⁴

¹ John 15:5; Heb. 11:6

² Lev. 18:4; 1 Sam. 15:22; Eph. 2:10

³ 1 Cor. 10:31

⁴ Deut. 12:32; Isa. 29:13; Ezek. 20:18-19; Matt. 15:7-9

Part III: Gratitude: The Ten Commandments
 Lord's Day 34

Q&A 92

Q. What does the Lord say in his law?

A. God spoke all these words:

“The First Commandment”

I am the Lord your God,
 who brought you out of Egypt,
 out of the land of slavery.
 You shall have no other gods before me.

“The Second Commandment”

You shall not make for yourself an idol
 in the form of anything in heaven above
 or on the earth beneath
 or in the waters below.
 You shall not bow down to them or worship them;
 for I, the Lord your God, am a jealous God,
 punishing the children for the sin of the fathers
 to the third and fourth generation
 of those who hate me,
 but showing love to a thousand generations of those
 who love me and keep my commandments.

Part III: Gratitude: The Ten Commandments
 Lord's Day 34

Q&A 92

Q. What is God's law?

A. God spoke all these words:

THE FIRST COMMANDMENT

“I am the Lord your God,
 who brought you out of the land of Egypt,
 out of the house of slavery;
 you shall have no other gods before me.”

THE SECOND COMMANDMENT

“You shall not make for yourself an idol,
 whether in form of anything that is in heaven above,
 or that is on the earth beneath,
 or that is in the water under the earth.
 You shall not bow down to them or worship them;
 for I the Lord your God am a jealous God,
 punishing children for the iniquity of parents,
 to the third and fourth generation
 of those who reject me,
 but showing love to the thousandth generation of those
 who love me and keep my commandments.”

“The Third Commandment”

You shall not misuse the name of the Lord your God,
for the Lord will not hold anyone guiltless
who misuses his name.

“The Fourth Commandment”

Remember the Sabbath day by keeping it holy.
Six days you shall labor and do all your work,
but the seventh day is a Sabbath to the Lord your God.
On it you shall not do any work,
neither you, nor your son or daughter,
nor your manservant or maidservant,
nor your animals,
nor the alien within your gates.
For in six days the Lord made
the heavens and the earth, the sea,
and all that is in them,
but he rested on the seventh day.
Therefore the Lord blessed the Sabbath day
and made it holy.

“The Fifth Commandment”

Honor your father and your mother,
so that you may live long
in the land the Lord your God is giving you.

“The Sixth Commandment”

You shall not murder.

THE THIRD COMMANDMENT

“You shall not make wrongful use of the name of the
Lord your God,
for the Lord will not acquit anyone
who misuses his name.”

THE FOURTH COMMANDMENT

“Remember the Sabbath day and keep it holy.
Six days you shall labor and do all your work,
But the seventh day is a Sabbath to the Lord your God;
you shall not do any work—
you, your son or your daughter,
your male or female slave,
your livestock,
or the alien resident in your towns.
For in six days the Lord made
the heaven and earth, the sea,
and all that is in them,
but rested the seventh day;
therefore the Lord blessed the Sabbath day
and consecrated it.”

THE FIFTH COMMANDMENT

“Honor your father and your mother,
so that your days may be long
in the land that the Lord your God is giving to you.”

THE SIXTH COMMANDMENT

“You shall not murder.”

“The Seventh Commandment”
You shall not commit adultery.

“The Eighth Commandment”
You shall not steal.

“The Ninth Commandment”
You shall not give false testimony
against your neighbor.

“The Tenth Commandment”
You shall not covet your neighbor’s house.
You shall not covet your neighbor’s wife,
or his manservant or maidservant,
his ox or donkey,
or anything that belongs to your neighbor.¹

¹ Ex. 20:1-17; Deut. 5:6-21

Q&A 93

Q. How are these commandments divided?

A. Into two tables.

The first has four commandments,
teaching us what our relation to God should be.

The second has six commandments,
teaching us what we owe our neighbor.¹

¹ Matt. 22:37-39

THE SEVENTH COMMANDMENT

“You shall not commit adultery.”

THE EIGHTH COMMANDMENT

“You shall not steal.”

THE NINTH COMMANDMENT

“You shall not bear false witness
against your neighbor.”

THE TENTH COMMANDMENT

“You shall not covet your neighbor’s house;
you shall not covet your neighbor’s wife,
or male or female slave,
or ox, or donkey,
or anything that belongs to your neighbor.”¹

¹ Ex. 20:1-17; Deut. 5:6-21

Q&A 93

Q. How are these commandments divided?

A. Into two tables.

The first has four commandments,
teaching us how we ought to live in relation to God.

The second has six commandments,
teaching us what we owe our neighbor.¹

¹ Matt. 22:37-39

Q&A 94

**Q. What does the Lord require
in the first commandment?**

- A. That I, not wanting to endanger my very salvation,
avoid and shun
all idolatry,¹ magic, superstitious rites,²
and prayer to saints or to other creatures.³

That I sincerely acknowledge the only true God,⁴
trust him alone,⁵
look to him for every good thing⁶
humbly⁷ and patiently,⁸
love him,⁹ fear him,¹⁰ and honor him¹¹
with all my heart.

In short,
that I give up anything
rather than go against his will in any way.¹²

¹ 1 Cor. 6:9-10; 10:5-14; 1 John 5:21

² Lev. 19:31; Deut. 18:9-12

³ Matt. 4:10; Rev. 19:10; 22:8-9

⁴ John 17:3

⁵ Jer. 17:5, 7

⁶ Ps. 104:27-28; James 1:17

⁷ 1 Pet. 5:5-6

⁸ Col. 1:11; Heb. 10:36

⁹ Matt. 22:37 (Deut. 6:5)

¹⁰ Prov. 9:10; 1 Pet. 1:17

Q&A 94

**Q. What does the Lord require
in the first commandment?**

- A. That I, not wanting to endanger my **own** salvation,
avoid and shun
all idolatry,¹ **sorcery**, superstitious rites,²
and prayer to saints or to other creatures.³

That I **rightly know** the only true God,⁴
trust him alone,⁵
and look to God for every good thing⁶
humbly⁷ and patiently,⁸
and love,⁹ fear,¹⁰ and honor¹¹ **God**
with all my heart.

In short,
that I give up anything
rather than go against God's will in any way.¹²

¹ 1 Cor. 6:9-10; 10:5-14; 1 John 5:21

² Lev. 19:31; Deut. 18:9-12

³ Matt. 4:10; Rev. 19:10; 22:8-9

⁴ John 17:3

⁵ Jer. 17:5, 7

⁶ Ps. 104:27-28; James 1:17

⁷ 1 Pet. 5:5-6

⁸ Col. 1:11; Heb. 10:36

⁹ Matt. 22:37 (Deut. 6:5)

¹⁰ Prov. 9:10; 1 Pet. 1:17

¹¹ Matt. 4:10 (Deut. 6:13)

¹² Matt. 5:29-30; 10:37-39

Q&A 95

Q. What is idolatry?

A. Idolatry is

having or inventing something in which one trusts
in place of or alongside of the only true God,
who has revealed himself in his Word.^1

¹ 1 Chron. 16:26; Gal. 4:8-9; Eph. 5:5; Phil. 3:19

Lord's Day 35

Q&A 96

**Q. What is God's will for us
in the second commandment?**

A. That we in no way make any image of God¹
nor worship him in any other way
than he has commanded in his Word.²

¹ Deut. 4:15-19; Isa. 40:18-25; Acts 17:29; Rom. 1:22-23

² Lev. 10:1-7; 1 Sam. 15:22-23; John 4:23-24

¹¹ Matt. 4:10 (Deut. 6:13)

¹² Matt. 5:29-30; 10:37-39

Q&A 95

Q. What is idolatry?

A. Idolatry is

having or inventing something in which one trusts
in place of or alongside of the only true God,
who has revealed himself in the Word.^1

¹ 1 Chron. 16:26; Gal. 4:8-9; Eph. 5:5; Phil. 3:19

Lord's Day 35

Q&A 96

**Q. What is God's will
in the second commandment?**

A. That we in no way make any image of God¹
nor worship him in any other way
than has been commanded in God's Word.²

¹ Deut. 4:15-19; Isa. 40:18-25; Acts 17:29; Rom. 1:22-23

² Lev. 10:1-7; 1 Sam. 15:22-23; John 4:23-24

Q&A 97

Q. May we then not make any image at all?

A. God can not and may not be visibly portrayed in any way.

Although creatures may be portrayed, yet God forbids making or having such images if one's intention is to worship them or to serve God through them.¹

¹ Ex. 34:13-14, 17; 2 Kings 18:4-5

Q&A 98

Q. But may not images be permitted in the churches as teaching aids for the unlearned?

A. No, we shouldn't try to be wiser than God. He wants his people instructed by the living preaching of his Word—¹ not by idols that cannot even talk.²

¹ Rom. 10:14-15, 17; 2 Tim. 3:16-17; 2 Pet. 1:19

² Jer. 10:8; Hab. 2:18-20

Q&A 97

Q. May we then not make any image at all?

A. God can not and may not be visibly portrayed in any way.

Although creatures may be portrayed, yet God forbids making or having such images if one's intention is to worship them or to serve God through them.¹

¹ Ex. 34:13-14, 17; 2 Kings 18:4-5

Q&A 98

Q. But may not images be permitted in churches in place of books for the unlearned?

A. No, we should not try to be wiser than God. God wants the Christian community instructed by the living preaching of his Word—¹ not by idols that cannot even talk.²

¹ Rom. 10:14-15, 17; 2 Tim. 3:16-17; 2 Pet. 1:19

² Jer. 10:8; Hab. 2:18-20

Lord's Day 36

Q&A 99

**Q. What is God's will for us
in the third commandment?**

- A. That we neither blaspheme nor misuse the name of God
by cursing,¹ perjury,² or unnecessary oaths,³
nor share in such horrible sins
by being silent bystanders.⁴

In a word, it requires
that we use the holy name of God
only with reverence and awe,⁵
so that we may properly
confess him,⁶
pray to him,⁷
and praise him in everything we do and say.⁸

¹ Lev. 24:10-17² Lev. 19:12³ Matt. 5:37; James 5:12⁴ Lev. 5:1; Prov. 29:24⁵ Ps. 99:1-5; Jer. 4:2⁶ Matt. 10:32-33; Rom. 10:9-10⁷ Ps. 50:14-15; 1 Tim. 2:8⁸ Col. 3:17**Lord's Day 36**

Q&A 99

Q. What does the third commandment require?

- A. That we neither blaspheme nor misuse the name of God
by cursing,¹ perjury,² or unnecessary oaths,³
nor share in such horrible sins
by being silent bystanders.⁴

In a word, it requires
that we use the holy name of God
only with reverence and awe,⁵
so that we may properly
confess God,⁶
pray to God,⁷
and glorify God in all our words and works.⁸

¹ Lev. 24:10-17² Lev. 19:12³ Matt. 5:37; James 5:12⁴ Lev. 5:1; Prov. 29:24⁵ Ps. 99:1-5; Jer. 4:2⁶ Matt. 10:32-33; Rom. 10:9-10⁷ Ps. 50:14-15; 1 Tim. 2:8⁸ Col. 3:17

Q&A 100

Q. Is blasphemy of God's name by swearing and cursing really such serious sin that God is angry also with those who do not do all they can to help prevent it and forbid it?

A. Yes, indeed.¹

No sin is greater,
no sin makes God more angry
than blaspheming his name.

That is why he commanded the death penalty for it.²

¹ Lev. 5:1

² Lev. 24:10-17

Q&A 100

Q. Is blasphemy of God's holy name by swearing and cursing really such serious sin that God is angry also with those who do not do all they can to help prevent and forbid it?

A. Yes, indeed;¹

for no sin is greater
or provokes God's wrath
more than blaspheming his name.

That is why God commanded it to be punished with death.²

¹ Lev. 5:1

² Lev. 24:10-17

Lord's Day 37

Q&A 101

Q. But may we swear an oath in God's name if we do it reverently?

A. Yes, when the government demands it,
or when necessity requires it,
in order to maintain and promote truth and
trustworthiness
for God's glory and our neighbor's good.

Lord's Day 37

Q&A 101

Q. But may we swear an oath in God's name if we do it reverently?

A. Yes, when the government demands it,
or when necessity requires it,
in order to maintain and promote truth and
trustworthiness
for God's glory and our neighbor's good.

Such oaths are approved in God's Word¹
and were rightly used by Old and New Testament
believers.²

¹ Deut. 6:13; 10:20; Jer. 4:1-2; Heb. 6:16

² Gen. 21:24; Josh. 9:15; 1 Kings 1:29-30; Rom. 1:9; 2 Cor. 1:23

Q&A 102

Q. May we swear by saints or other creatures?

A. No.

A legitimate oath means calling upon God
as the one who knows my heart
to witness to my truthfulness
and to punish me if I swear falsely.¹
No creature is worthy of such honor.²

¹ Rom. 9:1; 2 Cor. 1:23

² Matt. 5:34-37; 23:16-22; James 5:12

Such oaths are approved in God's Word¹
and were rightly used by the people of God in the
Old and New Testaments.²

¹ Deut. 6:13; 10:20; Jer. 4:1-2; Heb. 6:16

² Gen. 21:24; Josh. 9:15; 1 Kings 1:29-30; Rom. 1:9; 2 Cor. 1:23

Q&A 102

Q. May we **also swear by saints or other creatures?**

A. No.

A legitimate oath means calling upon God
as the only one who knows my heart
to witness to my truthfulness
and to punish me if I swear falsely.¹
No creature is worthy of such honor.²

¹ Rom. 9:1; 2 Cor. 1:23

² Matt. 5:34-37; 23:16-22; James 5:12

Lord's Day 38

Q&A 103

Q. What is God's will for you in the fourth commandment?

A. First,

that the gospel ministry and education for it be maintained,¹
 and that, especially on the festive day of rest, I regularly attend the assembly of God's people² to learn what God's Word teaches,³ to participate in the sacraments,⁴ to pray to God publicly,⁵ and to bring Christian offerings for the poor.⁶

Second,

that every day of my life I rest from my evil ways, let the Lord work in me through his Spirit, and so begin already in this life the eternal Sabbath.⁷

¹ Deut. 6:4-9, 20-25; 1 Cor. 9:13-14; 2 Tim. 2:2; 3:13-17; Tit. 1:5² Deut. 12:5-12; Ps. 40:9-10; 68:26; Acts 2:42-47; Heb. 10:23-25³ Rom. 10:14-17; 1 Cor. 14:31-32; 1 Tim. 4:13⁴ 1 Cor. 11:23-25⁵ Col. 3:16; 1 Tim. 2:1⁶ Ps. 50:14; 1 Cor. 16:2; 2 Cor. 8 & 9⁷ Isa. 66:23; Heb. 4:9-11**Lord's Day 38**

Q&A 103

Q. What is God's will in the fourth commandment?

A. First,

that the gospel ministry and education for it be maintained,¹
 and that, especially on the festive day of rest, I **diligently** attend the assembly of God's people² to learn what God's Word teaches,³ to participate in the sacraments,⁴ to pray to God publicly,⁵ and to bring Christian offerings for the poor.⁶

Second,

that every day of my life I rest from my evil ways, let the Lord work in me through his Spirit, and so **begin** in this life the eternal Sabbath.⁷

¹ Deut. 6:4-9, 20-25; 1 Cor. 9:13-14; 2 Tim. 2:2; 3:13-17; Tit. 1:5² Deut. 12:5-12; Ps. 40:9-10; 68:26; Acts 2:42-47; Heb. 10:23-25³ Rom. 10:14-17; 1 Cor. 14:31-32; 1 Tim. 4:13⁴ 1 Cor. 11:23-25⁵ Col. 3:16; 1 Tim. 2:1⁶ Ps. 50:14; 1 Cor. 16:2; 2 Cor. 8 & 9⁷ Isa. 66:23; Heb. 4:9-11

Lord's Day 39

Q&A 104

**Q. What is God's will for you
in the fifth commandment?**

A. That I honor, love, and be loyal to
my father and mother
and all those in authority over me;
that I obey and submit to them, as is proper,
when they correct and punish me;¹
and also that I be patient with their failings—²
for through them God chooses to rule us.³

¹ Ex. 21:17; Prov. 1:8; 4:1; Rom. 13:1-2; Eph. 5:21-22; 6:1-9;
Col. 3:18- 4:1

² Prov. 20:20; 23:22; 1 Pet. 2:18

³ Matt. 22:21; Rom. 13:1-8; Eph. 6:1-9; Col. 3:18-21

Lord's Day 39

Q&A 104

**Q. What is God's will
in the fifth commandment?**

A. That I show honor, love, and loyalty
to my father and mother
and all those in authority over me;
that I submit myself with proper obedience
to all their good teaching and discipline;¹
and also that I be patient with their failings—²
or through them God chooses to rule us.³

¹ Ex. 21:17; Prov. 1:8; 4:1; Rom. 13:1-2; Eph. 5:21-22; 6:1-9;
Col. 3:18- 4:1

² Prov. 20:20; 23:22; 1 Pet. 2:18

³ Matt. 22:21; Rom. 13:1-8; Eph. 6:1-9; Col. 3:18-21

Lord's Day 40

Q&A 105

Q. What is God's will for you in the sixth commandment?

A. I am not to belittle, insult, hate, or kill my neighbor— not by my thoughts, my words, my look or gesture, and certainly not by actual deeds— and I am not to be party to this in others;¹ rather, I am to put away all desire for revenge.²

I am not to harm or recklessly endanger myself either.³

Prevention of murder is also why government is armed with the sword.⁴

¹ Gen. 9:6; Lev. 19:17-18; Matt. 5:21-22; 26:52

² Prov. 25:21-22; Matt. 18:35; Rom. 12:19; Eph. 4:26

³ Matt. 4:7; 26:52; Rom. 13:11-14

⁴ Gen. 9:6; Ex. 21:14; Rom. 13:4

Q&A 106

Q. Does this commandment refer only to killing?

A. By forbidding murder God teaches us that he hates the root of murder: envy, hatred, anger, vindictiveness.¹

Lord's Day 40

Q&A 105

Q. What is God's will in the sixth commandment?

A. I am not to belittle, insult, hate, or kill my neighbor— not by my thoughts, my words, my look or gesture, and certainly not by actual deeds— and I am not to be party to this in others;¹ rather, I am to put away all desire for revenge.²

I am not to harm or recklessly endanger myself either.³

Prevention of murder is also why government is armed with the sword.⁴

¹ Gen. 9:6; Lev. 19:17-18; Matt. 5:21-22; 26:52

² Prov. 25:21-22; Matt. 18:35; Rom. 12:19; Eph. 4:26

³ Matt. 4:7; 26:52; Rom. 13:11-14

⁴ Gen. 9:6; Ex. 21:14; Rom. 13:4

Q&A 106

Q. Does this commandment refer only to murder?

A. By forbidding murder God teaches us that he hates the root of murder: envy, hatred, anger, vindictiveness.¹

In God's sight all such are murder.²

¹ Prov. 14:30; Rom. 1:29; 12:19; Gal. 5:19-21; 1 John 2:9-11

² 1 John 3:15

Q&A 107

**Q. Is it enough then
that we do not kill our neighbor
in any such way?**

A. No.

By condemning envy, hatred, and anger
God tells us

to love our neighbors as ourselves,¹

to be patient, peace-loving, gentle,
merciful, and friendly to them,²

to protect them from harm as much as we can,
and to do good even to our enemies.³

¹ Matt. 7:12; 22:39; Rom. 12:10

² Matt. 5:3-12; Luke 6:36; Rom. 12:10, 18; Gal. 6:1-2; Eph. 4:2;
Col. 3:12; 1 Pet. 3:8

³ Ex. 23:4-5; Matt. 5:44-45; Rom. 12:20-21 (Prov. 25:21-22)

In God's sight all such are **hidden** murder.²

¹ Prov. 14:30; Rom. 1:29; 12:19; Gal. 5:19-21; 1 John 2:9-11

² 1 John 3:15

Q&A 107

**Q. Is it enough then
that we do not **murder** our neighbor
in any such way?**

A. No.

By condemning envy, hatred, and anger
God wants us

to love our neighbors as ourselves,¹

**to show patience, peace, gentleness,
mercy, and friendliness towards them,**²

to protect them from harm as much as we can,
and to do good even to our enemies.³

¹ Matt. 7:12; 22:39; Rom. 12:10

² Matt. 5:3-12; Luke 6:36; Rom. 12:10, 18; Gal. 6:1-2; Eph. 4:2;
Col. 3:12; 1 Pet. 3:8

³ Ex. 23:4-5; Matt. 5:44-45; Rom. 12:20-21 (Prov. 25:21-22)

Lord's Day 41

Q&A 108

Q. What is God's will for us in the seventh commandment?

- A. God condemns all unchastity.¹
 We should therefore thoroughly detest it²
 and, married or single,
 live decent and chaste lives.³

¹ Lev. 18:30; Eph. 5:3-5² Jude 22-23³ 1 Cor. 7:1-9; 1 Thess. 4:3-8; Heb. 13:4

Q&A 109

Q. Does God, in this commandment, forbid only such scandalous sins as adultery?

- A. We are temples of the Holy Spirit, body and soul,
 and God wants both to be kept clean and holy.
 That is why he forbids
 everything which incites unchastity,¹
 whether it be actions, looks, talk, thoughts, or desires.²

¹ 1 Cor. 15:33; Eph. 5:18² Matt. 5:27-29; 1 Cor. 6:18-20; Eph. 5:3-4**Lord's Day 41**

Q&A 108

Q. What does the seventh commandment require?

- A. God condemns all unchastity.¹
 We should therefore thoroughly detest it²
 and, within the holy state of marriage or not,
 live chaste and decent lives.³

¹ Lev. 18:30; Eph. 5:3-5² Jude 22-23³ 1 Cor. 7:1-9; 1 Thess. 4:3-8; Heb. 13:4

Q&A 109

Q. Does God, in this commandment, forbid only such scandalous sins as adultery?

- A. We are temples of the Holy Spirit, body and soul,
 and God wants both to be kept clean and holy.
 That is why God forbids
 all unchaste actions, looks, talk, thoughts, or desires,¹
 and whatever may incite someone to them.²

¹ Matt. 5:27-29; 1 Cor. 6:18-20; Eph. 5:3-4² 1 Cor. 15:33; Eph. 5:18

Lord's Day 42

Q&A 110

Q. What does God forbid in the eighth commandment?

A. He forbids not only outright theft and robbery, punishable by law.¹

But in God's sight theft also includes cheating and swindling our neighbor by schemes made to appear legitimate,² such as:
 inaccurate measurements of weight, size, or volume;
 fraudulent merchandising;
 counterfeit money;
 excessive interest;
 or any other means forbidden by God.³

In addition he forbids all greed⁴ and pointless squandering of his gifts.⁵

¹ Ex. 22:1; 1 Cor. 5:9-10; 6:9-10

² Mic. 6:9-11; Luke 3:14; James 5:1-6

³ Deut. 25:13-16; Ps. 15:5; Prov. 11:1; 12:22; Ezek. 45:9-12;
 Luke 6:35

⁴ Luke 12:15; Eph. 5:5

⁵ Prov. 21:20; 23:20-21; Luke 16:10-13

Lord's Day 42

Q&A 110

Q. What does God forbid in the eighth commandment?

A. God forbids not only outright theft and robbery, punishable by law.¹

But in God's sight theft also includes all scheming and swindling by which we seek to get for ourselves our neighbor's goods, whether by force or means that appear right,² such as
 inaccurate measurements of weight, size, or volume;
 fraudulent merchandising;
 counterfeit money;
 excessive interest;
 or any other means forbidden by God.³

In addition God forbids all greed⁴ and pointless squandering of his gifts.⁵

¹ Ex. 22:1; 1 Cor. 5:9-10; 6:9-10

² Mic. 6:9-11; Luke 3:14; James 5:1-6

³ Deut. 25:13-16; Ps. 15:5; Prov. 11:1; 12:22; Ezek. 45:9-12;
 Luke 6:35

⁴ Luke 12:15; Eph. 5:5

⁵ Prov. 21:20; 23:20-21; Luke 16:10-13

Q&A 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.¹

¹ Isa. 58:5-10; Matt. 7:12; Gal. 6:9-10; Eph. 4:28

Lord's Day 43

Q&A 112

Q. What is God's will for you in the ninth commandment?

A. God's will is that I
never give false testimony against anyone,
twist no one's words,
not gossip or slander,
nor join in condemning anyone
without a hearing or without a just cause.¹

Rather, in court and everywhere else,
I should avoid lying and deceit of every kind;
these are devices the devil himself uses,
and they would call down on me God's intense anger.²

Q&A 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.¹

¹ Isa. 58:5-10; Matt. 7:12; Gal. 6:9-10; Eph. 4:28

Lord's Day 43

Q&A 112

Q. What does the ninth commandment require?

A. God's will is that I
never give false testimony against anyone,
twist no one's words,
not gossip or slander,
nor join in condemning anyone
frivolously or without a hearing.¹

Rather, in court and everywhere else,
I should avoid lying and deceit of every kind;
these are devices the devil uses,
and they would call down on me God's intense wrath.²

I should love the truth,
 speak it candidly,
 and openly acknowledge it.³
 And I should do what I can
 to guard and advance my neighbor's good name.⁴

¹ Ps. 15; Prov. 19:5; Matt. 7:1; Luke 6:37; Rom. 1:28-32

² Lev. 19:11-12; Prov. 12:22; 13:5; John 8:44; Rev. 21:8

³ 1 Cor. 13:6; Eph. 4:25

⁴ 1 Pet. 3:8-9; 4:8

I should love the truth,
 speak it candidly,
 and openly acknowledge it.³
 And I should do what I can
 to guard and advance my neighbor's good name.⁴

¹ Ps. 15; Prov. 19:5; Matt. 7:1; Luke 6:37; Rom. 1:28-32

² Lev. 19:11-12; Prov. 12:22; 13:5; John 8:44; Rev. 21:8

³ 1 Cor. 13:6; Eph. 4:25

⁴ 1 Pet. 3:8-9; 4:8

Lord's Day 44

Q&A 113

**Q. What is God's will for you
 in the tenth commandment?**

A. That not even the slightest thought or desire
 contrary to any one of God's commandments
 should ever arise in my heart.

Rather, with all my heart
 I should always hate sin
 and take pleasure in whatever is right.¹

¹ Ps. 19:7-14; 139:23-24; Rom. 7:7-8

Lord's Day 44

Q&A 113

Q. What does the tenth commandment require?

A. That not even the slightest thought or desire
 contrary to any one of God's commandments
 should ever arise in **our hearts**.

Rather, with all our hearts
we should always hate sin
 and **desire** whatever is right.¹

¹ Ps. 19:7-14; 139:23-24; Rom. 7:7-8

Q&A 114

Q. But can those converted to God obey these commandments perfectly?

A. No.

In this life even the holiest have only a small beginning of this obedience.¹

Nevertheless, with all seriousness of purpose, they do begin to live according to all, not only some, of God's commandments.²

¹ Eccles. 7:20; Rom. 7:14-15; 1 Cor. 13:9; 1 John 1:8-10

² Ps. 1:1-2; Rom. 7:22-25; Phil. 3:12-16

Q&A 115

Q. No one in this life can obey the Ten Commandments perfectly: why then does God want them preached so pointedly?

A. First, so that the longer we live the more we may come to know our sinfulness and the more eagerly look to Christ for forgiveness of sins and righteousness.¹

Q&A 114

Q. But can those converted to God obey these commandments perfectly?

A. No.

In this life even the holiest have only a small beginning of this obedience.¹

Nevertheless, with all seriousness of purpose, they do begin to live according to all, not only some, of God's commandments.²

¹ Eccles. 7:20; Rom. 7:14-15; 1 Cor. 13:9; 1 John 1:8-10

² Ps. 1:1-2; Rom. 7:22-25; Phil. 3:12-16

Q&A 115

Q. Why, then, does God want the Ten Commandments preached so pointedly if no one can keep them in this life?

A. First, so that the longer we live the more we may come to know our sinfulness and the more eagerly look to Christ for forgiveness of sins and righteousness.¹

Second, so that,
 while praying to God for the grace of the Holy Spirit,
 we may never stop striving
 to be renewed more and more after God’s image,
 until after this life we reach our goal:
 perfection.²

¹ Ps. 32:5; Rom. 3:19-26; 7:7, 24-25; 1 John 1:9

² 1 Cor. 9:24; Phil. 3:12-14; 1 John 3:1-3

Second, so that,
 while praying to God for the grace of the Holy Spirit,
 we may never stop striving
 to be renewed more and more after God’s image,
 until after this life we reach our goal:
 perfection.²

¹ Ps. 32:5; Rom. 3:19-26; 7:7, 24-25; 1 John 1:9

² 1 Cor. 9:24; Phil. 3:12-14; 1 John 3:1-3

Part III: Gratitude: The Lord’s Prayer
Lord’s Day 45

Q&A 116

Q. Why do Christians need to pray?

A. Because prayer is the most important part
 of the thankfulness God requires of us.¹
 And also because God gives his grace and Holy Spirit
 only to those who pray continually and groan inwardly,
 asking God for these gifts
 and thanking him for them.²

¹ Ps. 50:14-15; 116:12-19; 1 Thess. 5:16-18

² Matt. 7:7-8; Luke 11:9-13

Part III: Gratitude: The Lord’s Prayer
Lord’s Day 45

Q&A 116

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A. Because prayer is the most important part
 of the thankfulness God requires of us.¹
 And also because God gives his grace and Holy Spirit
 only to those who pray continually and groan inwardly,
 asking God for these gifts
 and thanking God for them.²

¹ Ps. 50:14-15; 116:12-19; 1 Thess. 5:16-18

² Matt. 7:7-8; Luke 11:9-13

Q&A 117

Q. How does God want us to pray so that he will listen to us?

A. First, we must pray from the heart to no other than the one true God, who has revealed himself in his Word, asking for everything he has commanded us to ask for.¹

Second, we must acknowledge our need and misery, hiding nothing, and humble ourselves in his majestic presence.²

Third, we must rest on this unshakable foundation: even though we do not deserve it, God will surely listen to our prayer because of Christ our Lord. That is what he promised us in his Word.³

¹ Ps. 145:18-20; John 4:22-24; Rom. 8:26-27; James 1:5; 1 John 5:14-15

² 2 Chron. 7:14; Ps. 2:11; 34:18; 62:8; Isa. 66:2; Rev. 4

³ Dan. 9:17-19; Matt. 7:8; John 14:13-14; 16:23; Rom. 10:13; James 1:6

Q&A 117

Q. What is the nature of a prayer that pleases and is heard by God?

A. First, we must pray from the heart to no other than the one true God, revealed to us in his Word, asking for everything God has commanded us to ask for.¹

Second, we must fully recognize our need and misery, so that we humble ourselves in God's majestic presence.²

Third, we must rest on this unshakable foundation: even though we do not deserve it, God will surely listen to our prayer because of Christ our Lord. That is what God promised us in his Word.³

¹ Ps. 145:18-20; John 4:22-24; Rom. 8:26-27; James 1:5; 1 John 5:14-15

² 2 Chron. 7:14; Ps. 2:11; 34:18; 62:8; Isa. 66:2; Rev. 4

³ Dan. 9:17-19; Matt. 7:8; John 14:13-14; 16:23; Rom. 10:13; James 1:6

Q&A 118

Q. What did God command us to pray for?

A. Everything we need, spiritually and physically,¹
as embraced in the prayer
Christ our Lord himself taught us.

¹James 1:17; Matt. 6:33

Q&A 119

Q. What is this prayer?

A. Our Father in heaven,
hallowed be your name,
your kingdom come,
your will be done
on earth as it is in heaven.
Give us today our daily bread.
Forgive us our debts,
as we also have forgiven our debtors.
And lead us not into temptation,
but deliver us from the evil one.
For yours is the kingdom
and the power
and the glory forever.
Amen.^{1*}

¹ Matt. 6:9-13; Luke 11:2-4

*Earlier and better manuscripts of Matthew 6 omit the words
“For the kingdom . . . Amen.”

Q&A 118

Q. What did God command us to pray for?

A. Everything we need, spiritually and physically,¹
as embraced in the prayer
Christ our Lord himself taught us.

¹James 1:17; Matt. 6:33

Q&A 119

Q. What is this prayer?

A. Our Father in heaven,
hallowed be your name,
Your kingdom come,
Your will be done,
on earth as it is in heaven.
Give us this day our daily bread.
And forgive us our debts,
as we also have forgiven our debtors.
And do not bring us to the time of trial,
but rescue us from the evil one.
For the kingdom
and the power
and the glory are yours forever.
Amen.^{1*}

¹ Matt. 6:9-13; Luke 11:2-4

*Earlier and better manuscripts of Matthew 6 omit the words
“For the kingdom . . . Amen.”

Lord's Day 46

Q&A 120

Q. Why did Christ command us to call God "our Father"?

A. At the very beginning of our prayer Christ wants to kindle in us what is basic to our prayer—the childlike awe and trust that God through Christ has become our Father.

Our fathers do not refuse us the things of this life; God our Father will even less refuse to give us what we ask in faith.¹

¹ Matt. 7:9-11; Luke 11:11-13

Q&A 121

Q. Why the words "in heaven"?

A. These words teach us not to think of God's heavenly majesty as something earthly,¹ and to expect everything for body and soul from his almighty power.²

¹ Jer. 23:23-24; Acts 17:24-25² Matt. 6:25-34; Rom. 8:31-32**Lord's Day 46**

Q&A 120

Q. Why did Christ command us to call God "our Father"?

A. That at the very beginning of our prayer he may awaken in us the childlike reverence and trust toward God which should be basic to our prayer: that God has become our Father through Christ, and will even less deny us what we ask in faith¹ than our parents refuse us the things of this life.

¹ Matt. 7:9-11; Luke 11:11-13

Q&A 121

Q. Why the words "in heaven"?

A. These words teach us not to think of God's heavenly majesty as something earthly,¹ and to expect everything needed for body and soul from God's almighty power.²

¹ Jer. 23:23-24; Acts 17:24-25² Matt. 6:25-34; Rom. 8:31-32

Lord's Day 47

Q&A 122

Q. What does the first request mean?

A. "Hallowed be your name" means,

Help us to really know you,¹
to bless, worship, and praise you
for all your works
and for all that shines forth from them:
your almighty power, wisdom, kindness,
justice, mercy, and truth.²

And it means,

Help us to direct all our living—
what we think, say, and do—
so that your name will never be blasphemed because of us
but always honored and praised.³

¹ Jer. 9:23-24; 31:33-34; Matt. 16:17; John 17:3² Ex. 34:5-8; Ps. 145; Jer. 32:16-20; Luke 1:46-55, 68-75;
Rom. 11:33-36³ Ps. 115:1; Matt. 5:16**Lord's Day 47**

Q&A 122

Q. What is the first petition?

A. "Hallowed be your name" means:

Help us to rightly know you,¹
to **hallow, glorify,** and praise you
for all your works
and for all that shines forth from them:
your almighty power, wisdom, kindness,
justice, mercy, and truth.²

And it means,

Help us to direct all our living—
what we think, say, and do—
so that your name will never be blasphemed because of us
but always honored and praised.³

¹ Jer. 9:23-24; 31:33-34; Matt. 16:17; John 17:3² Ex. 34:5-8; Ps. 145; Jer. 32:16-20; Luke 1:46-55, 68-75;
Rom. 11:33-36³ Ps. 115:1; Matt. 5:16

Lord's Day 48

Q&A 123

Q. What does the second request mean?

A. "Your kingdom come" means,
Rule us by your Word and Spirit in such a way
that more and more we submit to you.¹

Keep your church strong, and add to it.²

Destroy the devil's work;
destroy every force which revolts against you
and every conspiracy against your Word.³

Do this until your kingdom is so complete and perfect
that in it you are
all in all.⁴

¹ Ps. 119:5, 105; 143:10; Matt. 6:33

² Ps. 122:6-9; Matt. 16:18; Acts 2:42-47

³ Rom. 16:20; 1 John 3:8

⁴ Rom. 8:22-23; 1 Cor. 15:28; Rev. 22:17, 20

Lord's Day 48

Q&A 123

Q. What does the second petition mean?

A. "Your kingdom come" means:
Rule us by your Word and Spirit in such a way
that more and more we submit to you.¹

Uphold and increase your church.²

Destroy the devil's work;
destroy every force which revolts against you
and every conspiracy against your **holy** Word.³

**Do this until the full coming of your kingdom,
in which you will be
all in all.**⁴

¹ Ps. 119:5, 105; 143:10; Matt. 6:33

² Ps. 122:6-9; Matt. 16:18; Acts 2:42-47

³ Rom. 16:20; 1 John 3:8

⁴ Rom. 8:22-23; 1 Cor. 15:28; Rev. 22:17, 20

Lord's Day 49

Q&A 124

Q. What does the third request mean?

A. "Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven" means,

Help us and all people
to reject our own wills
and to obey your will without any back talk.
Your will alone is good.¹

Help us one and all to carry out the work we are called to,²
as willingly and faithfully as the angels in heaven.³

¹ Matt. 7:21; 16:24-26; Luke 22:42; Rom. 12:1-2; Tit. 2:11-12

² 1 Cor. 7:17-24; Eph. 6:5-9

³ Ps. 103:20-21

Lord's Day 49

Q&A 124

Q. What does the third petition mean?

A. "Your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven" means:

Help us and all people
to reject our own wills
and to obey your will without any back talk.
Your will alone is good.¹

Help us one and all to carry out the work we are called to,²
as willingly and faithfully as the angels in heaven.³

¹ Matt. 7:21; 16:24-26; Luke 22:42; Rom. 12:1-2; Tit. 2:11-12

² 1 Cor. 7:17-24; Eph. 6:5-9

³ Ps. 103:20-21

Lord's Day 50

Q&A 125

Q. What does the fourth request mean?

A. "Give us today our daily bread" means,

Do take care of all our physical needs¹
 so that we come to know
 that you are the only source of everything good,²
 and that neither our work and worry
 nor your gifts
 can do us any good without your blessing.³

And so help us to give up our trust in creatures
 and to put trust in you alone.⁴

¹ Ps. 104:27-30; 145:15-16; Matt. 6:25-34² Acts 14:17; 17:25; James 1:17³ Deut. 8:3; Ps. 37:16; 127:1-2; 1 Cor. 15:58⁴ Ps. 55:22; 62; 146; Jer. 17:5-8; Heb. 13:5-6**Lord's Day 50**

Q&A 125

Q. What does the fourth petition mean?

A. "Give us this day our daily bread" means:

Do take care of all our physical needs¹
 so that we come to know
 that you are the only source of everything good,²
 and neither our work and worry
 nor your gifts
 can do us any good without your blessing;³
 and so that we, therefore, give up our trust in creatures
 and trust in you alone.⁴

¹ Ps. 104:27-30; 145:15-16; Matt. 6:25-34² Acts 14:17; 17:25; James 1:17³ Deut. 8:3; Ps. 37:16; 127:1-2; 1 Cor. 15:58⁴ Ps. 55:22; 62; 146; Jer. 17:5-8; Heb. 13:5-6

Lord's Day 51

Q&A 126

Q. What does the fifth request mean?

A. "Forgive us our debts,
as we also have forgiven our debtors" means,

Because of Christ's blood,
do not hold against us, poor sinners that we are,
any of the sins we do
or the evil that constantly clings to us.¹

Forgive us just as we are fully determined,
as evidence of your grace in us,
to forgive our neighbors.²

¹ Ps. 51:1-7; 143:2; Rom. 8:1; 1 John 2:1-2

² Matt. 6:14-15; 18:21-35

Lord's Day 51

Q&A 126

Q. What does the fifth petition mean?

A. "Forgive us our debts,
as we also have forgiven our debtors" means:

Because of Christ's blood,
do not hold against us, poor sinners that we are,
any of the sins we do
or the evil that constantly clings to us.¹

Forgive us just as we are fully determined,
as evidence of your grace in us,
to forgive our neighbors.²

¹ Ps. 51:1-7; 143:2; Rom. 8:1; 1 John 2:1-2

² Matt. 6:14-15; 18:21-35

Lord's Day 52

Q&A 127

Q. What does the sixth request mean?

A. "And lead us not into temptation,
but deliver us from the evil one" means,

By ourselves we are too weak
to hold our own even for a moment.¹

Lord's Day 52

Q&A 127

Q. What does the sixth petition mean?

A. "And do not bring us to the time of trial,
but rescue us from the evil one" means:

By ourselves we are too weak
to hold our own even for a moment.¹

And our sworn enemies—
the devil,² the world,³ and our own flesh—⁴
never stop attacking us.

And so, Lord,
uphold us and make us strong
with the strength of your Holy Spirit,
so that we may not go down to defeat
in this spiritual struggle,⁵
but may firmly resist our enemies
until we finally win the complete victory.⁶

¹ Ps. 103:14-16; John 15:1-5

² 2 Cor. 11:14; Eph. 6:10-13; 1 Pet. 5:8

³ John 15:18-21

⁴ Rom. 7:23; Gal. 5:17

⁵ Matt. 10:19-20; 26:41; Mark 13:33; Rom. 5:3-5

⁶ 1 Cor. 10:13; 1 Thess. 3:13; 5:23

Q&A 128

Q. What does your conclusion to this prayer mean?

A. “For yours is the kingdom
and the power
and the glory forever” means,

We have made all these requests of you
because, as our all-powerful king,
you not only want to,
but are able to give us all that is good,¹

And our sworn enemies—
the devil,² the world,³ and our own flesh—⁴
never stop attacking us.

And so, Lord,
uphold us and make us strong
with the strength of your Holy Spirit,
so that we may not go down to defeat
in this spiritual struggle,⁵
but may firmly resist our enemies
until we finally win the complete victory.⁶

¹ Ps. 103:14-16; John 15:1-5

² 2 Cor. 11:14; Eph. 6:10-13; 1 Pet. 5:8

³ John 15:18-21

⁴ Rom. 7:23; Gal. 5:17

⁵ Matt. 10:19-20; 26:41; Mark 13:33; Rom. 5:3-5

⁶ 1 Cor. 10:13; 1 Thess. 3:13; 5:23

Q&A 128

Q. What does your conclusion to this prayer mean?

A. “For the kingdom
and the power
and the glory are yours forever” means:

We have made all these petitions of you
because, as our all-powerful king,
you are willing and able
to give us all that is good,¹

and because your holy name,
and not we ourselves,
should receive all the praise, forever.²

¹ Rom. 10:11-13; 2 Pet. 2:9

² Ps. 115:1; John 14:13

Q&A 129

Q. What does that little word “Amen” express?

A. “Amen” means,

This is sure to be!

It is even more sure
that God listens to my prayer,
than that I really desire
what I pray for.¹

¹ Isa. 65:24; 2 Cor. 1:20; 2 Tim. 2:13

and because your holy name,
and not we ourselves,
should receive all the praise, forever.²

¹ Rom. 10:11-13; 2 Pet. 2:9

² Ps. 115:1; John 14:13

Q&A 129

Q. What does that little word “Amen” express?

A. “Amen” means:

This shall truly and surely be!

It is even more sure
that God listens to my prayer
than that I really desire
what I pray for.¹

¹ Isa. 65:24; 2 Cor. 1:20; 2 Tim. 2:13

I. Introduction

The Christian Reformed Church in North America maintains employee benefit programs that provide retirement, health, life, and disability benefits for employees of the denomination in its ministries, agencies, local churches, and other CRC organizations.

II. Board matters

The ministers' pension plans, special-assistance funds, and the employees' retirement plans are governed by the U.S. Board of Pensions and the Canadian Pension Trustees. These boards meet several times per year, usually in joint session. Separate meetings of the boards are held as needed.

Rev. William G. Vis is completing his first term on the U.S. Board of Pensions in 2010 and is eligible for a second three-year term.

Concluding service on the U.S. Board of Pensions is Mr. William Terpstra. The following slate of nominees is presented for election to a three-year term:

Mr. Howard Van Mersbergen is the vice president of employee benefits at Christian Schools International. He holds the Certified Investment Management Analyst and Certified Employee Benefit Specialist designations. By way of his role at CSI he has extensive experience in pension, employee benefits, and investment issues for both Canada and the United States. Mr. Van Mersbergen is a member of EverGreen Ministries in Hudsonville, Michigan, and has served on the boards of Hudsonville Christian School and the Hudsonville Christian School Foundation.

Mr. Michael Cok of Bozeman Montana is the founding partner of Cok Kinzler law firm and has practiced law for 32 years as a civil trial lawyer. He has served as a long-time board member on several boards including the Montana Justice Foundation and Montana Trial Lawyers Association. Mr. Cok has served 9 years on the Manhattan (Montana) Christian School Board, and many of those years as its president. He has also served as an elder in the Bozeman CRC and as president of its council. Presently Mr. Cok is helping with work on a CRC church plant in Bozeman. He attended Calvin College and graduated from the University of Montana law school, where he is an adjunct instructor.

Completing service on the Canadian Pension Trustees is Mr. Ary de Jong. The board recommends the following single nominee for election to a three-year term:

Mr. Keith Oosthoek retired as senior vice president and ombudsman for RBC Financial Group and actively volunteers in a number of roles in his community. His activities include teaching Junior Achievement programs in local Christian schools and serving as chair of the church council at Community CRC in Kitchener, Ontario. In the past he has served six years on the Board of Trustees of the CRCNA as well as six years on the board of The Back to God Hour. In each case his tenure included three years as president of the board.

III. Benefit-program activities

A. Ministers' pension plans

The ministers' pension plans are defined-benefit plans. Benefits paid by the plans are defined by formula, and the required funding of the plans is determined by actuarial calculations. The primary purpose of the plans is to provide retirement benefits to plan participants. The plans also provide benefits to the surviving spouses of participants as well as to any dependent children who are orphaned. In addition, long-term disability benefits are provided through an insurance product to all full-time, active participants in the plans who have furnished the information concerning compensation and housing as required by the insurance carrier.

The following is a summary of participant counts as of December 31, 2009, for each plan and in total. Participants having an interest in both plans appear in the column where their interest is the greatest.

	United States	Canada	Total
Active ministers	831	254	1,085
Retired ministers	472	129	601
Spouses and dependents	150	30	180
Withdrawn participants with vested benefits	100	21	121
Total	1,553	434	1,987

Independent actuaries are employed to do a valuation of the plans. The most recent actuarial valuation of the U.S. plan was performed as of January 1, 2009, which furnished the information needed to determine church and participant assessment amounts for 2010, 2011, and 2012. The Canadian Plan is required to submit an annual valuation to provincial regulators. Accordingly, information regarding church and participant assessment amounts for 2011 is not available for inclusion in this report. However, it is anticipated that it will be included in the supplemental report to Synod 2010 and released to the churches and others following Synod 2010.

1. Portfolio balances and performance

Plan assets are invested in diversified portfolios under the management of professional investment-management firms. These firms are required to adhere to the denomination's investment guidelines, and their performance is measured against established benchmarks and regularly reviewed by the trustees.

The plans' actuaries have informed us that as of December 31, 2009, the actuarial liability totaled approximately \$108.9 million for the U.S. plan and \$36.9 million for the Canadian plan. These amounts reflect the plans' obligations to all participants including active, disabled, and retired pastors, widows, and dependents.

Market value of the portfolios is summarized as follows:

	December 31, 2009	December 31, 2008
United States (U.S. \$)	\$84,370,000	\$72,401,000
Canada (Can. \$)	29,452,000	26,120,000

Dividends, interest, and appreciation in the value of the plans' holdings are used to provide a significant portion of the resources needed to

meet the plans' obligations to their active participants and to fund payments to retirees and beneficiaries.

2. Changes to the plan

The pension plan has undergone several changes since separate plans for the United States and Canada were established in 1983. The basic defined benefit form of the plan was not altered; changes were made to improve benefits provided by the plan, to clarify how the plan is administered, and to improve the protocols used to obtain funds needed to pay costs.

The more significant changes to the plans (or changes that affect them) made by recent synods include the following:

2001 Approved a variety of optional benefit forms in addition to the plan's normal form.

Applied the plan's 1.46 percent multiple to all service beginning January 1, 1985.

2003 Approved guidelines for part-time service.

Required payment for upgrading the interests of previously frozen participants reinstated as active members of the plans.

Acted to replace self-insured disability benefits with an insurance contract.

Changed funding protocols for all organized churches, effective January 1, 2004, to require payment of the greater of direct costs or per-member assessments.

Linked timely payment of annual costs (the greater of participant or per-member costs) to the grant of credited service to first or only pastors of organized churches.

2004 Required that pension costs of endorsed chaplains be paid as a condition for active participation in the plan, effective January 1, 2006.

Approved a rule requiring synods to defer any proposed action concerning the plans until advised regarding the proposed action by the pension trustees.

Amended Church Order Article 15 to include specific elements of "proper support," including payment to the denomination's ministers' pension plan.

Taken together, these changes have significantly improved the design and administration of the plan, and they benefit plan participants, the denomination as sponsor, and the plan itself. They should serve to improve the financial viability and staying power of the plans.

3. Funding

All organized churches are expected to pay church assessments determined at an amount per active professing member age 18 and older, or, if greater, the direct costs of their first or only pastor's participation in

the plan. The amount of the assessment for 2010 is \$35.52 per member in Canada and \$30.72 in the United States, and direct costs have been set at \$8,148 and \$6,372, respectively. These amounts are collected by means of quarterly billings to each organized church, based on reported membership statistics.

All emerging churches and other denominational ministries that employ a minister as a missionary, professor, teacher, or in any other capacity, including organizations that employ endorsed chaplains (with the exception of chaplains serving in the military who are not yet entitled to receive any military pension benefits) are required to pay the annual cost of participation in the plan. All pension assessments, however determined, are billed quarterly, and the grant of credited service for pastors is contingent on timely payment of amounts billed.

As discussed previously in this report, costs for 2011 will be determined based on actuarial information that is not available to the pension trustees in time for inclusion in this report. However, it is anticipated that these amounts will be included in the supplemental report to Synod 2010.

B. Employees' retirement plans

The employees' retirement plans are defined-contribution plans covering employees not ordained as ministers of the Word employed by participating denominational agencies and ministries. In the United States contributions are paid to the plan by participating employers in an amount up to 6 percent of compensation. An additional employer contribution of up to 4 percent of compensation is made to match employee contributions of a similar amount. In Canada contributions of up to 9 percent are paid to the plan by participating employers. In Canada there are no contributions made to the plan relative to matching employee contributions. In both plans, participants may make additional contributions up to the limits determined by federal regulation. Participants receive periodic statements indicating the dollar amount credited to their accounts, the value of their accounts, and the vested percentage.

Individual participants direct the investment of their account balances among several investment alternatives, including fixed-income and equity funds. The investment alternatives are currently managed for U.S. participants by J.P. Morgan Chase Trust Division, which also serves as custodian of the plan's assets, and for Canadian participants by Sun Life Financial Group.

As of December 31, 2009, the balances in these plans totaled approximately \$18,999,000 in the United States and \$2,856,000 in Canada, and, as of that date, there were 404 participants in the U.S. plan and 89 in the Canadian plan, categorized as follows:

	United States	Canada
Active	250	77
Inactive	154	12

C. Consolidated Group Insurance

Oversight of the denomination's Consolidated Group Insurance is provided by the Board of Trustees.

Consolidated Group Insurance is a denominational plan that offers health, dental, and life coverage in the United States and Canada to ministers

and employees of local congregations and denominational agencies and ministries. Currently there are 1,300 participants in the program. The most significant categories of participants include 655 pastors and employees of local churches, 351 employees of denominational ministries and agencies, and 294 retirees. The plan in Canada is a fully insured plan with coverage purchased through a major health-insurance provider and is supplemental to health benefits available through government health programs. In the United States, a trust has been established to fund benefits and expenses of the plan.

Premiums charged by the plan in Canada are set by the insurance carrier. The premiums for the U.S. plan are based on overall expectations of claims and administrative expenses for the coming year. For 2009, premiums in the United States increased 12 percent.

D. Financial disclosures

Audited or reviewed financial statements of the retirement plans and of all of the agencies and institutions are made available each year to the treasurer of each classis with the request that they be made available to any interested party. In addition, summary financial statements are included in the *Acts of Synod*. Individualized statements are furnished to active members of the ministers' pension plans and the employees' retirement plans.

IV. Recommendations

A. That synod grant the privilege of the floor to members of the Canadian Pension Trustees and of the U.S. Board of Pensions and to Mr. John H. Bolt 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 2010 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 by way of the printed ballot both elect to a first term and reappoint to a second term members to the U.S. Board of Pensions for a three-year term beginning July 1, 2010.

D. That synod by way of the printed ballot elect members to the Canadian Board of Pensions for a three-year term beginning July 1, 2010.

Pensions and Insurance
John H. Bolt, director of finance
and administration

Chaplaincy Ministries (Rev. Mark Stephenson, interim director)

I. Introduction

Christian Reformed chaplains represent Christ and embody the grace of our Lord Jesus throughout North America and the world.

The mandate given by synod to the Office of Chaplaincy Ministries: “chaplains are called by the church to extend the ministry of Christ to persons in institutional or specialized settings.”

The mission of the Office of Chaplaincy Ministries:

The office is maintained by the Board of Trustees to implement and regulate the denomination’s commitment to chaplaincy by recruiting, training, and endorsing persons to provide ministry in specialized settings, including military chaplains, pastoral counselors, institutional spiritual care givers, hospice care, and others called to minister in places where the institutional church is not present. The office supports and promotes the development of chaplaincy and related ministries for the denomination.

In March 2009, Rev. Mark Stephenson, director of Disability Concerns, was appointed as interim director of Chaplaincy Ministries. Rev. Herman Keizer, Jr., director emeritus of Chaplaincy Ministries has assisted Rev. Stephenson so that the work of Chaplaincy Ministries could move forward in a manner that integrates this ministry into The Network of denominational ministries.

II. Ministries of the Office of Chaplaincy Ministries

A. *Ministry that is transforming lives and communities worldwide*

1. Our chaplains work at transforming the institutions in which they serve by calling the organizations to ethical standards of care and concern, and they sometimes have opportunity for broad influence. Chaplain Thomas Walcott is now working in Washington, D.C., in the Chief of Navy Chaplains Office. Chaplain Gloria Kroeze serves on the Advisory Council of the Pediatric Chaplains Network (PCN). The PCN is a collaborative fellowship of pediatric chaplains and others interested in the spiritual care of ill and injured children, their families, and the pediatric medical team.
2. Our military chaplains have ministered to military personnel and indigenous peoples throughout the world, as in working with villages in Afghanistan and Iraq. Our civilian chaplains work to minister Christ’s presence in many settings: medical, psychiatric, and V.A. hospitals; hospice; pastoral counseling; the workplace; correctional centers; and long-term care facilities. They also work as trainers of new chaplains by serving as clinical pastoral education supervisors. In addition, they work with seafarers and people with developmental disabilities.
3. Our chaplains serve our denomination in a variety of ways. For example, Chaplain John Lamsma serves as the restorative justice project developer in the United States and Chaplain John de Vries, Jr., serves in Canada as the restorative justice liaison. In December 2009, Chaplain de Vries retired from hospital chaplaincy and accepted an invitation from Rev. Dr. Pierre

Allard, former director general of Chaplaincy Services Canada, and now president of “Just.Equipping,” to join the February through March 2010 training and teaching team in the Great Lakes area of Africa (Rwanda, Burundi, Democratic Republic of the Congo). As a member of the team, Chaplain de Vries’s work aims to equip and empower Rwandan prison chaplains and workers in the area of restorative justice to facilitate further healing in post-genocide Rwanda.

B. Ministry to and with the local churches

1. All chaplains have a calling church. Many have worked with their calling churches by serving on council, at classis, and as delegates to synod. Chaplains lead worship services, conduct adult education and workshops, and help formally and informally with pastoral care in congregations. Chaplain Hendrik Boer has served for more than six years as the president of the Aurora Township Senior Services Provider Commission.
2. Chaplain Dirk Evans (retired) has published a manual to help elders and deacons with pastoral care, titled, *Hi, How Are You?* Chaplain Herman Keizer, Jr., (retired) presents many adult education and Calvin College classes on chaplaincy, the just war tradition, and the role of the Neo-Cons in the Iraq War. He continues to brief the members of the Department of Defense and members of Congress on the 2006 synodical War and Peace Report.

C. Collaborative efforts

The Office of Chaplaincy Ministries collaborated with a number of agencies and organizations over the past year:

- The Calvin Institute of Christian Worship—to create online worship aids for persons with post-traumatic stress disorder available at <http://calvin.edu/worship/resources/ptsd/index.php>.
- The Office of Social Justice and Hunger Action—implemented decisions of synod in response to the Committee to Study Restorative Justice.
- Calvin Theological Seminary and other institutions of higher education—recruited and advised prospective chaplains.
- Religious Endorsing Bodies and the National Conference on Ministry to the Armed Forces—advised the Department of Defense on Selective Conscientious Objection and chaplaincy issues in the military and civilian certifying agencies.
- *The Banner* and other publications—worked to get the stories of chaplains out to the denomination and wider church bodies.

D. Stories to share

1. Our chaplains continue to strive for excellence in their profession. In the past year the following chaplains were honored as follows: Shawn Bootsma received the Navy Achievement Medal; Ardean Brock passed the board exam for Professional Counseling License; Peter Hofman successfully completed U.S. Army Ranger training; James Kok received the Distinguished Alumnus award from Calvin Theological Seminary; Antonio Illas received the Army Service Ribbon, Army Overseas Training Ribbon, and Army Commendation Medal; Betty Vander Laan was

honored throughout 2009 at the Advocate Illinois Masonic Medical Center as the Value Leader for Equality; John Van Hemert received a plaque and honorable recognition in *Who's Who in America* for his chaplaincy work; Doug Vrieland completed Joint Professional Military Education.

2. Our chaplains serve in leadership roles in a variety of professional organizations including the following: American Association of Pastoral Counselors, American Association on Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities, Association for Clinical Pastoral Education, Association of Professional Chaplains, C.G. Jung Institute of Chicago, College of Pastoral Supervision and Psychotherapy, Michigan Chaplains Association, and VISN 18 Chaplain Operational Board.

E. Development of future ministry

Chaplaincy Ministries has not had a full-time director since June 2008. When Rev. Stephenson became the interim director in March 2009, he was asked to work with the Chaplaincy Ministries Advisory Committee and the chaplains themselves in developing an understanding of the chaplaincy ministry and the need to support and grow the ministry. To accomplish this work, he interviewed a number of chaplains and engaged in several conversations on this topic with the former director of Chaplaincy Ministries and the director of denominational ministries, Ms. Sandy Johnson. Out of these discussions, Chaplain Keizer wrote two papers for review and interaction with the advisory committee and with the DDM: a review of systemic issues facing chaplaincy ministry and a proposal for including *care* in the name of the ministry. With the approval of the advisory committee, a new job description and title for the director (director of chaplaincy and care ministry) was adopted that included a significant component of advocacy and resourcing for ministries of care within our denomination. The process of selecting a new director is presently in the final stages.

F. Statistics

1. Total chaplains: full-time, 95; part-time, 22
2. Chaplains in the United States: full-time, 80; part-time, 17
3. Chaplains in Canada: full-time, 15; part-time, 5
4. Active military chaplains: 17 in the United States; 2 in Canada; 5 in the National Guard and Reserves
5. New chaplains, 7; Civilian: Long-term care – Laurie Hogge, Grace Miedema; Hospice – John Poortenga; Hospital – David Van Buren; Seafarers – John Van Hemert; U.S. Army: Jonathan Averill; Canadian Forces: Leonard Kevin Stieva
6. Retired from chaplaincy, 6: Arlo Compaan, Nell De Boer, Ray Hommes, Lambert Sikkema, William Stroo, Robert Uken
7. Military chaplains who served overseas: Shawn L. Bootsma, Richard Hill, David Jeltema, Scott Koeman, Timothy Rietkerk

III. Recruitment and training

Chaplaincy Ministries organized five recruitment events in Fall 2009 at Calvin, Kuyper, Redeemer University, and Trinity Christian Colleges, and at Calvin Theological Seminary. As part of these events, chaplains participated in or led chapel services at Redeemer University College, Trinity Christian College, and Calvin Theological Seminary. Several hundred people were introduced to chaplaincy as a calling through these events, and several have begun to pursue training specifically for chaplaincy.

As a church we need to introduce the opportunity for chaplaincy ministry to high school and college students so that they can consider a possible calling to ministry in specialized settings. Chaplains are encouraged to tell the story of their ministries in their communities. We currently are working with twenty-four students and assisting them as needed in their education—both financially and through mentoring. As a result, the entire budget for training future chaplains was spent and, for the first time, money had to be used from the Chaplain Development Fund.

We maintain a list of persons interested in chaplaincy ministry (currently over one hundred people). Every other month the office sends job postings to the persons on the list.

Every year, Christian Reformed chaplains gather at a chaplains' conference sponsored by Chaplaincy Ministries. Chaplains work at the margins of society; thus, they do not receive the kind of connection and support that parish ministers have through their contact with parishioners, councils, classis meetings, and ministerial associations. Therefore, many chaplains relish the time they can spend with each other at the annual conference to renew friendships, learn together, and talk with fellow servants of the Lord who are living with the unique pressures, joys, and challenges that chaplaincy brings.

IV. Recommendations

A. That synod approve the change in the name of the Office of Chaplaincy Ministries to the Office of Chaplaincy and Care Ministry.

Grounds:

1. The change in name will better reflect the revised job description already adopted for the director, whose purpose is "to develop and promote the strategic ministry of Christian Reformed chaplains and to advance and facilitate ministries of care with Christian Reformed pastors, congregations, and other CRCNA ministries." The new job description includes various components for enhancing the caring ministry of the churches of our denomination: to promote and facilitate opportunities for training in care in CR churches, classes, and ministries; to develop and maintain a bi-national list of spiritual directors and mental health consultants adept at serving ordained professionals; and to advocate for clinical pastoral education as a significant educational opportunity for people studying for ministry and for people already serving in ministry.
2. By the nature of their work, chaplains engage in ministry at the margins of society with people who are dying, people who are at war, people who face limitations due to age, and so forth. In addition, our denomination has placed a higher value on preaching than on pastoral

care, further isolating chaplains from the heart of church life. By emphasizing the caring nature of the work of chaplains, this name change will highlight the value that chaplains add to the overall ministry of our denomination, the expertise they bring to our denomination, and the opportunity for additional training they can give to the churches of our denomination.

3. Since other offices of our denomination are involved in enhancing the caring ministries of churches (for example, Disability Concerns, Pastor-Church Relations, and Safe Church Ministry), the name change affirms chaplaincy's connection with these ministries.

B. That synod urge parents, the youth and education ministries in our churches, and Christian schools to encourage our young people to prayerfully consider a wide range of ministry options, including chaplaincy ministries and other specialized Christian vocations.

Committee for Contact with the Government (Mr. Mike Hogeterp, research and communications manager)

The Committee for Contact with the Government (CCG) is one manifestation of the CRC's pursuit of justice and peace in every area of life. CCG's work is rooted in the Christ-inspired vision—seeking justice, speaking hope. Our efforts within this vision are shaped by partners in the ecumenical and social justice communities. We are particularly excited to be partnering with Ms. Debbie VanHoeve as a member of CCG appointed by the Reformed Church in America's (RCA) regional synod of Canada—this working relationship is the next stage in a partnership that began with the RCA's observation of the CCG. Great partners and committed members allow CCG to pursue a quality research, advocacy, and popular communications program. Currently this work has two foci: peace as a priority in Canada's international policy (as discussed at Synod 2006), and walking in reconciliation with Aboriginal people. The CCG invites churches and CRC members to learn more about our work and engage in dialogue with us by subscribing to Mobile Justice—our monthly digital newsletter at www.crcna.org/ccg.

Disability Concerns (Rev. Mark Stephenson, director)

I. Introduction

The mission of Disability Concerns is “to bring about the full participation of all people with disabilities in the life of the church and the full participation of the church in the lives of people with disabilities.”

The mandate of Disability Concerns is “to assist the congregations and regional bodies of the Christian Reformed Church to ensure that members with disabilities receive appropriate congregational care and participate fully in congregational life.”

The vision of Disability Concerns can be summarized briefly: “In churches, ministries, and communities, everybody belongs, and everybody serves.”

In March 2009, Rev. Mark Stephenson was appointed to serve additionally as interim director of Chaplaincy Ministries, working half-time for each office.

II. Ministries of the Office of Disability Concerns

A team of people from Disability Concerns assists churches and ministries. This team is composed of approximately 450 church advocates; 39 regional advocates serving 33 out of the 47 classes; 7 agency advocates working within the CRC agencies; 2 part-time administrative assistants working from the CRC offices in Grand Rapids and Burlington; as well as our director. Regional Disability Concerns committees are active in Illinois, Michigan, and Ontario.

A. *Ministry that is transforming lives and communities worldwide*

- The director served as vocational mentor for a Calvin seminary student for two years; mentee is now studying to serve as a chaplain for people with disabilities.
- Disability Concerns web pages have been accessed thousands of times by people seeking resources for disability awareness, inclusion, starting support groups, and other matters related to disability and the church.
- Disability Concerns volunteers participated in leadership activities with the Muscular Dystrophy Association, the Association for the Blind, Friendship Ministries, CLC Network, Hope Network, Hope Haven, Village Northwest, Canadian Hard of Hearing Association, Joni and Friends, Christian Horizons, Shalem Mental Health Network, local organizations and support groups, as well as their local churches and classes.
- Disability Concerns resourced Christian Reformed World Missions with ways to reach out to the deaf in Kenya.
- Disability Concerns resourced congregations and individuals for contacting their MPs on C-384, a Canadian bill moving through parliament which would legalize euthanasia and assisted suicide.

B. *Ministry to and with the local churches*

The Office of Disability Concerns has assisted CRC churches over the past year by

- sponsoring conferences and leading workshops that train people about inclusion of people with disabilities in their life and ministry.
- resourcing congregations and advocating for inclusion through distribution of *Breaking Barriers*, our quarterly newsletter, to individuals, families, churches, and agencies that subscribe to it. All CRC churches receive a minimum of three copies per quarter; 576 churches currently receive more than that. All subscriptions to *Breaking Barriers* are free.
- creating an online version of *Breaking Barriers*, which is now available as a free subscription via RSS feed. Back issues can be viewed at anytime.
- translating each issue of *Breaking Barriers* into Spanish and making it available on the website.
- continuing to sell a booklet (now in its second printing) co-published by the Office of Disability Concerns and Faith Alive Christian Resources that is used for training council and care team members—

A Compassionate Journey: Coming Alongside People with Disabilities or Chronic Illnesses by John Cook.

- consulting with churches about many topics including support groups, Bibles for the deaf, language issues, printed resources, ministering to congregation members who have challenging behaviors, Multiple Chemical Sensitivity, and establishing outreach ministries to people with disabilities.
- promoting the Registered Disability Savings Plan in Canada and assisting numerous individuals in getting necessary resources for setting up plans for themselves or family members.
- establishing a Mental Health Task Force comprised of CRC chaplains and mental health professionals to assist churches in their ministry with people with mental illnesses.
- establishing a Facebook fan page to distribute ideas and resources on inclusion to “fans” of the page.
- maintaining a blog, articles, links, and other information on The Network pages to resource individuals and churches and to foster conversation about disability and inclusion.

C. Collaborative efforts

The Office of Disability Concerns collaborated with the following agencies and organizations over the past year:

- Calvin Theological Seminary and other Christian institutions of higher education—made several classroom presentations.
- *The Banner* and CRC Communications—worked to get stories related to disability issues to the denomination and wider church bodies.
- Rev. Terry DeYoung, the new coordinator for Disability Concerns for the Reformed Church in America—implementing the provisions of the Working Agreement approved by both denominations in 2008. Initial areas of cooperation include a newsletter, website, training/conferences, as well as web and print resources for use by congregations.
- National Council of the Churches in Christ of the U.S.A.—director serves on the Committee on Disabilities Leadership Team.
- Faith Alive Christian Resources—exploration of offering some resources in alternative formats, and gave input on a number of manuscripts with disability-related themes.
- Synodical Faith Formation Committee—director serving as a pastoral correspondent.

D. Stories to Share

The most dramatic story to share is the increasing accessibility of church buildings over the years. The following chart summarizes some of the findings of the yearly survey of churches done by Disability Concerns in partial fulfillment of our synodical mandate. The figures demonstrate the effort, time, and cost that many churches have undertaken to make their facilities accessible to people with mobility impairments in their congregations and communities. Over the past eight years about twice as many churches’ main entrances as well as the worship, classroom, restroom, and fellowship areas have become accessible. Even more astounding, in 2002 only about six

percent of CRC churches had an accessible pulpit area. Now approximately one-third of churches do—a five-fold increase!

Church areas with accessibility

	2009	2008	2007	2006	2005	2004	2003	2002
Worship area	893	874	850	832	802	747	633	482
Fellowship area	873	848	821	792	762	703	599	446
Classrooms	763	745	705	679	653	601	494	365
Restrooms	839	820	795	767	733	672	543	396
Pulpit area	337	330	273	253	249	213	115	68
Main entrance	832	795	776	752	734	681	563	421

Between 15 and 20 percent of the population in North America lives with a disability. As our population increases in average age, this percentage will increase. Therefore facilities and congregations that are welcoming to people with disabilities will only grow in importance.

E. Development of Future Ministry

Because the director has been serving only half-time with Disability Concerns, he has had to focus this year on holding on to gains that have been made in the past, especially nurturing the network of volunteers and maintaining the quality of *Breaking Barriers* and the website.

Three major initiatives that the office has undertaken this year and will continue to work on are

- engaging with the Reformed Church in America using the Working Agreement described briefly above,
- forming a Mental Health Task Force to promote safe dialog regarding mental health within the body of Christ, and
- assisting individuals and family members with the Registered Disability Savings Plan in Canada.

An additional goal that we hope to accomplish this coming year is to study, write, and publish the best practices of several CRC churches that are creatively ministering to people with disabilities.

III. Recruitment and training

Disability Concerns continues to recruit committed and passionate volunteers who work for the inclusion of people with disabilities in churches, classes, and institutions. Once each year we gather regional and agency advocates and Disability Concerns Advisory Committee members for training and encouragement in their work.

IV. Recommendation

That synod encourage Christian Reformed churches, classes, ministries, and institutions to sponsor events to observe Disability Week from October 11 through 17, 2010, with a suggested focus on mental health issues.

Grounds:

1. As the covenant people of God, the Bible calls us to be a caring community. We recognize that our Lord Jesus Christ requires the involvement of all his people in the ministry of his church. We have not always

made it possible for people with disabilities to participate fully in the community and have often isolated them and their families.

2. In 1985 we committed ourselves as a denomination to eliminate barriers of architecture, communication, and attitude “in order to use the gifts of all people in our life together as God’s family.” Although many CRC congregations, classes, ministries, and institutions have made significant progress in including people with disabilities in their work and ministry, much more can and should be done.
3. About 25 percent of the North American population experiences a diagnosable mental disorder in a given year. Just as the population at large, members of Christ’s body struggle with a variety of mental health issues. A much smaller population, about 6 percent, live with a serious mental illness. Due to its prevalence among younger people, mental disorders are the leading cause of disability in the United States and Canada for people ages 15 to 44. Disability Week, with a focus on mental health issues, will provide opportunities to educate congregations of the prevalence and nature of mental illnesses and help congregations to learn better ways to minister to people with mental illnesses when they are in a season of suffering. Disability Concerns will make a variety of resources available to assist congregations in this.
4. Specific and intentional events that recognize the importance of breaking down barriers and including people with disabilities in congregational life will remind God’s people of the welcome our Lord gives to all of his people (Luke 14:15-24) and will encourage them to press on toward becoming a community in which every member knows that he or she is indispensable (1 Cor. 12:12-27).

Pastor-Church Relations (Rev. Norman J. Thomasma, director; Rev. Cecil Van Niejenhuis, pastor/congregation consultant)

I. Introduction

The Office of Pastor-Church Relations (PCR) maintains a focus on its mandate to support pastors, staff, councils, and congregations through two basic functions—intervention and education. Over the twenty-eight years of its existence, PCR and the churches have been challenged to recognize that, while these functions remain basic, there are adjustments required because of changing culture, economic factors, and programs.

The ministry of PCR includes both *direct involvement* with pastors, staff, councils, and congregations, and *extension* or cooperative activities whereby the staff of the Office of Pastor-Church Relations train and support others who, in turn, provide direct support to pastors, staff, councils, and congregations.

II. Ministries of the Office of Pastor-Church Relations

A. Probably the most familiar activity of the Office of Pastor-Church Relations is its *direct involvement* in cultivating healthier relationships within the life of congregations. This may involve interventions when there are conflicts, consultations in which we can assist in ways that work toward healing

and growth, and educational activities in which the members and leaders of congregations learn creative ways of responding.

B. PCR *extends* its work through regional pastors in classes who provide support, encouragement, and counsel to pastors and spouses challenged by the demands of life and ministry. These pastors also assist in setting up mentor relationships for new pastors and encourage the development of support mechanisms when there are multiple staff persons within a congregation.

C. Another *extension* initiative has been the organization of training events by PCR staff to assist classes in church visiting. Many in the CRC agree that the work of church visitors has not received sufficient attention in recent years and, done well, could provide a vital resource for the classis and congregation. PCR will continue offering these training events in the coming year.

D. PCR continues to advance the work of mentoring new pastors. Mentoring, beginning in the seminary and continuing throughout a pastor's ministry, is seen as a crucial area of pastoral growth and accountability. Through peer groups supported by the Sustaining Pastoral Excellence program and assigned mentoring relationships, this aspect of encouragement and learning continues to be a key part of many pastors' experience.

E. Educational and retreat activities for councils, congregations, classes, and church staff also continue to be a focus of PCR activity. In many ways the educational and intervention activities are closely linked. In partnership with Sustaining Pastoral Excellence and one of its peer groups, PCR has developed a manual to assist congregational leaders in providing helpful evaluations for pastors and church staff.

F. Specialized transitional ministers (STM) are trained to help congregations deal with challenges during the transition between pastors. For a number of years the denomination has employed several transitional pastors. This strategy has been phased out, and a new strategy has replaced it. The new strategy involves developing a guild of endorsed STMs that works in close partnership with PCR. A steering committee has been formed consisting of Rev. Ronald L. Bouwkamp, Rev. Ronald L. Fyneweever, Rev. Peter C. Hogeterp, and Rev. Larry D. Slings. Along with the PCR staff, the steering committee is developing protocols for endorsement, salary guidelines, and approaches to continuing education.

With a growing number of recently retired pastors, congregations are also using other pastors as stated supply. These pastors are not working directly with PCR.

G. Through a subcommittee of PCR, the Staff Ministry Committee (SMC), over 1,200 non-ordained church professionals are being supported in a variety of ways. Opportunities for networking and distribution of resources are offered, and churches are increasingly requesting services pertaining to staffing issues. SMC is currently piloting a credentialing process for church staff. In addition, SMC is exploring ways to support the growing number of ministry associates in the CRC.

H. On behalf of synod, the Office of Pastor-Church Relations administers a continuing education fund for pastors and professional church staff. Grants of up to \$750 per year are awarded to pastors and staff who demonstrate the value of an educational event and/or opportunity they are pursuing. The number of applications for these funds continues to grow. It is gratifying to experience this growing interest in continuing education. It is also a challenge as the committee makes decisions regarding how the funds will be distributed.

I. At the request of synod, PCR developed “guidelines for former pastors” to assist pastors and congregations with the relationships that develop after a pastor leaves his/her role with a congregation. These guidelines are available on the Pastor-Church Relations website.

J. The Ministerial Information Service (MIS) maintains a database of more than eight hundred pastor profiles as well as several hundred congregation profiles. These profiles are used by search committees of congregations looking for pastors and by pastors seeking new positions. The Office of Pastor-Church Relations, with the assistance of a volunteer committee, recommends pastoral candidates for search committees.

III. Considerations for the future

A. PCR is exploring ways to develop a web-based approach to the Ministerial Information Service, an approach that will provide greater freedom for communication among churches looking for pastors as well as for pastors and pastor candidates looking for churches.

B. PCR continues to seek effective ways to build a working relationship with newly ordained pastors and church staff. Given the synodical decisions about ministry associates, we are attempting to find ways to better serve this expanding group among the churches. We are also meeting with Ecclesiastical Program for Ministerial Candidacy (EPMC) students currently enrolled at Calvin Theological Seminary and are familiarizing them with the work of our office. As part of the broader network of denominational entities who work with candidates, PCR also attempts to maintain a working relationship with the Candidacy Committee.

C. As one of the denominational ministries, PCR continues to explore ways to work with other denominational ministries in addition to responding to congregations, staff, and pastors. It is our goal to encourage healthy ways of doing ministry in the CRC.

Race Relations (Rev. Esteban Lugo, director)

The ministry of Race Relations continues to engage in a plan to bring about biblical reconciliation within the church. With the assistance of a team of trained facilitators, the staff of Race Relations is providing avenues for helping the CRC embrace its identity as God’s diverse and unified family through the ministry of racial reconciliation. The year 2009 served as a time in which the need for the ministry of reconciliation was highlighted not

only in the denomination but also in our society and throughout the world. During 2009, the Dance of Racial Reconciliation (DORR) and Widening the Circle (WTC) workshops were presented in various venues; most of the CRC agency staff members have now taken the workshops.

The Office of Race Relations provides training for people who are interested in becoming facilitators for the ministries of DORR and WTC. All facilitators are leaders who have developed a value for biblical diversity, have gained an understanding of systemic racism in their context, and have embraced the ministry of racial reconciliation.

The Office of Race Relations successfully planned and implemented the All Nations Heritage (ANH) campaign in 2009. Please watch for material regarding ANH Sunday, October 3, 2010, which will be sent to all the churches in May 2010.

The Race Relations Scholarship Program continues to encourage students who have a desire to engage in the ministry of racial reconciliation in their churches, schools, and communities. For the 2009–2010 school year, the Office of Race Relations awarded \$9,000 to nine students who are attending Calvin Theological Seminary, Calvin College, Dordt College, Kuyper College, Redeemer University College, and Trinity Christian College. This scholarship money comes directly from CRC congregations as offerings in response to All Nations Heritage Sunday. We praise God for the generosity that the churches have shown in this area of our ministry.

The Race Relations Team, made up of staff from the Office of Race Relations and the antiracism teams of CRC agencies, continues its work to develop and implement strategies for moving toward a work environment that is free of racism.

In conjunction with Faith Alive and Home Missions, the Office of Race Relations is working to develop a DVD and study guide on racial reconciliation to be distributed to our churches throughout North America.

The 2009 Multiethnic Conference was held at Trinity Christian College, Palos Heights, Illinois. This Multiethnic Conference proved to be an exciting time because it was scheduled for June 12–14, coinciding with Synod 2009. The keynote speaker and workshop facilitators were effective, and the participants were highly appreciative of what they had to say. By far, the participants loved the fellowship with other people of color. When asked what the highlight of the conference was, one person commented: “For me, it was working and learning how to love each other the way we are—that we are a body with differences but one in Christ with a purpose and a mission to unite all God’s people regardless of nationality or color.”

The Office of Race Relations invites and encourages people of color to become involved in their churches and to make themselves available to serve on committees, on denominational boards, and at synod. As members of these groups, people of color will gain not only valuable experience and leadership qualities, but will also bring their voices to the table, influencing decisions and directions that are crucial to the life of the CRC.

The denomination continues to face the challenge of placing high value on the dignity of all persons and on the inclusiveness of multiple cultures in life together as a church, as well as on the integrity of that identity. To that end, the ministry of Race Relations continues to lead and encourage throughout the whole church. The Office of Race Relations is committed to its statement

of vision and its mandate to make the CRC a truly diverse and unified family of God. Once again, we attribute all the progress and success that has been made in this ministry only to the grace and goodness of God. We covet your prayers for our continued work.

Safe Church Ministry (Ms. Beth A. Swagman, director)

I. Introduction

The mandate of the Safe Church Ministry is to create awareness of abuse, provide resources, conduct seminars, develop policies and protocols, train Safe Church Teams and Advocates, and consult with church leaders and others when allegations of abuse arise. These activities revolve around two core goals: reduce the risk of abuse in the church setting and assist the church to respond justly and compassionately when abuse has occurred.

II. Ministries of the Safe Church Ministry

A. Ministry that transforms lives and communities worldwide

Through December 2009, Safe Church Ministry helped 585 CRC congregations implement a child safety policy. In addition, several non-CRC congregations sought help with child safety policy resources and training last year. More recently, non-profit organizations began seeking policy resources and training. Slowly we are reducing the risk of harm to children in churches and in organizations that serve the needs of children.

Safe Church Ministry has trained twenty safe church teams. These teams have conducted twenty-four advisory panels around allegations of church leader misconduct. The advisory panel offers a victim an opportunity to encounter the church as a listener and responder to the harm that occurred—often many years before. The advisory panel offers an offender an opportunity to repent and to let go of the shame and self-deception that prevents healing. The advisory panel offers a church the opportunity to be justice-seekers and reconcilers. For individuals and the church, the advisory panel can be the foundation for personal and community restoration.

Fourteen safe church teams have an advocate to help a victim prepare for the advisory panel and to assist a church with its pastoral response. Advocates assisted in five advisory panels since 2005. Teams also offer support services to victims, offenders, and their families. Further, team members offer education and resources to classes and congregations. Over the past several years, eight classical teams conducted 58 council trainings and 62 trainings to congregations on child safety, the advisory panel process, or abuse prevention.

Safe Church Ministry creates or promotes resources for awareness and training. Examples of these resources are *Preventing Child Abuse* (4th edition); *Responding to Domestic Violence*; *Emotional Abuse: What You Should Know*; *Questions from the Pickle Jar: Teens and Sexuality*; and *Behind Closed Doors* (Christians and pornography). Through the websites of Faith Alive Christian Resources and Safe Church Ministry, brochures and small-fee booklets are available on the topics of dating violence, Internet safety, shaken baby syndrome, elderly abuse, and bullying. A series of four bulletin-inserts on child abuse, domestic violence, elderly abuse, and the healing path provide a

glimpse into problems that continue to plague church members and leaders and the steps that are necessary to respond.

B. *Ministry with the local church*

In addition to the services mentioned above, Safe Church Ministry sponsored Abuse Awareness in September 2009. About eighty-two churches in the United States and Canada responded to the invitation to learn more about abuse. Over 27,300 bulletin inserts on elderly abuse and the healing path were distributed. Through Faith Alive, free worship resources and small-fee booklets were available to churches to increase awareness of various forms of abuse.

This past year, several churches received training, and many churches received resources to design a child safety policy. At Anaheim CRC (California), over fifty people from CRC congregations and other faith communities learned more about abuse dynamics and prevention. In addition, based on the requests of several churches struggling to minister to convicted sexual offenders, Safe Church Ministry assisted these churches with the Covenant of Conduct that promotes ministry to the ex-offender while keeping the congregation safe.

Safe Church Ministry provides child safety policy training, church volunteer training, and other training opportunities for church members to grow in their understanding of the dynamics of abuse. In addition, Safe Church Ministry consults daily with individuals on matters related to abuse. In excess of 1,700 calls and email about abusive situations were received over the past 15 years, averaging about 120 per year.

C. *Collaborative efforts*

In partnership with Safe Church Ministry, Faith Alive Christian Resources published a new resource for survivors of abuse. *Bethesda: Come to the Water*, by Bonnie Nicholas, encourages women survivors to explore healing through brief meditations and self-reflection exercises. Faith Alive also published the fourth edition of *Preventing Child Abuse: Creating a Safe Place*. This book, first offered in 1995, helps churches and organizations design an effective child safety policy to reduce the risk of abuse in their programs. The fourth edition contains many new features, including discussions on bullying, sexual harassment, facility changes, and integrating a former sexual offender into a church or organization.

In two congregations, Immanuel (Ripon, CA) and Maranatha (Holland, MI), Safe Church Ministry conducted child safety presentations that were video-taped and converted into DVDs. These efforts help to expand the number of church members who receive training.

Safe Church Ministry sends out resources to many non-CRC congregations and their church leaders. Some attendees at training sessions and seminars are non-CRC. The message from non-CRC communities is that we are fortunate to have services and resources that other denominations do not offer.

In the fall, Safe Church Ministry spends a class period with seminarians in Pastoral Care at Calvin Theological Seminary. Informing seminarians of the dynamics of abuse prepares them for the likelihood that they will encounter these dynamics in their ministry.

Synod 2009 approved the regional advisory panel system. The system allows classes to develop a Safe Church Team that functions in the local classis while allowing two to three safe church teams within a region to pool their

members to form an advisory panel when necessary. The collaboration that arises from the regional advisory panel system increases networking among the classical teams within a region. The collaboration will also strengthen the composition of the panels because a more diverse pool of panelists is available. After synod's decision, the director was able to conduct three advisory panel trainings that included team members from classes within a region. The cross-team interaction generated enthusiasm for the regional panel system and a commitment to future opportunities for additional training.

In May 2009, Safe Church Ministry offered a conference for 26 advocates. The conference focused on understanding the advocate's role throughout the advisory panel process. The most informative time was spent with three advocates and one victim, each of whom shared their experiences with an advisory panel process. Repeatedly, advocates heard that walking with a victim through the advisory panel process is empowering to the victim and a privilege for the advocate. In October 2009, the Safe Church Team chairpersons gathered for their second conference, designed to offer networking and opportunity to share best practices.

D. Stories to share

A non-CRC church volunteer was arrested for assaulting a teenager who attended that church. The teen's parents requested that the accused volunteer refrain from attending worship because his presence upset the teen. Other parents from that church voiced concern about the volunteer's presence too. The pastor of the non-CRC church contacted the pastor of a neighboring CRC church for help. The CRC congregation, using the *Covenant of Conduct*, accepted the accused volunteer to worship with them and provided pastoral care throughout the trial and prior to sentencing. The teen victim was cared for by one congregation while the offender was cared for by another congregation. The physical separation combined with pastoral care allowed both individuals to begin the long journey toward healing. The two congregations profess different doctrines, yet they were able to focus on the needs of a victim and an offender which could lead to their reconciliation in the future.

A young woman acknowledged that the child abuse she suffered left her feeling spiritually void and discouraged. She resigned her membership in the Christian Reformed Church, but could not find a spiritual home elsewhere. A safe church team member reached out to her, and through extensive contact the woman disclosed her painful story. Through the support of the larger safe church team, she reported that the Christian Reformed Church had come full circle. The faith community within which she experienced so much suffering was now the faith community that surrounded her with the support she needed for healing.

Abuse thrives in secrecy. Fifteen years after the Safe Church Ministry was founded, a victim still finds it difficult to disclose a story of abuse. The victim remembers the offender and knows how his or her mind works. But the greater obstacle to disclosure is the anxiety of not knowing how the church will respond or whether it will respond.

There are success stories among churches that were called upon to respond to allegations of abuse. Councils and individual church leaders were heroic and compassionate while seeking the truth and providing pastoral care. But even stories of compassion and justice are difficult to report if we

intend to afford privacy to the victim and to the offender—and their family members. As a faith community, we need to grow in our understanding of abuse so that our response becomes predictable—compassion and justice for all from all.

E. Development of future ministry

Diversification of resources is a priority. Resources need to be available in Spanish, Korean, Laotian, Vietnamese, and other languages. Resources need to expand to include various forms of abuse and their related issues. Also, creating resources in a variety of media is important. With greater emphasis on economics and the environment, it is a future challenge to create paperless resources and training opportunities available online.

Future ministry should address attitudes within the North American CRC culture that perpetuate the cycle of abuse within families and within ministry relationships. For example, church members struggle to understand the nature of the imbalance of power between a church leader and a parishioner. When is a sexual relationship between a church leader and parishioner an affair and when is it misconduct?

Safe church teams are encouraged to develop the support-person position, the advocate position, and the educational ministry to foster liberal access to local resources. Safe church teams will take on greater responsibility for educating congregations and assisting church leaders to respond to abuse.

As restorative justice practices and restitution gain traction in the broader culture, the CRC will be faced with the challenge and the opportunity to engage in these processes for restoration of victims and offenders. Safe Church Ministry is developing a protocol for classes to use to form a “My Neighbor Fund” to assist victims with counseling expenses.

III. Recruitment and training

Safe Church Ministry will recruit active safe church team members to become educators for churches in their respective classes. Local resources are cost effective, respond quickly to shifting needs, and create a useful liaison between the churches and the classical safe church team.

The role of the advocate, designed to assist victims through the advisory panel process, is expanding to assist victims who seek restorative justice practices.

Safe Church Ministry will continue efforts to develop the safe church team chairperson role. The denomination has a very competent, but untapped, resource in these leaders.

ServiceLink (Ms. Carol Sybenga, program manager)

The 2009-2010 fiscal year marks a special anniversary for ServiceLink in that its Volunteer Program celebrates fifteen years of service. ServiceLink got its roots in Canada and served the denominational agencies and congregations for fourteen years, providing opportunities to engage in various ministries and programs. Throughout those years more than 4,600 people served in various capacities, coming alongside God’s people in numerous countries around the world. In July 2009 ServiceLink embarked on a new journey to transition its program and services into the United States, allowing more

churches and constituents to engage and interact with our denominational ministries. Our prayer for this journey is for God to guide our path as we engage in his kingdom work so that we reflect his image to the far corners of the world.

Social Justice and Hunger Action (Mr. Peter Vander Meulen, coordinator)

I. Introduction

The Christian Reformed Church has always had a good track record on addressing hunger and poverty but has realized that more needs to be done to address the *root causes* of world hunger. Understanding that hunger is always part of a complex web of natural disasters, poverty, oppression, structural injustice, and spiritual alienation, the CRC formed the Office of Social Justice and Hunger Action (OSJ) to address these root causes.

Today, the OSJ works to develop a deeper understanding of and response to God's call to "let justice flow like a river" in our personal and communal lives and in the structures of our societies, especially as it relates to hunger and poverty. The OSJ works to educate CRC members and to encourage and support their engagement in social justice issues. The OSJ is also occasionally involved in direct advocacy.

The Office of Social Justice acts in three ways: (1) through congregational social justice contacts or groups, (2) through organizing collaborative efforts with existing denominational agencies and institutions (see summary of the Micah Challenge, below), and (3) through ecumenical efforts and partnerships. In short, this office aims to be a catalyst that energizes and organizes our denomination for more appropriate, effective, and efficient action on behalf of and with the poor and the oppressed.

II. What is social justice?

When we talk about social justice, we are referring to God's original intention for human society: a world where basic needs are met, people flourish, and peace (*shalom*) reigns. God calls us, the church, to participate in redeeming society so that all—especially the weak and vulnerable—can enjoy God's good gifts. To do this, we identify the root causes of what keeps people poor, hungry, and powerless and then witness and work to remove those barriers.

III. Our work

A. We assist congregations to understand and become active in social justice issues.

1. With the Christian Reformed World Relief Committee (CRWRC), the OSJ has introduced a global Christian movement, the Micah Challenge, to the CRC. The Micah Challenge, endorsed by Synod 2004, encourages Christians to deepen their engagement with the poor and challenges government leaders to achieve the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). The MDGs are eight measurable, time-bound targets that address poverty and hunger and their root causes. The OSJ and CRWRC are particularly excited to engage a new generation of young Christian Reformed people

in global justice and poverty issues through campus visits and organizing. We look forward to collaborating on service-learning opportunities, concerts, college courses, and more.

2. The OSJ has also partnered with CRWRC to start a new movement of justice-seeking in our churches. The Congregation Justice Mobilization (CJM) project is well into its second year with a shared full-time coordinator. Some of the many initiatives coming out of CJM include “lunch and learn” webinars on various hot topics, a new fair trade coffee fundraiser for the CRC, and growing relationships with over twenty congregations.
 3. *OSJ News* is our bi-monthly newsletter for CRC justice activists. This popular newsletter is delivered electronically to over 1,500 recipients and supplies a unique Christian Reformed perspective on social justice news and events. This year also marks the launch of *OSJ Prayers*, a weekly email list of the most pressing justice issues around the world needing prayer. To subscribe to any of our publications, visit www.crcjustice.org and click on “Newsletters.”
 4. The OSJ website (www.crcjustice.org) serves more than two thousand visitors a month. In addition to providing news and advocacy opportunities, the site supplies practical resources and helpful information to pastors, deacons, social justice committees, students, and every CRC member who wants to live the call to do justice. Another exciting online resource is <http://justiceseekers.ning.com>—a social networking website for CRC advocates to learn, speak, and act as agents of social justice.
 5. *Shalom Seekers: Living the Call to Do Justice* is the OSJ workshop kit that helps to create or revitalize a social justice committee and to challenge and enrich Bible study or other education groups. Canadian and U.S. versions of the kit are available through Faith Alive Christian Resources by calling 1-800-333-8300 or by visiting www.faithaliveresources.org.
 6. In Canada, network building includes regular workshops at diaconal conferences, Days of Encouragement, and other venues (i.e., adult Sunday school). The Micah Challenge continues to provide many opportunities to introduce social justice into Canadian congregations and social justice groups.
- B.* In addition to our core goals of helping congregations and small groups become effective communities of salt and light, we work on education and advocacy regarding select issues important to the CRC.
1. We have added two part-time staff members to promote restorative justice projects in the United States and Canada, and to further develop those already in place. In Canada, there is an increased emphasis on restorative practices in all areas of our communal life. This increased focus on restorative justice stems from the decisions of Synod 2005.
 2. In Canada, we continue to benefit from and support KAIROS: Canadian Ecumenical Justice Initiatives. In addition, the OSJ is working with the Canadian Council of Churches Commission on Justice and Peace and the Evangelical Fellowship of Canada.

3. When appropriate for our areas of focus, we facilitate advocacy activities in Washington, D.C., and support the work of the Committee for Contact with the Government to do the same in Ottawa, Canada. This year, such advocacy included comprehensive immigration reform, the reform of U.S. foreign aid, and travel to Cuba. In Canada the Committee for Contact with the Government participated in the writing of an Ecumenical Brief on Afghanistan, which was released this past December.

The Office of Social Justice, in collaboration with the agencies and institutions of the CRC, looks back with gratitude on a productive year. We look forward to continuing to assist our denomination to become salt and light in the service of God's justice and mercy.

Urban Aboriginal Ministries

The Edmonton Native Healing Centre, Indian Family Centre in Winnipeg, and Indian Metis Christian Fellowship in Regina, all seek to shine as beacons of God's love, light, and justice in their respective cities.

Urban Aboriginal Ministries offers a cup of cold water, a listening ear, a time for people to rest and reflect. Through the gift of hospitality, this ministry welcomes people in the name of Jesus and offers his hope and healing in a culturally appropriate manner. As said by one of the founding pastors, "The Urban Aboriginal Ministries are about presence."

Access to a safe and friendly place for fellowship is a great blessing for people living in inner-city environments, and, during this past year, Urban Aboriginal Ministries poured more than 25,000 cups of tea and coffee for everyone who came through its doors.

Another way we offer presence is through our worship circles. Almost daily, people in these ministries gather round the circle to seek their Creator and discover him together. The circle is a sacred concept in Aboriginal culture; around the circle, everyone is equal and everyone has a voice. Around the circle, pain is revealed and healing is found. Around the circle, unity is experienced and expressed.

As one community member put it, "Here you aren't a number or just a person in a program. You really feel like you belong."

During this past year, Urban Aboriginal Ministries experienced trials and celebrations. Indian Family Center in Winnipeg mourned the deaths of both their director (Mrs. Jeanet Sybenga) and their administrator (Mrs. Brenda McLean), just one month apart. The Edmonton Native Healing Centre hosted "Hear the Call of the Drum," a Christian Aboriginal celebration of National Aboriginal Day. And the Indian Metis Christian Fellowship in Regina welcomed a SERVE team who helped them complete the renovations on their prayer lodge. The SERVE participants expressed joy with the gift of Christian Aboriginal music.

The three ministries thank the people of the Christian Reformed Church for their ongoing support. Although the legacy of residential schools has tarnished the image of God for so many, the presence of these ministries is a testimony to God's love and acceptance for all.

"When the righteous prosper, the city rejoices" (Prov. 11:10). This is our prayer, that God prospers our ministries in such a way that the city rejoices.

STANDING COMMITTEES

I. Introduction

Synod 2004 established the Synodical Ministerial Candidacy Committee (SMCC), which is now known as the Candidacy Committee. The committee mandate is available in a document titled "Journey Toward Ordination," which is available on the Candidacy Committee website. The initial members of the committee were appointed in 2004 and meet three times per year. As in each denominational committee, they serve a potential of two terms of three years each.

II. Committee membership

The following people currently serve on the Candidacy Committee: Ms. Kristen Pickaart (2012/1), Rev. Melvin Jackson (2012/1), Rev. Peter Choi (2011/1), Rev. Jack Vos (2010/1), Mr. Roy Heerema (2010/1), Dr. Albert Wolters (2012/2), Rev. Henry Jonker (2011/2), Rev. Thea Leunk (2010/2), Dr. Jay Shim (2010/2), Dr. Duane Kelderman (ex officio as the Calvin Seminary representative), Rev. Jerry Dykstra (ex officio as the ED), and Rev. David Koll (non-voting staff).

Two committee members are completing their second term, and one of the members (Rev. Jack Vos) has chosen not to serve a second term. Thus, the Candidacy Committee recommends the following nominees for election:

Position 1

Dr. LaVerne Jordan serves as an elder at Horizon Community CRC in Classis Rocky Mountain. She also serves on the classical ministerial leadership team. Dr. Jordan has a Ph.D. in counselor education and serves as dean of social sciences and humanities at Colorado Christian University.

Rev. Gilbert Varela has been an ordained pastor in the CRC since 1995. He was a seminary professor in his native country of Costa Rica, and more recently served as pastor of Sol del Valle CRC in Sun Valley, California. Rev. Varela currently serves three CRC ministries in western Michigan as pastor of Hispanic ministries.

Position 2

Rev. Lisa Vander Leek was ordained in the CRC as a minister of the Word in 2005. She has served as the pastor of youth at Hebron CRC, and she serves on the classical ministerial leadership team of Classis Quinte. Rev. Vander Leek is currently working on an advanced degree at the Toronto School of Theology.

Rev. Mary-Lee Bouma has been an ordained pastor in the CRC since 1997. She has served in campus ministry in both Mount Pleasant and Ann Arbor, Michigan, and is currently serving as a church planter in Vancouver, British Columbia. Rev. Bouma has a heart for urban ministry.

Position 3

Rev. Alvern Gelder was ordained as a pastor in the CRC in 1969 and has served CRC congregations in Crownpoint, New Mexico; Rapid City, South Dakota; Kansas City, Missouri; Belding, Michigan; and Binghamton, New York. He has been actively involved in the classical ministerial leadership team of Classis Atlantic Northeast and has served in numerous capacities at the classical and denominational level.

Rev. Ken Koeman was ordained as a pastor in the CRC in 1968, and has served CRC congregations in Albuquerque, New Mexico; Portland, Oregon; Lynden, Washington; and Bellevue, Washington. He has been actively involved in various classical and denominational positions and currently serves on the classical ministerial leadership team of Classis Pacific Northwest.

III. A review of the past year

In the past year the work of the Candidacy Committee has continued to be enhanced by the presence of a full-time director. The committee is encouraged that a number of goals and initiatives are now being accomplished. The committee highlights the following items of special interest:

A. *Ministry associate developments*

In the past year the Candidacy Committee has offered much consultation regarding the office of ministry associate. A “Ministry Associate Handbook” has been posted on the Candidacy Committee website to present the various policies and practices relevant to this office. Many of the initiatives discussed in the Candidacy Committee report to Synod 2009 have been accomplished.

B. *Clarification of Church Order Article 8*

In the work of the committee, the following guideline found in Church Order Supplement, Article 8, E, 4 has been noted and acknowledged:

The need for calling a minister of another denomination shall be acknowledged when the following applies:

- a. The minister to be called has such extraordinary qualifications that the church recognizes it would be important for the denomination to acquire the minister’s service, or,
- b. The need of a particular congregation for a pastor is so urgent that it can be met only by calling a minister from another denomination, or,
- c. The minister is a new-church developer and is being called to start a new church, or
- d. There is a need for indigenous leadership in a multicultural or ethnic minority church.

In some cases where a normal search process is under way within the churches, these guidelines are still found to be insufficient. Perhaps it is true that sections c and d above do not require as much deliberation. Often, however, sections a and b require a significant judgment call. Search teams and congregations who could very well find a pastor from the normal pool of ordained CRC pastors and candidates do not give what others may judge to be sufficient attention to that pool. Candidates for Article 8 are, thus, sometimes presented before a call is even extended to someone from the normal pool of pastors or candidates. In presenting such candidates, congregations are often convinced of “extraordinary qualifications” (section a) or “urgent need” (section b). Yet the candidacy committee finds itself in the position of questioning such convictions.

Thus, the following principles have been identified and adopted by the Candidacy Committee:

1. The burden of proof that a “sustained and realistic effort” has occurred is on the congregation and classis, not the denominational candidacy committee.
2. While each situation is unique, it is important to observe that historically churches have not claimed to have performed a “sustained and realistic

effort” before issuing at least two or three calls. Expecting a church to have issued two to three calls before claiming to have performed a “sustained and realistic effort” continues to be a reasonable guideline in most situations.

3. The Candidacy Committee, when performing its synodically mandated task of determining *need*, will consult with the local church, the counselor of the church, and the relevant classis committee.

C. Discussion regarding mandatory continuing education for pastors/mandatory clinical pastoral education for candidates

In the past year the Candidacy Committee has had discussions regarding the benefit of clinical pastoral education for new pastors and the benefits of continuing education for all pastors. Initial input gained through an inquiry of classes and CMLT leaders strongly encouraged pursuit of this discussion. A committee has been appointed to consider these issues in further depth and to present a proposal for consideration to Synod 2011.

D. Enhancing the Ecclesiastical Program for Ministerial Candidacy online program

The Candidacy Committee has had numerous discussions regarding the use of online tools for the delivery of the Ecclesiastical Program for Ministerial Candidacy. There is very strong support within the committee for such initiatives. A committee has been appointed to look into this matter in coordination with the appropriate personnel at Calvin Theological Seminary.

E. Welcoming new pastors (KIM and “Welcome to the CRC”)

The Candidacy Committee presents a yearly training program for Korean-speaking pastors that are affiliating with the CRC via Church Order Article 8. The KIM program (Korean Institute in Ministry) is directed by Dr. Jay Shim. The program involves an intensive ten days in Grand Rapids, Michigan, and includes lectures, exposure to our denominational ministries, and a time of interaction.

A similar program called “Welcome to the CRC” was piloted this year for interested persons who are affiliating with the CRC through Church Order Articles 8 or 23. The program was held for a week in January in coordination with the Calvin Institute of Christian Worship’s (CICW) Worship Symposium. We are grateful for the partnership of CICW in this project. Eleven pastors and spouses participated and deeply appreciated the hospitality shown to them.

VI. Recommendations

A. That synod grant the privilege of the floor to Rev. David Koll (director of candidacy) and to Rev. Peter Choi (member of the Candidacy Committee) when the Candidacy Committee report is discussed.

B. That synod by way of the printed ballot appoint three members to the Candidacy Committee from the nominees presented and reappoint those eligible for a second term.

C. That synod take note of the various initiatives of the Candidacy Committee as noted in this report and thank them for their continuing work.

Candidacy Committee
David R. Koll, director

I. Introduction

The church is the fellowship of those
who confess Jesus as Lord.
She is the bride of Christ,
his chosen partner,
loved by Jesus and loving him:
delighting in his presence,
seeking him in prayer—
silent before the mystery of his love.

(Our World Belongs to God: A Contemporary Testimony, para. 35)

When the Christian Reformed Church speaks these words of the Contemporary Testimony, we know that we are testifying about the church that is broader than just our own denomination. We are a part of the body, but we are not the whole. Our fellowship as church includes denominations on the other side of the globe, and it includes Christ-followers with different histories, politics, and theological emphases.

Formerly known as the Interchurch Relations Committee (IRC), the Ecumenical Relations Committee (ERC) is honored to represent the CRC in its ecumenical relationships. Sometimes these relationships are institutional and formal, and at other times they are established and fostered through more casual encounters. But whatever the venue—major ecclesiastical assemblies, multilateral associations, denominational offices, or coffee shops—the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace is experienced and celebrated.

This has been an eventful time for the ERC, with a lot of ecumenical activity taking place at many levels of denominational life. Several important matters are being brought to the attention of Synod 2010 by the ERC, and the committee seeks to provide synod with information needed to make decisions on the recommendations the committee brings.

II. Membership and meetings

The members of the ERC for the current year ending June 30, 2010, are Rev. Pedro Aviles (2010/1); Dr. Emily Brink (2010/1); Rev. Carel Geleynse (2011/2); Rev. Marvin Hofman, vice chair (2011/2); Dr. William T. Koopmans, chair (2012/2); Dr. James R. Payton, Jr. (2010/2); Dr. Shirley Roels (2012/1); Rev. Peter Slofstra (2010/1); Ms. Rebecca Warren (2011/1); and Ms. Anne Zaki (2012/1).

Rev. Bruce G. Adema and Rev. Gerard L. Dykstra serve as ex officio members of the ERC.

The ERC met twice since Synod 2009 and intends to hold its third meeting via conference call in mid-April. Typically the on-site meeting locations alternate between Grand Rapids, Michigan, and Burlington, Ontario.

III. Nominations for membership

The first terms of Rev. Pedro Aviles, Dr. Emily Brink, and Rev. Peter Slofstra end June 30, 2010, and they are eligible for a second term. The ERC heartily recommends them to synod for reappointment to a second term.

Dr. James Payton, Jr., is completing his second term of service. He has faithfully served the cause of ecumenicity for the CRC. The ERC recommends that synod express its gratitude for his service.

In keeping with the synodical guidelines and requirements for diversity in terms of gender, ethnicity, geographical location, and ordination, the ERC presents the following slate of nominees to synod to fill this position:

Ms. Rachel Kim is a special education teacher for the blind, a position she has held for eleven years. Prior to that she pursued the master of theological education degree at Calvin Theological Seminary. She has served as a church education and resource consultant for the denomination. Having immigrated to the United States as a child, Ms. Kim has a deep understanding of the multicultural and religious realities of our society and our world. She is a member of the Salt and Light CRC in Arcadia, California, the church that she and her husband, Rev. Jonathan Kim, planted ten years ago.

Ms. Debra Ortiz-Vásquez graduated from the John Marshall Law School with a Juris Doctor degree. For twelve years she was the executive director of the Ayuda Community Center, requiring interaction with churches and Christians of various traditions. During that time Ms. Ortiz-Vásquez also started a legal clinic that served the poor of Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. An active member of the Spirit and Truth Fellowship CRC in Philadelphia, she has been extensively involved in discipleship, youth, and leadership ministries.

IV. Information regarding ecumenical relations

A. Fraternal delegates

The ERC appointed the following fraternal delegates to the assemblies of churches with which the CRC has a relationship or is in ecclesiastical fellowship:

1. To the Reformed Church in Japan (RCJ) General Assembly, Rev. Lawrence Spalink.
2. To the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church in Canada, Rev. Bruce G. Adema.
3. To the Evangelical Presbyterian Church (EPC) General Assembly, Rev. Gerard L. Dykstra.
4. To the Associate Reformed Presbyterian Church (ARPC) meeting of synod, Dr. Peter Borgdorff.

B. Representatives and observers to ecumenical organizations

In accordance with the provisions of the Ecumenical Charter of the CRCNA, the ERC appointed representatives and observers to various ecumenical organizations.

1. Rev. Gerard L. Dykstra serves as the CRCNA's representative on the board of directors of the National Association of Evangelicals (NAE). Dr. Peter Borgdorff serves the NAE board as a member at-large.
2. Rev. Peter Slofstra and Rev. Bruce G. Adema serve as the CRCNA's representatives on the governing board of the Canadian Council of Churches (CCC). Rev. Adema now serves as president of the CCC.

3. Rev. Gerard L. Dykstra and Dr. Peter Borgdorff serve as the CRCNA's representatives to Christian Churches Together in the U.S.A. (CCT-USA).
4. Rev. Bruce G. Adema represents the CRC to the Evangelical Fellowship of Canada (EFC).

V. Multilateral relationships – ecumenical organizations

A. *World Communion of Reformed Churches (WCRC)*

As has been previously reported to synod, the Reformed Ecumenical Council (REC) and the World Alliance of Reformed Churches (WARC) are working toward the formation of the World Communion of Reformed Churches (WCRC), an organization that will be formed in June 2010 by taking over the functions of both the REC and WARC. Synod 2006 noted with gratitude and appreciation the proposal to form the WCRC as proposed by the WARC and the REC cooperation committee. The grounds synod adopted as the rationale for its support were

Grounds:

- a. The unity of the church, especially those in the Reformed tradition, is enhanced by this development.
- b. Uniting together is a better testimony to the world than remaining separate.
- c. The confessional basis proposed for the [WCRC] will be inviting for others to join the new organization.
- d. The basis for the [WCRC] is consistent with the confessional basis of the CRC in that [the WCRC] will be based on "the Word of the triune God, incarnated in Jesus Christ, the foundation of the Church, and written in the Holy Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments. This communion embodies the Reformed identity articulated in the historic Reformed confessions and continued in the life and witness of the Reformed community."
- e. In times of financial constraint, combining the witness of WARC and REC is responsible financial stewardship.

(Acts of Synod 2006, p. 666)

The Christian Reformed Church agreed to be the official host church for the Uniting General Council meeting (at which the WCRC will officially launch) to be held on the campus of Calvin College June 18-28, 2010. The Board of Trustees of the CRCNA formally approved the request that the CRC function as the official host for this event with the understanding that other North American WARC member churches will co-host the event with us. This Uniting General Council will be composed of some 600 delegates and is likely to draw additional observers and guests for an expected attendance of 1,000 representatives from more than 100 countries. To plan and arrange for this global event, a North American Arrangements Committee has been formed of representatives from the various co-hosting denominations. The following have been appointed by the ERC to represent the CRC at the Uniting General Council meetings: Rev. Bruce G. Adema, Rev. Gerard L. Dykstra, Dr. Mary Hulst, Dr. William T. Koopmans, Ms. Kate Kooyman, and Dr. Carol Rottman. Dr. Peter Borgdorff serves as chair of the arrangements committee and will co-chair the Uniting General Council meeting with Rev. Clifton Kirkpatrick (PCUSA) until new leadership is elected midway through the council meeting.

B. Reformed Ecumenical Council

The ERC maintains contact with the Reformed Ecumenical Council (REC) through its *REC News Exchange* and through its general secretary, Dr. Richard van Houten, whose office is in Grand Rapids, Michigan. Most of the present work of the REC is conducted by its executive committee, and Dr. Peter Borgdorff is presently serving as president of the REC and chair of the REC executive committee until June 2010, when the REC shall join with WARC to form the new WCRC.

C. World Alliance of Reformed Churches

The CRC has held membership in WARC for several years, and there has been regular contact with the general secretary of WARC, Dr. Setri Nyomi, throughout the year. The CRC's relationship within WARC has been wholesome, and this gives great hope that the relationship with the new WCRC will be very positive as well.

The regional configuration of WARC is expressed through the Caribbean and North American Area Council (CANAAC). Rev. Bruce G. Adema serves on the steering committee of CANAAC on behalf of the CRC.

D. Evangelical Fellowship of Canada

The CRC is a member of the Evangelical Fellowship of Canada (EFC). The EFC focuses on bringing evangelical Christians together for greater impact in mission, ministry, and witness. It does so by working closely together for ministry empowerment and by working cooperatively to address the government and the courts on current issues of interest and concern.

E. Canadian Council of Churches

The CRC is a member of the Canadian Council of Churches (CCC). The CCC works primarily through its Commissions on Faith and Witness and on Justice and Peace. The CRC has representation on both commissions, and the CRC representatives make the CRC's voice heard in matters relating to ecumenical relations and to broad concerns within our culture and world. Rev. Bruce Adema, the CRC's ecumenical officer, serves as president of the CCC.

F. National Association of Evangelicals

The National Association of Evangelicals (NAE) meets twice each year, where representatives of evangelical denominations, ministries, and congregations discuss matters of common interest and concern. In addition to these membership meetings, the CRC cooperates with the NAE Commissions in the area of chaplaincy ministries (especially as that relates to endorsement of chaplains' issues). From time to time, the CRC is asked to participate in other NAE initiatives.

G. Christian Churches Together in the U.S.A.

Since the fall of 2001, church leaders from a wide spectrum of ecclesiastical traditions have been meeting to discuss and create a new kind of ecumenical organization that includes participants from all Christian traditions at the same table: Christian Churches Together in the U.S.A. (CCT-USA). The present participants in CCT-USA represent five families of churches as follows: Roman Catholic, Orthodox, Historic Protestant, Evangelicals/Pentecostals, and Historic Ethnic.

Synod 2004 authorized the IRC (now ERC) to participate in this ecumenical organization. The ERC has monitored the CRC's involvement and has prepared a review of our relationship with the CCT-USA. The report and its recommendations can be found in Appendix A.

VI. Bilateral relationships

Relationships with other denominations can be extremely rewarding and sources of great blessing. The CRC has asked for and received advice from other denominations, and it has been asked for and given advice to other denominations. Partnerships and ministry alliances not only allow us all to have a greater impact on others, they also help us to grow in discernment, and together to demonstrate the unity of the worldwide fellowship of God's people.

An example of this came through our relationship with the Reformed Churches of South Africa (GKSA). On hearing about the tragedy of the earthquake in Haiti, that denomination offered to partner with the CRC through the work of CRWRC by making a generous contribution on behalf of the members of the GKSA. That example led us to send messages to other denominations around the world, letting them know that if they were seeking ways to be of assistance, they could do that through our relief agency, as well as by lifting up the nation of Haiti in their prayers.

A. *International*

1. The ERC has taken a careful look at the state of our engagement with the various denominations with whom we are in ecclesiastical fellowship and correspondence, and it aims to identify ways of deepening these relationships. Therefore the ERC has targeted four denominations, each in a different level of engagement with the CRC, with a view toward moving to a higher level of fellowship. Lessons learned from this effort will inform our future activities.

2. Protestant Church in the Netherlands (PCN)

In recognition of the long and historic relationship between the CRC and the PCN, Synod 2008 decided to

declare that it is the desire of the CRC to develop and maintain a relationship with the PCN that

- a. Is in the spirit of our Ecumenical Charter.
- b. Does not obscure the seriousness of the issues that led to restrictions placed on the GKN prior to the formation of the PCN—issues that appear to continue today in the PCN.

(Acts of Synod 2008, p. 512)

Synod 2008 then instructed the IRC (now ERC)

to attempt to develop a mutually acceptable process to work with the PCN toward a long-term relationship between the CRC and the PCN and to report the progress to synod annually.

Grounds:

- a. The PCN confesses the Bible to be the authoritative, infallible Word of God in conformity with the Reformed confessions.
- b. The principles of ecumenicity demand that we relate faithfully to the whole church of Jesus Christ, and especially with those churches with whom we share a common history and confessional heritage; it follows

that the CRC can value and benefit from fellowship with the PCN even though, as with every other ecumenical relationship the CRC maintains, there remain differences between the churches involved.

- c. The CRC has an ecumenical opportunity to be in fellowship with the PCN as it seeks to be a Reformed witness in a radically secular European environment and is also seeking spiritual renewal within its own fellowship.
- d. The PCN expresses its fervent desire to be in ecclesiastical fellowship with the CRC.
- e. The historical character of the CRC's relationship to the GKN, which in spirit is continued in the PCN, is important to the ecumenical life of the CRC and lends credibility to our own witness as expressed in the CRC's Ecumenical Charter.
- f. It is the expressed wish of the Gereformeerde Bond (Reformed Alliance), an evangelical and more conservative alliance of ministers and congregations within the PCN, that the CRC be in fellowship with the PCN.

(Acts of Synod 2008, pp. 512-13)

Subsequent to the meeting of Synod 2008, the IRC (ERC) arranged for a meeting with PCN representatives to explain the decision of synod and to discuss how the CRC and the PCN might "develop a mutually acceptable process . . . toward a long-term relationship." A delegation consisting of Dr. Peter Borgdorff (ecumenical officer), Rev. Gerard L. Dykstra (executive director), and Dr. William T. Koopmans (IRC chair) met with a delegation representing the PCN. The meeting was cordial and helpful. Though there has been some delay on our part, for which we apologize, the ERC is currently working to build on the results of that meeting through the drafting of a "memorandum of understanding." The intent of a formalized memorandum of understanding is to identify concrete and tangible ways in which our denominations can dialogue, strategize, and work together in various aspects of ministry. The ERC anticipates that such a memorandum of understanding, when approved by the PCN and adopted by the synod of the CRCNA, will move our denominations beyond the impasse created under the previous categorization of ecclesiastical fellowship (with or without restrictions). The ERC will continue to move this matter forward and report all progress and developments to synod.

3. Church of Jesus Christ in Madagascar

The Church of Jesus Christ in Madagascar (FJKM) is currently a church in formal dialogue with the CRC. The FJKM has requested that the relationship between our denominations be deepened, and asked that they be transitioned from a church in formal dialogue to a church in ecclesiastical fellowship.

Complicating the matter was recent turmoil within Madagascar and a difficult relationship with the governing structures. In January the ERC received reports of harassment and persecution against the FJKM and its leadership. An electronic communication was sent from the ERC staff to all congregations of the CRC, requesting prayer to the Lord and advocacy to our own government leaders on behalf of the FJKM.

The ERC will continue to correspond with the FJKM and will present further recommendations to a future synod.

B. North America

The CRC maintains ecclesiastical fellowship with three churches in North America. They are the Associate Reformed Presbyterian Church (ARPC),

the Evangelical Presbyterian Church (EPC), and the Reformed Church in America (RCA). Fraternal delegates are exchanged with these churches on a regular basis.

1. Reformed Church in America

Synod 2002 instructed the Interchurch Relations Committee (now ERC) to engage in dialogue with the Commission on Christian Unity of the Reformed Church in America. The mandate is as follows:

That synod instruct the IRC, in consultation with appropriate agencies of the CRCNA, to engage in a dialogue with the Commission on Christian Unity of the RCA, to ascertain how our ministry and mission throughout the world might be strengthened by greater cooperation between our two denominations, and to report its findings to Synod 2005.

(Acts of Synod 2002, p. 498)

The RCA's Commission on Christian Unity was also given a mandate by its synod in 2002:

To enter into dialogue with the Christian Reformed Church in North America (CRC), exploring ways of moving toward greater unity between the CRC and the RCA in their ministry and mission, beginning with a discussion of the orderly exchange of ministers, and to report to the 2003 General Synod; and, further, to encourage the agencies of the RCA to continue to expand their cooperative efforts with their CRC counterparts.

Cooperation with the RCA and its programmatic offices is in place. Examples of these partnerships follow:

- A partnership agreement has been established between CRWRC and the RCA office of disaster response.
- Faith Alive Christian Resources has formed a publishing and distribution partnership with the RCA office of faith and discipleship.
- The CRC is using the RCA Study Guide for consideration of the Belhar Confession as a basis for developing a study guide for use within CRC churches as the CRC considers the Belhar between 2009 and 2012. In addition, a common introduction to the Belhar Confession has been developed.

These references include neither the numerous consultative contacts that take place between denominational staff nor the many cooperative ventures conducted by classes and congregations throughout both denominations.

2. Presbyterian Church in Canada

The ERC has been in conversation with the Presbyterian Church in Canada (PCC) for a number of years. PCC congregations and CRC congregations often serve in the same communities, share a Reformed theological perspective, support many of the same ministries, and serve together on ecumenical boards such as the Canadian Council of Churches and the World Alliance of Reformed Churches. The dialogue has been warm and encouraging.

The ERC and the PCC's Ecumenical and Interfaith Relations Committee drew up an affirmation of the relationship between our churches that currently exists informally, but they wish it could become more formal. That document was presented to the last General Assembly of the PCC

meeting in Hamilton, Ontario, and was enthusiastically affirmed by the delegates there.

The ERC recommends that synod adopt the Affirmation of the Relationship (Appendix B) between the Presbyterian Church of Canada and the Christian Reformed Church in North America and by so doing recognize the PCC as a church in corresponding fellowship with the CRC.

Grounds:

- a. The PCC and the CRC share the Christian faith, a Reformed theological perspective, and variations of Presbyterian church government.
- b. There are many longstanding relationships between congregations of our two denominations who join together in goodwill for worship, for fellowship, and for collaborative ministries.
- c. Both denominations have strong commitments to mission in Canada and around the world, to evangelism and justice, and to a prophetic view of the mission of the church in society.
- d. By developing this more formal relationship, we may together explore new horizons of mission that respond to Christ's calling to the church today.

VII. Dialogue with the Roman Catholic Church (RCC)

Synod 2003 approved a recommendation authorizing the IRC (now ERC) to participate in an ongoing dialogue between the Roman Catholic Church and four Reformed denominations in the United States. The topic of this dialogue is the sacramental understanding of the Eucharist (Lord's Supper) and baptism.

Several meetings of the dialogue partners have been held since September 2003. Dr. Richard Mouw, president of Fuller Theological Seminary, and the Most Reverend Patrick Cooney, Bishop of Gaylord, Michigan, were selected as co-chairs of the multi-year discussion. The CRC participants are Dr. Lyle Bierma, Ms. Susan Rozeboom, and Dr. Ronald Feenstra.

The present focus of the dialogue is on the sacrament of baptism. It was deeply disappointing to receive word that the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops would not approve the "Common Agreement on Mutual Recognition of Baptism" that was the result of many consultations. We hope for renewed engagement and dialogue—work is being done to find a new way forward.

VIII. Ecumenical Charter

The Ecumenical Charter of the CRC was adopted by Synod 2006. The very first sentence of that charter states that "the ecumenical landscape is changing and undergoing major revision." With that being true, it should come as no surprise that the Ecumenical Charter itself needs periodic revision.

The ERC has noted that on occasion the Ecumenical Charter has caused some confusion. Synod 2006 opened up new vistas in ecumenical engagement for the CRC, but the new Ecumenical Charter used categories and terms from previous times that carried unintended meaning.

In accordance with its mandate, the ERC presents an updated version of the Ecumenical Charter that we believe brings clarity, particularly to the classification of relationships, while being consistent with the intention and

vision of the CRC for ecumenical matters. The edited version clarifies the category of churches in dialogue—striving for a charter that does not hinder but, rather, becomes a help.

We recommend that synod endorse the modifications to the Ecumenical Charter as found in Appendices C-1 and C-2.

Grounds:

1. The revision to the Ecumenical Charter clarifies the classification of ecumenical relationships.
2. This version of the Ecumenical Charter will be a more helpful guide for the many ecumenical endeavors of the CRC.

IX. Church Order Article 49

The ERC proposes that synod consider a revision of Church Order Article 49 that brings it into line with the Ecumenical Charter. The current Article 49 states

Present Article 49

- a. Synod shall appoint a committee to correspond with other Reformed churches so that the Christian Reformed Church may exercise Christian fellowship with other denominations and may promote the unity of the church of Jesus Christ.
- b. Synod shall decide which denominations are to be received into ecclesiastical fellowship, and shall establish rules which govern these relationships.

The following proposed revision of Church Order Article 49 is consistent with the Ecumenical Charter as adopted by synod:

Proposed Article 49

- a. Synod shall appoint a committee to encourage ecumenical relationships with other Christian churches, especially those that are part of the Reformed family, as articulated in the synodically approved Ecumenical Charter of the Christian Reformed Church so that the Christian Reformed Church may exercise Christian fellowship with other denominations and may promote the unity of the church of Jesus Christ.
- b. Synod shall approve the churches with whom the Christian Reformed Church is in ecclesiastical fellowship, the churches with whom the Christian Reformed Church is in dialogue, and the ecumenical organizations in which the Christian Reformed Church holds membership or significantly participates.

Grounds:

1. This proposed change is consistent with the revisions contained in the proposed Ecumenical Charter also presented to Synod 2010.
2. This proposed change is consistent with the Ecumenical Charter that was approved by Synod 2006.
3. This proposed change more clearly specifies the prerogatives of synod with reference to the Ecumenical Charter and ecumenical relations.
4. Synod 2010 is considering the recommendations of the Church Order Revision Task Force; thus it seems appropriate that a revision to Article 49 also be considered at this time.

X. Interfaith dialogue

Synod 2009 took note that the ERC was engaged in a discussion about interfaith dialogue, which concerns interaction with persons from faiths other than the Christian faith, for the purpose of fostering better understanding between people of differing faiths living in a pluralistic society. It was then decided

1. That synod authorize the expansion of IRC's mandate to include interfaith dialogue to assist the CRC in its interreligious encounters.

Grounds:

- a. The CRC on several occasions has been asked by ecumenical partners to participate in such dialogue.
 - b. While interfaith dialogue is to be distinguished from ecumenicity, there is sufficient overlap to warrant the expansion of the IRC mandate.
2. That synod instructs the IRC to submit a full rationale for and the wording of the revised mandate to Synod 2010 for approval.

Ground: Official mandates of standing committees of synod are appropriately approved by synod.

(Acts of Synod 2009, p. 611)

The ERC report regarding interfaith dialogue and its recommendations can be found in Appendix D and is presented for synod's approval.

XI. The Belhar Confession

Synod 2009 agreed to propose to Synod 2012 that the Belhar Confession be adopted as part of the standards of unity of the CRC (as a fourth confession). It also authorized the ERC to promote the study of the Belhar Confession in the churches during this consideration period.

The ERC asked Dr. Peter Borgdorff to facilitate the study of the Belhar Confession on its behalf. With his assistance, a number of classes have discussed the issues raised by this confession, church councils and congregations have studied it, pastors have preached biblical messages on its themes, and many agencies and offices of the CRC have used the Belhar in their work. We have found there to be enthusiastic engagement at many levels with the content of the Belhar Confession.

The task of promoting study of the Belhar will continue over the next two years, and we are confident that when Synod 2012 deliberates on the proposal of Synod 2009, the delegates and the church will be ready to come to a confident decision.

XII. Churches in ecclesiastical fellowship and ecumenical visitors at synod

The CRC maintains a relationship of ecclesiastical fellowship with a wide range of Reformed denominations. A complete list of such churches is attached in Appendix E. Some churches are in a less formal relationship with the CRC; however, those relationships are no less important than others. Additionally the CRC participates in a number of multilateral associations.

The ERC facilitates the invitation and hosting of ecumenical visitors to the synod of the CRC. A rotation schedule of invitation has been developed, allowing synod to welcome people from across the world and from many churches and organizations. Ecumenical guests to this synod will come from

churches in ecclesiastical fellowship, a church in corresponding fellowship, and a multilateral ecumenical organization.

We look forward to welcoming them, hearing from them, and growing in fellowship with them.

XIII. Recommendations

A. That Dr. William Koopmans, chair, and Rev. Bruce Adema be given the privilege of the floor when matters relating to the Ecumenical Relations Committee are being discussed.

B. That synod express its gratitude to Dr. James Payton, Jr., for serving the cause of ecumenicity for the CRC.

C. That synod by way of the printed ballot elect a member to serve on the ERC for a three-year term.

D. That synod by way of the printed ballot ratify the reelection of Rev. Pedro Aviles, Dr. Emily Brink, and Rev. Peter Slofstra to the ERC for a second three-year term.

E. That Synod 2010 endorse the continued membership of the CRCNA in Christian Churches Together in the U.S.A. (CCT-USA) (Appendix A).

Grounds:

1. The grounds approved by Synod 2004 continue to be relevant to such membership.
2. CCT-USA continues to provide an excellent forum for the CRC to carry on its ecumenical work with the United States.
3. The very broad membership of CCT-USA allows the CRC to engage with a significant representation of the Christian community.

F. That synod adopt the Affirmation of the Relationship between the Presbyterian Church of Canada and the Christian Reformed Church in North America, and by so doing recognize the PCC as a church in corresponding fellowship with the CRC (see Appendix B).

Grounds:

1. The PCC and the CRC share the Christian faith, a Reformed theological perspective, and variations of Presbyterian church government.
2. There are many longstanding relationships between congregations of our two denominations who join together in goodwill for worship, for fellowship, and for collaborative ministries.
3. Both denominations have strong commitments to mission in Canada and around the world, to evangelism and justice, and to a prophetic view of the mission of the church in society.
4. By developing this more formal relationship, we may together explore new horizons of mission that respond to Christ's calling to the church today.

G. That synod approve the revisions to the Ecumenical Charter as found in Appendix C-1.

Grounds:

1. The revision to the Ecumenical Charter clarifies the classification of ecumenical relationships.
2. This version of the Ecumenical Charter will be a more helpful guide for the many ecumenical endeavors of the CRC.

H. That synod adopt the following revision of Church Order Article 49:

Proposed Article 49

- a. Synod shall appoint a committee to encourage ecumenical relationships with other Christian churches, especially those that are part of the Reformed family, as articulated in the synodically approved Ecumenical Charter of the Christian Reformed Church so that the Christian Reformed Church may exercise Christian fellowship with other denominations and may promote the unity of the church of Jesus Christ.
- b. Synod shall approve the churches with whom the Christian Reformed Church is in ecclesiastical fellowship, the churches with whom the Christian Reformed Church is in dialogue, and the ecumenical organizations in which the Christian Reformed Church holds membership or significantly participates.

Grounds:

1. This proposed change is consistent with the revisions contained in the proposed Ecumenical Charter also presented to Synod 2010.
2. This proposed change is consistent with the Ecumenical Charter that was approved by Synod 2006.
3. This proposed change more clearly specifies the prerogatives of synod with reference to the Ecumenical Charter and ecumenical relations.
4. Synod 2010 is considering the recommendations of the Church Order Revision Task Force; thus it seems appropriate that a revision to Article 49 also be considered at this time.

I. That synod receive the report of the Interfaith Dialogue Subcommittee of the ERC as found in Appendix D for information and instruct the ERC to proceed accordingly.

J. That synod adopt the following additions to the present mandate of the ERC, reflecting the responsibility for interfaith dialogue (while noting that the interfaith mandate should be maintained as a document distinct from the Ecumenical Charter; see Appendix D, III):

- Compile resources for the Christian Reformed Church that will guide interfaith encounters.
- Monitor and facilitate interfaith encounters that come through ecumenical activities and within the context of the ministries of the CRC.
- Provide advice and perspectives for the CRC as requested.
- When appropriate and opportune, represent the CRC in interfaith dialogues.

K. That synod approve the change in the name of the Ecumenical Relations Committee to the Ecumenical and Interfaith Relations Committee (EIRC; see Appendix D, IV).

Grounds:

1. The proposed name reflects the broader mandate and additional responsibilities for interfaith dialogue.
2. The proposed name makes clear that ecumenical engagement and interfaith dialogue are distinct activities.

Ecumenical Relations Committee
Bruce G. Adema, ecumenical officer

Appendix A

Review of Relationship with Christian Churches Together in the U.S.A.

I. Introduction

Synod 2004 authorized the CRCNA to become a founding member of the Christian Churches Together in the U.S.A. (CCT-USA) based on the four grounds included with the recommendation from the Interchurch Relations Committee (IRC, now called the Ecumenical Relations Committee [ERC]). In addition synod instructed that a review of that relationship be presented to Synod 2010. The actions of Synod 2004 follow:

- a. That synod authorize the IRC [ERC], on behalf of the CRCNA, to become a founding participant in the new ecumenical organization known as Christian Churches Together in the U.S.A. (CCT-USA).

Grounds:

- 1) The theological affirmations and the purpose of the organization are consonant with the confessions and teachings of the CRC, and the *modus operandi* (consensus decision-making) is in keeping with the polity of the CRC, namely that no external assembly makes decisions that are binding on the CRC.
 - 2) Participation in CCT-USA enables the CRC to fulfill “its ecumenical responsibility to cooperate and seek unity with all churches of Christ in obedience to the gospel and insofar as is commensurate with the gospel” (Ecumenical Charter, III, A, 1; *Agenda for Synod 2000*, p. 248; *Acts of Synod 2000*, pp. 670-71).
 - 3) “The CRCNA seeks to pursue its ecumenical task by participating in ecumenical organizations, fellowships, and associations that enable it to carry out its ecumenical responsibilities broadly, effectively, and efficiently” (Ecumenical Charter, III, C, 1, b). CCT-USA provides a new opportunity to relate to a wide variety of Christian churches within a single organization.
 - 4) Participating at this time will allow our representatives an opportunity to help shape the immediate future of CCT-USA.
- b. That synod request the IRC [ERC] to prepare a review of the relationship with CCT-USA for Synod 2010.

(*Acts of Synod 2004*, pp. 569-70)

The Ecumenical Relations Committee has been actively involved with CCT-USA since 2004 and has delegated representatives to each of the annual meetings since that time. Initially Dr. David Engelhard and Dr. Peter

Borgdorff served as CRCNA representatives to CCT-USA. More recently Rev. Jerry Dykstra and Dr. Borgdorff have served as part of the CCT-USA.

The relationship with the other members of CCT-USA has been excellent. Christian Churches Together continues to be a source of encouragement and support to the churches engaged in this ecumenical conversation. In addition, the CRCNA has had a significant voice in shaping the direction and focus of CCT-USA. The format of conversation and consensus has created an environment in which difficult yet practical matters can be discussed and decisions can be reached. Over the past few years, CCT-USA has focused its conversations around the issues of poverty and evangelism. These two issues, identified through a process of consensus, have been the focal point for conversations and learning.

In reviewing the four grounds for the initial engagement in CCT-USA by the CRCNA, it is evident that these grounds continue to be as compelling today as they were in 2004. Having experienced the continued growth of Christian Churches Together, its ongoing practices of cooperative consensus building, its commitment to building fellowship among its members, and its focus on practical relevant discussion, the CRCNA should continue to actively participate in and support the work of Christian Churches Together in the U.S.A.

II. Recommendation

That the CRCNA continue its membership in Christian Churches Together.

Grounds:

1. The grounds approved by Synod 2004 continue to be relevant to such membership.
2. CCT-USA continues to provide an excellent forum for the CRC to carry on its ecumenical work within the United States.
3. The very broad membership of CCT-USA allows the CRC to engage with a significant representation of the Christian community.

Appendix B

Affirmation of the Relationship between the Presbyterian Church in Canada and the Christian Reformed Church in North America

PREAMBLE

Over the past few years conversations have taken place between the Christian Reformed Church in North America's Interchurch Relations Committee and the Presbyterian Church in Canada's Ecumenical and Interfaith Relations Committee. Also, on the local level, we have maintained many longstanding relationships between congregations of our two denominations, who join together in goodwill for worship, for fellowship, and for collaborative ministries.

We celebrate the many facets of shared ministry between our denominations over the past several years. Together we have prepared Christian education curriculum and other resources, worked and shared resources, both human and financial, through the Canadian Foodgrains Bank, facilitated food shipments and CFGB growing projects across Canada, and shared

in ecumenical ministry through Kairos, the World Alliance of Reformed Churches, and the Canadian Council of Churches.

Both the Presbyterian Church in Canada and the Christian Reformed Church in North America recognize that through this formal statement we are affirming and building upon existing relations with a denomination that shares the Christian faith, a Reformed theological perspective, and a Presbyterian form of church government. Both denominations have strong commitments to mission in Canada and around the world, to evangelism and justice, and to a prophetic view of the mission of the church in society. We look forward to developing together new horizons of mission which respond to Christ's calling to the church today.

AFFIRMATIONS

1. It is with thanksgiving to God that we acknowledge the bonds of fellowship Christians have with each other through our Lord Jesus Christ and recognize that the Presbyterian Church in Canada (PCC) and the Christian Reformed Church in North America (CRCNA) share a mutual responsibility in Christ's mission.
2. We jointly affirm our readiness to work together in mission in Canada and wherever else God may lead, and to this end we formally recognize this relationship in Christ's mission between our two churches.
3. We recognize that each partner has understanding and insights which, when shared with the other, continue to lead to a more faithful response to God's call to mission, and to this end we encourage consultations and visits between officers, staff, and other leaders of our two churches.
4. In addition, we see the value of exchanges of visitors at our respective general assembly and synod, and we see the possibility of sharing personnel with specific expertise in order to give expression to our desire to collaborate in ministry.
5. We further encourage our respective presbyteries and classes, in addition to our local congregations, to welcome exchanges of visitors and to engage in shared ministries wherever possible for the building up of Christ's church.
6. In order to develop better understanding and prayer support between our two churches, we agree to the regular exchange of information about the life and mission of our churches and to share information received throughout our churches.
7. We concur on the value of interchurch dialogue and collaboration at the local, regional, and national levels, and we will encourage respectful and fruitful engagement of our churches together at every level.
8. We do not view our relationship together as exclusive but rather as a part of our broader ecumenical commitment.
9. We understand and agree that either partner may withdraw from this relationship at any time after honest and thorough discussion with the other partner.

10. This statement is intended not to limit the relationship between the PCC and the CRCNA but to give a formal basis to what is seen as a growing relationship between our two churches.

Appendix C-1

Proposed Revised Ecumenical Charter

Preface

The state of ecumenical relations is in constant transition. The days of merging likeminded denominations, at least for now, are over. Current discussions are about covenants, agreements, and partnerships—all of which presuppose the existence of churches that are independent of each other, equal to each other, and open to an ecumenical relationship.

There are also substantial changes in the way churches relate. There was a time when ecumenical relations were initiated and maintained primarily with those who shared the same faith, viewpoints, confessions, and theological heritage. For the Christian Reformed Church, that meant that our church-to-church relations were initiated and developed with churches that were, in significant respects, most like the CRC. Historically, ecumenical contacts of the CRC were exclusively with denominations in the Reformed tradition who shared the viewpoint that ecumenical partners assume responsibility for keeping each other confessionally Reformed. Not only did synods consult each other on important theological issues, but the one partner could hold the other partner accountable for deviations or practices that were considered to be objectionable.

The Ecumenical Relations Committee of the CRC has learned that requiring such uniformity for ecumenical relationships is no longer a meaningful option. The requirement that ecumenical partners think biblically, theologically, and confessionally like the CRC can soon make the circle of ecumenical relationships very small. Furthermore, such a demand for similar perspectives exposes the risk of being perceived as being theologically arrogant. That risk is real because the demand for similar perspectives sets up a dynamic of monitoring and control instead of the development of healthy relationships with ecumenical partners. Perhaps every denomination can cite instances when it was subjected to such monitoring and controlling behavior when another denomination judged that they had moved beyond the pale of theological and biblical integrity.

These changes in ecumenical relationships prompted Synod 2006 to revise its Ecumenical Charter. The CRC is less insistent than it once was that our ecumenical partners understand issues in the same way as these same issues are understood in the CRC. This change in attitude allowed the CRC to expand its ecumenical involvement beyond the Reformed Ecumenical Council (REC) and become a member of the World Alliance of Reformed Churches (WARC) [soon to be the World Communion of Reformed Churches (WCRC)], the National Association of Evangelicals (NAE), and the Evangelical Fellowship of Canada (EFC), and develop a relationship with the Canadian Council of Churches (CCC). At the same time, some bilateral (church-to-church) relationships remain a challenge for the CRC because the earlier approach

to ecumenical relationships has not yet been fully supplanted by the present perspective.

The reality is that the CRC is in a period of transition, and transitions can cause one to live with certain contradictions. As such contradictions become visible, it is important to address and correct them. If it is possible for the CRC to accept the theological diversity present in the NAE and WARC, then why not with a greater number of bilateral (church-to-church) relationships even if there are substantial differing perspectives on ethical and theological issues? The CRC does not need to endorse every position taken by an ecumenical partner. Rather, the present understanding in ecumenical circles is that churches learn from each other and discuss differing perspectives. Ecumenical relationship can be built on common interests and commitments to the ministry of the gospel and the mission to which that gospel calls the whole church. When the CRC believes that a particular denomination is part of the universal church of Christ, then the CRC can be in an ecumenical relationship with that church and consider such a church an ecumenical partner, especially in areas where we share values and a common mission. The Ecumenical Charter of the CRC that follows this introduction reflects the CRC's desire for such ecumenical relationships.

Four configurations of ecumenical relationships are identified in the Ecumenical Charter. First, there are churches with which the CRC has a particular affinity, which are called *churches in ecclesiastical fellowship*. Second, there are churches with which the CRC is in a stage of exploration for a closer relationship, or with which there is a memorandum of understanding, which are called *churches in dialogue*. *Note:* Churches in dialogue may or may not become churches in ecclesiastical fellowship, since each relationship within this designation is governed by particular circumstances. Third, some relationships are more distant and episodic and, therefore, are important to the extent that the CRC considers such churches to be part of the global Christian family. This third classification is called *churches in other ecumenical relationships*. These first three classifications are at times referred to as *bilateral ecclesiastical relationships*. And, fourth, there is a classification for participation in *ecumenical organizations*. This last classification is at times referred to as *multilateral relationships*. The Ecumenical Charter provides room for all these types of relationships and for some variation within each classification of relationships.

The CRC does not relinquish any of its principles or convictions by engaging in a variety of ecumenical relationships. Rather, by broadening its ecumenical engagement, there is increased opportunity to be involved in the discussion with Christians who together seek to be faithful to the mission of God in the world.

Ecumenical Charter of the Christian Reformed Church

I. Biblical principles on the unity of the church

A. Made one in Christ

From a fallen and broken humanity, God gathers a new humanity—the church. For this purpose God called Abraham and Israel and then acted in a unique and definitive way in Jesus Christ, whose life, death, and resurrection

are the foundation of the church. Unity is therefore central to the being and mission of the church. As there can be but one Lord, there can be but one church; one Head, one body; one Husband, one bride; one Shepherd, one flock (Eph. 4:5, 15; 5:25-33; John 10:16). The church is as indivisible as Christ is indivisible (1 Cor. 1:13; see Belgic Confession, Art. 27; Heidelberg Catechism, Lord's Day 21).

Focusing on the continuation of his ministry and mission in the world, Christ prays for the unity of the church, a unity as deep and wondrous as that between him and the Father: "that all of them may be one . . . so that the world may believe that you have sent me" (John 17:21). At stake in the unity of the church is the witness in and for the world to the unity of God, the one Father of us all (Eph. 4:6).

B. Our unity with the church of all generations and throughout the world

The Bible speaks of the church as extending through time and place. The description "people of God" emphasizes the historical continuity between Old Testament Israel and the New Testament church. It pictures the church of all ages, from God's choosing Israel as his special people to Jesus' calling the disciples and, by the power of his Spirit, creating the new people of God from all nations, a great multitude that no one can count (Rev. 5:9; 7:9; see also Phil. 2:10-11). This saintly multitude from every tongue, tribe, people, and nation portrays the one church throughout the world (see Belgic Confession, Art. 27).

C. Unity as gift and goal

1. The unity of the church is a precious gift. The biblical challenge is to treasure, preserve, deepen, and demonstrate this given unity. The unity of Christ-followers is flesh-and-blood testimony to God's reconciling work in Christ.
2. For the church in New Testament times, the summons to unity had a different ring than it has today. In the New Testament context, it was a call to be more fully what we are—one in Christ. However, once the divisions, which Paul could not so much as contemplate ("Is Christ divided?"), fractured the body, the call to unity has taken on new and painful urgency. In the midst of today's disunity, the call to be one requires that we pray and work to overcome the scandal of division. Divisions among Christians and churches are a stumbling block to our witness to the unity of the being of God. Division contradicts the good news of reconciliation in Christ. The call to unity is a summons to manifest the unity of God himself and the reconciling power of God's love in Christ.
3. The ecumenical task is the responsibility of the church at all its organizational levels. This task is especially important at the level of the local congregation, for it is there that the witnessing power of visible unity—and the counter-witness of division—is most vivid. Local congregations should seek to worship, witness, and work with neighboring churches that are part of the Christian community and unequivocally witness to Jesus Christ (see Belgic Confession, Art. 29).

D. Diversity in unity

Unity does not mean uniformity. Indeed, the manifold wisdom of God is to be made transparent through the church (Eph. 3:10). It is displayed not in the obliteration but in the reconciliation of diversity. The uniqueness of tribes, tongues, customs, and culture is reflected in a rich diversity of worship, confessional forms and formulations, and church structure. It is this unity in diversity and diversity in unity that we attest when we confess “the holy catholic church” (Apostles’ Creed; see Belgic Confession, Art. 27).

1. Diversity in worship

Though all Christians confess one God, administer one baptism, and celebrate one Lord’s Supper, they worship through various languages, liturgies, prayers, and hymns.

2. Diversity in confessional forms and formulations

Though all Christians confess one God, one faith, and one hope, they express this confession in different ways, in accordance with different cultural contexts, traditions, and modes of theological reflection.

3. Diversity in forms of governance

Though all Christians confess one God, one Lord, one Spirit, and one body, they order their church affairs in different ways, depending on their understanding and application of New Testament models of ministry and in accordance with different cultural forms of social interaction and decision-making processes.

E. Unity and truth

Unity is intrinsic to the truth of the gospel and to our confession. Unity and truth are not alternatives. The unity of the church is a unity in truth, the truth that is Jesus Christ.

To confess Christ, therefore, is to confess the unity of his church and to be impelled to pray and to work for its visible unity.

The process of comprehending this truth needs to be done “together with all the saints” (Eph. 3:17-19). Yet, even in the company of all God’s children throughout the ages and throughout the world, we stand in wonder of the truth that is beyond our grasp.

Understanding the truth is limited by history, culture, situation, and experience. Moreover, it is distorted by sin. We know only in part and see but a poor reflection (1 Cor. 13:12). Divisions in the body of Christ also impoverish our understanding of the truth. We are called, therefore, to engage in a dialogue that involves mutual learning and correction in order that, in the words of the apostle, “together with all the saints, [we] grasp how wide and long and high and deep is the love of Christ . . .” (Eph. 3:18). As we come to a deeper understanding of God’s revelation, we walk more consistently, more humbly, and more joyfully in its light.

In brief, the biblical witness leads us to draw two complementary conclusions.

- Passion for the truth of Christ impels us to reach out to the people of God everywhere, striving for the visible oneness of the church.
- Passion for the truth of Christ calls us to reject all forms of unity that compromise unequivocal witness to Jesus Christ (see Belgic Confession, Art. 29).

II. Values that shape ecumenical relations

A. *The unity we seek*

1. In striving for the unity of the church, we celebrate the extent to which unity is already visible in
 - a. the one, holy, written Word of God, given for us and our salvation;
 - b. one baptism in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit;
 - c. common ecumenical creeds: the Apostles' Creed, the Nicene Creed, the Athanasian Creed;
 - d. common hymns, prayers, and liturgical practices;
 - e. united witness to the name of Christ in evangelism;
 - f. common witness in the name of Christ in public testimony and action on ethical-social issues; and
 - g. common confessions of faith, especially with churches who share a Reformed heritage.
2. In striving for unity, we seek to make the spiritual and visible communion we already have in Christ more fully visible.
3. Because the unity of the church is a unity in Christ, it demands an ever deeper conversion to Christ (see Heidelberg Catechism, Lord's Day 33). As we draw closer to Christ, we draw closer to each other. Such conversion entails repentance, the reconciliation of churches now separated, and the healing of wounds and memories of the past. Questions of institutional relations and negotiations aiming at organizational merger are important only as they serve this deeper unity.

B. *The path we take*

1. As we draw closer through conversion and renewal, the search for greater visible unity may be pursued along various avenues and take a variety of forms, such as
 - a. mutual understanding
 - b. cooperation in ministry through partnership agreements
 - c. common witness—mission and evangelism
 - d. collaboration in ethical-social testimony
 - e. fellowship
 - f. combined worship
 - g. pulpit and table fellowship (as decided by a church council)
 - h. regular combined prayer for unity
 - i. organic union
2. The pursuit of visible unity shall be guided by biblical principles on the unity of the church as articulated in section I above and by both historical and confessional considerations.
3. The pursuit of visible unity needs to be diverse and flexible, open to surprising manifestations of the working of the Spirit in various communions.

III. The ecumenical responsibility of the Christian Reformed Church

A. General principles for the ecumenical task of the Christian Reformed Church (CRC)

1. The CRC recognizes its ecumenical responsibility to cooperate and seek unity with all churches of Christ in obedience to the gospel.
2. For the purpose of pursuing the CRC's ecumenical calling, ecumenical relationships are categorized into four (4) classifications.
 - a. Reformed churches with whom the CRC is in **ecclesiastical fellowship**.
 - b. Churches of Reformed heritage and selected other communions with whom the CRC is in **dialogue** to develop closer ties or to develop a ministry partnership.
 - c. Other Christian denominations and independent churches (evangelical), as well as the Roman Catholic Church and the Orthodox churches—the ecumenical relations of the CRC with churches in this classification, called **other ecumenical relationships**, may vary in depth and intensity of fellowship, determined by the degree of our affinity with them.
 - d. **Ecumenical organizations** in which the CRC chooses to participate.
3. The CRC may enter into relationships that are church-to-church (bilateral) or into a relationship with an ecumenical organization (multilateral). A church-to-church (bilateral) relationship is established with a particular *denomination* or *church*. A relationship with an *ecumenical organization* (multilateral) is established when the CRC joins with other denominations or churches for the purpose of fellowship and common witness.
4. The CRC's ecumenical responsibility is expressed locally (between and among neighboring congregations), regionally (among churches in a given geographical area), and denominationally (among churches nationally and internationally).
5. Ecumenical relationships on the synodical level are initiated, promoted, and maintained by a standing committee on ecumenical relations, as articulated in Church Order Article 49:
 - a. Synod appoints an Ecumenical Relations Committee (ERC) to encourage relationships with other Christian churches (especially those that are part of the Reformed family) so that the Christian Reformed Church may exercise Christian fellowship with other denominations and may promote the unity of the church of Jesus Christ.
 - b. Synod shall approve, upon recommendation of the Ecumenical Relations Committee, with whom the Christian Reformed Church is in ecclesiastical fellowship, the churches with whom the Christian Reformed Church is in dialogue and the ecumenical organizations in which the Christian Reformed Church holds membership or significantly participates.

6. Ecumenical relationships at the local level can be expressed by joint involvement in areas such as worship, service projects, prayer, and address to social/ethical issues.

B. *The specifics of ecumenical relationships*

1. Churches in **ecclesiastical fellowship**

The CRC, in accordance with Church Order Article 49, values ecumenical relationships with other Christian churches, particularly those that are confessionally Reformed. With some such churches, synod may establish a close relationship; and if such is decided with reference to a particular group of churches, then the category is designated *churches in ecclesiastical fellowship*. The purpose of such a close relationship is to

- a. encourage joint action in Christian endeavors, where possible, and a common Christian witness to the world.
- b. explore whether the unity we share with such churches may include various forms of organizational expression—the shape of such organizational unity shall be determined in keeping with prudence and such circumstances as language, distance, and nonessential differences in formal standards and practices.
- c. provide the opportunity to exchange fraternal delegates at major assemblies.
- d. make possible the engagement in pulpit and table fellowship.
- e. exercise mutual concern and encouragement with a view to promoting the fundamentals of Christian unity (*Acts of Synod 1974*, p. 57).
- f. communicate on major issues of common concern.
- g. remain abreast of current developments to assure that such fellowship continues to grow in vibrancy.

2. Churches in **dialogue**

- a. Churches in a **stage of exploration** leading to ecclesiastical fellowship

The CRC encourages churches in the Reformed family to explore the possibility of being in ecclesiastical fellowship with the CRC. During such an exploration phase the CRC designates such relationships as *churches in dialogue*. The very purpose of such exploration implies that the classification is of a temporary nature. The following general provisions shall apply to relationships designated as churches in dialogue:

- 1) Invitations will periodically be extended to send delegates to each other's broadest assemblies where delegates may be recognized by the assembly.
- 2) When ecumenical delegates are not exchanged, the ERC will be expected to communicate periodically with these churches and, when appropriate, to inform synod of such correspondence.
- 3) The ERC shall regularly offer the *Agenda for Synod* and *Acts of Synod* (and any other relevant information) to each of these churches to

keep them informed about the CRC and thereby demonstrate our continuing interest in them. In turn, the ERC shall encourage each church in dialogue to inform us by correspondence about itself and its activities.

- 4) The ERC shall continue to explore specific ways in which we may be of service to these churches through our denominational agencies; for example, through opportunities for higher education of pastors and teachers in our educational institutions, availability of teaching and training materials through Faith Alive Christian Resources, and services of our various boards and committees. Such services will require the cooperation of these agencies with the ERC. The ERC shall likewise be alert to services and help that these churches may be able to contribute to the CRC (*Acts of Synod 1993*, pp. 408-10).

- b. Selected other communions with whom the CRC is in **dialogue** to develop closer ties or to develop a ministry partnership

This classification is for a relationship with Christian churches with which the CRC has mutual interests, or with which the CRC has a ministry partnership even though a relationship of ecclesiastical fellowship is not envisioned. In cases where a ministry partnership is involved the agreement shall be described in a specific "memorandum of understanding" between the two churches. The general provisions specified in section III, B, 2, a above shall also apply to this classification.

3. Churches in **other ecumenical relationships**

The CRC may establish relationships with Christian churches that, though not necessarily Reformed, will enrich the CRC's ecumenical fellowship. This category of relationship is called *churches in other ecumenical relationships*. The purpose of such relationships, while less formal than what pertains to *churches in ecclesiastical fellowship* and *churches in dialogue*, is to maintain contact, correspondence as circumstances may dictate, and conversation. Churches in this classification may include a wide range of Christian churches with a view to being informed about their ecclesiastical life, their relationships, and how such churches address current issues. The following general provisions shall apply to relationships with churches classified as *churches in other ecumenical relationships*.

- a. The CRC will be responsive to churches that desire to establish contact with the CRC because of its Reformed theology, polity, and particular emphasis on education, evangelism, and benevolence.
- b. The CRC will be responsive to churches that previously have broken ecclesiastical ties with the CRC or have withdrawn from fellowship with the CRC due to previous doctrinal, creedal, Church Order, or ethical decisions.
- c. The CRC will be responsive to churches from differing historical and confessional backgrounds that are willing to address matters of common interest or issues that require clarification.

It is synod's prerogative to decide with which denominations the CRC will maintain ecclesiastical fellowship and with which churches the CRC

will be in dialogue. The ERC shall keep synod informed about the status of all relationships. Such reporting provides synod the opportunity to monitor the ERC's involvement in the broader Christian family.

4. Ecumenical organizations

- a. The CRC seeks to pursue its ecumenical task by also participating in *ecumenical organizations*. The purpose of such participation is to better carry out the CRC's ecumenical responsibilities broadly, effectively, and efficiently.
- b. The propriety of relationships with such ecumenical organizations is circumscribed by the biblical principles on ecumenicity and the principles for ecumenical practice of this Ecumenical Charter. The ERC shall evaluate the nature of the ecumenical organizations as described in the constitutions, bases, and statements, and as demonstrated in the activities of each. It is synod's prerogative, upon recommendation of the ERC, to decide with which ecumenical organizations the CRC is affiliated.

IV. Specific responsibilities of the Ecumenical Relations Committee

A. Synod, through the maintenance of an Ecumenical Relations Committee (ERC), in conformity with the provisions of this charter and in accordance with synodical decisions, shall maintain and promote interest in the worldwide church. The ERC is synod's committee of contact in ecumenical relations and will advise the executive director of the CRC in fulfilling the responsibilities of representing the CRC as the ecumenical officer.

B. The ERC shall annually present to synod in the printed Agenda for Synod a report of its activities, including a summary of all the ecumenical relations included in its mandate.

Proposed to Synod 2010

Appendix C-2

Proposed Revised Ecumenical Charter (changes indicated)

Introduction-Preface

~~The ecumenical landscape is changing and undergoing major revision. An interest in existing ecumenical organizations, and confidence in their ability to bridge the gap that exists among Christian churches from around the world, has waned. Ecumenical budgets are under severe stress as denominations reduce their support for, and willingness to commit to, such formations.~~

It appears that the days of mergers of likeminded denominations, at least for now, are over. It is presently more likely to hear discussions about covenants, agreements, and partnerships—all of which presuppose the existence of entities that are independent, equal, and open to a relationship.

The state of ecumenical relations is in constant transition. The days of merging likeminded denominations, at least for now, are over. Current

discussions are about covenants, agreements, and partnerships—all of which presuppose the existence of churches that are independent of each other, equal to each other, and open to an ecumenical relationship.

There are ~~other~~ also substantial changes in the way churches relate. There was a time when ecumenical relations were initiated and maintained primarily with those who shared the same faith, viewpoints, confessions, and theological heritage. ~~In~~ For the Christian Reformed Church, that meant that our church-to-church relations were initiated and developed with churches that were, in significant respects, most like the CRC ~~in significant respects~~. ~~Initially, the~~ Historically, ecumenical contacts ~~for~~ of the CRC were exclusively with denominations in the Reformed tradition who shared a the viewpoint that ecumenical partners assume a ~~corporate~~ responsibility for keeping each other confessionally Reformed. Not only did synods consult each other on important theological issues, but the one partner could call to account hold the other partner accountable for deviations or practices that ~~the one found~~ were considered to be objectionable.

The Ecumenical Relations Committee of the CRC has learned that requiring such forms of uniformity for ecumenical relationships come with risks is no longer a meaningful option. The requirement that ecumenical partners think biblically, theologically, and confessionally like the CRC can soon make the circle of ecumenical relationships very small. Furthermore, such a demand for similarity of viewpoint perspectives exposes the risk of being perceived as being theologically arrogant. That risk is real because the demand for similarity of viewpoint perspectives sets up a dynamic of monitoring and control instead of the development of healthy relationships with ecumenical partners. Perhaps every denomination can cite instances when they were it was subjected to such monitoring and controlling behavior when another denomination judged that they had moved beyond the pale of theological and biblical integrity.

The changed landscape of These changes in ecumenical relationships has caused the CRC to alter its ecumenical practices and prompted Synod 2006 to revise its Ecumenical Charter. The CRC is less insistent than it once was that our ecumenical partners understand Christian, or even Reformed, truth issues in the same way as these same issues are understood in the CRC. This change in attitude allowed the CRC to expand its ecumenical involvement beyond the Reformed Ecumenical Council (REC) and become a member of the World Alliance of Reformed Churches (WARC) [soon to be the World Communion of Reformed Churches (WARC)], the National Association of Evangelicals (NAE), and the Evangelical Fellowship of Canada (EFC), and develop a relationship with the Canadian Council of Churches (CCC). At the same time, some bilateral (church-to-church) relationships remain a challenge for the CRC because the former ecumenical earlier approach to ecumenical relationships has not yet been fully supplanted by a new the present perspective.

Part of the problem The reality is that the CRC is in a period of transition, and transitions can cause one to live with certain contradictions. However, As such contradictions become visible, it is also important to address and correct them. If it is possible for the CRC to accept the theological diversity present in the National Association of Evangelicals-NAE and the World Alliance of Reformed Churches-WARC, then why not with a greater number

of bilateral (church-to-church) relationships even if there are substantial differing perspectives on ethical and theological issues? The question obviously is not that the CRC must does not need to endorse every position taken by an ecumenical partner. Rather, the present understanding in ecumenical circles is that we can churches learn from each other and discuss our differing perspectives, but our Ecumenical relationship is can be built on common interests and commitments to the ministry of the gospel and the mission to which that gospel calls the whole church. Fundamentally, if we When the CRC believes that a particular denomination is part of the universal church of Christ, then we the CRC can be in an ecumenical relationship with that church and consider such a church an ecumenical partner, especially in areas where we have shared values and a common mission. The synod of the CRC affirmed the legitimacy of this premise at its meeting in 2006, and the revised Ecumenical Charter of the CRC that follows this introduction reflects the CRC's desire for such ecumenical relationships. This means that some ecumenical relationships are based on a general acceptance of Christian churches while maintaining more intentional fellowship with churches in the Reformed family.

Differing Four configurations of ecumenical relationships can still be retained are identified in the Ecumenical Charter. First, there are churches with which the CRC has a particular affinity, which are called *churches in ecclesiastical fellowship*. Second, there are churches with which the CRC is in a stage of exploration for a closer relationship, or with which there is a memorandum of understanding, which are called *churches in dialogue*. Note: Churches in dialogue may or may not become churches in ecclesiastical fellowship, since each relationship within this designation is governed by particular circumstances. Third, some relationships are more distant and episodic and, therefore, are important to the extent that the CRC considers such churches to be part of the global Christian family. This third classification is called *churches in other ecumenical relationships*. These first three classifications are at times referred to as *bilateral ecclesiastical relationships*. And, fourth, there is a classification for participation in *ecumenical organizations*. This last classification is at times referred to as *multilateral relationships*. The Ecumenical Charter provides room for all these types of relationships and for some variation within each classification of relationships. Other fellowships may be more distant and episodic. The Ecumenical Charter provides room for both types of relationships and for some variation within each classification of relationships.

The Ecumenical Charter of the CRC reflects the changed landscape of ecumenical relationships. It is the position of the CRC to operate with two classifications of ecumenical relationships:

- Ecclesiastical: churches with whom the CRC is in ecclesiastical fellowship;
- Dialogue: churches with whom the CRC is in dialogue.

The CRC does not relinquish any of its principles or convictions by simplifying the options for ecclesiastical fellowship and churches in dialogue engaging in a variety of ecumenical relationships. Rather, by broadening the ecumenical scope, its ecumenical engagement, there will be is increased opportunity to bear testimony to the truth as the CRC understands it. Our testimony and voice can be "at the table" as Christians be involved in the

discussion with Christians who together seek to be faithful to the mission of God in the world.

Dr. Peter Borgdorff
Executive Director—Emeritus and
Chief Ecumenical Officer
Summer 2006

Ecumenical Charter of the Christian Reformed Church

I. Biblical principles on the unity of the church

A. Made one in Christ

From a fallen and broken humanity, God gathers a new humanity—the church. For this purpose God called Abraham and Israel and then acted in a unique and definitive way in Jesus Christ, whose life, death, and resurrection are the foundation of the church. Unity is therefore central to the being and mission of the church. As there can be but one Lord, there can be but one church; one Head, one body; one Husband, one bride; one Shepherd, one flock (Eph. 4:5, 15; 5:25-33; John 10:16). The church is as indivisible as Christ is indivisible (1 Cor. 1:13; see Belgic Confession, Art. 27; Heidelberg Catechism, Lord’s Day 21).

Focusing on the continuation of his ministry and mission in the world, Christ prays for the unity of the church, a unity as deep and wondrous as that between him and the Father: “that all of them may be one . . . so that the world may believe that you have sent me” (John 17:21). At stake in the unity of the church is the witness in and for the world to the unity of God, the one Father of us all (Eph. 4:6).

B. Our unity with the church of all generations and throughout the world

The Bible speaks of the church as extending through time and place. The description “people of God” emphasizes the historical continuity between Old Testament Israel and the New Testament church. It pictures the church of all ages, from God’s choosing Israel as his special people to Jesus’ calling the disciples and, by the power of his Spirit, creating the new people of God from all nations, a great multitude that no one can count (Rev. 5:9; 7:9; see also Phil. 2:10-11). This saintly multitude from every tongue, tribe, people, and nation portrays the one church throughout the world (see Belgic Confession, Art. 27).

C. Unity as gift and goal

1. The unity of the church is a precious gift. The biblical challenge is to treasure, preserve, deepen, and demonstrate this given unity. The unity of Christ-followers is flesh-and-blood testimony to God’s reconciling work in Christ.
2. For the church in New Testament times, the summons to unity had a different ring than it has today. In the New Testament context, it was a call to be more fully what we are—one in Christ. However, once the divisions, which Paul could not so much as contemplate (“Is Christ divided?”), fractured the body, the call to unity has taken on new and painful urgency. In the midst of today’s disunity, the call to be one requires that we pray and

work to overcome the scandal of division. Divisions among Christians and churches are a stumbling block to our witness to the unity of the being of God. Division contradicts the good news of reconciliation in Christ. The call to unity is a summons to manifest the unity of God himself and the reconciling power of God's love in Christ.

3. The ecumenical task is the responsibility of the church at all its organizational levels. This task is especially important at the level of the local congregation, for it is there that the witnessing power of visible unity—and the counter-witness of division—is most vivid. Local congregations should seek to worship, witness, and work with neighboring churches that are part of the Christian community and unequivocally witness to Jesus Christ (see Belgic Confession, Art. 29).

D. Diversity in unity

Unity does not mean uniformity. Indeed, the manifold wisdom of God is to be made transparent through the church (Eph. 3:10). It is displayed not in the obliteration but in the reconciliation of diversity. The uniqueness of tribes, tongues, customs, and culture is reflected in a rich diversity of worship, confessional forms and formulations, and church structure. It is this unity in diversity and diversity in unity that we attest when we confess “the holy catholic church” (Apostles’ Creed; see Belgic Confession, Art. 27).

1. Diversity in worship

Though all Christians confess one God, administer one baptism, and celebrate one Lord’s Supper, they worship through various languages, liturgies, prayers, and hymns.

2. Diversity in confessional forms and formulations

Though all Christians confess one God, one faith, and one hope, they express this confession in different ways, in accordance with different cultural contexts, traditions, and modes of theological reflection.

3. Diversity in forms of governance

Though all Christians confess one God, one Lord, one Spirit, and one body, they order their church affairs in different ways, depending on their understanding and application of New Testament models of ministry and in accordance with different cultural forms of social interaction and decision-making processes.

E. Unity and truth

Unity is intrinsic to the truth of the gospel and to our confession. Unity and truth are not alternatives. The unity of the church is a unity in truth, the truth that is Jesus Christ. To confess Christ, therefore, is to confess the unity of his church and to be impelled to pray and to work for its visible unity.

The process of comprehending this truth needs to be done “together with all the saints” (Eph. 3:17-19). Yet, even in the company of all God’s children throughout the ages and throughout the world, we stand in wonder of the truth that is beyond our grasp.

Understanding the truth is limited by history, culture, situation, and experience. Moreover, it is distorted by sin. We know only in part and see but a poor reflection (1 Cor.13:12). Divisions in the body of Christ also impoverish our understanding of the truth. We are called, therefore, to engage in a

dialogue that involves mutual learning and correction in order that, in the words of the apostle, “together with all the saints, [we] grasp how wide and long and high and deep is the love of Christ . . .” (Eph. 3:18). As we come to a deeper understanding of God’s revelation, we walk more consistently, more humbly, and more joyfully in its light.

In brief, the biblical witness leads us to draw two complementary conclusions:

1. Passion for the truth of Christ impels us to reach out to the people of God everywhere, striving for the visible oneness of the church.
2. Passion for the truth of Christ calls us to reject all forms of unity that compromise unequivocal witness to Jesus Christ (see Belgic Confession, Art. 29).

II. Guidelines for Values that shape ecumenical work relations

A. The unity we seek

1. In striving for the unity of the church, we celebrate the extent to which unity is already visible in
 - a. the one, holy, written Word of God, given for us and our salvation;
 - b. one baptism in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit;
 - c. common ecumenical creeds: the Apostles’ Creed, the Nicene Creed, the Athanasian Creed;
 - d. common hymns, prayers, and liturgical practices;
 - e. united witness to the name of Christ in evangelism;
 - f. common witness in the name of Christ in public testimony and action on ethical-social issues (~~such as gambling, abortion, genetic engineering, euthanasia, poverty~~); and
 - g. common confessions of faith, especially with churches who share a Reformed heritage.
2. In striving for unity, we seek to make the spiritual and visible communion we already have in Christ more fully visible.
3. Because the unity of the church is a unity in Christ, it demands an ever deeper conversion to Christ (see Heidelberg Catechism, Lord’s Day 33). As we draw closer to Christ, we draw closer to each other. Such conversion entails repentance, the reconciliation of churches now separated, and the healing of wounds and memories of the past. Questions of institutional relations and negotiations aiming at organizational merger are important only as they serve this deeper unity.

B. The path we take

1. As we draw closer through conversion and renewal, the search for greater visible unity may be pursued along various avenues and take a variety of forms, such as

- a. mutual understanding
 - b. cooperation in ministry
 - c. common witness—mission and evangelism
 - d. collaboration in ethical-social testimony
 - e. fellowship
 - f. combined worship
 - g. pulpit and table fellowship
 - h. regular combined prayer for unity
 - i. organic union
2. The pursuit of visible unity shall be guided by biblical principles on the unity of the church as articulated in section I above and by both historical and confessional considerations.
 3. The pursuit of visible unity needs to be diverse and flexible, open to surprising manifestations of the working of the Spirit in various communions.

III. The ecumenical responsibility of the Christian Reformed Church

A. *General guidelines principles for the ecumenical task of the Christian Reformed Church (CRC)*

1. The CRC recognizes its ecumenical responsibility to cooperate and seek unity with all churches of Christ in obedience to the gospel.
2. For the purpose of pursuing the CRC's ecumenical calling, ~~the churches of Christ may be classified into a number of groups:~~ ecumenical relationships are categorized into four (4) classifications.
 - a. Reformed churches with whom the CRC is in **ecclesiastical fellowship.**
 - b. Churches of Reformed heritage and selected other communions with whom the CRC is in **dialogue** to develop closer ties or to develop a **ministry partnership.**
 - c. Other Protestant Christian denominations and independent churches (evangelical), as well as the Roman Catholic Church, and the Orthodox churches—~~the interchurch~~ ecumenical relations of the CRC with churches of these groups in this classification, called **other ecumenical relationships**, may vary in depth and intensity of fellowship, determined by the degree of our affinity with them. ~~This is true not only on the denominational level but also on the congregational level.~~
 - d. Ecumenical organizations in which the CRC chooses to participate.
3. The CRC may enter into relationships that are church-to-church (bilateral) or into a relationship with an ecumenical organization (multilateral). A church-to-church (bilateral) relationship is established with a particular *denomination or church*. A relationship with an *ecumenical organization* (multilateral) is established when the CRC joins with other denominations or churches for the purpose of fellowship and common witness.

4. The CRC's ecumenical responsibility is expressed locally (between and among neighboring congregations), regionally (among churches in a given geographical area), and denominationally (among churches nationally and internationally).
5. Ecumenical relationships on the synodical level are initiated, promoted, and maintained by a standing committee on ~~interchurch~~ ecumenical relations, as ~~specified~~ articulated in Church Order Article 49:
 - a. Synod ~~directs the Board of Trustees to maintain an Interchurch Relations Committee (IRC) to correspond~~ appoints an Ecumenical Relations Committee (ERC) to encourage relationships with other Christian churches (especially those that are part of the Reformed family) so that the Christian Reformed Church may exercise Christian fellowship with other denominations and may promote the unity of the church of Jesus Christ.
 - b. Synod shall ~~decide~~ approve, upon recommendation of the Interchurch Ecumenical Relations Committee, with ~~which denominations whom~~ the Christian Reformed Church shall seek to establish formal relationships, and approve the rules that govern such relationships is in ecclesiastical fellowship, the churches with whom the Christian Reformed Church is in dialogue and the ecumenical organizations in which the Christian Reformed Church holds membership or significantly participates.
6. Ecumenical relationships at the local level can be expressed by joint involvement in areas such as worship, service projects, prayer, and address to social/ethical issues.

B.—Bilateral The specifics of ecumenical relationships

1. **Churches in ecclesiastical fellowship**

The CRC, in accordance with Church Order Article 49, seeks values ecumenical relationships with ~~all other Christian~~ churches of Christ, particularly those churches that are confessionally Reformed. With some such churches, synod may establish a close relationships; that are and if such is decided with reference to a particular group of churches, then the category is designated as churches in ecclesiastical fellowship. The purpose of such a close relationship is to:

- a. encourage joint action in Christian endeavors, where possible, and a common Christian witness to the world.
- b. explore whether the unity we share with such churches may include various forms of organizational expression—the shape of such organizational unity ~~should~~ shall be determined in keeping with prudence and such circumstances as language, distance, and nonessential differences in formal standards and practices.
- c. provide the opportunity to exchange of fraternal delegates at major assemblies.
- d. make possible the engagement in pulpit and table fellowship.

- e. exercise mutual concern and encouragement with a view to promoting the fundamentals of Christian unity (*Acts of Synod 1974*, p. 57).[‡]
- f. communicate on major issues of common concern.
- g. remain abreast of current developments to assure that such fellowship continues to grow in vibrancy.

2. Churches in dialogue

a. Churches in a **stage of exploration** leading to ecclesiastical fellowship.

The CRC may also establish relationships with Christian encourages churches that, though not Reformed, may nonetheless enrich the CRC's in the Reformed family to explore the possibility of being in ecclesiastical fellowship with the CRC. During such an exploration phase the CRC designates such relationships as *churches in dialogue*. The very purpose of such exploration implies that the classification is of a temporary nature. The following general provisions shall apply to relationships designated as churches in dialogue: This category of relationship is called "churches in dialogue." The purpose of such relationships, while less intense than what pertains to churches in ecclesiastical fellowship, is also to maintain contact, correspondence, and conversation. Churches in dialogue may include a wide range of Christian churches with a view to being informed about their ecclesiastical life, their relationships, and how such churches address current issues. It is the CRC's intent to establish closer relationships or restore broken relationships where possible. In seeking such relationships, the CRC intends to be fulfilling its task in keeping with the biblical principles on ecumenicity and the principles for ecumenical practice. The dialogue may include exploration of areas for cooperation. Furthermore, the following will give substance and meaning to the CRC's relationship with churches in dialogue:

- a. The CRC will dialogue with churches that desire to establish contact with the CRC because of its Reformed theology, its polity, and its particular emphasis on education, evangelism, and benevolence.

1) Invitations will periodically be extended to send delegates to each other's broadest assemblies where delegates may be recognized by the assembly.

- b. The CRC will dialogue with churches that previously have broken ecclesiastical ties with the CRC or have withdrawn from fellowship with the CRC because of certain doctrinal, creedal, church order, or ethical decisions.
- c. The CRC will dialogue with churches from differing historical and confessional backgrounds that are willing to address matters of common interest or issues that require clarification.
- d. When the CRC is in dialogue with another church, it is desirable that invitations periodically be extended to send delegates to each other's

[‡]*Acts of Synod 1974*, p. 57.

highest assemblies where delegates would be recognized by the assembly.

e.2) When ecumenical delegates are not exchanged, the IERC will be expected to communicate periodically with these churches and, when appropriate, to inform synod of such correspondence.

f.3) The IERC shall regularly offer the Agenda for Synod and Acts of Synod (and any other relevant information) to each of these churches to keep them informed about the CRC and thereby demonstrate our continuing interest in them. In turn, the IERC shall encourage each church in dialogue to inform us by correspondence about itself and its activities.

g.4) The IERC shall continue to explore specific ways in which we may be of service to these churches through our denominational agencies; for example, through opportunities for higher education of pastors and teachers in our educational institutions, availability of teaching and training materials through CRC Publications, and services of our various boards and committees that could assist needy churches. Such services will require the cooperation of these agencies with the IERC. The IERC shall likewise be alert to services and help that these churches may be able to contribute to the CRC (Acts of Synod 1993, pp. 408-10).

It is synod's prerogative to decide with which denominations the CRC will maintain ecclesiastical fellowship, and with which denominations the CRC will be in formal dialogue.

b. Selected other communions with whom the CRC is in dialogue to develop closer ties or to develop a ministry partnership

This classification is for a relationship with Christian churches with which the CRC has mutual interests, or with which the CRC has a ministry partnership even though a relationship of ecclesiastical fellowship is not envisioned. In cases where a ministry partnership is involved the agreement shall be described in a specific "memorandum of understanding" between the two churches. The general provisions specified in section III, B, 2, a above shall also apply to this classification.

3. Churches in other ecumenical relationships

The CRC may establish relationships with Christian churches that, though not necessarily Reformed, will enrich the CRC's ecumenical fellowship. This category of relationship is called *churches in other ecumenical relationships*. The purpose of such relationships, while less formal than what pertains to *churches in ecclesiastical fellowship* and *churches in dialogue*, is to maintain contact, correspondence as circumstances may dictate, and conversation. Churches in this classification may include a wide range of Christian churches with a view to being informed about their ecclesiastical life, their relationships, and how such churches address current issues. The following general provisions shall apply to relationships with churches classified as *churches in other ecumenical relationships*.

- a. The CRC will ~~dialogue with~~ be responsive to churches that desire to establish contact with the CRC because of its its Reformed theology, its polity, and its particular emphasis on education, evangelism, and benevolence.
- b. The CRC will ~~dialogue with~~ be responsive to churches that previously have broken ecclesiastical ties with the CRC or have withdrawn from fellowship with the CRC ~~because of certain~~ due to previous doctrinal, creedal, Church Order, or ethical decisions.
- c. The CRC will ~~dialogue with~~ be responsive to churches from differing historical and confessional backgrounds that are willing to address matters of common interest or issues that require clarification.

It is synod's prerogative to decide with which denominations the CRC will maintain ecclesiastical fellowship, and with which denominations the CRC will be in ~~formal~~ dialogue. The ERC shall keep synod informed about the status of all relationships. Such reporting provides synod the opportunity to monitor the ERC's involvement in the broader Christian family.

~~C. Multilateral relationships~~

4. Ecumenical organizations

- 1a. The CRC seeks to pursue its ecumenical task by also participating in ecumenical organizations. The purpose of such participation is to better carry out the CRC's ecumenical responsibilities broadly, effectively, and efficiently.
- 2b. The propriety of relationships with such ecumenical organizations is circumscribed by the biblical principles on ecumenicity and the principles for ecumenical practice of this Ecumenical Charter. ~~as they bear on the nature of the organizations as articulated and demonstrated in their respective~~ The ERC shall evaluate the nature of the ecumenical organizations as described in the constitutions, bases, and statements and as demonstrated in the activities of each. It is synod's prerogative, upon recommendation of the ERC, to decide with which ecumenical organizations the CRC is affiliated.
3. The varying distinctives of ecumenical organizations may require that the CRC stipulate for itself diverse and restricted types of membership. The degree of the CRC's involvement and the level of intimacy of fellowship will be determined in keeping with the principles for ecumenical practice as spelled out in the Ecumenical Charter.

IV. Specific responsibilities of the Interchurch Relations Committee

A. ~~The Board of Trustees Synod~~, through the maintenance of an Interchurch Ecumenical Relations Committee (~~HERC~~), in conformity with the provisions of this charter and in accordance with synodical decisions, shall maintain and promote interest in the worldwide church. The IRC is synod's committee of contact in ecumenical relations and will advise the executive director of the CRC in fulfilling the responsibilities of representing the CRC as the ecumenical officer.

B. The ERC shall annually present to synod in the printed Agenda for Synod a report of its activities, including a summary of all the interchurch relations comprehended in its mandate.

Proposed to Synod 2010

Appendix D Interfaith Dialogue Report

I. Introduction

Canada and the United States once viewed themselves as Christian nations. Whether or not this was ever the case can be debated, but what is clear today is that our countries are increasingly and profoundly diverse in terms of the faith commitments of the citizenry. Immigration and conversion are bringing adherents of many religions to our communities, and our neighbors now include Muslims, Sikhs, Hindus, Jews, and Buddhists.

While the Ecumenical Relations Committee of the Christian Reformed Church is very aware of this reality, the current mandate of the ERC is to “cooperate and seek unity with all churches of Christ in obedience to the gospel” (Ecumenical Charter, III.A.1). It accomplishes this in part by fully participating in multilateral associations. But one of these associations, the Canadian Council of Churches, facilitates several committees. These committees include the Christian Interfaith Reference Group, the National Muslim Christian Liaison Committee, and the Canadian Christian-Jewish Consultation. Periodic reports from CRC representatives on these committees have been received by the ERC and have generated much discussion. Additionally, across the denomination, both in Canada and the United States, congregations and members have participated in informal interfaith conversations.

The ERC has noted that there are some similarities and many profound differences between ecumenical relations (with other Christian churches and associations) and interfaith dialogue. The ERC wondered if one committee could do both or if a separate committee should be commissioned by synod to assist the CRC in its interfaith encounters.

The ERC informed Synod 2009 of its internal discussions but did not recommend any action. Synod, however, took note and made these decisions:

In light of the IRC [now ERC] report highlighting interfaith dialogue (*Agenda for Synod 2009*, p. 249), we note that in recent years there is increasing opportunity for interfaith dialogue. The Interchurch Relations Committee distinguishes such dialogue from what is normally called ecumenical relations in that interfaith dialogue involves persons from faiths other than the Christian faith. The purpose of interfaith dialogue is to foster better understanding between people of differing faiths living in a pluralistic society. In response to the observation of the IRC concerning interfaith dialogue, it is recommended

1. That synod authorize the expansion of IRC’s mandate to include interfaith dialogue to assist the CRC in its interreligious encounters.

Grounds:

- a. The CRC on several occasions has been asked by ecumenical partners to participate in such dialogue.
- b. While interfaith dialogue is to be distinguished from ecumenicity, there is sufficient overlap to warrant the expansion of the IRC mandate.

2. That synod instruct the IRC to submit a full rationale for and the wording of the revised mandate to Synod 2010 for approval.

Ground: Official mandates of standing committees of synod are appropriately approved by synod.

(*Acts of Synod 2009*, p. 611)

II. Reflection

Synod 2009 said that the goal of interfaith dialogue is to foster better understanding between persons of different faiths. There is great need for such understanding:

- Muslims are sometimes stereotyped as terrorists committed to violent jihad.
- Christians are sometimes understood to worship multiple gods (Father, Son, and Holy Spirit) and practice cannibalism (“Take and eat; this is my body.”)
- People of various religions feel that others hate or despise them because of their faith convictions.

While it is important to grow in understanding, it is not easy. Understanding the other requires respectful communication. It requires acknowledgment of deep differences of opinion and faith, while permitting joint action on issues of common concern—such as promotion of religious freedom and protection of human rights. Our neighbors do not all believe the way we do, but they are our neighbors nonetheless.

Synod 2009 wisely named understanding, not evangelism, as the purpose of interfaith dialogue. While the Christian church should never lose its confession that Jesus Christ is the way, the truth, and the life, and should joyfully proclaim that there is no other name given under heaven by which people may be saved, interfaith dialogue must not be a pretext for evangelism. Other contexts are more appropriate for the important activity of evangelizing. However, it is hoped that when people of other faiths have an accurate understanding of Christian teachings and values and get to know Christian people, they will be intrigued by the Christian worldview and testimony and begin a journey that leads to true reconciliation with God.

III. Mandate

The following additions are recommended to the present mandate of the ERC to reflect the responsibility for interfaith dialogue:

1. Compile resources for the Christian Reformed Church that will guide interfaith encounters.
2. Monitor and facilitate the interfaith encounters that come through ecumenical activities and within the context of the ministries of the CRC.
3. Provide advice and perspectives for the CRC as requested.
4. When appropriate and opportune, represent the CRC in interfaith dialogues.

The Interfaith Mandate should be maintained as a document distinct from the Ecumenical Charter.

IV. Name of the Ecumenical Relations Committee

Though the name of the Ecumenical Relations Committee was changed by Synod 2009 from the Interchurch Relations Committee, the ERC should propose another revision to its name to reflect its broader mandate and responsibilities. An appropriate name for this committee is the Ecumenical and Interfaith Relations Committee (EIRC).

Grounds:

1. The proposed name reflects the new broader mandate and additional responsibilities for interfaith dialogue.
2. The proposed name clarifies that ecumenical engagement and interfaith dialogue are distinct.

Interfaith Dialogue Task Force
James R. Payton, Jr.
Shirley Roels
Bruce G. Adema

Appendix E

Churches in Ecclesiastical Fellowship and Formal Dialogue

I. Churches in Ecclesiastical Fellowship

Following is a list of churches in ecclesiastical fellowship, referencing the year in which such fellowship was established.

A. Africa

1. Christian Reformed Church of Nigeria (CRCN) (1974)
2. Church of Christ in the Sudan among the Tiv (NKST) (1974)
(Nongo U Kristu U Ken Sudan Hen Tiv)
3. Dutch Reformed Church in Africa (DRCA) (1983)
(Nederduitse Gereformeerde Kerk in Afrika)
4. Dutch Reformed Church in South Africa (DRC) (2001)
(Die Nederduitse Gereformeerde Kerk in Suid Afrika)
5. Midlands Reformed Churches in South Africa (MRCSA) (1991)
(Gereformeerde Kerke in Suide-Afrika—Sinode Middelande)
6. Reformed Church in Africa (RCA) (1982)
7. Reformed Churches in South Africa (Synod Potchefstroom) (1974)
(Gereformeerde Kerke in Suid-Afrika)
8. Reformed Churches in South Africa (Synod Soutpansberg) (1989)
9. Reformed Church of Christ in Nigeria (2003)
10. Uniting Reformed Church in Southern Africa (URCSA) (1982)
(Verenigende Gereformeerde Kerk in Suider Afrika)

B. Asia, Australia, and Indonesia

1. Christian Church of Sumba (Indonesia) (1974)
(Gereja Kristen Sumba)
2. Christian Reformed Church in the Philippines (1997)
3. Christian Reformed Churches of Australia (CRCA) (1974)

4. Dutch Reformed Church in Sri Lanka (1974)
5. Reformed Church in Japan (RCJ) (1974)

C. *Europe*

Netherlands Reformed Churches (NRC) (1982)
(Nederlands Gereformeerde Kerken-Buiten Verband)

D. *North America*

1. Associate Reformed Presbyterian Church (ARPC) (1977)
2. Evangelical Presbyterian Church (EPC) (1986)
3. Reformed Church in America (RCA) (1976)

E. *Latin America*

Christian Reformed Church in Cuba (2001)
(La Iglesia Cristiana Reformada en Cuba)

F. *South America*

1. Evangelical Reformed Church in Brazil (1974)
(Ireja Evangelica Reformada no Brasil)
2. Reformed Church in Argentina (1974)
(Iglesias Reformadas en le Argentina)

II. Churches in Formal Dialogue

It is synod's prerogative to decide with which denominations the CRC will maintain ecclesiastical fellowship, and with which denominations the CRC will be in *formal dialogue*. Following is a list of churches currently in *formal dialogue* with the CRC:

- A. *Christian Reformed Church in Eastern Africa (Uganda)*
- B. *Christian Reformed Church of Myanmar*
- C. *Church of Central Africa Presbyterian (Nkhoma Synod) Malawi*
- D. *Church of Jesus Christ in Madagascar*
- E. *Evangelical Reformed Church of Burundi*
- F. *Protestant Church in the Netherlands (PCN)*
- G. *Reformed Church in Zambia*
- H. *Reformed Church of East Africa (Kenya)*

I. Introduction

The Historical Committee is a standing committee of the Christian Reformed Church established by Synod 1934 to oversee the work of the denominational archives and to promote publication of denominationally related historical studies. The committee's members are Rev. Lugene Schemper, chair (2011/2); Dr. James De Jong (2012/2); Ms. Angie Ploegstra (2010/1); Mr. William Sytsma (2010/1); Dr. Richard H. Harms (ex officio), secretary. The committee requests that synod reappoint Ms. Ploegstra and Mr. Sytsma to a second three-year term.

II. Archives staff

Dr. Richard Harms is the curator of the Archives, which are housed in Heritage Hall at Calvin College. As archivist, he serves the Christian Reformed Church, Calvin Theological Seminary, and Calvin College. Other staff include Ms. Hendrina Van Spronsen, office manager; Ms. Wendy Blankespoor, library assistant; Ms. Melanie Vander Wal, departmental assistant; Dr. Robert Bolt, field agent and assistant archivist; student assistant Ms. Dana Verhulst; and volunteers Dr. Paul Bremer, Mrs. Willene De Groot, Mr. Ed Gerritsen, Mr. Fred Greidanus, Mr. Ralph Haan, Dr. Henry Ippel, Mrs. Helen Meulink, Rev. Gerrit Sheeres, Mrs. Janet Sheeres, and Mr. Ralph Veenstra.

III. Archival work during 2009

We received and organized the papers of Mr. William Van Regenmorter, a prominent West Michigan politician, who specialized in the rights of crime victims. The Dr. Quentin Schultze research and reference files on Christianity and the mass media and on Christians and information technology also were organized. These 28.5 cubic feet of material are already providing valuable research opportunities for students. The summer saw an influx of denominational records, which, due to space limitation for unprocessed material at the time, were immediately processed. Among these collections were the records of the former Paw Paw, Michigan, Christian Reformed Church; the denominational Campus Ministry Program; the University of Western Ontario (London) Campus Ministry program; and the former University Church in Mount Pleasant, Michigan. We also processed records previously received from Mountain Lake, Minnesota, CRC (a discontinued ministry); Christian Reformed World Missions; the Office of Chaplaincy Ministries; and Classis Lake Superior.

Smaller collections are the records of the Fremont, Michigan (Calvin College), Alumni Guild; the papers of Mr. Leo Peters, an active critic of Calvin College and its faculty during the 1980s and 1990s, which came from his estate and includes correspondence as well as copies of advertisements he purchased in *The Grand Rapids Press*; the papers of Rev. Emo F. J. Van Halsema; and the WWI correspondence and diary of Mr. Edward DeVries, who was killed in action.

Among the material received but not yet processed was raw stock video footage of the Spoelhof biographical project, 1951-1975; ten cubic feet of records from the CRC Chaplaincy Ministries office; the records of the Ottawa (Ontario) Region of Christian Reformed Ladies' Societies, 1954-2008; records of the Gainey Institute for Faith and Communication, 2004-2005; and records

from the denominational Sesquicentennial Committee. We also received the papers of Dr. Bernie Zylstra, which had been housed at Redeemer University College, and these will complement the papers of Paul Schrotenboer, Pete Steen, and H. Evan Runner.

Work continues in organizing the papers of Dr. H. Evan Runner, a sizable task given the volume of material that arrived. Translation from Dutch into English of additional minutes from Pillar CRC, Holland, Michigan, and Classis Holland were completed and then returned to the Holland, Michigan, Central Avenue CRC. Indexing of *The Banner* vital records continues.

Thanks to the efforts of the Calvin College Physical Plant staff, we were granted additional storage space in the basement of the Surge building. This space was specifically designed for record storage with a fire suppression system and environmental controls. Although the distance between our two areas is not ideal, this arrangement is workable and helps us deal with the critical lack of storage space noted in previous reports.

IV. Publications

The history of the CRC mission effort in China, 1920-1950, by Dr. Kurt Selles, has been approved for publication by the Historical Series of the RCA and is expected to be released in spring 2010. This is the fourth title that *Origins* has published in the past five years. Based on comments from editorial readers, Mrs. Janet Sheeres is making changes to the fifth publication project, the extensively annotated and translated minutes of the CRC synodical meetings (then called classical or general assembly meetings), 1857-1880.

Early membership information from Pillar Church, Holland, Michigan, records from the earliest Dutch immigrants in West Michigan at the middle of the nineteenth century, are now available online at www.calvin.edu/hh/family_history_resources/Pillar_church.htm. We received the membership records of the Maxwell, New Mexico, CRC, 1893-2008, which were also published electronically and are available at www.calvin.edu/hh/family_history_resources/Maxwell_church.htm.

In November 2008 the Historical Committee was contacted by representatives from a project sponsored by the Frisian Provincial Government to contribute to a book (published in September 2009 by Friese Pers Boekerij) titled *Famous Frisians in America* (published in Dutch as *Gevierde Friezen in Amerika*) as part of the celebration of 400 years of Dutch-American ties. The Archives contributed dozens of images from the collection as well as text for eleven of the more than seventy people featured. In reviewing the entries, the editors discuss a "disproportionately large number" of people included with background in the Christian Reformed Church and Calvin College.

V. Recognition

1. The Committee acknowledges the following individuals who will celebrate significant anniversaries in the ordained ministry during 2010:

70 years	Repko W. Popma
69 years	Harold Petroelje Gysbert J. Rozenboom
68 years	John A. Botting

66 years	Paul Han
65 years	Edward G. Boer John C. Derksen George D. Vanderhill James W. Van Weelden
64 years	David B. Muir Seymour Van Dyken
63 years	John A. De Kruyter Jacob Hasper Herman Minnema Bernard E. Pekelder Clarence Van Ens
62 years	Carl G. Kromminga, Sr. Peter M. Macaskill Howard B. Spaan
61 years	John A. Petersen Albert J. Vanden Pol
60 years	Lugene A. Bazuin Martin D. Geleyense Dick C. Los Lammert Slofstra Leonard F. Stockmeier
55 years	Harvey J. Baas Andrew J. Bandstra Winston C. Boelkins Rodger J. Buining John Bylsma Ike Chang Michiel M. De Berdt Bert Den Herder John Hofman, Jr. James C. Lont Earl C. Marlink Jack J. Matheis Jan D. Pereboom Carl J. Reitsma John C. Rickers Gerard Ringnalda William K. Stob Jacob W. Uitvlugt Wilbert M. Van Dyk Gerard Van Groningen, Sr.
50 years	Norman B. Haan James Joosse Alfred E. Mulder Joel H. Nederhood

John H. Primus
Raymond C. Swierenga
Stanley J. Vander Klay
Frederick J. Van Dyk
Theodore Wevers

2. We report the following anniversaries of ministries during 2010:

- | | |
|----------------------|---|
| 125 years, 1885-2010 | Holland, MI – South Olive
Luctor, KS |
| 100 years, 1910-2010 | Edmonton, AB – First
Hudsonville, MI – North Blendon
Lodgepole, SD – Holland Center
Paterson, NJ – Madison Avenue |
| 75 years, 1935-2010 | East Lansing, MI – River Terrace
Kalamazoo, MI – Parchment
Lacombe, AB – Woody Nook
Morrison, IL
Newton, IA
Sumas, WA |
| 50 years, 1960-2010 | Bellingham, WA – Hope in Christ
Colorado Springs, CO – Cragmor
Jamaica, NY – Queens
Jenison, MI – Baldwin Street
Manhattan, MT – Bethel
Palo Alto, CA
Pinellas Park, FL – Pine Grove Community |
| 25 years, 1985-2010 | Atlanta, GA – New Hope Church of Dunwoody
Beamsville, ON – Providence
Chandler, AZ – Christ's Community
Flamborough, ON – Calvary
Napa, CA – Valley Community
Ponoka, AB – Sunrise
Rimbey, AB
Shiprock, NM – Bethel
St. Thomas, ON – Fellowship
Thunder Bay, ON – Hope
Victoria, BC – Christ Community
Wyoming, MI – Hahn-In |

VI. Reminders

We again ask congregations that have observed anniversaries during 2009 or will observe anniversaries during 2010 to send copies of commemorative materials (e.g., booklets, historical sketches, video recordings, and photographs) to the Archives.

Official minutes of 96 Christian Reformed churches and five Christian school organizations were received and microfilmed, and the copies were stored in our vault. The originals were returned, usually by UPS. Official minutes were received from all 47 classes. Anniversary materials were received from 12 Christian Reformed churches.

Of the 837 organized congregations that have existed for at least ten years, 665 (just under 80%) have sent their minutes to the Archives for microfilming. This total represents an increase of one in the number of churches that have had their records duplicated. Due to the persistent and frequent reports of lost or misplaced minutes, the Historical Committee again strongly urges congregations to utilize this very inexpensive means to produce a backup copy of their important records that will be stored in a secure location. As was the case last year, we gratefully report that every church at least ten years old in the following classes has sent their minutes to be duplicated and to have the duplicates placed in the Archives: Arizona, B.C. North-West, Grand Rapids East, Heartland, Minnkota, Niagara, Thornapple Valley, and Zeeland.

VII. Regional representatives

At the beginning of each year the Archives sends a communication to each regional representative, a liaison between the committee and churches in a particular classis, and to each classical stated clerk. This communication informs them of the materials the Archives holds for each of the individual churches within their classis. The stated clerks and regional representatives are asked to share this information with each church within the classis.

During this past year the Historical Committee's representative in Classis Central California, Ms. Bertha DeJong, passed away. She had served in her office well and will be greatly missed. The committee extends sympathy to her family and to her church, the First CRC of Ripon, California. In addition, the committee thanks retiring classical representatives for their meritorious service and is grateful for those who will carry the work forward. All who have served and are now retiring have been thanked for their services, and those who are to become our representatives have been welcomed.

VIII. Recommendations

- A. That synod grant Dr. Richard H. Harms the privilege of the floor when matters pertaining to the mandate of the Historical Committee come before synod.
- B. That synod by way of the ballot reappoint members of the Historical Committee to a second three-year term.
- C. That synod remind the classes and congregations that Synod 1912 instructed that all records from discontinued ministries be sent to the Archives. Archives staff will organize and sort the material to ensure that contents with legal or historical significance are preserved. (Contact the committee at crcarchives@calvin.edu.)
- D. That synod encourage classes that have member churches more than ten years old to submit copies of council minutes to the Archives if they have not yet done so.

Historical Committee
James De Jong
Richard H. Harms (ex officio), secretary
Angie Ploegstra
Lugene Schemper, chair
William Sytma

I. Brief overview

In 2010 the Sermons for Reading Services Committee solicited and approved twenty-seven sermons that are available on the denominational website (www.crcna.org under “Devotion” and “Resources”). Email and other information we receive indicate that this service continues to be used and is widely appreciated within the denomination and sometimes outside of it as well.

The committee is working with denominational website staff to make the sermons easier to search by text or topic. The committee has received requests from churches for additional sermons. To accommodate the requests, the committee will include links to other CRC related organizations that also have sermons available, such as the Calvin Theological Seminary Center for Excellence in Preaching, the Calvin Institute for Christian Worship, and Back to God Ministries International.

The committee is currently composed of Rev. Richard J. deLange (2012), serving as chairman and secretary; Rev. John Kerssies (2011); Rev. Paul D. Stadt (2011); and Rev. Kenneth F. Benjamins (2012).

The committee requests that synod appoint an additional member to the committee for a three-year term.

Rev. Stephen D. Tamming is pastor of Trinity CRC, Goderich, Ontario. He received his M.Div. from Calvin Theological Seminary and is active in his classis, having served on several classical committees over the past nine years.

The honorarium paid to pastors who submit an approved sermon has not increased for many years. The committee recommends that compensation increase to \$100 whether in U.S. or Canadian funds.

II. Recommendations

- A. That synod approve the work of the committee and encourage the churches to avail themselves of the sermons for reading services on the CRC website.
- B. That synod by way of the ballot approve the appointment of Rev. Stephen D. Tamming for a three-year term.
- C. That synod increase the honorarium to \$100 for submitted sermons approved for use by the Sermons for Reading Services Committee.

Sermons for Reading Services Committee
Kenneth F. Benjamins
Richard J. deLange, chairman/secretary
John Kerssies
Paul D. Stadt

DENOMINATIONALLY RELATED AGENCIES

The faculty, staff, and students of Dordt College send greetings and thanks for the many ways that the Christian Reformed Church has supported us again this year. Through regional ministry shares and offerings, churches across the United States and Canada have contributed much to help prepare 1,320 Christian young people and adults for careers and lives that honor God and serve their fellow citizens. We know that many have also lifted us up in prayer again this year.

We have been blessed to be able to maintain nearly steady enrollment this past year, despite difficult economic conditions. Our students have found their way here from 33 states, 8 Canadian provinces, and 17 countries.

As it has been for 55 years, the mission of Dordt College is to equip our students to work toward Christ-centered renewal in all parts of their lives. We consciously create an environment in which our academic program and our residence life programs work hand in hand to prepare our students for specific professions and for the complex array of roles they will fill throughout their lives. We nurture attitudes of service, teach for understanding, and provide training.

We continue to look for and find fresh ways to do that effectively. Our new international business and proposed construction management majors are examples of this. We have compiled a range of courses that will give students interested in these areas not just the technical knowledge to be good professionals, but also a broad context for obedient service. Our goal is to help them better understand the complexity and the inter-relatedness of the world and what this requires of them. For example, international business majors will take courses in economic development in low income countries, non-western history, missions, and cross cultural communication.

We began a new First Mondays Speaker Series this year, inviting Christian leaders to speak to our students about vocation and God's call in their lives. We have refocused our chapels, and judging from attendance, are speaking to students in ways they appreciate. We continue to devote resources to Core 100 (Kingdom, Identity, and Calling), and Core 300 (Calling, Task, and Culture) to help students develop insight into how they can and should serve in every part of their lives.

One of the challenges for institutions like Dordt College is to speak to and learn from diverse groups of people and, at the same time, eagerly share what we believe is a helpful and biblical way of understanding how to live in the world. The Christian Reformed Church has been a crucial part of our growth and history, and our connection to it has helped deepen our vision and commitment. As we look to the future, eager to work with Christians outside of our traditional community too, we feel blessed to be able to share a Reformed worldview that helps us deal with contemporary issues in our culture, that rests in God's grace toward us, and that gives us a credible place to stand.

Dordt College
Carl E. Zylstra, president

The Institute for Christian Studies (ICS) was established in 1967 to address the North American academy at its highest levels with a Christian word-in-edgewise. It dedicates its teaching and scholarship to bringing out the religious roots of scholarly work and understanding.

The institute does this by addressing scholarly problems so central to life that they are shared by many academic disciplines. It does this work as a community of learners and teachers principally via M.A. and Ph.D. programs. In these programs, the institute both produces scholars that articulate a Christian interdisciplinary voice and prepares self-consciously Christian scholars for service in our society's colleges and universities. In addition, ICS does its work in the conviction that faithful Christian scholarship must bear fruit in faithful Christian action. It gives form to that conviction via a master's degree in worldview studies that aims to form Christian activists—such as Christian day school teachers, campus chaplains, or political advocates—to self-consciously Christian action. Finally, ICS does its work in the conviction that faithful Christian scholarship must equally bear fruit in faithful day-to-day Christian living. It lives out this conviction principally via its Worldview Conferences held on an annual rotation in cities across North America.

ICS successfully instituted an austerity program to survive the current economic downturn without layoff of faculty or staff. The program involved deep pay cuts, a reduction in operations, and a very deep cut in space costs. The cuts allowed for bare minimum survival. However, our situation immeasurably improved in Fall 2009 with the receipt of a large bequest of \$4.2 million (Cdn). The generous gift allows ICS to proceed confidently into the coming years in service to our Lord.

This year the number of students following one of three programs of study at ICS is up about 10 percent from last year. Consequently, there are forty students enrolled in degree programs at ICS. In addition ICS teaches students from the Toronto School of Theology, a large theological consortium affiliated with the University of Toronto and via a separate memorandum with ICS, as well as from the University of Toronto and other universities in the greater Toronto area, who enroll in ICS seminars during its fall and winter/spring semesters. It also teaches students of various backgrounds (e.g., Christian school teachers and pastors looking for professional development) who enroll in our distance and summer offerings. This year ICS serves another 42 students in these ways. The number is down about 10 percent from the previous year because ICS offered approximately 20 percent fewer courses in keeping with its austerity program.

The M.A. and Ph.D. programs at ICS culminate with a thesis and its formal defense. Moreover, its Ph.D. program has an earlier and preliminary climax in what is termed a pre-thesis examination. Over the course of this year, the following programs and/or culminating examinations were completed or are in process:

- One M.W.S. program was completed.
- Four M.A. theses were successfully defended.
- Two Ph.D. pre-thesis examinations were successfully passed.

- One ICS/Vrije Universiteit Ph.D. thesis will be defended.
- A TST Ph.D. (University of St. Michael's College) thesis will be defended in September 2010 under the direction of an ICS supervisor.

This year ICS has held and will hold Worldview Conferences in five different locales. ICS senior member in philosophy of religion Dr. Ronald Kuipers is our keynote speaker. In the winter/spring he leads conferences on the theme "What's so critical about faith?" He argues that thinking flowing from faith allows for a critical intelligence and understanding that can be seen as a source of wisdom and hope, one that develops an alternative imagination in its adherents, providing them with a fresh take on the various problems we meet in a dynamic and confounding world. In the fall, he will be keynoting conferences on the conjunction of Christian faith and the environment.

Institute for Christian Studies
Robert Sweetman, academic dean
and acting president

Greetings from The King's University College to all delegates of Synod 2010 of the Christian Reformed Church!

The King's University College exists to provide university education that inspires and equips learners to bring renewal and reconciliation to every walk of life as followers of Jesus Christ, the Servant-King. King's mission is the foundation for its strategic plan that will be completed this spring—providing us with strategic direction for the next five years. We pray for the Spirit's leading as we seek to embody our mission more fully.

Fall enrollment at King's increased by 6 percent, for a total of 667 students. This is the highest enrollment King's has ever had; it surpasses our previous high enrollment in 2003—by one! King's University College has now experienced three consecutive years of enrollment growth, and we pray that prospective students and their parents will continue to see the extraordinary value of the university education that King's provides.

In September we were excited to launch the bachelor of education – secondary program. We are confident that the graduates of this program will be a blessing to Christian high schools across Canada.

Our 30th-anniversary celebrations last September provided a wonderful occasion to reflect on the amazing ways God has blessed the university college. Opening its doors to 76 students in 1979 and having four graduates in the class of 1987, King's has grown to nearly 700 students today with 125 graduates last spring. King's support community has provided generation-long vision and support. Christian Reformed churches in western Canada have been a vital component of this expression of the body of Christ.

In 2009, King's and other Christian post-secondary institutions in Canada benefited from a large economic stimulus allocation for university and college infrastructure in the federal budget. King's proposal for \$1.89 million in infrastructure upgrades was approved, with the federal government providing half of the funding. This presents a significant challenge, but we are excited for the opportunity! This is the first time that federal funding has been given to independent Christian institutions for capital projects.

For the third year in a row, King's achieved outstanding results in *The Globe and Mail* Canadian University Report. King's ranked at or near the top of the "very small" university category in all the important academic categories. The full report card can be found on the web at globecampus.ca/uni-101/. We trust that our excellent rankings will continue to benefit our marketing and enrollment development efforts.

The King's University College continues to be blessed with generous support from Christian Reformed churches. Through area college ministry shares and other offerings, churches contributed \$515,000 to King's in 2009, enabling us to maintain and build programs, offer student financial support, and control tuition. We thank God for the ongoing support of Christian higher education at King's. May God bless your work on behalf of his church during Synod 2010.

The King's University College
Harry Fernhout, president

We are very grateful to the Lord to have experienced once again an enrollment increase (fourth year in a row) and to see so many people—young students and career-change folks alike—coming to Kuyper with specific ministry careers in mind. These students exhibit highly motivated responses to God’s call on their lives, reminding us of the activism of the 1960s (but in a much more polite way). As a result, our traditional programs have grown, and we are adding new majors as students look for ministry opportunities in a variety of professions.

The addition of new majors is a strategic response to our vision as a Christian leadership institution. Bible and theology remain at the core of our academic program, with all students completing that major along with one in a professional area. The five largest professional majors this past year were pre-seminary, youth ministry, music and worship, cross-cultural studies, and social work. Our general education program and internship requirement complement these as we have increased our expectations of the skills students must demonstrate as superb Christian leaders.

Our unique origin as an institute 70 years ago set up a historical budget reality of greater dependence on gift income than on tuition income to sustain our programs. As we grow, this setup presents a challenge to Kuyper, especially in a time when general fund gift income is decreasing as a percentage of total revenue, potentially limiting our program development for the future. We are very grateful, therefore, that the Christian Reformed Church embraces and helps us along the way as we strive to provide more graduates for your ministry, mission, and service programs around the world.

Because of growing enrollment and the need for expanded programs, the college is analyzing its property and facility needs. We have opportunities to expand our acreage but are mindful of the wisdom to remain debt-free so that loan interest or other costs do not get passed on to students or compromise funding for the programs and services they need. We would appreciate your prayers, comments, and encouragement as we develop long-range plans for the college.

Thank you for your long-term support of Kuyper College and for your enthusiasm in our unique mission. We are thrilled to serve, along with you, in this challenging yet exciting time for the church. God is doing marvelous things around the world, and we are grateful for the sense of partnership you show toward us as we strive to respond well to the Lord’s call on our lives.

Kuyper College
Nicholas V. Kroeze, president

We are thankful to the Lord for the blessings we have experienced over the past year and appreciate this opportunity to share some highlights with you.

We welcomed a record 918 students (865 full-time equivalent) this past September, representing 9 Canadian provinces, 8 U.S. states, 7 other countries, and 52 different denominational backgrounds. Approximately 56 per cent of students are from a Reformed background, and we are encouraged by the spiritual, intellectual, and cultural vitality on our campus.

The Continuous Learning & Education at Redeemer (CLEAR) program, aimed at reaching out to adult learners, has enjoyed a successful launch with approximately 700 individuals participating in our fall learning activities, including three sold-out events. A ten-week lecture series for parents of children with autism spectrum disorders and a painting workshop is planned in addition to many other interesting learning opportunities. Visit www.redeemer.ca/CLEAR for more information.

This past October, Redeemer's rankings in *The Globe and Mail's* annual "Canadian University Report" were outstanding. We scored best in class in 3 categories among 12 very small universities (under 4,000 students); received an A+ in 6 of 19 categories, including most satisfied students, quality of education, student-faculty interaction, class size, campus atmosphere, and student residences; and an A- or better in 11 of 19 categories. These rankings build on Redeemer's good showing in the *Maclean's* student satisfaction rankings in February 2009 and is helping to build our reputation for excellence as a Christian undergraduate university.

Redeemer's chaplain, Dr. Syd Hielema, is working to make Redeemer a vibrant campus. The students are actively taking part in activities like the 24/7 prayer week, worship in "Church in the Box" and chapel, a student-initiated program of reading through the entire New Testament during the school year, a worship conference, and a workshop on vocational discernment. The students also organized the third annual Social Justice Conference in January.

Redeemer University College has been stimulated by a number of speakers, including Dr. John Witte, Jr., as our Zylstra Lecturer in November; Dr. James Payton, Jr., who gave our annual "The World and Our Calling Lectures" as the Association for Reformed Institutions of Higher Education lectureship; and Dr. Bob Goudzwaard, who visited our campus under the sponsorship of the Paideia Centre.

Dr. Adam Barkman has accepted the appointment to fill the vacant position in philosophy to replace the late Dr. Theo Plantinga. Currently there are 45 full-time, 3 sessional, and 43 part-time faculty. Our curriculum planning includes investigating new programs in health sciences and in education. Research also continues to be a hallmark at Redeemer, with both internal budget support and outside research funding from the Natural Sciences and Engineering Research Council of Canada, Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada, the Jackman Foundation, and other donors.

For campus development, Redeemer has received two large capital grants. For the first time in its history, Redeemer University College has been given a \$2.95 million grant from the federal government's Knowledge

Infrastructure Program, which we will match to achieve \$6 million to be used to upgrade our labs, campus safety, student services, and energy efficiency, including solar panels to generate the electricity for our campus.

Under the recreation infrastructure program, Redeemer has received \$2.6 million in combined federal and provincial funding, along with an interest-free \$1 million loan from the City of Hamilton, to be matched with \$2.2 million through a partnership with the Ancaster Soccer Club to upgrade our existing soccer field and to build a second soccer complex that will be usable year-round.

The work of our Presidential Search Committee is proceeding as the current president completes his third term on June 30, 2010. The strategic planning process has come together in a compelling way as part of the preparation for the transition to a new president. President Cooper considers it a privilege to have served Redeemer in various capacities over the past 30 years.

We are very grateful for the prayer and financial support we have received from the Christian Reformed community, including the ministry shares sent to us by area Christian Reformed churches. These are essential for our mission of providing Christian university education and promoting Christian scholarship from a biblical, Reformed Christian perspective.

Redeemer University College
Justin D. Cooper, president

Challenging economic times confront all of us. This past fall our tuition increased a minor amount—the lowest in our history—as our faculty and staff salary and wage schedules were frozen and other expenditures were curtailed. We continue to plan with intense fiscal responsibility and direct more funds toward Trinity scholarships, as we seek to keep a Reformed, Christian education affordable for families desiring such for their sons and daughters. Families are finding ways to finance a Trinity education with help from the campus work study program, Trinity aid, and government aid. God’s blessings are evident as our enrollment continues to increase with 1,367 in 2007; 1,405 in 2008; and 1,450 in 2009.

The presence of Trinity Christian College in Chicago continues to increase as well. In addition to the College’s long-time role in managing the Chicago Semester program—a semester-long experience interning and living in the city—Trinity has expanded its ChicagoQuest program for high school students. ChicagoQuest is a four-week program in the summer designed for academically motivated students who will be age 17 and high school seniors in 2010 and for incoming college freshmen. During this structured, residential experience, students establish friendships, take a general education course, and immerse themselves in cultural and service opportunities in Chicago. Serving adult learners in the city, Trinity’s Adult Studies program holds classes in space rented from Daystar School, a Christian Schools International (CSI) elementary school serving students in the heart of Chicago.

Back on our main campus in Palos Heights, we are making progress on our Time Is Now capital campaign and have raised approximately 75 percent of our \$31 million goal. Key features of the campaign are the expansion of the Mitchell Memorial Gymnasium. Phase 1 of the project will provide students with a new competition gymnasium, training facilities, classrooms, and offices. The development of additional soccer, baseball, and softball fields less than a mile from campus will provide ample space for even more students to develop leadership and teamwork skills.

Trinity is pleased that the Christian Reformed World Relief Committee (CRWRC) has begun to include youth board members. Ms. Melissa J. Voss, a junior from Orland Park, Illinois, has been chosen to serve in this capacity. Earlier this year, this connection proved to be helpful, as the students at Trinity began to organize a Haitian relief benefit concert in response to the devastating earthquake in Haiti. Ms. Voss immediately became the bridge between CRWRC and Trinity as plans came together.

Summer is always a busy time for Trinity. A newly expanded schedule of summer courses for traditional baccalaureate students and the annual summer camps for local elementary and high school students will bring hundreds to campus. CSI’s leadership convention also meets on our campus this summer, and again we are pleased to host the CRC synod in June. We are grateful we are able to be the location where leaders gather in the summer, mindful that our mission each and every year is to form the next generation of leaders for churches, schools, and beyond all year long.

Trinity Christian College
Steven Timmermans, president

Calvinist Cadet Corps

Shortly after Synod 2009, the Cadet Corps counselors and their families traveled to Des Moines, Iowa, for the counselors' convention. The annual theme, 20/20 Vision, was introduced at the convention and was celebrated in many of our churches in January 2010 on Cadet Sunday. But something else new was introduced at the convention. Actually, it was a *someone*. Mr. Daniel Nandwa, the coordinator for the Kenyan Cadet clubs, came from Eldoret, Kenya, to Des Moines for the convention and stayed in North America for three weeks, meeting sponsoring clubs, and strengthening American-African bonds. Three times he attempted entry into Canada but was turned down by the Canadian consulate. Undeterred, Canadian sponsors made trips across the border to Port Huron, Michigan, and spent time with Mr. Nandwa there. It is good to hear the stories of people who are serious about helping to develop ministry in distant mission fields. Currently there are approximately thirty Cadet clubs in Kenya, and nearly all have sponsors.

In August 2009 the Cadet executive committee formed a new visioning team for the purpose of moving the ministry forward. The visioning team, made up of about a dozen men with a heart for ministry to boys, has determined two overarching areas that require attention. The first discovery was that the ministry's focus really needs to be on the leadership. We need to know what makes a man decide to be a Cadet counselor, what will build him up in that task, and what will keep him in place for as long as God calls him there.

That led to the second realization—a heightened awareness. The Cadet ministry needs to become a culture of prayer, from top to bottom. Time spent in talking with God cannot become a thoughtless ritual. It must be sincere. The Cadet Corps is calling attention to the issue through Cadet publications and training events. Lives have already been changed by this new focus. It's an exciting thing to see!

One of the results of the new focus took place at the January 2010 Cadet Congress, the annual meeting of the board of directors. This event draws about 100 men from all over North America for three days of deliberation and decision making. The agenda this year was unusually light, and the executive committee determined that business could be concluded by Friday noon instead of the usual Friday evening. That opened up the entire afternoon for something new. After considerable prayer, discussion, and planning, the executive committee and visioning team mapped out an afternoon that was filled with prayer and problem solving. It moved between plenary sessions and small groups. The groups were led by visioning team members and regional training coordinators together, with the trainers leading the focus on counselors and the visionaries leading the portions on prayer. When Congress concluded, many congressmen expressed their appreciation, and some even said that this should be repeated every year.

Calvinist Cadet Corps

G. Richard Broene, executive director

GEMS Girls' Clubs

Equipping women and girls to passionately live out their faith—doing justice, loving mercy, and walking humbly with God is indeed the vision, mission, and aim of GEMS Girls' Clubs. This is done by

- training, equipping, and inspiring women to be mentors of girls. This past year, over 3,300 of the 5,300 women who serve as counselors were trained at one of our 26 area-wide training workshops in North America, and/or attended our Annual Counselors' Leadership Conference in Ancaster, Ontario, at Redeemer University College, or attended a training workshop in Lusaka, Zambia.
- providing culturally relevant, biblically based, engaging curricula and other resources to girls, as well as offering dynamic, inspiring events for girls that result in faith nurture and development. Eight new or newly revised curricula will be introduced to GEMS Clubs at the 2010 Annual Counselors' Leadership Conference at Bethel University in Minneapolis, Minnesota. Two new curricula for our Zambian Clubs will likewise be introduced at the 2010 training workshops offered in the cities of Lusaka, Ndola, and Mpika, Zambia, in April and May. In addition, Get Connected! Camp, our life-changing, international summer camp for early teen girls, will be operating at peak capacity in August 2010 at Miracle Camp in Lawton, Michigan. In partnership with Zondervan Publishing, GEMS will offer the inspirational *Beauty of Believing Tour* to mothers and daughters in six locations across North America in the next twelve months.
- providing women and girls with real opportunities to be difference makers in our world—now. *The Call to Africa*, received by GEMS in 2006, has created many opportunities for girls and women to become actively involved in changing the lives of girls and boys and women in Zambia, Africa. Through the *Sister Club Program*, many churches have adopted GEMS Clubs in Zambia, providing the necessary funds needed to operate for a period of three years. Many individuals, clubs, and churches have raised funds to support the building of *The House that GEMS Built*, a home for eight orphan children and one housemother in Lusaka, and many more are currently raising support to build *The Esther School*—a school in Chongwe, Zambia, for orphan and under-resourced children. Many girls, clubs, and churches in North America and Zambia participated in *The Hand 'n Hand Program* introduced in 2009, a fundraising and micro-financing program that benefits all participating clubs. Through these programs and activities, girls and women have taken their focus off of their own wants and needs and caught a vision for how they can and are making a difference in the lives of others in great need.

For all the opportunities for kingdom work, service, and growth, GEMS gives thanks to our great God. We give thanks also to the Christian Reformed Church for entrusting to our care and nurture your beautiful girls!

GEMS Girls' Clubs

Jan Boone, executive director

Youth Unlimited

This past year Youth Unlimited was blessed with the opportunity to serve 482 Christian Reformed churches through many different resources and events like SERVE, Encounter, Convention, and the Where U At? urban youth conference.

As we look forward to the 2010-2011 ministry year and beyond, Youth Unlimited strives to be a valued resource for the local church. We are excited about our new initiatives and how they can help fulfill youth workers' need for support and encouragement, while also fulfilling the need to help young people experience faith in action.

The first new initiative taking place during winter 2010 are three youth worker retreats. These retreats are focused on ministering to youth workers, giving them space and opportunity to grow closer to Christ while being challenged to continue fulfilling God's call to youth ministry. We pray that these weekends help youth workers reflect a bright and authentic relationship with Christ as they walk with the youth of their church and community.

A second new initiative and strategic move is to invest much more into the leadership development of youth workers. Youth Unlimited has recently added a new full-time team member to give leadership and carry out this effort. As a result we hope to better network, minister to, train, and resource youth workers.

A third action is the creation of a new large youth event called "Live It!" The purpose of this event is to help young people see a God-sized plan for reaching this world, using their gifts and areas of interest to do it. This experience will enable students to see why God uniquely created them the way he did and how they are needed to influence this world and their friends for him—God's plan, our purpose. We are eagerly anticipating this event planned for July 2011.

The Youth Unlimited SERVE experiences planned for summer 2010 will challenge young people to wrestle with the question "**Who Cares?**" The answer will be provided from James 5:10-11, which says,

Take the old prophets as your mentors. They put up with anything, went through everything, and never once quit, all the time honoring God. What a gift life is to those who stay the course! You've heard, of course, of Job's staying power, and you know how God brought it all together for him at the end. That's because God cares, cares right down to the last detail.

(The Message)

Youth Unlimited appreciates the partnership with the Christian Reformed Church and eagerly anticipates how God will use this ministry to bless the lives of young people and youth workers in the coming year.

Youth Unlimited
Jeff Kruithof, executive director

STUDY COMMITTEES

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Appendix A: Proposed Guidelines for Handling Abuse Allegations Against a Church Leader (clean version)

Appendix B: Guidelines for Handling Abuse Allegations Against a Church Leader (changes noted)

I. Introduction

A. Context of the task force's work

For most members of the CRC, the local congregation is our community. It is *our* community of believers—our corner of Christ's body on earth. It elicits feelings of love and loyalty in us, including attachment to our church leaders, who are a vital part of the community. When a church leader is accused of misconduct or abuse, community and personal stability are deeply shaken. We do not want to believe it, and we often do not know what to do. We feel close to the church leader, who is often well-liked and has contributed to the growth and vitality of the congregation. We often dissipate some of our denial and confusion by blaming the victim for bringing forward an allegation that a respected church leader is involved in sexual misconduct. A near-universal response is a desire to make the problem go away as quickly and quietly as possible.

As a community of Christ's body, however, we must seek justice and mercy; we must seek the path of love for all parties. This is not easy. Each situation is complicated and emotional. The pain is deep. The effects for the claimant, the accused, and the congregation can be life changing.

And so, together, in the larger community of the denomination, members of the CRC have searched for ways to prevent abuse in the church and to respond effectively to allegations of misconduct by church leaders. The CRC showed leadership among North American denominations by forming the Office of Abuse Prevention in 1994, in response to a comprehensive study of abuse within our own denomination. Now named the Safe Church Ministry, the office helps congregations develop abuse prevention policies and practices; it facilitates the formation of classical safe church teams; it provides educational resources; and it has developed guidelines for responding to allegations of church leader misconduct.

From the beginning, the CRC officially recognized that sexual misconduct by a church leader, particularly by a pastor, always represents an abuse of power and authority; consistent implementation of this understanding, however, in action and in attitudes, remains a challenge. The report to Synod 1994 from the Synodical Committee on Abuse Prevention stated that "abuse by people in positions of leadership is always abuse of power. There is always a differential in power between the abuser and the victim" (*Agenda for Synod 1994*, p. 147). The following year Synod 1995 approved "Guidelines for Ministerial Personnel in Their Interpersonal Relationships." These guidelines unequivocally placed responsibility for proper relationship boundaries on ministerial personnel.

Abuse committed by ministerial personnel is always abuse of the authority committed to them by the church, as well as a serious betrayal of trust essentially assigned to ministerial personnel by those who need pastoral care and spiritual direction. . . . To abuse that authority and to violate that trust are a breach of ministerial responsibility that disregards a person's dignity in a setting of unequal power at a time of vulnerability. . . . Furthermore, sexual contact between parishioner and ministerial personnel is always abuse because of the authority entrusted to leaders. . . . The responsibility to assure that no abusive behavior takes place always belongs to ministerial personnel. The consent of the other person is never a justification, nor is the provocation by another person a defense for abuse.

(*Agenda for Synod 1995*, pp. 555-56)

Abuse of authority and power through sexual misconduct harms not only the victim but also the church. As stated in the first abuse study report presented to Synod 1992, "Abuse by clergy undermines the credibility of the ministerial profession and ultimately of the gospel itself. Prevention of such abuse and appropriate discipline for its occurrence are of paramount importance for the health of the church" (*Agenda for Synod 1992*, p. 352). The understanding of sexual misconduct by ministerial staff as an abuse of power remains as important and valid today as nearly two decades ago when synod received that first report.

Over the years the Christian Reformed Church learned that sexual abuse by church leaders occurs more often than we want to believe. We also learned that victims struggle for years or a lifetime to regain a sense of hopefulness and peace within the body of Christ. Regrettably, many victims leave the church.

Building on what we have learned, we continue the search for more effective pastoral responses that demonstrate justice and mercy through love and healing toward the victim, the offender, their families, and their congregations. This report is one more step toward bringing Christ's love and restoration to those individuals and communities confronted with an allegation of abuse by a church leader.

B. Mandate

Synod 2006 was confronted with a difficult situation. Mr. Wesley Heersink, who as a child was sexually abused by a youth ministry worker, brought an appeal to the Judicial Code Committee based on his claim that the accused person's church had inadequately responded to his request for pastoral care. Mr. Heersink further claimed that classis also failed to acknowledge the church's inadequate response. His appeal was an attempt to bring attention to the plight of other victims of abuse within the CRC, as well as to his own case.

The Judicial Code Committee did not sustain Mr. Heersink's appeal because the local church council had not violated or ignored existing CRC guidelines (*Acts of Synod 2006*, pp. 678-79). Both the Judicial Code Committee and Synod 2006 recognized the complexity of issues in providing pastoral care for those who have been victims of sexual abuse by church leaders. Therefore, synod adopted the recommendation from the Judicial Code Committee that a task force be appointed

to consider how best to respond to the underlying issues raised by Mr. Heersink's appeal: namely how the denomination ought to be responding, whether in financial terms or otherwise, to the very real consequences of sexual abuse in the lives of current and former members. . . .

(*Acts of Synod 2006*, p. 679)

Synod recognized that, as a community, we have not always dealt well with the consequences of misconduct by church leaders. We have not always been pastorally sensitive to victims and their families. The church community needs to confess its failure to consistently respond in redemptive love to the hurt and brokenness caused by actions of those entrusted to lead God's people. Seeking God's kingdom, the church seeks a better response to be an effective agent of healing, justice, and reconciliation. That response needs to include specific actions to improve our practice.

Scripture commands responsible exercise of authority. James 3:1 states, "Not many of you should presume to be teachers, my brothers and sisters, because you know that we who teach will be judged more strictly" (TNIV). Paul instructs the church to "have nothing to do with the fruitless deeds of darkness, but rather expose them" (Eph. 5:11). Throughout Scripture God's people are also called to care for the weak, the poor, and the disenfranchised. The 1992 report to synod from the Committee to Study Abuse includes a detailed exploration of biblical-theological perspectives on family and social life. The 1992 report explains,

Even in their original context, the Old Testament laws to which Jesus refers existed less to protect the privileges of the strong than to guarantee justice for the weak. . . . The covenant code (Exod. 20:22-23:23) and the book of Deuteronomy contain specific legislation to ensure that the enslaved, the widowed, the orphaned, the poor, and the stranger are not exploited but instead are securely integrated into the economic and social life of Israel. To this list of vulnerable groups Jesus pointedly adds children, whose very vulnerability reflects the attitude required of anyone wishing to enter the kingdom of heaven (Matt. 18:1-5). No fewer than five times throughout the Gospels Jesus warns that these "little ones" (in the immediate context he means children, but the image also pertains to other easily exploited groups) are God's special concern. Of those who cause them to stumble, Jesus says, "It would be better for you if a great millstone were fastened around your neck and you were drowned in the sea" (Matt. 18:6).

(Agenda for Synod 1992, p. 332)

Abuse by church leaders violates both the specific commands and the heart of Scripture. Following Jesus, the church must firmly protect the vulnerable and seek justice for the wounded.

As directed by Synod 2006, the Board of Trustees (BOT) appointed an Abuse Victims Task Force. Their report was submitted to Synod 2008 by way of the BOT report to synod. Synod 2008 adopted the following recommendation from the advisory committee that reviewed the report:

- b. That synod, with thanks to the task force for excellent work, refer the Abuse Victims Task Force Report back to the Board of Trustees for further refinement and to report to Synod 2010, with distribution to the churches by Fall 2009.

Grounds:

- 1) There has not been adequate time for councils, existing safe church teams, and other stakeholders to process this significant report.
 - 2) There are issues that need more clarification (such as but not limited to insurance issues, legal language, legal representation, more focus on healing, relationship of ecclesiastical process and judicial review, how and at what point restorative justice can be implemented, cultural considerations).
 - 3) The report must be carefully reviewed by people with expertise in several fields before it comes to the churches.
- c. That synod encourage the Board of Trustees to continue to use the expertise of the Abuse Victims Task Force and the Office of Abuse Prevention in refining the report.

(Acts of Synod 2008, p. 480-81)

After Synod 2008, the BOT reconstituted the task force to refine the report and consult with relevant stakeholders, in keeping with synod's direction.

C. Issues addressed in this report

The 2006 task force examined current practices, gathered information from people who were victims of abuse, corresponded with other denominations about their policies, and met with various experts. Communication from some victims showed that, like Mr. Heersink, others have experienced pain because of the way the church community responded when they brought forward claims of church leader misconduct. The task force sifted through the many issues and analyzed options for improvement. Time constraints prevented outside review of the draft report before submission to Synod 2008.

The 2008 task force began to refine the earlier work in October 2008. The task force researched the concerns identified by Synod 2008 and sought the advice of experts and stakeholders through consultation and comments regarding a draft report. Reviewers of a draft report included safe church team chairpersons, past claimants, insurance agents, legal counsel in Canada and the United States, restorative justice experts, the Office of Race Relations, the Advisory Committee to the Safe Church Ministry, and church polity experts. The responses from these individuals were considered in the revisions to the report.

The task force identified the following areas to improve how member churches in the CRC respond to abuse:

1. Pastoral care and response to abuse—from allegation to restoration

Disclosure of allegations of sexual abuse by a church leader brings intense emotions for many parties. Congregations become polarized; the claimant and the accused may feel isolated and ostracized; the claimant's story is often minimized. Healing and restoration require pastoral care for the claimant, the accused, their families, and the congregation.

2. Restorative justice and response to sexual abuse by church leaders

The denomination expressed commitment to restorative justice principles in 2005. Application of the principles in the context of abuse by church leaders raises questions that need to be addressed. While restorative justice principles should guide our pastoral care responses, specific restorative justice processes may be applicable in some cases of abuse by a church leader, but not in other cases.

3. Financial care and response to abuse by church leaders

Genuine pastoral care includes effectively addressing the financial costs that arise as a consequence of sexual abuse by church leaders. These financial costs fall into three areas: (1) the costs of counseling, (2) expenses related to participation in an ecclesiastical or synodically approved process, and (3) restitution as part of the healing process. Providing financial assistance raises questions regarding who should pay, assessing claims, and insurance policies.

4. Education about abuse in the church

Educational materials can equip church members and council members for their roles when an allegation of sexual abuse by a church leader arises.

5. Guidelines for dealing with allegations of abuse against a church leader

The response to an allegation of sexual abuse by a church leader may include implementation of the advisory panel process, the current procedure approved by synod. The task force reviewed the advisory panel process with an eye to clarity, consistency, and helpfulness in responding to allegations of abuse.

II. Elaborating the issues

A. Pastoral care

The task force placed a notice in *The Banner* requesting input from those affected by abuse within the church. The task force is grateful for those who courageously reflected on past personal experiences for the benefit of others. The responses demonstrated a wide variety of situations that resulted in deep pain and harm. Respondents included adults who were abused by church leaders when they were children or teens, adults who experienced clergy sexual misconduct, and family members of children or teens abused by church leaders. Responses included suggestions regarding existing CRC processes. The task force also received suggestions from persons who were abused outside the church with regard to ways the church community could minister to them.

All the stories expressed deep and enduring pain. Many longed for more helpful pastoral care from their church communities. Their suggestions contributed to the ideas presented in this pastoral care section. In addition to experiential evidence, the task force gathered information from books, articles, and organizations that provide pastoral care in situations of abuse by church leaders.

Church communities need to be sources of healing and restoration, especially when the harm was done by someone in a position of church leadership. Claimants, whether children or adults, and their families need immediate and ongoing compassionate pastoral care. They need assurance of God's love for them and acceptance within the church community so that those who have been abused can heal from the damaging and unmerited abuse they experienced. The accused and their families also need ongoing compassionate pastoral care as they experience stress and disruption in their lives. And, finally, the local congregation needs care and assistance as it copes with difficult circumstances and community distress.

The following guidelines relate to pastoral care when allegations of sexual abuse against a church leader surface. These guidelines are not exhaustive. They remind churches of the importance of pastoral care and provide initial direction. More extensive information can be found on the Christian Reformed Church website under the Safe Church Ministry (www.crcna.org/safechurch).

1. Pastoral care when an abuse allegation is made

An abuse allegation against a church leader is distressing for a church council. To ensure that pastoral needs are not inadvertently overlooked, councils should immediately appoint an individual or small group of wise and experienced pastoral care persons to develop and oversee the provision of pastoral care for each of the concerned parties—claimants, the accused, their families, and the congregation as a whole.

2. Pastoral care for claimants and their families

Claimants and their families present a wide range of pastoral care needs. If the abuse occurred recently, they may feel shock, fear, and confusion. If the abuse occurred in the past, they may have been living for years with emotions such as hurt, sadness, anger, alienation from the church, and more. They may be unaware of church procedures for responding to allegations of abuse. Claimants need to be taken seriously and offered immediate compassionate support.

a. Systems for support

- Church leaders who are not part of the abuse allegation should contact the claimant and family, expressing willingness to take the complaint seriously. Church leaders should express sorrow that the claimant has this story to tell.
- Support resources should be offered without waiting for requests from the claimant and family. The claimant and family's decisions regarding use of these resources should be respected and accepted. Support resources may include referral to Christian counseling, referral to a victim advocate, prayer, spiritual guidance, and up-to-date information regarding the response process to the abuse allegation.
- Pastoral care includes attention to financial needs. As with other diaconal matters, the situation should be assessed and financial support provided for counseling or other needs emerging from the circumstances. Section II, C in this report provides additional information about financial issues.

b. Interactions with claimants and families

The following guidelines for interaction with claimants and their families are based on thoughtful suggestions from victims and families who have experienced abuse in the church context.

- Claimants and families need to be able to speak about their experiences and emotions without blame or shame. They need to know that others hear and understand their pain.
- Abuse situations raise many complicated spiritual questions. Claimants and families may desire assistance with the effects of abuse in their spiritual lives. Offer prayer and spiritual guidance to help them deal with their questions.
- Provide information to claimants about support services and options for redress available to them within the CRC.
- Whenever possible, allow claimants to make choices in the process following the abuse complaint. Respect their requests as far as possible. If appropriate, claimants will be offered the assistance of a trained victim advocate for assistance during a synodically approved process, but they may choose another person to be their advocate.
- Claimants and families benefit from close communication with those involved with the response process. Keep them informed about steps in the process, decisions made, and the outcomes of hearings. Responsibility for communication with the claimant and family should be assigned to a designated person. The victim advocate should also have access to this information.

c. Long-term healing

The effects of abuse are long-term and require long-term pastoral care. Pastoral care needs do not disappear at the conclusion of the church's official response to an allegation. Healing and restitution require considerable time. Pastoral care should continue after the official response process has ended.

- Healing is promoted when victims and families hear sincere apologies and expressions of regret from offenders, the church, or others involved in the abuse situation. Genuine apologies recognize the wrong, acknowledge the suffering, and take responsibility without blaming the victim or excusing the offender. Sincere apologies cannot be forced or demanded. Repentance extends beyond words to a change in behavior. Although apologies support healing, the effects of abuse continue even following apologies.
- The deep wounds from abuse often require professional counseling for healing and resolution. Victims generally should receive assistance to pay for out-of-pocket medical and psychological treatment needed to recover from abuse, even if the abuse occurred years prior to the disclosure.
- Some victims may desire pastoral care support as they wrestle with the concept of forgiveness. Forgiveness is a process that should not be advocated prematurely and cannot be forced by the victim or forced by others. Resources to explore the forgiveness process can be found on the CRC website under the Safe Church Ministry: www.crcna.org/safechurch.

d. Pastoral care for children

Particular challenges for pastoral care are presented by situations of alleged abuse of a child or teen by a church leader. By law, civil authorities must be immediately informed of such an allegation. The police or other authorities may forbid discussion of the incident with the minor until after formal investigation. Confidentiality requirements may prevent disclosing information to those who could provide valuable pastoral care to the child and family.

- Church response steps are explained in the “Guidelines for Handling Abuse Allegations of a Child Against a Church Leader,” available on the CRC website under the Safe Church Ministry: www.crcna.org/safechurch.
- Professional counseling resources may be especially important in these situations.
- Parents, as well as the child, need pastoral care. In addition to intense emotional and spiritual effects on the parents, they may also face the need to take time off from work for the legal process involving their child.
- The child's siblings may need pastoral care for their reactions to the complicated or confusing situation.

3. Pastoral care for accused persons and their families

Those who are accused of misconduct are often judged prematurely and are not pastored effectively. Paul reminds us that we are to “carry

each other's burdens, and in this way . . . fulfill the law of Christ" (Gal. 6:2). This applies to the accused as well as to claimants. In many cases the spouse and children of the accused are secondary victims of the situation.

- a. The spouse and children of those accused of abuse should not be overlooked for pastoral care. They experience deep distress, confusion, embarrassment, and other strong emotions. Direct expressions of care and concern from non-involved church leaders and others in the congregation are important.
- b. Regardless of outcome, the accused and their families require continuing pastoral care to assist with the ongoing effects in their lives following an allegation.

4. Pastoral care for congregations

Congregations are deeply affected by allegations of abuse against a church leader. Some members deny the occurrence of abuse even after a careful process has concluded that evidence supports the allegation. When other members accept the findings of the process and support taking measures to hold the offender accountable, the congregation may experience division. Members feel betrayed, confused, angry, or sad. Members may fear that others, including their own children, have been hurt. Abuse allegations also raise difficult spiritual questions regarding God and his church.

For all these reasons and more, congregations need focused care and time to heal from the effects of an abuse allegation against a church leader. The long-term health of the congregation depends on pastoral care that effectively promotes grace, peace, and healing.

a. Disclosure

Appropriate disclosure of information supports the healing process for individuals and the congregation. Disclosure is necessary for those who need to know, including the congregation. Experience has demonstrated that healing within a congregation is better realized when disclosure is made to the congregation. Disclosure should never involve revealing the identity of the victim or facts that would make the victim readily identifiable. Guidelines for disclosure need to be carefully followed to avoid giving grounds for a defamation lawsuit. Clear guidelines for disclosure can be one of the resources available on the CRC website for churches to access as needed. Disclosure is helpful for the following reasons:

- It is easier for a congregation to deal with a matter, no matter how unpleasant, if the matter is confronted openly rather than shrouded in secrecy. Disclosure reduces the harmful effects of rumors.
- Disclosure is also necessary to fulfill the mission of the church body to reach out to people who need the love, healing, and reconciliation that are at the heart of the gospel of Jesus Christ. Disclosure facilitates pastoral care to the congregation.
- Disclosure ministers to people who have been victims of abuse; they are encouraged when the church takes other cases seriously.

- Disclosure is preventive; it helps to prevent future abuse within the congregation and the community.

Note: Information for the above section regarding disclosure is taken from “An ELCA Strategy for Responding to Sexual Abuse in the Church,” produced by the Commission for Women (Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, 1992).

b. Communication and education

Sermons should address all aspects of healing. If the alleged offender is the pastor, then a pastoral care specialist or a skilled local chaplain can be called upon for one or more sermons. Addressing this issue from the pulpit makes the issue real and unavoidable; it is an important component in the healing process.

Educational presentations by knowledgeable community professionals promote greater understanding of the issues involved by the congregation. Safe church teams, whose mandate includes education, are a valuable resource for local congregations when abuse issues arise. Educational materials for individual use, such as books, pamphlets, videos, and websites, should be easily accessible for members of the congregation.

c. Support

Prayer services and small groups can help congregations recover from the effects of allegations of abuse by their church leaders. Holding special prayer services as soon as possible after an abuse allegation provides an opportunity for people to gather and pray in community. Small group gatherings with a trained facilitator can provide opportunities to express doubt, anger, fear, and concern. When the accused is a staff person, fellow church staff members may have particular concerns and emotions that can be addressed in staff groups, through opportunities to pray, learn, and deal with feelings and questions that arise.

d. Additional information

Books and other resources are available to help congregations heal from damage to the community that occurs when a leader is accused of abuse. These resources provide more information and practical suggestions than can be included in this report. The Safe Church Ministry office can provide further resources and references.

B. Restorative justice and response to abuse within the CRC

Synod 2005 affirmed principles of restorative justice and urged “congregations, schools, denominational offices, other Christian institutions, and homes to employ restorative justice practices” in their community lives (*Acts of Synod 2005*, p. 762). This report will address their relevance and application to how CRC churches deal with allegations of abuse by church leaders. If the CRC promotes restorative justice principles for public use, it is important to use them in our own practice, when feasible to do so (see *Agenda for Synod 2005*, pp. 556-57).

1. Restorative justice principles

The core principles of restorative justice endorsed by synod include

- a. Justice is defined by right relationships, and when justice is violated, we are called to right the wrong, to restore broken relationships, and to reestablish peace within the community as much as we can.
- b. Justice seeks restoration and healing, which requires that we
 - 1) seek vindication and healing for victims, not pushing them aside in pursuit of blind justice, but recognizing their pain and loss.
 - 2) take seriously the harm done by requiring of the offender a sentence proportional to the weight of the crime.
 - 3) call the offender to take responsibility for the crime and offer ways for the offender to do so.
 - 4) restore, where possible, the losses suffered by the victim.
 - 5) seek reconciliation between offender and victim, provided the victim also desires reconciliation.
 - 6) attempt to restore the peace of the community.
 - 7) involve the community in the process of justice.
 - 8) exercise punishment in a way that promotes healing and restoration whenever possible.

The focus of restorative justice is to “make things right again” by accepting responsibility for harm done to another person, making amends for losses incurred by the person who was harmed as much possible, and repairing broken relationships within the affected community.

Accountability, restitution, and healing of broken relationships are major goals of the church’s response to abuse. It is particularly in the area of restitution and healing that restorative justice principles and processes may be useful for responding to cases of abuse within the church.

2. Challenges for the application of restorative justice

Applying restorative justice in cases of abuse by a church leader raises a number of questions. Two main areas of concern identified by the 2006 task force are the power imbalance and the need for both parties to participate voluntarily. To address these concerns, the 2008 task force reviewed the applied research on use of restorative justice practices in cases of family violence and sexual assault; these are close proximities to the situation of abuse by a church leader in relation to power imbalance and refusal to accept responsibility on the part of offenders. The research includes positive case studies and critiques. A sampling of research, critical analysis, and case studies can be found in a volume edited by Heather Strang and John Braithwaite, titled *Restorative Justice and Family Violence*, published by Cambridge University Press in 2002. The review of applied research and practices in restorative justice, including comparisons with other approaches to justice in similar situations, leads the editors to observe that there is value in trying to apply restorative justice principles in response to abuse within familial relationships, when the necessary conditions are present to make it a feasible option. Recently a documentary film on the use of restorative justice to respond to cases of clergy abuse within the Roman Catholic Church became available for public education. It was produced by the Marquette University Law School Restorative Justice Initiative and is titled “The Healing Circle.” More information is available at <http://healingcirclegroup.com>.

The task force recognizes that restorative justice methods will not work in many cases of abuse by church leaders. Each situation needs to be carefully considered. A top priority is safety and protection for members of the congregation, including prevention of further harm to those who bring forward evidence of abuse. Churches also need to consider their legal responsibilities and legal liabilities as societal institutions.

Restorative justice cannot be forced on either claimant or accused. Voluntary participation is essential. In some cases, voluntary participation emerges as a result of personal support and careful preparatory work. Various means can be used to reduce the power imbalance, which is also essential in other approaches to justice.

The challenge is finding appropriate methods for each situation. The practice of restorative justice includes a variety of methods, but it is most commonly associated with the sentencing circle. The sentencing circle is unlikely to be appropriate in many cases of sexual abuse by church leaders. In cases of sexual abuse within familial circles, restorative justice has been implemented through the use of other methods such as facilitated communication between claimant, accused, and other stakeholders through trained intermediaries, including written communications; separate community conferences for victim and offender; and extensive preparatory work for an eventual dialogue that involves all parties.

Common features of restorative justice practice in response to abuse within close communities include the following:

- use of a trained facilitator
- preparatory dialogue with individual stakeholders
- involving those most affected in the determination of appropriate response
- decision making by agreement
- flexibility in the process, compared to formal court processes

3. Value of restorative justice practices for CRC response to abuse

Several research studies document that both victims and offenders who participate in restorative justice processes in cases of family violence have a much higher satisfaction rate and lower rate of repeat offences than comparable cases handled through the traditional criminal justice system. There is also evidence of the effective use of restorative justice within close cultural groups that have some similarities to the closeness of CRC church culture. When the conditions make it feasible and restorative justice practices are applied with care for all parties, the healing that results provides an illustration of what Scripture teaches about justice as restoring right relationships.

The current CRC process for responding to abuse is an ecclesiastical process unique to the CRC, drawing from various approaches to justice. There are some elements of restorative justice in it; there are many elements drawn from traditional court processes; and there are some elements based on CRC church order and cultural practice. When the conditions are right, the value of increasing the use of restorative justice options would include the following:

- a. Likelihood of acceptance of responsibility for harm caused to another person

Fact-finding is an essential part of any response to allegations of abuse. The current advisory panel process was developed to create a space that allowed victims of abuse within the CRC to come forward. It is still a major problem that victims of abuse think they will not be taken seriously, so they do not report it. The current process remains an important avenue available to all persons to ensure that claims of abuse are properly addressed.

Secrecy in cases of sexual abuse is a challenge for all forms of abuse response. Fact-finding processes, such as the advisory panel process, face challenges when denial and minimization of what happened by one party cannot be countered with traditional proofs such as witnesses and material evidence of harm done. This is especially true for sexual abuse by church leaders because there are often no witnesses. When fact-finding gets bogged down in contested details of what happened, with no outside witnesses, the emotional damage and spiritual harm tend to be sidelined because they are less easily proved, and yet they are the most harmful and most important to address. Opportunities for genuine redress and healing can be missed when denial is more advantageous in a process than accepting responsibility.

Refusal to recognize and accept responsibility for harm done by abuse is a major barrier to healing. As an ecclesiastical process, the current process includes elements that encourage acceptance of responsibility. Using restorative justice practices that encourage admission of wrong and greater empathy for the victim could be used to enhance acceptance of responsibility for harm done in cases of sexual misconduct by church leaders.

- b. Focus on broken relationships between persons

A key feature of restorative justice is the clear focus on the harm done to another person as well as breaking laws or church rules. Within the CRC, the advisory panel process allows claimants to tell about their story, the harm done, and the impact of what happened for their ability to be the persons God intended them to be. It also allows accused persons to present their side of the story and explain circumstances and impacts for them. This is an important first step toward justice and healing of broken relationships.

Extending the role of the advocate through the decision making process helps to ensure that the harm done to the victim remains at the center of the decision making. It is important to note that the need to improve restitution to victims gave rise to this task force. The task force heard stories of experiences that left a wronged person feeling hurt and estranged from the community rather than restored to wholeness and a place of dignity, and fewer cases in which broken relationships were restored, which is the ultimate goal of justice.

Restorative justice processes put more focus on making whole again what was harmed and broken as a way of accepting responsibility. Synod 2009 took another step forward by approving a proposal to extend the role of the advocate in the area of restorative justice. Some of

the recommendations in this report move in the direction of restorative justice. As the CRC embraces restorative justice thinking and begins to put it into practice, more alternatives will emerge. In this way, the church also provides a witness within society, which struggles with a justice system that puts the apparatus of the state, such as police and courts, at the center instead of the people affected.

c. More attention to restoration of both victim and offender

The advisory panel process facilitates the first essential step in abuse response, which is fact-finding and truth-telling. After the panel process completes its work, church councils are faced with the enormous challenge of holding offenders accountable in a way that protects congregants and leads to genuine changes in behavior, repairs harm done to victims, and restores broken relationships within the community of believers as much as possible. This task force was formed in response to a case that demonstrated the need for more focus on this stage of the process, which is about restitution and restoration.

The task force identified that church councils with limited experience in such matters find themselves faced with complex, emotion-laden issues and are required to make judgments with limited options while having limited expertise to dedicate to it. Testimony suggests that people on all sides are sometimes left with unresolved hurts. Because of the secrecy that surrounds the whole process, it is difficult for the community to provide support for each of the parties, to know what they can do that will be helpful, and to learn from individual cases to better prevent abuse within the CRC.

Restitution, in the context of abuse, focuses on healing and extends beyond the victim to the offender and the community. Restorative justice practices, using a trained facilitator, can be helpful to address the needs of each party. The victim, for example, is allowed to state what will help in the healing process. This may include apologies, increased safety for others, medical treatment, psychological treatment, and/or specific elements that reflect individual circumstances. An offer of restitution by an offender must be voluntary and genuine for healing, but it can be developed with help from a restorative justice facilitator. Within a restorative justice framework, restitution promotes healing because it symbolizes recognition of the harm done and gives back part of what was lost, without the concern that the victim is seeking revenge or retribution. It is not a substitute for consequences for the offender or a reward for the victim; its role is to reduce suffering, promote healing, and seek the restoration of right relationships within the church community.

The meaning of restitution to offenders and victims must be stated clearly. Restitution is not a consequence to the offender, nor does restitution bargain away any consequence. Restitution is an acknowledgment of wrongdoing, of the harm done. Restitution comes with a remorse that can hardly be expressed. Restitution is an act that expresses the offender's longing to amend, to restore what was broken. On the other hand, restitution is never a gift to the victim. It does not reward, or celebrate, or congratulate, or mark an achievement. Instead,

restitution is balm for a wound that does not heal. Restitution does not remove the injury, but it can ease the aching pain.

Restitution is also healing for the church community. The church community needs to heal and in many cases the relationship between a victim and the local church needs healing and restitution. Within a restorative justice framework, communal restitution is healing because it recognizes that justice and injustice take place in community and affect the whole community. Restitution is one step in restoring right relationships and healing the community following the deep wounds of sexual abuse by a church leader. Restorative justice processes focus on what is needed to restore all the broken relationships that result from abuse. A lot of thought and deliberation go into deciding what should be done to restore justice, with on-going community accountability for implementation of measures developed through participation of everyone.

Recognizing that this is an area for continued learning, this report recommends the initial use of pilot projects in restorative justice. Careful evaluation of these will likely reveal promising practices for broader application.

d. Participation by the person harmed throughout the decision-making process

The CRC advisory panel process makes it easier for victims of abuse to come forward, and the role of the victim's advocate provides some voice for the victim in the early stages of council decision-making. In the final stages of council decision-making, however, the victim's voice can be lost, particularly in cases involving a pastor who is close to the council making the decision. Victims who spoke to the task force identified that the exclusion from the final decision-making process impeded their healing and asked that this matter receive more attention.

Another area of concern is information about deliberations after the advisory panel process has concluded. Some claimants reported not learning about decisions made until they made further inquiries. Some of the restrictions on sharing information are important for impartiality. This can leave the claimant on the outside of the decision-making process, accentuating anxiety about the final outcome.

Restorative justice processes actively engage claimants, the accused, and related community members throughout the process from storytelling through decision making. They require trained facilitators to do that with sensitivity to all the stakeholders.

e. More attention to other stakeholders and community

It is widely recognized that spouses, families, and the church family are all affected by abuse when it occurs and all have an important role to play in restoring justice for individuals and for the community as a whole.

Restorative justice processes, which carefully consider all affected persons, can be used to enhance the work of restoration and reconciliation after the adjudication stage is complete. With the help of trained facilitators, other stakeholders are engaged in understanding the harm done and contributing to the healing process in appropriate ways.

Wider circles of support, beyond one advocate, are available for both

claimant and the accused person and work with them on a long-term basis.

Restorative justice approaches could be advisory to church councils, to fit in with CRC church polity. Using restorative justice methods after the advisory panel process is complete could assist councils by providing more options for dealing with issues related to restitution and restoration and allowing trained persons to do some of this work that councils may find themselves inadequately trained to do.

4. Awareness of restorative justice within the CRC

Having determined the value of restorative justice for abuse response, the task force considered another concern: the general lack of awareness and understanding of restorative justice among the CRC membership. The task force considered whether education was necessary before application or whether education and application could proceed together. In consultation with restorative justice team members, the task force determined it would be advantageous to pursue education and some initial steps toward application together. The cautious recommendations in this report invite the CRC community to move forward on a journey of education, application, and development of restorative justice practice that can serve the CRC well and contribute to providing a witness to the larger society about the biblical meaning of *justice*.

C. *Financial care*

Synod 2006 asked the task force to specifically consider how the denomination ought to respond “whether in financial terms or otherwise, to the very real consequences of sexual abuse in the lives of current and former members.” Synod 2006 was made aware of the financial consequences of such abuse through Mr. Heersink’s appeal and testimony. Genuine pastoral care includes effectively addressing the financial costs that arise as a consequence of sexual abuse by church leaders.

The task force identified the following three areas of financial need that require consideration for financial assistance as part of a comprehensive approach to pastoral care:

- financial costs of counseling services
- financial costs associated with an ecclesiastical or synodically approved process
- financial costs related to longer-term restoration and healing

1. Financial assistance for counseling services

The first form of financial assistance addresses the costs of counseling services related to possible abuse by a church leader. Financial assistance for counseling is important as an early diaconal care response to an individual with a need. It should be approached as need-based benevolence and provided without judgment regarding the allegations and without requiring the recipient to proceed with a charge of sexual abuse or continue into an advisory panel process. People who have experienced abuse by a church leader often need counseling to better understand the events and to make decisions that lead to healing. They may or may not decide to proceed with a formal allegation.

While financial assistance for counseling of possible victims of sexual abuse by a church leader is recommended, a church or classis may wish to expand the availability of benevolent counseling funds to any member who has experienced abuse including family abuse, domestic violence, date rape, or elder abuse. Persons who need such counseling often do not wish to tell others about the abuse; they are often reluctant to ask family members for the necessary funds; and they may not be able to afford counseling on their own.

At least two models exist for providing financial assistance for counseling services. The first model is a classis counseling fund. Following established criteria and provisions for confidentiality, managers of the fund provide resources to support necessary counseling for members of any church within the classis. A classis fund allows member churches to share the financial burden for what are unexpected and unpredictable costs that can be difficult for individual churches to manage within a yearly budget. For example, a smaller church that could not offer counseling funds alone can contribute to and have access to a larger resource, if needed. In addition, confidentiality through a classical fund increases the likelihood that a victim may accept this important form of pastoral care and get the help needed for healing. Presently, Classis Eastern Canada operates a fund on this model. Further information, such as principles, criteria, and operating policies, is available for other classes that would like to develop an appropriate mechanism for their context.

A second model provides financial assistance for counseling through arrangements between a local church and a local mental health or counseling agency, often a Christian agency. For a yearly fee, paid by the church, the agency agrees to provide counseling services to church members, as needed, according to established criteria. These programs are similar to an employee assistance program in the workplace.

2. Provision for costs of the ecclesiastical process

A second area for financial assistance is provision to cover the costs of participation in a church-approved or synodically approved process, such as the advisory panel process. Expenses related to the process may include

- the cost of contacting witnesses and meetings with an advocate.
- cost of preparing testimony and documents.
- necessary travel to meet a witness or advocate.
- travel and accommodations to participate in an advisory panel or similar process.
- wage loss incurred while participating in an advisory panel or similar process.
- cost of daycare or babysitting services while participating in an advisory panel or similar process.
- other expenses directly related to the process.

Presently the chairperson of the advisory panel process works with the claimant's advocate to assure that many of these costs are covered. Expenses are covered by the church where the accused person is a member, the classis whose safe church team is conducting the panel, or the classis

that includes the accused person's church. Classes with appropriate processes in place to deal with such an unexpected request can respond in a timely and effective manner.

3. Financial aspects of restitution

Finally, a third area of financial assistance addresses the need to make amends for the financial costs that result from sexual abuse by a church leader. This is part of restitution that was addressed earlier in this report. The financial aspects of restitution are only one part of a comprehensive approach to restitution; however, they can play an important role in the healing process. Financial restitution may include paying for

- documented medical expenses paid by the victim.
- documented psychotherapy or counseling costs paid by the victim.
- documented wage loss if the victim cannot work as a consequence of the sexual abuse.
- court costs in a civil or criminal complaint.
- pain and suffering.
- other expenses that are a consequence of the sexual abuse by a church leader.

Restitution is, first of all, the moral responsibility of the offender. In situations where an offender has died, moved, or cannot provide restitution for other reasons, the local church may accept a moral responsibility to become involved out of love for a victim and out of a commitment to restore as much as possible what was broken for the victim. Addressing the financial aspects of restitution raises serious concerns about legal liability, litigation, and insurance policies. These hurdles should not divert from the church's primary focus on justice and reconciliation. They can be overcome.

In relation to insurance, churches need to be aware of the relevant provisions of their insurance policy and discuss this as part of abuse prevention. Some insurance companies now have specific policies for churches that also encourage abuse prevention. In the context of a specific case, the insurance company should be informed as soon as required by the church's insurance policy. The insurance company is one of the stakeholders in any discussion about restitution.

With regard to legal liabilities, an offender may be warned away from restitution or apology because it implies guilt that could result in lawsuits. Diligence and inclusion of legal counsel, as well as all stakeholders, in any discussions, can lead to options that remove this hurdle and better meet the needs of all parties. As one example, legal counsel or trained restorative justice facilitators are sometimes able to negotiate a restitution agreement that disallows future litigation. Each case has unique factors and needs to be considered carefully. Churches do not need to reject out-of-hand options that reflect restorative justice principles because of legal or insurance issues.

D. Education about abuse in the church

Education is a powerful tool for developing a kingdom-building approach to the destructive power of abuse by church leaders. Councils, classes, and congregations benefit from education about the complexities of effective

prevention, sexual misconduct, emotional abuse, responding to allegations, and comprehensive healing. Councils and congregations need ongoing education to prevent abuse and to prepare for wise and just responses in the event of an allegation of abuse. Church councils in particular bear heavy responsibilities when abuse allegations are presented. Yet, frequently councils have little preparation for the task they face and the decisions that must be made. Since each year brings new council members, councils need to plan yearly training on abuse prevention and response.

When council members are faced with an allegation, they need immediate information about abuse, and they need assistance to understand their responsibilities in the process for responding to allegations. The task force suggests that the Safe Church Ministry be asked to develop a specific handbook for council members, containing information about the dynamics of abuse and a step-by-step description of the role and guidelines council members should follow in the process of responding to an allegation of abuse. This handbook should be distributed and read by all council members before they begin their deliberations on a specific case. Informational material specifically for council members dealing with abuse allegations could also be available on the Safe Church Ministry website, where any council member could access it when needed.

Ongoing education for members of CRC congregations supports abuse prevention and wise responses in the event of an allegation. The Safe Church Ministry offers materials to all congregations. The Safe Church Ministry also provides initial and ongoing training to members of classical safe church teams resulting in knowledgeable people available at the local level.

Some suggestions received by the task force include brochures for church information centers, specific training for church council members, and expansion of the resources available on the Safe Church Ministry website. This would provide easy access by all church members to practical materials designed for the possible situations and roles they may be facing when they look for information.

Aspiring pastors need training and education about abuse dynamics and clergy abuse. Trained, knowledgeable clergy will reduce the risk of abuse in the future and increase the likelihood of sensitive and wise responses to situations of alleged abuse. Calvin Theological Seminary includes training about abuse and boundaries in its curriculum. The seminary is encouraged to continue this training, develop it further as new materials become available, and reinforce it in continuing education programs.

E. Guidelines for handling abuse allegations against a church leader

The denominational guidelines for handling abuse allegations against a church leader provide direction when abuse is alleged. The guidelines seek to facilitate justice for everyone involved. The task force, including the director of Safe Church Ministry, reviewed the guidelines to take into consideration knowledge gained from experience; advice from past claimants; comments from advisory panels; and recommendations from legal, insurance, and other professionals. Proposed modifications of the guidelines improve their usefulness as an effective response to allegations of abuse by a church leader. The appendices to this report contain the proposed advisory panel guidelines as amended. Appendix A is a clean version of the proposed

revisions and Appendix B is included to show the changes as compared to the 1997 version.

III. Recommendations

A. That synod give the privilege of the floor to Ms. Kathy Vandergrift and Ms. Laura V. Triezenberg as representatives of the Abuse Victims Task Force.

B. That synod urge church councils to provide for the pastoral care needs of the claimant, the accused, families, and congregation when an allegation of sexual abuse against a church leader is brought forward.

Grounds:

1. Effective pastoral care is necessary for healing for individuals and for the congregation.
2. Effective pastoral care is an essential component of a just and merciful response fitting to the followers of Christ.
3. The elders are charged to provide faithful care and discipline for the church.

C. That synod urge councils to immediately appoint a person or small group of persons, accountable to the elders, who will ensure that the pastoral care needs of the claimant, the accused, families, and congregation are addressed.

Grounds:

1. A structure and accountability will assist with effectively meeting pastoral care needs.
2. The importance of pastoral care merits the focused attention of a small group so that pastoral care needs will not be overlooked.

D. That synod reaffirm the decision of Synod 2005 in its support for restorative justice principles and their application in the way that churches respond to abuse issues, recognizing that it will not be appropriate in all cases.

Grounds:

1. This complies with the decision of Synod 2005 that calls on all parts of the church to “employ restorative justice practices” in their community lives (*Acts of Synod 2005*, p. 762), and asks churches to review their own practices in light of restorative justice principles.
2. There is research to document the added value of applying restorative justice principles in response to abuse within close communities, when appropriate.
3. Consistency between public witness and internal practice is important for the credibility of the church, especially in the current cultural context.

E. That synod encourage CRC churches and agencies to take steps to increase awareness and understanding of restorative justice teachings and their relevance for life within the church, among both pastors and church members.

Grounds:

1. There is limited awareness of restorative justice within the CRC community, and dominant messages in our culture reinforce an adversarial approach to justice that is contrary to restorative justice principles.
2. Increased general awareness is essential for implementing the decisions of Synod 2005, and this awareness is important for effectiveness in application to abuse response within the CRC.

F. That synod, to begin implementation, allow for pilot projects in the use of restorative justice practices in response to specific situations of abuse by church leaders, provided that recognized restorative justice facilitators are available and participation is genuinely voluntary. Pilot projects and evaluations of them will be coordinated by the Safe Church Ministry to share the learning for application to other cases.

Grounds:

1. Pilot projects are a useful way to explore implementation of a different approach. Using them allows learning and opportunity to address any problems before changing existing practices for the entire church community.
2. Current guidelines and CRC church polity allow flexibility when stakeholders and relevant church authorities agree that an alternative approach might be beneficial.

G. That synod encourage all church councils to develop a plan for providing financial assistance for abuse-related counseling, if and when it is needed, as a diaconal response to a person in need, as early as possible and without judgment regarding any future claims. Options for consideration are a classis counseling fund, an arrangement with a local counseling or mental health agency, or other appropriate means.

Grounds:

1. Such counseling represents proper pastoral care for those in need.
2. Counseling is often needed to assist claimants with greater understanding of their situation and to assist with decisions that lead to healing.
3. Providing benevolent financial assistance is a typical diaconal activity.

H. That synod advise each church council to annually review its policies for abuse prevention and liability coverage.

Grounds:

1. Prevention of harm is essential for the well-being of individuals, the congregation, and the witness of the church.
2. Stewardly planning and resource use require responsible liability coverage for situations in which abuse occurs despite prevention efforts.

I. That synod encourage councils to use a restorative justice framework in decisions regarding restitution following sexual abuse allegations against a church leader that have been sustained.

Grounds:

1. Justice is facilitated when a victim receives needed healing responses.
2. Restitution should not be neglected or minimized as part of responding to victims with justice and mercy.
3. Restorative justice principles and practices are effective means for determining what may be needed for healing.

J. That synod strongly encourage councils to participate in yearly training on topics such as effective abuse prevention, the complexities of abuse situations, the denominational abuse response guidelines, and comprehensive healing for everyone affected by the situation.

Grounds:

1. Councils are entrusted with the well-being of their congregations; education will support the fulfillment of this responsibility.
2. Councils bear primary responsibility for decisions when abuse allegations are presented; education will result in thoughtful consideration of the complexities of mercy and justice in difficult situations.

K. That synod request that the executive director of the CRCNA develop additional educational resources on abuse prevention and church leader misconduct that are easy-to-understand and readily accessible for church members in general (e.g., brochures for church information centers, and specific resources on the dynamics of abuse by church leaders for church council members).

Grounds:

1. Information should be available to everyone in the church, including ministry leaders.
2. Education efforts need to address the reality and dynamics of abuse committed by church leaders in order to enhance prevention efforts and to support just and healing responses when abuse occurs.
3. Wide distribution of educational resources increases the probability that people will protect themselves and their fellow church members more effectively against abuse in the church.
4. New technology, including the Internet, offers expanding opportunities for wide dissemination and easy access.

L. That synod request that the executive director of the CRCNA develop a handbook that clearly describes the roles and responsibilities of church council members when an allegation of sexual abuse by a church leader arises, for distribution to church council members when a case arises, and for easy reference throughout the process.

Grounds:

1. Council members have primary responsibility for decisions in situations of alleged sexual abuse by a church leader.
2. Council members need to be equipped with knowledge in order to fulfill the responsibilities of their office when situations involving abuse arise.

M. That synod adopt the revised “Guidelines for Handling Abuse Allegations Against a Church Leader” as indicated in Appendix A.

Ground: These changes are consistent with the mandate to respond to the needs of victims of abuse.

N. That synod instruct the Board of Trustees to take the necessary steps to ensure that adequate resources are available to implement the recommendations in this report.

Grounds:

1. Synod has repeatedly made decisions indicating that effective abuse prevention and response is a high priority for the denomination.
2. Additional information and analysis are needed to determine what can be accomplished with existing resources and what additional human and financial resources are required.
3. This involves administrative decisions that go beyond the mandate of the task force.

O. That synod dismiss the Abuse Victims Task Force with thanks.

Abuse Victims Task Force

Bruce G. Adema, staff adviser

Daniel B. Mouw, BOT representative

Beth A. Swagman, Safe Church Ministry staff

Laura V. Triezenberg, reporter

Katherine M. Vandergrift, chair

Appendix A

Proposed Guidelines for Handling Abuse Allegations Against a Church Leader (clean version)

Note: The following material contains recommended changes to the “Guidelines for Handling Abuse Allegations Against a Church Leader.” In developing this draft document for your review, the Abuse Victims Task Force omitted several paragraphs from the original 1997 version in order to reduce the length of this draft document and because changes were not recommended to those paragraphs. The omitted paragraphs are intended, however, to be included in the final set of guidelines despite their absence from this draft document.

1. Definitions

- a. Church Leader: Member churches and classes should be allowed some freedom in defining *church leader*. A member church or classis may use the definition of church leader that is consistent with its general liability policy or other insurance coverage.
- b. Misconduct: The Canadian provinces and each of the fifty United States have legal definitions of child abuse, child sexual abuse and exploitation, and physical abuse as well as a host of definitions of crimes committed against adults, including assault and battery, rape, and sexual harassment. Ecclesiastical procedures such as those out-

lined in Sections 2 and 3 that follow cannot measure a person's guilt by a legal standard; only civil authorities are entitled to hold a person accountable for violation of a civil or criminal code. For that reason, an ecclesiastical procedure cannot judge a person to be guilty of child abuse or rape as defined by law. An ecclesiastical procedure can, however, judge someone to be guilty of ungodly conduct, misuse of power, neglect and abuse of office, sexually inappropriate behavior, and neglect and abuse of office. These behaviors are not violations of civil or criminal code and therefore are not subject to criminal prosecution or civil redress. They are, instead, behaviors that violate the trust and well-being of individuals and the community of believers, and they taint the office held by the offender.

The following definitions are given to further assist the churches in understanding the types of behaviors that might constitute ungodly conduct, misuse of power, sexually inappropriate behavior, and so forth:

1) Physical misconduct

Physical misconduct means

- threatened harm or non-accidental injury inflicted on a minor or legally protected adult, or
- offensive or harmful contact to an adult.

Physical misconduct is sometimes a single event, but more often a chronic pattern of interacting with a minor or an adult.

2) Sexual misconduct

Sexual misconduct means

- exploiting or grooming (preparing) a minor or an adult—regardless of consent or circumstances—for the purpose of sexual touch, sexual activity, or emotional intimacy with the result of either sexual gratification or power and control over the minor or adult,
- unwelcome touch, sexual activity, or emotional intimacy between co-workers, co-volunteers, or
- sexual touch, sexual activity, or emotional intimacy between a supervisor and a subordinate who serve together in a church program or church ministry.

2. Suggested guidelines when the claimant is an adult

The guidelines in this section describe the process to be followed (1) when the claimant is an adult or (2) when the claimant comes forward as an adult with an allegation of abuse that took place during childhood or adolescence. The guidelines for handling abuse allegations by an adult against a church leader assume the availability of an advisory panel. The role of the advisory panel is to evaluate the gravity of the allegations and the probable veracity of them. The standard of proof is that the testimony "more likely than not" supports the allegations.

Note: Provisions that specify the time to convene a meeting or the place of that meeting are only guidelines and are not requirements of the procedure.

- a. The claimant contacts the office of Safe Church Ministry or a classis safe church team for an advocate. The advocate will assist the claimant with her or his allegation by helping to compile witnesses and testimony, by attending the panel session with claimant, and by advocating for the claimant before other ecclesiastical bodies.
- b. The advocate should contact a member of the executive committee or similar committee (executive) of the accused person's church or the chairperson of the safe church team (team) with a request to convene an advisory panel. The contact should include the allegation in writing with the names of the claimant and the accused person.
- c. The executive notifies the safe church team chairperson (or the chairperson notifies the executive) of the advocate's contact. The executive (or chairperson) will identify the claimant, the accused person, and the allegation known at that time.

Note: The advisory panel will notify the accused person of the allegation after it has evaluated the testimony of the claimant to be both probable and serious.

- d. If a classis does not yet have a safe church team, then the advocate or the executive should contact the nearest team to convene an advisory panel (panel). A panel should convene as soon as possible after it receives a request to convene.
- e. The chairperson of the panel contacts the advocate to schedule the claimant's meeting. The panel chooses the location and the time. The claimant and witnesses should be available for the meeting. The panelists, executive committee members, claimant, advocate, and witnesses should not publicly mention the meeting.
- f. The panel chairperson brings the panelists under a pledge of confidentiality regarding the name of the claimant, the accused person, and the details of the allegation brought forward. The claimant and witnesses may waive confidentiality of their own testimony at the conclusion of the panel process so the advocate, the panelists, and the representatives (see section 2, g below) may report on the matter when it is presented to the executive, the council, and other ecclesiastical bodies.
- g. If the executive chooses, it may appoint two representatives to observe both the claimant's and the accused person's meeting with the panel. A representative must adhere to confidentiality during the panel process.
- h. The panel receives the information presented to it by the claimant, examines the contents of written materials, questions the witnesses, and consults with experts as needed.

Testimony may be in the form of written material, witnesses, notarized statements, depositions (statements taken under oath), email and other electronic communications, and personal property. When distance would make travel difficult, costly, or cause an undesirable delay in convening the panel, teleconferencing and other secure methods of communication are permissible.

- i. Following the meeting with the claimant, if the panel evaluates the allegation as both serious and probable, then the panel notifies the claimant of their evaluation and the panel moves to the next step in the advisory panel process. If, however, the allegation is not evaluated as serious or probable, then the panel ends its work. If the panel ends, it notifies the claimant and the executive. The executive may dismiss the matter or continue contact with the claimant.
- j. If the panel process continues, a panelist notifies the accused person that a claimant's advisory panel meeting took place. The panelist submits the allegations in writing to the accused person. The allegation must include specific incidents, the dates of those incidents when possible, and an indication of witnesses or corroborating evidence. The accused person has at least five (5) days after receiving the written allegation to prepare for his or her meeting with the panel. The accused person should be accompanied by a support person who is not a current or former practicing lawyer.

The accused person presents his or her testimony before the same panel at a time and location chosen by the panel. The panelists, executive committee, accused person, support person, and witnesses should not publicly mention the meeting.

- k. The panel receives the information presented to it by the accused person. They examine the contents of written material, notarized statements, or depositions. They interview the accused person and witnesses, and they consult with experts as needed. When distance would make travel difficult, costly, or cause an undesirable delay in convening the panel, teleconferencing and other secure methods of communication are permissible.

The accused person and witnesses may waive confidentiality of their own testimony at the conclusion of the panel process so that the panelists and the representatives may report to the executive, the council, and other ecclesiastical bodies.

- l. The panel convenes to consider the seriousness and the probability of the allegation along with the testimonies offered by the claimant and the accused person. The panelists sign a report of their findings. If the panel hears the accused person's admission of misconduct, or if the claimant's testimony is more likely to have occurred than that of the accused person's testimony, the panel may offer specific recommendations for pastoral care and church discipline. The panel will send a copy of their report to the claimant and the accused person.
- m. The executive receives the panel's report. The chairperson presents the panel's report first; next, the advocate (or the claimant) presents to the executive; and then the representatives present to the executive.

If the accused person is an ordained pastor, then a classical church visitor or member of the classical interim committee must be present when the chairperson, advocate or claimant, and the representatives meet with the executive.

- n. The executive must convene the council to bring the panel's report. At this meeting, the chairperson first presents the panel's report. Second, the council should meet with the claimant (or advocate) and the accused person individually, one after the other. Neither the claimant (advocate) nor the accused person should meet with the council prior to this meeting. Third, the representatives meet with the council.
- o. If the accused person acknowledges his or her guilt at the council meeting, the council should initiate steps of discipline by following Church Order Articles 82 and 83. When the council takes a step of discipline, it should inform the neighboring council for its concurrence, if necessary, and the congregation as well.
- p. The council has thirty days from receipt of the report to adjudicate the allegation and decide the next course of action. The council will notify in writing the claimant and the accused person of its adjudication and its next course of action. The council may conduct its own hearing into the matter, and if so, the claimant and the accused person may have legal counsel present at the council's expense.
- q. If the council decides to take no further action on the report, or if the action taken by the council is contrary to the findings of the advisory panel, then the panel chairperson, after consultation with the claimant or advocate, will
 - 1) submit a copy of the panel's report to the church visitors with a request for intervention; or
 - 2) submit a copy of the panel's report to the classical interim committee with a request for intervention.
- r. If the executive does not inform the council of the panel's report, the panel chairperson or advocate will immediately contact the church visitors or classical interim committee.
- s. The advocate and the claimant may attend any subsequent ecclesiastical meetings where the allegations are discussed, including classis, the denominational Judicial Code Committee, or the advisory committee of synod.
- t. The claimant and the accused person may appeal the decision of the council. Such appeals should be addressed to the classis, where standard appeal procedures are applied.

3. Five important footnotes

- a. These are *suggested* guidelines. The circumstances of abuse may dictate that church officials deviate from them. In addition, state and provincial laws vary somewhat in terms of the manner in which abuse is defined and how it should be reported. The presumption should be in favor of following the guidelines in the case of each allegation of abuse; however, the church is best served by retaining legal counsel with expertise in the area to define the legal standards relevant to a particular jurisdiction. Furthermore, the director of Safe Church Ministry can be consulted regarding the application of the guidelines.

- b. The guidelines anticipate that the claimant's allegations will be disclosed to certain entities or individuals at certain times. At each stage of the proceedings outlined in the guidelines, those individuals who disclose and/or receive information relating to the allegations should use extensive precautions to ensure that the allegations and surrounding circumstances are not shared with any entities or individuals other than those expressly described under these guidelines or required by law. Accuracy is of the utmost importance in the disclosure of allegations or surrounding circumstances to those individuals or entities named in these guidelines. Wrongful or inaccurate dissemination of information can lead to adverse legal consequences.
- c. Whenever a disclosure of allegations of child abuse or assault is warranted, the disclosure must include the language of the criminal code along with the indication that criminal authorities have made the charges and will follow them up to the full extent of their capabilities. If the allegations are ungodly conduct, abuse of office, and so forth, then the disclosure must include the language of the Church Order along with the indication that church officials will follow up to the full extent of their capabilities. After a judgment on the matter is rendered, subsequent disclosure must include the language of the Church Order; an explanation of the violation(s) may be given but only with care so as to protect the identity of the victim. Failure to explain the nature of the violation enables the offender to continue a pattern of denial or minimization and promotes the perception that the matter is being covered up somehow.
- d. Member churches and classes that adopt these guidelines should check with their own legal counsel about potential liability that arises from the guidelines. By adopting the guidelines, the member church and its classis may be assuming legal obligations not dictated under the laws of their jurisdiction. The liability of the advisory panel that serves the member church or classis should also be discussed with legal counsel. A classis that forms a safe church team and advisory panel should be incorporated and should obtain legal protection for the volunteers serving on each. Finally, member churches and classes that adopt the guidelines should follow the procedures specified. Negligent failure to follow the guidelines as adopted could be a basis for potential liability.
- e. Denominational personnel should not serve on either a safe church team or an advisory panel.

Appendix B

Guidelines for Handling Abuse Allegations Against a Church Leader (changes noted)

Note: The following "Guidelines for Handling Abuse Allegations Against a Church Leader" show the changes made from the 1997 version of the guidelines for comparison purposes. Several paragraphs from the 1997 version have been omitted in order to reduce the length of this draft document and because changes were not recommended to those paragraphs.

1. Definitions

- a. Church Leader: Member churches and classes should be allowed some freedom in defining *church leader*. A member church or classis may use the definition of *church leader* that is consistent with its general liability policy or other insurance coverage.
- b. Misconduct: The Canadian provinces and each of the fifty United States have legal definitions of child abuse, child sexual abuse and exploitation, and physical abuse as well as a host of definitions of crimes committed against adults, including assault and battery, rape, and sexual harassment. Ecclesiastical procedures such as those outlined in Sections 2 and 3 that follow cannot measure a person's guilt by a legal standard; only civil authorities are entitled to hold a person accountable for violation of a civil or criminal code. For that reason, an ecclesiastical procedure cannot judge a person to be guilty of child abuse or rape as defined by law. An ecclesiastical procedure can, however, judge someone to be guilty of ungodly conduct, misuse of power, misuse of spiritual authority, sexually inappropriate behavior, and neglect and abuse of office. These behaviors are not violations of civil or criminal code and therefore are not subject to criminal prosecution or civil redress. They are, instead, behaviors that violate the trust and well-being of individuals and the community of believers, and they taint the office held by the offender.

The following definitions are given to further assist the churches in understanding the types of behaviors that might constitute ungodly conduct, misuse of power, sexually inappropriate behavior, and so forth:

- ~~a. Physical abuse is any non-accidental injury inflicted on another person. It is sometimes a single event but more often a chronic pattern of behavior. It may result from severe punishment.~~

1) Physical misconduct

Physical misconduct means

- threatened harm or non-accidental injury inflicted on a minor or legally protected adult, or
- offensive or harmful contact to an adult.

Physical misconduct is sometimes a single event, but more often a chronic pattern of interacting with a minor or an adult.

- ~~b. Sexual abuse is exploitation of a person regardless of age or circumstance for the sexual gratification of another.~~

2) Sexual misconduct

Sexual misconduct means

- exploiting or grooming (preparing) a minor or an adult—regardless of consent or circumstances—for the purpose of sexual touch, sexual activity, or emotional intimacy with the result of either sexual gratification or power and control over the minor or adult,

- unwelcome touch, sexual activity, or emotional intimacy between co-workers, co-volunteers, or
- sexual touch, sexual activity, or emotional intimacy between a supervisor and a subordinate who serve together in a church program or church ministry.

2. Suggested procedures and guidelines when the abuse victim claimant is an adult

The guidelines in this section describe the process to be followed (1) when the alleged victim claimant is an adult or (2) when the alleged victim claimant comes forward as an adult with an allegation of abuse that took place during the victim's childhood or adolescence. The guidelines for handling abuse allegations by an adult against a church leader assume the availability of an advisory panel. The role of the advisory panel is to evaluate the gravity of the allegations and the probable veracity of them. The standard of proof is that the testimony "more likely than not" supports the allegations.

Note: Provisions that specify the time to convene a meeting or the place of that meeting are only guidelines and are not requirements of the procedure.

- a. The claimant contacts the office of Safe Church Ministry or a classis safe church team for an advocate. The advocate will assist the claimant with her or his allegation by helping to compile witnesses and testimony, by attending the panel session with claimant, and by advocating for the claimant before other ecclesiastical bodies.
- b. If a classis has an abuse response team, then the person with the allegation or an The advocate should contact either a member of the executive committee or similar committee (executive) of the accused person's church or a member of the chairperson of the safe church team (team) with a request to convene an advisory panel. ~~abuse response team.~~ The contact should include the allegation in writing with the names of the claimant and the accused person. ~~with a request for an advisory panel.~~
- c. In those cases when the abuse response team is contacted directly, the chairperson of the abuse response team notifies the executive committee of the church where the accused person is a member that an advisory panel has been requested, and then identifies the accused person, and the allegation known at that time. Confidentiality among these parties is very important. The executive notifies the safe church team chairperson (or the chairperson notifies the executive) of the advocate's contact. The executive (or chairperson) will identify the claimant, the accused person, and the allegation known at that time.

Note: The advisory panel will notify the accused person of the allegation after it has evaluated the testimony of the claimant to be both probable and serious.

- d. If a classis does not yet have a safe church team, an abuse response team, then the person with the allegation or an then the advocate or the executive should contact the nearest team to convene an advisory

panel (panel). A panel should convene as soon as possible after it receives a request to convene, should contact a member of the executive committee of the accused person's church. The contact should include the allegation in writing with a request for an advisory panel.

The executive committee (or its equivalent), after consulting with one another (no one of those consulting may be implicated by the victim) and after reviewing the alternatives, should contact the nearest classical abuse response team to convene a panel. The advisory panel should be convened as soon as possible after the allegation is presented to a member of the executive committee or its equivalent.

- e. The chairperson of the panel contacts the advocate to schedule the claimant's meeting. The panel chooses the location and the time. The claimant and witnesses should be available for the meeting. The panelists, executive committee members, claimant, advocate, and witnesses should not publicly mention the meeting. A representative of the advisory panel should contact the accuser that an advisory panel meeting will be held. The advisory panel chooses the location and the time for the meeting. The accuser and witnesses should be available for the meeting. No public mention of the meeting should be made by the panel members, the pastor, the president or vice president of council, or the accuser.
- f. The panel chairperson brings the panelists under a pledge of confidentiality regarding the name of the claimant, the accused person, and the details of the allegation brought forward. The claimant and witnesses may waive confidentiality of their own testimony at the conclusion of the panel process so the advocate, the panelists, and the representatives (see section 2, g below) may report on the matter when it is presented to the executive, the council, and other ecclesiastical bodies. When the advisory panel is convened, a chairperson should be appointed who is responsible to bring all panel members under a pledge of confidentiality regarding the name(s) of the alleged victim(s), the name of the alleged abuser, and any details of the allegation brought forward. The summary of the advisory panel should also be confidential, as well as any report of the advisory panel.
- g. If the consistory/council executive chooses, it may have appoint two representatives to observe both the claimant's and the accused person's meeting with hearing panels of the advisory panel the panel. A representative must adhere to confidentiality during the panel process. All matters of confidentiality apply to the consistory/council observers.
- h. The advisory panel should receives all the information presented to it by the accuser claimant, examines the contents of all written materials, questions the presenters witnesses, and consults with identified experts as needed. The experts should be knowledgeable in abuse dynamics, legal matters, church polity, child welfare, etc. The pledge of confidentiality extends to them as well.

For the advisory panel, supporting evidence Testimony may be in the form of written material, witnesses, notarized statements, depositions (statements taken under oath), email and other electronic

communications, and personal property. or oral testimony, including hearsay testimony. When distance would make travel difficult, costly, or cause an undesirable delay in convening the panel, teleconferencing and other secure methods of communication are permissible. it difficult or costly for travel or cause an undesirable delay in convening the advisory panel, videotaping and telephone conferencing are allowable.

- i. Following the meeting with the claimant, if the panel evaluates the allegation as both serious and probable, then the panel notifies the claimant of their evaluation and the panel moves to the next step in the advisory panel process. If, however, the allegation is not evaluated as serious or probable, then the panel ends its work. If the panel ends, it notifies the claimant and the executive. The executive may dismiss the matter or continue contact with the claimant.
- j. If the panel process continues, a panelist notifies the accused person that a claimant's advisory panel meeting took place. A representative of the advisory panel should contact the accused person and notify him/her that an advisory panel meeting has taken place. The panelist submits the allegations in writing to the accused person. The allegation must include specific incidents, the dates of those incidents when possible, and an indication of witnesses or corroborating evidence. The accused person has at least five (5) days after receiving the written allegation to prepare for his or her meeting with the panel. The accused person should be accompanied by a support person who is not a current or former practicing lawyer.

The accused person presents his or her testimony should then be invited to present his/her defense before the same panel at a time and location chosen by the panel. The panelists, executive committee, accused person, support person, and witnesses should not publicly mention the meeting.

Whenever possible, the accused should appear before the panel within seven days after the accuser does. At the time the accused is notified, he/she should be given information about the charges, including specific incidents, dates of specific incidents when possible, and indication of witnesses or corroborating evidence. The charges must be presented in writing.

- k. The advisory panel should receives all the information presented to it by the accused person. They examine the contents of all written material, notarized statements, or depositions. They interview question the accused person and witnesses, and they consult with experts as needed. For the advisory panel, supporting evidence for the accused may be in the form of written material, witnesses, depositions (taken under oath), or oral testimony. When distance would make travel it difficult, costly, for travel or cause an undesirable delay in convening the advisory panel, teleconferencing and other secure methods of communication are permissible. videotaping and telephone conferencing are allowable.

The accused person and witnesses may waive confidentiality of their own testimony at the conclusion of the panel process so that the

panelists and the representatives may report to the executive, council, and the other ecclesiastical bodies.

- l. The advisory panel should convene to consider the gravity seriousness and the probability probable veracity of the allegation along with the testimonies offered by the claimant and the accused person as quickly as possible. The panelists sign a report of their findings. If the panel hears the accused person's admission of misconduct, or if the claimant's testimony is more likely to have occurred than that of the accused person's testimony, the panel may offer specific recommendations for pastoral care and church discipline. A summary of its findings should be put in written form for all panel members to sign. The written report may contain specific recommendations for pastoral care and/or discipline. The panel will send a copy of their report to the claimant and the accused person.
- m. The executive receives the panel's report. The chairperson presents the panel's report first; next, the advocate (or the claimant) presents to the executive; and then the representatives present to the executive. Within one week of the advisory panel's formulation of its summary, the chairperson of the advisory panel, accompanied by the advocate, should report the panel's summary to the executive committee. The advisory panel should notify the accuser and the accused in writing of the panel's findings.

If the accused person is an ordained pastor, then a classical church visitor or member of the classical interim committee must be present when the chairperson, advocate or claimant, and the representatives meet with the executive.
- n. The executive must convene the council to bring the panel's report. executive committee (or its equivalent) of the council should convene the consistory within one week to bring the panel's summary and its recommendations for pastoral care and/or discipline. At this meeting, the chairperson of the advisory panel should report first presents the panel's report, summary, and the advocate will be present. Second, the council should meet with the claimant (or advocate) and the accused person individually, one after the other. Neither the claimant (advocate) nor the accused person should meet with the council prior to this meeting. Third, the representatives meet with the council. advisory panel ends when the chairperson of the advisory panel reports the panel's summary to the consistory of the alleged abuser's church. If one of the consistory/council members is implicated by the alleged victim, he/she is excluded from participation in the deliberative work of the consistory/council dealing with the allegations against that member.
- o. If the accused person acknowledges his or her guilt at the council meeting, the council should initiate steps of discipline by following Church Order Articles 82 and 83. When the council takes a step of discipline, it should inform the neighboring council for its concurrence, if necessary, and the congregation as well.

- p. The consistory council has thirty days from receipt of the report to adjudicate the allegation and decide the next course of action. The consistory council will ~~should~~ notify in writing the claimant and the accused person of its adjudication and its next course of action, and the accuser of its findings. The council may conduct its own hearing into the matter, and if so, the claimant and the accused person may have legal counsel present at the council's expense.
- q. If the council decides ~~decision is made~~ to take no further action on the report, or if the action taken by the consistory council is contrary to the findings of the advisory panel, then the panel chairperson, ~~of the advisory panel,~~ after consultation with the claimant or advocate, will
- (1) submit a copy of the panel's report to the church visitors with a request for intervention; or
 - (2) submit a copy of the panel's report to the classical interim committee with a request for ~~further action~~ intervention.

Further action could include the following:

1. The Classical Interim Committee meets with the executive committee of the council, the chairperson of the panel, and the advocate to review the findings and discuss the possible steps to take with respect to the report.
 2. The Classical Interim Committee meets with the consistory to review the findings and discuss the possible steps to take with respect to the report.
 3. The Classical Interim Committee reports on the matter at the next classis meeting.
- r. If the executive does not inform the council of the panel's report, the panel chairperson or advocate will immediately contact the church visitors or classical interim committee.
- s. The advocate and the claimant may attend any subsequent ecclesiastical meetings where the allegations are discussed, including Classis, the denominational Judicial Code Committee, or the Advisory Committee of synod.

Note: The Victims Task Force proposes the following paragraphs be deleted because these actions are not part of the advisory panel process. If the consistory judges the allegations to be weighty and probable, then two members should notify the accused person within seven days that allegations of abuse have been lodged against him/her. The designees should also indicate to the accused the specific charges and the names of those making the charges. These charges should be given in writing. Also, within seven days, the accuser(s) should be notified by two members of the consistory that charges of abuse have been accepted against the accused person and that he/she/they are being notified of such charges.

A summary of the consistory's deliberations should be given in writing if requested. The accused person(s) may acknowledge or deny his/her/their guilt at the notification meeting. Such acknowledgment or denial should be confirmed by the two consistory members present. If the accused acknowledges the allegations, the council should be convened as soon as possible to initiate steps of discipline by following Church Order Articles 82 and 83. Both the accused and the accuser should be notified in writing of the pastoral care and church-discipline steps taken at this meeting. When the council decides either to suspend or depose from office, it should inform the congregation in writing of this action.

If the accused person denies the allegations made against him/her, the consistory has the responsibility to conduct a formal hearing to determine the likelihood of the accused's guilt. The formal hearing should be conducted prior to any recommended steps of discipline.

The formal hearing should be conducted within one week of the notification meeting in which the accused denies the allegations against him/her. The accused has the right to receive the specific charges in writing and to meet the accuser in the hearing. If a face-to-face meeting between accuser and accused would be materially detrimental to the accuser, then alternate arrangements might be made for the accuser to be available but out of the sight or presence of the accused. A tape-recording of the testimony should be made.

The consistory should convene in executive session to deliberate the truthfulness of the allegation(s) and the accused person's guilt or innocence. If the accused is found innocent, the matter ends, and both the accused and the accuser should be notified of the consistory's deliberations. If the accused is found guilty, the council should be convened as soon as possible to initiate appropriate steps of discipline. When the accused is a church leader (but not an office bearer), the person should be removed from duty or position as soon as possible. Both the accused and the accuser should be notified in writing of the pastoral care and church-discipline steps taken at this council meeting.

- t. The claimant and the accused person may appeal the decision of the council. in matters of discipline. Such appeals should be addressed to the classis, where standard appeal procedures are applied.

I. Introduction**A. Task force mandate**

In its report to Synod 2007, the Board of Trustees (BOT) observed that

Over the past decade, a number of changes to the Church Order have been proposed and adopted by various synods. This year, additional significant changes are being proposed. The Board of Trustees proposes that synod initiate a process for a complete review and revision of the *Church Order and Rules for Synodical Procedure*.

(*Agenda for Synod 2007*, p. 28)

The BOT then made the following recommendation to Synod 2007:

That synod initiate a process for a complete revision of the Church Order and its Supplements both for the purpose of an orderly updating as well as a rewrite of synodical regulations that govern the life of the denomination and the churches in the present situation and that synod appoint a committee or task force to propose such a revision for consideration by the churches and synod (II, A, 18).

(*Agenda for Synod 2007*, p. 41)

Synod 2007 responded to the BOT recommendation by adopting the following decision:

That synod initiate a process for a revision of the Church Order and its Supplements for the purpose of an orderly updating to incorporate the synodical decisions and regulations that govern the life of the denomination and the churches and that synod instruct the BOT to appoint a task force to propose such a revision for consideration by the churches and synod (II, A, 18).

(*Acts of Synod 2007*, p. 597)

The committee noted that there is disparity between the language of the original BOT recommendation and synod's decision. Whereas the BOT recommended a "complete revision" as well as a "rewrite of synodical regulations," Synod 2007 chose to use the term "orderly updating" even while keeping the general language of Church Order "revision."

Upon receiving the directive from synod, the BOT appointed an initial task force and requested that it present its report to the Board. Hence, the task force presents its report to the September 2009 meeting of the Board of Trustees.

B. Task force membership

The persons appointed by the Board of Trustees to serve on the Church Order Revision Task Force were Rev. Andrew Beunk, Dr. Rolf Bouma, Rev. Peter Choi, Rev. Kathy Smith (chair), Rev. George Vink, Ms. Francene Wunderink, Dr. Henry De Moor (adviser), and Rev. Gerard L. Dykstra (*ex officio*). Rev. Beunk was unable to complete his service on the task force due to family and ministry responsibilities. As Rev. Beunk represented the BOT on the task force, Rev. John Terpstra was appointed as a representative of the BOT to fill this vacancy.

C. Task force activity

The task force began its deliberations by conference call on January 8, 2009, discussing the nature of its mandate and a set of objectives for the revision of the Church Order. It was also decided to ask for clarification from the BOT regarding synod's formulation of the task force mandate, especially

whether the primary task of the task force was to update the Church Order in light of recent decisions or, rather, to accomplish a more substantial revision of the Church Order.

The BOT advised that the primary responsibility of the task force was to update the Church Order and bring consistency to its provisions. A more substantial revision of the Church Order would have to await a clearer directive from synod. In its deliberations in May 2009 the task force reviewed approximately half of the Church Order.

Resuming its work in June 2009, the task force reviewed the remaining articles of the Church Order and its Supplement. The task force composed and approved an "Introduction to the Church Order," which it recommends for inclusion in the Church Order booklet for background and educational purposes. The task force also discussed issues such as recommended layout for the printing of the Church Order and referred these ideas to the office of the executive director of the CRCNA.

D. Task force guidelines

The mandate given by Synod 2007 called for a revision of the Church Order and its Supplements by means of an orderly updating of provisions.

Although this was not indicated as a consideration of the task force by either synod or the BOT, the task force in its deliberations kept in mind a preference to leave the numbering of the articles of the Church Order intact. While it might have been possible to delete one or two articles of the Church Order as extraneous or to combine/split articles in the interest of clarity, it was deemed sufficiently important that the Church Order remain consistent with past editions of the Church Order; therefore, the number and numbering of articles remain unchanged.

In its deliberations, the task force addressed the following issues:

1. Consistency of provisions and terminology

Changes to the Church Order over the years, especially the recent addition of the office of ministry associate and the move to a younger age for admission to the Lord's table by way of profession of faith, resulted in inconsistencies from one section of the Church Order to another and in the use of terminology. The task force sought to bring consistency of terminology between sections of the Church Order.

2. Elimination or modernization of archaic or unclear language

Since various provisions of the Church Order were composed at different times and approved by different synods, style of language varied significantly. Some articles contained language that would no longer be commonly used or understood. References to practices that used to be universal were considered for revision if practice or usage had changed significantly and no motions to revise the Church Order had been considered by synod in recent years.

3. Reorganization for clarity

Some provisions of the Church Order had been placed, for undetermined reasons, in sections only tangentially related to their purpose. In a few instances, the task force proposes moving subarticles or provisions to another place in the Church Order to better organize and clarify the Church Order.

E. *Matters beyond the mandate of the task force*

In addition to considering revisions to the Church Order as mandated by synod, the task force encountered issues in the Church Order that were beyond the mandate. We would be remiss in not bringing these issues to the attention of synod. The Church Order was written in a time of rural churches with a single pastor serving communities dominated by settlers from western Europe. Changes in the cultural make-up of the denomination as well as changes in the cultural milieu of the 21st century frequently result in a divergence of practice from the regulations of the Church Order.

The following matters were discussed by the task force and deemed to be beyond its mandate. The task force believes these should, however, be brought to the attention of synod.

1. Ministry associates

It is still unclear how the recently approved office of ministry associate will develop and be utilized. Presently there are questions, inconsistencies, and concerns that go beyond the mandate of the task force. For example, Article 2 identifies ministry associate as an office apart from elder, deacon, or minister of the Word. Article 23, however, states that “ministry associates shall be acknowledged as elders.” Similarly, Article 35 fails to mention the ministry associate even though some ministry associates serve as pastors of churches, often in a solo capacity. Although some ministry associates are nearing retirement age and still could be of service to the churches in that role after retiring, currently there is no provision for a ministry associate to retain the title upon retirement as does a minister of the Word (Article 18). More clarification is required in the Church Order’s treatment of ministry associates.

2. Noncompliance

The issue of noncompliance engendered great discussion within the task force. Churches and classes at times engage in practices at variance with the Church Order’s regulations. Some noncompliance is the result of changed circumstances or an attempt to find a more convenient procedure. For instance, Article 40 stipulates that classes meet three times per year; but studies show that over 50 percent of churches belong to classes that meet only two times per year. Whereas classis meetings used to be a primary means of communication, many classes now avail themselves of email, websites, conference calls, and other means of communication. Yet the reality is that the majority of classes deviate from the norms established by the Church Order.

In some instances past attempts have been made to revise the Church Order, but the historical and theological associations with a particular Church Order provision made revision impossible. Article 51 (number of Sunday worship services and special days for worship), Article 54 (mandating the preaching of the Heidelberg Catechism at one service per Sunday), and Article 71 (diligent encouragement of Christian schools and education) all create some level of tension between principle and practice, even when words such as *ordinarily* are included in the Church Order. When practice ceases to make such observances *ordinary*, an inevitable and not-always-creative tension results.

Although, for the most part, the task force left such Church Order provisions as they are (with a slight revision proposed for Article 54), the task force believes it would benefit the effectiveness of the Church Order if synod would review and revise such articles as the examples noted above.

3. Church diversity

Today there are various staffing and leadership structures and styles as new churches emerge within the Christian Reformed Church and congregations join the denomination. The task force noted that there is a distinction between governance and administration. The Church Order is intended to promote good governance of churches locally and collectively within the CRC. At times, however, the Church Order goes beyond good governance and assumes administrative structures that are not universal. Some emerging and affiliating churches have developed differently than have “traditional CRC” churches. Assumptions about universal structures can be a barrier to participation on the denominational level and ultimately to organized membership within the denomination.

4. Cultural diversity

The task force became aware of some practices within various cultural groups that do not follow the Church Order. Rarely have requests for variances been made from the churches in this regard. Synod would benefit from a discussion about how the Church Order in its structure and content should reflect and honor the cultural diversity that the denomination promotes and values. Does our current Church Order do an adequate job of reflecting the changing face of the denomination? It may also be valuable to communicate sound theological and ecclesiastical reasons for certain Church Order stipulations to churches newly affiliated with the Christian Reformed Church.

5. Classis Red Mesa

Over the years, synod adopted a set of provisions in the Supplement to the Church Order to address special circumstances for Classis Red Mesa. With the exception of two Supplement articles (Articles 52 and 53) deemed obsolete if the recommendations of this task force are adopted, the task force did not review the appropriateness or necessity of other continued special provisions for Classis Red Mesa. A review of the Supplement in discussion with Classis Red Mesa should be conducted in order to determine the Supplement’s current relevance.

F. Church Order articles left unrevised

The task force reviewed the Church Order and its Supplements article by article. In the judgment of the task force, the following Church Order articles are either outside the mandate of the task force or are not in need of revision: Articles 2, 5-17, 19-20, 22-35, 39-41, 44-46, 48-49, 51, 55-59, 62-64, 69, 71, 73-75, and 78-86.

II. Recommendations

A. That Rev. Kathy Smith (chair), Dr. Rolf Bouma (reporter), and one alternate, if needed, be given the privilege of the floor when the proposed revisions are discussed in the advisory committee and on the floor of synod.

B. That synod adopt the following revisions to the Church Order:

Article 1-a: Replace the phrase “all things are to be done decently and in order” with “everything should be done in a fitting and orderly way.”

Ground: The proposed language is a more contemporary idiom and follows the reading of the TNIV, which is used in current denominational publications.

Present <i>Article 1</i>	Proposed <i>Article 1</i>
<p>a. The Christian Reformed Church, confessing its complete subjection to the Word of God and the Reformed creeds as a true interpretation of this Word, acknowledging Christ as the only head of his church, and desiring to honor the apostolic injunction that in the churches all things are to be done decently and in order (1 Cor. 14:40), regulates its ecclesiastical organization and activities in the following articles.</p> <p>b. The main subjects treated in this Church Order are The Offices of the Church, The Assemblies of the Church, The Task and Activities of the Church, and The Admonition and Discipline of the Church.</p>	<p>a. The Christian Reformed Church, confessing its complete subjection to the Word of God and the Reformed creeds as a true interpretation of this Word, acknowledging Christ as the only head of his church, and desiring to honor the apostolic injunction that in the churches “everything should be done in a fitting and orderly way” (1 Cor. 14:40), regulates its ecclesiastical organization and activities in the following articles.</p> <p>b. [Remains the same.]</p>

Article 3-a: Insert the word “adult” before the phrase “confessing members.”

Ground: Inserting the word “adult” brings Article 3 in line with Article 59-b.

Present <i>Article 3</i>	Proposed <i>Article 3</i>
<p>a. All confessing members of the church who meet the biblical requirements are eligible for the offices of minister, elder, deacon, and ministry associate.</p> <p>b. Only those who have been officially called and ordained or installed shall hold and exercise office in the church.</p> <p style="text-align: right;">—Cf. Supplement, Articles 3-a, 45, and 48-a</p>	<p>a. All adult confessing members of the church who meet the biblical requirements are eligible for the offices of minister, elder, deacon, and ministry associate.</p> <p>b. [Remains the same.]</p> <p style="text-align: right;">—Cf. Supplement, Articles 3-a, 45, and 48-a</p>

Article 4-c: Insert the word “adult” before the phrase “confessing members.”

Ground: Inserting the word “adult” brings Article 4 in line with Article 59-b.

Present <i>Article 4</i>	Proposed <i>Article 4</i>
<p>a. In calling and electing to an office, the council shall ordinarily present to the congregation a nomination of at least twice the number to be elected. When the council submits a nomination which totals less than twice the number to be elected, it shall give reasons for doing so.</p> <p>—Cf. Supplement, Article 4-a</p> <p>b. Prior to making nominations the council may give the congregation an opportunity to direct attention to suitable persons.</p> <p>c. The election by the congregation shall take place under the supervision of the council after prayer and in accordance with the regulations established by the council. The right to vote shall be limited to confessing members in good standing.</p> <p>d. After having called the elected persons to their respective offices and having announced their names, the council shall proceed to ordain or install them if no valid impediment has arisen. The ordination or installation shall take place in the public worship services with the use of the prescribed ecclesiastical forms.</p>	<p>a. [Remains the same.]</p> <p>—Cf. Supplement, Article 4-a</p> <p>b. [Remains the same.]</p> <p>c. The election by the congregation shall take place under the supervision of the council after prayer and in accordance with the regulations established by the council. The right to vote shall be limited to adult confessing members in good standing.</p> <p>d. [Remains the same.]</p>

Article 18-b: Remove the phrases “honor and” and “the official connection”; insert the phrase “the authority, conferred by the church, to perform official acts of ministry.” These changes clarify matters of supervision and retention of certain privileges of the ministerial office, while anticipating that a retired minister may transfer membership to another congregation.

Grounds:

- a. Removing the reference to “honor” is not intended to denigrate the office of minister of the Word but to bring this provision in line with Church Order Articles 2 and 85, which state that no office is of greater value or honor than another and that no officebearer shall lord it over another.
- b. Ministers of the Word retain some of the privileges of office when they retire. The revision makes clear that their continuing status allows them to perform official acts of ministry.
- c. It is becoming increasingly common that ministers of the Word relocate when they retire. Supervision by the last congregation served becomes difficult or impossible in such circumstances. The revision recognizes that ministerial credentials are often transferred to another congregation upon retirement.

<p><i>Present Article 18</i></p> <p>a. A minister who has reached retirement age, or who because of physical or mental disability is incapable of performing the duties of the office, is eligible for retirement. Retirement shall take place with the approval of the council and classis and in accordance with synodical regulations.</p> <p>b. A retired minister shall retain the honor and title of a minister of the Word and the official connection with the church last served, and this church shall be responsible for providing honorably for the minister's support and that of qualifying dependents according to synodical regulations.</p> <p>c. Should the reasons for retirement no longer exist, the minister emeritus shall request the council and classis which recommended the retirement to declare the minister eligible for call.</p> <p style="text-align: right;">—Cf. Supplement, Article 18</p>	<p><i>Proposed Article 18</i></p> <p>a. [Remains the same.]</p> <p>b. A retired minister shall retain the title of minister of the Word and the authority, conferred by the church, to perform official acts of ministry. Supervision shall remain with the church last served unless transferred to another congregation. The supervising church shall be responsible for providing honorably for the minister's support and that of qualifying dependents according to synodical regulations.</p> <p>c. [Remains the same.]</p> <p style="text-align: right;">—Cf. Supplement, Article 18</p>
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Article 21: Insert the phrase “in coordination with classis” into the first sentence; delete the second sentence and insert that into Article 43. This revision focuses on the task of the churches with regard to encouraging study for the ministry of the Word, and it moves the reference to the responsibility of classis to the Church Order section on the duties of classis.

Ground: The second sentence of Article 21 is better inserted into the section of the Church Order regarding the responsibilities of classis.

<p><i>Present Article 21</i></p> <p>The churches shall encourage young persons to seek to become ministers of the Word and shall grant financial aid to those who are in need of it. Every classis shall maintain a student fund and a Classical Ministerial Leadership Team (CMLT).</p> <p style="text-align: right;">—Cf. Supplement, Articles 6, 7, and 8</p>	<p><i>Proposed Article 21</i></p> <p>The churches shall encourage young persons to seek to become ministers of the Word and, in coordination with classis, shall grant financial aid to those who are in need of it.</p> <p style="text-align: right;">—Cf. Supplement, Articles 6, 7, and 8</p>
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Article 36-b: Clarify the description of mutual censure.

Ground: While retaining the historical reference to mutual censure, the proposed revision better indicates the intent and manner of the exercise of mutual censure.

<p>Present Article 36</p> <p>a. The council, consistory, and diaconate shall ordinarily meet at least once a month, at a time and place announced to the congregation. Each body shall select its own president and other officers.</p> <p>b. The council, at least four times per year, shall exercise mutual censure, which concerns the performance of the official duties of the officebearers.</p>	<p>Proposed Article 36</p> <p>a. [Remains the same.]</p> <p>b. The council, at least four times per year, shall exercise mutual censure, in which officebearers assess and encourage each other in the performance of their official duties.</p>
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Article 37: Append the phrase “except in those matters stipulated otherwise in the articles of incorporation or by law” to the last sentence.

Ground: The proposed change better reflects the legal situation regarding the relationship of congregational and council decisions; there are matters that by law or by the articles of incorporation of a church are stipulated to be decided by the congregation.

<p>Present Article 37</p> <p>The council, besides seeking the cooperation of the congregation in the election of officebearers, shall also invite its judgment about other major matters, except those which pertain to the supervision and discipline of the congregation. For this purpose the council shall call a meeting at least annually of all members entitled to vote. Such a meeting shall be conducted by the council, and only those matters which it presents shall be considered. Although full consideration shall be given to the judgment expressed by the congregation, the authority for making and carrying out final decisions remains with the council as the governing body of the church.</p> <p style="text-align: right;">—Cf. Article 59-b</p>	<p>Proposed Article 37</p> <p>The council, besides seeking the cooperation of the congregation in the election of officebearers, shall also invite its judgment about other major matters, except those which pertain to the supervision and discipline of the congregation. For this purpose the council shall call a meeting at least annually of all members entitled to vote. Such a meeting shall be conducted by the council, and only those matters which it presents shall be considered. Although full consideration shall be given to the judgment expressed by the congregation, the authority for making and carrying out final decisions remains with the council as the governing body of the church, except in those matters stipulated otherwise in the articles of incorporation or by law.</p> <p style="text-align: right;">—Cf. Article 59-b</p>
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Article 38-c: Remove the phrase after the word “followed.”

Ground: The last part of the current Article 38 is too specific and would better be included in the Supplement to the Church Order.

Present <i>Article 38</i>	Proposed <i>Article 38</i>
<p>a. Groups of believers among whom no council can as yet be constituted shall be under the care of a neighboring council, designated by classis.</p>	<p>a. [Remains the same.]</p>
<p>b. When a council is being constituted for the first time, the approval of classis is required.</p> <p style="text-align: center;">—Cf. Supplement, Article 38-b</p>	<p>b. [Remains the same.]</p> <p style="text-align: center;">—Cf. Supplement, Article 38-b</p>
<p>c. When a non-Christian Reformed congregation wishes to affiliate with the Christian Reformed Church, including the transfer of its pastor and other ministry staff, the procedure and regulations established by synod shall be followed as described in the Candidacy Committee’s “Journey to Ministry” document.</p> <p style="text-align: center;">—Cf. Supplement, Article 38-c</p>	<p>c. When a non-Christian Reformed congregation wishes to affiliate with the Christian Reformed Church, including the transfer of its pastor and other ministry staff, the procedure and regulations established by synod shall be followed.</p> <p style="text-align: center;">—Cf. Supplement, Article 38-c</p>
<p>d. When a council and congregation decide to disband or revert to unorganized status, the approval of classis is required. If any distribution of assets is required, the congregation and council shall consult with classis.</p> <p style="text-align: center;">—Cf. Supplement, Article 38-d</p>	<p>d. [Remains the same.]</p> <p style="text-align: center;">—Cf. Supplement, Article 38-d</p>
<p>e. When two or more councils and congregations decide to merge, the approval of classis is required.</p>	<p>e. [Remains the same.]</p>
<p>f. When a council decides to disaffiliate from the denomination, the set process for disaffiliation adopted by synod shall be followed.</p> <p style="text-align: center;">—Cf. Supplement, Article 38-f</p>	<p>f. [Remains the same.]</p> <p style="text-align: center;">—Cf. Supplement, Article 38-f</p>
<p>g. 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.</p> <p style="text-align: center;">—Cf. Supplement, Article 38-g</p>	<p>g. [Remains the same.]</p> <p style="text-align: center;">—Cf. Supplement, Article 38-g</p>

Article 42: Make extensive revisions to include appointments by classis for providing advice to churches. The proposed Articles 42-a and 42-c refer to the appointment and task of classical counselors, and Article 42-b clarifies the task of church visitors and combines sections b, c, and d of the present article.

Ground: The reference to a classical counselor in Article 9 currently has no corresponding statement regarding the duty of classis to appoint counselors for churches in the process of calling a pastor.

<i>Present Article 42</i>	<i>Proposed Article 42</i>
<p>a. The classis shall appoint at least one committee composed of two of the more experienced and competent officebearers, two ministers, or one minister and one elder, to visit all its churches once a year.</p> <p>b. The church visitors shall ascertain whether the officebearers faithfully perform their duties, adhere to sound doctrine, observe the provisions of the Church Order, and properly promote the edification of the congregation and the extension of God’s kingdom. They shall admonish those who have been negligent, and help all with advice and assistance.</p> <p>c. The churches are free to call on the church visitors whenever serious problems arise.</p> <p>d. The church visitors shall render to classis a written report of their work.</p>	<p>a. The classis shall be responsible for appointing persons to provide counsel and advice to churches. The classis shall appoint church visitors to visit each church in classis on a yearly basis. The classis shall appoint classical counselors to provide advice to any church in the process of calling a minister of the Word.</p> <p>b. The church visitors shall consist of one or more teams of officebearers chosen for their experience and counsel, with teams composed of two ministers or one minister and one elder. Their task shall be to ascertain whether the officebearers of the church faithfully perform their duties, adhere to sound doctrine, observe the provisions of the Church Order, and promote the building up of the body of Christ and the extension of God’s kingdom. Churches are free to call on the church visitors whenever serious challenges arise that would benefit from their advice. The church visitors shall provide classis a written report of their work.</p> <p style="text-align: center;">—Cf. Supplement, Article 42-b</p> <p>c. The classical counselor’s task is to ensure that a church in the process of calling a minister of the Word observes ecclesiastical regulations and sound process. The counselor shall be an officebearer, normally a minister of the Word, whose ministerial credentials or membership resides in a congregation other than the church in the process of calling a minister. The classical counselor shall provide classis a written report during and after the calling process.</p>

Article 43: Insert new Article 43-a (taken from Art. 21), identifying the responsibility of each classis to establish a student fund and a Classical Ministerial Leadership Team. Remove the word “urgent” from what is now proposed as Article 43-b.

Grounds:

- a. The responsibility of classis to support and encourage individuals preparing for ministry should be included in the Church Order section on classis responsibilities.

- b. The standard used to assess “urgent need” is unclear. The practice of classes currently is to assess whether granting the right to exhort is appropriate and will benefit the churches within the classes.

<p>Present <i>Article 43</i></p> <p>The classis may grant the right to exhort within its bounds to persons who are gifted, well-informed, consecrated, and able to edify the churches. When the urgent need for their services has been established, the classis shall examine such persons and license them as exhorters for a limited period of time.</p>	<p>Proposed <i>Article 43</i></p> <p>a. Every classis shall maintain a student fund and a Classical Ministerial Leadership Team (CMLT) to provide support and encouragement for individuals preparing for ministry in the Christian Reformed Church.</p> <p>b. The classis may grant the right to exhort within its bounds to persons who are gifted, well-informed, consecrated, and able to edify the churches. When the need for their services has been established, the classis shall examine such persons and license them as exhorters for a limited period of time.</p>
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Article 47: In the first paragraph of Article 47 restructure the list of tasks and matters to be adopted and approved by synod. The first proposed group involves those elements that commit the church in theology and ecclesiastical organization. The second group lists those elements useful in the worshipping life of the church.

Ground: The proposed revision better categorizes the tasks of synod with respect to theology, ecclesiastical organization, and worship.

<p>Present <i>Article 47</i></p> <p>The task of synod includes the adoption of the creeds, of the Church Order, of the liturgical forms, of the <i>Psalter Hymnal</i>, and of the principles and elements of the order of worship, as well as the designation of the Bible versions to be used in the worship services.</p> <p>No substantial alterations shall be effected by synod in these matters unless the churches have had prior opportunity to consider the advisability of the proposed changes.</p> <p>—Cf. Supplement, Article 47</p>	<p>Proposed <i>Article 47</i></p> <p>The task of synod includes the adoption of the creeds, of the Church Order, and of the principles and elements of worship. Synod shall approve the liturgical forms, the <i>Psalter Hymnal</i>, and the Bible versions suitable for use in worship.</p> <p>No substantial alterations shall be effected by synod in these matters unless the churches have had prior opportunity to consider the advisability of the proposed changes.</p> <p>—Cf. Supplement, Article 47</p>
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Articles 50-a and 50-c: Replace the word “synods” with the word “bodies.”

Ground: Reformed ecumenical organizations are currently identified by a variety of names, with the term “synod” slowly losing currency in the ecumenical world. The generic term “bodies” covers a wider range of organization types.

<p>Present <i>Article 50</i></p> <p>a. Synod shall send delegates to Reformed ecumenical synods in which the Christian Reformed Church cooperates with other denominations which confess and maintain the Reformed faith.</p> <p>b. Synod may present to such gatherings matters on which it seeks the judgment of the Reformed churches throughout the world.</p> <p>c. Decisions of Reformed ecumenical synods shall be binding upon the Christian Reformed Church only when they have been ratified by its synod.</p>	<p>Proposed <i>Article 50</i></p> <p>a. Synod shall send delegates to Reformed ecumenical bodies in which the Christian Reformed Church cooperates with other denominations that confess and maintain the Reformed faith.</p> <p>b. [Remains the same.]</p> <p>c. Decisions of Reformed ecumenical bodies shall be binding upon the Christian Reformed Church only when they have been ratified by its synod.</p>
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Articles 52-b and 52-c: Combine these sections of Article 52 to focus on the principles and elements of worship. The proposed Article 52-b also references a wider range of music types used in worship.

Ground: The proposed revision better describes worship as it is practiced today and promotes flexibility while maintaining emphasis upon a Reformed understanding of worship.

<p>Present <i>Article 52</i></p> <p>a. The consistory shall regulate the worship services.</p> <p>b. The consistory shall see to it that the synodically approved Bible versions, liturgical forms, and songs are used, and that the principles and elements of the order of worship approved by synod are observed.</p> <p>c. The consistory shall see to it that if liturgical forms are adapted, these adaptations conform to synodical guidelines and that if choirs or others sing in the worship service, they observe the synodical regulations governing the content of the hymns and anthems sung. These regulations shall also apply when supplementary hymns are sung by the congregation.</p> <p style="text-align: right;">—Cf. Supplement, Article 52</p>	<p>Proposed <i>Article 52</i></p> <p>a. [Remains the same.]</p> <p>b. The consistory shall see to it that the principles and elements of worship approved by synod are observed, including the use of liturgical forms, songs, and synodically approved Bible versions. If liturgical forms are adapted or additional psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs are used in worship, these elements should conform to synodical guidelines.</p> <p style="text-align: right;">—Cf. Supplement, Articles 52 and 52-b</p>
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Article 53: Redirect the focus of Article 53-a from the minister of the Word conducting worship to the general matter of worship leadership. Combine Articles 53-b and 53-c to address the situation in which a person other than a minister of the Word will offer the sermon.

Ground: The proposed wording updates Article 53 to reflect current understandings of worship and the varieties of ways in which worship is led, while retaining guidelines for worship leading, exhorting, and reading sermons.

<p>Present <i>Article 53</i></p> <p>a. The ministers of the Word shall conduct the worship services.</p> <p>b. Persons licensed to exhort and anyone appointed by the consistory to read a sermon may conduct worship services. They shall, however, refrain from all official acts of the ministry.</p> <p>c. Only sermons approved by the consistory shall be read in the worship services.</p> <p>—Cf. Supplement, Article 53</p>	<p>Proposed <i>Article 53</i></p> <p>a. The worship services shall be led by the ministers of the Word and others appointed by the consistory.</p> <p>b. Worship services may be led by persons licensed to exhort or by those appointed by the consistory to read a sermon. Such persons, however, shall refrain from all official acts of ministry, and only sermons approved by the consistory shall be read in a worship service.</p> <p>—Cf. Supplement, Article 53</p>
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Article 54: Combine Articles 54-a and 54-b into one article that focuses on the proclamation of the Word.

Ground: The proposed revision better reflects the current practice of the churches and encourages the shaping of the preaching ministry by the creeds and confessions of the church, with special emphasis on the Heidelberg Catechism.

<p>Present <i>Article 54</i></p> <p>a. In the worship services the minister of the Word shall officially explain and apply Holy Scripture.</p> <p>b. At one of the services each Lord’s Day, the minister shall ordinarily preach the Word as summarized in the Heidelberg Catechism, following its sequence.</p>	<p>Proposed <i>Article 54</i></p> <p>The proclamation of the Word shall be central to the worship of the church and shall be guided by the creeds and confessions of the church, especially by the Heidelberg Catechism.</p>
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Article 60: Combine Articles 60-a and 60-b into one article stating minimum requirements for celebration of the Lord’s Supper and relating the practice to the well-being of the body of Christ.

Ground: The language of the current Article 60-b is archaic and unclear as to which elements of Lord’s Supper administration should remain unchanged.

<p>Present <i>Article 60</i></p> <p>a. The Lord’s Supper shall be administered at least once every three months.</p> <p>b. The consistory shall provide for such administrations as it shall judge most conducive to edification. However, the ceremonies as prescribed in God’s Word shall not be changed.</p>	<p>Proposed <i>Article 60</i></p> <p>The Lord’s Supper shall be administered at least once every three months in a manner conducive to building up the body of Christ and in keeping with the teachings of God’s Word.</p>
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Article 61: Remove the concluding phrase “for all Christendom and all humanity” from Article 61-a, and remove Article 61-b.

Grounds:

- a. The reference to “Christendom” is archaic and problematic, and delimiting prayers to the social and political realms discourages other appropriate sorts of prayer (such as prayer for the creation).
- b. A provision stating that certain written prayers may be used is superfluous and can be eliminated.

<p>Present <i>Article 61</i></p> <p>a. The public prayers in the worship service shall include adoration, confession, thanksgiving, supplication, and intercession for all Christendom and all humanity.</p> <p>b. In the ministry of prayer the approved liturgical prayers may be used.</p>	<p>Proposed <i>Article 61</i></p> <p>The public prayers in the worship service shall include adoration, confession, thanksgiving, supplication, and intercession.</p>
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Article 65: Revise the list of pastoral care practices to include a set of possible methods among others.

Ground: The proposed wording reflects the reality that pastoral care today requires great flexibility in the methods used to provide it.

<p>Present <i>Article 65</i></p> <p>The officebearers of the church shall extend pastoral care to all members of the congregation and to others whenever possible by calling and encouraging them to live by faith, conducting annual home visitation, seeking to restore those who err in doctrine or life, and comforting and giving assistance in adversity.</p>	<p>Proposed <i>Article 65</i></p> <p>The officebearers of the church shall extend pastoral care to all members of the congregation and to others whenever possible. Methods such as home visitation, spiritual mentorship, and personal contact shall be used to encourage them to live by faith, restore those who err in doctrine or life, and comfort and assist those experiencing adversity.</p>
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Article 66: Insert the phrase “or to a church in ecclesiastical fellowship” in Articles 66-a and 66-b.

Ground: This wording better reflects the policy of encouraging transferring members to affiliate with a Christian Reformed congregation or a church similar in theology and practice.

Present <i>Article 66</i>	Proposed <i>Article 66</i>
<p>a. Confessing members who move to another Christian Reformed church are entitled to a certificate, issued by the council, concerning their doctrine and life. When such certificates of membership are requested, they shall ordinarily be mailed to the church of their new residence.</p> <p style="text-align: center;">—Cf. Supplement, Article 66-a</p> <p>b. Members by baptism who move to another Christian Reformed church shall upon proper request be granted a certificate of baptism, to which such notations as are necessary shall be attached. Such certificates shall as a rule be mailed to the church of their new residence.</p> <p>c. Ecclesiastical certificates shall be signed by the president and clerk of the council.</p>	<p>a. Confessing members who move to another Christian Reformed church or to a church in ecclesiastical fellowship are entitled to a certificate, issued by the council, concerning their doctrine and life. When such certificates of membership are requested, they shall ordinarily be mailed to the church of their new residence.</p> <p style="text-align: center;">—Cf. Supplement, Article 66-a</p> <p>b. Members by baptism who move to another Christian Reformed church or to a church in ecclesiastical fellowship shall upon proper request be granted a certificate of baptism, to which such notations as are necessary shall be attached. Such certificates shall as a rule be mailed to the church of their new residence.</p> <p>c. [Remains the same.]</p>

Article 67: Insert the phrase “or a church in ecclesiastical fellowship.”

Ground: This wording better reflects the policy of encouraging members who move to affiliate with a Christian Reformed congregation or a church similar in theology and practice.

Present <i>Article 67</i>	Proposed <i>Article 67</i>
<p>Members who move to localities where there is no Christian Reformed church may, upon their request, either retain their membership in the church of their former residence, or have their certificates sent to the nearest Christian Reformed church.</p> <p style="text-align: center;">—Cf. Supplement, Article 67</p>	<p>Members who move to localities where there is no Christian Reformed church or a church in ecclesiastical fellowship may, upon their request, either retain their membership in the church of their former residence, or have their certificates sent to the nearest Christian Reformed church.</p> <p style="text-align: center;">—Cf. Supplement, Article 67</p>

Article 68: Change the word “dismissals” to “releases.”

Ground: The word “release” avoids the negative connotation of “dismissal” and is used elsewhere in the Church Order regarding the non-prejudicial termination of ministerial status.

Present <i>Article 68</i>	Proposed <i>Article 68</i>
Each church shall keep a complete record of all births, deaths, baptisms, professions of faith, receptions and dismissals of members, and excommunications and other terminations of membership.	Each church shall keep a complete record of all births, deaths, baptisms, professions of faith, receptions and releases of members, and excommunications and other terminations of membership.

Article 70: Instead of emphasizing the distance of the church from funerals and memorial services, the proposed revision emphasizes the proper role of the church in funeral observances for members of the body of Christ.

Ground: While historical reasons dating back to the Reformation exist for the negatively stated form of Article 70, these reasons are little understood today, and a positive statement of the church’s proper role better affirms the valid reasons for pastoral and church involvement in times of grief and loss. The language added has been used to explain this article in the 1987, 1994, 2001, and 2008 versions of the *Manual of Christian Reformed Church Government*.

Present <i>Article 70</i>	Proposed <i>Article 70</i>
Funerals are not ecclesiastical but family affairs, and should be conducted accordingly.	Funerals and memorial services within the body of Christ should reflect the confidence of our faith and should be conducted accordingly. Such times provide opportunities to minister love, provide comfort, give instruction, and offer hope to the bereaved.

Article 72: Change the word “societies” to “groups” and combine the two sentences to bring together the two tasks of council in promoting and organizing various types of groups within the church.

Ground: Most churches today are no longer organized around women’s, men’s, and youth societies but instead encourage small and large group ministries dedicated to Bible study, prayer, fellowship, discipleship, and/or service.

<p>Present Article 72</p> <p>The council shall promote societies within the congregation for the study of God’s Word and shall serve especially the youth organizations with counsel and assistance. All such societies are under the supervision of the council.</p>	<p>Proposed Article 72</p> <p>The council shall promote and supervise groups within the congregation for the study of God’s Word, for prayer, and for the enhancement of fellowship, discipleship, and service.</p>
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Article 76-a: Change the word “controlled” in the last line to “governed.”

Ground: The word “governed” is used in Article 76-b and better describes the relationship between synodical regulations and denominational agencies.

<p>Present Article 76</p> <p>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.</p> <p style="text-align: center;">—Cf. Supplement, Article 76-a</p> <p>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.</p>	<p>Proposed Article 76</p> <p>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 governed by synodical regulations.</p> <p style="text-align: center;">—Cf. Supplement, Article 76-a</p> <p>b. [Remains the same.]</p>
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Article 77-a: Replace “determine the field” with “encourage and assist.” Also change the word “controlled” in the last line to “governed.”

Grounds:

- a. The present Article 77 reflects the past practice of working by world mission “fields,” which is no longer the only or primary way in which world mission work is carried out.
- b. The proposed revision makes the language of Article 77 consistent with Article 76.
- c. The word “governed” better describes the relationship between synodical regulations and denominational agencies.

Present <i>Article 77</i>	Proposed <i>Article 77</i>
<p>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.</p> <p style="text-align: center;">—Cf. Supplement, Article 77-a</p> <p>b. The denominational diaconal committee shall extend the ministry of mercy of the congregations and classes worldwide.</p>	<p>a. Synod shall encourage and assist the joint world mission work of the churches by regulating the manner in which this task is to be performed, providing for its support, and encouraging the congregations to call and support missionaries. To administer these activities, synod shall appoint a denominational world missions committee, whose work shall be governed by synodical regulations.</p> <p style="text-align: center;">—Cf. Supplement, Article 77-a</p> <p>b. [Remains the same.]</p>

C. That synod adopt the following changes to the Supplement to the Church Order:

Supplement, Article 4-a: Insert the following decision of Synod 2003 regarding lots and election of officebearers:

“The use of the lot in the election of officebearers is permitted when a congregational vote is part of the process” (*Acts of Synod 2003*, p. 609).

Ground: The most recent decision regarding lots and election of officebearers is not included in the *Index of Synodical Decisions 1857-2000*. Therefore, placing the decision of Synod 2003 in the Supplement would make it more accessible to churches seeking advice on the appropriateness of using lots in the election of officebearers.

Supplement, Article 6, C, 1: Replace the current regulation with one based on the following change in requirements for candidacy approved by Calvin Theological Seminary:

Applications for candidacy may be made by students who anticipate having a combination of four or fewer uncompleted units in their seminary program as of the meeting of the synod at which they will be declared a candidate. Each course and internship would be considered a “unit” for purposes of this calculation.

Ground: This change is necessitated by the recent curriculum revision at Calvin Theological Seminary and the transition from a quarter system to a semester system.

Supplement, Article 18: Insert reference to the decision of Synod 2001 regarding official acts of ministry (*Acts of Synod 2001*, p. 504) if synod approves the task force’s proposed changes to Church Order Article 18-b:

- c. Re the “official acts of ministry”
 - 1) Certain acts of ministry—among them the preaching of the Word, the administration of the sacraments, the pronouncement

of blessings for the people, the laying of hands on new leaders, and the reception and formal dismissal of members—are part of the ministry of Christ to his followers and are entrusted to the church and, within the church, to its ordained leaders, not to a specific office.

- 2) Therefore, no long-standing, organized congregation of Christians should be deprived of these liturgical acts simply because it cannot provide for the presence of an ordained minister or evangelist.
- 3) These acts of ministry symbolize and strengthen the relationships among the Lord, leaders, and the people of God. Their use is a sacred trust given to leaders by the Lord for the purpose of strengthening the flock. Therefore the administration of these acts should continue to be regulated by the church.

Ground: Placing this information in the Supplement would give guidance to churches and individuals attempting to identify what constitutes “official acts of ministry.”

Supplement, Article 22: The Candidacy Committee is in support of removing the references to “in theology” in Supplement, Article 22, A, 3, a and c. The Supplement to Article 22, A, 3, a would read “that this privilege is to be granted to those who are taking post-graduate work and declare that it is their definite intention to enter the ministry of the Christian Reformed Church” and the parenthetical portion of Article 22, A, 3, c would read “(the latter part of this *Rule 3, c* does not apply to those who are taking post-graduate work outside of the United States or Canada).”

Ground: Graduate work in disciplines other than theology may also be consistent with a goal of entering the ministry (e.g., communications, organizational studies, international development, and so forth).

Supplement, Article 38-c: Insert the phrase “as described in the Candidacy Committee’s ‘Journey Toward Ordination’ document” in the last sentence. *Note:* The name of the document was recently changed from “Journey to Ministry” to “Journey Toward Ordination.”

Ground: This phrase, if removed by synod from Church Order Article 38-c as recommended by the task force, properly belongs in the Supplement.

Supplement, Article 40-b: Include reference to the following requirements for a *classis contracta*. Synod 2000 declared that

any classical decision requiring the concurrence of the synodical deputies be made in the presence of delegates from all the churches which are members of the classis in which the action is being taken. If a *classis contracta* is necessary because of justifiable circumstances, to be determined in consultation with the deputies, a contracted classis shall never be convened with fewer than half the churches represented. A quorum for a *classis contracta* shall be half the churches of a classis plus one.

(*Acts of Synod 2000*, p. 668)

Ground: Placing this information in the Supplement would give guidance to classes attempting to determine the appropriate course of action when not all the churches of a classis are able to be present for necessary business.

Supplement, Article 42-b: Add a new Supplement, Article 42-b indicating that the *Guide for Conducting Church Visiting*, as well as other resources related to church visiting, can be downloaded from the CRC website.

Ground: Synod 2009 reemphasized the importance of church visiting and encouraged use of the resources available as indicated in the following:

That synod encourage classes to emphasize the importance of church visiting, thereby acknowledging its value for maintaining spiritual health and vitality in the member congregations of the classis, and encourage the use of the Guide for Conducting Church Visiting (found on CRC web: www.crcna.org) and/or other resources available from the Office of Pastor-Church Relations as effective tools to that end (II, A, 10).

(*Acts of Synod 2009*, p. 596)

Supplement, Articles 52 and 53: Remove the current Supplements to Articles 52 and 53 applying to Red Mesa.

Ground: The proposed revisions to Church Order Articles 52 and 53, if adopted by synod, eliminate the need for special Supplement provisions for Classis Red Mesa.

Supplement, Article 52-b: Add the following new Supplement, Article 52-b, identifying synodical guidelines for liturgical forms and music:

- **Bible versions** recommended by synod for use in worship services are listed online at www.crcna.org and include the King James Version (KJV), the American Standard Version (ASV), the Revised Standard Version (RSV), the New International Version (NIV), the New Revised Standard Version (NRSV), Today's New International Version (TNIV), the English Standard Version (ESV), and the New Living Translation (NLT).
- **Liturgical forms, songs, and elements of worship** approved by synod are contained in the latest edition (currently 1987) of the denomination's *Psalter Hymnal*. Forms, subsequent revisions of forms that are synodically approved, and other such resources are made available on the denomination's website (www.crcna.org) under "Synodical Resources."
- Synodical guidelines pertaining to the **adaptation of liturgical forms** are found in the *Acts of Synod 1994*, pages 493-94, and in the *Manual of Christian Reformed Church Government* (2008 Revision), pages 224-25.
- Materials on the **principles of, elements of, and guidelines for worship and music** are found in the "Introduction to the Psalms, Bible Songs, and Hymns" contained in the latest edition (currently 1987) of the denomination's *Psalter Hymnal*, pages 11-13, in the *Acts of Synod 1997*, pages 664-68, and in the 1997 Committee to Study Worship Report available on the denomination's website (www.crcna.org) under "Synodical Resources."

Ground: Placing these references in the Supplement would provide guidance for churches and individuals attempting to identify the synodical guidelines relating to liturgical forms and music.

Supplement, Article 53: Insert the following new reference regarding official acts of ministry (see *Acts of Synod 2001*, p. 504):

Re the “official acts of ministry”

- 1) Certain acts of ministry—among them the preaching of the Word, the administration of the sacraments, the pronouncement of blessings for the people, the laying of hands on new leaders, and the reception and formal dismissal of members—are part of the ministry of Christ to his followers and are entrusted to the church and, within the church, to its ordained leaders, not to a specific office.
- 2) Therefore, no long-standing, organized congregation of Christians should be deprived of these liturgical acts simply because it cannot provide for the presence of an ordained minister or evangelist.
- 3) These acts of ministry symbolize and strengthen the relationships among the Lord, leaders, and the people of God. Their use is a sacred trust given to leaders by the Lord for the purpose of strengthening the flock. Therefore the administration of these acts should continue to be regulated by the church.

Ground: Placing this information in the Supplement would give guidance to churches and individuals attempting to determine the appropriateness of worship leaders engaging in certain liturgical acts.

Supplement, Article 76-a: Adopt the following as the new supplement to Article 76-a:

The synodical regulations referred to in Article 76 may be found in the Mission Order of the Christian Reformed Board of Home Missions (*Acts of Synod 1992*, pp. 741-46 and subsequent revisions thereof).

Grounds: Placing this reference in the Supplement would provide guidance for churches and individuals attempting to identify the synodical guidelines relating to missions.

Supplement, Article 77-a: Adopt the following as the new supplement to Article 77-a:

Synod regulates the work of the world missions committee by way of the Constitution and decisions of the Board of Trustees of the CRCNA.

Ground: Placing this reference in the Supplement makes clear synod’s delegation of oversight responsibility to the Board of Trustees.

D. That synod approve the following “Introduction” to the Church Order for inclusion in the Church Order booklet:

Introduction

Welcome, readers! You have discovered an important document for the Christian Reformed Church in North America (CRCNA)—the *Church Order and Rules for Synodical Procedure*! The title is not so exciting—perhaps it should be called “A Tool Churches Cannot Live Without.” The fact is that this is an important booklet, one that church leaders will want to be familiar with in order to function well in their congregations and classes (regional groups of churches) and at synod (the denomination’s annual assembly). Other interested individuals can learn about the Christian Reformed Church through this booklet as well.

So, What Is the Church Order?

The Church Order is a document that shows how the congregations of the Christian Reformed Church in North America have decided to live together and to organize themselves. It is a tool for effective leadership, in that leaders need to know the regulations and parameters of the organization in which they are working so that they can apply them in a variety of situations.

More than a contractual set of regulations or simply guidelines, the Church Order is really a record of our covenanting together within this denominational fellowship. As leaders and members and congregations in the CRCNA, we promise to use these regulations to order our life together as a particular part of the body of Christ. And that covenant commitment is based on our belief that Christ is the head of the church and we, as Christ’s body, must reflect Christ in how we function, choose leaders, assemble, deliberate over issues, carry out the ministries and mission of the church, and hold one another accountable for all these things.

We agree to abide by these promises and to work together to change the regulations when necessary. It’s important to remember that the Church Order is a document of the churches, and what it says and how it changes is determined by the churches together. It’s our book; in a sense, we all are its authors. And as our denomination becomes more diverse, the Church Order helps to build unity by establishing normative patterns even as it encompasses many different churches in varying local contexts.

Just as books come in different genres, and the Bible in particular contains writing in many different genres, the Church Order also reflects a particular genre. In a sense it may be compared to the Proverbs of Scripture as *wisdom literature*. The collective wisdom of the church is contained in these articles and is passed on from generation to generation. The articles of the Church Order are meant to help the church function in healthy and wise ways.

Designed for Change

Part of being wise about how to live together and function in healthy ways is being able to adjust to changes in the church and in our culture. When the churches discern together by the Holy Spirit's guidance that the Church Order needs to change, they discuss and make these decisions together. The normal process is for a church council to send a request for a change by way of an overture which is sent to the classis, and then on to synod. Each step of the way involves more leaders of the church, bearers of the office of Christ who are trying to discern what is fitting for how God calls us to live together, and fitting for how our churches function in the world today.

So the Church Order is intended to change from time to time, and those changes are made by the broadest assembly of the denomination. What's more, substantial changes need to be communicated to all the churches for feedback before they even go to a synod, and once they do go to synod, any changes must be approved by a subsequent synod before they take effect. So while we are certainly open to change, we are careful about it, to make sure we hear all the important voices involved.

All this is in keeping with the Scripture verse quoted in Article 1 of the Church Order, "Everything should be done in a fitting and orderly way." This statement in 1 Corinthians 14:40 rises out of a concern about disorder in worship, but it also highlights a New Testament principle that Christians are to behave in ways that are fitting for followers of Christ. The Church Order applies that principle to the organization of the church and the checks and balances that seek to ensure that fittingness.

Our commitment to change and adjust our practices comes from one of the theological fathers of our church, John Calvin, who wrote,

But because [our Lord] did not will in outward discipline and ceremonies to prescribe in detail what we ought to do (because he foresaw that this depended upon the state of the times, and he did not deem one form suitable for all ages), here we must take refuge in those general rules which he has given, that whatever the necessity of the church will require for order and decorum should be tested against these. Lastly, because he has taught nothing specifically, and because these things are not necessary to salvation, and for the upbuilding of the church ought to be variously accommodated to the customs of each nation and age, it will be fitting (as the advantage of the church will require) to change and abrogate traditional practices and to establish new ones. Indeed, I admit that we ought not to charge into innovation rashly, suddenly, for insufficient cause. But love will best judge what may hurt or edify; and if we let love be our guide, all will be safe (*Institutes*, IV.X.30).

Calvin certainly believed in good order in the church for healthy and peaceful functioning, but he also argued that there should be as few

rules as necessary, allowing for maximum flexibility. And, most important, he called us to the rule of loving one another as we make decisions in these matters.

Important Distinctions

It is very important for readers to distinguish between the Church Order, the Church Order Supplements, and the Rules for Synodical Procedure.

The **Church Order** is a list of articles that regulate the organization and activities of the church, which are organized under four main headings—the offices, assemblies, task and activities, and admonition and discipline of the church.

The **Church Order Supplements** are decisions that a particular synod judged were significant enough to accompany the Church Order so that the churches are aware of them.

The **Rules for Synodical Procedure** are an outline for the functioning of the annual synod of the Christian Reformed Church—its constitution, tasks and duties, and the rules of order used in its meetings.

Many more decisions have been made throughout the years and can be found in the *Acts of Synod*, which is published annually. Recent versions (1999 to the present) can be found online at www.crcna.org. A listing of particular positions of the CRC on various ethical and theological matters can also be found on that website.

Reformed Church Polity

Church polity refers to the form of governance and organization of a church. The CRCNA follows a Presbyterian form of church polity organized under governance by elders, as compared to Episcopal polities organized under governance by bishops (Roman Catholic, United Methodist, and Episcopal denominations) and Congregational polities organized under the governance of the local congregation (Congregational, Baptist, Disciples of Christ). Some of these congregational polities do allow for greater associations and connections between churches.

Governance by elders is assumed throughout the Christian Reformed Church Order, but please note that CRCNA polity is not exactly like that of Presbyterian denominations. Two particular differences include the fact that we have limited tenure for officebearers (so elders and deacons serve *terms*, not *forever*), and ministers' credentials are held at the local council level, not at the regional (classical) level, as in many Presbyterian and Reformed denominations. Another key difference is that church polity in the CRCNA does not have confessional status and, therefore, the Church Order does not have the same authority as the creeds. The Church Order is subordinate to the creeds and confessions, which are subordinate to Scripture.

New Format

In 2009-2010 a task force worked at updating the Church Order to eliminate some inconsistencies that had developed over the years, but synods update the Church Order almost every year as changes are made in our ever-reforming context. The formatting of this booklet is intended to make the Church Order and its Supplements more readable and accessible for use.

For further reflection on the Church Order and its Supplements, please refer to the *Manual of Christian Reformed Church Government*, the most recent edition of which was authored by Dr. Peter Borgdorff and published by Faith Alive Christian Resources in 2008.

May God bless you as you serve in Christ's church in a fitting and orderly way!

- E. That synod dismiss the Church Order Revision Task Force with thanks.

Church Order Revision Task Force

Rolf Bouma, reporter

Peter Choi

Henry DeMoor (adviser)

Gerard Dykstra (*ex officio*)

Kathy Smith, chair

John Terpstra

George Vink

Francene Wunderink

Outline of the Report**I. Background****II. Introduction****III. Historical perspective—an immigrant church****IV. Overview of current migration issues**

A. *Migration to the United States*

B. *Migration to Canada*

C. *Conclusion*

V. Overview of current North American immigration laws and policies

A. *Current immigration law and policies in Canada*

1. Permanent residents and visitors

2. Refugee determination system

3. Persons without status

B. *Current immigration laws and policies in the United States*

C. *Summary*

VI. Social and economic implications of immigration**VII. Biblical-theological background**

A. *Introduction*

B. *The Old Testament*

C. *The New Testament*

D. *Theological reflections*

1. The church

2. The government

3. Believers and advocacy

4. Romans 13

E. *Conclusion*

VIII. Recommendations**Appendices**

Appendix A: Five Interviews with Dutch Immigrants to Canada

Appendix B: Interviews with Hispanic Immigrants

Appendix C: The Lighthouse Toronto: Our Work with Non-Status Immigrants

Appendix D: Narratives of Non-Status Immigrants in Canada

Appendix E: A True Story Happening Now

I. Background

The matter regarding the migration of workers came onto the agenda of the denomination through the work of a study committee commissioned by Classis Zeeland in 2006 to address a pastoral concern arising from one of its congregations. This local church had engaged in ministry to mainly Latino migrant workers for several years, offering classes in English as a second

language, Bible studies, and other kinds of practical help to families in need, including, on some occasions, legal assistance regarding immigration and work status. The congregation wanted to receive into membership some of these families who professed faith in Christ, but given the strong Reformed tradition of “fencing the table” from those who are known to persist in sinful behavior, they asked for advice from classis to determine if living without status in a country was inconsistent with the demands for life lived according to God’s will. Unhappily, due to the presentation in the overture, the broader issue of ministering to immigrant neighbors and addressing their needs was eclipsed by a discussion that focused on church discipline. Synod 2007 rejected Overture 6, apologizing for the hurt caused by the tone and thrust of the overture, its lack of inclusive language, and its narrow focus. However, Synod 2007 did recognize the need to address the conditions under which undocumented migrants in both Canada and the United States live, and thus it formed a committee to report and recommend how the Christian Reformed Church in North America might better address the needs of those who are marginalized by their lack of legal status.

II. Introduction

The mandate given to the committee was “to study the issue of the migration of workers as it relates to the church’s ministries of inclusion, compassion, and hospitality, and to propose ways for the church to advocate on behalf of those who are marginalized” (*Acts of Synod 2007*, p. 596).

During its term from October 2007 to May 2009, the committee was intentional about keeping the process transparent and inclusive. The committee consulted many stakeholders and others with specialized knowledge on the issues involved. Interviews were conducted with immigrants—both with and without legal status—a focus group with diverse community leaders was convened, and consultations with agencies of the CRC were held in an effort to hear and understand different perspectives. This report is the result of the thoughtful deliberations of the committee in addressing a very sensitive and multifaceted issue.

III. Historical perspective—an immigrant church

The Christian Reformed Church in North America (CRCNA) was born within a community of immigrants. Less than two decades after the first group of Dutch dissenters began settling in Michigan and Iowa in the 1840s and through successive waves of migration since then, this denomination made ministry to Reformed Dutch immigrants central to its mission. Now that the CRCNA embraces a broader multicultural mission in North America, the opportunity arises once again to serve recent arrivals, their children, and their growing communities. The Christian Reformed Church has a built-in store of ministry experience and sympathy for the struggles of the newly arrived that can be put to strategic service today. The challenge, of course, is to transpose that experience to embrace new people and new circumstances.

Many Christian Reformed members, particularly in Canada, are personally familiar with the post-World War II wave of immigration to Canada. As the Netherlands recovered from the ravages of war, many families sought a better life than was possible in Holland—opportunities to start businesses, obtain housing, and own farms. CRC members in Canada actively engaged

in the lives of those who arrived, sponsoring them by providing employment, cultural orientation, and social support. Immigration societies on both sides of the ocean organized the sponsorship of these immigrants; and while sponsorship was not a legal requirement, it eased the transition for many families. Upon arrival in Canada, the immigrants were granted landed immigrant¹ status. Many immigrants became naturalized citizens after the five-year minimum waiting period. It was in the context of Christian faith and fellowship that many felt called to become involved in these immigration societies. Welcoming new arrivals from Holland in the 1950s made an impact on both the “hosts” and those “hosted,” and integrating those “strangers” into the life of the CRC in Canada forever changed what it would be.

Although not subsidized financially by either the Dutch government or the Canadian government, immigration was strongly encouraged. The Dutch immigrant community itself also provided social support for new immigrants. Their social lives revolved around Christian Reformed congregations that grew by leaps and bounds, particularly from 1951-1953. The ministers of the churches, who were appointed by Home Missions in Grand Rapids, helped the newcomers as they settled in Canada in ways beyond pastoral duties. Therefore, the success of this immigration to Canada was largely due to motivation brought on by economic opportunities, strong community and governmental support, and a church structure that openly advanced the cause of the immigrant.

The denomination again responded to God’s call to “welcome the stranger” in the 1960s when Cuban refugees began to arrive in the United States in the aftermath of the Castro revolution. In fact, the first works of the Christian Reformed World Relief Committee included sponsoring and supporting Cuban refugee families in Miami. Many refugee families were sponsored by CRC families and became part of our communities and congregations—black beans and rice were on the tables for perhaps the first time at CRC potlucks. Because of CRC members’ willingness to embrace those who were in need of social, financial, and spiritual support, and because of those refugee families’ willingness to contribute their unique culture and strengths to their new communities, the CRC is a stronger, more diverse, and more vibrant community today.

The CRCNA again “welcomed the stranger” in the 1970s during a large influx of Southeast Asian refugees from war-torn countries like Cambodia, Laos, and Vietnam. In the 1980s and 1990s, West African immigrants began to arrive, seeking asylum from political upheaval and violence in their home countries. Today, the Pacific Hanmi classis continues to welcome more and more new immigrant families from Korea. Over and over, it seems that God has called upon members of Christian Reformed churches to respond to the needs of these new strangers in our midst. Because of this unique call, the CRC has grown, changed, and strengthened to become who it is today.

IV. Overview of current migration issues

A. Migration to the United States

In the global economy, what any one nation does can have a wide effect on many other nations. In the Western Hemisphere this has meant that the

¹ Permanent residents.

economic policies of the United States, though helping the United States to become one of the wealthiest nations on earth, has in the opinion of many had a negative effect on the economic situation of many other nations, including Mexico and the nations of Latin America. Since those lands face dire economic conditions, and since the prospect of a far better life in the neighboring United States looks so promising, millions have decided to try to make a new beginning in the greener pastures of the United States. While many who choose to leave their country would prefer to stay near their friends and families, often poverty compels them to leave. The promise of sufficient salaries, free public education, and sending financial support back home are often cited as reasons immigrants from that region come north.

The journey is different for each new immigrant, but for many it is a harrowing one. Some pay thousands of dollars per person to professional smugglers to sneak into the United States. Others spend days crossing the deserts of the southern U.S. border, often making several attempts before having success. Border fences have made crossing possible in only the most dangerous places, which has caused deaths of dozens of migrants each year who are still willing to take the risk. Other immigrants recount stories of having ridden atop trains from their home countries in Central America through Mexico—stories of limbs severed by moving trains, marauding gangs, robberies, rapes, and weeks of sleepless nights. Regardless of how they come, these immigrants arrive without any possessions or money to restart their lives.

Most Latin American immigrants find work, and many work without a proper visa. Though work visas do exist in small numbers, those lucky enough to receive them have waited for years. Other immigrants may be eligible for family-based visas, but again wait times are long; some immigrants wait twenty years for their applications to be processed. While many undocumented immigrants have a great desire to “get their papers in order,” it is virtually impossible to do that within the current system. If people have entered the United States illegally, there is usually no way to regularize their immigration status without returning to their home country and applying for a visa. Even if they are eligible for a visa—because of marriage to a U.S. citizen, for example—and if it becomes known that they lived for any length of time without status in the United States, they may not attempt to re-enter the U.S. for ten years. Stories of U.S.-citizen parents with U.S.-citizen children who are separated from their spouses because of this ten-year bar are heartbreaking. It is easy to hastily conclude that immigrants should “get in line” and come through the U.S. immigration system in the proper way. The truth is, there is simply no line, nor a proper way, for the vast majority of immigrants who wish to come to the United States. Many immigrants go “around” the system because they cannot go “through” it.

Due to their lack of status, many undocumented immigrants live in fear of authorities such as police officers. Many would rather allow abuse or criminal activity to go unreported than to speak to the police, fearing discovery of their lack of status more than they fear the threat of crime. This is particularly poignant in stories of women in abusive relationships, whose fear of separation from their children because of deportation compels them to stay in dangerous situations. Many community workers point to the decrease in safety for all who live in a community where some are known to be afraid to report crimes. We are all less safe when there are so many who live in fear.

All children who are born in the United States are U.S. citizens by birth-right. This has led to a new complexity of today's immigrant situation: mixed-status families. While undocumented parents face the threat of deportation daily, their U.S.-born daughters and sons have never known the country and culture to which the family may be forced to return. Deported parents must make the heart-wrenching decision of whether to leave their American-born children behind to continue their education and pursue their dreams, or to remain as a family unit despite the prospect of poverty, a language their children may not speak, and the same barriers to success that drove the family to immigrate in the first place.

Other parents leave children behind in their home countries when they cross the border, believing the journey to be too dangerous or too expensive to bring all the family members. Many who leave family behind, leave them for good: it has become so difficult in the past decade to cross the U.S. border without documents that few immigrants ever return to their home countries. Births, graduations, sicknesses, funerals, all of life's important events take place without them, leaving them to celebrate and to grieve these times alone in a strange new country. The scars this leaves on both children and parents are irreparable.

The CRC also has a high number of Korean immigrants, some of whom are also without documents. While the reasons for and means of migration differ depending on what part of the world an immigrant comes from, the vulnerability of undocumented immigrants remains constant regardless of a person's nation of origin. Instead of fleeing poverty as they did forty years ago, today's Korean immigrants often come seeking educational opportunities and a more accepting culture (a divorce or a disability might prompt an immigrant to seek a culture outside of Korea, for example). Many Korean immigrants come initially with a short-term tourist visa, simply choosing to remain after it has expired. In fact, estimates show that almost half of all undocumented immigrants in the United States are "visa over-stays."

Today's Korean CRC pastor is typically well-versed in the needs of such undocumented immigrants—often providing translation services, help with meeting basic needs like securing food and shelter, and connecting families with services like medical help and spiritual support. Korean congregations are often much more aware than other CRC congregations of the difficulties that undocumented families face.

B. Migration to Canada

The immigration system in Canada is different than that of the United States in many ways. One clear difference is the speed of the bureaucracy; the Temporary Foreign Worker Program is a relatively new program, and many applications are processed very quickly because of the high demands of industries like construction. Those who qualify for this program arrive in Canada with legal status, but it is temporary. They are not permitted to bring family members with them, nor is there a means to adjust to a more permanent status through this program. Because many of these immigrants come to Canada for the economic opportunity of employment, they fear to leave the country as required—they worry that leaving will allow someone else to be hired in their place. Staying in the country without legal documents opens

the door to exploitation, and many immigrants wind up being taken advantage of without the chance of their rights being protected.

Canada also has immigrants without status who came claiming refugee status, but were denied. When refugee claimants enter the country, they are given an opportunity to make a legal claim of persecution. This claim often takes years to process. While they wait, they establish themselves in their new community—some join churches, get jobs, have children. Often, if that claim is denied, these immigrants fear returning to their home country, and they simply choose to remain in Canada as undocumented immigrants. Again, without legal status, they are vulnerable to exploitation. They are often isolated by a new fear of deportation, having escaped their former fears of severe persecution and violence in the country from which they fled.

C. Conclusion

Since the first worshipers gathered as the Christian Reformed Church, God has used the CRC as an agent of hospitality toward those who find themselves in a new land. This is the case today as churches in the United States and Canada welcome “strangers” who share belief in Christ and who long for the community that can be found in the body of Christ.

The situation of undocumented immigrants forces the church to face new complexities, as the church seeks to live out God’s call to hospitality. Whenever there are people living on the margins of society, it is the role of the church to see them, enfold them, and give them an opportunity to flourish. Whenever there is injustice or oppression, it is the role of the church to advocate for righting what is wrong. And whenever there are half-truths, hasty conclusions, and inaccurate assessments, it is the role of the church to tell the truth.

We have been blessed by countless “strangers in our midst” who have changed the CRCNA into the people we are today. Out of a total of 1,057 congregations, the Christian Reformed Church in North America today includes 61 multiethnic congregations, 86 Korean congregations, 28 Hispanic congregations, 8 Chinese, and 8 Laotian congregations, as well as many other congregations representing other people groups, including Cambodian, Filipino, French, Haitian, Hmong, Indonesian, and Vietnamese. Perhaps in the 1940s, referring to the CRC as an “immigrant church” referenced the church’s Dutch heritage, but today the CRC is a church with immigrants whose heritages stem from many countries around the world.

As the CRC seeks to welcome the stranger today, it is not only a call to hospitality but also a recognition of our immigrant past that uniquely qualifies us to serve the new immigrant.

V. Overview of current North American immigration laws and policies

For a long time Canada and the United States have tried to secure the land and sea borders against illegal access by those who would enter without passing through inspection. Amid increasing concerns about national security, especially after the attack on the World Trade Center in New York City in September 2001, these efforts have intensified. However, in doing so, they have led to the creation of many imperfect and contradictory laws and policies. Although both Canada and the United States work closely to monitor and regulate the numbers and types of persons entering the continent,

they differ in the way newcomers and especially those without status or refugees are treated. These differences are briefly described below.

A. *Current immigration law and policies in Canada*

According to its 2006 census, Canada's population stands at around 33 million persons. This includes citizens and permanent residents. Citizens are those who are born in Canada or are born to Canadian parents who live overseas, or those to whom citizenship is granted or conferred by the state. Immigrants and refugees² who are given permanent resident status are allowed to apply for citizenship after having lived in Canada for three consecutive years.

1. Permanent residents and visitors

There are four pathways to permanent resident (PR) status in Canada. A person can become a Canadian citizen

- as an economic immigrant under the skilled (independent) migrant category and/or business/investor class.
- if sponsored as a family class member from overseas by family members in Canada.
- if an application is made and is accepted as a refugee (sponsored or in-land).
- if a person is eligible as a live-in caregiver; as someone who is able to prove that they have been employed in Canada continuously in their profession for over two years.

In addition to immigrants and refugees (sponsored or claiming asylum in-land), Canada welcomes a large number of visitors every year. They may arrive as tourists, students, or temporary foreign workers. Canada has a Seasonal Agricultural Workers Program, which contracts with individuals from participating countries such as Mexico and the Caribbean islands to spend about half a year working on farms in Canada. Workers and students are required to obtain employment or student permits in addition to their visit visas.

Visitors are expected to return to their country of origin after their temporary residence permit expires, or to apply to renew their permit for a further term.

Canada accepts approximately 250,000 new permanent residents per year. Of that number about 60 percent become citizens due to economic factors and 40 percent become citizens on account of family and humanitarian and compassionate reasons.

2. Refugee determination system

While Canada's refugee determination system may be one of the most progressive in the world, refugee status decisions are made by one person and there is no appeal process for questionable decisions. In a simplified format, refugee or "protected person" status is conferred to two categories of asylum seekers: those who arrive in Canada seeking protection (in-land) and those who are selected and brought from overseas into Canada by the government and private sponsors (re-settled). In-land claimants go through a process of determination by appearing before a quasi-tribunal

² Also referred to as *protected persons*.

known as the Immigration and Refugee Board which determines if the claim for protection is credible. Those overseas are selected by the government in collaboration with the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees. Both the government and private sponsors³ are allowed to name refugees for resettlement, and those who arrive in Canada are given their PR status upon arrival. At this writing in 2009, Canada resettles about 12,000 refugees annually.

3. Persons without status

In addition, there are currently about 200,000 to 300,000 persons living in Canada without status. These are mainly individuals who have not returned to their home country after their temporary permits have expired, or they are failed refugee claimants who have not left Canada. They live and work in Canada and send their children to school, but they live in constant fear of being deported by the Canadian authorities.

B. *Current immigration laws and policies in the United States*

Foreign nationals are typically granted entry into the United States in one of two broad categories: nonimmigrant or immigrant.⁴ Non-immigrants are almost always granted a specified “period of stay” (ranging from ninety days to several years), while people who enter the United States with an “immigrant visa” are then granted permanent resident status. A non-immigrant is permitted to engage in only those activities for which the visa was granted, while permanent residents have most of the rights of citizens (such as being able to hold any job or move anywhere within the country), except the right to vote.

The most common non-immigrant categories include students; tourists; business visitors and individuals with various types of work authorization; professionals with specialty degrees; investors, managers, and executives of multinational companies.

There are also a limited number of H-2B visas available for non-agricultural “seasonal” workers (66,000 for fiscal 2008) and an unlimited number of H-2A visas available for agricultural workers. The annual quota of H-2B visas is typically insufficient to meet the demand, while the H-2A program, because of the requirements it imposes on employers with respect to minimum hours, free housing, and other requirements, is not widely utilized. Some recent information suggests annual H-2A admissions of fewer than 50,000 workers.

Immigrant visas are divided into two principal categories: family-based and employment-based.

A person who enters the United States without obtaining a visa and without being formally admitted by a United States immigration officer is characterized as having “entered without inspection.” At the present time, it is extremely difficult under current law for persons who entered without inspection to obtain lawful status. Current estimates of those who have “entered without inspection” and those who have overstayed their visas—

³ For a detailed description of the Private Sponsorship of Refugees Program in Canada, visit the Citizens for Public Justice website: <http://cpj.ca/refugees/index.html?ap=1&x=102947>.

⁴ There are several additional categories as well, such as asylum seekers and refugees, but people who enter in these categories are a relatively small number.

collectively referred to as “illegal aliens” or “unauthorized migrants”⁵—stand at anywhere between 12-14 million individuals. The overwhelming majority are Hispanic, most from Mexico.⁶ A 2009 report from the Pew Hispanic Center examines where and how these persons without status live and work.

The following are among the key findings:

- Most illegal immigrants live in families in which the adults are persons without status but the children are United States-born. An estimated 13.9 million people, including 4.7 million children, live in families in which the head of household or the spouse is an unauthorized immigrant.
- Undocumented immigrants continue to outpace the number of legal immigrants—a trend that has held steady since the 1990s. While the persons without status continue to concentrate in places with existing large communities of Hispanics, they are also increasingly settling throughout the rest of the country.
- Among the U.S. states experiencing the greatest growth in undocumented immigrant population are Arizona, North Carolina, Utah, Colorado, and Idaho—places not traditionally considered centers for immigration.
- Undocumented immigrants arriving in recent years tend to have more education than those who have been in the country a decade or more. One-quarter have at least some college education. Nonetheless, persons without status as a group are less educated than other segments of the United States population.
- Undocumented immigrants can be found working in many sectors of the United States economy. About 3 percent work in agriculture; 33 percent have jobs in service industries; and substantial numbers can be found in construction and related occupations (16 percent) and in production, installation, and repair (17 percent).
- Undocumented immigrants have lower incomes than both legal immigrants and native-born Americans.⁷

C. Summary

Even for a person applying legally for permanent residency, the system can be complex and unnerving. There are many legal and procedural complications to navigate, and that sometimes makes immigration consultancy a lucrative source of income for unethical opportunists. Stories abound of potential immigrants either parting with large sums of money to have their applications processed or being swindled by unscrupulous consultants; some applicants have to return home after their application process was mishandled by the people they paid to help with the process.

⁵ The term *unauthorized migrant* means a person who *resides* in the United States but who is not a U.S. citizen, has not been admitted for permanent residence, and is not in a set of specific authorized temporary statuses permitting longer-term residence and work.

⁶ NPR website (<http://www.npr.org/templates/story/story.php?storyId=4703307>) visited on April 12, 2008. Also visit Pew Hispanic Centre website for more details on unauthorized migrants at <http://pewhispanic.org/files/reports/61.pdf>.

⁷ Visit Pew Hispanic Centre website for more details on unauthorized migrants at <http://pewhispanic.org/files/reports/61.pdf>.

No system is insulated from abuse, and the immigration systems of Canada and the United States are no exception. Misrepresentation, fraud, impersonation, and every imaginable type of infringement occurs, serving only to hurt people who should be welcomed. Sadly, the attitudes of public officials and those who formulate policies and regulations often focus on border control rather than on welcome.

VI. Social and economic implications of immigration

The life of the church and society has changed markedly since the post-World War II influx of immigrants from Europe. Economic imbalance, poverty, conflict, and population shifts have affected the movement of people and immigration patterns into North America and the industrialized West.

The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees currently estimates that there are about 11-12 million persons seeking asylum as refugees (those forced to leave their country of residence) and approximately 26 million individuals who have been internally displaced within their own countries.⁸ Economic hardships, the effects of globalization, and humans' innate desire to improve their lives have led many people from developing countries to seek greener pastures in countries such as Canada and the United States, which frequently experience a shortage of the workers they need to keep their economies robust. Businesses in Canada and the United States have had to look to foreign labor to shore up their dwindling work forces. The fact remains that as long as Western countries need migrant workers to help maintain their current socioeconomic lifestyles and as long as there are sufficient economic, social, and political reasons for those in the least developed countries to leave their homelands, there will be steady flows of people moving from the global south to the north in the years to come. In fact, the Pew Research Center predicts⁹ that if current trends continue, the population of the United States will rise to 438 million in 2050, from 296 million in 2005, and 82 percent of the increase will be due to immigrants. A similar report released by Statistics Canada states that, based on current trends, 20 percent of persons in Canada will be minorities by the year 2017¹⁰ and 25 percent will be foreign born. In urban centers such as Toronto and Vancouver, these figures would be significantly higher.

Beginning in the 1970s, with changes in American immigration laws no longer favoring European immigrants, a significant increase began in the number of immigrants and temporary workers from developing countries, based more on human capital and labor market demands than any other factor. While both Canada and the United States encourage educated, qualified, and skilled economic immigrants and their families to apply for and obtain permanent resident visas (or what is commonly referred to as the "Green Card" in the United States) that enable them to reside and work in these countries, each country sets annual quotas for such applicants. They

⁸ UNHCR website (<http://www.unhcr.org/statistics/STATISTICS/4852366f2.pdf>) accessed in March 2008.

⁹ Pew Research Centre website: <http://pewhispanic.org/files/reports/85.pdf>.

¹⁰ Statcan website: <http://www.statcan.ca/english/freepub/11-008-XIE/2005003/articles/8968.pdf>.

also have additional quotas for family members who want to join those who are already established here. In addition to immigration on a permanent resident basis, Canada brings in significant numbers of *temporary* foreign workers to fill labor shortages in sectors such as agriculture and construction. Visitors to Canada and the United States who are granted temporary visit visas are another group of individuals who enter the continent for purposes ranging from studying, volunteering, and visiting family to simply sightseeing. All of these categories, including refugees who are sponsored for resettlement in these two countries, make up the list of those who live and reside, albeit temporarily for some, legally in these two nations. These immigrants arrive with a variety of experiences and resources and are able to become economically independent quickly and contribute to the economic, social, cultural, and political landscape of these two countries.

However, undocumented persons have also made their way to both Canada and the United States—often for reasons of extreme poverty and economic hardship—and are living and working without any legal basis. These individuals are unable to enjoy a lifestyle without restrictions and must learn to live within the inconsistencies of the laws. For example, in some states, they may be able to buy a home and open a savings account, but they may not be able to renew their driver’s license or other identity documents. Many of these individuals are employed in precarious work and are over-represented in sectors such as agriculture, hospitality, and construction. They are often open to exploitation by unscrupulous employers and victimized by a system that does not recognize the human value of the individual—only their contribution to the gross national product. Many choose to remain because life in their country of origin is far worse or because their North American born children would find it difficult to return to a different way of life. Ironically, however, although these individuals are labeled as “illegal,” the host countries really cannot afford to remove all of them for fear of severely impairing their local economies. Consequently, both countries adopt practices that reflect a double standard.

VII. Biblical-theological background

A. Introduction

In addressing the issue of the migration of workers, a few key points need to be noted at the outset. First, we note that the biblical witness does not speak specifically to the situation currently being faced in the North American context. Socioeconomic and political situations vary from age to age and from place to place such that it would be naïve to treat the Bible as presenting material that is a “one size fits all” answer to every conceivable legal or political scenario. We realize that we cannot proof-text our way to an answer to every question that arises in this area. We will contend that key principles can be drawn especially from the Old Testament and God’s commands to the ancient Israelites—principles that properly help us frame and parse contemporary issues—but we do not wish to commit the error of adopting God’s theocratic blueprint for Israel as though it represents governmental structures, laws, and policies that must be incorporated into the United States or Canada also today.

No modern state is the equivalent of ancient Israel. Furthermore, the church is not called to reinvent the equivalent of Israel within any nation today. The church is now the New Israel and is transnational in nature, transcending as a spiritual community the distinctions that arise from allegiances to a given country. As Christians, we need to address issues of the migration of workers from an ecclesiastical context as informed by biblical-theological principles and teachings. Although we witness to the powers-that-be and may advocate for certain policies, we do not want to act as though our goal is a “Christian nation” modeled on the theocracy of ancient Israel. Believers from both the right and the left are frequently tempted to cherry-pick the Old Testament in order to give various policies and stances a divine stamp of approval. Hence, some more conservative believers sometimes suggest that because ancient Israel treated something like adultery as a crime, the government today should adopt the same stance. Meanwhile, more liberal believers—while criticizing the conservatives attempt to “legislate morality”—nevertheless seize on other aspects of ancient Israel in order to promote various policy positions on poverty and public welfare. Both sides are correct that we may draw broad guidance from the Bible in terms of how to think about a given society, but both sides are incorrect in attempting too neatly to transfer Israel’s laws and political structures onto contemporary society or any one government.

These caveats are vital to the discussion on migration of workers. However, important though it is that we avoid blurring these lines between ancient Israel and modern states, Christian believers are still obligated to let the biblical witness inform their thinking on a range of issues. Scripture reveals to us the heart of God. So even when we properly keep in mind the hermeneutical distinctions mentioned above, nevertheless it is true that insofar as something like the laws of Israel reveal to us enduring truths about God’s desires for this creation and for us as his people, we are right to move from biblical principles of justice to ideas that, broadly speaking at least, inform our thinking as a church community today. What follows is an attempt to draw out from the Old and New Testaments salient ideas that we believe are relevant to the questions confronting us regarding the migration of workers in North America. Although we will not attempt to develop a full-blown “theology of the stranger” in this report, both the Old and New Testaments are consistent enough in their treatment of aliens and strangers that we can begin to discern the contours of what such a theology may look like.

B. The Old Testament

After the cosmic dramas that make up the first eleven chapters of Genesis, the biblical narrative focuses on just one man: Abram. Through this one man and through the descendants that God would graciously grant to him and his wife, Sarai, the world would one day be renewed and redeemed. God will move from the particular to the general, from one lone couple to all the nations of the earth. From the biblical text of Genesis 12, it appears that Abram is already well situated and content living in the land of Haran. Abram and his father’s household appear well-established and fairly wealthy, possessing significant land and many possessions, flocks, herds, and other goods. Certainly it would have made perfect sense had Yahweh come to Abram and said, “Stay right where you are. You’re already off to a

good start, but I will increase your flocks and herds and land holdings and I will grant to you a family in your old age so that in Haran, I can begin my renewal of all things.”

God said no such thing. Instead, the very first word God speaks to Abram is “Leave” (Gen. 12:1). God would do a mighty work and would multiply Abram’s descendants, but the first step in all that was for Abram to become a wanderer in a new land—a migrant person who had to leave all that he had in order to start from scratch in a land far away and where he would have no prior claims whatsoever. Like all immigrant and refugee peoples thereafter, Abram would be cast out into a place that would make him vulnerable. A scant ten verses into the story of Abram we discover that the land to which God had directed him was enduring a famine. With no stockpiles of resources to fall back on, Abram and company had to leave for Egypt “because the famine was severe” in the very place to which God had directed them (Gen. 12:10).

Although Egypt afforded the opportunity to secure food and drink for his starving family, being a stranger in yet another strange land revealed still more vulnerability. The Egyptians noted that Sarai was attractive and suggested her to the Pharaoh as a new member of his harem. Abram’s subsequent lying about Sarai (saying she was his sister) succeeded in feathering Abram’s nest as the Pharaoh gave Abram many gifts on account of his lovely “sister.” But Abram’s lack of trust in God’s providence brought about God’s displeasure, and this, in turn, brought disease on Pharaoh’s household. As a result, Abram was once again forced to leave after being exiled from Egypt by a Pharaoh, angry at Abram’s deception.

All of this takes place in one short biblical chapter consisting of just twenty verses. We see Abram forced to become a migrant and see immediately the multiple vulnerabilities that this new status brought to a man who previously would have been safe and secure from all such threats. It is frequently noted that Abram is the father of the faith, the grand patriarch of Judaism, Christianity, and Islam. Yet at the deepest level of Abram’s experience—at the very core of his identity as the one chosen by God to renew the face of the earth—there is an immigrant experience. In the rest of Scripture—both the Old and New Testaments—a concern to care for those who are also vulnerable due to being displaced occurs again and again and again. There may be many theological reasons why God did not found his mighty nation in Haran. Radical dependence on God and upon the lovingkindness of God is best forged through precisely the extremes of experience that God forced on Abram and Sarai. Perhaps that is why there was a twenty-five year gap between the promise of a child (already an unlikely prospect when it was first spoken) and the actual birth of Isaac. Similarly that is why, having at long last received his one and only son, Abraham is later asked to sacrifice him. Again and again God tested Abraham’s faith by forcing him into extreme circumstances.

The main point to be noted at this juncture and for the purpose of this report is that the experience of being displaced—of being a migrant and a refugee—lies at the very heart of the biblical narrative. Abram, Sarai, and their family became an immigrant people not out of political or economic necessity but by divine decree, and although this source of being displaced may be unique, the *experience* of being a stranger in a strange land has some

common elements for all people, no matter what the original cause of their displacement may have been. Before the Abraham cycle of stories concludes—in a passage that is often underappreciated in terms of its poignancy—Abraham purchases his very first piece of Canaan when he bargains to purchase a plot of land to bury Sarah. “I am an alien and a stranger among you. Sell me some property for a burial site here so I can bury my dead” (Gen. 23:4). When you are an alien in land not your own, you are forced—even in a time of death and grief—to rely on the kindness of strangers. All that Abraham went through as a result of the divine election of his becoming the founder of the renewal of all the earth is seared deeply into the consciousness of Jews and Christians alike.

Several generations after Abraham purchased his first piece of Canaan to bury Sarah, his descendants again became strangers in a strange land when famine led them once more to Egypt, where Joseph had become the Pharaoh’s right-hand man. Through the surprising providence of God, the reprehensible actions of Joseph’s brothers yielded a situation that saved not only the family of Jacob but also the lives of untold others in Egypt and many surrounding nations. God’s promise that Abram and his kin would become a blessing to the entire earth had a glimmer of fulfillment through Joseph’s supervision of food distribution during a severe famine throughout that region of the earth. For the family members of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, living in Egypt set up a longer term situation that would ultimately turn sour. The final phrase of the Book of Genesis refers to “a coffin in Egypt” (Gen. 50:26). However, the story doesn’t end in Egypt because just a few verses prior to the report of Joseph’s being placed “in a coffin in Egypt,” Joseph had prophesied that the day would come when the family would return to the land of promise and that when they did, his bones needed to be properly buried there.

In the intervening four centuries before that took place, the history of God’s people passed through a dark and cruel time as they became enslaved to Egyptians who feared the Hebrew people as a potential threat living among them. In and through all that happened, God’s promises were also marching forward. By the time biblical readers arrive at Exodus 1, the people of Israel are referred to (for the first time in the Bible) as “a nation,” or *am* in Hebrew. This report is not the place to rehearse all the events of the exodus from Egypt led by Moses, but this is most certainly the place to notice that the experience of being an alien people in a strange land is seared—or is supposed to be seared—deeply into the consciousness of all subsequent generations.

For this reason much of the Pentateuch concerns itself with laws and practices for Israel that are designed both to build on their collective experience of having been strangers who were once oppressed in a foreign land *and* to make sure that Israel itself never become guilty of similar oppression of the strangers and aliens in her midst. Repeatedly in the laws and commands and statutes that Yahweh gave to Israel through Moses, the people were taught two key connected facts: first, the laws and festival holy days of Israel—including even the celebration of high and holy holidays like Passover—applied to and were open to strangers in their midst as well as to the people of Israel themselves; and, second, God reserves a special place in his heart for society’s most vulnerable people: widows, orphans, and aliens.

On the Sabbath, strangers were to be given a day of rest the same as any Israelite. In fact, by the time the Ten Commandments are repeated to Israel in the Book of Deuteronomy, the entire basis of the Sabbath gets grounded in Israel's experience as an oppressed people in Egypt. Whereas the text of Exodus 20:11 grounded the practice of Sabbath in creation and the Lord's having taken a day of rest, the text of Deuteronomy 5:15 grounds Sabbath in the Israelite experience of being an oppressed people in Egypt who were never given rest. "Remember that you were slaves in Egypt" God declared. Curiously, this is the only significant variation in the two versions of the Ten Commandments in Exodus 20 and Deuteronomy 5. Among other things, this may indicate that Sabbath has roots in both creation and redemption. But it may also indicate that as the time drew closer for the Israelites to return to the promised land of Canaan, the practice of remembering their slave experience became increasingly important. The Israelites who heard the law repeated on the plains of Moab in Deuteronomy represented a new generation who did not recall slavery in Egypt on a firsthand basis. Their lack of active experience with being oppressed did not, however, relieve them of the need to recall that experience from their collective history as a nation so as to set the tone for all generations to come.

In Moses' grand sermon that constitutes the bulk of the text in Deuteronomy, the people of Israel are reminded repeatedly to remember their collective experience as slaves even as they are also reminded that the land they will soon enter is a sheer gift of divine grace. As the writer of Psalm 24 would later write, so Moses in essence told the people, "The earth is the LORD's, and everything in it." The land and all its goodness represented a divine bequest that the Israelites would occupy as a kind of tenant. It was not finally theirs to hoard—its riches had to be shared with all, including chiefly the strangers and aliens in their midst.

These final reminders in Deuteronomy represent the culmination of the many laws that had been given to the generation of the exodus. The verses that most clearly reveal the heart of God and that summarize how God desires to characterize his people come in Leviticus 19:33-34: "When an alien [Hebrew *gar*] lives with you in your land, do not mistreat him. The alien living with you must be treated as one of your native-born. Love him as yourself, for you were aliens in Egypt. I am the LORD your God." Those two passages are the clearest summary of many similar passages scattered throughout the Pentateuch. The word *gar* occurs twenty-nine times in Exodus, Leviticus, and Numbers, and in nearly every instance the text makes clear that the benefits of the promised land were to be extended to strangers as well as to the Israelites themselves and that strangers were to be offered the same protections as the Israelites (even as they would incur the same punishments in case they broke the law).

In sum, there was no significant difference between God's desire for the Israelites as they enjoyed their lives in the land flowing with milk and honey and God's desire for the strangers and aliens who lived among them. This is not surprising when we read these words from Leviticus 25:23: "The land [of Canaan] must not be sold permanently, because the land is mine and you are but aliens and my tenants." In other words, God desired Israel to extend to the strangers among them every kindness and courtesy because in so doing, the Israelites would be mirroring their God who extended his grace,

his lovingkindness, to the Israelites who were just as much an immigrant people in God's eyes as anyone else on the earth. In fact, the Israelites were to go beyond merely offering strangers the same benefits and protections as the rest of the people enjoyed; they were required actively to provide extra protections.

Throughout the Old Testament, God makes clear that there is a special place reserved in his heart for the most vulnerable members of society: widows, orphans, and aliens. As David Holwerda once summarized it, God's abiding concern for that triplet of widows, orphans, and aliens reveals a fundamental fact: "The Old Testament teaches that God is scandalized by poverty and wills its abolition."¹¹ Under ordinary circumstances, these three groups of people represented the most vulnerable members of society. In a patriarchal society like ancient Israel, women and children who lacked the protection and status of a male head of the family (a husband and/or a father) were liable to become invisible to the rest of society and could easily have fallen through the social cracks as a result. Similarly, resident aliens who lacked formal citizenship and any claim to land were also liable to mistreatment and had few prospects unless special provision was made. Hence, God repeatedly told the Israelites to make just such special provisions like gleaner laws that instructed farmers and vintners to intentionally leave portions of their fields and vineyards unharvested so that widows and orphans and aliens could come by and gather up provisions. Just before the new generation of Israelites moved in to take the Promised Land for themselves, God reminded them of what is sometimes called God's "preferential option for the poor" through these soaring words in Deuteronomy 10:17-20:

For the LORD your God is God of gods and Lord of lords, the great God, mighty and awesome, who shows no partiality and accepts no bribes. He defends the cause of the fatherless and the widow, and loves the alien, giving him food and clothing. And you are to love those who are aliens, for you yourselves were aliens in Egypt. Fear the LORD your God and serve him.

The biblical material summarized here constitutes the main lines of Old Testament thinking in this area of inquiry. However, there are also a few other verses in the Hebrew canon of Scripture that point to certain other strictures that were also present in ancient Israel. Other passages indicate that under a few well-defined circumstances, certain strangers could represent a *spiritual* threat to the people. If intermarriage with Canaanites or other foreigners, or if the very presence of such aliens among the people, led to religious syncretism or to the tolerating of spiritual practices that God had strictly forbidden, then Scripture was clear that in those specific instances the foreigners who were promoting syncretism or seeking sanction for forbidden rituals needed to be shunned and expelled. As J. Charles Hay pointed out in an essay written for the Presbyterian Church of Canada, the books of Ezra and Nehemiah are stringent in painting foreigners as a threat to the people of Israel as they resettled the land and re-built Jerusalem and the temple after their decades of captivity and exile in Babylon. At that time the risks of syncretism and a watering down of the traditions handed down from Moses were acute, so Ezra and Nehemiah repeatedly censured those who had intermarried with foreigners. As Hay highlights, the most chilling conclusion

¹¹ *The International Standard Bible Encyclopedia*, Volume 3, Geoffrey W. Bromiley, General Editor, page 905 (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1986).

to any biblical book may be the end of Ezra, where we read a long list of names of men who were “guilty” of having married foreign women. Then the book concludes with the line “All these had married foreign women, and some of them had children by these wives” (Ezra 10:44). A variant on this text includes also the line “and they sent them away with their children.” Whether or not that is a valid part of the text, we were told in Ezra 10:17 that at a certain point “they finished dealing with all the men who had married foreign women.” This surely indicates a dire fate (from J. Charles Hay, “The Bible and the Outsider,” published by Inter-Church Committee for Refugees, Presbyterian Church of Canada, Toronto, 1996).

Despite this sub-theme, it would be wrong to suggest that this wariness of the stranger constitutes the main line of the Old Testament. It would, therefore, also be wrong for those wishing to promote a more protectionist, closed-border agenda in North America today to seize on these other texts as though they supersede, if not vitiate, the vast majority of other Old Testament passages that so clearly call for an open attitude toward strangers. As the above summary makes clear, the main line of thought when it comes to immigrant peoples in the midst of God’s people is that these strangers are to be embraced. If they desire to join with God’s people, they are to be welcomed (albeit being required to undergo the covenant sign of circumcision and so also indicating a desire to follow the whole counsel of God). However even short of becoming a formal part of Israel, the very presence of such strangers put the people of Israel under special obligation (and this obligation would not become null and void even if the strangers in question never became members of the Israelite community in any formal way). And the reason is everywhere the same: they themselves had been aliens in Egypt and knew firsthand the horror of being mistreated on account of their alien status. What’s more, the Israelites were to see themselves as aliens who lived off the grace of God every single day of their lives. God’s kindness and gracious provision to them as aliens on God’s earth were to set the tone for how they treated all others they encountered. Unless aliens represented a clear threat to the religious and spiritual integrity of Israel or declared themselves enemies of Yahweh, they were to be enfolded into the community and even granted special privileges and protections along with the other similarly vulnerable members of society, such as widows and orphans.

These themes weave through the entire Old Testament. By the time the biblical reader arrives at prophetic books like Amos, Micah, and Isaiah, God’s love for the vulnerable becomes clear in a new way as the prophets indicted Israel for precisely their *failure* to extend special courtesy to the vulnerable. “They sell the righteous for silver, and the needy for a pair of sandals. They trample on the heads of the poor as upon the dust of the ground and deny justice to the oppressed” (Amos 2:6b-7a). “Your hands are full of blood; wash and make yourselves clean. Take your evil deeds out of my sight! Stop doing wrong, learn to do right! Seek justice, encourage the oppressed. Defend the cause of the fatherless, plead the case of the widow” (Isa. 1:15-17). God had asked the formerly oppressed Israelites to remember the horrors of oppression as a reason never to oppress the vulnerable in their midst. If history has taught us anything, it is that those who were once oppressed often turn their anger over such mistreatment into a license to then oppress some other group. As someone once noted, the most recent

group to finally get admitted to the country club often becomes the most vocal about keeping out the next discriminated group. God wanted to snap this cycle of oppression.

The fact that God retains this desire for his people to reach out in love to all people will continue to be revealed in the witness of the New Testament. But the premiere Old Testament example of what can happen when the alien in one's midst is treated with love and justice is the story of Ruth. As narrated in the book of Ruth, this story presents us with a character who was vulnerable on multiple fronts. First, she was from Moab and so was a foreign stranger in Israel when she arrived in Bethlehem with her mother-in-law Naomi. Second, although she had married an Israelite man, she was a widow without formal claim to any land or possessions in Israel. Third, she was poor on account of these other two strikes against her and so could survive only if others took some extra care to provide for her.

The story of Ruth begins with emptiness and bitterness and with a high probability of ending badly. The fact that the story has a "happy ending" occurs only because, in this case, God's commands to Israel to enfold the alien and to make extra provisions for the poor and the widow were heeded. Boaz makes sure that the gleaning laws are followed so that poor persons like Ruth would be able to find plenty of grain. Boaz also recognized Ruth's vulnerability to rape and other mistreatment and so extended a special invitation that she glean in no one else's fields but his own so that through his influence over his own workers she could be kept safe. And finally, despite the dangers that could be associated with intermarriage in Israel, Boaz went the extra mile to become the kinsman-redeemer who could marry Ruth and so give her a reliable and solid future in Israel. Like so many others in Israel, Boaz could have gone another way. He could have ignored God's injunctions to give special treatment to the alien and the widow and the poor. But by following God's ways Boaz not only saved Ruth and Naomi from a dire fate, but he also became a key player in the line of people who would one day produce no less than the Christ of God—for Ruth and Boaz became the great-great grandparents of King David. As we will see below, Matthew had a good theological reason to go out of his way to list Ruth specifically in the family tree of Jesus the Christ. For this reason, the person of Ruth is a fitting turning point to direct us to the witness of the New Testament.

C. The New Testament

The incarnation of Jesus the Christ and his subsequent ministry represent not only God's definitive move to fulfill the promises made to Abraham to save the whole earth but represent also the ultimate instance of dealing with the alien in our midst. As the Son of God in skin, Jesus of Nazareth represented the quintessential stranger, the one person the likes of whom no one had ever before encountered. As Eugene Peterson paraphrased John 1:14, "the Word became flesh and blood, and moved into the neighborhood." But our "neighborhood" had never before known such a presence and so, not surprisingly, even as Jesus spent his ministry reaching out to the last, least, lost, and lonely members of his own day who were invisible to and so excluded by others, so many in Israel rejected Jesus himself. As John said, Jesus came to those who were his own, but his own people "did not receive him" (1:11).

The Gospel of Matthew carries through some of the themes that emerged in the Old Testament. Matthew is generally regarded as having been written for a reading audience composed of Jews and Jewish-Christians who had recently been converted to embrace Jesus as the Christ of God, the promised Messiah of not only the Jewish people but of all peoples. Thus Matthew took particular care to show not only that the ministry of Jesus would carry on and fulfill all that had begun in the Old Testament but also that, somehow, the very presence of Jesus on this earth would be a test case for how well the people of God could continue to accept and enfold the strangers in their midst.

The theme of Matthew's gospel is "Immanuel," or "God with us." This theme begins in Matthew 1:23, reminding readers of Isaiah's prophecy that the one born of a virgin would be "Immanuel" (Isa. 7:14). The gospel is later book-ended with the Great Commission in Matthew 28:20 when Jesus tells his disciples that they could move out into mission to the entire world with the assurance that he was then and would always be Immanuel, the God who would be forever with them: "Surely I am *with you always*, to the end of the age."

Before Immanuel arrives in Matthew 1:25, Matthew gives us a little background as to how God came to be "with us." Matthew goes out of his way to remind us that the way God arrived in this world came through the influence of many who were, at one time, aliens within Israel's gates. Modern readers of the Bible regard Matthew's opening genealogy or "family tree" of Jesus as dull and an odd way to open a book. However, Matthew knew that this genealogy was not only necessary for his Jewish readers to establish Jesus' credentials as a true son of David; it was also necessary as a way to set up a gospel that reaches beyond just Israel to include all peoples.

A typical Jewish genealogy did not include the names of any women. If a family tree were to include any female names, it would be limited to the great patriarchs of Israel: Sarah, Rachel, Rebecca, and Leah. Matthew, however, takes pains to mention—or directly refer to—four very different women: Tamar, Rahab, Ruth, and Bathsheba. Strikingly, each of these women came from outside Israel and three of the four had something more than vaguely scandalous associated with them. Tamar played the harlot with her father-in-law Judah. Rahab was the head of a brothel in the doomed city of Jericho. Bathsheba was the wife of Uriah the Hittite when King David forced her into an adulterous liaison with himself. Since Matthew was under no obligation to mention *any* women in this genealogy, it is remarkable that he included these foreign women who, in addition to their non-Israelite background, also conjure up what could be regarded as "skeletons" in Jesus' family closet.

What was Matthew's point? Perhaps he wanted to begin his gospel with a series of reminders that the story of God's people had always been wider than Israel alone, that it had often been advanced in history by the good treatment of aliens in Israel's midst and that even the Christ of God could not emerge into history without a familial past in need of forgiveness and redemption. By constructing his genealogy of Jesus the way he did, Matthew is sounding an inclusive note to his gospel at the very outset. For those with theological eyes to see, Matthew's opening chapter is not a stale and dull

family tree but something that bristles with inclusivity and a wide-reaching grace.

In case we missed Matthew's desire for inclusivity in the opening genealogy, he hits the reader over the top of the head with this theme in Matthew 2 by bringing stargazers from the east to the cradle of the Christ. To Jewish readers in Matthew's day, the presence of the Magi would not have represented an infusion of exotic color and spice into the Christmas story the way many in the church today regard the Magi when the annual Sunday school Christmas pageant is put on for the congregation. The Magi represented a foreign presence and a sinful presence. The Bible directly condemns Magi and their astrological arts. A rabbi writing in the years before Jesus' birth went so far as to say, "He who learns from a magi is worthy of death." These men were the ancient equivalent of people who write horoscopes and try to predict the future by reading what's in the stars. Further, they came from Baghdad, so in all these ways they represented a threat to all that was holy in Israel. And yet Matthew makes a point of bringing them to the cradle of baby Jesus as yet another early signal in this gospel that whatever else "God with us" would mean, it would have meaning for all the people of the earth, not just those already on the inside of certain religious communities.

No sooner do the Magi exit the stage and a series of calamitous events (set off by their visit to Herod) force Mary and Joseph to take their child and flee to Egypt. As many in church history have noted, this makes the holy family itself an emblem of all refugee peoples ever since. The flight into Egypt mirrors Abram's flight there in Genesis 12 as well as Israel's own history of being forced to flee to, and then remain for a time in, that foreign land. Presumably, Mary, Joseph, and their infant child survived their time in Egypt because they themselves found some kind of a welcome from the Egyptians, who must have also provided some kind of lodging and sustenance that preserved the life of no less than God's own Son. Again, early in his gospel Matthew is hitting on themes and sounding various theological notes calculated to get our attention and to force us to widen our vision of who Jesus is, where he came from, and what he came to this world to do.

Throughout his gospel Matthew reinforces this theme in a variety of ways. Jesus reaches out to unclean lepers, Roman centurions, and those plagued by demons. He touches the ritually unclean—dead bodies, menstruating women—who had been ostracized from good society but instead of becoming contaminated and so unclean himself, the purity of Jesus spreads to the sick person, restoring him or her to community. He tells parables that portray the kingdom of God as never being quite what one expects, and so Jesus' followers needed to be careful before leaping too quickly to judgments of various kinds. The good wheat must grow alongside the weeds for now. The modest-looking gospel message Jesus brought to the world might look as puny as mustard seeds and granules of yeast, but its effect would be great. On and on Jesus went, praising the faith of a Canaanite woman and reminding his followers that they'd never be finished with the task of forgiving one another (and so don't ask when the task of forgiveness would come to an end; for now, forgiveness never ends because everyone sins all the time).

Finally, just before the gospel reaches its climax with the arrest of Jesus and all that followed, Jesus had one last thing to say that summed up what "Immanuel" ("God with us") had meant all along: "I tell you the truth,

whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers of mine, you did for me” (Matt. 25:40). Jesus had just used the image of the sheep and the goats to tell his disciples how everything would shake out at the end of time. Interestingly, the one thing the sheep and the goats have in common is their mutual ignorance as to what they had been doing all along. As it turns out, the sheep had not been aware that it had been Jesus whom they had been feeding, welcoming, clothing, and visiting. They had just seen someone hungry and had fed him. They had seen someone thirsty and had provided a drink. They had seen a stranger in their midst and had welcomed him into their lives. They had seen someone naked and had clothed him. They had seen someone in prison and so had spent some time with him. But they didn’t know it was Jesus. Similarly the goats had ignored the hungry, thirsty, strange, naked, and imprisoned people they had passed by, but they had no idea that it was finally Jesus whom they were dismissing.

The difference between the sheep and the goats was not that one group went looking for Immanuel in this world and the other did not. The sheep just responded to the vulnerable and to the alien with love. At the end of Matthew, when Jesus told his disciples that he would keep on being “Immanuel” for them, he meant more than the disciples knew. According to Jesus himself in Matthew 25, there is no escaping “God with us.” God is with us every time we encounter a stranger in need. The Gospel of Matthew tells us that Jesus was not only the incarnation of the Son of God—Jesus was also the living embodiment of something we heard way back in Leviticus and Deuteronomy when Yahweh repeatedly told the Israelites that he loved the aliens, the strangers, and that a big part of God’s own self-identity was that he is the one who takes delight in defending the vulnerable of the world.

Beyond Matthew, the other three gospels press the same claim of gospel inclusivity. The parables of Jesus alone build a case for seeing in the presence of the stranger and the poor the presence of God. Luke gives us two of the most memorable such parables in this regard. Scholars note that across all of Jesus’ parables as recorded in the New Testament, precisely one parabolic character receives a name: it is the poor man Lazarus in the parable in Luke 16:19-31. But given Luke’s theme of lifting up the poor as people especially prized by God, it is no surprise that in Luke Jesus would take a poor person—whom most of the world would not even see—and would elevate his biblical status by giving him a name. Jesus signals in this way that every poor person or stranger whom we meet likewise has a name (and if we would ever bother to get to know such people, we would learn their names too) because they are real people made in God’s image and loved by God. What’s more, when the rich man begs father Abraham to send Lazarus back to warn his brothers, Abraham refuses by tellingly noting, “If they do not listen to Moses and the Prophets, they will not be convinced even if someone rises from the dead” (Luke 16:31). Indeed, the Pentateuch makes abundantly clear why the Lazarus figures of this world should receive the special treatment that God again and again enjoins on his people for all the poor and vulnerable widows, orphans, and strangers. “They have Moses,” Abraham replies to the rich man in torment. Jesus’ point is that we *all* have Moses. But are we comprehending what “Moses” is telling us about our treatment of the poor, the vulnerable, and the other strangers in our midst?

Luke's greatest contribution to a "theology of the stranger" comes in his reporting of Jesus' landmark parable of the good Samaritan in Luke 10:25-37. It was an expert in the law who kicked off what has become one of the most famous parables of all time. Jesus reminded this man of the biblical injunction to "love your neighbor as yourself," which prompted this man—ostensibly so well-versed in the law of Israel—to inquire "And who is my neighbor?" (Luke 10:27, 29). As our summary of the Old Testament made clear, the answer to this question is "just about anybody you meet." The reach of God's love is wide, not narrow—it is as all-inclusive as possible, not exclusivist. But the very premise of a question like "And who is my neighbor?" is that there must be relevant restrictions that apply so as to shrink the pool of potential neighbors whom we'd be obligated to love. To explode that kind of thinking, Jesus tells a story. He begins it in Luke 10:30 with a broad, general term; Jesus says that "a man" was traveling to Jericho. In Greek the phrase is *anthropos tis*, which could be loosely translated as "some guy." He didn't tell us it was some Jewish guy (though this could be inferred from his traveling from Jerusalem, but that is not terribly strong evidence in that the Jerusalem of Jesus' day contained also Romans and people of many other backgrounds). No, it's just some guy who fell into the hands of robbers and so needed assistance to live. The man in the ditch at the side of the road could be anybody. And he is anybody, which was just Jesus' point.

Upon encountering the man, the unlikely hero of the story—the Samaritan—does not calculate his actions, he just acts. He does not inspect the man to see if his ethnicity, socioeconomic status, or religion is "right" as a precondition to reaching out to him. He does not launch an investigation to see if his having fallen into the hands of robbers was somehow the victim's fault ("Were you traveling at a safe time of the day? Did you consider bringing along some traveling companions—there's safety in numbers, you know?!"). The good Samaritan does not ask questions, consult a checklist, or launch an investigation to see if this man at the roadside was worthy of help. He simply sees needs and meets them.

Before Jesus finishes this parable, he pulls the rug out from underneath his initial conversation partner and all of us who read the story. This parable is Jesus' extended answer to the law expert's question, "And who is my neighbor?" While reading the parable, we think the bottom line is that the man in the ditch is the neighbor. "Who is your neighbor?" Jesus could have said to the law expert. "Well, your neighbor is that anonymous guy in the ditch. *That's* the neighbor whom you are to love as yourself." But that's not quite what Jesus says. Instead in Luke 10:36 he asks who was the neighbor *to* the man in the ditch. This turns the law expert's question back on him. Based on the law of God in the Old Testament in places like Leviticus and Deuteronomy, our task is not to figure out who "out there" in the wider world is our neighbor. Instead, it's our job to recognize that wherever we are, *we* are the neighbor, *we* are the alien in the presence of other people, and we act lovingly toward all without calculating whether or not the other person is enough like us to be worthy of our attention and care. We are supposed to represent no less than God, and if we look at the world that way, we won't wonder about how to treat others because we will know: we treat others with love because that's how God already treated us. Our job is just to be a chip off the divine block.

In sum, the gospels present the ministry of Jesus as being all-inclusive. But of particular interest to Jesus and to his kingdom were first and foremost precisely those people whom the religious establishment in his day excluded—in great contradistinction to everything God had taught in his law. The last, least, lost, and lonely fringe members of the world—the strangers in our midst—were the ones Jesus saw and loved first of all. If such people had a special place in Yahweh’s heart in the Old Testament, they would clearly occupy a special niche in the kingdom Jesus brought as well.

The community that continued Jesus’ ministry after his ascension into heaven would struggle with this. Questions of who was in and who was out—as well as larger questions as to who should even be invited to come into the community in the first place—would continue to plague the disciples-turned-apostles for some time (as the book of Acts makes clear). Paul and Peter nearly came to blows over the question of Gentile inclusion and whether they first had to become observant Jews *before* they could become also followers of Jesus the Christ. It took no less than a divine vision to motivate Peter to call on Cornelius and his family in Acts 10. But Peter did get the message eventually and so was later able to write to his fellow believers, “Live your lives as strangers here in reverent fear” (1 Pet. 1:17). When we see ourselves as resident aliens in this world—when we realize that the call of God makes us, as Hebrews 11:13 puts it, “aliens and strangers on earth”—then we are better equipped to reach out to any and all whom we meet with the gospel of the one who came to us as the divine stranger to bless all the nations of the earth. It is, then, no surprise to find that the God who turned Abram into an immigrant in Genesis 12 so as to found a nation that would bless the whole earth would conclude his own revelation to us in the book of Revelation with a heavenly vision of “a great multitude that no one could count, from every nation, tribe, people and language, standing before the throne and in front of the Lamb” (Rev. 7:9).

D. Theological reflections

As we conclude this section of our report, we will engage in some broader theological and practical implications based on the foregoing biblical considerations. Although there may be a certain degree of fluidity in what follows, it may be helpful on the practical front to break this discussion down into categories that focus on the church as a whole, on the role of the civil government, and on the role of individual believers as members both of the church and of the wider society. Finally, we will devote a little space to pondering what a passage like Romans 13 may have to say in this regard, particularly as Paul’s words there are frequently quoted whenever a discussion arises that concerns the church and its relationship to the governing authorities.

1. The church

This summary and condensation of the biblical witness regarding the vulnerable strangers in our midst give us a consistent biblical framework in which to ponder the presence of migrant peoples in our midst also today. Biblically it is clear that unless a given person—no matter what his or her background or current social circumstance—threatens the faith or life of the Christian community, then that person is to be embraced and witnessed to in deeds and words that reflect Christ. The strangers in our midst represent opportunities both to discern the presence of Jesus

“Lord, when did we see you hungry. . . ?”—Matt. 25:37) and to act as Jesus in the name of the God who long ago told his people Israel that they were to love strangers because God loved them.

In addressing the need to welcome the strangers among us, the United States Catholic Bishops noted that this biblical insistence that we discern each person as an imagebearer of God worthy of our love led Pope Paul VI to note,

The Church can regard no one as excluded from its motherly embrace, no one as outside the scope of its motherly care. It has no enemies except those who wish to make themselves such. Its catholicity is no idle boast. It was not for nothing that it received its mission to foster love, unity and peace among men.

—*Welcoming the Stranger: Unity in Diversity*,
United States Catholic Conference, Inc., 2000, p. 20

It should be clear from the foregoing that the church today carries forward the love of God for the stranger as revealed in the Old Testament and the love of God for all the vulnerable strangers in our midst as incarnated by Christ Jesus the Lord in the New Testament. As such, the church can but repent anytime it finds itself excluding people from its fellowship, membership, and sacramental life for any reason other than sin, evil, or threats to the church’s very existence and teaching. The church has no enemies except those who openly declare themselves as such either by word, deed, or a combination thereof. And even when the church has such legitimate enemies, Jesus calls us to love them even if their hatred of the church extends to their active persecution of that same church. We are to bless even those who curse us and love even those who hate us.

If that constitutes our attitude toward genuine enemies, it goes without saying that the church must open its doors to all who come. It’s not the church’s job to establish a person’s worthiness to join the church or receive the sacraments based on any precondition other than the person’s heartfelt desire to follow Jesus as Savior and Lord. Again, if the biblical witness of both testaments is any indication, the church needs to go out of its way to make the life of Christ available to the most vulnerable people of all.

In this connection, the question could be asked: who today is more vulnerable than those persons who find themselves forced to seek a better life in a country where they have no standing and where most of the legal protections and social safety nets that the rest of us rely on are not available? Like Abraham in Canaan without a place even to bury his dead wife, so immigrants in the United States and Canada live with the constant fear of not being able to access what full citizens regard as the normal services and amenities of life: food, insurance, medical care, housing, and, yes, even a place to bury their dead. If ever there were a group in need of the embrace of a loving God and all the hope and joy that the gospel represents, it would be this group of strangers in our midst. In the setting of Old Testament Israel, these would be the very aliens to whom the passages in books like Leviticus and Deuteronomy would apply. In a New Testament context, one senses that such a marginalized and vulnerable group may have been among the first people to whom Jesus would have reached out in precisely the kind of inclusive love that offended his exclusivist-minded religious peers in the temple establishment of his day.

Certainly, as Paul knew so well, the gospel that is powerful enough to transcend the greatest social barriers of that time—the barriers between Jews and Greeks, males and females, slaves and free persons (cf. Gal. 3:28)—must likewise today transcend any and all barriers associated with the migrations of peoples, including linguistic, racial, socioeconomic, ethnic, and national barriers.

2. The government

Theological reflection in this area must in addition lead to ethical considerations that may not be obviously answered simply by appeal to the biblical summaries presented above. After all, a key feature of the contemporary landscape in the United States and Canada is not the question of immigrants in our midst but of people without status/illegal immigrants who entered the country in ways that were in direct conflict with the laws of the nation. Although the Bible has a lot to say about strangers and aliens from other lands, it does not address in any obvious way the status of such persons vis-à-vis the immigration laws of any given nation and so does not talk about a given stranger's movement from one land to another in the terms of crime and punishment and border enforcement that we hear so often today.

As Peter C. Meilaender points out, in the modern world the governing authorities of a nation are certainly correct to establish laws that regulate immigration. Any given nation has a responsibility to its own citizens first and foremost, and so the government passes laws that protect its citizens from various forms of harm or danger and that regulate public life in prudent and wise ways. When pondering immigration law in particular, governments take into consideration issues such as availability of jobs and adequate housing for its citizens, how widely it is able to distribute its available services and resources, and other such practical considerations. It is not per se selfish for a government to take care of its own citizens ahead of the citizens of other nations, including care through immigration policies.

As Meilaender notes, we all exercise "preferential love." Suppose you are the parent of two children. As a parent, it is not surprising that your own two children would receive more love from you—and stir greater feelings of protectiveness in you—than any other children you know or encounter. As a human being and as a Christian, you know you are obligated to protect any child you may happen to see on a playground or at a public swimming pool. If you spied a child in distress at the public pool, you would not fail to assist that child—nor calculate your relative interest in lending a hand—based on the fact that this was not *your* child. The presence of that child places undeniable obligations on you as a fellow human (and as a follower of Christ). Even so, these facts would not lead you to stand vigil at the side of the pool every day it is open, whether your kids were in the water or not. You will be there to watch your children but feel no obligation to be there every moment when other children are in the pool. Similarly you will work hard at your job and earn money with which you may be able to support a great many causes, some of which will benefit children other than your own, but your first obligation will be to make sure your own two kids are well-fed, well-clothed, and well-housed.

So also any given national government has obligations to all people—and only a truly insular and selfish country would never provide foreign aid or fail to provide troops for a peacekeeping mission that would help keep the children of other nations safe—but it only makes sense that the ruling authorities will structure its laws and allocate its resources in ways that will benefit its own citizens first. Even so, a wealthy nation should also structure itself—including on the immigration front—in ways that will help spread its wealth to others who may be from nations that struggle to provide for their own citizens.

3. Believers and advocacy

Churches are called to be hospitable to immigrants, but hospitality alone will not solve the myriad problems that plague the immigration systems in the United States and Canada. Because of this, Christian believers may well conclude that they need to take up their roles as advocates, talking with lawmakers in recognition of the fact that problems so entrenched can be addressed, long-term, only through the avenue of just laws and significant legislation. Christians are right to advocate for immigration policies within a given nation that will be more just, fair, and generous and that will assist the nation in welcoming more strangers as citizens, not fewer. But as has already been noted in this report, certainly in the United States, and to a degree in Canada, people everywhere are being forced to deal with the presence of millions of people without status already living in these countries. Many of these people are children and young people who were brought here when they were very young and who now find themselves stranded in difficult circumstances with few good (or legal) options.

As already noted, a civil government will have its own viewpoint on such matters in terms of crime and punishment. Christians in the church, however, should parse the situation from a different starting point: that of Christlike compassion for the person or persons who are already in our midst and who place an obligation on us by their very presence. Compassion requires trying to understand what led people to their present circumstances. Compassion also leads the church to realize that people who are already vulnerable on many fronts—and who lack so many sources of hope, comfort, or security—are in need of Jesus and of his gospel ministry in acute ways. To deny such people the nourishment of ministry based on a prior decision that those who “break the law” cannot receive grace until they first repent is to forget our common solidarity before God as lawbreakers and sinners who are all in need of mercy and forgiveness. As God reminded the Israelites, they were to treat the aliens in their midst with kindness because, *vis-à-vis* God, even the Israelites were aliens living on *God’s* land. The conclusion the Israelites were supposed to draw from this when faced with aliens was to say, “We are all aliens before God, so we should treat everyone with the compassion and mercy God has shown us.” Similarly in the church today we recognize that we are all sinners before God and therefore should show everyone the love and grace God has shown us. Recognizing this does not untie all the various knotty questions and issues we encounter here, but it may succeed in reframing the issue spiritually and theologically.

4. Romans 13

Before moving on to a few closing observations in this biblical-theological section of our report, we by necessity should ponder the implications of a passage that is routinely quoted whenever questions arise in connection with the church's relationship to the governing authorities: Romans 13. As part of his larger address to the Christians living in Rome, the apostle Paul devoted seven verses to a plea that those Christians submit themselves to the governing authorities, obeying the laws of the land so that they need not fear the punitive arm of the authorities and paying taxes to the governing authorities as part of a recognition that all legitimate government officials are no less than the servants (Greek: *diakonoi*) of God himself. If a legitimate government appears to have legitimate claims for taxes, revenues, respect, and honor, then Paul says the Christian response is to render these things as part of their larger service to the God who has installed those authorities for the good of all.

A straightforward reading of Romans 13:1-7, therefore, would indicate that when a government passes laws—including laws governing the legality of a foreign person's presence in the country—the church is obligated to follow that law and ought not be aiding or abetting those who may have violated the law in terms of how they entered the country or how they arrived at their present status in that nation. But before we too quickly allow Romans 13 to settle the matter when it comes to the church's attitude toward and treatment of those who are in the country illegally, a few considerations should be observed in terms of how this text has functioned in church history as well as to the original setting of these words within the epistle to the Romans itself. What follows is by no means everything that could be brought into consideration when applying this text to the world today but may be enough to suggest that these verses by no means end the discussion of how the church deals with the law of the land in this connection.

First, whatever else Paul intended in these verses, it must be observed that even in the Roman context of the first century—not to mention subsequent historical contexts in the centuries to come—Christian obedience to the laws of the land was not an absolute requirement. If and when a government like Rome outlawed the Christian faith, outlawed worship services, or tried to regulate out of existence other distinctly Christian practices and beliefs, Romans 13 was not the Holy Spirit's way of telling the church that it had to obey the government. Civil disobedience was always an option for the church when the laws of the government conflicted with the practice of the faith. There is even an irony to be observed in the fact that whatever else Paul's words in Romans 13 may mean, they came to the Roman church in the form of a theological treatise that *itself* would have been considered by the Caesar as inflammatory if not illegal. Because contained within the theology of Paul's epistle to the Romans are clear counterclaims to the Caesar's assertion of being "lord and god" of the empire. Paul made clear that only Jesus is Lord, and he brooks no rivals. What we sometimes forget when hearing Romans 13 read in our churches today is that when this letter was first read to the Roman Christians in first-century Rome, the very reading of these words may have been an illegal act (or at the very least was an act that the governing

authorities would disdain). But had the governing authorities in Rome instructed the Roman Christians that Paul's letter to them had to be destroyed, it seems unlikely that Romans 13:1-7 would have become the reason for those Christians to burn the very letter that contains also these admonitions about obeying the authorities. Although it can be an acutely difficult matter to determine when the laws of the land are just and when they are sufficiently unjust as to warrant civil disobedience on the part of Christian believers, one thing can be said with certainty: Romans 13 has never ruled out civil disobedience once and for all.

Second, we cannot read Romans 13:1-7 in isolation from what precedes it in Romans 12. In it Paul calls on believers to be ready to present their bodies as "living sacrifices" because of a transformation of minds that would cut against the patterns of this world so as better to conform to the ways of God. Given Paul's soaring words in that first part of Romans 12, it would be difficult to believe that a few verses later Paul would undo this advice by telling these same readers that even if the patterns of this world—as enshrined perhaps in the laws of a given nation—were to conflict with the better ways of God's kingdom, believers nevertheless must conform to this world. Indeed, all through Romans 12 Paul holds out the highest law of all—the law to live by the rule of love—as the believer's truest vocation. But Paul is honest enough to admit that living against the patterns of this world may well lead to persecution, to the church's having enemies even to the point that the church will feel tempted to wreak revenge on those same enemies.

But Paul says no, it is better to suffer for what is right, to bless those who persecute, and to love even enemies because in all these ways the church will emulate the Lord and Savior who is the pioneer of the faith. Again, it is difficult (if not impossible) to believe that the same apostle who wrote all of that in Romans 12 would then in effect reverse himself by saying that vis-à-vis the governing authorities, all that Christian believers can do is go with the flow. Clearly Paul of all people knew that Christian believers are responsible to a higher law and to a divine pattern of behavior that will inevitably lead to conflict with even the very governing authorities about whom he writes in Romans 13. It may well be true, therefore, that Romans 13 represents advice to the church in the ordinary run of affairs over against governing authorities. Paul may even be indicating that God is clever enough to maintain the orderly function of this world through even unjust and corrupt governments such as the one that then existed in Rome. But recognizing that general principle and that general stand of the church over against the governing authorities by no means indicates that Christians have no choice but to be incessant compromisers of the truth, of the law of love, or of their highest commitment to the authority of Jesus as Lord.

The church has always known that despite the seemingly blanket advice proffered by Paul in Romans 13, Christian leaders and congregations are always obligated to examine the laws of any given time very carefully to ensure that the following of those laws is never done blindly but is always done with ongoing reference to the Lordship of Christ and to the highest calling of the Christian life to lead lives of forgiveness, grace, and love. Indeed, precisely this kind of ethical parsing has led to

countless acts of civil disobedience across the centuries as the church resisted those authorities who tried to stamp out the Christian faith or whose laws tried to wipe out or degrade whole segments of God's image-bearers. For example, Dietrich Bonhoeffer and the Confessing Church in Germany resisted and actively disobeyed the laws of Hitler's Third Reich, and Martin Luther King, Jr., led the civil rights movement peacefully to resist unjust laws of the U.S. government that discriminated against people of color in a variety of ways, both subtle and overt.

On a historical and theoretical level, perhaps it is true that many, if not most, Christian believers would affirm that in any number of difficult or extreme historical circumstances vis-à-vis the law of the land, the proper Christian response is to protest or actively resist some of that national law. But even as many Christians in Germany did not agree with Dietrich Bonhoeffer on the need to resist the Third Reich and even as any number of churches in the United States did not agree with Martin Luther King, Jr., on the need to exercise civil disobedience against segregationist laws, so not everyone today will agree that an activist stance is necessary against current immigration laws and policies. As this conversation takes place across many different communities and congregations, it may well be that some will regard any breach in immigration law as a crime if not a sin, such that the church's best stance would be to help carry out the law of the land to punish and prosecute those guilty of legal infractions.

Thus, it may be worthwhile to ponder briefly the question of how to think about the situation of those who live without proper documentation in a country like the United States or Canada. Do those who exist in this circumstance live in some state of perpetual sin—a state that could be lifted only if they reversed course and returned to their homeland?

This is a delicate question fraught with complexity. However, we err if we conclude that the state of living without proper documentation represents a situation completely unlike any number of other situations that are present in the church community at any given time. We may or may not conclude that entering a country without proper documentation is sinful—in fact, a compassionate consideration of a given family's situation may lead us to recognize that their actions were not at all sinful, regardless of whether the government would view those actions as a civil infraction.

Even if someone wished to press the case that illegal immigration is a sin, it is not at all clear that the redress for it would be the undoing of the original set of actions (in this case, going back to one's homeland). Many things that we all do cannot be undone. Hence, if we claimed that participation in the kingdom of God cannot happen until everything we have ever done is completely reversed and repaired on the human level, few would be able to see themselves as kingdom citizens. A divorced person cannot become un-divorced (or at least we do not generally withhold ministry until and unless someone re-marries his or her original spouse so as to erase the status of "divorced" once and for all). The damage caused by those who used to be abusive in any manner toward a child cannot be undone—the child will live with those scars all his or her life, and that state of affairs cannot be erased. Sometimes we cannot reconcile with people with whom we had a falling out even if we ourselves genuinely want to do so. Some people die before we have a chance to say we are sorry, and

other people who still are alive refuse even to look in our direction, much less hear our contrition over what took place in the past, so we cannot repair the relationship in question—we all live with brokenness that will never be fixed. It seems, therefore, that we in the church would be theologically and spiritually myopic if we concluded that living in an ongoing state of being a person without status represented a unique situation.

We cannot deny that nation-states have a right to create and also enforce immigration laws as part of their responsibility to care for their own citizens. But we also cannot deny that however various immigrants came to be in our midst as church communities, their very presence as vulnerable persons without social standing activates the Bible's long tradition of providing love and compassion without requiring lots of calculations to see if a given stranger is worthy of our love or of the gospel ministry of the church. The church has no enemies except those who willfully declare themselves to be. And although we are right to take seriously the need for heartfelt repentance and a desire for the grace of Christ for all who would receive the ministry of the church and its sacramental life, we cannot define such matters in ways that would be different for one group than for others in the church. The moment we begin to try to determine such things, we forget the words of God to Israel long ago when he reminded Israel that they were no less aliens before God than any Canaanites, Egyptians, or Phoenicians who might be in Israel's midst. The moment we begin to draw lines and circles as to who is worthy of Christ's grace and who may not be so worthy, we forget the person, work, and gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ, who was himself the stranger in our midst and who calls us to reach out first and foremost to those whom we encounter as strangers. As Jesus taught in the parable of the good Samaritan, it is less important to determine who "out there" is worthy of the designation "neighbor" than it is to make sure that *we ourselves* act as neighbors who embody the love of God in Christ wherever we happen to be.

E. Conclusion

When God called Abram to become the father of the faith and the source of a mighty nation that would one day bless every nation on the earth, his first order of business was to turn this stable and settled man into an immigrant wanderer. And when that man's descendants became numerous enough to qualify as a nation in their own right, they underwent a divine rescue operation from a situation of dire oppression that was supposed to sear deep into their hearts the need to be kind to all strangers from that time forward. And when the time had fully come, God sent his only Son into this world as an "outsider" in his own right but who, for that very reason, would teach us in word and deed that the heart of God remains fixed on loving all people, starting with those who are marginalized and on the fringes of our collective awareness.

These biblical and theological considerations do not provide easy or tidy solutions to the knotty questions that face the church, civil governments, and individual believers in the face of the current migration of so many millions of people. But they may succeed in reminding us that, from God's point of view, we all share more in common with our migrant sisters and brothers than we know and that we are called to do our best to love all people even as

we have been loved as we together journey toward that kingdom where all will be one. To again invoke the lyric words of the writer to the Hebrews:

By faith Abraham . . . was enabled to become a father because he considered him faithful who made the promise. And so from this one man, and he as good as dead, came descendants as numerous as the stars in the sky and as countless as the sand on the seashore. All these people were still living by faith when they died . . . and they admitted they were aliens and strangers on earth. People who say such things show that they are looking for a country of their own. If they had been thinking of the country they had left, they would have had opportunity to return. Instead, they were longing for a better country—a heavenly one. Therefore, God is not ashamed to be called their God, for he has prepared a city for them (Heb. 11:11-16).

VIII. Recommendations

A. That synod grant the privilege of the floor to Mrs. Teresa Renkema, chair; Mr. Chris Pullenayegem, reporter; and Dr. Scott E. Hoezee, adviser, when the report on the migration of workers is discussed.

B. That synod recommend this report to the churches for study and discussion regarding issues surrounding the immigration of workers.

Biblical Affirmations

C. That synod declare that the biblical teachings and principles from both the Old and New Testaments as summarized in this report properly inform and guide the church's ministry to both status or non-status immigrant people, and that they affirm the following:

1. All people are created in the image of God and are to be treated as such regardless of circumstances under which the church encounters individuals or of a given person's race, background, or legal status.
2. God's Word consistently directs the people of God to be welcoming toward the strangers in their midst and to extend special care to those most vulnerable to social or economic conditions that threaten their ability to survive.
3. The church of Jesus Christ welcomes all who profess faith in him as their Lord and Savior and who desire to live for him. God has no favorites—true faith in Jesus Christ is the only condition of membership in the church.
4. God's Word calls upon believers to respect the governing authorities and the laws of the state. However, citizenship in the kingdom of God obligates believers to the highest law of love for God and neighbor above all, and the exercise of this love should lead believers to advocate for laws that will mandate the just and humane treatment of immigrant peoples.

Education and Awareness

D. That synod instruct the Board of Trustees to encourage the Office of Race Relations to engage in, as a priority, a campaign to educate and raise cross-cultural sensitivity across our denomination and provide tools and resources

to denominational agencies, classes, and local churches to deal with cross-cultural conflict that may arise from time to time.

E. That synod instruct the BOT to encourage the CRC's relevant agencies to propose ways and to develop resources that will help in educating the churches and Christian schools by engaging in thoughtful study and discussion of the economic, political, social, and spiritual issues involved in the church's view of, and ministry outreach to, immigrant people.

F. That synod encourage local churches to educate their membership about the socioeconomic, political, and security issues facing immigrants and newcomers and equip them to respond in love and concern to these people groups that God is bringing into our nations.

Ground: The economic realities surrounding immigration and the presence of millions of documented and undocumented immigrants in the United States and Canada have created ongoing circumstances that already exist in many communities in which the church seeks to do ministry. This fact compels church members to educate themselves on the relevant issues already being faced by their various communities.

Advocacy and Justice

G. That synod instruct the Board of Trustees to encourage the Office of Social Justice and Hunger Action and the Canadian Committee for Contact with the Government, in collaboration with their denominational and non-denominational partners, to engage in, as a priority, policy development and advocacy strategies that will lead to immigration reform and the enactment of fair, just, and equitable laws regarding those without status in Canada and the United States.

H. That synod encourage congregations and their individual members to speak out against, and seek to reform, laws and practices concerning the treatment of immigrants that appear to be unduly harsh or unjust.

I. That synod, mindful of the need for governments to create and enforce laws that protect the security and integrity of a given nation's borders, nevertheless encourage congregations and church members to support the need for comprehensive immigration reform in ways that will reduce the number of people without status and/or non-status workers and provide increased opportunities for immigrants to gain legal status within the nation.

J. That synod encourage congregations to advocate on behalf of those suffering in prison on account of their lack of status to ensure a more just and dignified process in dealing with them while also advocating for more humane treatment of those who are unfortunate enough to be imprisoned.

Ground: The governments of both the United States and Canada have been struggling with comprehensive immigration reform for years, recognizing that current policies are insufficient to deal with contemporary aspects of immigration. The CRC can be of service to these governments by speaking up for the just treatment of all people as part of the larger process to reform current laws and policies.

Ministry of Mercy and Compassion

K. That synod urge the Christian Reformed Church, through its assemblies and agencies, to affirm the need to reach out in hospitality and compassion to immigrant people and that synod further encourage churches to display this ministry concern through actions that include but are not limited to the following:

1. Prayerful study and discussion of issues related to the causes that motivate people to immigrate to other lands so as to deepen understanding of the circumstances under which many people live.
2. Mindful attention to the plight of both documented workers and people without status and to reach out in love to those who seek assistance for themselves and for their children in terms of financial assistance, food, clothing, and shelter.

Ground: Scripture calls us to be mindful of the plight of aliens and strangers, offering compassion and love in Christ's name to those who find themselves marginalized and in need.

Process

L. That synod affirm the sorrow first expressed by Synod 2007 over the alienation and misunderstanding caused by the processes that brought the original overture to Synod 2007 (*Acts of Synod 2007*, pp. 595-96) and, to avoid such hurt in the future, that synod direct CRC agencies, classes, boards, and committees to make every effort to ensure proper representation of the affected groups when issues are studied and discussed.

Ground: When the church discusses an issue without the benefit of hearing the voices of those most directly affected by that issue, confusion and hurt can, and usually does, result.

M. That synod encourage churches to engage as mission partners the evangelical congregations and ministries that are serving in immigrant communities.

Ground: Many newer and diverse congregations are ministering effectively in this field of service, and Christian Reformed people would gain much by being in fellowship with them as partners in ministry.

N. That synod declare that this report fulfills the study committee's mandate given by Synod 2007 and dismiss the committee with thanks.

Committee to Study the Migration of Workers

Joel Carpenter
Rose Dekker
Gerard L. Dykstra (*ex officio*)
Scott E. Hoezee
Andrew C.S. Narm
Ramon Orostizaga
Duane Postma
Chris Pullenayegem, reporter
Teresa Renkema, chair
Daniel Vink

Appendix A

Five Interviews with Dutch Immigrants to Canada

Interview 1—November 9, 2007

Hans and Jenny, a couple in their eighties, immigrated in the early 1950s.

1. What was your immigrant experience? Why did you come to Canada? Did someone sponsor you? Were you welcomed by an individual, the church, the community?

Jenny: We didn't immigrate, we *moved!* There were no houses in Holland.

Hans: After I returned from Indonesia in 1948, we couldn't find a house in Holland. We had been engaged since before I went to Indonesia. I asked Jenny if we could immigrate to Australia. She said yes; then I found out it was cheaper to go to Canada, even though at that time there was no financial help from the government, we paid it all ourselves. We had \$100.

The "field man" (a Dutch immigrant from 1948) signed for us to come and work on a farm in the area. We didn't ever intend to work for that particular farmer. We immigrated in 1951 and worked on a fruit farm for three years for a family from England; they were nice people.

Jenny: I had four years of English in high school and Hans knew some too, so it wasn't as hard for us as others. Three children were born while we lived in that house with no running water; but I had lived on a farm in Holland too, so that wasn't hard for me.

Hans: We bought this farm [where they now live] in 1955.

2. What role did the church, the pastor, and other church members play?

Jenny and Hans: In 1951 the first CRC in this area opened; everyone came. People with cars picked up others for church. People came from neighboring villages; they brought lunch and stayed all Sunday. We were all new immigrants, hardly any in this area arrived before World War II. So many people were immigrating in those years that the church grew very fast. Home Missions in Grand Rapids sent Adam Persenaire to minister to this Dutch immigrant group. He and his wife didn't know Dutch, but they did every odd thing that we needed help with. He was paid by the Grand Rapids office. He and his wife took us to the doctor, took us to the store, and helped us in every way. The people who had come from 1948 to 1951 had it harder. Many came in 1951 and 1952 and really supported each other. Sunday was the best day of the week. The church held things together. We came with little money but when we wanted to build a church, there was \$7,000 in the offering. People needed the church more than they do today. That connection was so strong; people needed each other.

3. What was your legal status?

Jenny: I don't know. Immigrant? We were here legally, but I don't know the name of our status. As soon as we were here for five years, we became citizens. We moved to Canada to stay. Not all Dutch immigrants became citizens; some never did.

4. How much were you involved in the community outside of the Dutch community? Were you accepted?

Jenny: We had no problem. We lived on the farm with the English family for three years. Our kids were born here. Most of our kids married within the Dutch immigrant community.

5. Reflect on the fact that you now hire migrant workers on your farm. What about the fact that they may not bring families and settle here? Contrast with your own experience.

Jenny: It must be horrible. Some send money home to family; some spend it all here. Jamaica requires them by law to send 25 percent of wages home to support their families. All of the Mexican women send money home to their families.

Interview 2—November 14, 2007

Now a widower, Jelle came to Canada in 1953 with his parents and siblings and his brother's girlfriend. His brother had previously immigrated.

1. What was your immigrant experience? Why did you come to Canada? Did someone sponsor you? Were you welcomed by an individual, the church, the community?

Jelle: My parents were in their forties when they came to Canada with their seven kids. I was 15 years old at the time. My father had worked as an engineer at a mental hospital, which he did not like, so he was ready to leave Holland. My brother was already in Canada. My mom didn't really want to immigrate, but two of her sisters had already gone to Canada, and she was afraid all of us would eventually go without her.

Jelle thought immigrating was a great adventure. The family was supposed to go by boat, but six weeks prior to their departure date they were offered transport on a plane going to Canada. They flew on a propeller plane, making stops in Ireland and Montreal. On the plane there was a fire that was put out but that caused his mother nightmares afterward. An uncle had arranged for them to work on a farm. His dad was paid \$100 a month and was provided a house to live in. Jelle and his siblings earned 30 cents an hour. His mom and dad never complained, but it was very hard on his mother: there was no running water; they had an outhouse, a wood stove to cook on, and an oil space heater. His brother married the girlfriend who had traveled with them within a week of their arrival.

2. What role did the church, the pastor, and other church members play?

There was a "field man" who was put in place by the CRC and who gave them hints on living in Canada. In some places the "field men" would pick up the Dutch immigrants right off the train—then they would get the immigrants to help build the new Christian Reformed church building in the community. On Sundays a panel truck would pick them up and bring them to the little white church in town. The minister was Wiebe van Dijk, who had followed Adam Persenaire. He preached, helped people find jobs and helped them go to the doctor, although he himself, unlike

Persenaire, was also a recent immigrant. Many immigrants got jobs at the General Motors (GM) plant, but they had to join the union. Christian Reformed people that joined the union at GM were not allowed to be elders in the church. Jelle joined Young Peoples society at church. They argued about a lot of things; even as teenagers they were very opinionated. Now he wonders why they were that way at such a young age. Church was really the only social thing they had. His future wife's family arrived in Canada in 1952. They were only supposed to go out to Young Peoples meetings, but they would skip and go to hockey games and the pool hall—usually with other immigrant kids. They were mocked as “DPs” (displaced persons), and when playing hockey once, a Canadian kid ran into Jelle and broke his Dutch ice skates strapped on his feet. One of his brothers fell in love with a Catholic girl. Both sets of parents were against it, and they broke off the relationship. Jelle still feels the parents were wrong to prohibit the marriage with the Catholic girl. The new church building was finished in 1954, and then the Christian school was built. A Reformed minister was interested in cooperating with the Christian Reformed congregation by having his church members join the school society, but the ministers from the U.S. that were influencing the immigrants at that time were very separatist in their outlook and didn't allow the Reformed church to be part of the school society.

3. What educational and career opportunities did you have?

Jelle took a correspondence course in English and first became a mechanic and then took courses to become an electrician. He had studied English for three years in Holland; after six weeks in Canada, his English “clicked.” His parents took free English classes for immigrants. He started working on the farm at fifteen. By rights he shouldn't have worked until he was sixteen, but he was glad to leave high school in Holland and did not want to go to high school in Canada. He preferred to train for trades. He worked at GM from 1954 to 1958, but he hated the monotonous work and watching the clock. By then his dad had started an electrician business, and Jelle took a cut in pay to work with his dad. He says he never looked back, some immigrants worked at GM all their lives, but he would have hated it, working on the line where there was noise, people smoking, and the time crawled. All the immigrant kids that worked at GM gave their paychecks to their parents to help the families, as Jelle did that first year as well. The other young workers had cars and had money to spend.

When he arrived in Canada, one of the local stores offered bikes for \$52—a dollar down and a dollar a week for a year. Jelle can't imagine why the owner let him ride off on a bike for one dollar! He had always wanted a bike in Holland but couldn't afford it. He faithfully paid the one dollar a week for a year until the bike was his.

4. What was your legal status?

The Dutch government encouraged them to go to Canada; they were given landed immigrant status on arriving in Canada and were obligated to work for one year on the farm that sponsored them. After five years his entire family became Canadian citizens. His wife became a citizen on her own, but her family didn't. The farmer changed Jelle's name to a

Canadian name. He says that wasn't right, and he went back to his Dutch name and insisted on being called that. You had to be healthy to come to Canada. There was no provincial health care back then. GM had health insurance, and he kept that and paid the premiums himself after quitting work at GM. Good thing, because his first daughter was born three months premature and needed hospitalization; that would have wiped him out.

5. How was it for your dad starting a business in Canada?

It was tough. The labor rate at that time was \$2 an hour. In 1958 his dad bought an existing business, and Jelle worked in that business. Later he took over for his father, and retired last year.

Interview 3—November 14, 2007

Hank and Riek, an immigrant couple in their seventies, retired from a flower growing business.

1. What was your immigrant experience? Why did you come to Canada? Did someone sponsor you?

Hank: I grew up in Nijmegen, which was bombed during the war. In the five years after the war there were no jobs, and the country was crowded. I went to school for the flower business and wanted to own my own business, which would be impossible in Holland. Working on a farm of an uncle during one of the summers, I met Riek, who later became my wife.

Hank was already planning to go to Canada, and Riek was fine with that. An organization of the church in Holland, called "Christian Immigration Central" helped with the immigration. They assigned groups of people to go to a certain city or area so that a church could be founded in that place in Canada. Hank was sent to Nova Scotia. There were no Christian Reformed churches in Nova Scotia, so a whole group of immigrants went there with the idea that they would start a church. He immigrated on May 8, 1953; the trip took eight days by boat. He had 10 guilders in his pocket. At 21 he would have gotten \$40 from the Canadian government when he landed, but he wasn't 21 yet so he didn't get any money. He came for adventure and new possibilities, not necessarily because he felt God calling him to come, but he gives testimony to how God was with him and Riek and their family through all the years in Canada.

He took a train inland from Halifax harbor and got off at a depot all by himself. The son of the farmer where he was to work was there to pick him up, not very happy about it because it was 2:00 am on a dark, cold, miserable night. Hank arrived at the house and was told to go upstairs to a room to sleep. He went up and wondered what in the world he was doing there, but he never had another night of homesickness. It was a Dutch Catholic family; he worked there awhile, but they really couldn't afford to pay him, so they found him work on another farm before the year was up. Hank didn't speak any English when he came, but he would go to the neighbors' every night to talk and talk. Little by little he learned English, which was taught as part of the curriculum of a local college. He would practice his lessons with the neighbors.

Riek: After meeting Hank, I saw him a few more times in Holland. We had a young people's retreat on a farm. The boys and girls slept on opposite sides of the barn. We got engaged one week before he left, and I came to Canada the next year, in April 1954. We had thirty days to get married by government regulation. We were living on another farm by then. On Sundays, we did the chores and then borrowed a car to go to church which was held in a Temperance Hall—although the immigrants had originally started out with services in people's houses.

They were living with the family until Riek got pregnant, and then they found an old farm house to rent with a hand pump by the sink, an out-house, and a wood stove, but Riek was used to that from Holland. Hank refused to turn hay on a Sunday.

That year Hank needed surgery on his leg. He waited until after harvest for the surgery, but then he was let go by that family. They moved to another town where there were more Dutch people and found a job with a man from the Netherlands with a huge farm.

2. What role did the church, the pastor, and other church members play?

A group of people met on Sundays for reading services. They lived forty miles away. Hitchhiking to and from church took most of the weekend. Later Rev. Ralph Bos showed up, sent by a church in Chicago as a home missionary. He took care of all the churches in the area: Kentville, Truro, Halifax, and the church on Prince Edward Island, so he only came once a month to their town. He'd baptize all the babies on that Sunday. After Bos left, a student from seminary came for a while. He preached in English. Deciding to switch to English preaching was a big deal and caused argument.

Riek: Sundays were the times we were together. It seemed like all the women were pregnant.

A ladies group was formed in the church, and they'd meet from Easter through Christmas, not during the winter. She was never homesick. Everyone was in the same boat. After church they visited with other families.

The church grew, and some non-Dutch families joined. One of them was the family of the Dean of the agricultural college, who was very English. They became great friends, and this man got Hank a job as a manager for a large carnation grower on the border of Nova Scotia and New Brunswick, far from the Dutch community. It was 50 miles to the church in Truro, and they could only get there for the Sunday morning service; they attended a Church of the Nazarene at night. Meanwhile two of Hank's siblings had gone to Brampton, Ontario, and, wishing to be closer to family and Dutch community, they went to Ontario. They moved with six kids. After building an acre of greenhouses there, he heard of a job in Leamington, where they needed a finished product manager. They went there and lived right on Lake Erie in an old tobacco kiln—which had been rebuilt for human habitation. The closest church was Essex, 18 miles away. He was very involved in the Christian school society, served as elder, taught catechism; he was gone all the time for church responsibilities,

and he still regrets that he lost time with his family because of that. They stayed in Leamington for eleven years and finally came to the Niagara Peninsula, where Hank worked for someone else for a while. He then bought his own small greenhouse operation and changed the business from vegetable to flower growing—his dream from long ago in Holland.

Interview 4—November 23, 2007

A widow in her mid-eighties. We mailed the questions to her, and she responded by letter.

1. What was your family's personal experience of immigrating to Canada? Why did you come? Did someone in Canada sponsor you? Did someone welcome you to Canada? What year did you arrive?

The war made us ready to leave Holland, and Europe in general. I think that was true for most of us. After 1945 it took Holland several years to build up and repair the structure of society, as we knew it. Factories were in ruins, you could not buy anything, and no houses were available for new families. Jobs were scarce, and the future looked bleak for almost every segment of society. We were free—and very thankful for that—but there was such a shortage of everything that we needed as a young, married couple, that it was almost impossible to set up housekeeping. Many couples ended up living with their parents (we too). For families with children it was also very difficult to keep them clothed and well fed. Holland had been robbed empty by the Nazis and bombed by the allies, because every factory and all means of transportation were working for the German war effort.

Another factor in 1944 was the struggle in the Reformed churches. It made us want to leave the whole mess behind and start over in another country. My husband and I tried, and had contacts in the U.S., Quebec, Australia, and South Africa—anywhere. But Canada was the most inviting. The governments of Canada and the Netherlands had an agreement to promote the immigration of people with a background in agriculture. This was great for the farmers who were looking at their own country becoming too small and overpopulated to establish any more farms. Even the land reclaimed from the Zuiderzee could not fill the demand.

After Holland's liberation we developed a relationship with Canada and a longing to see that country where there was so much space and possibility. Canada itself was very active in promoting immigration, sending propaganda films, organizing conferences, etc. The Canadian Pacific Railway was very involved. The churches also helped, especially the Christian Reformed Church (Dutch roots), which was still very small in Canada but saw an opportunity to expand. Very soon there was a Christian Immigration Society on both sides of the ocean, and they kept close contact with each other.

To get the ball rolling for our own immigration, in 1949 we had to visit the Canadian Embassy in The Hague to get the approval of the Canadian authorities. We had to show we were capable of make a living for ourselves and would not become a liability to Canada. We needed to have a sponsor for the first year. We also had to pass a doctor's examination.

Families with handicapped children were not accepted. When all this was done, we had to get the money together to pay for the boat trip to Canada and for the transportation of our goods, which were loaded into large crates. We could not take money out of Holland because the monetary situation in the world was not stabilized. So we took whatever we had—furniture, clothing, and even a complete baby layette, as we were expecting our first child. Neither of the governments helped anyone financially in the late 1940s and early 50s. Later the Dutch government gave a subsidy to people who wanted to leave. Just imagine! There was a cartoon depicting the government waving goodbye to people on their way to Canada and welcoming, with the other hand, guest laborers from Morocco. Not much foresight in those days!

2. What role did the church play for you when you arrived and in your early years in Canada? The pastor? The congregation members? How was your first pastor assigned or called to your church?

Our need for spiritual support gave us a strong feeling of the need to have a church and Christian education for our children. Of course the ethnic factor played a strong role too. To get together on Sunday with your own people, hear a sermon, and sing in your own language was the highlight of the week. The CRC of Winnipeg helped us to organize. Their minister was A. Disselkoe, who came over very often to Thunder Bay. Home Missions helped also in the person of M. Dornbush from Portage la Prairie. Each of them often stayed in our home with us. Those first years we were like one large family. We all had similar circumstances and helped each other.

3. How much were you involved with the community outside of the Dutch community? Were you accepted by people outside of the Dutch community?

Were we welcome in Canada? Yes and No. Neighbors were mostly very good and helpful to us, but some confused us with other refugees like the people from Eastern Europe who did not fit easily into the Anglo-Saxon culture and had more trouble learning the language. They had lost everything and were called “DPs” (displaced persons). This became part of a cruel name calling, especially in the male labor world. As happens everywhere when there is a great sudden influx of foreigners, the people began to grumble that DPs were taking away jobs from Canadians.

Later, when we started our own church it was identified as the “Dutch Church,” and later still, the Christian school was always referred to as the “Dutch School.” People suspected that we had a clique mentality, a foreign implant into the Canadian culture. Would it have been better if we had just joined an existing denomination like the Presbyterian Church? I have often wondered about this. The CRC did not have much history in Canada, and we almost acted as if God never did anything here, as if we were the first bringers of the “True Church.”

After we started the Christian School in 1962, we lost all contact with the parents and children of the neighborhood public school, a fact that I still regret. Could we have made a better contribution to Canadian

society if we had supported them in what was good in their churches and schools?

4. What was your legal status when you immigrated to Canada? Did the Canadian government offer financial help to you or other Dutch immigrants to encourage you to come to Canada? Did you become citizens of Canada?

Our legal status was that of “landed immigrant,” with the understanding that after five years we could become Canadian citizens, which nearly all of us did. We wanted to be accepted very badly, but still separated ourselves spiritually, politically, and in education up to the highest levels. The government only helped with language courses, which most of us did not take for lack of time. We were too busy trying to make a living; the fathers of large families all had more than one job.

5. What role did the Dutch immigrant community play in your life, particularly in the early years?

The immigrant community consisted of singles, young married couples, and large families with several teenagers. The last group, the very large families, did very well and became the most prosperous. Their tactics were to find jobs for the young people in the family. Boys and girls were expected to bring their wages home and put them all in one pot. Very soon there was enough to make a down payment on the first family farm, where they continued with the same pattern. The young people had a very strong work ethic, and since they had stayed home on the farm in Holland during most of the war, they were more than happy to be part of this Canadian adventure. They also learned the daily language very fast without extra schooling. The result was that their language stayed at the elementary levels, but later they became the parents of the generation that branched out in all directions.

In Thunder Bay the majority of Dutch people came from the four Northern provinces of Friesland, Groningen, Drenthe, and Overijssel. Very few were from the west of Holland where the big cities are, or from North Brabant and Zeeland. Characteristics of these northerners were that they were very hard working, and very conservative, had strong family ties, and were independent decision makers, faithful church members, and straightforward (or blunt) in social situations—not very tolerant of people and things that were different; very opinionated but very strong in their commitment to church and school.

6. What was the role of the “field man”? How was he appointed to this position?

The heads of the Ontario Immigration Society discovered my husband’s gifts for making contact with the Canadian authorities, so they made him the “field man” for immigration for the district. His task was to find farms where help was needed and offer to them the opportunity to sponsor a Dutch family. Very soon he knew all the country roads and farms in the area and brought in several families from Holland. It was a challenging and sometimes frustrating occupation. If the Canadian farmer did not like the Dutch immigrant, it was the “field man’s” fault and vice versa. You

can well imagine how the people I described before often found fault with the farmer who sponsored them “who did not know how to farm” or did not stick to his promises. And the farmer was sometimes fed up with the “know it all” attitude of the immigrant.

Those first years were difficult for most families, but if I now look back over almost 60 years, I can see that the Lord was with us and led us through valleys and over mountaintops to a prosperous existence and made us an accepted, contributing ethnic group in the colourful multicultural make-up of our beloved country, Canada. Our children are totally Canadian but have their own convictions, many of which are based in the values, beliefs, and work ethic that we brought with us from Holland.

Interview 5—December 31, 2007

Based on the written story of Jack and Mary.

1. What was your immigrant experience? Why did you come to Canada? Did someone sponsor you? Were you welcomed by an individual, the church, the community?

My brother and I were in the building trades in Holland. After I returned from Indonesia, where I served with the Dutch army during the war, we wanted more freedom to work as we pleased. Also, I had been going steady with Mary for six years by then, and there were no houses, not even single rooms to rent in Holland. We decided to immigrate with my brother and his wife and small son. But my brother’s wife died suddenly, so we agreed to immigrate anyway and Mary would look after the little boy while we worked. We applied to come to Canada on our own. We didn’t know anything about a sponsor, and we wanted to keep it quiet that we were leaving because there were still some accounts owed to us in our business in Holland and we wanted the people to pay us. If they knew we were leaving Holland, they wouldn’t have paid. Mary and I got married, got passports, and received a visa. We thought a visa would tell us what to do about going to Canada, but it was only a stamp in our passports! Boats to Canada were full, so we flew to Canada for \$100 more per person. We landed in Iceland and then in Gander, Newfoundland, where we passed through immigration, then flew to Montreal. With no sponsor, no one was there to meet us, and we didn’t know what to do. We took the train to Toronto where the Department of Immigration advised us to go to Niagara Falls because carpenters were needed there. We took the train to Niagara Falls where another immigration official called a carpenter in St. Catharines, who asked if we had our own tools and knew English. We had our own tools, and I knew some English. We were hired on the spot.

2. What role did the church, the pastor, and other church members play?

The immigration official in Niagara Falls gave us the address of a Dutch minister in St. Catharines. We took the bus from Niagara Falls and went to his house on Geneva Street. Rev. Persenaire wasn’t home, but one of his daughters sent us to the home of another family from the church. We had supper with them, and they found a rooming house for us.

Every Sunday morning we were picked up for church in an old pickup truck. The church was hot and crowded. We sang hymns in English, but the preaching was in Dutch. The minister did a whole lot more than preaching. He and his wife helped newcomers settle in, find jobs, find housing, and took us to the doctor. There were jobs to be had, but housing was scarce as there were so many immigrants.

My brother and I started working as carpenters one week after leaving our business in Holland. We stayed at that rooming house for two weeks and then moved into a summer cottage for three months. Then we moved into an apartment, for which some of the church people gave us furniture and beds because our crate from Holland hadn't yet arrived. The next year we bought an acre of land, paying cash, and built a duplex house on the property. The day we moved into our new house, hurricane Hazel struck, causing much damage in Toronto. We had just moved our last piece of furniture in when the hurricane hit. We were not hurt or damaged. My brother had asked his deceased wife's sister to come to Canada and marry him, which she did. By the end of that year both Mary and she were pregnant. Our mother in Holland worried about us in Canada, so we paid for her to come and visit. She saw her two new grandchildren and moved into our newly built house with us, spending two weeks there before returning to Holland, assured that we were doing well in Canada.

3. What was your legal status?

We were encouraged by both the Dutch government and the Canadian government to immigrate to Canada. We became landed immigrants as soon as we arrived, and five years later we became Canadian citizens.

Appendix B

Interviews with Hispanic Immigrants

(Summary of Interviews with Mexican Immigrants in Northwest Iowa)

The questions used in these interviews were similar to the ones used for the interviews of Dutch immigrants in Canada. The interviewees were asked about their immigrant experience and why they came to the United States. They were asked if they had sponsors and whether they were welcomed by the church and their new community. They were asked what role the church played in their settlement and about their legal status in the U.S. Most of the people interviewed now have some type of relationship with evangelical churches. Below are summaries of the interviews, as well as information that the interviewer accumulated while working with Hispanic immigrants over the past few years. The participants in these interviews were all from Mexico, but the responses would be similar if they were from other Latin American countries. The participants were very willing to share their experiences and were pleased that the Christian Reformed Church is studying the immigration issue.

The immigrants' experiences in entering the United States ranged from quite simple to very dramatic. It is obvious that it is much more difficult to enter the United States now than it was some years ago. A few people obtain tourist visas and then overstay their visas. Most people use the assistance

of border people (coyotes) to get across the border, which is very costly. In the past this was relatively easy and not very expensive. Now it may be a secretive one-night pass over a river, but more common is a three-day trip through the desert undertaken on moonless or cloudy nights. The days are spent hiding under bushes and trying to get some sleep. Immigrants can only carry a few things with them, of which the most important is water. One immigrant talked about his selfish unwillingness to share water with someone who needed some because he was afraid he might run out. Some compassionate people had placed jugs of water in the desert to help them, but they did not dare drink the water because they had heard stories of others putting poison in the water. Extreme heat and cold are common problems.

It is always hard to cross with children, especially young children and babies. One mother had to give up her two very small children to total strangers who took them across the border; she then met the children at a well-known fast-food restaurant. The same mother said she later heard of children killed at the border for their valuable organs. One person said he had an uncle who disappeared crossing the border. They talked about women being violated and about gang fights over money and clients related to border crossings. Often one member of the family will cross the border to find work and lodging; the rest of the family follows. It is not at all uncommon for a family to make multiple border crossing attempts before succeeding.

There are few work visas given out to Mexicans. People wait for years for these visas. Immigrants can also get a more permanent status under political asylum, abuse situations, pastoral positions, unique family situations, and (in some cases) when an employer can prove an immigrant can fill a position that he has had trouble filling. These cases usually involve a lengthy process and high costs, and are available to very few people.

The vast majority of immigrants come to the United States for economic opportunity. A number of the immigrants had jobs in Mexico, but the income from these jobs was not sufficient. One family said that their children could not attend government schools because they did not have money to buy the school uniforms and backpacks required for enrollment. Immigrant parents talked about their willingness to sacrifice so their children would have opportunities that they did not have.

Mexican immigrants do not have sponsors but often have a relative or close friend in the United States who will, at least initially, offer them food and lodging. Typically, once a job is secured, the new immigrants share housing costs until they can find and finance their own house or apartment. Immigrants often arrive with large debts associated with their trip. A family of three said they had a debt of \$9,500 when they arrived in Sioux Center, with the added financial burden of the mother being pregnant. The cost of hiring someone to help cross the border is about \$3,000 per person. The immigrants arrive not only without money but also without any possessions. They are forced to travel light; some arrive literally with only the clothes on their backs, and if they arrive in winter, without proper clothing.

In Northwest Iowa there are both community and church ministries available to new immigrants. There are two community ministries that work extensively with Hispanics, and there is a Spanish language church called "Amistad Cristiana," supported by many area churches, which offers

assistance programs for Hispanics. There are also a few churches that independently are starting small programs mainly with Hispanic children.

Assistance usually takes the form of food, clothing, home furnishings, and help with translating. Hispanic immigrants are very appreciative of the help they receive and quickly talk about how important it is to them. They are also very much aware of the discrimination and racism that exist. Members of evangelical churches are not immune to this. Non-profit organizations that are mentioned as helpful are Justice for All and Amistad Cristiana. Government-supported organizations such as Mid-Sioux and Women, Infant, and Children maternal health care program (WIC) were mentioned as providing help to their families.

Most Mexican immigrants do not arrive with legal papers. Those who try to get papers are often frustrated by the long, costly process. The immigration service is overworked and often offers confusing and at times conflicting information.

Immigrants, because of their undocumented status, look at law enforcement as both friend and foe. There have been cases in which immigrants who reported abuse or criminal activity to law enforcement have been arrested themselves because of their illegal status. A woman who was severely abused by her husband reported him to authorities only to find herself fleeing from the police because she was not documented. Another person said he wanted to report illegal drug activity to the police but knew if he did so his false identity would be exposed and he would find himself in trouble with the law. It is so important that all residents trust law enforcement, but undocumented people often have trouble doing that because of their immigrant status. A return to their homeland is not a good option for those who have sold their home in Mexico and now have children who have become accustomed to living in the United States and would experience many hardships if forced to return.

Mexican immigrants greatly appreciate the opportunities they find in the United States. These include higher income, education for children, medical assistance for American-born children, and an opportunity to financially support aging parents and relatives back in Mexico. A huge frustration is the difficulty they have in visiting family in Mexico because they cannot return legally to the United States. Immigrants often do not visit ailing parents or attend family funerals because of the border crossing situation.

There is a strong level of solidarity among Mexican immigrants. The majority have entered the U.S. under the same circumstances--without documents. A number have since obtained legal status by qualifying for Reagan's amnesty program during the 1980s. Marrying someone who has legal status in the United States has been a relatively easy way for an undocumented person to gain a more permanent legal status.

There are major differences between the immigrants from Mexico and those from Holland, who are the ancestors of many people in the Christian Reformed Church. It is important that we identify the differences so we avoid simplistic assumptions that all immigrants face the same challenges.

Appendix C

The Lighthouse Toronto: Our Work with Non-Status Immigrants

The Lighthouse started in 1968 as a diaconal ministry of the Christian Reformed Church. Initially its work was mainly focused on children's Bible programs in our neighborhood in Toronto. In 1981 we started the work of refugee settlement at the request of local Christian Reformed churches. Soon thereafter we made a special agreement with the Christian Reformed World Relief Committee that enabled us to help Classis Toronto churches not only in the settlement of refugees but also in the sponsorship of refugees as well. Our work with refugee sponsorship has substantially decreased since the mid-1990s for a number of reasons. However, over the time that we have been involved in this program, we have been able to sponsor and settle around 1,000 refugees.

As many refugee claimants and new immigrants began to arrive and we became aware of the various needs of different groups, our work began to grow and expand. So by the mid-1980s we started the shift in the direction of becoming a community center. We have offered a large variety of services at different points in time, including settlement services to newcomers, family and individual counseling, trauma therapy to refugees, assistance to women fleeing violence, life skills training, support programs, family programs, English language training, community building programs, seniors programs, case management and advocacy, a food bank, an income tax clinic for low income clients, orientation and referrals, and spiritual support. Today we have five full-time staff committed to particular ministries serving the Vietnamese, Spanish, Chinese, and English speaking communities.

As a diaconal ministry our philosophy is to serve our neighbors in need in the name of Christ. We do this service without passing judgment on people, regardless of where they come from, what their lives are like, or their immigration status. Indeed, we have a particular commitment to serve people who are most vulnerable in society. The most vulnerable group of immigrants we served are non-status immigrants or persons who have overstayed a visa or received a negative decision on a refugee claim. Non-status immigrants face a high risk of labor exploitation; scams by immigration consultants; general violence, including violence against women; and no formal access to basic social services, including health and police protection. These immigrants live with severe emotional stress and in constant fear of deportation, which to them means losing everything they have at any moment, including their material possessions and the hope for someday living in safety. The fear of deportation and their vulnerability to all sorts of exploitation force them to live in extreme isolation with little support, and with little information to help them make good choices.

It would be a mistake to conclude that it would be better for non-status immigrants to go back to their home countries, rather than enduring the hardships that accompany living without status. Many of them migrated to Canada because of violence, danger to life, and economic hardship in their country of origin. In fact, many of them made a refugee claim but were given a negative decision. This is due to different factors: deficiencies in the refugee system in the way they understand how people of different cultures are impacted by trauma, shame, and fear; the inefficiency of lawyers and

immigration consultants to have adequate knowledge and time to build a good case; and the refugee's lack of knowledge to navigate the system. Once denied, refugees are given a deportation order, which means they must leave the country by a specific date. If they do not leave on the assigned date, a warrant for their arrest comes into effect. As a result, they go into hiding. This still means that if they are, for example, asked by the police to provide identification as a witness to a crime, or when they are looking for a criminal who happens to look like them, the police may find out there is a warrant for their arrest. They will immediately be detained and threatened with deportation. Under these conditions of insecurity and danger they have no other option but to live underground, what a non-status person called "living in the shadows."

It is believed that approximately 200,000 to 400,000 non-status people live in Canada in the major cities of Toronto, Vancouver, and Montreal. It is also believed that the majority of non-status people live in Toronto. We are seeing an increasing number of clients in this situation, and we notice the negative impact this life has on individuals and their families. Since it is extremely difficult for non-status people to access community services available to the general population, a number of community workers have created networks of support dedicated to offering limited services underground, which are provided by referral. The Lighthouse is part of this network. To ensure non-status people feel safe coming to our center, we are very careful and flexible about asking for identification from our clients. They have access to all our programs, as mentioned earlier, but tailored to their particular needs. In our experience, this means providing all of the above but with more home visits, providing orientation and information about immigration programs and other practical information pertinent to their survival, doing more advocacy, and providing more continuous support. We believe that we also need to go beyond providing direct services to clients and participate in the process of structural change. For this reason, we participate in community campaigns and activities that promote the rights of non-status people in the community, and we work for immigration policy changes.

Appendix D

Narratives of Non-Status Immigrants in Canada

Josefina's Story (January 2009)

Josefina is married to Mario, and together they have three children ages fourteen, eleven, and two. Her last child was born in Canada. Josefina and her family came to Canada ten years ago. They left Mexico because her oldest daughter, who was three years old at the time, had been kidnapped. They went to the police, but the police refused to do anything about it. They went to the human rights officer, who told them they were not going to get anywhere because of how the Mexican legal system worked.

They then decided to try to come to Canada. After finding out about the option to make a refugee claim, they decided that was the best way to go. It took about three years for their case to be heard. Unfortunately, they received a negative decision. A year later they had a deportation order, and they had only two weeks to pack their bags, give away their possessions, and return

to Mexico. They did not want to go back to Mexico for fear of the people who tried to hurt their daughter and because they felt their economic opportunities were very limited. They then decided to stay, hoping they could find a way to legalize their papers. Josefina and her family are Christians and have a deep faith and hope that God will answer their prayers and give them permanent resident status. This is what keeps them from falling apart.

Josefina started coming to The Lighthouse right after they came to Canada in 1999. She initially came with her children to a family summer camp that offered a number of recreation and life skills opportunities for newcomer and refugee families. Right after that, Josefina started counseling and therapy to help her deal with the trauma of the kidnapping of her child. In the meantime she had found a lawyer, but he was too busy to deal with her case.

At The Lighthouse we use a holistic approach to our service delivery: it includes the social, emotional, physical, and spiritual dimensions of well-being. We observe the person, the family unit, and the social/economic context when people come for help. This allows us to see a bigger and clearer picture of what the problem is and how we should address it. In the case of Josefina, we were able to help her deal with the legal aspect of her case, including meeting with her lawyer and helping her prepare for her refugee hearing. She and her family continue to participate in several family camps, Christmas programs, and counseling for the whole family. They benefit from our food bank, especially now with Mario's precarious employment from which he is often sent home without pay when his boss does not need him. We are working together with a lawyer to complete an application for permanent status based on a humanitarian and compassionate review. An application such as this takes an average of three years to process, and they might still be rejected.

After they lost their immigration status and became non-status immigrants, (undocumented) their lives changed radically. They could no longer live in their home, and their children had to change schools. They had to leave their secure jobs and find work where they were paid cash. Several times Mario has been exploited and not paid for his work. They live in constant fear of detention and deportation. The children live with the heavy burden that if they get in trouble with friends or the school system, their family could be deported; they must behave like perfect children.

At The Lighthouse we continue to assist this family as they have full access to all our programs without any requirements for immigration status. Josefina is one of our volunteers who come on a regular basis to help in some of our programs. She is a very compassionate person who enjoys serving and helping anyone in need. This is one of the very few places where people without status feel safe. They know they can talk to us freely and we will not judge them. After all, everyone has the right to live with dignity, and parents need to know their children are safe and well provided for. As a Christian community center it is our duty to serve, especially those most in need, as if we were serving Christ himself.

Hilda and Roberto's Story (January 2009)

Hilda and Roberto and their son, Carlos, came to Canada thirteen years ago from Chile. While in Chile, Roberto had refused to join a political party that he opposed. In order to protect his own safety and that of his family,

they decided to migrate to Canada. Roberto came first, and a few months later Hilda and Carlos arrived. They immigrated to Montreal. Roberto made a refugee claim upon his arrival, and Hilda and Carlos were later included in that claim for protection. This family became born again Christians a few months later and became very involved in their church community. They admired and respected their pastor, who took an interest in them. When this pastor found out about the refugee claim they made, he advised them to talk to a consultant with whom he was very close. Without any hesitation they and their pastor went to see this consultant, who recommended they abandon their refugee claim and make a skilled worker application. He promised they would get their permanent resident status since the Prime Minister of Canada had given him permission for a few families to get their status. In the meantime he was going to place them on a chicken farm outside Montreal to do some work. They worked there for a few months. He told them they needed to pay him \$10,000 within a year. He also advised them a few months later that they needed to move to Toronto because it had a more flexible immigration office. Every time they went to see this consultant their pastor went with them and assured them he was a Christian man who cared for others. He also told them not to tell people outside the church about it since this help was only given to Christians from his church. Hilda and Roberto did not hesitate to trust their pastor, and for the next year they worked three jobs each in order to make that money to pay this man.

They moved to Toronto and found another church there that was very supportive. A year later, Hilda came to The Lighthouse, where she started doing volunteer work. After paying the money to their consultant, they asked several times for an update of their case. The consultant insisted that everything was working well and the papers could come any time. After a few years of this, this man disappeared and the pastor left the church with criminal charges for stealing money. Hilda and Roberto suffered the biggest disappointment of their lives when they found this out. They also felt completely deceived and abandoned, and now they did not know what their status was. They found out soon after that their consultant had not submitted their application to the immigration office, which meant that they were totally without status. Things could not get any worse.

Hilda continued to volunteer at The Lighthouse and, in this critical moment, found friendly people who offered her advice, comfort, and support. They also found a medical clinic to help her and her son with their asthma, which was acting up because of this new and overwhelming stress. Roberto had taken a job using his old social insurance card, thinking he could still work legally. From this moment on everything changed. They had to move, find a different school for Carlos, and live with the fear of being deported, a feeling they had not had until that time.

Months and years went by, and their situation continued to be uncertain. The Lighthouse was a safe place for them to be and a place where they could continue doing volunteer work, getting updated information about possibilities for getting papers, and getting counseling. In 2006 Roberto was apprehended by the immigration authorities while coming back from work. He was detained, but this time he received a blessing in disguise. Since their refugee claim had been abandoned, they still had the chance to qualify for a PRRA (Pre-Removal Risk Assessment). At The Lighthouse we immediately

found the right lawyer that could work with them to make the PRRA and an application for humanitarian and compassionate review. We also made a petition that was signed by many people asking the government to let them stay. Less than two years later they got their permanent resident status, an occasion that brought much joy and happiness to them and to all of us who had watched them suffer. I am happy to say that after thirteen years of not being able to visit their family, and having no possibility to be with their sick parents, or to bury Hilda's father, finally in January of 2009 they were able to visit their native country of Chile. We have celebrated and thanked God for this family and for their new status as permanent residents in Canada. This is but a legal recognition of what they have already demonstrated, a family committed to live as good citizens of this country.

Appendix E

A True Story Happening Now (November 2008: As We See It)

by María N. Rodríguez de Vásquez

(Reprinted with permission from the author)

It is Saturday, a beautiful early summer evening. Ruth is in the kitchen preparing spaghetti for her children, her husband, Danilo, is at church at a prayer group meeting, and the children are sitting and talking at the table while waiting for their food to be ready. Laughter fills the house that has witnessed all the joys, blessings, and sickness of this typical family. A setting for disaster.

This is the end point of what began more than twenty years ago, when Danilo and Ruth, a young Central American couple, decided to emigrate to "El Norte" because of danger in their home country. Some of Danilo's brothers, uncles, and cousins, who at that time worked for their country's government, had been murdered by the opposition. One day Danilo received a phone call telling him that if he did not leave the country, he would be next. That same night he and Ruth left home and crossed the border into Mexico. There, even though illegal, they were able to work. Danilo did all kinds of jobs while Ruth studied to be a hair stylist. They could not communicate with anyone in their home country, however, since the threat there could follow them to Mexico.

Ten years passed before an opportunity arrived to travel to the United States. Ruth and Danilo knew of the horrible journey awaiting them, but the allure of a safe place where they could be free and prosper as a family was very strong. They ended up crossing the Rio Grande in an inner tube, which was especially frightening because Ruth did not know how to swim well. In addition, Ruth was beautiful and predators were always lurking, so Danilo had to protect her from being raped while also watching his own back.

Crossing the river was only the beginning of a physical and emotional ordeal. The coyote they were paying as a guide led them through the desert night after night, while they spent their days sleeping out of fear of capture. Food and water were scarce. The only thing that kept them going was their confidence in their heavenly Father. He would protect them, and if they died they would go to heaven to live with him.

Danilo and Ruth were aware that in entering the United States they had broken the law. Yet life was good. They had three beautiful children who were born U.S. citizens. They had good jobs, their own home, a wonderful church family—best of all, no fear of being murdered. They lived quietly and saved as much as they could. They sent their children to Christian school and drove them to sports practice, plays, and sleepovers like any other parents do. The only difference was the nagging fear of being detained and having to depart the country at a moment's notice. They did not know what would happen to their children then.

Over the years Danilo and Ruth hired various lawyers who did not do their jobs properly and instead ended up harming their prospects for legalization. Some entered wrong dates on the application for legal immigrant status. Others just took the money for application fees without submitting the application. Some have since been disciplined or disbarred. All along, Danilo and Ruth were unaware of what they were signing because their English was deficient; they had to trust their lawyers.

Disaster struck that Saturday evening last May. Immigration officials came to their home. Ruth was pulled out of the kitchen and handcuffed, her ankles chained so she would not run away. She was pushed into a van. Her children cried, not understanding what was going on except that their mother was being taken away from them. Danilo was at a church prayer group.

Ruth was introduced to the indignities of jail, American-style. She had to take off her clothes and wear an old, stained, orange uniform. Worse, a shy and modest woman, she was not allowed to wear any undergarments for three weeks. An excellent mother and wife, she has suffered keenly the separation from her husband and children. When the children visit, they may not even touch her. She has to look at them through a thick glass and talk on a telephone that makes sounds barely audible. Ruth lives in fear of never hugging her children again.

Ruth's deportation back to Central America has been halted; however, she is still in jail and only God knows how long. A lawyer has been hired to see what can be done. Ruth's heart aches for her children and for the many others like her that are living in similar difficult situations. What keeps this family together, even though they are physically apart, is their faith in God. They believe that he will touch the hearts of those in charge of looking over their documents, leading them to a just and merciful decision. She knows many American Christians are with her. Better that she doesn't know how many are not.

Note: María N. Rodríguez de Vásquez is assistant professor of Spanish at Calvin College in Grand Rapids, Michigan. The names in this story have been changed to protect the characters' identity.

I. Background

This is now the third report that the Faith Formation Committee is presenting to synod as it seeks to fulfill the five-year mandate given by Synod 2007. Synod appointed the committee in the context of discussions and decisions concerning the matter of admitting children to the Lord's Supper. Synod 2006 decided that all baptized members should be given permission to come to the Lord's Supper. However, Synod 2007 could not see fit to ratify this decision. Consequently the Faith Formation Committee was appointed with the following general mandate:

To deepen the integration of biblical teaching; confessional norms; church polity; and liturgical, educational, and pastoral practices in the CRC with respect to (1) participation in the Lord's Supper and (2) public profession of faith, by means of:

- a. Formulating a clear statement about the participation of baptized children at the Lord's Supper and the practice of public profession of faith for use in the churches. The statement should include, first, an explanation of 1 Corinthians 11 and other relevant Scripture texts in light of the principles of Reformed hermeneutics and, second, a discussion of the Reformed confessions with emphasis on the implications of the relationship between covenant and sacraments.
- b. Describing how Christian Reformed congregations in various contexts are experiencing intergenerational faith formation and sacramental practice and discerning which liturgical, educational, and organizational practices should be commended by synod to the entire denomination on the basis of their pastoral and theological integrity.
- c. Discussing with various agencies and organizations that work in the areas of faith formation, pastoral care, and worship (e.g., Calvin Theological Seminary, Home Missions, Youth Unlimited, Christian Schools International, the Center for Excellence in Preaching at Calvin Theological Seminary, and the Calvin Institute of Christian Worship) what kinds of collaborative educational efforts best promise to support pastorally sensitive, theologically grounded work in these topics.
- d. Providing guidelines, liturgical materials, and pastoral advice on these topics in collaboration with Faith Alive Christian Resources.
- e. Serving as a resource for discussions of these topics at a congregational and classical level.
- f. Reporting to synod annually for the next five years.

Grounds:

- a. Our approach to the question of participation at the Lord's Supper and public profession of faith must proceed on the basis of a clear statement of biblical and theological rationale.
- b. A study committee on biblical and theological issues alone is insufficient. An ongoing discussion needs to take place at all levels of the church to link our theology with our practice within a whole cluster of issues that relate to the sacraments, the preached Word, faith formation, church discipline, and practices that sustain lifelong discipleship.
- c. Our approach to children at the Lord's Supper and profession of faith needs to be part of a larger discussion of faithful and vital intergenerational faith formation in various contexts. Mutual accountability and learning among very different types of congregations is only likely to happen when there are intentional structures in place to promote it.
- d. Several congregations are already asking for shared wisdom on this topic.

- e. Given strongly held opinions on this issue and growing diversity of practices, this topic is likely to be discussed throughout the denomination for at least the next five years. A pastorally and theologically oriented committee, attuned to the diversity of ministry settings within the denomination, would be well positioned to shepherd a healthy theological dialogue within the denomination over time.
- f. This approach would be a cost-effective means of shepherding this discussion, especially given the availability of the Internet to promote communication among committee members and to disseminate information to the denomination.
- g. The work of such a committee would be a fitting way to carry forward the themes, insights, and energy developed during the denominational Year of Faith Formation (2007-2008).

(Acts of Synod 2007, pp. 655-57)

In addition, Synod 2007 gave the committee some additional related work on the subjects of infant dedication and infant baptism:

That synod mandate the Faith Formation Committee to provide biblical and pastoral guidance for councils who are conversing with those members who are requesting infant dedication in place of infant baptism.

Ground: Covenantal theology is foundational for faith formation (Gen. 17:1-14; 1 Cor. 7:14; Acts 2:38-39).

That synod mandate the Faith Formation Committee to provide guidance concerning liturgical practices surrounding infant baptism.

Ground: Because liturgical practices teach doctrine, it is important that liturgical practices reflect the doctrinal standards of the denomination.

(Acts of Synod 2007, p. 621)

Committee members eagerly began their work in Fall 2007 with the awareness that the task was a large one and the time-line was longer than usual. The committee was given a five-year mandate with the responsibility to report to synod each year. Each year the committee has informed synod of its efforts and findings, and, for the past two years, has engaged synod in helpful conversations about the issues involved in the life of the church relative to this matter.

As a committee, we miss the contributions and companionship of one of our members, Rev. Andrew Chun, a great deal. We were saddened for the sake of his family and congregation at his sudden death in July 2009, but we were also saddened at the loss we would feel in our committee work. His contributions were quiet, thoughtful, and very valuable.

II. Continued efforts

A. Collaborative efforts

As the committee mandate illustrates, efforts to collaborate with many others in the church were highly important. The committee has taken this approach with earnest, involving members in a study of the church and its practices as much as a study of the biblical and theological issues involved. By the time synod meets, the members of our committee will have met for an extended session with twenty-three CRC classes. We have engaged in correspondence and conversations with representatives of ethnic minorities in the CRC, representatives of denominational and non-denominational agencies, and knowledgeable persons in the field of education and youth

work. We have had conversations with representatives of Faith Alive Christian Resources, Back to God Ministries International, Center for Excellence in Preaching, Calvin Theological Seminary, Calvin College, Calvin Institute of Christian Worship, CR Home Missions, Youth Unlimited, and Christian Schools International. In addition, the committee has continued dialoging with those who agreed to serve as our pastoral correspondents.

As mandated by synod, the committee has worked closely with Faith Alive in the area of providing materials to assist congregations and families as they seek to nurture faith in members of all ages. Of particular interest to congregations are the following Faith Alive resources that focus on faith formation:

- “*Nurture*” blog – Check out www.NurtureKidsFaith.org and recommend it to families in your congregations with whom you partner to form faith in children and youth.
- *Celebrating the Milestones of Faith: A Guide for Churches* – A helpful resource for churches seeking to build a faith milestones ministry that will bless members of all ages.
- *Shaped by God: 13 Essentials for Nurturing Faith in Children, Youth, and Adults* – A collection of essays written for congregations by experts in the field of church education and faith formation (available July 2010).

All of the conversations noted above have been two-way streets. The committee has aimed to inform these groups of the committee’s work and materials available, but we have also been interested in listening to them as they express their experiences, concerns, and questions. We feel privileged to have gained a very helpful window into the life of the church through these collaborative efforts. The committee is deeply grateful for the willing cooperation it has found everywhere.

B. Key themes

The Faith Formation Committee is finding some very common themes that recur in the life of the churches. Some have been observed before and are confirmed. Some are new. A summary of these key themes would include, but not be limited to, the following:

- A wide diversity of practice within the CRC with regard to faith formation efforts, the observance and remembrance of baptism, public profession of faith, and the Lord’s Supper.
- A healthy and vital level of creativity as pastors and elders aim to minister effectively and provide resources for their ministries of faith formation.
- A notable level of energy and eagerness on the part of all to be sure that the church deals with these issues thoughtfully, biblically, and pastorally.
- A concern that we have perhaps made too much of public profession of faith, and questions about whether it is legitimate to consider public profession of faith the only rite of entrance to the Lord’s Supper.
- A vital interest in the concept of the milestones of faith formation. This is a concept that shows promise of being very helpful to us, is reflective of actual experience, yet stirs many questions about which milestones to recognize and how to do so.

- A continued and growing interest in studying the intent and instructions of 1 Corinthians 11 as the guiding passage that shapes our observance of the Lord’s Supper.
- The need to forge a stronger congregational and family partnership through which the church can aid parents to be more intentionally involved in the faith formation of their children.
- An awareness that the office of elder in the church needs revitalization, so that those who are elders are equipped to deal with such matters pastorally and biblically.
- A strong desire for resources and materials that will aid the churches in revitalizing their ministry in matters of the sacraments and faith formation.

C. *Materials provided*

The committee has provided many materials that it believes is assisting the churches. Many of these are posted on our website: www.crcna.org/faithformation. Delegates of synod and the members of their church council are encouraged to consult these materials and to use them in their ministries. The following key documents are to be noted:

1. “A Practice of Christian Unity” – a five-part Bible study of 1 Corinthians 11, a key passage in this entire discussion. The committee trusts that many churches will use this in small group study with great profit.
2. “Children at the Table: Toward a Guiding Principle for Biblically Faithful Celebrations of the Lord’s Supper” – provided for the churches in English, Korean, and Spanish. (The Korean and Spanish translations are available online at the synodical website.) It is attached (Appendix A) and contains a recommendation concerning a proposed guiding principle for which we seek synod’s endorsement as the basis for the committee’s continuing work. Near the end of the report is a vital section dealing with common questions that arise on the matter regarding children at the Table. This document is the foundation for the committee’s continuing work.
3. “Affirming Baptism and Forming Faith” – provided as Appendix B to the committee’s report. (The Korean and Spanish translations are available online at www.crcna.org/faithformation.) You will note that the report is a *draft*, which indicates it is a document *in process*. Rather than a report that presents recommendations on which actions are requested, it is a pastoral/shepherding document to aid the church and her leaders to thoughtfully assess these key themes that are so embedded in our ministries. The committee has provided “Sermon/Worship Series Suggestions” so that the material can become the center of worship. These are available on the Faith Formation website. A study guide is also available so that councils and small groups may discuss the document together and learn from it.

III. **Looking forward**

The Faith Formation Committee is well aware of the fact that the time allotted to do its work will come to an end at Synod 2012 and does not intend that all the committee’s recommendations should wait until 2012. Indeed, the committee is bringing the first major recommendation to synod in this report and eagerly awaits synod’s comments and actions in response

to the proposal. Much of the committee's work during the coming year will be formed by the response of Synod 2010.

In the coming year the committee aims to continue the highly collaborative conversations with persons and agencies that have served the committee so well in the past. In addition, the committee aims to continue producing materials that will be helpful to the churches and post those materials on the committee website. We anticipate that the committee's attention immediately following synod will be turned to such matters as

- considering which articles of the Church Order will possibly need revision and be prepared to make such recommendations to Synod 2011;
- formulating recommendations for Synod 2011 on matters of welcoming baptized members to the Lord's Supper, the role of profession of faith, and related matters;
- preparing recommendations and guidelines for the churches on the matter of Infant Baptism and Infant Dedication, including tools for the churches to use in aiding their members to make wise and biblical choices;
- begin the preparation of other resources, including pastoral and liturgical materials for baptism, milestone observances, professions of faith, admission to the Lord's Supper, and sacramental practices that will aid the churches in their ministry; and
- the collection of "Most Helpful Practices" currently in use in congregations that can serve as shared resources for other churches.

Undoubtedly other needs and issues will surface. The Faith Formation Committee knows this task will not be simple, but is passionate in wanting to serve the church well on this strategic matter. The committee has found great encouragement in all conversations with others and has felt a very warm kinship with pastors and councils who are eager to serve their children and youth biblically and thoughtfully in these matters. The committee has highly valued those who have been so willing to share their insights, suggestions, and questions with us.

IV. Recommendations

A. That synod grant the privilege of the floor to Dr. John D. Witvliet, Jr., chair, and Dr. Howard Vanderwell, secretary, when the committee's work is being discussed.

B. That synod endorse the following guiding principle (as presented in "Children at the Table: Toward a Guiding Principle for Biblically Faithful Celebrations of the Lord's Supper," Appendix A) as a basis for the committee's continuing work:

All baptized members are welcome to the Lord's Supper for age- and ability-appropriate obedience to biblical commands about participation, under the supervision of the elders. The elders have responsibility to nurture grateful and obedient participation by providing encouragement, instruction, and accountability in the congregation. Requiring a formal public profession of faith prior to participation in the Lord's Supper is one pastoral approach to consider, but is not required by Scripture or the confessions.

Grounds:

1. This position honors the covenant status of all who are baptized and affirms their membership in the body of Christ.
2. This position is faithful to the instruction of 1 Corinthians 11, which calls for a response of obedience on the part of those that come to the table.
3. This position acknowledges that, though members of the body of Christ respond to the promises of God in ways that are shaped by their age and abilities, their responses are nevertheless valid responses.
4. This position implements the instructions of Heidelberg Catechism, Q. and A. 81, that those who come to the table must be repentant, trusting, and desirous of growth in obedience.
5. This position honors the polity of the CRC, in which the sacraments of the church are to be celebrated under the supervision of the elders.
6. This position allows for diversity of local practice within a standard principle.
7. Adopting this principle will give the Faith Formation Committee sufficient guidance to complete its mandate by proposing Church Order changes and working with church agencies to develop pastoral resources for congregations.

C. That synod remind the churches that changes in local practice arising out of this principle should be delayed until changes to the Church Order are adopted at a future synod.

Grounds:

1. This approach reflects the covenant we share about changes to Church Order Article 47.
2. This reminder is necessary because congregations have recently been confused about the status of synodical decisions on this topic.
3. Working together as a denomination in discerning faithful practices for Lord's Supper celebrations is particularly important in an age of congregationalism.

D. That synod receive the draft document "Affirming Baptism and Forming Faith" (see Appendix B) for information and refer it to the churches for study and feedback, with the understanding that the Faith Formation Committee will return to a subsequent synod so that the document can be given to the churches as a shepherding document to guide and encourage the churches.

Faith Formation Committee

Irene Bakker
Gerard L. Dykstra (ex officio)
Jill Friend
Syd Hielema
Pat Nederveld
H. David Schuringa
Howard Vanderwell, secretary
John D. Witvliet, chairperson

Appendix A

Children at the Table: Toward a Guiding Principle for Biblically Faithful Celebrations of the Lord's Supper

Note: As we near the midpoint of our five-year mandate, the Faith Formation Committee offers this report and recommendations to synod regarding one aspect of our mandate, the participation of children at the Lord's Supper. Of all the matters entrusted to us, the discussion about children at the Lord's Supper is the most complex, requiring careful biblical study and theological and pastoral discernment. For this reason, we are sending this material to the churches in the fall rather than the spring in order to allow for substantive discussions within congregations and classes.

Report outline

I. Report overview: Key ideas

II. Background

A. *Pastoral concern*

B. *Mandate*

III. 1 Corinthians 11:17-34

A. *Central theme: Confronting inhospitality, promoting unity*

B. *Obedient participation at the table*

C. *A word of judgment*

D. *Three errors to avoid*

E. *Church practices: Pastoral care and church discipline*

IV. Debate about children at the Lord's Supper

A. *The two basic positions*

B. *Reformed confessions*

C. *Inconclusive arguments*

D. *Substantive arguments*

V. Profession of faith

A. *Profession of faith as an affirmation of baptism*

B. *Pastoral challenges*

C. *The status of requiring profession of faith prior to table participation*

VI. Our assessment and proposal

A. *Two positions restated*

B. *Points of agreement and consensus*

C. *An additional consideration: Age- and ability-appropriate obedience*

D. *A proposed guiding principle*

E. *Common criteria for evaluating practices*

F. *Common practices*

G. *Complementary models of welcome to the table*

H. *Models for sustaining and deepening table participation*

I. *Every congregation on a trajectory growth*

J. *Implications for church membership categories*

K. *Responses to common questions*

L. *Further steps*

VII. Recommendations

Addendum: Bibliography

I. Report overview: Key ideas

The Lord's Supper is a gracious gift of God that sustains and nourishes our faith. In response to our mandate to study the role of children at the Lord's Supper, this document proposes the following principle:

All baptized members are welcome to the Lord's Supper for age- and ability-appropriate obedience to biblical commands about participation, under the supervision of the elders. The elders have responsibility to nurture grateful and obedient participation by providing encouragement, instruction, and accountability in the congregation. Requiring a formal public profession of faith prior to participation in the Lord's Supper is one pastoral approach to consider, but is not required by Scripture or the confessions.

This approach, which is different from both the standard case for and the standard case against welcoming young children to the table, is developed out of the following convictions:

1. All baptized persons, regardless of age, are members of the church. Church membership comes not upon profession of faith but upon baptism.
2. We are invited to the table out of sheer grace as members of God's covenant people and not because of our profession of faith or our level of comprehension.
3. When we are invited, each participant is called to age- and ability-appropriate obedience of biblical commands about participation at the Lord's Supper.
4. We must learn to see the commands about participation in the Lord's Supper as life-giving gifts, not onerous burdens.
5. 1 Corinthians 11:17-34 is an especially significant text for understanding faithful participation in the Lord's Supper, inhospitality, and calls for greater unity in the body of Christ. The text is not primarily concerned with children's participation but rather focuses on unrepentant or inhospitable adults. At the same time, the text has implications for all participants at the table.
6. The elders of a congregation have responsibility for cultivating both the gracious invitation to the table and obedient participation at the table.
7. At times, discussions about the Lord's Supper have slipped into one of two opposing errors: (a) focusing too much on achieving a level of cognitive understanding prior to participation, and (b) minimizing the importance of the theological reflection and learning about deeper participation. Calling for "age- and ability-appropriate participation" addresses both problems at once, resisting the idea that children need to arrive at a certain level of comprehension before partaking and resisting the kind of unthinking participation that can set in over time for any worshiper.
8. Requiring a public profession of faith before participation in the Lord's Supper is a wise pastoral practice in some circumstances, but it is not a biblically mandated or confessionally required practice. Each church council should promote age- and ability-appropriate obedience at the

table, as described in the Bible and in the Reformed confessions, and may choose to require public profession of faith if appropriate.

9. This approach commends common criteria and a complementary set of practices for welcoming children to the table. The common principle and common criteria proposed in the following report promise to help us resist congregationalism, even though our practices may vary according to culture and ministry context.

II. Background

A. *Pastoral concern*

This report arises out of the heartfelt questions of many CRC members about Lord's Supper practices:

- The parent who wonders, "If our young children can be baptized, why can't they participate in the Lord's Supper?"
- The *Banner* reader who cannot imagine how people can even think about young children at the table, in light of 1 Corinthians 11.
- The youth leader who is frustrated about restrictions that keep some young people from participating in the Lord's Supper at an ecumenical youth rally.
- College students who love Jesus but have not made a public profession of faith, are now quite removed from the life of their home church and feel drawn to participate in the Lord's Supper at a campus ministry event, but also feel they might be doing wrong if they do so.
- The elders who are deeply saddened that their ten-year-old Sunday school students who deeply love Jesus are asked to pass plates of communion bread and cups on to their parents without partaking.
- The church council who must respond to a family who transfers from another congregation in which their children have participated at the table without making a public profession of faith and now asks for the same privileges.

Though the following pages are focused on biblical study and assessing theological arguments, these pastoral questions are never far from our minds. In fact, we hope that the following pages help us realize how valuable corporate biblical and theological reflections are when addressing questions of pastoral practice. This document develops a principle that we believe can be helpful in addressing each of these situations. We look forward to developing pastoral resources to these and other situations in light of synod's action on the proposed recommendation.

B. *Mandate*

The specific question of children at the Lord's Supper has been addressed in several prior studies and overtures to synod that have reached varying conclusions. In light of this past work, Synod 2007 mandated our committee to formulate

a clear statement about the participation of baptized children at the Lord's Supper and the practice of public profession of faith for use in the churches. The statement should include, first, an explanation of 1 Corinthians 11 and other relevant Scripture texts in light of the principles of Reformed hermeneutics and,

second, a discussion of the Reformed confessions with emphasis on the implications of the relationship between covenant and sacraments.

(Acts of Synod 2007, pp. 655-56)

This document is a first step in responding to this part of our mandate.

This assignment is no small matter. Arguments about this topic have already filled multiple dissertations, books, denominational reports, and websites (see the bibliography in the appendix). Taken together, these materials offer us some passages that are insightful, others that are tedious; some that are logical, others that stretch logic. Sorting out the relevant arguments has been a complex task, more complex than a brief report can possibly acknowledge. Our goal in preparing this report is not to catalog every single argument and counterargument but rather to accurately summarize ongoing debates and to discern what is essential for grounding a biblically faithful, confessionally Reformed, and pastorally responsive approach to the topic. It is our prayer that the following reflections will be faithful and generative.

We also note that while it is easy to be disparaging about the procession of committees and study reports that have emerged on this topic over the past 25 years, this entire discussion represents on both sides a sincere attempt to wrestle with one of the central challenges in pastoral ministry in every era of church history: the relationship of grace and obedience, faith and works. For two thousand years the church has constantly needed to test its practice so that it clearly communicates the unmerited grace of God that comes to us in Jesus and the obedient discipleship that flows from receiving this grace. With respect to the Lord's Supper, the church needs to convey that the Lord's Supper is God's gracious provision for the covenant community as well as the nature of obedient participation in which this gift should be received. Calibrating these dynamics is vitally important for faithful ministry, and each generation needs to see again the importance of both grace and obedience. To this end, we pray that this report will be an occasion for learning and renewal.

It is important to note that this is not the final report of the Faith Formation Committee. We have been given a five-year mandate to describe and learn from local ministry challenges throughout the Christian Reformed Church related to faith formation, to engage in biblical and theological study of key issues, and to provide recommendations and resources to strengthen congregational practices. As we observed in our report to Synod 2008,

Our mandate includes some work that is similar to past synodical study committees, such as that of producing a written document which will help synod respond to particular issues in the life of the church [such as this report]. . . . Our mandate includes some new kinds of work for a denominational committee, particularly that of working to strengthen communication, trust, and mutual learning within the denomination. Our mandate acknowledges that synodical decisions by themselves are not sufficient to generate a shared vision, commitment, or set of practices. But synodical decisions that emerge from and shape ongoing local conversations, learning, and ministry planning do promise to deepen our work together.

When we look back on our work after five years, we not only want to be able to say that we have addressed particular issues in scripturally sound ways. We also want to be able to say that we have worked well together as a denomination, we have wrestled with Scripture, we have honored and learned from the Reformed confessions, we have shared with each other the fruits of our local ministries, we have supported each other in prayer, and we have strengthened our ministry among children, youth, seekers, and lifelong Christians of all ages.

(Agenda for Synod 2008, p. 233)

This document is offered to the churches in the spirit of these observations. This document has been developed out of prayerful study of biblical and theological texts and past synodical study reports, with close attention to what we heard in discussion sessions at twenty classis meetings, the past two synods, and in several hundred other written communications. We are offering it to the churches in the fall rather than the spring to allow for more time for denomination-wide prayer and study. We are offering a principle that promises to help us move forward together as a denomination, but we are also waiting for synod's action on this principle before developing the resources and Church Order changes that would flow from it. We hope that the timing and nature of this recommendation avoids the temptation to delay our most substantive work until the end of our five-year mandate and the temptation to rush quickly into new patterns of practice without careful, denomination-wide study.

In this spirit, we invite CRC congregations and classes to continue to engage this report and its recommendations by not only studying the material here but also

- praying for the growth in faith of everyone with whom our congregations minister, and for our common work on these topics.
- studying the initial draft of “Affirming Baptism and Forming Faith” (online at www.crcna.org/faithformation), which presents an overarching vision for the role of the sacraments in faith formation (see also the related sermon/worship suggestions).
- using the Bible Study materials “A Practice of Christian Unity” (based on 1 Corinthians 11) provided on the Faith Formation Committee’s website for group study.

III. 1 Corinthians 11:17-34

Before assessing specific arguments for or against children at the table, we pause for an extended study of one text, 1 Corinthians 11:17-34. This text is one of the few that provide specific guidance about the practice of the Lord’s Supper, and it is the single most important text in discussions of children at the Lord’s Supper. For this reason, Synod 2007 included a specific reference to it in the mandate given to our committee.

A. *Central theme: Confronting inhospitality, promoting unity*

Though there are certainly many areas of disagreement about this text, we are grateful that there is a strong consensus among biblical scholars about its main theme: confronting inhospitality and favoritism in the Lord’s Supper. We also note that this consensus view is hardly benign. It offers much to challenge, correct, and inspire us all.

One central theme of 1 Corinthians as a whole is the breakdown of community, unity, and fellowship in the Christian church, and 1 Corinthians 11:17-34 deals with one facet of this theme. Paul is writing to protest favoritism and inhospitality at the Lord’s table—a breakdown of the Christian community along sociological lines. He is specifically concerned with those who “show contempt for the church” and “humiliate those who have nothing” (v. 22, NRSV). When Paul says, “I hear that there are divisions among you” (11:18), he is tying this part of the book into the broader theme of unity that he stresses in 1:10 (“I appeal to you . . . that all of you be in agreement

and that there be no divisions among you, but that you be united in the same mind and the same purpose”) and in the preceding and subsequent context of chapter 11 (10:16-17 and 12:12-13).

The specific issue in 1 Corinthians 11:17-34 involves Lord’s Supper practices that were inhospitable and divisive. As Professor Jeffery Weima explains:

The church in Corinth, like other congregations well into the second century, celebrated the Lord’s Supper as part of a dinner or full meal. The whole church would first break bread at the beginning of the meal to remember Christ’s death, then they would eat their main course, and finally at the end of the meal they would drink wine also to remember Christ’s death (note 1 Cor. 11:25, “In the same way, *after supper* he took the cup, saying . . .”). The problem was the main course that took place between these two acts of remembrance: the Corinthians were celebrating the Supper in a way that created divisions (v. 18). The guilty were the wealthy (“those who have homes”), whose conduct at these meals involved despising the church of God and humiliating those who have nothing (v. 22). In fact, things got so out of hand that poor church members left the worship services hungry while the rich members staggered home drunk (v. 21)! . . . Although we cannot know with certainty what led to divisions over the Lord’s Supper at Corinth, it is clear that the problem involved social discrimination: the wealthy Christians celebrated the Lord’s Supper in a way that despised and humiliated their poorer fellow believers.¹

In dealing with this situation, Paul outlines some principles for participation at the table that transcend the specific situation: each participant must carefully assess their relationship to others who are coming to the table, set aside all arrogance, inhospitality, and self-centeredness, and wait for, welcome, and receive one another in the celebration itself (see v. 33).

When we generate modern-day applications of this text, one good place to begin is by asking, When do we “show contempt for the church” and “humiliate those who have nothing” (v. 22)? It is a provocative exercise to think about who may be experiencing such humiliation in various CRC congregations. In our day, as in first century Corinth, the poor come to mind immediately. They are often more welcome in soup kitchens than in worship. But others may also be treated as second-class citizens in the church: adult singles, the divorced and separated, persons with disabilities, ex-offenders, shut-ins, those with dementia, those without a certain level of education, and many others. This text challenges us to make sure that none of God’s children is humiliated, even subtly, in our celebrations of the Lord’s Supper. We might also state the matter positively: When we assemble at the table, and elsewhere, how can we more adequately express that we are God’s new people, eager to show hospitality and break down the barriers that divide us?

For any sermon, Bible study, or other discussion of this text, the breakdown of the church as the body of Christ should be a central concern. We regret that in some discussions of the Lord’s Supper, including those about whether or not children should participate, this central theme has receded from view. More attention is often given to the narrow question of at what age children should participate than to this prophetic call for hospitality. Each of us, regardless of our specific views on the matter of children at the table, should avoid this error.

¹ Jeffrey A. D. Weima, “Children at the Lord’s Supper and the Key Text of 1 Corinthians 11:17-34.” *Calvin Theological Seminary Forum* (Spring 2007): 7-8.

B. Obedient participation at the table

As this text addresses the problem of inhospitality, it offers us additional guidance about participation at the table. This wisdom is articulated in each of the action words, mostly the imperative form, associated with the table: *take, eat, drink, remember, examine yourself, and wait for each other.*

Before looking at these imperatives, it is important to remember that the Bible's commands are not onerous obligations but rather gracious gifts. Obeying them is life-giving. They help us flourish as apprentices of Jesus. This is important to state because of the persistent tendency in many Christian churches, including Reformed ones, to unwittingly treat the Bible's commands as onerous burdens. In fact, when our committee asked Synod 2008 delegates about how their local congregations practice these life-giving commands, we received several comments such as the following: "I have never thought about these as life-giving commands." Indeed, Reformed Christians have not always seen this as a text that points to joyful obedience (in direct opposition to Reformed theology's high view of the law as a guide for grateful living!). Rather, these commands have at times been a source of anxiety and legalism. In this context, we need to recover the sense that these commands are life-giving. Obeying them brings joy, integrity, and justice.

The specific actions associated with participation at the table include the following: doing this in remembrance of Jesus (vv. 24-25), eating, drinking, proclaiming the Lord's death (v. 26), examining ourselves (v. 28), discerning the body (v. 29), and waiting for one another (v. 33).

Of all of these actions, discerning the body has generated the most controversy and discussion. The verb *discern* is an active verb that calls us to reflection, judgment, and correct perception. "The body" refers, most likely, to both the physical body of the Christ (as in the reference to the "body and blood" of the Lord in verse 27)² and to the church as the body of Christ (as in 1 Cor. 10 and 12). Indeed, the power and delight of the metaphor of the body is that it refers simultaneously to Jesus' literal body (on earth and now in heaven), the church, and to the bread we break.

In the context of this passage, Paul is emphasizing the significance of the church as the body of Christ. Paul is calling the Corinthians to examine their relationship to their fellow believers and to celebrate the sacrament in a manner that does not humiliate other congregational members. This communal or horizontal aspect is an essential part of this text. Thus, a significant part of "discerning the body" involves determining, perceiving, and practicing what it means to be the church—a community who embodies Jesus' presence and mission. The central application or result of this discernment action is then beautifully summed up in verse 33: "wait for each other."³

² Please note there is a textual critical issue in v. 29. The NIV includes "*recognizing the body of the Lord*," the TNIV includes "*recognizing the Body of Christ*," and the NRSV includes "*discerning the body*." There is very strong scholarly consensus for not including the phrase "of the Lord" or "the body of Christ" in v. 29. Still, either alternative fits well with the interpretation we are describing.

³ We caution against speaking about "a new interpretation of 1 Corinthians 11." The themes we are presenting above are attested throughout the history of the Christian church. While it is true that it is new for some CRC people to think of "discerning the body" as having to do with the church as the body of Christ, this is not a new discovery! See, for example, Thomas Davis, *This is My Body: The Presence of Christ in Reformation Thought* (Baker Academic, 2008), pp. 149-68.

At the same time, this primary emphasis need not displace the fact that “body” can also refer to Jesus’ literal body on the cross.⁴ The bread we eat points us to and symbolizes our union with Jesus, whose ascended body is now in heaven. While some scholars insist that “the body” here refers exclusively to the church as the body of the Christ, and while others insist that it refers to the presence of Christ’s own body, we see no conclusive evidence that forces us to choose between these views.

C. *A word of judgment*

While protesting inhospitality and describing participation at the Lord’s Supper, the text also clearly offers a word of judgment. Whoever partakes unworthily will “eat and drink judgment against themselves” (v. 29) and be “answerable for the body and blood of the Lord” (v. 27). In Corinth, this meant that some became weak or ill, and some died (v. 30), the result of God’s disciplinary action (v. 32).

It is important for us to attend to these warnings. Many treatments of the text and of Lord’s Supper theology in general avoid these warnings like a plague. Others, including some historic Reformed treatments, dwell on them in ways that generate unnecessary fear and anxiety at the table.

One particular error to address is the notion that God’s judgment here refers exclusively to eternal judgment. Echoes of this idea lurk in many informal conversations and even in some published sermons, and this may be partly why many resist any mention of these warnings. Yet there are several problems with this view: (1) the text speaks of consequences on earth, not eternal judgment, (2) it is hard to conceive of a logic that says one mode of partaking can somehow override divine election with respect to our eternal destiny, and (3) Paul was writing to “those who are sanctified in Christ Jesus” (1 Cor. 1:2) to call them to obedience. The idea that the judgment in question here is eternal judgment displaces any active awareness of the judgment the text does describe: the consequences of our actions that become part of God’s disciplinary program to make us holy. God’s discipline, while painful, is also redemptive and sanctifying.

Thus Paul invites us to think of the consequences of improper participation as a matter of divine discipline. Whether this discipline comes to us through natural consequences of our actions or through divine intervention in natural processes, it is clear that inhospitality and indifference to others will have consequences. Indeed, if we do not root out arrogance and self-centeredness, we will let a cancer grow inside our churches. If we simply rehearse hypocrisy, rather than resisting it, we will grow increasingly insensitive to others, and cause untold harm. The more we think of judgment in these terms, the more our approach to discipline at the table is likely to become organic and ongoing. This is why a once in a lifetime public profession of faith is, by itself, an inadequate door to admission to the table, and why Reformed polity has always insisted on other practices of mutual accountability. We need regular practices of confession, repentance, forgiveness, and accountability to complement our participation at the table.

⁴ Several recent commentators have pointed out that in many Reformed and evangelical congregations the understanding of “discerning the body” has been limited to this second meaning only. This is a reductionist account that takes vv. 23-25 out of their context and ignores the main theme of the text.

D. *Three errors to avoid*

In light of this analysis, there are three persistent errors with respect to this text that have harmed the church.

First, some interpretations and practices ignore the communal dimension of the text. This error includes allowing the community to recede from view in our understanding of what it means to “discern the body” and “examine ourselves.” These commands suggest for many a picture of an individual believer before the cross, reflecting on their own sin, and their salvation in Christ, with little awareness or attention on the community. Gordon Fee, for example, wonders “whether our making the text deal with self-examination has not served to deflect the greater concern of the text, that we give more attention at the Lord’s Supper to our relationships with one another in the body of Christ” (569). The Lord’s Supper is never a private affair. And “discerning the body” and “examining ourselves” each entail not only looking within but also looking around us to cherish and deepen the communion of all of God’s people.

Second, some interpretations and practices promote unhealthy legalism and scrupulosity. In some contexts, we have allowed the imperative verbs of this text to overshadow the welcome to the table. This approach has left some unhealthy impressions in some communities, including the notion that the value of the Lord’s Supper depends on our faith and on our righteousness. In contrast, what we need is the kind of balance and logic reflected in Paul’s letters and in the Reformed Confessions: we are graciously welcomed to the table, we gratefully accept Jesus’ invitation, and in gratitude we engage in the kind of self-examination and discernment that deepens our faith and promotes integrity. Our obedience is not a condition for the invitation but rather is the way to respond to the invitation. This distortion could well be less prominent in Reformed churches today than in past years. And it could be that in contemporary culture, we will more likely face an opposite problem—the lack of any clear and sustained call for believers to practice self-examination and discernment. Nevertheless, this concern remains significant in many contexts, as attested by several communications to our committee.

Third, some interpretations and practices tend to explain away or set aside the strong imperatives in the text, and to ignore its strong words of judgment. The result is a kind of “cheap grace,” where the church is constantly rehearsing messages of inclusiveness and welcome without realizing that these warnings are also a part of God’s gracious provision for us.

What makes our work as a committee and denomination especially challenging is that these three tendencies can be simultaneously present in a given congregation, and even in the practices of any single church leader. As we listen to voices in the CRC, we hear voices that are motivated by concern for each. All of this is further complicated by the fact that resisting one of these errors can sometimes generate one of the others. We resist individualism so much that we fail to call for individual accountability. We resist legalism and end up downplaying divine commands. The matter is further complicated by our ever-changing cultural context. Indeed, each of these problems is potentially fueled by cultural considerations that can vary widely throughout a diverse denomination.

In sum, the challenge before every congregation and for all of us together as a denomination is to discern how to celebrate the Lord’s Supper faithfully

in our specific cultural contexts. We are called to resist making any member of Christ's body a second-class citizen. We are called to resist individualism while still calling for individual accountability. We are called to enhance the joyful, life-giving practices of remembering, proclaiming, examining, discerning, and waiting. There is much here to challenge and inspire us all.

E. Church practices: Pastoral care and church discipline

Throughout the history of the church, a variety of practices have been developed to resist the kind of inhospitality, division, and favoritism that this text warns against. These include the following: church visits by office-bearers from classis to each church council; the practice of mutual censure (Church Order Article 36); devotional, liturgical, and instructional practices to help congregations prepare for celebrations of the Lord's Supper; sermons and public prayers that deal with difficult topics around inhospitality and division; intentional training, such as antiracism training, about communal life; and prayers for healing and reconciliation, including liturgical prayers of confession. Every denomination, every congregation, and every believer is strengthened by healthy practices of accountability.

IV. Debate about children at the Lord's Supper

A. The two basic positions

The case for and against the presence of children at the table has been made in several recent books, articles, and synodical studies.⁵ These discussions are frequently complicated by lack of clarity about the age of children under consideration and an inconsistent use of terms (e.g., "paedo-communion"). Further, these discussions have been complicated by the fact that each argument for or against requiring public profession of faith prior to table participation draws upon a different set of arguments. The committee has done its best to clarify the best thinking of each point of view.

Nevertheless, there are two basic positions in the CRC that can be readily identified. The following descriptions summarize these two positions:

1. Position 1: Typical arguments for welcoming children at the table before public profession of faith

Those who argue for children at the table typically develop several of the following arguments:

- a. The Bible nowhere explicitly bars children from participation at the table.
- b. Children are clearly part of the covenant community.
- c. Children participated in the Passover (Ex. 12:26)—the covenant feast that was transformed by Jesus into the Lord's Supper.
- d. Evidence suggests that children participated in the Lord's Supper in the early church.

⁵ See the extensive bibliography in the appendix and materials on the Faith Formation Committee website. Recent contributions include overtures from Classis Holland (*Agenda for Synod 2006*) and Classis Pella (*Agenda for Synod 2007*), Cornelis P. Venema, *Children at the Lord's Table?* (Reformation Heritage Books, 2009), and *Calvin Seminary Forum*, Spring 2007.

They conclude that on the basis of covenant theology, we would naturally assume that children should participate at the table, as in Passover, unless told otherwise. They suggest that the burden of proof should rest on those who want to hold children back from the table.

Some advocates of children at the table go on to argue that Reformed interpretations of the command “repent and be baptized” (Acts 2:38, Mark 16:16) is instructive. Unlike some Baptist interpretations that uphold this command as a universal command requiring repentance before baptism in every instance, Reformed interpreters stress that the command is directed only to those who have the capacity to do so: adults and older children, but not infants. In a similar way, advocates of children’s participation in the Lord’s Supper argue that the imperatives in 1 Corinthians 11 fittingly apply to all who have the capacity to obey them.

Following are some CRC voices that make this case:

- “It strikes me very odd how the arguments we use to support infant baptism (it’s God’s work . . . not dependent on us or the infant) seem to be turned upside-down in the sacrament of the Lord’s Supper (first show that you are competent; then partake).”
- “It does bother me that that one text is used to deny all covenant children a place at the table, and it’s not even talking about the kids!!”
- Here is a statement of this argument in the 2006 Overture from Classis Holland: “How can Paul’s concerns for unity of the body at communion be applied to exclude baptized children? The apostle’s concerns actually suggest the opposite, namely, that all members of the covenant community should be included at the table rather than having some who remain spiritually hungry” (2007 CRC Survey on Children at the Table).

Most of those who argue for inviting children to the table have in mind young children, roughly ages 5 to 10. In many congregations, the children in question are those who no longer participate in a children’s worship time during the main worship service.

2. Position 2: Typical arguments against children at the table before public profession of faith

Those who argue that baptized children should not partake respond as follows:

- a. There is no biblical text that explicitly warrants the inclusion of children at the table.
- b. There is no proof that children participated in the Passover.
- c. 1 Corinthians 11 clearly requires each participant to engage in certain actions.
- d. Baptism and the Lord’s Supper are two quite different sacraments, with baptism being more passive, and the Lord’s Supper being more active.

Some insist that the burden of proof should require all who want to depart from traditional practice to make a conclusive case for change.

Following are some CRC voices that advance this position:

- "The Lord's Supper ought to remain a sacrament partaken of by those who have professed faith in Jesus Christ."
- "We are concerned about how baptized children of a younger age can meet the requirements for the Lord's Supper set forth in 1 Corinthians 11:27-29, and we have significant reservations about how younger children (under the middle school age category) can meet the standards set forth in Heidelberg Catechism, Q. and A. 81."
- "We ought to be concerned that people can eat and drink judgment on themselves if they don't rightly examine themselves before coming to the table as 1 Corinthians 11 instructs his church."
- "Clearly the big issue is interpreting what it means to discern the body. Clearly a child cannot do this, so it will be interesting to watch once again how a clear passage of Scripture is handled by our CRC" (2007 CRC Survey on Children at the Table).

B. *Reformed confessions*

The confessions bear upon this discussion in several ways. First, the confessions clearly convey that membership in the church is tied to baptism, not profession of faith. The Belgic Confession clearly asserts that "by baptism we are received into God's church" (Art. 34). Heidelberg Catechism, Q. and A. 74 clearly asserts that "Infants as well as adults are in God's covenant and are his people. . . . Therefore, by baptism, the mark of the covenant, infants should be received into the Christian church." By the standard of the confessions, it is not appropriate to say to someone when they make profession of faith "congratulations on joining the church." Full membership in the church comes with baptism, even if a denomination distinguishes baptized and confessing members (see also 1 Cor. 12:13).

Second, the confessions clearly convey that proper participation arises out of faith. Heidelberg Catechism, Q. and A. 81 explains who may come to the table: "those who are displeased with themselves because of their sins, but who nevertheless trust that their sins are pardoned and that their continuing weakness is covered by the suffering and death of Christ, and who also desire more and more to strengthen their faith and to lead a better life." The catechism goes on to name those who may not participate: "Hypocrites and those who are unrepentant, however, eat and drink judgment on themselves." Q. and A. 82 goes on to explain how the church must prevent the unbelieving and ungodly from participating.

The Belgic Confession explains this in a slightly different way: "We believe and confess that our Savior Jesus Christ has ordained and instituted the sacrament of the Holy Supper to nourish and sustain those who are already born again and ingrafted into his family: his church" (Art. 35). How might this passage apply to children at the Lord's Supper? The confessions clearly assert that baptized children are ingrafted into the church, point noted by advocates of children at the table. Yet they also make clear that while baptism is a sign of regeneration,⁶ it is not the cause or mechanism of regeneration,

⁶ See Belgic Confession, Article 34: "In this way God signifies to us that just as water washes away the dirt of the body when it is poured on us and also is seen on the body of the baptized when it is sprinkled on him, so too the blood of Christ does the same thing internally, in the soul, by the Holy Spirit."

point noted by advocates of requiring a public profession of faith prior to table participation.

In response, we take note that the confessions do not speak about public profession of faith. Requiring public profession of faith before entrance to the table certainly fits well with the confessions' claim that proper participation arises out of faith. At the same time, the confessions do not require this particular form of profession. That is, there may be any number of ways by which the church conveys that table participation is for believers and through which the church allows participants to express their faith as they come to the table.

Yet we know that many would argue along these lines: "The Belgic Confession asserts that the table is for those who are born again; and a public profession of faith is a testimony to God's regenerating work, and offers us sufficient assurance that a given person is born again. That is why we should require it." We urge particular care in both advancing and responding to this line of thought, for it brings us very close to a host of theologically and pastorally challenging topics. Our basic response to this is that we should gratefully receive all expressions of faith, including public profession of faith, as likely signs of God's regenerating work. Public profession of faith may differ from other expressions of faith in degree, but not in kind. We also join a long chorus of voices urging caution about making conclusive judgments about who is born again, even as we warmly invite everyone, both inside and outside the church, to accept Jesus and testify to their faith.⁷

Third, the confessions speak about the nature of participation: "no one should come to this table without examining himself carefully" (Belgic Confession, Art. 35); to "eat the crucified body of Christ and to drink his poured-out blood . . . means to accept with a believing heart the entire suffering and death of Christ" (Heidelberg Catechism, Q. and A. 76). Obedient participation involves self-examination and belief.

Finally, we note that when stating explicitly those who may not partake of the Lord's Supper, the confessions only mention "hypocrites and those who are unrepentant" (Heidelberg Catechism, Q. and A. 81) and the "wicked person" (Belgic Confession, Art. 35). The confessions nowhere explicitly bar covenant children from the Lord's Supper. It can only be ascertained implicitly if one concludes that up to a certain age, children cannot be "displeased with themselves because of their sins" and "nevertheless trust that their sins are pardoned and that their continuing weakness is covered by the suffering and death of Christ, and who also desire more and more to strengthen their faith and to lead a better life" (Heidelberg Catechism, Q. and A. 81). That it would not have been the authors' intent to place covenant children in the same company as hypocrites, the unrepentant and the ungodly, is evident when, earlier, covenant infants are said to be "in God's covenant and are his people" and that "they, no less than adults, are promised the forgiveness of sin through Christ's blood and the Holy Spirit who produces faith" (Heidelberg Catechism, Q. and A. 74).

⁷ And if we do make judgments, we are advised by the Canons of Dort, as follows: "Since we must make judgments about God's will from his Word, which testifies that the children of believers are holy, not by nature but by virtue of the gracious covenant in which they together with their parents are included, godly parents ought not to doubt the election and salvation of their children whom God calls out of this life in infancy" (1:17).

On this question, Ursinus's comments concerning the children of believers are instructive. He clearly argues that "infants are not capable of coming to the Lord's Supper, because they do not possess faith actually, but only potentially and by inclination." He also suggests that "all the children of those that believe are included in the covenant, and church of God, *unless they exclude themselves*" (emphasis added). Further, as those "born in the church, or school of Christ," it follows that "the Holy Spirit teaches them *in a manner adapted to their capacity and age*" (emphasis added). He states that the "benefit of the remission of sins, and of regeneration" indeed "belongs to the infants of the church." He concludes, "Those unto whom the things signified belong, unto them the sign also belongs." But then he defaults to excluding infants from the Lord's Supper "because of their incapacity of shewing the Lord's death, and proving themselves."⁸

The original authors of the confessions, despite their high view of the spiritual state of covenant children, were not disposed to infant participation at the Lord's Supper. But they were ambiguous regarding the age at which children could legitimately participate in faith. It must be noted that the confessions themselves only implicitly exclude covenant children if it can be proved that they are unable to examine themselves or to what extent such a condition is applicable to them. Could it be argued that fencing the table with age requirements may be inconsistent with the confessions' own covenant theology? And if we take seriously Ursinus's belief that the Holy Spirit teaches children "in a manner adapted to their capacity and age," could it be that the faith of covenant children may not only be "potential" and "inclination" but also more "actual" than usually assumed? At the very least, then, one could conclude that the confessions, according to original intent and explicit statement, suggest that covenant children should be welcomed to participate in the Lord's Supper as soon as they are able to partake in an age- and ability-appropriate manner.

C. *Inconclusive arguments*

The debate about children at the table is complicated by the use of several arguments that are, in the committee's judgment, not conclusive. These topics can be instructive and can inform our learning together, but they do not offer conclusive evidence that would help us arrive at a settled position. We encourage all participants in this discussion to be especially cautious in pursuing these arguments.

1. Texts that do not speak with sufficient detail

Some texts speak to the general topic of children but do not really help us make a final decision about this topic. Jesus said, "Let the little children come to me" (Mark 10:14). This text rules out indifference to children. But by itself it doesn't help us decide between welcoming them to partake and welcoming them to observe expectantly. Invoking texts in this way usually serves to inflame the debate without clarifying it.

2. The analogy with the Passover

Did children eat at the Passover meal? We don't really know at what age they participated and under what conditions. We know that children

⁸ Zacharias Ursinus, *Commentary on the Heidelberg Catechism*, trans. G. W. Williard (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1954), pp. 366-67, 425, see also p. 429.

participated by asking about the meaning of the meal (Ex. 12:24-26). We know that Passover was celebrated within households (e.g., Ex. 12:3-4; 2 Chron. 35:4). We know that the “whole community of Israel” was called to celebrate it (Ex. 12:47), and we have descriptions of the Passover being celebrated by all the returned exiles for a period of 7 days (Ezra 6:19-22), a description that implies that the entire covenant community was involved. These texts figure prominently in many discussions of children at the Lord’s Supper, often leading writers to opposite conclusions that can each seem rhetorically convincing especially to people who agree with their position (e.g., “if children asked about the meaning of Passover, then it seems as if they were participating,” or “if they had to ask about the meaning, it appears that they were not yet eating”). The committee therefore urges caution about such arguments on both sides. The Passover certainly does inform our understanding of the Lord’s Supper and the nature of a covenant relationship with God. But while biblical discussions of the Passover offer suggestive evidence about the participation of children, they do not offer conclusive evidence about when children first participated or under what conditions they did so.

3. The “communal agent” approach

Some argue that children should be welcome because it is the church as a community (not only each individual) that must discern the body. This argument is hinted at, though not defended, in the report of the task force to Synod 2007:

The decision to allow baptized children at the Lord’s Supper is also based on a strong awareness of the significance of the faith of the entire community. In defending the practice of infant baptism, many Reformed theologians stress that the phrase *repent and be baptized* (Acts 2:38) is practiced by the entire faith community rather than by the infant—a communal action that is also possible for *discerning the body*. Some may even suggest that this is the *only* interpretative move needed to defend the practice of welcoming children to the Lord’s Supper in the context of a tradition that practices infant baptism, regardless of how one understands the phrase *discerning the body*.
(*Agenda for Synod 2007*, p. 51)

This communal subject approach is compelling as a response to an individualistic culture. The problem with this approach is the grammar of the text, which clearly calls for the faithful participation not only of the community but also of each individual Christian at the table (the English translation *whoever* in 1 Corinthians 11:27 is designed to emphasize this point).

4. The historical argument

Some argue for young children at the table because some ancient Christian sources suggest it was common practice. Some argue for requiring a public profession of faith prior to participation at the table because the Reformers practiced this. Significant historical work on these topics offers significant insight about the complex interplay of theological, pastoral, and historical factors in these time periods. Each period is well worth studying, and it contributes to several sections of this report. But ultimately, the history of this topic does not conclusively argue for one side or the other. The early church offers some evidence of young children and infants at communion, but it is unclear how widespread the practice

was, and whether there was theological and pastoral consensus about the reasons for the practice. The Reformation period offers us testimony to the pastoral function of public profession of faith but does not provide an argument why public profession of faith is scripturally required for admission to the table. In the end, history is a source of wisdom but not a source for a definitive position.

In addition to these inconclusive arguments, we note that the discussion of this topic is further complicated because of the conceptual links or implicit connections between various arguments and other positions that do not cohere with the confessions. Some defenses of young children seem to imply baptismal regeneration (the idea that the act of baptism is the means by which God accomplishes regeneration) or some other form of sacramentalism. Some defenses of requiring public profession of faith for table admission slip into language about the Lord's Supper that sounds more like Zwingli (who stressed that the bread and cup merely represent Jesus' body and blood, and the Lord's Supper is primarily about our memorial of Jesus) than the Belgic Confession (which insists in Article 35 that "this banquet is a spiritual table at which Christ communicates himself to us with all his benefits" and that the Lord's Supper is both for our memorial and for God's feeding and nourishment of faith). In all our discussions about the Lord's Supper, it is important to be alert for any principle or practice that might unwittingly suggest either baptismal regeneration or Zwinglian memorialism.

D. Substantive arguments

That leaves two primary considerations: 1 Corinthians 11:17-34 and covenant theology, the very two issues named in our mandate from synod.

1. 1 Corinthians 11:17-34

As we have suggested in section III above, 1 Corinthians 11:17-34 is primarily addressing the breakdown of Christian community along sociological lines. The question of children at the table is *not* the central concern of this text. In other words, while the text specifically addresses the participation of unrepentant and inhospitable adults, the question is whether it also addresses the participation of children. This involves a central issue in biblical interpretation, namely, how we can most faithfully apply commands that were intended for one situation to a somewhat different situation. On this point, two basic positions emerge:

- a. First, those who support children at the table emphasize how the historical context here helps us understand the imperatives in the text. They typically argue, "A text that bars unrepentant adults should not be used to bar covenant children." They are eager to apply the text but to focus its application to very similar situations today. This is similar to saying that the command "repent and be baptized" (Acts 2:38) naturally applies to adults but not to infants, a fairly standard argument by Reformed theologians.
- b. Second, those opposed to young children at the table insist that grammatical construction of general principles in verses 27-29 establishes a timeless principle that is not limited to similar contexts. They typically argue, "When Paul says 'examine yourselves' and 'discern the body,'

that is clearly intended for all participants in all circumstances.” Some who hold this view go on to say, in effect, “And this is an activity that young children are incapable of doing.”

The committee’s judgment is that each position advances a very compelling argument. If we truly approach the commands here as life-giving gifts, then we should be eager to obey them in all possible circumstances, and we should be eager to teach them to the youngest of believers. From this point of view—which again we recognize is not the implicit approach to these commands in many contexts—there would seem to be little motivation to pursue the first view: why would we want to withhold these commands from our youngest children? At the same time, as we will explain below, we do not think that we should simply assume that young children are incapable of obeying these imperatives.

2. Covenant theology

Alongside of discussions of 1 Corinthians 11, the most significant arguments about the participation of children in the Lord’s Supper focus on the nature of the covenant that God establishes with us. God’s covenant promises echo throughout Scripture and have been central to Reformed discussions of the sacraments. This attention is given particular urgency in Peter’s sermon on Pentecost: “for the promise is for you, for your children, and for all who are far away, everyone who the Lord our God calls to him” (Acts 2:39). We worship a God who has chosen to ingraft us into a promise-based relation and a promise-shaped community. In light of this rich vein of biblical teaching,

- those who favor the participation of young children at the table simply ask: If covenant children should be baptized, what prevents them from participating at the table?
- those who favor requiring a public profession of faith respond: What about the obligations and responsibilities of covenant membership, one of which is to come the table of the Lord after self-examination?

As we have studied these positions, we observe that while each rightly points to essential elements of biblical teaching, each position also entails some potential dangers to avoid:

- To require public profession of faith prior to table participation can unwittingly suggest that the efficacy of the Lord’s Supper depends upon our faith or on the level of our understanding (and though no official document, confessional statement, or other widely accepted theological work defends this, it does surface as a common pastoral concern).
- To fail to require public profession of faith prior to table participation can unwittingly undermine the significance of the obligations we have as believers in covenant participation, and in some circumstances create a culture of practice in which the participation in the Lord’s Supper is taken quite lightly.

Communications to our committee confirm that both concerns are expressed in CRC congregations. We urge each of us to be deeply aware of these dangers. As we will continue to explain, our view is that we should

seek a practice that reflects both elements of covenantal engagement: God's gracious invitation to all members of the body, and the importance of obedience to God's commands. Further, we are convinced that the potential pastoral dangers described here must be of primary concern for church councils as they shape local practice.

V. Profession of faith

For many Reformed Christians over the past 450 years, public profession of faith has been a rich and vital practice, a time of gratitude for God's work, an occasion for deepened commitment to the faith, and an occasion for recognizing the joyful and serious obligations of participation in the church. As a committee, we are eager to renew and deepen public profession of faith as a significant milestone event in the lives of believers.

A. *Profession of faith as an affirmation of baptism*

Profession of faith is a time to celebrate and affirm baptismal identity. For those baptized as infants, profession of faith is a time to affirm covenant promises. For those baptized as adults, profession of faith accompanies baptism and affirms that our identity is found in Jesus Christ.

Public profession of faith is both an expression of and catalyst for the missional work of the church in the world. The great commission calls the church to a public testimony of faith as it disciples nations, "baptizing them . . . teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you" (Matt. 28:19-20). Indeed, the church's profession of faith, and each individual profession of faith, is an act of proclamation that reaches out to the lost and disciples the found. This reaching out toward the world that God loves happens both through explicit witness to the love of Christ and through faith-filled actions in society (Heidelberg Catechism, Q. and A. 86), including caring for "the least of these" with grace-filled words and deeds (Matt. 25:40) and serving as an advocate for victims of injustice (Prov. 31:8-9; Mic. 6:8).

There are also significant developmental or psychological reasons for affirming profession of faith. For many generations, a public profession of faith has served as a rite of passage out of childhood and into adolescent or adult faith. It serves as a natural occasion for challenging youth to consider the claims of Christ, to give voice to the faith within them, to celebrate and affirm their God-given gifts, and to join in God's worldwide work.

At the same time, there is no single age that the church is able to mandate for public profession of faith. Indeed, in God's sovereign grace, congregations have witnessed profound professions of faith by believers of 8 and 88 years. Professions of faith arise out of individual initiative as the Holy Spirit leads. We also note gratefully that in recent years many congregations have been more intentional about welcoming persons with cognitive disabilities to profess their faith.

Public professions of faith are a lifelong practice rather than a once-in-a-lifetime event. Some of these professions happen at significant life moments—for example, parents who present children for baptism profess their faith, and officebearers who are ordained and installed to their offices profess their faith, each in the public assembly for worship. Additional expressions of faith happen as a recurring part of worship, as the congregation recites creeds, sings songs that testify to God's goodness, or exclaims

“Amen” or “Thanks be to God” after a Scripture reading or in the middle of a sermon. Every time we participate in the Lord’s Supper, we profess our faith, “proclaiming the Lord’s death until he comes.” Professing faith should thus be seen as an indispensable element in regular worship practices. And the formal rite of passage we call “profession of faith” can be understood as a way for each individual to join in expressing assent to the faith regularly professed by the whole congregation. Regrettably, public profession of faith has tended to be seen as a once-in-a-lifetime event, overshadowing the fact that the act of professing faith happens throughout life and in many and varied ways in the life of a congregation.

B. Pastoral challenges

We acknowledge, however, that several contemporary factors have also eroded this practice, including the extension of adolescence as a distinct stage in one’s life cycle, the reluctance of some churches to impose any expectation of a formal profession of faith, lack of clarity about the missional character of profession of faith, and—for some—prolonged periods of formal education at a distance from a young person’s congregational home.

These factors, however, do not offer grounds for setting aside this practice, but only for becoming more intentional about it. Congregations that offer warm, personal invitations to each child and young person to explore making profession of faith by probing their doubts and questions, developing Christian practices of Bible study and prayer, and discerning their gifts for service will have served them well.

C. The status of requiring profession of faith prior to table participation

Since the Reformation, profession of faith has also been a requirement for participation at the table in many Reformed and Presbyterian churches. The sixteenth-century Reformers in the Reformed tradition replaced medieval confirmation with profession of faith. Profession of faith was closely linked with both baptism and catechesis. Children ages 10-14 were invited and expected to testify to their faith and to recite answers to catechism questions that explored their faith prior to participation at the Lord’s table. It entailed, then, both a testimony of faith in response to God’s grace and assent to the particular doctrines of the local church. In the Reformation period, this practice was an effective means of encouraging discipleship and resisting superstitious views of the Lord’s Supper.⁹ Likewise, in subsequent centuries it has been a valuable pastoral approach.

However, we also observe that public profession of faith is neither biblically nor confessionally mandated. It is one pastoral strategy to promote discipleship and to provide accountability regarding table participation. And the requirement does have some disadvantages. For one, requiring profession of faith before table participation can unwittingly reinforce the perception that infant and young children are not members of the church. In these circumstances, profession of faith replaces baptism in the perception of many as the entrance requirement into the church, in opposition to the confessions (See Belgic Confession, Art. 34). For another, it can suggest that

⁹ See, for example, Robert M. Kingdon, “Catechesis in Calvin’s Geneva,” in John Van Engen, ed., *Educating People of Faith* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2004), pp. 150-78.

participation at the table requires not only age-appropriate obedience to the biblical commands about participation but also assent to the particular doctrinal formulations.

With these disadvantages in mind, some have called for eliminating the requirement for profession of faith prior to participation in the Lord's Supper in all circumstances, judging in effect that the Reformers were wrong in instituting it. Our committee, in contrast, judges that requiring profession of faith prior to participation at the table should be a matter of local discernment. We have heard compelling accounts from some pastors and elders who minister in areas of significant biblical illiteracy, where some would be likely to treat the Lord's Supper in a superstitious way (in other words, a situation not unlike that of John Calvin's day), in which requiring profession of faith would be a wise decision on the part of the elders. We have also heard compelling accounts from pastors and elders who sense that requiring profession of faith prior to participation in the Lord's Supper has reinforced the idea that children are not members of the church.

In sum, promoting discipleship and nurturing obedient participation at the table is the task of every congregation under the supervision of the elders. Requiring public profession of faith is one strategy for accomplishing this.

VI. Our assessment and proposal

A. Two positions restated

In light of section IV, it is helpful to state again the two basic positions, purged of the inconclusive arguments, and restated in light of our study of 1 Corinthians 11 and covenant theology.

1. Those against children partaking before making a profession of faith—The Bible nowhere explicitly mandates that children should participate. 1 Corinthians 11 mandates that *each* participant at the table should examine themselves and discern the body, actions which young children are incapable of engaging in. While Paul articulates these imperatives with respect to a specific situation, they do apply in all situations.
2. Those for children at the table—The Bible nowhere explicitly bars children from participating. When we “discern the body,” part of what we discern is that children should be present because they belong to the covenant. We should handle the command for each to examine themselves just like we do the command “repent and be baptized,” noting that it is appropriate for everyone who has the capacity to do so.

Each of these arguments can be stated in rhetorically powerful ways. Each is convincing to some. For this reason, the CRC has had a series of study reports, majority and minority positions; the RCA allows both practices; and several other Reformed and Presbyterian denominations have had vigorous debates about the topic. As a committee, we have listened to both positions. We have learned much from each. We are convinced that no matter what position someone holds, there is much to learn from the best arguments for the other position, provided they can be heard above the din of weaker arguments.

Furthermore, we sense an underlying unity in both positions: everyone involved wants as many baptized members as possible to be sorry for their sin, to trust in Jesus as their Savior, to desire to live for Jesus, and to participate actively in the Lord's Supper.

We also note that both positions on this topic are fraught with some problematic tendencies.

The case for welcoming children tends to downplay the significance of the imperatives in the text. The Lord's Supper does involve tangible, faith-filled action—taking, eating, drinking, discerning, and waiting. Yet some are so eager to defend the presence of young children at the table that this active obedience tends to be downplayed.

The case for not welcoming children until profession of faith tends to treat profession of faith as the only appropriate strategy for welcoming people to the table, a lofty designation for a practice that is not mandated directly in Scripture.

B. Points of agreement and consensus

That brings us to our current assessment of this material. The committee offers the following two claims on the basis of this study. Further, on the basis of conversations across the CRC, we sense that these two claims could be widely embraced.

1. Baptized children are members of the church—the body of Christ who are welcomed to the table on the basis not of their comprehension or profession but on the basis of God's gracious invitation to the covenant community.
2. Each participant in the Lord's Supper should participate actively, in obedience to each biblical imperative.

That is, with those who support children at the table, we agree that the main application of 1 Corinthians 11 should be to call inhospitable adults to renewed practices of hospitality. Yet we see no reason why it should also call inhospitable persons of all ages to renewed practices of hospitality.

Likewise, with those who oppose children at the table, we agree that each imperative comes as life-giving instruction to each participant, regardless of age.

As we shall explain below, where we disagree with those who oppose children at the table is with the sense that very young children are incapable of self-examination and discernment in age-appropriate ways.

C. An additional consideration: Age- and ability-appropriate obedience

In addition to this brief summary, the committee wishes to add one additional but significant consideration: a simple comparison of how we approach the obedience of children to various biblical commands. Namely, should we not view the imperatives regarding participation in the Lord's Supper as we do with all the life-giving imperatives throughout Scripture, as something that all God's children should obey in an age- and ability-appropriate way? Just as we encourage very young children to begin obeying commands to pray to God and to not steal or lie, so too we invite young children to engage in age- and ability-appropriate ways of participating at the Lord's table.

This “age-appropriate and ability-appropriate” argument is already practiced by the church. We gratefully observe that congregations regularly welcome baptized persons with cognitive disabilities to the table as members of the covenant who participate according to their ability. Further, the church regularly welcomes persons with dementia to the table, long after they have the capacities they once did to examine themselves and discern the body. It welcomes them to obey in an “ability-appropriate” way. As a committee, we want to strongly affirm the practice of welcoming persons with cognitive disabilities and dementia to partake of the Lord’s Supper in precisely this way, namely, by obeying all the imperatives in an “ability-appropriate” way.

This position challenges the notion that children are not capable of self-examination and discernment. Even very young children engage in the practices commended in 1 Corinthians 11, as they express with heartfelt sincerity, “I’m sorry”; “I love Jesus”; “This is God’s family”; “This is God’s feast.” Like all professing adults who express these same sentiments, they will not understand them fully, and they may not hold to them consistently throughout their life. But as with professing adults, we see no reason why the church should not welcome and nurture their age- and ability-appropriate participation, as well as to commit to ongoing nurture, education, and accountability.

This view resists a common analogy that we hear in discussions of this topic, the view that requiring profession of faith prior to table participation is like requiring a driver’s license before driving. Aspects of this analogy are compelling—participation at the table, like driving, is a matter of great significance. But other aspects of this analogy are troubling—the implication that young children are incapable of faith or genuine obedience, and the implication that the commands of 1 Corinthians 11 are qualitatively different than other biblical commands. While we enthusiastically embrace the significance of the commands presented in 1 Corinthians 11, we see no biblical grounds for supporting this analogy.

The committee realizes that some will still resist this approach, asking, How can children even know what they are doing? We want to respond to this point with great care.

First, the committee wants to gently challenge the emphasis on cognitive understanding that may undergird this question. Our ability to reason is a great gift from God. But participation in the Lord’s Supper should never be limited to thinking about what we are doing, even as we generously invite each participant to greater learning over time.

Second, the committee would respectfully note that none of us can comprehend the depths of the mystery of the Lord’s Supper. As adult believers, it is appropriate for us to realize that the difference between a young child and a mature adult pales in comparison to the depths of this mystery.

Third, an approach that advocates participation in an “ability-appropriate” way necessarily entails that we challenge children to grow in their understanding. Rather than setting aside the value of learning and pursuing cognitive understanding, it actually reinforces it—calling on Christians to grow in knowledge and depth of participation throughout our lives. Indeed, this “age-appropriate” and “ability-appropriate” consideration also mitigates another pastoral challenge—the fact that some lifelong members either passively or actively resist growth in their walk with God and their participation in the table over the course of their life.

This brings us to what we judge to be one of the underlying but often unarticulated dynamics with the CRC discussion of this topic over the past 25 years—the fact that we have unwittingly focused our response to the warnings of 1 Corinthians 11 almost entirely on the process of welcome to the table. As we reflect on the gift of God’s covenant love, many of us do find the idea of children’s participation compelling. But we can’t set aside the haunting sense that we would not be taking seriously enough the warnings of 1 Corinthians 11. That makes sense if our answer to the question “What does the church do to prevent unworthy participation” is limited to “requiring a public profession of faith prior to participation.” If this is the case (and we sense that it may often be in practice, if not in theory), this is unhealthy in two ways: it does not include organic, ongoing practices of discipline around the table, and it unnecessarily sets the bar too high for initial participation. For this reason, both the Church Order changes and resources we continue to develop address not only the nature of welcome to the table but also ongoing discipline.

In sum, “age- and ability-appropriate participation” should be not considered merely a way of “lowering the bar” for young children, persons with dementia, or persons with cognitive disabilities. Rather, it “sets the bar” for every believer in ways that fit with their own age and capacity.

D. A proposed guiding principle

On the basis of each of these prior considerations, the committee proposes a guiding principle for discussion:

All baptized members are welcome to the Lord’s Supper for age- and ability-appropriate obedience to biblical commands about participation, under the supervision of the elders. The elders have responsibility to nurture grateful and obedient participation by providing encouragement, instruction, and accountability in the congregation. Requiring a formal public profession of faith prior to participation in the Lord’s Supper is one pastoral approach to consider, but is not required by Scripture or the confessions.

This approach has significant merit. It flows naturally from the consensus we have described, and it mitigates the problematic tendencies of each position. Further, the above guiding principle

1. Fits naturally with how Reformed Christians understand the beautiful (though sometimes misunderstood) relationship between faith and works, grace and obedience. We are qualified to come to the table not because of our faith or our mental understanding or our act of professing faith, but only because of God’s gracious invitation, and then as we come, we are invited and challenged to participate as an act of faithful obedience to God’s commands.
2. Fits naturally with how we read the rest of Scripture. We intuitively sense that the Ten Commandments, for example, apply to all God’s children, regardless of age or ability. We do not wait to insist that young children arrive at some level of understanding before learning not to steal or lie or to pray. The same can be true here.

3. Accents the obedience at the table that 1 Corinthians 11 requires, and resists approaches that essentially ignore or downplay these imperatives. It applies this call to obedience to all God's children, at every age, including not only our children but also all adults (adults, we hasten to add, who must never think of profession of faith as a kind of graduation from continual growth in the faith).
4. Fits naturally with Reformed confessions. The Heidelberg Catechism (Q. and A. 81) indicates that participants who come to the table should be "displeased with themselves because of their sins," "trust that their sins are pardoned and that their continuing weakness is covered by the suffering and death of Christ," and "desire more and more to strengthen their faith and to lead a better life."¹⁰ Children of all ages for whom this is true should be welcomed at the table.
5. Also is fitting for a church with a missional focus, conveying God's gracious invitation to receive grace in Jesus Christ, and God's gracious instructions for responding in grateful obedience.
6. Emphasizes the authority and responsibility of the elders to determine the shape of local congregational practices (1 Pet. 5:1-2; Church Order, Art. 25-b).

E. Common criteria for evaluating practices

This principle is an important first step in our process of discerning together the nature of faithful participation at the Lord's Supper. The next step is to discern what practices best enact this principle. The committee suggests shaping this discussion as follows: first, to identify a set of common criteria for discerning practices; second, to describe common practices that we all can share; and, third, to describe complementary practices of welcome to the table that congregations may develop in response to local ministry contexts.

First, this guiding principle, in light of the preceding discussion, leads naturally to several criteria that each church council should use to evaluate their own local practices.

1. Congregations should actively resist any language that suggests baptized children or any other typically marginalized group are not part of the church.
2. Congregations should question any practices that routinely "humiliate those who have nothing" or others in the body of Christ.
3. Congregations should question their practices if they fail to challenge the unrepentant, the inhospitable, or others who "show contempt for the church of God" and routinely participate in the Lord's Supper.
4. Congregations should prayerfully examine practices that may routinely fail to invite certain groups of baptized members to partake in an age- and

¹⁰ To be sure, in the 16th century, profession of faith was the practice that the church adopted to live out this article of faith. But this specific choice is not mandated by Scripture or by the confessions. It has some strengths and some weaknesses. The church in each age has the enormous pastoral responsibility of discerning which practices best promise to strengthen obedience to each biblical command about the Lord's Supper.

ability-appropriate way, including persons with cognitive disabilities or dementia, as well as children.

5. Congregations should develop practices of training, formation, and accountability that invite baptized members into joyful obedience of each biblical command about table participation, including instruction in self-examination and discerning the body. These practices should be cultivated for each age group in age- and ability-specific ways.
6. Congregations should promote a culture of lifelong learning, in which no milestone moment is seen as a graduation from growth in the faith.
7. Congregations should resist overly casual approaches to the Lord's Supper that minimize the important and life-giving biblical commands for participation.

It may be helpful to formulate these criteria as constructive questions:

- What can we do to actively resist language that suggests children are not part of the church?
- What can we do to ensure that no one is treated as a second-class citizen at the table?
- What can we do to challenge inhospitable or unrepentant attitudes?
- What can we do to actively encourage all members to participate in an age-appropriate way?
- What can we do to offer specific instruction on faithful participation in the Lord's Supper, including what it means to "discern the body" and examine ourselves?
- What can we do to cultivate a culture of life-long learning and discipleship?
- What can we do to resist overly casual attitudes toward participation in the Lord's Supper?

F. Common practices

The committee also judges that the preceding discussion commends a wide range of practices that should be common in every CRC congregation.

1. When the Lord's Supper is celebrated, it should be clear that all participants are, in fact, professing faith as they do so. They are "proclaiming the Lord's death until he comes."
2. Each congregation should provide clear explanations for new and inquiring Christians, parents and guardians about who is welcome and why.
3. Each congregation should provide ongoing nurture and instruction about the Lord's Supper to people of all ages and abilities.
4. Each congregation should provide regular, constructive disciplines of accountability, such as mutual censure.

G. Complementary models of welcome to the table

Third, in the context of these common criteria and practices, each church council has important decisions to make about the specific ways in which it will welcome baptized members to participate in age- and ability-appropriate ways. In what circumstances might it be wise to require public profession of

faith prior to participation at the table? In what ways can the church communicate both God's gracious invitation and the joy of covenant obedience? What should happen in worship services, and what should happen outside of worship?

At this point, the context of each congregation will become particularly important. The history of local practice, the nature of common assumptions, and the particular pastoral challenges of each congregation must all be taken into account in making wise choices about practice. This is clearly a matter for church councils to decide through processes of spiritual and pastoral discernment.

However a council proceeds, it is important that the process involve the children, the parents or guardians of the children, and the church (typically, the pastor, elders, and/or church education teachers).

The committee is aware of three basic models that have the potential to meet the principle and common criteria proposed. Basic descriptions are offered here, along with some initial observations about them.

1. Model 1: Invitation is offered in worship

One approach would be for a congregation to simply convey in the context of the Lord's Supper celebration the principle we have described. A pastor might say, "The Lord's Supper is a gracious gift that God has provided to Christ's body, the church. All members of Christ's body are invited to participate as an act of faith, and to come to the table of the Lord discerning that this bread and cup are signs and seals of God's love for us and discerning that we who participate are members of Christ and each other."

This approach is simple and clear. But we have significant reservations about an approach that relies only on this invitation. First, few churches do or would take the time during a worship service to explain each of the life-giving commands about participation at the table. Without that explanation, it is far too easy to be unaware of those commands. And without understanding them, it is very easy, especially in a North American context for participants to slip into a rather privatistic way of participating. Second, by itself this approach does not provide a milestone event for welcoming children to the table.

2. Model 2: Through public profession of faith

Some congregations may judge that requiring a formal, public profession of faith before participation in the Lord's Supper remains the best pastoral way to encourage faith-filled, age-appropriate participation. This may be especially apt in pastoral settings where biblical literacy is low or where the Lord's Supper would otherwise be treated in a rather casual or flippant way. In this regard, we are grateful for the testimony of a pastor in a largely unchurched area who spoke eloquently to us about how requiring profession of faith before entrance to the table is crucial for helping the youth of the church take it seriously. We also note that the resources provided by Synod 1995 can assist churches who would continue to require a public profession of faith prior to table participation in welcoming younger children to profess their faith.

3. Model 3: Through a “Welcome to the Table” process

A third model involves a process whereby the church invites young, baptized members of the church to learn about the Lord’s Supper, to express their desire to participate in faith in an age-appropriate way, and then to celebrate the milestone of their first participation. As with profession of faith, this may be done with a group of children or by individual children. The process may involve a Sunday school teacher, an elder, parents, and pastors in appropriate ways. It could be as simple as a conversation between the child and the pastor, or it may be more complex, including several Sunday school lessons.

This model is ideal in many ways: it offers an intentional time for nurturing full, active, and conscious participation; it celebrates the work of God in the lives of members of the body; and it clearly conveys that the Lord’s Supper is a church matter, not merely an act of personal devotion.

This model may be appropriate in many settings. It is especially appropriate in contexts in which there are several baptized members who love Jesus but do not participate in the Lord’s Supper because profession of faith seems intimidating—a fairly common concern we have heard from congregations in our work. It is also especially appropriate in settings where many have come to think of profession of faith, rather than baptism, as the entrance into church membership.

This model is an adaptation of a model of “young profession of faith” that many congregations adopted after the synodical decisions of 1995 (see the Faith Formation Committee website for examples of how several congregations developed this: www.crcna.org/faitformation). Though we await feedback from the churches, we sense that if the approach recommended in this report were to be adopted, that congregations would retain the term “profession of faith” for the public act of professing faith and indicating agreement with the Reformed creeds and confessions, and would refer to this process as a “Welcome to the Table” process.

The Faith Formation Committee looks forward to significant additional work on resources related to these models following responses from the churches and synod.

H. Models for sustaining and deepening table participation

With each model, however, our discussion makes clear that the welcome to the table is just the beginning. Every church needs to deepen and sustain faithful participation over time. If a child begins to participate in the Lord’s Supper at age 8, we should be able to ask that person five or ten years later, “What has your church done to deepen your understanding and participation at the Lord’s Supper?” and receive a satisfying answer. Likewise, if a church requires public profession of faith for table participation and a person makes profession of faith at age 18 or 28 or 58, we should be able to ask that person the same question five or ten years later and receive a satisfying answer. We have some concern that the significant attention we have given to the welcome to the table over the past generation has unwittingly detracted from healthy practices that sustain and deepen table participation over time.

I. Every congregation on a trajectory of growth

We have some concern that the work of the committee and this discussion will result in two equally problematic situations: (1) it may lead some congregations to make radical changes hastily, without a healthy approach to change; and (2) it may lead some congregations to conclude that their present approach is good enough and that they do not need to take up the topic. In contrast, our vision—confirmed by dozens of conversations across the CRC—is that each congregation will study this topic and look for ways to hone practices that deepen discipleship. Our vision is that every congregation would be on a healthy trajectory of growth.

J. Implications for church membership categories

The current CRC Church Order and its Supplements distinguish between “members by baptism” or “baptized members,” on the one hand, and “confessing members” or “communicant members,” on the other. If synod adopts the recommendations in this report, these terms will need to be revisited. We are willing to serve synod by proposing alternative language for the relevant Church Order articles.

K. Responses to common questions

As the committee continues to think through this matter, it has received several helpful questions. The following offers preliminary responses that we look forward to refining over time.

1. Won't this approach simply further congregationalism?

We are certainly aware of the risks of congregationalism. Should we really promote a culture in which some churches require profession of faith and some do not? It is our prayer that this proposed approach will not in fact fan congregationalism but, rather, will strengthen the unity we share by articulating a common principle, a set of common criteria to evaluate practices, and a network of communication to share resources that fit well with this principle and common criteria. These common starting points are, indeed, significant common ground—far greater than many denominations share, including many Reformed denominations. In an age of astonishing diversity in congregational life, we dare to dream that this will deepen, not erode, our sense of unity across the denomination.

2. What about cases in which young children participate, but then go through a period of time in which they rebel against the church? Isn't it risky to involve them at such a young age?

This is a difficult challenge that requires enormous spiritual discernment and pastoral wisdom. But it is also important to see that this is not really different from welcoming a sullen, stubborn 39-year-old who cheats on his or her taxes despite the fact they have been participating since they made public profession of faith when they were 20. In both cases, the church should pray for them and call them to a life of faithful discipleship. And the church has the authority to also either (a) suggest or (b) require that they not participate in communion for a time. Wise church leaders might themselves choose to abstain from communion at a given time until they can reconcile with a neighbor.

3. If we adopt this, will we finally be doing something to prevent so many young people from leaving the church?

The reasons for this phenomenon are complex, and no one change in church practice is, by itself, likely to address this problem. Still, if we deeply internalize the vision represented here—in which children are seen as full members of the body, and they are invited to and held accountable to full, active, conscious participation in body life, including life at the table—that could, by the Spirit’s power, make an enormous difference in the faith formation of children and youth. That is one reason why we are eagerly working on this topic together.

4. What about the issue of transferring from church to church and having various practices—must churches who make different decisions on the three models accept transfers from churches that have done it differently and allow them to follow their ways—for example, if a church requires profession of faith for participation, does that apply to the children in a family transferring from a church that does not require it?

This is a challenging issue, and one that many congregations already face. This issue is significant no matter what direction the CRC takes on this issue, given the number of transfers that happen between CR churches and from many other denominations into the CRC. Church councils here have two options. One option is to explain current practice and ask everyone to abide by it. The other is to grant exceptions to children who have already participated. Each approach has strengths and weaknesses, yet we sense that the principle we are recommending offers the best possible position from which to decide. The question to ask for any given child or family is “How can we invite baptized members of the church to participate most deeply in an age-appropriate way?” In many instances, this would entail a pastoral conversation with the family about the Lord’s Supper and the nature of obedient participation at the table and granting permission for children to participate. In some instances, perhaps in instances in which a family’s prior congregation approached the Lord’s Supper in a rather superstitious or casual way, a church may ask the children not to participate for a time until further instruction or conversations are possible.

5. Is there an age that is too young for “age-appropriate participation”?

The committee does not think there are scriptural grounds for making a specific determination about this. We judge that naming a specific age in the Church Order would be too arbitrary. The cultural context of a congregation also makes a difference in shaping perceptions around young children and their capacity for participation. We sense that many congregations will approach this by welcoming children beginning somewhere around ages 5 to 8, though some may choose to invite 3- or 4-year olds. It would seem natural to wait for children to answer in the affirmative questions such as “Do you love Jesus? Are you sorry for your sin? Is this God’s family? Is this God’s meal? Do you want to participate?” We realize that local church councils will need to offer specific advice about this question for parents. As our committee develops resources for church councils, we will do so in response to synod’s action on our recommendation.

6. Is it possible for baptized infants to practice “age-appropriate participation”?

At present the committee is not aware of a strong desire in the CRC to practice infant communion. But we do hear people asking this theoretical question. Some raise the question in light of the intriguing words of the psalmist (in the NIV): “You brought me out of the womb; you made me trust in you even at my mother’s breast” (Ps. 22:9), and “From birth I have relied on you; you brought me forth from my mother’s womb. I will ever praise you” (Ps. 71:6). Others point to recent discoveries in developmental psychology that demonstrate the significant ways in which infants respond to their environment.

As this report explores, celebrations should highlight the life-giving significance of active participation, avoid implying that either baptism or the Lord’s Supper impart grace magically, and avoid reinforcing a kind of “cheap grace” view that is prevalent in contemporary culture. For this reason, we judge that infant communion would not be a wise pastoral practice.

At the same time, we do not believe we can determine a particular age when infants or children can appropriately participate, especially given many diverse ways in which various cultures understand the capacities of young children. That is why our recommendation notes that communion takes place “under the supervision of the elders,” and we entrust this particular decision to them.

7. How do the recommendations of this report differ from those adopted by Synod 1995?

The primary change that occurred in 1995 involved finding pastorally helpful ways to lower the age for making profession of faith. This report commends the importance of public profession of faith as a significant faith milestone but also proposes that a public profession of faith not be required for table participation in all congregations. Instead, this report recommends that participation at the table be understood in terms of “age- and ability-appropriate obedience.”

8. How do the recommendations of this report differ from those adopted by Synod 2006?

Synod 2006 simply declared that all baptized members of the CRC are welcome to come to the table. It did not provide analysis of 1 Corinthians 11, and it did not lay out specific principles or guidelines for participation or accountability.

L. Further steps

The Faith Formation Committee looks forward to continuing work on other aspects of its mandate in response to synod’s actions on this report’s recommendations. Depending on the nature of synod’s actions, we anticipate working on:

- possible Church Order changes.
- pastoral responses to several case studies.
- educational and liturgical resources for congregations.

As the committee has repeatedly heard, what congregations need most is a set of very accessible materials—everything from sample pastoral letters in response to commonly asked questions, worship materials, and brief explanations for parents about children’s participation. We are committed to work collaboratively to produce those materials. At present, we envision resources that will flow from the common criteria developed above, but also be designed for use in a variety of congregations: African-American, Latino, Asian, Anglo; rural, suburban, urban; large and small; brand new and well established. We have imagined the possibility of convening a working group of people from a wide variety of congregations to work with us in developing a portfolio of sample resources for many types of congregations. But first the committee awaits the response of the churches and of synod.

VII. Recommendations

- A. That synod grant the privilege of the floor to members of the Faith Formation Committee when synod addresses its report.
- B. That synod endorse the following guiding principle as the basis for the committee’s continuing work:

All baptized members are welcome to the Lord’s Supper for age- and ability-appropriate obedience to biblical commands about participation, under the supervision of the elders. The elders have responsibility to nurture grateful and obedient participation by providing encouragement, instruction, and accountability in the congregation. Requiring a formal public profession of faith prior to participation in the Lord’s Supper is one pastoral approach to consider, but is not required by Scripture or the confessions.

Grounds:

1. This position honors the covenant status of all who are baptized and affirms their membership in the body of Christ.
2. This position is faithful to the instruction of 1 Corinthians 11, which calls for a response of obedience on the part of those that come to the table.
3. This position acknowledges that, though members of the body of Christ respond to the promises of God in ways that are shaped by their age and abilities, their responses are nevertheless valid responses.
4. This position implements the instructions of Heidelberg Catechism, Q. and A. 81, that those who come to the table must be repentant, trusting, and desirous of growth in obedience.
5. This position honors the polity of the CRC, in which the sacraments of the church are to be celebrated under the supervision of the elders.
6. This position allows for diversity of local practice within a standard principle.
7. Adopting this principle will give the Faith Formation Committee sufficient guidance to complete its mandate by proposing Church Order changes and working with church agencies to develop pastoral resources for congregations.

C. That synod remind the churches that changes in local practice arising out of this principle should be delayed until changes to the Church Order are adopted at a future synod.

Grounds:

1. This approach reflects the covenant we share about changes to Church Order Article 47.
2. This reminder is necessary because congregations have recently been confused about the status of synodical decisions on this topic.
3. Working together as a denomination in discerning faithful practices for Lord's Supper celebrations is particularly important in an age of congregationalism.

Note: The Faith Formation Committee is likely to bring additional recommendations to Synod 2010 in its annual report.

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Appendix B

Affirming Baptism and Forming Faith

Note: Sections in italics indicate those sections of material that are also addressed rather directly in the document "Children at the Table."

Since we began our work late in 2007, our committee has had the privilege of listening to voices from throughout the CRC, to engage in scriptural and theological study, and to reflect on the significant challenges and opportunities of contemporary ministry and denominational life. Our mandate from Synod challenges us both to express and hone a biblical vision for faith formation and to provide specific guidance on the question of children at the Lord's Supper. We strongly sense that our approach to the more focused question of children at the table must be seen in context of an overarching biblical vision for the sacraments and faith formation.

This document, "Affirming Baptism and Forming Faith," is one attempt to express such a vision. The document is designed to express widespread feelings of both

concern and opportunity in contemporary ministry, reflect our continuity with the confessions, create an outline for teaching, for gathering additional resources, and serve the cause of spiritual renewal in the church. More specifically, this document expresses several key themes embedded in the formation of our faith and found in our work to date:

1. **BAPTISMAL IDENTITY.** *Our identity is found in our union with Christ through the Holy Spirit. Practices of faith formation are designed not merely to teach biblical literacy or to promote certain behavioral choices, as important as these are. Rather, the ultimate purpose of faith formation practices is to deepen our sense of identity as God’s children, united to Christ. The importance of this task is underscored by the identity crisis that many of God’s children are facing today.*
2. **MILESTONES.** *Public, liturgical, prayerful celebrations of milestone moments (such as profession of faith and other such events—see Part II.2-3) promise to reinforce baptismal identity, convey the church’s love for each individual, and express a warm invitation to deeper participation in the life of faith (see, for example, Joshua 4: 21-24).*
3. **EXPECTANT URGENCY.** *Growth in the faith is a gift of the Holy Spirit. We do not produce it, but we should pray for it, long for it, participate in it, and be prepared to suffer in it—themes poignantly conveyed in Paul’s description of his attitude toward the Galatians as being “in the pain of childbirth until Christ is formed in you” (Galatians 4:19).*
4. **LIFELONG LEARNING.** *We never graduate from the school of faith formation. Each chapter or season of life includes its own challenges and opportunities that can aid or impede growth. We must resist any practice or language that unwittingly conveys the impression that we graduate from learning when we make our Public Profession of Faith. We must also resist any practice or language that implies that those who are farther along in the journey of faith no longer face questions and struggles.*
5. **HOLISTIC FORMATION.** *Our practices of formation are aimed at helping us love God “with your heart, soul, and mind,” and “your neighbor as yourself” (Matthew 22:37-39). We are eager to resist approaches to formation that are merely cognitive or merely affective or that separate our love of God from our love of neighbor. We aim that the whole person is formed after the pattern of Jesus Christ. Only through such holistic formation will true biblical maturity be evidenced.*

The form of this document is something of an experiment. Unlike a standard Synodical report, the audience for this document is not primarily Synod, but rather any individual or group engaged in a study of faith formation and the sacraments (e.g., teachers, parents, a church council, a small group, a college or seminary class). Once we arrive at a complete provisional text, additional study materials can be compiled for each section, and a shorter summary version can be prepared for other audiences.

One of the features of the document that has already occasioned many constructive conversations is the purposefully ambiguous use of the “we” at the end of each section. It is the committee’s intention that we understand that “we” not to refer to our committee, nor even to synod, but rather to the collective whole of the

denomination. This is why each of the final statements in each section begins “we call on each other. . .” It is our desire to conduct our work in such a way that these statements genuinely express our common convictions.

To this end, this document has been developed through a process that has already been very collaborative. Over 50 pastoral correspondents and several seminary students offered feedback on earlier drafts of this material. We have engaged twenty CRC classes in workshop discussions. We have welcomed helpful feedback about both the content and form of this statement from delegates to Synod 2009, from church councils, and from individuals throughout the denomination and beyond. Following the recent Synod, we have responded to the advice we received by editing this document.

We are pleased to have also completed our major document entitled “Children at the Table: Toward a Guiding Principle for Biblically Faithful Celebrations of the Lord’s Supper.” We are making it available to the churches now and will be presenting it to the Synod of 2010, asking that Synod endorse the major principle presented as the basis for our continuing work. We are eager for Synod’s consideration and response. We have also provided a Bible Study on 1 Corinthians 11 and a series of Sermon/Worship Series Suggestions to complement these documents. (These can be found on our website at www.crcna.org/faithformation.)

PROLOGUE

Discerning Faithful Sacramental Practice in Contemporary Culture

The sacraments are indispensable gifts of God, and are of vital significance for the church’s task to make and form disciples of Jesus. Baptism and the Lord’s Supper are clearly mandated by scripture, in rich and evocative texts which both point back to God’s dealings with Israel and to the life, death, resurrection and ascension of Jesus Christ and which point ahead to the fullness of the coming kingdom. The confessions of the church affirm that God “confirms [our faith] through our use of the holy sacraments” (*Heidelberg Catechism*, Q & A 65), and that God “added these to the Word of the Gospel . . . confirming in us the salvation he imparts to us” (*Belgic Confession*, art. 33). The *Contemporary Testimony* echoes these confessions: “God meets us in the sacraments, communicating grace to us by means of water, bread, and wine” (*Our World Belongs to God*, 2008 edition, par. 37). The sacraments are indispensable gifts of God which not only express, but also form and nurture faith.

Nevertheless, the contemporary practice of the sacraments involves several complex challenges. In many contexts, the liturgical practices around the sacraments have changed more in the past generation than in the past four centuries, generating new and sometimes competing perceptions about their meaning and purpose, as well as very different ways of celebrating the sacraments. New emphasis on visual communication offers both opportunities and challenges for contemporary sacramental practice, forming in people inside and outside the church a new capacity for perceiving meaning in visual and dramatic actions, but also so surrounding us with significant visual and dramatic forms of communication that the unique role of the sacraments can be obscured. Further, members of our congregations have more sustained contact with the entire spectrum of Christian traditions than in previous times, exposure that generates many competing perceptions about the meaning of sacraments. In a time of significant change, it is wise

for all of us—working together as denomination and in partnership with our ecumenical partners worldwide—to discern and then promote biblically faithful sacramental practices.

PART 1: BAPTISMAL IDENTITY

1.1 Baptism and the Grace of God

The marvelous grace of God given through Jesus Christ and conveyed to us through the work of the Holy Spirit is the foundation of baptism. Through this sacrament, God takes the initiative and declares that we belong to him. It is God who acts through baptism, working to nourish, sustain, comfort, challenge, teach, and assure us. A richly symbolic action, the celebration of baptism stirs our imaginations to perceive the work of God and the contours of the gospel more clearly. “By Baptism we are received into God’s church and set apart from all other people . . . that we may be dedicated entirely to him, bearing his mark and sign. It also witnesses to us that he will be our God forever, since he is our gracious Father” (*Belgic Confession*, art. 33).

We call on each other to celebrate the wondrous grace of God signified in baptism in all the liturgical and pedagogical avenues available to us.

1.2 Multiple Scriptural Images for Baptism

As the New Testament unfolds the meaning of baptism, it teaches us that baptism is a single celebration that conveys several layers of meaning. It is at once a sign of the washing away of sin (Acts 2:28, Acts 22:16), a sign of our union with Jesus’ death and resurrection (Romans 6:4, Colossians 2:12), a sign of the promise of new birth in Christ (1 Peter 3:21-22), a sign of incorporation into the one, universal church (Ephesians 4: 5, 1 Corinthians 1:13, 12:13), and a sign of the covenant and kingdom of God (Ephesians 1:13, Colossians 2:11). While the image of washing away sin has long been primary in Reformed theology and liturgy, the celebration of baptism should highlight each of these aspects of New Testament teaching.

While we gratefully recognize the rich blessings of the washing imagery in baptism; we also call on each other to affirm and teach the full range of scriptural imagery for baptism.

1.3 Baptism and the Drama of Redemption

When God called Abram to leave his country, his people and his father’s household God gave him a new identity, promised to make his name great and cause him to be a blessing to all the peoples on earth (Genesis 12:1-3). Later God identified his arrangement with Abram as a covenant to which God would be faithful forever, which would involve both Abraham and his descendants for the generations to come, and should be signified by circumcision (Genesis 17:1-14).

In the New Testament baptism functions similarly, as a sign of God’s covenant to which he will always be faithful, involving us and our descendants as his covenant children, and signified by the water of baptism. Paul says that in our baptism we have a “circumcision not

performed by human hands” and that we are “circumcised by Christ” (Colossians 2:11, 12).

In baptism God identifies us as his covenant children, pledges his faithfulness to us, and calls us to faithful obedience as his body in the world.

We call on each other to see the entire story of God’s redemptive work expressed in our baptism, and to proclaim that his gift of a new identity is at the heart of his drama of redemption.

1.4 Baptism as a Sign of Both Forgiveness and Life-long Dying and Rising with Christ

One way to summarize this rich scriptural teaching is to note how baptism is a sign of both the believer’s justification and sanctification. It is a sign of both the washing and cleansing of our sin and also of our being “set apart . . . that we may be dedicated entirely to God” (*Belgic Confession* 24). John Calvin referred to this as a “double grace and benefit from God in baptism,” which includes both that “God wills to be a merciful Father to us, not imputing to us all our faults” and that “God will assist us by his Holy Spirit so that we will have the power to battle against the devil, sin, and the desires of the flesh, until we have victory in this, and to live in the liberty of his kingdom” (*Calvin’s 1542 baptismal liturgy*). The Apostle Paul uses the metaphor of clothing to describe these two dimensions of the sacrament. Paul declares that “you are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus, for all of you who were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ” (Galatians 3:26f.). But this status of being clothed with Christ includes the call to continue putting on the character of Christ: “as God’s chosen people, holy and dearly loved, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience” (Colossians 3:12). The unfathomable gift of a new status implicitly comes with a call sustained by a promise, for “he who began a good work in (us) will carry it on to completion until the day of Christ Jesus” (Philippians 1:6). In this context, we take note of the tendency in some preaching and teaching about baptism to focus only on justification—a narrowing which can undermine our perception of God’s grace throughout life and our lifelong practice of affirming baptismal identity (see section 2).

We call on each other to proclaim both the gift and the calling that comes to us in our baptism.

1.5 Baptismal Identity

In all these ways, baptism points us to our ultimate identity in Christ. This identity should shape our habits, our piety, and our daily life. The Christian life is a daily dying to sin and rising with Christ. As the *Belgic Confession* concludes, “this baptism is profitable not only when the water is on us and when we receive it but throughout our entire lives” (*Belgic Confession*, art. 34). This statement echoes John Calvin’s concern that “The benefit which we derive from the sacraments ought by no means to be restricted to the time when they are administered to us, as though the visible sign conveyed with itself the grace of God only at that moment when it is actually being proffered . . . the benefit of baptism lies open to the whole course of life, because the promise which is contained in it is

perpetually in force” (1549 *Articles concerning the sacraments*). This benefit blesses both infants and adults, and infants gradually grow to appropriate this benefit as they mature. Our baptismal identity in Christ reminds us of the astonishing work of the Holy Spirit to transform and renew our entire being—our dispositions, desires, knowledge, imagination, emotions, and more—in the image of Christ (Colossians 3:10, 2 Corinthians 3:18; 4:15).

Baptism thus offers us our ultimate vocation, that of being disciples of Jesus, a vocation that includes, but is always more important than our careers, our hobbies, even our families. This comprehensive character is described by Paul at the conclusion of one of his key descriptions of living out this baptismal identity: “And whatever you do, whether in word or in deed, do it all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him” (Colossians 3:17).

We call on each other to speak explicitly with people of all ages reminding them that their identity is found in God’s claim on them, a claim made visible in baptism.

1.6 The Inclusion of Infants

The inclusion of the children of believers in the covenant of grace is engrained in God’s plan of redemption. Covenant infants have a relationship with God (cf. Psalms 22:9-10; 71:6; 139:13; Jeremiah 1:5) and, therefore, covenant blessings are promised to them (Genesis 17:7; Acts 2:39). If crossing the Red Sea pictures baptism, it would be impossible to imagine Israel leaving the children on shore until they were old enough to cross on their own (1 Corinthians 10:2). Jesus embraced infants as citizens of his Kingdom (Luke 18:16) further suggesting how children need not be excluded from baptism. Paul refers to baptism as receiving the circumcision done by Christ (Colossians 2:11-12). For these reasons, Reformed Christians, joining with many major Christian traditions, have concluded that Scripture gives us warrant for including covenant children in the sacrament of baptism. As the Belgic Confession concludes, “Truly, Christ has shed his blood no less for washing the little children of believers than he did for adults” (art. 34).

We also take note that some other Christian traditions refrain from baptizing infants, at times in conjunction with constructive criticisms of those who do. We are particularly grateful for their warnings to us about allowing the practice of infant baptism to erode our commitment to teach our children the faith and to challenge them to express their faith in Christ. Indeed, infant baptism should heighten, not erode our commitment to invite our children and youth to claim their baptismal identity.

We call on each other to celebrate that infants of believers are covenant children who are warmly invited to taste God’s grace through the sacrament of baptism and to regularly invite children and youth to consider the claim of God on their life and to express their faith.

1.7 Baptism as Ritual Action

There are many reasons to be cautious about ritual action. The Bible gives priority to hearing the Word as the means of grace (cf. Deuteronomy 6:4; Luke 10:16; Romans 10:14-17), forbids the use of images

bearing the wrong message (Exodus 20:4; *Heidelberg Catechism* Q & A 98), declares the Old Testament ceremonies as fulfilled in Christ (Colossians 2:17), and defines faith as the conviction of things not seen (John 20:29; Hebrews 11:1; 2 Corinthians 5:7).

There are also many reasons to value healthy ritual actions, including the redemptive intentions of the Creator for both ear and eye (Proverbs 20:12), Jesus' explicit command to baptize (Matthew 28:19), and Jesus' participation in ritual practices (Luke 22:14-23, John 13:1-11), including his own baptism (Matthew 3:13-17). Such concrete, physical, symbolic action is designed, says the Belgic Confession, to "represent better to our external senses both what God enables us to understand by his Word and what he does inwardly in our hearts." This embodied nature of baptism is significant for congregations in many ways. It is a source of encouragement not only when we receive baptism, but also when we witness it. It demonstrates that grace comes to us as fully embodied creatures, created in God's image.

We call on each other to recognize the ritual and sensory character of baptism in ways that deepen the congregation's participation, while resisting any semblance of ritualism or formalism.

1.8 The Covenant Community in Baptism

Baptism is not intended to be a private action, but one which takes place within the worshiping community. God speaks publicly about the covenant position of the one being baptized. The recipients of baptism are publicly welcomed as members of the covenant community. And the community responds with its vows to receive baptized persons in love, to pray for them, and to encourage and sustain them in the fellowship of believers (cf. Form for Baptism of Children and Baptism of Adults). The covenant community lives out its vows by loving, praying for, encouraging, teaching, mentoring, and offering models of grace-filled, faithful living to every member of the congregation.

We call on each other to take such vows seriously and faithfully provide the support, encouragement and ministries needed to foster healthy growth of faith in all who are baptized.

1.9 The Significance of Baptismal Identity in Contemporary Culture

Claiming baptismal identity is especially important in the context of contemporary culture which is hungering for healing, hope, and significant relationships. Baptism clearly anchors our spirituality in the church, and resists any church-less form of spirituality. Baptism frankly acknowledges that the Christian life may involve suffering for Christ, resisting any form of spirituality that is sentimental or therapeutic. Baptism grounds us in the grace of God, resisting any spirituality that is moralistic. Baptism calls attention to the beauty, glory, holiness, and gracious sovereignty of a triune God who is intimately involved in creation and in the life of the church. In doing so it resists any notion of God as removed or isolated. Baptism draws us into the world-wide redemptive work of God who is making all things new through the work of his Son Jesus Christ.

We call on each other to discern and resist the spirits of the age that seek to undermine the meaning or significance of baptism, and to take steps to affirm its deepest meaning and significance.

PART 2: AFFIRMING BAPTISMAL IDENTITY AS A LIFELONG PRACTICE

2.1 Remembering and Affirming Baptism Throughout Life

While baptism is rightly celebrated only once, affirming our baptismal identity is a life-long practice. The Belgic Confession reminds us, “. . . this baptism is profitable not only when the water is on us and when we receive it but throughout our entire lives” (art. 34). John Calvin likewise affirmed: “we must realize that at whatever time we are baptized, we are once for all washed and purged for our whole life. Therefore, as often as we fall away (i.e., newly committed sins into which we fall after baptism), we ought to recall the memory of our baptism and fortify our mind with it, that we may always be sure and confident of the forgiveness of sins” (*Institutes* 4.15.3).

We call on each other to remember and affirm our baptismal identity throughout our lives. We call on parents to regularly remind children of their baptism and its significance.

2.2 Nurturing Baptismal Identity in Congregations

Our baptismal identity in Christ is nurtured through a variety of scripturally-mandated practices and disciplines of prayer, learning, obedience, witness, fellowship, and service. For this reason, congregations teach people of all ages, including very young children, to pray, to understand the Bible, and to engage in service in both the church and society. Our church education, fellowship, and service programs are part of how we live out our baptismal vows. Speaking explicitly about the connection between these aspects of church life and baptism is constructive—and it may be a bit too rare in some contexts. When the connection is clear, then we more easily understand that our learning, fellowship, and service in congregational life are not merely activities of self-enrichment. They are expressions of our identity in Christ. They are ways for each of us to embrace and live out of this identity.

We call on each other to speak more intentionally about the connection between baptismal identity and congregational programs for education, service, and mission.

2.3 Milestones: Multiple Occasions for Publicly Affirming Baptism

Public celebrations of milestone moments promise to reinforce baptismal identity, convey the church’s love for each individual, and express a warm invitation to deeper participation in the life of faith (the milestone imagery is suggested, for example, in Joshua 4: 21-24). There are particular occasions when our focus on baptismal identity is especially important.

- a. Public profession of faith is an especially important occasion for looking back at God’s hand on us, affirming his grace for us, and looking ahead to continued obedience (see also Section 3 below).

- b. In corporate worship, we regularly affirm our faith in receiving the assurance of pardon, in regular professions of the creeds, in the baptism of others, at the Lord's Table, and at other key milestones in congregational life. Nearly every worship service offers us opportunities to affirm our baptismal identity.
- c. Further, we affirm baptismal identity in significant public moments in the lives of individual Christians, including marriage, ordination, commissioning services for particular ministries, being welcomed into a new congregation, or reaffirmation of faith after a time of estrangement from the church, even at the time of death. At times, the language of baptism may be too obscure in our celebrations of these events. Renewing awareness of how each of these moments is a part of living our baptismal vocation offers rich possibilities for renewed faithfulness.
- d. This perspective also provides a framework for marking significant life moments of many kinds: for example, pregnancy, miscarriage, significant birthdays and anniversaries, graduations, new employment or unemployment, retirement, hospitalization, recognition of an addiction or recovery from an addiction, significant moves, and more. In each of these significant times of transition, individuals, families, fellowship groups, and congregations can joyfully affirm "we claim our identity as children of God" and pray "Spirit of God, help us live out our identity in this new circumstance."
- e. Other times of affirmation can occur at special moments in the life of a congregation, including celebrations of significant anniversaries or dedications of new ministries or facilities, marking times of crisis or difficult decisions, opportunities to welcome or say farewell to a pastor.

All such occasions, and many others, are fitting times for individuals or congregations to intentionally and explicitly remember baptism, claim again the promises of God in Christ, and renew commitment to baptismal living. Speaking explicitly about baptism in all these events is an important antidote to any sense that baptism is an isolated ritual, disconnected from the Christian life.

We call on each other to regularly celebrate our public affirmations of baptism at multiple occasions to sense the journey of our lives and the faithfulness of God's grace, and our oneness with each other.

We call on churches to do further work in providing very practical resources for worship and congregational life and to eagerly share these with other congregations.

2.4 Affirming Baptism in Many Cultural Contexts

We celebrate the many ways that the formation of children and youth comes to expression in the many varied cultures represented in God's growing family, in and beyond the CRC. Through the varied cultural expressions within the CRC, we see the fabric of God's redeeming work in breaking down dividing walls and creating one new people (see Ephesians 2:14ff). We acknowledge that "the church, in its unity

and diversity, is God's strategic vehicle for bringing into being his new creation" (*Acts of Synod 1996*, p. 230). While we recognize that race, ethnicity, and culture are significant for self-identification, we uphold that "Christians find their deepest identity in union with and in the service of Christ" (1996 *Acts of Synod*, p. 232). We are grateful for the variety of approaches to nurturing faith and teaching scriptural truths that arise out of diverse cultural contexts. We are grateful for the ways that various cultures express, for instance, passion for prayer, cultivate faith through family and other inter-generational relationships, tell stories that affirm God's grace, and mark significant occasions in the growth and development of each child and young person.

We encourage each other to learn from and about faith formation practices in many times and places.

We challenge each other to develop and refine faith formation practices that embody the fullness of the gospel in ways that are at once deeply contextual and counter-cultural.

2.5 Remembering and Affirming Baptism in Family Life

Since parents and guardians have such a significant role in nurturing their children's faith, they should make every effort to regularly teach their children about the meaning of baptism. Parents and guardians can use the occasion of a baptism in the family or in the church family to teach their children about the promises and mystery of the sacrament of baptism. Remembering and celebrating a child's "baptism birthday" can be a particularly significant time for learning and growth in family life. Parents and guardians need to frequently speak to their children about baptism, and model the importance of baptismal identity in their own lives. They can find support and encouragement in the fact that they do not carry such tasks alone, but are supported by the entire congregation.

We call on parents and guardians to teach their children about their baptism, to make possible their participation in the life of the church, and to nurture their sense of baptismal identity.

2.6 Affirmation of Baptism instead of Rebaptism

The experience of spiritual renewal and repentance are remarkable gifts of God to individuals and to the church. Requests for rebaptism that come from individuals are thus occasions for gratitude and joy for the work of God in their life. The church's response to these requests should reflect this gratitude.

The response should also be aware of the complex messages that rebaptism can convey, including the strong resistance to rebaptism articulated in the Reformed Confessions. The Belgic Confession concludes, "we believe that anyone who aspires to reach eternal life ought to be baptized only once without ever repeating it—for we cannot be born twice" (art. 34). More specifically, re-baptizing can easily convey three false impressions:

- a. That God's promises were not really given in one's original baptism,
- b. that the congregation or denomination in which a given member was originally baptized is not a legitimate part of Christ's body, and
- c. that personal experience is the sole barometer of the presence of God.

For these reasons, Reformed churches in many cultural contexts have responded to requests for rebaptism by planning for public celebrations of *affirmation* of baptism. These celebrations offer praise and thanks for the sovereign grace of God, providing a memorable, visible, and public milestone for both the congregation and the individual.

We call on each other to strengthen joyful practices of affirming baptism and reaffirming baptismal vows, rather than rebaptism, as the appropriate pastoral response to requests for rebaptism.

2.7 Affirming Baptism in Contemporary Cultures

Affirming baptism is a particularly significant act in many contemporary cultural contexts. In an age in which people long for a sense of belonging, affirming baptism rehearses that we belong to Christ and to the body of Christ, the church. In a culture of consumerism, baptism affirms that we know to whom we belong and the radical transformation of our values. In an age of individualism, baptism affirms our inclusion as members of Christ's body. In an age which tends to evaluate people on their achievements, baptism affirms that our identity as children of God is a gift that does not depend on our own efforts. In a world that belongs to God, baptism affirms our calling to identify movements of providence within history and culture that can serve to extend Christ's rule and reign. In a world of self-promotion, affirming our baptism calls us to a life of self-giving mission that seeks first the kingdom of God (Matthew 6:33), that finds our greatness in our service (Mark 10:43-45), and unselfish service that seeks out the "least of these" (Matthew 25:40).

We call on Christians and churches everywhere to refuse to allow the world to force us into its mold and to regularly affirm that our baptism calls us to remain true to our mission for God in this world (Romans 12:1-2).

PART 3: AFFIRMING BAPTISMAL IDENTITY THROUGH A REVITALIZED PUBLIC PROFESSION OF FAITH

3.1 Public Profession of Faith as an Affirmation of Baptism

For those who come to faith as an adult their time of baptism also includes a profession of their faith. This event is always a milestone event for them and carries great personal significance. Those who are baptized as an infant, however, are expected to make their personal profession of faith later, when they are able to give their personal response to their baptism. Public profession of faith, though not a specific biblically mandated practice, is nevertheless an especially important milestone by which persons affirm their baptism, express personal trust in Jesus Christ, and indicate their pledge to follow Christ. Reformed Christians have practiced public profession of faith with good benefit for theological, pastoral, and historic reasons. It marks a time in which a believer is ready for new responsibilities and roles in the life of the church. It offers the Christian community rich opportunities to express gratitude for the work of God in the lives of his children. The opportunity for public profession of faith is a gift, then, both for individuals and for the church.

We call on each other to highlight the way that public profession of faith is an affirmation of baptism, and to celebrate public professions of faith with joyful gratitude.

3.2 Profession of Faith of Children and Youth as a Milestone

Profession of faith by a baptized person represents both an affirmation of their baptism and a response of commitment to the promises of God given at baptism. It is affirming what was given and looking forward to obedience in living it out.

There are significant developmental or psychological reasons for affirming profession of faith. For many generations, a public profession of faith has served as a rite of passage out of childhood and into adolescent or adult faith. It serves as a natural occasion for challenging youth to consider the claims of Christ, to give voice to the faith within them, to celebrate and affirm their God-given gifts, and to join in God's world-wide work.

However, there is no single age which the church is able to mandate for public profession of faith. Indeed, in God's sovereign grace, congregations have witnessed profound professions of faith by believers of 8 and 88. Professions of faith arise out of individual initiative as the Holy Spirit leads. For this reason, congregations need not passively wait for individuals to step forward, but should rather eagerly and sensitively invite children and youth to take the significant step of publicly professing their faith.

We acknowledge readily that several contemporary factors have recently eroded this practice, including the extension of adolescence as a distinct stage in one's life cycle, the reluctance of some churches to impose any expectation of a formal profession of faith, the practice of welcoming of young children to the Lord's Supper, and—for some—prolonged periods of formal education at a distance from a young person's congregational home. These factors, nonetheless, do not offer grounds for setting aside this practice, but only for becoming more intentional about it. Congregations that offer warm, personal invitations to each child and young person to explore making profession of faith by probing their doubts and questions, developing Christian practices of Bible study and prayer, and discerning their gifts for service will have served them well.

We call on each other to intentionally create a culture in our congregations in which we eagerly tell our stories of faith formation as a means of mentoring and encouraging others.

We call on each other to explore ways in which the ritual of a public profession of faith can be revitalized and become a memorable and encouraging event in the spiritual journey of each believer.

We call on all baptized persons to resist the temptation to unnecessarily delay or postpone their personal response to baptism, but to sense the urgency of such a response.

We call on each other to resist practice and instruction that gives the impression that profession of faith is a one-time stand-alone event.

We call on each other to develop and recognize multiple occasions in the life of a person and within a congregation when we profess our faith, and discover ways in which this can be celebrated liturgically.

3.3 Young Children and Profession of Faith

Young children are people of faith. Little ones have much to teach us when we listen to their simple, spontaneous expressions of love for Jesus—as Christ

himself suggested (Mark 10:13-16). The Christian Reformed Church took Christ's reminder seriously when it urged congregations to invite covenant children to affirm their baptisms and profess their faith at younger ages, rather than waiting until late adolescence. In 1988, synod encouraged covenant children "to make public profession of faith as soon as they exhibit faith and are able to discern the body and remember and proclaim the death of Jesus in celebrating the Lord's Supper" (1988 Acts of Synod, p.559). In 1995 synod outlined a four-step procedure for hearing such age-appropriate professions of faith (1995 Acts of Synod, p.719-720).

(This paragraph reflects our current understanding of the matter, but may likely be modified to reflect the discussions and actions of Synod 2010.)

We call on each other to be sensitive to the faith often found in younger children, and to encourage younger children to consider professing their faith as the Synods of 1988 and 1995 have encouraged.

We call on each other to embrace young children who have professed their faith and to heartily affirm their baptisms, celebrate with great joy, welcome them to the Lord's Table, and give thanks to God for his faithfulness throughout the generations.

3.4 Persons with Disabilities and Profession of Faith

Healthy congregations include all who seek to belong to the body of Christ by professing faith in him—including persons with disabilities. Healthy congregations welcome all people with the message: "Come to Jesus. Belong to the people of God. Give and receive love and acceptance—and participate by sharing your gifts with brothers and sisters in this faith community." The invitation to profess one's love for Christ and to live in community with fellow believers is offered to all in the measure in which they are able to respond to it—with no age requirement, no physical, emotional, or cognitive prerequisite! The invitation has no higher goal than to extend Christ's love to all, to deepen the fellowship of believers, to integrate the gifts of all, and to strengthen the witness and work of the church in this world.

We call on each other to practice the full welcome of God to all whose disabilities make it necessary for them to express their faith in their own appropriate way.

3.5 Profession of Faith and Confirmation

While confirmation was considered a sacrament prior to the Reformation, the Reformers resisted identifying it as a sacrament, preferred, instead, to call it profession of faith, and acknowledged that there is no explicit mandate in scripture for a specific ritual action (as there is for baptism). Rather, the Reformers identified profession of faith as a pastoral practice which worked together with catechesis and worship to encourage vital faith formation and to provide a public opportunity to affirm the grace of God signed and sealed in baptism (see Calvin's Institutes, IV.19.4-13). They mandated that the journey prior to profession of faith should include instruction in the Christian faith, a personal response to the grace of God, an expression of love for and commitment to Jesus Christ as Savior, a confession of the church's common faith, and a pledge of obedience to the triune God.

We affirm the Reformers' resistance to making public profession of faith a sacrament of the church, like baptism and the Lord's Supper, and affirm their

approach of practicing public profession of faith as a fruitful pastoral practice which builds up the body and encourages vital faith formation.

3.6 Profession of Faith and the Mission of God

Public profession of faith is both an expression of and catalyst for the missional work of the church in the world. The great commission calls the church to a public testimony of faith as it disciples nations, “baptizing them . . . teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you” (Matt. 28: 19-20). Indeed, the church’s profession of faith, and each individual profession of faith, is an act of proclamation that reaches out to the lost and disciples the found. This reaching out toward the world that God loves happens both through explicit witness to the love of Christ and through faith-filled actions in society (Heidelberg Catechism, Q & A 86), including caring for “the least of these” with grace-filled words and deeds (Matthew 25:31ff) and serving as an advocate for the victims of injustice (Proverbs 31:8-9; Micah 6:8).

Yet in some contexts, the missional character of public profession of faith may be too unclear or obscure, with little attention given to challenging all believers to joyfully use their gifts for the sake of God’s mission in the world. Indeed, when we affirm our baptism and profess our faith we express our intentional commitment and vow to “join the people of God in doing the work of the Lord everywhere” (cf. Form for Public Profession of Faith). The private and personal expression of faith must always be seen as a genuine public pledge to join the mission of God in the world.

We call on each other to see public profession of faith as an expression of the missional work of the church in the world, and to look for ways to celebrate public profession of faith with more explicit commitment to the mission of God in the world.

3.7 Profession of Faith and the Worship of the Church

Public professions of faith are a lifelong practice, rather than a once-in-a-lifetime event. Some of these professions happen at significant life moments, for example, parents who present children for baptism profess their faith, and office bearers who are ordained and installed to their offices profess their faith, each in the public assembly for worship. Additional expressions of faith happen as a recurring part of worship, as the congregation recites creeds, sing songs which testify to God’s goodness, or exclaims “Amen” or “Thanks be to God” after a scripture reading or in the middle of a sermon. Every time we participate in the Lord’s Supper, we profess our faith, “proclaiming the Lord’s death until he comes.” Professing faith should thus be seen as an indispensable element in regular worship practices. And the formal, rite of passage we call “Profession of Faith” can be understood as a way for each individual to join in expressing assent to the faith regularly professed by the whole congregation.

We call on each other to strengthen and revitalize profession of faith by underscoring, celebrating, enhancing and multiplying these liturgical moments, and by resisting the idea that a profession of faith is a once in a lifetime event.

We call on each other to understand the high value of such times of corporate professions of faith in worship as a time in which we give encouragement in the faith to one another (Romans 1:12).

3.8 The Significant Role of Parents and Guardians

At baptism, parents make important vows about their role in the faith development of their children, specifically to instruct their children in the Christian faith and lead them by example to be Christ's disciples (Deut. 6:4-9). We call on parents to nurture their children's faith by faithfully teaching the truths found in Scripture, and by using every possible means in everyday life to interact with their children on the questions and issues of faith. The key to a revived Christian nurture of children is a parental faith that is vital, involved, and communicated. Adult spiritual growth and discipleship is the foundation for children's faith and its nurture. Alongside traditional church-based Christian education programs for children and youth, congregations must emphasize training parents for this enormous responsibility, as well to encourage a culture of life-long learning and growth for adults. Whether through classes, workshops, or mentoring, congregations need to walk alongside parents to assist them in their task of Christian nurture in the home from birth until the child leaves the home. A strong denomination-wide effort is needed to invite and exhort parents to accept this responsibility with renewed commitment and joyful hope. Many Christians have historically provided Christian Day Schools to assist parents in this task.

We call on parents to understand that the faith development of their children is primary among all the tasks of parenthood. We call on each other to take an active supportive role with parents, not only reminding them, but also providing support, encouragement, counsel and training in their tasks of faith formation.

3.9 Profession of Faith and Lifelong Discipleship

Profession of faith is a significant milestone in the lifelong journey of discipleship. Congregations should not view profession of faith as a graduation from church-based education programs, but rather, profession of faith should further encourage and stimulate the individual towards greater levels of maturity in faith formation (see Heidelberg Catechism, Q & A 114/115). Profession of faith should further awaken the entire congregation to challenge and stretch Christian believers of all ages in ways that make faith formation a priority in every stage of life.

We call on each other to see profession of faith not as an end but as the beginning of a new step forward in the journey of faith formation. We call on each other to emphasize the life-long nature of Christian discipleship and develop ministries to aid this awakening.

3.10 Profession of Faith and Contemporary Culture

Public profession of faith goes hand in hand with the church's calling to be a prophetic voice in contemporary culture. Obligated to speak out against injustice and wickedness in the world, the church errs seriously when it suppresses the faith by remaining silent. It must sound a loud and clear voice for the voiceless that embraces all, without exception, with the love of Christ (Proverbs 31:8-9; 1 Corinthians 14:8). In the faith formation of its members, young and old, the body is equipped to profess its faith, staking the claims of Christ in every sector of modern society. The profession of its members ought not be an expression of world-flight Christianity that trumpets platitudes over a fortified wall of isolationism, nor a profession submerged by or indistinguishable from the deafening noise of this world. The church's public profession of faith

and the faith formation of its members must be in line with the Bible and the Reformed tradition, but, as truly reformed and reforming, the church must be determined to be a clear voice for today with an ear for the times.

We call on all who have professed their faith to be committed to the task of the Body of Christ to be his transforming presence in the world.

PART 4: THE LORD'S SUPPER AS SIGN AND SEAL OF GOD'S GRACE

4.1 The Lord's Supper, Baptismal Identity and the Grace of God

In baptism, God speaks to us, sealing his covenant and pledging his covenant faithfulness. In the case of an adult baptism, he seals to the covenant to one who has responded in faith. In the case of infant baptism, he seals his covenant to a child of believing parents who does not yet understand. In both cases, God acts in grace. The sealing of the covenant to such persons gives them each an identity as one who belongs to God.

Similarly, the Lord's Supper is a sign and seal of God's gracious forgiveness through Christ Jesus. Through the sacrament we act in remembering Jesus' death on the cross as atonement which makes satisfaction for our sins. Through His death and resurrection our sins are forgiven and we are declared righteous before God. The Lord's Supper is, therefore, the visible means by which we see God's invisible work in us through the power of the Holy Spirit" (Belgic Confession, art. 33). In this sacrament we remember his gracious sacrifice, and Christ confirms to us that we are forgiven, nourishes our new life in Christ, and confirms that we are members of God's covenant family. As in baptism, it is God who acts through the Lord's Supper, working to nourish, sustain, comfort, challenge, teach and assure us. Ephesians 2:8-9, "For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith—and this is not from yourselves, it is the gift of God—not by works, so that no one can boast."

We call on each other to celebrate the wondrous grace of God signified in the Lord's Supper in all the liturgical and pedagogical avenues available to us.

4.2 Multiple Scriptural Images for the Lord's Supper

The New Testament teaches us that the Lord's Supper is a celebration that conveys several layers of meaning. It involves both memory and hope. It serves as a thankful remembrance of the entire life and ministry of Christ; a celebration and proclamation of Jesus' real, spiritual presence with us, of the forgiveness he offers, and the spiritual nourishment he provides; a celebration of the unity of Christ's body, the church; and a meal of hope in which we anticipate the heavenly feast of Christ's coming kingdom (*The Worship Sourcebook*, Section 8, p. 305-306).

As the story of the New Testament unfolds the meaning of the Lord's Supper as instituted by Christ, we are struck by the beauty of the multiple images that are given to us in Scripture. Not only did Christ teach us that this is a time for remembrance (1 Corinthians 11:24) and proclamation (1 Corinthians 11:26), it is also a time of eager anticipation of the heavenly feast (1 Corinthians 11:26). He reminded the disciples that this sacrament was a sign of the atonement represented in the Passover feast

(Mark 14:12-16) and therefore a time of assurance of God's forgiveness (Matthew 26:28). It is also a time of spiritual nourishment (John 6:35) and a participation in the oneness of the body of Christ (1 Corinthians 10:17). We are to find, therefore, when we come to the Lord's Table that we can expect Christ to manifest himself to us (Luke 24:28-31).

We call on each other to emphasize and proclaim the richness of this sacrament as represented in these multiple images. We also call on pastors and worship leaders to plan celebrations of the Lord's Supper that takes these multiple images into careful consideration.

4.3 The Lord's Supper and the Drama of Redemption

The mission of God unfolds within the drama of redemption and is demonstrated in the Lord's Supper. Beginning in the Garden of Eden and progressing through history to the consummation of all things, Christ carries out the redemptive plan of God.

Our first parents were given the cultural mandate and were nourished with the garden's abundance in order to accomplish the mission. In disobedience, they ate of the forbidden fruit, failing the test and were banned from the Garden. God, in his mercy, however, had already been busy orchestrating his grand drama of redemption in Christ, with the plan that the seed of the woman would ultimately crush the head of the serpent.

In keeping his promise through Abraham to bless all the nations, God rescued his people from Egypt and represented this deliverance through the Passover. Israel was unfaithful to God's covenant and was exiled. However, God graciously preserved a remnant he would return to the land and through which he would bring forth the Messiah promised already in Eden.

Jesus, perfectly faithful to the mission of God, became the bread of life to which the Scriptures had pointed from the beginning. Before his atoning death, Jesus instituted the Lord's Supper, symbolizing his body and blood. As he continues to prepare the table, this meal becomes for the New Testament church today a vital means of grace not only to rehearse the drama of redemption, but also to empower God's people with the Spirit of Christ in their efforts to participate in carrying out the mission of God.

We call on each other to celebrate this sacrament with the expectation that God will nourish us in preparation for our efforts to carry out his mission in the world.

4.4 Nurturing and Feeding our Spirits at the Table

When we come to the table we come in faith bringing our hunger for Life.

We trust Jesus' words, "I am the bread of life. He who comes to me will never go hungry, and he who believes in me will never be thirsty" (John 6: 35). At the table we follow the exhortation of the Psalmist who declared, "Taste and see that the LORD is good; blessed is the one who takes refuge in him" (Ps. 34: 8). Through participation we respond to the Lord's gracious invitation given through Isaiah, "Come, all you who are thirsty, come to the waters; and you who have no money, come, buy and eat! Come, buy wine and milk without money and without cost" (Isaiah

55:1). The LORD delights in nourishing his people, and we respond by coming with grateful, but empty, hearts to his bountiful table, so that we sing together “You prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies. You anoint my head with oil; my cup overflows” (Ps. 23:5).

For this reason, we trust that “. . . just as truly as we take and hold the sacraments in our hands and eat and drink it in our mouths, by which our life is then sustained, so truly we receive into our souls, for our spiritual life, the true body and true blood of Christ, our only Savior. We receive these by faith, which is the hand and mouth of our souls” (Belgic Confession, art. 35). “. . . The celebration of the Lord’s Supper nourishes our faith and stirs our imaginations to perceive the work of God and the contours of the gospel more clearly” (The Worship Sourcebook, Section 8, p. 305).

We call on churches to celebrate the riches of God which nourish our spiritual lives, and to invite his people to bring their hungers and longings to him, believing that the community that hungers and thirsts for righteousness will be blessed with filling (Matt. 5:6).

4.5 The Life-Giving Imperatives for the Table

We participate in the supper as part of the “dance of grace” in which the Lord leads and we respond, the Lord provides and we receive. Our response involves our entire life. Paul summarizes significant dimensions of this response in 1 Cor. 11:17-31, where in action words, mostly in the imperative form, he calls believers to respond: “take,” “eat,” “remember,” “examine yourself,” and “wait for each other.” These imperatives are not prerequisites for earning the right to come to the table, but rather they exemplify our grateful steps of response as a community that has entered into the wondrous dance of grace. Such steps are life-giving; they expand our capacity to receive and to become contagious with the new life that Jesus pours into us.

We call on churches to celebrate the privilege we have in engaging this covenantal dance, carefully avoiding all language which implies that we earn the right to come by our actions.

4.6 The Lord’s Supper as Healthy Ritual Action

It is significant that Jesus commanded us to “do this,” calling for specific actions that we perform together. While we may well be cautious about ritual actions which can become mere ritual, it is nevertheless important that Jesus Himself commanded the church to observe the Lord’s Supper which symbolizes his body and blood, broken and shed for God’s people. The Holy Spirit uses the Lord’s Supper to bring blessing to the church. It is not an ordinary meal with other humans, but fellowship with Christ himself. Through it we are reminded that we are saved through Jesus’ death and resurrection.

John 6:53-56 “Jesus said to them, ‘I tell you the truth, unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink his blood, you have no life in you. Whoever eats my flesh and drinks my blood has eternal life, and I will raise him up at the last day. For my flesh is real food and my blood is real drink. Whoever eats my flesh and drinks my blood remains in me, and I in him.’”

The Lord’s Supper is also a seal confirming that we belong to God. The participation in the eating and drinking and the sharing in the

benefits of Christ's body and blood given for us, nourish and refresh the spiritual union among believers and with the Lord.

The Christian community is glued together in such a repeated ritual action. A sense of belonging is created and identity as God's beloved people is fostered. Our hearts and minds are linked when we partake of this meal so that faith is strengthened. We are connected once again with the core of the Christian belief and what life is all about. We are reminded of who we are and whose we are. We are empowered to move forward in faith.

Therefore, we believe there are several foundational claims that shape this ritual action to be a healthy one for the Christian Church. It is a celebration of grace, not human achievement. It is not an end in itself, but also points beyond itself to God's grace and covenant faithfulness. It is a sign of a covenant relationship with God that is based on promises. And it is deeply personal, but never private (*The Worship Sourcebook*, Section 8, pp. 306-307).

We call on each other to celebrate the ritual and sensory character of the Lord's Supper in ways that deepen the congregation's participation, while resisting any semblance of ritualism or formalism.

4.7 Coming to the Table in a Hospitable and Healing Community

When we are united to Christ, we also live in union with all those who belong to Him, and the Lord's Supper celebrates and affirms both of these realities.

Jesus pointedly prayed "... that all of them may be one, Father, just as you are in me and I am in you" (John 17:21). Many New Testament references, in addition to Jesus' high priestly prayer, speak of the unity of the body (see 1 Corinthians 12: 4-13, Ephesians 4: 3-6). This same theme is expressed in the earliest communion liturgies available to us ("As many grains are gathered from many hills into one loaf..."). Through this corporate act we are called to practice hospitality, discern the body and wait for each other (1 Corinthians 11: 17-34). This communal character of the sacrament requires that we honor church discipline, call all believers to come to the table without lingering resentments, forgive as the Lord's forgiveness has been received (Colossians 3:13), and call to repentance all who undermine the unity of the body (1 Corinthians 1:10). Our confessions therefore speak of this Holy Supper as a privilege for those who are "born again and grafted into his family: his church" (Belgic Confession, art. 35).

We call on churches to celebrate our unity in Christ, and repent of all actions, words and attitudes which undermine this unity.

4.8 Children and Others at the Lord's Supper

The Scriptures and our Confessions have taught us that the church's celebrations of the sacraments should be marked by a spirit of welcome for all those who come with hunger and trust. They have also taught us that a spirit of exclusion of any other than those who are unrepentant, hypocritical, unrepentant and ungodly (see Heidelberg Catechism, Q & A 81-82) would violate the soul and spirit of the sacrament. For this reason, Paul points to the divisions within the life of the Corinthian church and claims "...your meetings do more harm than good" (1 Corinthians 11:17).

Since Christ desires to nourish and sustain the spiritual life of all his children, the church must be careful to pay attention to those who might easily be

overlooked or neglected. Persons with cognitive disabilities or dementia are to be welcomed to the table in a way that is appropriate to their abilities that they may be nourished by the Lord. Similarly the church must be concerned about young children and youth who are growing in faith and able to fulfill the imperatives for the Lord's Supper in an age-appropriate way. To exclude them would be to deny them the very nurture that their faith formation requires.

We call on each other, therefore, to be sensitive and welcoming toward those who might easily be overlooked or neglected, such as children and others of limited ability.

4.9 The Key Importance of the Lord's Supper in Contemporary Culture

When one considers our contemporary culture, the Lord's Supper is ever relevant to the faith and life of God's people. In a climate of individualism, the Lord's Supper provides a communal context of shared faith and identity; in a culture of consumerism, the Lord's Supper points to that which can truly satisfy; in a visual age, the Supper proclaims the truth of the gospel in visible signs and seals; as differentiation diffuses society into ever-increasing numbers of components, the Lord's Supper turns our attention to the King whose sovereign claims embrace every sphere of life; in a culture where people feel broken and "homeless," the Lord's Supper warmly invites them to the hearth of God's family; and in a world with a relentlessly growing divide between the haves and the have-nots, the Lord's Supper provides a level playing field for all believers under the cross and energizes each to reach out to those in need.

Since the Lord's Supper is a visual means, in a visual age, its message can be powerful. We must, therefore, pay attention to the messages we are transmitting in its celebration for it is capable of either effectively communicating the message of the gospel or of seriously altering it. It is able to communicate a joyful invitation and a beautiful welcome to be experienced by all who come trustingly. Or it may signal an unwarranted exclusivism regarding those who might not be considered in the inner circle. Even the manner of its celebration can carry important messages that must be carefully examined.

We call on each other to carefully and thoughtfully examine the messages of our observance of the sacraments in our current culture to discern their faithfulness of the intent of the Scriptures, and to identify any mistaken messages being conveyed.

We call on each other to make sure our observance of the sacraments is a clear proclamation of a world-view which brings all things under the rule of the living Lord, until he comes again and his glorious kingdom will be on display for all to see.

PART 5: CONCLUSION

5.1 Expectant Urgency

Faith, both its presence and its growth, is a gift of God given to us through the ministry of the Holy Spirit (Acts 16:14, 1 Corinthians 12:3, Galatians 5:16-26). We do not produce it, but we should pray for it, long for it, participate in it, and be prepared to suffer in it—themes poignantly conveyed in Paul's description of his attitude toward the Galatians as

being “in the pain of childbirth until Christ is formed in you” (Galatians 4:19). This dramatic imagery challenges us to live, teach, pray, and worship with expectant urgency for the faith formation of all members of the body.

5.2 Jesus, the Author and Perfecter of our Faith

In all our efforts from baptism through the life of full obedience, we celebrate the grace of God which unites us with Jesus Christ. We affirm and proclaim that Jesus is the “author and perfecter of our faith” (Heb. 12:2) and we take comfort in the promise that “he who began a good work in you will carry it on to completion until the day of Christ Jesus” (Phil. 1:8).

To him be all glory now and forever!

Note: The final version of this document is dependent on the actions of synod in response to recommendations made.

DRAFT

I. Background**A. History**

In 2003, Fleetwood CRC in Surrey, British Columbia (Classis B.C. South-East), overtured Synod 2004 to study the efficacy of the Form of Subscription (FOS) on the grounds that many churches in that classis no longer used the FOS because many individuals had difficulty signing it. Classis B.C. South-East wrote, "When a tool such as the Form of Subscription becomes ineffective in our culture and time, a study into the reasons and attempts to once again make it effective are justified" (*Agenda for Synod 2004*, p. 435).

Synod 2004 did not accede to the overture but, in response to it, requested that synod instruct the Board of Trustees (BOT) to inquire regarding the methods by which the churches comply with the provisions of Church Order Article 5 and refer the results of such inquiry to Synod 2005 for appropriate action.

In late 2004, the general secretary's office sent out a survey concerning the current use of the FOS to all of the churches. The BOT referred the results of the survey to Synod 2005, and, based on its review of the survey data, made several recommendations. In response to the BOT's report and recommendations, Synod 2005 adopted the following:

That synod adopt the following recommendations with reference to the Form of Subscription (BOT Supplement, section I, H):

1. That a revised edition of the Form of Subscription be presented to Synod 2007 for consideration and possible adoption, with the understanding that the purpose of the revision is to clarify the meaning of the Form of Subscription.
2. That the proposed revision of the Form of Subscription be drafted by a committee appointed by the Board of Trustees.
3. In their work, we encourage the committee to take note of the guidelines as to the meaning of subscription in the Church Order Supplements (2004 edition, p. 26).
4. That the draft of a proposed revision be sent to the churches no later than January 1, 2007.

Grounds:

- a. The survey conducted among the churches indicates that a substantial number of churches believe that an update is desirable.
- b. The present Form of Subscription contains statements that are subject to misinterpretation.
- c. A more contemporary expression of agreement will make the requirements more meaningful.

(*Acts of Synod 2005*, p. 735)

In response to Synod 2005, the BOT appointed a study committee and mandated it to clarify the FOS. This study committee reported to Synod 2008. The advisory committee of Synod 2008 responded to the Form of Subscription Committee report found in the *Agenda for Synod 2008* on pages 473-78.

The advisory committee commended the work of the study committee in several ways. First, the Form of Subscription Revision Committee understood that the mandated clarification of the FOS required a more thorough restatement rather than a minor update of the language. The proposed Doctrinal Covenant for Officebearers in the CRCNA was the study committee's

contribution toward faithfully and thoroughly carrying out its assigned mandate. The proposed Doctrinal Covenant for Officebearers in the CRCNA raised critical questions and produced vigorous conversations, not only about the FOS but also about the role of the confessions in our denomination.

Second, the Form of Subscription Revision Committee observed that one of the issues at stake in clarifying the FOS was the issue of encouraging rather than discouraging significant theological discussion. In its report, the committee wrote that “any regulatory instrument that is adopted by the church ought to be regarded as an invitation to the officebearers of the church to participate in this ongoing reflection rather than a document that precludes or hinders such reflection” (*Agenda for Synod 2008*, p. 247). The advisory committee endorsed this view because it reflects both the will of previous synodical decisions (see *Acts of Synod 1976* and *Acts of Synod 2005*) and the purpose of the FOS.

Third, the committee’s work highlighted the need to address how the FOS functions within our increasingly diverse church family. A FOS, no matter how it is written, is useful only if it functions to enhance the faithful ministry of the local church. The FOS, in whatever form, must offer a clear and compelling statement of Reformed Christianity, to which officebearers can subscribe, as well as bridge barriers of language and ethnicity. This is an especially relevant concern for our emerging and ethnic minority churches and their leaders.

Despite these strengths of the Form of Subscription Revision Committee’s work, the advisory committee expressed the following concerns.

First, several overtures, communications, and discussions raised questions about the clarity and accuracy of language in the proposed Doctrinal Covenant for Officebearers.

Second, the advisory committee believed that the process of renewing the FOS must include an educational strategy designed to engage both the local church and denominational agencies. Because a document such as the FOS must live and function well across the various constituencies of our denomination, the advisory committee believed that the process of change was as important as its product.

Believing this challenge presented a unique opportunity to educate our denomination as to the importance and usefulness of the confessions in the life of the church, the advisory committee advised a more comprehensive approach than was originally mandated to the Form of Subscription Revision Committee.

Third, the advisory committee believed that a more comprehensive process of consultation and communication must take place between the study committee and the churches.

B. Committee composition and mandate

In order to address these concerns and to fulfill the original mandate of Synod 2005, the advisory committee recommended and Synod 2008 adopted the recommendation to recommit the original mandate and the work of the Form of Subscription Revision Committee to an expanded study committee. In addition, the newly expanded study committee was to present a revised version of the Form of Subscription to Synod 2011 and to communicate annually to synod prior to the study committee’s final report in 2011.

The new Form of Subscription Revision Committee II was given the mandate to present a revised FOS to synod for possible adoption. In addition, the new committee was mandated to engage a broad cross-section of the denomination in a process of discussion regarding the meaning of confessional subscription as well as to develop a process of communication and education regarding the FOS and the Reformed confessions, particularly in emerging and ethnic minority contexts, with the goal of clarifying the meaning of the FOS and increasing adherence to it, and encouraging robust engagement with the Reformed confessions.

II. Progress report

The Form of Subscription Revision Committee II began its work with a meeting in October 2008. At that meeting the committee wrestled with some foundational issues with respect to the mandate, such as the purpose of a FOS and how the committee's work might best proceed as it drafts a document to replace the present FOS. The committee reached agreement that the purpose of any revision should be *unity* with a secondary concern for *purity*. We also agreed that the FOS revision should be clear, compelling, and easily transportable across cultural and linguistic barriers. Finally, we agreed that the FOS revision should be precise in identifying the relationship of Scripture, creeds, confessions and other documents that many affirm as useful contemporary expressions of Reformed Christianity but that have not been granted confessional status (e.g., the Contemporary Testimony).

In preparation for Synod 2009, the committee developed a "working document" as a potential revision of the Form of Subscription, a background document that briefly explains the reasoning behind the potential revision, and a discussion guide designed to encourage reflection in large and small groups that may gather to discuss matters within the study committee's mandate. While at Synod 2009, members of the committee led a roundtable discussion of the proposed revision and background document over a meal in a small group setting.

Leading up to Synod 2009 members of the committee met with various groups within the denomination, making presentations to the Black and Reformed Conference and the Multiethnic Conference. Following Synod 2009 numerous meetings of classes agreed to welcome members of our committee for discussion of the work in particular and more generally about the nature of confessional subscription. In order to facilitate positive interactions and widespread engagement across a broad spectrum of congregations within the denomination, the committee has translated the proposed revision into Korean and Spanish for the significant numbers of CRC members whose first language is not English.

From these presentations, the committee received many positive responses as well as suggestions and constructive criticism for improving the proposed revision of the FOS. In addition, we have received numerous responses from individuals and have appreciated the depth of engagement obvious in many of these reflections. In preparation for Synod 2010, the study committee would welcome the response of churches and individuals regarding the committee's work and on the nature of confessional subscription. To date, we have received several helpful recommended revisions as well as many appreciative comments showing gratitude for the winsome tone of the

proposed revision, the explicit inclusion of Scripture and ecumenical creeds and the simplicity of the document's language. As a result of these communications and its own ongoing reflection, the committee prepared at its January 2010 meeting a further revision of the proposed Covenant for Officebearers in the Christian Reformed Church (below) and submitted it, along with a brief background report, to the churches through the Office of Synodical Services, and requested that the churches respond to the committee's work.

A Covenant for Officebearers in the Christian Reformed Church (A Working Document, January 2010)

We, the undersigned, believe the inspired Word of God as received in the Old and New Testaments of the Holy Scriptures, which proclaim the gospel of grace in Jesus Christ and the reconciliation of all things in him. Placing ourselves under the authority of God's Word, we submit to it in all matters of life and faith.

We affirm three creeds—the Apostles' Creed, the Nicene Creed, and the Athanasian Creed—as ecumenical expressions of the Christian faith. In doing so, we confess our faith in unity with followers of Jesus Christ throughout all ages and among all nations.

We also affirm three confessions—the Belgic Confession, the Heidelberg Catechism, and the Canons of Dort—as historic Reformed expressions of the Christian faith. These confessions continue to define the way we understand Scripture, direct the way we live out the gospel, and locate us within the larger body of Christ.

Grateful for these expressions of faith, we promise to be formed and governed by them, conforming our preaching, teaching, writing, serving, and living to them.

As followers of Jesus Christ today we also gratefully affirm the witness of *Our World Belongs to God: A Contemporary Testimony* as a powerful Reformed expression of biblical faith that forms and guides us as it speaks to the concerns of our day.

Should we at any time come to believe that a teaching in the confessional documents is irreconcilable with God's Word, we will communicate our views to the church, according to the procedures prescribed by the Church Order and its supplements. Further, we promise to submit to the church's judgment and authority. We also promise to submit or receive confessional difficulties in a spirit of love and fellowship with our brothers and sisters as together we seek a fuller understanding of the gospel.

We honor this covenant to the glory of God the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Amen.

III. Highlights

The committee carefully deliberated about using the word *covenant* in the title. "A Covenant for Officebearers in the Christian Reformed Church" was a preferred working title for a number of reasons, in addition to the obvious biblical and theological freight the word *covenant* carries. The language of *covenant* is communal rather than individualistic. Further, *covenant* suggests that the document is not only an affirmation of one's personal *beliefs* but is

also a profound agreement on how we are called to *live* together as sisters and brothers in Jesus Christ. Such language also implies a reciprocal understanding of obligations. There is a commitment on the part of an individual to the broader community, but there is also a responsibility on the part of the church to the individual to approach questions in a spirit of mutual love and commitment. The language of *covenant* conveys a promise to work through disagreements and to openly and honestly deal with questions that arise, rather than to have the first reaction be to stifle dissent. The committee was concerned to draft a document that encourages discussion and an ongoing process of deeper understanding and discernment as well as more faithful living. The word *covenant* suggests promise-making and a binding together of parties. A covenant is binding and therefore not to be taken lightly. Covenantal language implies a concern with the ethical as well as the doctrinal. It suggests depth and encourages periodic review and renewal. Covenantal language draws us into the work of God in the world, kingdom, body of Christ, local community, and so forth. *Covenant* is a liturgical and even missional concept.

The committee was also concerned to write a document in language that “sings” rather than “plods along.” Any document that calls people to covenant together should be stated in simple yet profound language so that it might be widely understood and embraced. We further desired that the tone of the language be understood as encouraging open, honest, and respectful dialogue over questions that arise. The committee also wanted the language to move nimbly across cultural and linguistic barriers as well as be meaningful to those who did not grow up in the Reformed tradition (or in any Christian tradition) and who may not be familiar with our particular theological dialect or accent.

Finally, the committee wanted to make clear the logical flow of authority in the document from Scripture to creeds to confessions and finally to the Contemporary Testimony. We struggled to define the status of the Contemporary Testimony. Though it has a comparatively short history within the denomination, it does enjoy a certain level of official recognition as well as wide-spread acceptance and much contemporary relevance. Further, our discussions among classes pointed to a widespread appreciation of the Contemporary Testimony and its use in liturgy, preaching, and teaching. While the Contemporary Testimony often *functions* as a *de facto* confession, the fact is that it has, for a variety of reasons, not been granted such status. Questions about the status of the Contemporary Testimony may be particularly pertinent at this time in light of Synod 2009’s commendation of the Belhar Confession to the churches for reflection and study at the same time the Form of Subscription is being revised. The committee will further reflect on this issue in its anticipated final report to Synod 2011.

IV. Clarification

Through its discussions and engagement with various groups, the committee has been able to clarify its mandate in significant ways. First, we realized that the task before us was enormously demanding and complicated. Second, we recognized that the FOS or any proposed revision to it was not the real issue. Renewal of confessional vitality is. Therefore we begin what

will hopefully become an ongoing process of discussion and reflection on the confessions and the nature of confessional subscription.

The committee engaged in vigorous discussions about the status of the Contemporary Testimony within the Christian Reformed Church. Much of this discussion focused on the placement of paragraphs four and five of the proposed revision to the FOS, which highlight the Contemporary Testimony and define its relationship to the three forms of unity. But we were unable to come to a clear consensus. While on the one hand we believe it is not our committee's task to recommend the adoption of the Contemporary Testimony as a confession, we have come to believe that the Contemporary Testimony has the potential to revitalize confessional identity and engagement within the Christian Reformed Church. Thus we strongly urge synod to consider what its adoption might mean as we continue to wrestle with what it means for the Christian Reformed Church to be and to remain a confessional church.

In addition, we recognized that the current discussion within the Christian Reformed Church about possible adoption of the Belhar Confession also highlights the need for continuing reflection on the nature of confessional subscription. As a result of conversations with the Ecumenical Relations Committee (ERC)—the committee mandated by Synod 2009 to guide the discussions about possible adoption of the Belhar Confession—we recognize that our committee and the ERC have both been given separate and limited mandates. We wish to respect those boundaries and not prejudice the ongoing discussion about the Belhar Confession. We recognize the need to restate confessional truth in particular times and places, and we observe with gratitude that the very fact of these wide-ranging discussions about the Contemporary Testimony and the Belhar Confession reflect a deep desire within the Christian Reformed Church to revitalize our confessional identity.

Following are highlights of the committee's deliberations regarding the nature of the language in the proposed revision:

First, the strength of the word *irreconcilable* in paragraph six is significant. It implies previous, long-term discussion about a matter in dispute. Its application is also limited to the doctrine under dispute. The supplements to Church Order already grant that one does not necessarily subscribe to the particular formulation of a doctrine as that formulation is expressed in the confessions, but only to the doctrine itself. The committee does not envision frequent cases of this nature, but wishes to articulate briefly the steps necessary to communicate such difficulties in the event they do arise.

Second, some of the responses to the committee have expressed concern about the apparent lack of disciplinary sanction for those who are judged to have contradicted a doctrine contained in the confessions. The language of *conforming* to the confessions in paragraph four of the proposed revision to the FOS, by definition, readily connotes *not* contradicting the confessions. The committee appreciated these concerns and seriously considered them but ultimately concluded that procedures for the discipline of an officebearer based on deviation from sound doctrine are provided for by Church Order Article 83, to which all officebearers agree to submit. These additional expectations of officebearers are further articulated and agreed to in the forms for ordination and installation. Similarly, several responses received encouraged us to incorporate the task of teaching the confessions. While seriously

considering these thoughtful comments, we again concluded that such tasks were implicit in the broader content of the Covenant itself. Thus to include these in an explicit way in the proposed revision to the FOS would be redundant.

V. Future work

As we look ahead, the committee foresees a two-fold task. First, we will continue to meet the primary objective of considering the communications and evaluating the recommendations we have received, and we will weigh how and in what fashion these might be incorporated into a final proposed revision of the FOS. By now the churches will have received a final draft of the proposed Covenant for Officebearers from which we are soliciting responses until August 31, 2010.

Second, we will be producing a final provisional report that will be sent to the churches for study and reflection in Fall 2010.

VI. Recommendations

A. That synod grant the privilege of the floor to Rev. James C. Dekker, chair, and Rev. Michael Borgert, reporter, when the committee's work is discussed.

B. That synod encourage churches to give particular consideration to how the Form of Subscription or its revision can help encourage officebearers' vital engagement with the Reformed confessions and suggest these to the committee.

C. That synod encourage the churches and classes to engage in earnest prayer and discussion on these matters.

Form of Subscription Revision Committee II
Michael Borgert, reporter
Mark A. Davies
James C. Dekker, chair
Gerard L. Dykstra, ex officio
Eduardo A. Gonzalez
Sheila Holmes
Cornelius Plantinga, Jr.
Kristen Van Engen
John Van Schepen
Wilma Vander Leek
Uko Zylstra

OVERTURES, COMMUNICATION, AND PERSONAL APPEAL

Overture 1: Approve the Transfer of Trinity CRC of Sparta, Michigan, to Classis Minnkota

I. Background

Since 2007 Classis Grand Rapids North has changed Church Order Article 3 to delete the word *male* and allow any member to be eligible for the office of minister, elder, and deacon. Sometime after this decision, Classis Grand Rapids North examined a woman for ministry. Trinity CRC delegates did not attend the classis for the sake of consciences rooted in biblical convictions. Classis advised the delegates to still come to classis, but under protest. Although they appreciated the advice, they did not believe it was the best option for them since they do not wish to continuously protest or cause discomfort for those who believe differently than they do on these matters. They continue to participate in classis meetings when there are no women delegates and gladly pay full classical ministry shares. Trinity CRC has been greatly blessed with unity on this issue, flourishing church life with men and women using gifts of the Holy Spirit in complementary roles according to Scripture, and evangelistic growth. They do not wish to get unnecessarily distracted by this issue so that they can carry on with the work and mission God has given them to do as a Christian Reformed church in their community and in God's kingdom.

Trinity CRC has explored the issue of transferring to another classis. In God's providence, they learned that another church, Second CRC of Kalamazoo, Michigan, was in a similar situation, and together with them they did research into several Michigan classes and Classis Illiana. They came to the conclusion that it was difficult to find a classis that was solidly united on either side of the issue of women's ordination. They also did not want to cause unnecessary conflict or disturbance of the peace by transferring to a classis which has already gone through painful church splits over this issue.

After much prayer and collective wisdom from church leaders, including the executive director of the CRCNA, they believe that God is leading them to a better option of starting a new classis in Michigan. This classis will be for churches who have deep convictions about the Bible's qualifications for leadership in the home and in the church, and who wish to keep devoted male and female members, families, and churches from leaving the CRC.

Trinity CRC has had two encouraging meetings with representative leaders from about a dozen CRC churches in the Michigan area. All are very positive and supportive of those churches that need a new classis now. Some are instructing their own congregations as to the value and helpfulness of such a

classical option should they in their own classes face a conflict of conscience and yet wish to remain a faithful CRC congregation.

In order to organize a new classis for other reasons than geographical, a significant number of churches should be ready to organize. We believe there are not enough churches yet ready to organize a new classis in 2010. However, by Synod 2011 there very well may be.

Since Trinity CRC cannot be sure as to when other churches will be ready, they wish to transfer to Classis Minnkota because they are the nearest classis that has the most solid and consistent unity on the issue of the Bible's qualification for church leaders. Trinity CRC will continue to pray and work with those churches in their area who face or will face similar conflicts of conscience and who seek to find the best option within the CRC. Their ultimate goal is to organize a new classis in their area in God's timing. In the meantime, they seek to be in a classis where they can serve without having to violate their conscience or cause others the awkwardness of continually protesting when women delegates are seated or examined for ministry.

II. Overture

Classis Grand Rapids North overtures synod to approve the transfer of Trinity CRC of Sparta, Michigan, to Classis Minnkota according to Church Order Article 39.

Grounds:

1. Synod 2007 permitted a congregation to seek out a classis that shares the same theological conviction on the issue of the Bible's qualification for offices. First CRC of Prinsburg, Minnesota, was given permission by Synod 2007 to transfer to Classis Minnkota.
2. Trinity CRC believes joining and serving in a classis with harmony on this issue is better than violating their conscience, and a better option than to continually protest classis meetings when women delegates are seated or examined.
3. Joining Classis Minnkota and working toward a new classis in the area will help keep families, men and women, and members of the CRC from leaving the denomination. Such members will know that there continues to be a place for them to serve the Lord in the CRC without unnecessarily violating their biblical and confessional convictions.
4. Classis Minnkota has expressed their support and willingness to allow Trinity CRC to join them. (Subject to approval by the classis in March 2009.)

1 Corinthians 11:16 – "If anyone wants to be contentious about this, we have no other practice—nor do the churches of God."

Titus 3:1-2 – "Remind the people . . . to be peaceable and considerate, and to show true humility toward all men."

Romans 12:18 – "If possible as far as it depends on you, live at peace with everyone."

Ephesians 4:3 – "Make every effort to keep the unity of the Spirit through the bond of peace."

2 Corinthians 13:11 – “Aim for perfection, listen to my appeal, be of one mind, live in peace. And the God of love and peace will be with you.”

1 Thessalonians 5:13 – “Live in peace with each other.”

2 Timothy 2:22 – “Flee the evil desires of youth, and pursue righteousness, faith, love and peace, along with those who call on the Lord out of a pure heart.”

1 Peter 3:8 – “Finally, all of you, live in harmony with one another; be sympathetic, love as brothers, be compassionate and humble.”

1 Timothy 2:11-15 – “A woman should learn in quietness and full submission. I do not permit a woman to teach or to have authority over a man; she must be silent. For Adam was formed first, then Eve. And Adam was not the one deceived; it was the woman who was deceived and became a sinner. But women will be kept safe through childbearing—if they continue in faith, love and holiness with propriety.”

1 Corinthians 14:33-38 – “As in all the congregations of the saints, women should remain silent in the churches. They are not allowed to speak, but must be in submission, as the Law says. If they want to inquire about something, they should ask their own husbands at home; for it is disgraceful for a woman to speak in the church. Did the word of God originate with you? Or are you the only people it has reached? If anybody thinks he is a prophet or spiritually gifted, let him acknowledge that what I am writing to you is the Lord’s command. If he ignores this, he himself will be ignored.”

Classis Grand Rapids North
William G. Vis, stated clerk

Overture 2: Approve Transfer of Second CRC, Kalamazoo, Michigan, from Classis Kalamazoo to Classis Minnkota

I. Background

In the summer of 2007, taking into consideration the makeup of Classis Kalamazoo, the desire of some of the churches within Classis Kalamazoo to immediately delegate women to classis, and the decision of Synod 2007 to grant churches that privilege effective immediately, the council of Second CRC made a decision to abstain from attending meetings of Classis Kalamazoo and to pursue a realignment with a classis of like mind.

The council of Second CRC sensed that to “attend classis under protest” would soon become a mere formality and would function as acquiescence to majority voices in conflict with their reading of Scripture and in violation of conscience. The council also was convinced that to go to classis and continually voice the conviction of objection to the seating of women would soon be viewed as being a “thorn in the side” of classis or, even worse, as being contentious, which the Bible forbids.

In contrast, the council decided, with the support of the congregation, to pursue realignment with another classis of like mind, since that option was sanctioned by synod and has many instances of precedent.

II. Overture

Classis Kalamazoo overtures Synod 2010 to permit the transfer of Second CRC, Kalamazoo, Michigan, from Classis Kalamazoo to Classis Minnkota.

Grounds:

1. Second CRC cannot in good conscience remain in a classis that promotes the ordination of women to the offices of minister, elder, deacon, and ministry associate.
2. Second CRC wishes to join a classis in which it can serve in harmony as opposed to serving in protest. Synod has provided such allowance (see Church Order Article 39 and its Supplement).
3. Synod 2007 permitted the churches to seek out like-minded classes with which to participate and has set precedent to do so (e.g., Mt. Pleasant, Michigan, 1997; Pine Creek, Holland, Michigan, 1997; South Bend, Indiana, 1999; First, Prinsburg, Minnesota, 2007).
4. Synod has declared that churches and delegates to classis should not be forced to participate against their convictions (see Church Order Article 3, and Supplement, Article 3-a, 1, b and c, 3, and 5).
5. Classis Minnkota has extended the invitation for Second CRC to join them, which would allow them to continue to serve within the Christian Reformed Church.
6. In its reading of Holy Scripture, Second CRC believes it is imperative to make this request. Biblical passages foundational to this request include Acts 6:3; 1 Corinthians 11:8-9; 1 Corinthians 14:33-40; 1 Timothy 2-3; Titus 1:5-11; and Titus 2:1-8.

Classis Kalamazoo
Jake Weeda, stated clerk

Overture 3: Transfer Membership of Second CRC, Kalamazoo, Michigan, to Classis Minnkota

Classis Minnkota overtures synod to transfer the membership of Second CRC, Kalamazoo, Michigan, from Classis Kalamazoo to Classis Minnkota.

Grounds:

1. Second CRC, Kalamazoo, Michigan, has requested this transfer.
2. Classis Minnkota has considered the reasons for which Second (Kalamazoo) CRC desires a transfer and finds these reasons to be acceptable.
3. Classis Minnkota would welcome Second CRC into its classical fellowship.
4. Classis Kalamazoo concurs with the request of Second CRC.

Classis Minnkota
LeRoy G. Christoffels, stated clerk

Overture 4: Transfer Membership of Trinity CRC, Sparta, Michigan, to Classis Minnkota

Classis Minnkota overtures synod to transfer the membership of Trinity CRC, Sparta, Michigan, from Classis Grand Rapids North to Classis Minnkota.

Grounds:

1. Trinity CRC has requested this transfer.
2. Classis Minnkota has considered the reasons for which Trinity CRC desires a transfer and finds these reasons to be acceptable.
3. Classis Minnkota would welcome Trinity CRC into its classical fellowship.
4. Classis Grand Rapids North concurs with the request of Trinity CRC.

Classis Minnkota

LeRoy G. Christoffels, stated clerk

Overture 5: Develop Guidelines for Endorsements Made by Denominational Staff

Classis Grandville overtures synod to request the Board of Trustees to develop appropriate guidelines concerning endorsements made by individual denominational officials regarding specific issues and/or signing special initiatives that synod and/or the BOT have not discussed and that are being solicited because of their denominational position.

Grounds:

1. Since members often perceive a denominational leaders' signature (with their accompanying title or position) as a denominational endorsement, their endorsement has often resulted in additional controversy within the denomination.
2. We believe the Board of Trustees is the appropriate body to develop such guidelines.

Classis Grandville

Daniel B. Mouw, stated clerk

Overture 6: Develop and Advocate Denominational Support Opposing Abortion

Synod 1998 adopted the following action regarding abortion: "that synod urge the churches to continue to proclaim boldly our opposition to the North American atrocity of abortion and thus avoid the guilt of remaining silent" (*Acts of Synod 1998*, p. 442).

In the wake of this decision, what action has the denomination taken? The CRC Office of Social Justice and Hunger Action of the CRC (OSJ) has subordinated speaking out against the abortion atrocity to any number of other social concerns, so that today on its main web page you find advocacy for

fair trade, health care reform, HIV / AIDS, the Micah Challenge, and so forth, but not a word about abortion—no mention of abortion or life issues in the drop-down menu under “issues,” and a brief mention at the bottom of the page of “other issues.” Clearly the legalized death of innocent human lives is also a matter of grave concern. The OSJ should be instructed to proactively develop programs and highlight efforts encouraging churches to take action to protect human life. Synod has repeatedly stated the importance of opposing legalized abortion, whereas it has never taken an official position on, for example, health reform efforts. In spite of synod’s clear statements, there has been little encouragement to the churches in promoting programs that oppose abortion.

Therefore, Classis Grand Rapids North overtures Synod 2010 to instruct the Board of Trustees to request that the Office of Social Justice and Hunger Action actively encourage and facilitate programs that boldly proclaim the CRC’s stated opposition to the national atrocity of legalized abortion.

Classis Grand Rapids North
William G. Vis, stated clerk

Overture 7: Identify the CRC Position on Anthropogenic Global Warming; Address Endorsements Made by Denominational Leaders

I. Background

Four leaders in the Christian Reformed Church have used their positions to essentially commit the Christian Reformed Church to an alarmist position on the contentious topic of anthropogenic global warming. They are

- Dr. Peter Borgdorff, former executive director of the Christian Reformed Church in North America
- Dr. Gaylen Byker, President of Calvin College
- Rev. Robert DeMoor, Editor of *The Banner*
- Mr. Andrew Ryskamp, Director of the Christian Reformed World Relief Committee

Dr. Borgdorff, Dr. Byker, and Mr. Ryskamp have signed the controversial Evangelical Climate Initiative (ECI), identifying themselves as leaders of the Christian Reformed Church. Rev. DeMoor has permitted only the alarmist viewpoint of this debate to be published in *The Banner* except for letters to the editor.

I submit two issues with regard to their actions. First, since the Christian Reformed Church is governed by a presbytery system rather than an ecclesiastical hierarchy, it is customary to formulate denominational policy in a deliberative, open, and inclusive manner.

Second, their actions associate Christ’s church with a dubious secular crusade. The ECI was originated and funded by the Hewlett Foundation, which is the world’s leading proponent for abortion on demand. Furthermore, much of the “science” behind this activist political movement has been exposed as fraudulent.

II. Overture

Therefore, I overture Synod 2010 to address the following two matters:

- A. Identify the position of the Christian Reformed Church on the issue of anthropogenic global warming from a biblical and Reformed perspective.
- B. Examine whether the actions of these four men were appropriate.

Note: Significant supporting documentation is posted on the CRC website at www.crcna.org/pages/synodical.cfm.

Paul Rhoda
Grandville, Michigan

Overture 8: Request that the Candidacy Committee Review Wording of Church Order Article 23

I. Background

Synod 2004 adopted standards for those seeking to be ordained as a ministry associate by way of Church Order Article 23. That same year a communication was sent to Synod 2004 from Classis Pacific Northwest, indicating concern that there could be a lack of clarity between the offices of ministry associate under Article 23 and ministers ordained by way of Articles 6, 7, or 8. Since 2004 subsequent synods have expressed a desire to place a higher value on Article 23 ordination and have also made several changes to Article 23. There is, however, considerable ambiguity in the current wording of this article.

Article 23-b states that “ministry associates may continue to serve the newly organized church until an ordained minister of the Word is installed or until they have served the newly organized church for a reasonable period of transition.” This statement seems to indicate that the service of a person ordained under Article 23 is temporary with the intent that an ordained minister of the Word be called or perhaps that the person ordained under Article 23 would himself/herself pursue M.Div. status and become ordained by way of Article 6. However, little is said to give guidance regarding what constitutes a “reasonable period” and if there are any guidelines by which to determine extending a person’s time of service in this position under Article 23.

Synod 2007 added a sentence to Article 23-c stating that

Ministry associates who have served an organized congregation along with a minister of the Word may, in exceptional circumstances, with the approval of classis and the concurrence of the synodical deputies, continue serving that congregation as a solo pastor after the minister of the Word has left.

(Acts of Synod 2007, p. 653)

However, it is unclear whether the stipulations of 23-b also apply to this sentence—namely, that it be “for a reasonable time of transition” and “until an ordained minister of the Word is installed,” or if the intent of synod was that organized congregations be served indefinitely by ministry associates in such situations.

Synod 2008 adopted Church Order Article 23-d. This article states that a ministry associate may be called to serve as a solo pastor in an organized congregation provided that classis, with the concurring advice of the

synodical deputies, “ascertains that such congregations are from a ministry context where such standards for pastoral preparation required by Articles 6, 7, or 8 are not presently practical.” The phrase “not presently practical” appears to imply that this is intended to be a temporary resolution. Perhaps the intent is that those who are initially called to such positions as ministry associates ought to be moving in the direction of fulfilling the requirements of Articles 6, 7, or 8. However, this is not clearly stated, nor is there any mention of a “reasonable time of transition” in these cases as in Article 23-b.

While we are grateful for the opportunities for ministry that Article 23 gives the church to serve in our changing times, as well as the greater local flexibility it gives to our classes, we also believe the various parts of this article can and should be more clearly stated.

II. Overture

Therefore, Classis Pacific Northwest overtures Synod 2010 to request that the Candidacy Committee review the wording of Church Order Article 23 in order to bring clarity regarding the various statements dealing with permanence and length of stay for ministry associates serving in established churches, particularly in the role of solo pastor.

Grounds:

1. As more and more ministry associates function as solo pastors under Church Order Article 23, it is important that there be clarity and consistency in the guidelines for this office.
2. Changes made to Article 23 in the past several years lack clarity and consistency in the statements having to do with permanence and length of stay for ministry associates serving established churches.

Classis Pacific Northwest
Timothy B. Toeset, stated clerk

Overture 9: Withhold Action on Recommendations from the Faith Formation Committee re Children at the Lord’s Supper

Classis Zeeland overtures Synod 2010 to withhold action on the recommendations from the Faith Formation Committee re children at the Lord’s Supper.

Grounds:

1. The report blurs the distinction between the visible and invisible church. The first sentence of the report’s guiding principle for the committee’s continuing work states that “All baptized members are welcome to the Lord’s Supper for age- and ability-appropriate obedience to biblical commands about participation, under the supervision of the elders” (*Agenda for Synod 2010*, p. 622). The implication that results from this statement, namely that all baptized members are welcome to the Lord’s Supper based on their status as members of the covenant community, blurs the distinction between the visible and invisible church. This distinction has been held in accord with Scripture passages such as Romans 9:6 at least since the time of the Reformation. It states that the one church of Jesus Christ should be understood by these two aspects. The term *visible*

church refers to all who are a part of the historic administration of God's covenant. This includes all people who are part of a Christian church and their children; in other words, all who have been baptized into the Christian church. Thus, one could say that the gracious and saving promises of God through Jesus Christ are offered to everyone in the visible church. The *invisible church*, on the other hand, refers only to God's elect. The Bible teaches repeatedly that one becomes a child of God by grace alone through faith alone. Thus, one could say that the gracious and saving promises of God through Jesus Christ are sincerely accepted and believed by every member of the invisible church. Certainly it is not within human capacity to be able to discern who is God's elect since only the Lord looks at the heart (1 Sam. 16:7), but it is important to consider the visible/invisible church distinction as it relates to the sacraments of the church. God's promises are offered to all in the visible church, but only those who are part of the invisible church accept those promises and believe them. It should be made clear again that this is not two different churches, but two aspects of the same church. In fact, all who are part of the invisible church are also part of the visible church, but some in the visible church are not part of the invisible church. We intend to demonstrate in Ground 2 below that baptism initiates one into the visible church while the Lord's Supper is intended to confirm and sustain the faith of those who profess to be part of the invisible church. By implying that all baptized members of the church are welcome at the Lord's Supper based on their status as members of the covenant community (i.e., the visible church), the distinction between the visible and invisible church is blurred.

2. By ceasing to require a public profession of faith prior to admittance to the Lord's Supper, the distinction between the two sacraments of the church is confused. Baptism is God's gracious initiation into the covenant community and "infants, no less than adults, are promised the forgiveness of sin through Christ's blood and the Holy Spirit who produces faith" (Heidelberg Catechism Q. and A. 74). A key word in that answer is *promised*. In baptism, covenant children are offered the gracious promises of God and, therefore, are welcomed into the visible covenant community and should be distinguished from children of unbelievers. However, the Heidelberg Catechism also says that the community of the holy catholic church is "united in true faith" (Q. and A. 54), that "*believers* one and all share in Christ" as members of the communion of saints (Q. and A. 55), and that we are right with God "only by true faith in Jesus Christ" (Q. and A. 60). In other words, the gracious promises offered by God in baptism must be accepted in true faith in order for the realities of those promises (forgiveness and the Holy Spirit) to be made manifest in the baptized child. In saying this, we are not trying to suggest that no covenant children are part of the invisible church. In fact, Scripture calls the children of believing parents holy (1 Cor. 7:14). We are saying only that baptism itself does not bring one into the invisible church, nor does it in itself create faith in its recipient. But does baptism in itself qualify one to come to the Lord's Supper? The Faith Formation Committee "Children at the Table" report answers yes, "on the basis not of their comprehension or profession but

on the basis of God's gracious invitation to the covenant community" (p. 612). The report also references Heidelberg Catechism Q. and A. 81, which states that those who come to the table are "those who are displeased with themselves because of their sins, but who nevertheless trust that their sins are pardoned and that their continuing weakness is covered by the suffering and death of Christ, and who also desire more and more to strengthen their faith and to lead a better life." In other words, some level of faith must be evident. This fits with the confessions' description of the Lord's Supper as a sacrament that confirms and sustains faith. The Belgic Confession (Art. 35) describes the Lord's Supper as "ordained and instituted . . . to nourish and sustain those who are already born again and ingrafted into his family: his church." Article 35 goes on to state: "To maintain the spiritual and heavenly life that belongs to believers he has sent a living bread that came down from heaven: namely, Jesus Christ, who nourishes and maintains the spiritual life of believers when eaten—that is, when appropriated and received spiritually by faith." The Heidelberg Catechism states in Q and A 65 that "The Holy Spirit produces [faith] in our hearts by the preaching of the holy gospel, and confirms it through our use of the holy sacraments." It is noteworthy that in Q. and A. 65 the sacraments are not said to create faith (so that covenant children are being starved if they do not partake) but to confirm the faith created through the preaching of the gospel (which is proclaimed to adults and children alike). That aside, the common theme seen in these statements is that God invites to his Table those who have faith (i.e., "those born again," "believers"), not merely those who are part of the visible covenant community. But if in baptism God simply makes promises that must be received in faith, one may ask when and how the faith that must be evident for participation in the Lord's Supper is made evident. To put it in terms of the visible/invisible church distinction described above, the baptized member should in some way confess that he/she accepts the promises made by God in baptism and therefore should be considered (as best we can determine by human standards) part of the invisible church. The question then is how is such faith to be made evident? Historically in CRC churches, this has been done by a public profession of faith. The "Children at the Table" report suggests that children be allowed to follow the biblical imperatives in an age- and ability-appropriate way. Do these have to be in conflict as the report suggests by advising that public profession of faith be merely one pastoral approach to consider?¹ If the Lord's Supper is described in our confessions as a sacrament that confirms and sustains one's faith (or the spiritual life of the born again person), does not such faith need to be

¹ We would also like to briefly address a reason that the "Children at the Lord's Table" report gives for other options being considered in addition to public profession of faith, namely, that "regrettably, public profession of faith has tended to be seen as a once-in-a-life-time event, overshadowing the fact that the act of professing faith happens throughout life and in many and varied ways in the life of a congregation" (p. 19). We would like to point out that the poor understanding and practice in the churches of a certain thing should not nullify that thing itself. Public profession of faith does not by its nature nullify the education leading up to it nor the discipleship that should continue subsequently. Nor does

made evident? Unless we believe in baptismal regeneration, we cannot simply presume that such faith exists. Certainly these public professions can be conducted in an age- and ability-appropriate way so that younger children than have traditionally done so can publicly profess their faith, but ceasing to require such professions can too easily lead to a confusion of the purpose and nature of the sacraments.

3. By ceasing to require a public profession of faith prior to admittance to the Lord's Supper, obedience to the command to discern the body (from 1 Cor. 11) in its communal dimension is made unnecessarily difficult. That professions of faith be made in the public worship service makes sense given the report's interpretation of 1 Corinthians 11. If part of discerning the body is recognizing the church as the body of Christ and examining one's relationship to fellow believers (p. 7), then it would seem appropriate for fellow members of the church to hear a public attestation of faith in Jesus Christ so that they know who are their fellow believers. If profession of faith does not happen in the public worship service, confusion could result during the Lord's Supper. For instance, how would believing members know when fellow partakers of the Lord's Supper have professed the faith that is to be confirmed, sustained, and nourished by the sacrament? Would that not put an undue burden on the ability of believing members to discern the body of Christ in the communal dimension described by the report? In other words, how can believers examine their relationship to fellow believers if they have not heard the profession of faith necessary to determine who their fellow believers are? Again, unless we are going to change our understanding of baptism so that we believe that it in its administration creates faith, there must be some manner of professing faith within the worship service so that fellow believers can properly discern the body of Christ. We are unaware of any biblical evidence which suggests that our understanding of baptism should be changed to teach such things. Thus, we believe that public profession of faith should remain the means of admittance to the Lord's Supper so that the church can properly discern the body of Christ in its communal dimension. Public profession of faith should not be viewed as something that keeps covenant children from the table but rather as the means by which God invites them to the table. In other words, God makes real promises in the sacrament of baptism to covenant children, and he invites them to believe those promises by faith, after which he will sustain that faith through the Lord's Supper. Although no human being can know for sure who from the visible covenant community (all those baptized) belongs to the invisible covenant community (those who believe God's gracious promises which are fulfilled through Jesus Christ), public profession of faith remains the most appropriate tool for churches to use. In that profession, children should at least be able to

its practice by nature suggest that the act of professing faith should not continue throughout one's life in many and varied ways. A lifelong growth in faith can and should be encouraged in churches that practice public profession of faith. The understanding of public profession of faith can be altered (i.e., part of a process of spiritual maturity and growth rather than a once-in-a-lifetime event) as can the practice of it (i.e., in a more age- and ability-appropriate manner) without ceasing to require the thing itself.

confess the characteristics listed in Heidelberg Catechism Q. and A. 81 in a manner they can understand, and this profession should be public in order to promote a meaningful discernment of the body of Christ.

We believe that public profession of faith (during a worship service) should continue to be a prerequisite for admittance to the Lord's Supper, and that such professions should be conducted in an age- and ability-appropriate manner.

Classis Zeeland
Ronald J. Meyer, stated clerk

Overture 10: Withhold Action on the Recommendations of the Faith Formation Committee

Classis Columbia overtures synod to withhold action on the recommendations of the Faith Formation Committee.

Grounds:

1. The report of the Faith Formation Committee omits a crucial command in the treatment of the 1 Corinthians 11 passage that governs any eating and drinking at the Lord's Supper (see section I of the following Appendix).
2. The report omits the historic understanding of true faith, which is the foundation of the confessional statements from which the Faith Formation Committee quotes (see section II of the following Appendix).
3. The report omits the value for the whole community of faith presented in the lives of those who share in the Lord's Supper by observation (see section III of the following Appendix).
4. This will allow time for the Faith Formation Committee to consider these grounds in light of potential changes in practice in the Christian Reformed Church.

Classis Columbia
Howard B. Spaan, stated clerk

Appendix

To "Examine Oneself" in the Context of 1 Corinthians 11

I. Introduction

The first omission in the Faith Formation Committee's report to Synod 2010 is the absence of a detailed study of the command to "examine oneself" as stated in 1 Corinthians 11:28. The committee gave a very detailed study of the words "to discern the body," in v. 29, which made the absence of the command in v. 28 all the more glaring. Consider the words in relationship to one another:

- 1 Corinthians 11:28 (ESV): "Let a person *examine himself*, then, and so eat of the bread and drink of the cup."

– 1 Corinthians 11:29 (ESV): “For anyone who eats and drinks without *discerning the body* eats and drinks judgment on himself.”

The Faith Formation Committee report comments exegetically on the participle, *discerning* without ever considering the power and intent of the main verb that pulls the participle along, which is the command (imperative) “examine oneself”! Even if we don’t know exactly what the word *examine* means, we see immediately that it is of essence because it is determinative: “. . . each should examine himself . . . and so eat . . . and drink.” Grammatically, the examination is the key. Further, it is this overture’s assertion that the examination and not the discernment of the body laid the historic foundation for asking children to refrain from eating and drinking at the Lord’s Supper until they publicly profess their faith, which leads us to the supplemental character of this overture: a consideration of an understanding of 1 Corinthians 11: 28 and 29.

In summary, a quick review of the list of the uses of the word *examine* as a verb and a noun (included in Addendum 1) will quickly show that each use of the word *examine* calls for a certain level of perspective and proving that come from experience. This understanding is reaffirmed and further supported in extrabiblical literature, where the word is frequently used in military situations (cf. Xenophon) but is *never* applied to recruits or new soldiers. To examine oneself is to prove oneself tried in battle. It implies the essential experiential knowledge of not only recognizing shortcomings but learning to overcome them.

Therefore, the call to examine oneself in the context of the Lord’s Supper is to know oneself in a deep way. It is a mandate to know our failures and our need for the Savior because we have exhausted all other resources. Then it follows that we “so eat . . . and drink,” to say that we examine first; and in that same manner, eat and drink in the sharing of the sacrament. There is no doubt that this is the message the apostle proclaimed in Corinth. Yes, the broader community was present, but we must also recall that the original recipients of the apostle’s instruction knew the meaning of the words far beyond our ability to comprehend them. In response to the certainty of the apostle’s command, the church continually tries to preserve the character and intent conveyed in the command through our liturgy and practice, inviting those proven in the true faith, communicated by the proclamation of Christ, to the table in recognition of their union in the death and hope that is ours uniquely in Christ. We do not have the ready vocabulary to capture the depth of the apostle’s instruction, but our practices show that the Supper is for the proven. As John Calvin once taught the church, the Supper is not only for those who discern Christ; that is the easy part. But the Supper is reserved for those who have come to know their essential need for Christ and the certainty of their faith. With this summary in mind, let us turn to a fuller understanding of the Corinthian text.

A. 1 Corinthians 11:28

To reassure us in our faith, 1 Corinthians 11:28 provides the foundation for the strong emphasis upon personal examination. “Let a person examine himself, then, and so eat of the bread and drink of the cup.” As we consider this verse in 1 Corinthians, there are four main ideas to ponder: emphasis, relationship or priority, vocabulary, and personal action.

The first thing that we need to observe is the emphasis conveyed in this verse. In the original text, the verb tenses make v. 28 stand out as if it were in boldface type. The entire text of 1 Corinthians 11, with the exception of v. 28, is communicated in what one might oversimplify as “conversational” verbs. All the verbs serve the telling of a story, which in this context happens to be a story of rebuke and an appeal to correct action. However, in v. 28 all three verbs: Examine! Eat! and Drink! are commands. Sadly, many of our English translations miss this fact. Verse 28 is emphatic. The verbs are commands to be obeyed!

Second, a study of 1 Corinthians 11:28 should show the relationship that exists between the three verbs of the verse. Unfortunately, the NIV is anemic in its translation of this verse, “*A man ought to examine himself before he eats of the bread and drinks of the cup.*” The ESV is a little more helpful, for it tries to give some sense of the original emphasis by saying, “Let a person examine himself, then, and *so eat . . . and drink. . .*” In the apostle Paul’s mind the eating and drinking of the Lord’s Supper are directly connected to the verb *examine*, and they are not to be undertaken until the prior examination is completed.

Our third point of consideration in rightly understanding the practice of the Lord’s Supper concerns the vocabulary used in this verse. That is to say, we do not know what the author is saying unless we know the full extent of the meaning of the words that he is using. In this regard, it is necessary that we follow closely the specific language used in v. 28 with respect to examination (i.e., What does Paul mean when he commands the Corinthians to examine themselves?). To convey his point, Paul selects a word that normally applies to military service in the sense of “being tested and tried in battle.”

Fortunately, we are not on our own in discerning the meaning of the examination commanded. The same Greek word from 1 Corinthians 11:28 occurs a total of twenty-one times in the New Testament. A study of these texts will show uniformity with the thought communicated herein as shown in two clear examples from 1 Timothy 3:10 and 1 Peter 1:7. In each case we should ask if these uses permit the inclusion of children or if they are exclusive to those of a proven personal profession:

- 1 Timothy 3:10 (ESV): “And let them also *be tested* first; then let them serve as deacons if they prove themselves blameless.” We don’t call the untested to office.
- 1 Peter 1:6-7 (ESV): “In this you rejoice, though now for a little while, if necessary, you have been grieved by various trials, so that the *tested genuineness* of your faith—more precious than gold that perishes though it is tested by fire—may be found to result in praise and glory and honor at the revelation of Jesus Christ.” We don’t declare the untested to be spiritually mature.

Furthermore, in support of the understanding of this text let us also consider 1 Corinthians 11:19 (ESV): “for there must be factions among you in order that those who are genuine among you may be recognized.” Here the apostle uses a cognate word (the same Greek word root) to speak of mature Corinthians who have demonstrated that they are “being proven genuine.” Therefore, in the apostle’s mind, the examination in 1 Corinthians 11:28 is not for children or for the spiritually immature. The Lord’s Supper is for those

who have been proven genuine, which is precisely why our tradition has always required some sort of a profession of faith prior to granting permission to come to the table of the Lord. This textual basis lies at the root of our Lord's Supper forms calling us to consider our sin, search our hearts, examine our consciences, and come to God's mercy for help in our time of need.

The fourth interpretive point that flows from 1 Corinthians 11:28 specifies that the examination is to be as personal as the eating and the drinking. This emphasis is conveyed by the presence of the reflexive pronoun *himself*. The apostle permits no communal examination, nor does he permit any to conduct the examination for another. The Word of God in this regard is intensely and redundantly personal. To this end, John Calvin says, "Do we wish anything plainer than the apostle's teaching when he exhorts each man to prove and search himself, then to eat of this bread and drink of this cup [1 Cor. 11:28]? A self-examination ought, therefore, to come first, and it is vain to expect this of infants" (*Institutes of the Christian Religion* 4.16.30 [McNeil, Battles edition quoted here]).

In summary, it is upon the basis of this understanding of 1 Corinthians 11:28 that the Christian church has limited communion to adult members. John Calvin taught the believers in Geneva that discerning Christ was not the issue for children, but it was one of testing commitment in the fire of life. Similarly, Charles Spurgeon in his sermon, *Fencing the Table*, said, "The Lord's own test is 'by their fruits you shall know them.' We must have a credible profession of faith supported by a life that is consistent therewith."

B. 1 Corinthians 11:29

As we noted above, v. 28 stands out in the equivalent of boldfaced type; the next verse tells us why that one was so important. Thus, consider briefly the message from 1 Corinthians 11:29 (ESV): "For anyone who eats and drinks without discerning the body eats and drinks judgment on himself."

The first point for our consideration from v. 29 is to call attention to the fact that we are to *recognize* (NIV) or *discern* (ESV), the body of Christ. No one is permitted to eat or drink of the Lord's Supper without knowing personally the body of Christ and what that body has done for us. That much is very straightforward, and it reminds us of the need for a basic profession of faith.

The second point from v. 29 is slightly more complex, although not terribly so. Once again, the apostle shows his mastery in the use of language. Whereas the unique feature of v. 28 is the compiling of imperatives or commands, the unique feature of v. 29 is the repetition of the verbs to eat and drink, first as participles and then as indicative verbs. Literally the verse reads, "For the one eating and drinking judges himself if he eats and drinks not discerning the body." Therefore, the text is really calling us to examine two things. As was evident from our English translations, we must discern the body of Christ; but, second, as is clear from the literal reading of the text, we must also be aware of the potential for bringing judgment upon ourselves (and our children).

A study of John Calvin's writings will bear out that he separates the two things we must discern. The first, says Calvin, is easy for all children and adults to discern. We see Christ, and so we are saved. But the second, the capacity to know if we are bringing harm or not, is something that we only learn by the maturity of experience. In Calvin's language we must judge

thoroughly the power of sin's pull upon us, and this is something that children cannot do; so we may not permit them to partake of the Lord's Supper, for we would be administering poison to them (cf. Addendum 2).

The strength of Calvin's argument retaining the view consistently held by the church was later used when Charles Spurgeon faced a contemporary appeal to include children in the Lord's Supper. The argument in that day concerned the Wesleyan view of the Lord's Supper as an ordinance to produce faith instead of the traditional view that the Lord's Supper was reserved for those of professed faith. Spurgeon, in a sermon on "Fencing the Table," affirmed the need to examine oneself in light of the fear of judgment, which he called the most practical guide that must be retained from 1 Corinthians 11. Spurgeon continued to say that we need the experience of life to know what it is to be forsaken in order to know what the depth of God's judgment is. Further, Spurgeon eloquently rambled on to say that we need to know "the agony of sin to know the agony of Christ so that we might rightly discern His body." Still not finished, Spurgeon declared that God, according to his patience, chose to let us learn of our need for Christ by the persistence of our nature to rebel. Thus it was with example after example that Spurgeon attacked the influence of Wesley and those who would permit children to come to the Lord's Supper, all the while highlighting the necessity of personal experience in life (just like a proven soldier) to lead us in examination in the light of the doom of the judgment of God.

Consequently, it is helpful to know that we are not the first to wrestle with the common appeal of uniting the entire congregation with Christ in the eating and drinking of the Lord's Supper. But we should also recognize that desire to eat is only part of the process. Of course children of the church want to come. It is appealing. However, yielding to children on the basis of appeal is rarely considered good parenting. For example, we spend our parental lives protecting our children from a God-ordained activity that is appealing in the practice of their sexuality. We hold them at bay until they may rightly enjoy this appeal in the proper context of marriage.

Similarly, every parent recognizes that there is progression in terms of physical foods. We start our children on milk; then, at about four to five months we usually add rice cereal, for there are fewer allergies to rice and it is easier to digest. At some point in the process of adding one food upon another our children want foods that we are eating but withholding from them. They want it desperately. They want it with all their being. Yet, for the sake of their health, we do not give in. We will not give them food that they are not to eat. If we know this and practice it physically, why is this so hard to understand spiritually?

Finally, in terms of exegetical consideration, Paul urges the Corinthians to spare the discipline that God is pouring out upon them, as we see in 1 Corinthians 11:30-32 (ESV), "That is why many of you are weak and ill, and some have died. But if we judged ourselves truly, we would not be judged. But when we are judged by the Lord, we are disciplined so that we may not be condemned along with the world."

The lack of examination has brought about discipline. Serious preparation or examination is mandated prior to eating the bread and drinking the cup. What parent would put their child at such risk? We may not presume to take

the judgment lightly just because our congregations are healthy and show longevity. We may not confuse God's forbearance for his permission.

Nor may we (as the Faith Formation Committee did) appeal to the Belgic Confession, Article 35, which allows for no ambiguity, "Therefore, no one should come to this table without examining himself carefully, lest 'by eating this bread and drinking this cup he eat and drink to his own judgment,'" and conclude the confession granted permission because it did not explicitly mandate a profession of faith. The text of Scripture is clear; some form of examination is essential to participation in the Lord's Supper.

II. Remembering the historic teaching of the church

The Faith Formation Committee report converses long and eloquently about the nature of the Corinthian text and the history of that text that is affirmed in the confessions of the church. But it has always been the stand of Reformed congregations that mere presence does not equal saving faith. Further, true faith has always been affirmed in our confession as a gift that is expressed in dual form—the dying to the old nature and living of the new. We all affirm that dying to the old and living for the new occurred in the historic death and resurrection of Christ. However, we have also always affirmed that these gifts are brought to recognition in our lives through the hearing of the gospel of Christ (Rom. 10:17 [ESV]: "So faith comes from hearing, and hearing through the word of Christ"). Thus it has always been the stand in Reformed congregations to recognize that true faith has been prospered by the preaching of Christ and that we celebrate the discernment of that faith with a profession of faith.

Therefore, it is with an eye toward an understanding of faith that we see the ironic second omission of the Faith Formation Committee report, for they fail to affirm or challenge the confessional definition of true faith. Of course there is no finer voice on this subject than that of John Calvin, who, historically speaking, articulated the very foundation of understanding upon which the confessions that the Faith Formation Committee report quotes. Of course, using Calvin as a source would not have been helpful for the committee's report because he is so eloquent in voicing an opinion different than they want to communicate. It is the opinion of Classis Columbia that the congregations of the CRC should be reminded of the teaching of John Calvin, and they should be given time to reflect seriously upon that teaching before considering the recommendations of the Faith Formation Committee. We lament that this information is not given its due in the conversations about the Lord's Supper, our history, and proposals to change our practice.

Since, as we have previously noted, we are not the first to have thoughts of including children at the Lord's Supper, it is essential to know what our fathers in the faith have said about children at the table of the Lord. And since the Faith Formation Committee finds the confessions of the church less than clear in terms of guidelines requiring a profession of faith prior to the Lord's Supper, let us consider the theological opinion behind the confessions in the clear teaching of John Calvin.

Institutes of the Christian Religion

John Calvin

(Henry Beveridge translation)

Book 4, Section 16

30. *Baptism and Lord's Supper*

At length they object, that there is not greater reason for admitting infants to baptism than to the Lord's Supper, to which, however, they are never admitted: as if Scripture did not in every way draw a wide distinction between them. In the early Church, indeed, the Lord's Supper was frequently given to infants, as appears from Cyprian and Augustine, (August. ad Bonif. Lib. 1;) but the practice justly became obsolete. For if we attend to the peculiar nature of baptism, it is a kind of entrance, and as it were initiation into the Church, by which we are ranked among the people of God, a sign of our spiritual regeneration, by which we are again born to be children of God, whereas, on the contrary, the Supper is intended for those of riper years, who, having passed the tender period of infancy, are fit to bear solid food.

This distinction is very clearly pointed out in Scripture. For there, as far as regards baptism, the Lord makes no selection of age, whereas he does not admit all to partake of the Supper, but confines it to those who are fit to discern the body and blood of the Lord, to examine their own conscience, to show forth the Lord's death, and understand its power. Can we wish anything clearer than what the apostle says, when he thus exhorts, "Let a man examine himself, and so let him eat of that bread, and drink of that cup?" (1 Cor. 11: 28.) Examination, therefore, must precede, and this it were vain to expect from infants. Again, "He that eateth and drinketh unworthily, eateth and drinketh damnation to himself, not discerning the Lord's body." If they cannot partake worthily without being able duly to discern the sanctity of the Lord's body, why should we stretch out poison to our young children instead of vivifying food? Then what is our Lord's injunction? "Do this in remembrance of me." And what the inference which the apostle draws from this? "As often as ye eat this bread, and drink this cup, ye do show the Lord's death till he come." How, pray, can we require infants to commemorate any event of which they have no understanding; how require them to "show forth the Lord's death," of the nature and benefit of which they have no idea? Nothing of the kind is prescribed by baptism. Wherefore, there is the greatest difference between the two signs. This also we observe in similar signs under the old dispensation. Circumcision, which, as is well known, corresponds to our baptism, was intended for infants, but the Passover, for which the Supper is substituted, did not admit all kinds of guests promiscuously, but was duly eaten only by those who were of an age sufficient to ask the meaning of it, (Exod. 12:26.) Had these men the least particle of soundness in their brain, would they be thus blind as to a matter so very clear and obvious? *[emphasis ours]*

For the sake of convenience, let us review the main points again.

- Children are never admitted to the Lord's Supper (*Institutes of the Christian Religion*, 4.16.30).
- It is vain to expect an examination from infants (*Institutes of the Christian Religion*, 4.16.30).
- "If they cannot partake worthily . . . why should we stretch out poison to our young children" (*Institutes of the Christian Religion*, 4.16.30)?

The Faith Formation Committee also appealed to the parallel between the children who partook of the Passover and those able to partake of the Lord's Supper. But this is not a new argument either, for Calvin said (paraphrased for brevity) that even though children ate the Passover it was meaningless until the age in which the children could discern its meaning and they

could appropriate it by faith (cf. Exodus and 1 Corinthian Commentary; and *Institutes*, 4.16.30). But this was not Calvin's final answer. He further declared that the Lord's Supper was separated from the Passover because of the foundational matter on the importance of personal examination regarding the Lord's Supper:

The examination of a man's self, is of necessity required in the supper, and therefore they ought not to be admitted to it who cannot examine themselves: such as children, furious and angry men, also such as either have no knowledge of Christ, or not sufficient, although they profess Christian religion: and others that cannot examine themselves.

(Geneva Bible, note on 1 Corinthians 11:28)

In like manner Calvin also said, "We cannot be too diligent in examining ourselves as the Lord enjoins" (Short Treatise on the Supper of Our Lord, Section 21; text cited in Addendum 2 for reference).

We must renounce all that is our own . . .
we must acknowledge that we are dead in ourselves . . .
we seek our strength in [Christ] . . .
we must understand that in ourselves we are weak . . .
we must understand how miserable we are without [God's grace] . . .
we must feel within ourselves only disquietude and torment.

Now such feelings cannot exist, without producing, first, dissatisfaction with our whole life; secondly, anxiety and fear; lastly, a desire and love of righteousness. . . . When under such a conviction of our misery we get a taste of the goodness of God. . . .

(Short Treatise on the Supper of our Lord, Section 22;
text cited in Addendum 2 for reference)

So, the second lesson from Reformed history is that a personal examination is required (contrary to the conclusion of the Faith Formation Committee). Further, the perspective of history shows that an examination such as a profession of faith includes both a discernment of Christ *and* an evaluation of ourselves that highlights our need for Christ which, of course, children and unbelievers cannot do.

Still another perspective from history is the consideration that there is no credible reference to any discussion of children at the Table of the Lord until the 12th century when the suggestion was immediately dismissed. When suggestions to include children arose in the 16th and 19th centuries, they were quickly resisted upon the weight of 1 Corinthians 11:28. We should be very cautious and be very certain of our biblical footing when we change practices that have been affirmed by the Holy Catholic Church for centuries without clearly showing those exegetical practices to be in error. The Faith Formation Committee may show periods of eloquence, but they have not come close to showing John Calvin to be in error or to show how our forefathers and authors of our Church Order and Lord's Supper forms were similarly in error.

III. Reclaiming the role of the whole community

Patience is a great quality that is often lost on contemporary society. In our pressure to meet deadlines and to create equality, we often overlook crucial elements that have been part of our history. The longer the congregations of the CRC keep talking, the more likely we will come to a full

understanding of the usefulness of our traditional practices. This same tendency is illustrated in the third major omission of the report of the Faith Formation Committee. In the committee's struggle to create participation for all, they fail to observe the valuable symbolism of waiting and anticipating that is essential to the lesson of the sacrament. The contemporary desire to be inclusive for all members of the community sharing in the same way actually abandons the wonder of longing for the eating of the Supper and removes a role that is part of the blessing for the community.

Therefore, in light of the considerations to enhance community, a few basic questions seem like logical inquiries that are omitted in the Faith Formation Committee report. For example, instead of abandoning the period of waiting for our children, why not enhance it and reclaim that value too? Why not teach it as an honored part of the communal lesson? Let us not forget that the longing to eat or drink at the Lord's Supper is an essential part of the sacrament's proclamation, for the entire sacrament is cast in the scope of waiting for a greater participation. Therefore, the rush to "include" everyone actually becomes an abandonment of the essential character of the Lord's Supper that the community should retain. Admittedly, we have not succeeded in this part of the Lord's Supper proclamation. However, instead of losing any form of the symbolism, we should notice the desire and longing of the all who long to eat and drink, even as all should notice the eating and drinking of the entire body. Then the community is proclaiming in union with each doing their part.

It should be further noted that the role of anticipation and desiring a fuller understanding and fuller share in the message and meaning of the sacrament is parallel to the symbolism of the Passover present in the Lord's Supper to which the Faith Formation Committee appeals. Indeed the children were present, and indeed they did share in the Passover meal, but we all readily affirm that "physically present does not entail spiritually present." As noted above, Calvin already taught what Judaism and Christianity have always affirmed, that the true meaning of Passover is appropriated by faith. Furthermore, we must also remember that the most important role of the children at Passover was to *highlight the memory and the longing*. Isn't the recommendation of the Faith Formation Committee obliterating that role and proclamation? Let us not be in haste lest we remove characteristics of the Supper that we would do well to retain and enhance.

The Faith Formation Committee seeks to get us to consider the context of the Corinthian church and recognize that each ate from the dinner in a communal way. They also want us to enhance the unity of the communal meal. However, it is also essential to discern that the historic dinner in Corinth lacked unity and the instruction and commands for proper Supper adherence was specifically directed to restore unity not in physical presence but in faithful participation. To that end, the apostle commanded examination and discernment for so eating and so drinking. Unity is achieved in the understanding and affirmation of the apostle's word, not in proximity to it. Similarly, our worship is designed to be inclusive. We, like Corinth, include those with right practice and those who must be rebuked. We include those of faith and those who do not even know that they should seek the Father in spirit and truth. In practice each person, member and guest, professing member and baptized member, shares in the proclamation of the death of

Christ until he comes again, discerningly or undiscerningly. Since we do not hold to baptismal regeneration or to salvation by proximity, we must affirm that the true unity of 1 Corinthians 11 is only found in the true faith of the repentant, which requires mortification and vivification. For example, some administer the Supper, others serve it, many eat it; and, yes, some long to eat it. But those who truly eat it are only those who can examine themselves as the truly repentant.

This overture seeks to demonstrate the blessing of community by laying the historic opinion of the church and the omitted treatment of crucial texts alongside the report of the Faith Formation Committee so that the congregations of the CRC may truly consider the formation of the faith of the children entrusted to our care.

Addendum 1

To Examine Oneself

I. New Testament uses of the verb *dokimazō*, “to examine”

Luke 12:56 (ESV): “You hypocrites! You know how to interpret the appearance of earth and sky, but why do you not know how to interpret the present time?”

Luke 14:19 (ESV): “And another said, ‘I have bought five yoke of oxen, and I go to examine them. Please have me excused.’”

Romans 1:28 (ESV): “And since they did not see fit to acknowledge God, God gave them up to a debased mind to do what ought not to be done.” [Greek contrasts proven knowledge of God with unproven mind, *dokimazō . . . adokimos*; “and since they were not proven in having knowledge of God, God gave them up into a debased mind to do what ought not to be done.”]

Romans 2:18 (ESV): “And know his will and approve what is excellent, because you are instructed from the law. . . .”

Romans 12:2 (ESV): “Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that by testing you may discern what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect.”

Romans 14:22 (ESV): “The faith that you have, keep between yourself and God. Blessed is the one who has no reason to pass judgment on himself for what he approves.”

1 Corinthians 3:13 (ESV): “Each one’s work will become manifest, for the Day will disclose it, because it will be revealed by fire, and the fire will test what sort of work each one has done.”

1 Corinthians 11:28 (ESV): “Let a person examine himself, then, and so eat of the bread and drink of the cup.” [Greek is more emphatic: “Let a person examine himself, then, and in that manner eat of the bread and drink of the cup”; the eating and drinking is essentially connected to examining.]

1 Corinthians 16:3 (ESV): “And when I arrive, I will send those whom you accredit by letter to carry your gift to Jerusalem.”

2 Corinthians 8:8 (ESV): “I say this not as a command, but to prove by the earnestness of others that your love also is genuine.”

2 Corinthians 13:5 (ESV): “Examine yourselves, to see whether you are in the faith. Test yourselves. Or do you not realize this about yourselves, that Jesus Christ is in you?—unless indeed you fail to meet the test!” [Greek: “unless indeed you are unproven.”]

Galatians 6:4 (ESV): “But let each one test his own work, and then his reason to boast will be in himself alone and not in his neighbor.”

Ephesians 5:10 (ESV): “And try to discern what is pleasing to the Lord.”

Philippians 1:10 (ESV): “So that you may approve what is excellent, and so be pure and blameless for the day of Christ. . . .”

1 Thessalonians 2:4 (ESV): “But just as we have been approved by God to be entrusted with the gospel, so we speak, not to please man, but to please God who tests our hearts.”

1 Thessalonians 5:21 (ESV): “But test everything; hold fast what is good.”

1 Timothy 3:10 (ESV): “And let them also be tested first; then let them serve as deacons if they prove themselves blameless.”

Hebrews 3:9 (ESV): “Where your fathers put me to the test and saw my works for forty years.”

1 Peter 1:7 (ESV): “So that the tested genuineness [noun form of the same root, see below] of your faith—more precious than gold that perishes though it is tested by fire—may be found to result in praise and glory and honor at the revelation of Jesus Christ.

1 John 4:1 (ESV): “Beloved, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits to see whether they are from God, for many false prophets have gone out into the world.”

II. *Dokimos*

Compare the following support for understanding the verb from the noun forms of the root word *dokimos*:

Romans 14:18 (ESV): “Whoever thus serves Christ is acceptable to God and approved by men.”

Romans 16:10 (ESV): “Greet Apelles, who is approved in Christ. Greet those who belong to the family of Aristobulus.”

1 Corinthians 11:19 (ESV): “For there must be factions among you in order that those who are genuine among you may be recognized.”

2 Corinthians 10:18 (ESV): “For it is not the one who commends himself who is approved, but the one whom the Lord commends.”

2 Corinthians 13:7 (ESV): “But we pray to God that you may not do wrong—not that we may appear to have met the test, but that you may do what is right, though we may seem to have failed.”

2 Timothy 2:15 (ESV): “Do your best to present yourself to God as one approved, a worker who has no need to be ashamed, rightly handling the word of truth.”

James 1:12 (ESV): “Blessed is the man who remains steadfast under trial, for when he has stood the test he will receive the crown of life, which God has promised to those who love him.”

1 Peter 1:7 (ESV): “So that the tested genuineness of your faith—more precious than gold that perishes though it is tested by fire—may be found to result in praise and glory and honor at the revelation of Jesus Christ.”

Addendum 2

Historic Statement on Children’s Participation in the Lord’s Supper

Short Treatise on the Supper of our Lord

John Calvin

21. THE MANNER OF EXAMINING OURSELVES.

Here it is necessary to be well on our guard. For as we cannot be too diligent in examining ourselves as the Lord enjoins, so, on the other hand, sophistical doctors have brought poor consciences into perilous perplexity, or rather into a horrible Gehenna, requiring I know not what examination, which it is not possible for any man to make. To rid ourselves of all these perplexities, we must reduce the whole, as I have already said, to the ordinance of the Lord, as the rule which, if we follow it, will not allow us to err. In following it, we have to examine whether we have true repentance in ourselves, and true faith in our Lord Jesus Christ. These two things are so conjoined, that the one cannot subsist without the other.

22. TO PARTICIPATE IN THE BLESSINGS OF CHRIST, WE MUST RENOUNCE ALL THAT IS OUR OWN.

If we consider our life to be placed in Christ, we must acknowledge that we are dead in ourselves. If we seek our strength in him, we must understand that in ourselves we are weak. If we think that all our felicity is in his grace, we must understand how miserable we are without it. If we have our rest in him, we must feel within ourselves only disquietude and torment. Now such feelings cannot exist, without producing, first, dissatisfaction with our whole life; secondly, anxiety and fear; lastly, a desire and love of righteousness. For he who knows the turpitude of his sin and the wretchedness of his state and condition while alienated from God, is so ashamed that he is constrained to be dissatisfied with himself, to condemn himself, to sigh and groan in great sadness. Moreover, the justice of God immediately presents itself and oppresses the wretched conscience with keen anguish, from not seeing any means of escape, or having any thing to answer in defense. When under such a conviction of our misery we get a taste of the goodness of God, it is then we would wish to regulate our conduct by his will, and renounce all our bygone life, in order to be made new creatures in him.

Overture 11: Reject the Guiding Principle Proposed by the Faith Formation Committee; Reaffirm the Decisions of Synods 1988 and 1995

Classis Illiana overtures Synod 2010 to reject the guiding principle proposed by the Faith Formation Committee and to reaffirm the decisions of Synods 1988 and 1995 that require covenant children to make an “age- and ability-appropriate” profession of faith before being admitted to the Lord’s Supper.

Grounds:

1. The guiding principle set forth by the Faith Formation Committee lacks clarity and fails to provide adequate guidelines for elders with regard to children at the Lord’s Supper. It leaves the basic question regarding children at the Lord’s Supper unanswered: Is a personal expression of faith on the part of the baptized child also required for participation, or is covenant status in the believing community sufficient reason for admitting baptized children to the Lord’s Supper?
2. While the practice of making a formal public profession of faith is not addressed by Scripture and the confessions, both Scripture and the confessions teach that believing faith is a requirement for all who come to the Lord’s Supper.
 - a. Scripture

1 Corinthians 11:17-34

Note: The committee gives an extended exegesis of this text and the commands to take, eat, drink, remember, proclaim, examine, discern, and wait. With regard to whether *the body* refers to the *church* or to *Christ’s own body*, the committee says: “We see no conclusive evidence that forces us to choose between these two views.”

The interpretation of this passage offered by the Faith Formation Committee does not eliminate the need for an individual response of faith as a prerequisite for communion. On the contrary, this passage assumes that the participant has a personal faith in Christ when it speaks about participating in a worthy manner by discerning the body, and by remembering and proclaiming the death of Jesus as the only basis for our salvation.

The current position of the Christian Reformed Church is that a child must be capable of making an age- and ability-appropriate profession of faith before being admitted by the elders to the Lord’s Supper. Synod 1988 declared that “the church is warranted in admitting to the Lord’s Supper covenant children who give evidence of faith and are able to discern the body and remember and proclaim the death of Jesus in celebrating the Lord’s Supper” (*Acts of Synod 1988*, p. 558). This position is also consistent with the following quotations from the Confessions.

b. Confessions

- 1) Heidelberg Catechism, Q. and A. 75: "Christ has commanded . . . *believers* to eat this broken bread and to drink this cup."
- 2) Heidelberg Catechism, Q. and A. 76: Speaking concerning the Lord's Supper, the catechism calls us "to accept with a *believing* heart the entire suffering and death of Christ" and "by *believing* to receive forgiveness of sins and eternal life."
- 3) Heidelberg Catechism, Q. and A. 77: Christ promises "to nourish and refresh *believers*" in the institution of the Lord's Supper.
- 4) Heidelberg Catechism, Q. and A. 81: Those who come to the Lord's table must be "displeased with themselves because of their sins," they must "nevertheless trust that their sins are pardoned and that their continuing weakness is covered," and they must "also desire more and more to strengthen their faith and to lead a better life."
- 5) Belgic Confession Article 35 states that the Lord's Supper was instituted "to nourish and sustain those who are already *born again*."

3. Church Order

The guiding principle and the report underlying it downplay the significant role that public profession of faith serves in the life of the individual making profession of faith and in the life of the believing community. Profession of faith is intimately linked to both baptism and the Lord's Supper. When making public profession of faith, a baptized child affirms the promises of God signified and sealed in baptism and is granted admission to the Lord's Supper.

It needs to be remembered that the Church Order of the Christian Reformed Church never specifies a rite called "public profession of faith." Rather, the Church Order reminds the churches that admission to the Lord's Table must include a public profession of faith (Church Order Article 59). The emphasis of the article is to supervise the Lord's table. Profession of faith has no standing in the Church Order apart from that purpose.

At baptism another place is set at the Lord's table, and all the church's efforts should be dedicated to leading covenant youth to take their place at that table as soon as possible. How can elders evaluate the expression of faith on the part of those who seek admission to the table? The teaching of the Bible is clear: "If you confess with your mouth, 'Jesus is Lord,' and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved" (Rom. 10:9). "No one can say, 'Jesus is Lord,' except by the Holy Spirit" (1 Cor. 12:3). The only standard that the Bible authorizes in supervising the Lord's Supper is a public expression of faith and, of course, a life consistent with that profession.

Classis Illiana

Robert L. Jipping, stated clerk

Overture 12: Adopt the Belhar Confession as a Testimony, Not a Confession

I. Background

Synod 2009 proposed “to Synod 2012 the adoption of the Belhar Confession as part of the standards of unity of the CRC (as a fourth confession).” Ground 8 of this proposal “allow[s] for a three-year period of reflection (2009-2012). . . . The additional time is given to the churches to adequately study and reflect on the proposal and be better prepared for response” (*Acts of Synod 2009*, p. 604).

This overture is a response to synod’s recommendation to study and reflect on the Belhar Confession. We hope that this overture will be a helpful addition to this study period and will be received as part of synod’s discussion in 2012.

II. Introduction

Racism is a terrible sin that has humiliated, belittled, and destroyed countless people through the ages. Throughout history racism has taken on many forms. It has appeared as slavery, oppression, apartheid, and the holocaust—to name a few forms. Regardless of its form, racism effectively denies that all people are created in the image of God. Scripture makes it clear that in Christ there are no divisions of race. In Christ “there is no Greek or Jew, circumcised or uncircumcised, barbarian, Scythian, slave or free, but Christ is all, and is in all” (Col. 3:11).

Unfortunately the church has not always proclaimed this truth. Some churches have remained silent about racism while others have manipulated Scripture to make racism appear acceptable, even honorable. In both silence and endorsement the sin of racism has been perpetuated in Dutch Reformed churches. The sin of apartheid is not something that happened in South Africa; it is the sin of our family. This pains us as a family and causes much regret.

We are thankful to our brothers and sisters in South Africa who have done much hard work in promoting reconciliation and peace where there has been division. We are thankful for the time and efforts that they have poured into the Belhar Confession. We are grateful that they have shared the Belhar Confession with us, as it reminds us how easily racism can hide in our churches.

In North America churches have also struggled with the sin of racism. Historically we recognize our endorsement of slavery and continued mistreatment of people of color. In fact, this was predated by mistreatment and often outright slaughter of Native Americans. In both situations our treatment of people with different color skin is disgraceful and offensive to God. We recognize that racism isn’t simply a historical problem. It continues today in the way we perceive people of Middle Eastern descent with fear, especially since the 9/11 attacks. We must also note our disrespectful treatment of many legal and illegal immigrants.

A. *History of racism in the CRC*

The CRCNA, while not guiltless, has not remained quiet on the issue of racism and in numerous cases has put words into action. Synod 2007 recognized that the decision to send missionaries to China instead of Africa “was

motivated in part by racist values.” For this reason we took time to pray and to confess our sin as a denomination.

This was not the only time our denomination struggled with racist tendencies. The Timothy Christian School situation in Cicero, Illinois, in the 1960s is just one example of that. Another example is the white-flight mentality as we moved our churches into the suburbs to avoid contact with the increasingly African-American community that moved into the cities.

In all of this we recognize that we cannot ignore the reality of racism in our churches and in our denomination. We must fight against this sin as we seek to love and embrace our fellow humans regardless of race or color or ethnic background.

B. The benefits of the Belhar Confession

It is into this context that we receive the Belhar Confession. This document does well in its call to reconciliation and healing. It is a call to unity and a call to love each other regardless of our differences. Given our continent’s and our own denomination’s history, this is an important document because it forces us to wrestle with racism.

The Belhar is an articulation of our need for unity and respect for the diversity God has created in the world he loves. We also recognize its desire to remain true to God’s Word. After reading through this document, one would find it very difficult to argue against its basic premise from a biblical basis. For this reason we see value in this document within our context in the CRCNA. At the same time we also note some significant concerns about this document.

C. Theological concerns

The Belhar Confession leaps into social matters before establishing a gospel foundation. It rightly points out Christ’s concern for the unity of the church. Citing John 17:20-23, the Belhar notes

that this unity must become visible so that the world may believe that separation, enmity and hatred between people and groups is sin which Christ has already conquered, and accordingly that anything which threatens this unity may have no place in the church and must be resisted.

This visible aspect of unity is a necessary component of declaring the lordship of Jesus Christ. However, we must be careful that we keep our emphases in proper order.

The Belhar Confession states humanity’s need for unity in such strong terms that it renders unclear humanity’s greater need for reconciliation with God through Jesus Christ. In John 17:21b Jesus emphasizes that the heart of evangelism is union with God the Father and God the Son when he says to the Father, “May they also be in us so that the world may believe that you have sent me.” Christ’s followers are unified not first in how they act, but first as they know a more significant union with God through the blood of Christ. Union with each other serves as evidence of this more significant union with God. We fear that the Belhar is aiming only for the fruit of true conversion, not the root of the unity problem—being reconciled to God!

The preceding observation is evidence that the Belhar may be theologically unclear. There is a confusion of theological emphasis as it appears to place primary importance on horizontal unity with man, as though this will strengthen our vertical unity with God. This emphasis appears to parallel

a humanistic assumption that the human race can better itself through our own hard work—in this case the hard work of race reconciliation. Little emphasis is given to human depravity and our need to first be reconciled to God through Christ by means of Christ's atonement and the Spirit's power. Jesus evidenced this in his summary of the law in Matthew 22:34-40. Loving God above all must lead to love for his imagebearers. The Belhar's human-centered theology will in the end fail to achieve results because it is centered on people first before God.

When we consider racism in this light, we realize that racism is a much more serious issue. Racism is not simply harmful feelings or actions between those of different colored skin. Racism is a symptom of a heart that has not been reconciled to God. To this end, racism causes us grave concern, not only for the victims of racism but also for the perpetrators of racism considered before their God. Therefore, when the Belhar Confession focuses only on the fruit of conversion—viz, unity with humanity—it effectively bypasses a much more serious need for the perpetrators of racism to be reconciled to God through the blood of Christ.

A second concern that we have is with the Belhar's statement "we reject any doctrine which explicitly or implicitly maintains that descent or any other human or social factor should be a consideration in determining membership of the church." The term *social factor* is much too ambiguous. Religion itself can be categorized as a social factor. To this end, the Belhar can very easily be used to propagate a theology of universalism.

Furthermore, we should recognize that the gospel itself is on occasion divisive in nature. In Luke 12:49-53, Jesus says he is not bringing peace but division. As Jesus speaks from there, he talks about division that will happen within families as a result of the gospel. Given that this division will happen within a family system, this division is obviously not based on descent but is likely based on social factors. As Christians, we are called to live according to a standard that differs from that of the world. What secular society deems as acceptable behavior is often much different from the way Christ calls us to live. Even these basic parameters of belief fall under the category of *social factor*.

Third, we are concerned with where the Belhar stands in relation to our current three Forms of Unity. Since the Belhar calls for a rejection of all theology that does not encourage unity, this appears to place the Belhar at odds with our other three confessions, given that these confessions themselves point to a division between members of the church. They were written to distinguish the beliefs of Reformed churches from other theological traditions of the day. In our current Reformed confessions, we discover language referring to the Mass as "condemnable idolatry" (Heidelberg Catechism, Q. and A. 80) and detesting the "error of the Anabaptists" (Belgic Confession, Art. 34). Historically the CRCNA has taken issue with these statements in our current confessions and has opted not to change these confessions due to the historical nature of these documents. Rather, these oppositions have been noted as footnotes in subsequent printings of these documents. Since the CRCNA has chosen not to alter our existing confessions, these divisive words still stand. This implies that if we were to receive the Belhar confession as a fourth confession, we might be required to reject the other three.

Given that the CRCNA has been reluctant to alter inflammatory language in our current confessions, can we safely assume the same treatment of the

Belhar if it reaches confessional status? As it stands right now, there are many concerns about the content and the language of the Belhar. Is it wise for the CRCNA to rush forward and grant this document confessional status without first wisely and carefully addressing these issues before the document reaches a status where we can no longer alter its content?

This in itself is a problem because we recognize the limited scope of the Belhar. It is a document concerned solely with one issue: the issue of racial unity. When placed beside the Belgic Confession and the Heidelberg Catechism, the Belhar lacks the depth and richness of the whole Christian faith. While the Canons of Dort focus on one specific theological issue, they are an important confessional statement to make as they bring clarity to God's sovereignty in such a way that the elect can have comfort and peace in their election to salvation. Our three Forms of Unity lay out the basics of Reformed theology. They help to speak our Reformed accent in a way that the Belhar does not.

The Belhar appears to be in an entirely different category from that of our current three Forms of Unity. The current three Forms of Unity serve mainly as a vertical description of who God is and how God interacts with humanity. The Belhar focuses on the horizontal relationship between people. This horizontal relationship serves as a testimony to who God is. Our current confessions are statements about God; the Belhar is a statement about how people should respond to each other in response to God. To this end, it seems appropriate for the Belhar to be accepted as a testimonial status. A testimony is our response to the gospel. A testimony is a call for our actions to speak to who God is.

Finally we find this document far too open-ended and unclear. It calls us to offer reconciliation to anyone who has experienced injustice. What kind of injustice are we referring to? Is it real injustice or perceived injustice? May we even make a distinction between the two? What if a perceived injustice does not resonate with the truths of God's Word? Some would argue that it is unjust to limit a woman's right to abortion. Do we need to fight on behalf of these rights when Scripture recognizes that sometimes being true to God's Word means being unjust in some people's eyes? The lack of clarity of the Belhar is a point of concern, given that the purpose of our confessions is to bring greater clarity to what we believe.

D. The paradox of our response

Some people are afraid that if we do not accept the Belhar as confessional, it would send the wrong message to people. They fear rejecting the Belhar as confessional could send the message that we endorse racism. Therefore we need to be careful to distinguish between the Belhar as a document and the act of racism. Some would assume that not accepting the Belhar as confessional is nothing more than passive racism. We must be clear that not accepting the Belhar as confessional does not equal embracing racism. Racism is sin.

More important, we need to consider the implications of accepting the Belhar as confessional. This too could send the wrong message to people. Accepting the Belhar as confessional could send the message that the church is so concerned with producing fruits of the gospel (social issues) that it pays little attention to its root: its central message about the active and passive obedience to Christ. When the church places social matters before us without

clarifying the gospel, it diminishes the church to just another social agency. The Word of God deals greatly with social matters but only as an outflow of the gospel and the knowledge of God (theology); there is no warrant for hanging one social issue like racial justice alongside our confessions independently.

Furthermore, the language of the Belhar Confession is divisive in itself. There are portions of the Belhar where the wording is so strong that it makes it difficult to express theological disagreement without being seen as a racist. Point 5 of the Belhar leaves little room for questioning or dialogue, stating, “We believe that, in obedience to Jesus Christ, its only head, the church is called to confess and to do all these things, even though the authorities and human laws might forbid them and punishment and suffering be the consequence.” This point appears to say that if a person does not agree with every last point that is written in this document, that person must not be a follower of Christ. This is in stark contrast to the tone found in the Belgic Confession, Article 7, where it humbly submits itself to the authority of Scripture, saying, “We must not consider human writings—no matter how holy their authors may have been—equal to the divine writings . . . therefore we reject with all our hearts, everything that does not agree with this infallible rule.”

To that end, we do not wish to accept the Belhar as confessional because there are aspects of the Belhar that do not agree fully with the emphasis of Scripture or give full-bodied expression to the gospel as it is expressed in our other confessions.

III. Overture

Given the above discussion we recognize the benefits and the limitations of the Belhar as a confession. It certainly has value for our denomination and our context, but its limitations make it impossible for us to receive it with confessional status. As a result, we wonder about the possibility of receiving this document on par with *Our World Belongs to God: A Contemporary Testimony*. Both documents challenge us, as a denomination, to live out our faith in our specific social context.

Therefore, Classis Niagara overtures Synod 2010 to propose to Synod 2012 the adoption of the Belhar Confession as a document with the same status as *Our World Belongs to God: A Contemporary Testimony*.

Grounds:

1. A testimony is properly understood to be our response to the gospel.
2. Adopting the Belhar as a testimony recognizes the importance of this document.
3. Adopting the Belhar as a testimony honors our need for racial reconciliation.
4. Adopting the Belhar as a testimony rather than a confession recognizes the limits of this document.
5. It provides Synod 2012 with an option for addressing the Belhar.

Classis Niagara
John TeBrake, stated clerk

Overture 13: Appoint a Study Committee to Review Church Order Articles 67 and 78-81, as Well as the Corresponding Supplements

Classis Heartland overtures Synod 2010 to appoint a study committee to review Church Order Articles 67 and 78-81, as well as the corresponding supplements, to provide guidance for addressing non-attending members that remain within the geographical area of the church, are not attending another church, and resist any meaningful conversation or contact with the church in which their membership resides.

Grounds:

1. Congregations seem to lapse or simply do not address members that, according to current Church Order, may be candidates for discipline. These are members for whom there is no specific “public sin” other than non-attendance. This includes those members who live locally and to the council’s knowledge are not attending a church. Unfortunately this leads to inconsistency in the practice of addressing church membership.
2. The formal process of church discipline leading to excommunication is ineffective when the non-attending member will not initiate or return any attempts to make contact and refuses to correspond with or ignores the council.
3. Along with promoting the benefits of a vibrant membership in the church, the CRC should uphold and promote the value of integrity in recordkeeping.

Classis Heartland
David L. Heilman, stated clerk

Overture 14: Modify Financial Provisions of Church Order Article 17 for Cases When a Pastor Leaves a Congregation for Personal Reasons

I. Background

Synod 1998 adopted provisions providing extended compensation when a pastor separates from his or her congregation under the provisions of Church Order Article 17-a (see *Acts of Synod 1998*, pp. 392-96). The article is appropriate when used as a result of irreconcilable differences. However, the article is also used when a pastor leaves for purely personal reasons, such as to pursue additional studies. When that happens, it places an inappropriate financial burden on a local congregation to require such extended compensation and benefits.

Article 17 is the only article in the Church Order whereby a minister can leave a church and maintain his or her ministerial credentials. The *Manual of Christian Reformed Church Government* (2008) says in regard to Article 17, “The intent of this Article is to provide for the proper release of a minister from a congregation when the minister wants to pursue additional education or when relationships have become strained so that effective ministry

has become impossible” (p. 87). The financial provisions adopted by Synod 1998 to administer Church Order Article 17-a were clearly intended for the support of the pastor who separates from the church because of irreconcilable differences. A pastor, under no pressure from the church, who chooses to leave his or her calling in order to pursue advanced study, should not be entitled to extensive severance compensation and benefits.

II. Overture

Classis Grand Rapids North overtures Synod 2010 to modify the interpretation of the financial provisions of Church Order Article 17 in cases where the pastor leaves voluntarily for purely personal reasons so that a church is not forced to provide extended compensation and benefits.

Ground: Requiring such extended compensation and benefits places an inappropriate financial burden on a local congregation when the decision of a pastor to leave is for purely personal reasons.

Classis Grand Rapids North
William G. Vis, stated clerk

Overture 15: Reject the Recommendation from the Church Order Revision Task Force re Article 54

I. Background

The Church Order Revision Task Force was appointed by the Board of Trustees (BOT) following the decision of Synod 2007 with a mandate to “initiate a process for a revision of the Church Order and its Supplements for the purpose of an orderly updating to incorporate the synodical decisions and regulations that govern the life of the denomination and the churches” (*Acts of Synod 2007*, p. 597).

II. Overture

The council of Beaverdam CRC overtures Synod 2010 to reject the recommendation of the Church Order Revision Task Force regarding Church Order Article 54.

Grounds:

1. Synod 2007 authorized a revision of the Church Order in order to update and incorporate previous synodical decisions and regulations. However, the task force, rather than updating Article 54, has suggested a wholesale revision of Article 54 without a synodical decision mandating such a revision. Therefore, the task force has taken upon itself the authority to make a synodical decision.
2. No previous synod has repudiated the wise practice of Church Order Article 54-b, which states that “At one of the services each Lord’s Day, the minister shall ordinarily preach the Word as summarized in the Heidelberg Catechism, following its sequence.” The proposed revision, with little fanfare or synodical deliberation, seeks to now sweep away hundreds of years of mandated Reformed church practice where the

Heidelberg Catechism is to be used, not just as an occasional reference or silent underpinning, but as a systematic summarization of our foundational beliefs as Reformed Christians. It is for this reason that Reformed-minded churches have held to the practice of using one Sunday worship service out of two for an explanation and application of the 52 Lord's Days of the Heidelberg Catechism. The proposed revision removes the call of the CRCNA to her churches to make it a regular practice of preaching through the Heidelberg Catechism, without any previous synods actually having mandated such a drastic and important change.

3. The proposed revision strips away the language which implies that there ought to be more than one Sunday worship service (Article 54-b: "At one of the services each Lord's Day . . ."). In fact, just as recently as Synod 2008, in response to an overture from Classis Zeeland regarding the importance of holding two separate worship services on Sunday, synod, while not acceding to the overture, did so not because they did not agree with the overture, but because they believed the position of the denomination was clearly and recently outlined by Synod 1995, in which synod reaffirmed "the rich tradition of assembling for worship twice on the Lord's Day" (*Acts of Synod 2008*, p. 445). Therefore the proposed changes to Article 54 by the task force not only fail to uphold the mandate Synod 2007 gave to it, which was to incorporate previous synodical decisions, but in fact go against the mandate by contradicting previous synodical decisions, even as recently as Synods 1995 and 2008.
4. The stated ground that the task force employed to bring about this dramatic and substantive change to Article 54 is at best a misunderstanding of the purpose of the Church Order, and at worst an undermining of the Church Order's authority and the authority of synod.
 - a. To propose, as in their ground, that this "proposed revision better reflects the current practice of the churches" is then to allow the Church Order to fall in line with the practices of the churches rather than the churches falling in line with the Church Order. This is in complete contradiction to the stated purpose of the Church Order, as written in Article 1, where even in the task force's proposed revision they retain the original wording, which states that the churches are regulated by the ecclesiastical organization of this denomination, an organization which has been written down and is found in the articles of our Church Order. Either the Church Order is an expression of previous synods' regulating of church life, or it is not. If it is, then the practices of our churches ought to be in line with the Church Order; if it is not, then why even have a Church Order? If we allow church *practice* to change Church Order rather than ratified synodical *decisions and deliberations*, then we have truly become a denomination that is congregationalistic.
 - b. Might the problem here not be with the Church Order but instead with the churches and the church visitors? Again, even in the proposed revision to Church Order Article 42-b, one of the roles of the church visitors is to "ascertain whether the officebearers of the church faithfully perform their duties, adhere to sound doctrine, *observe the provisions of the Church Order . . .*" [emphasis ours]. Even in the proposed revision of Article 42-b the task force recognizes the

importance of observing the provisions of the Church Order. Would not Article 54 have been one of those? So why now change Article 54 because it has not been observed? Have our church visitors been doing their job? How much visiting is even being done in the different classes by their church visitors, to maintain this level of accountability? And do church visitors even ask anymore about a Church Order article such as Article 54? And if not, why not? Again, where does the problem here lie, with the Church Order, or with the churches and the church visitors?

- c. If the Church Order is prescriptive, which it is according to Article 1, then it ought to do its job and establish what the church ought to be striving for in her life and practice. If the church order is descriptive, which according to Church Order Article 1 it is not, then it becomes a fluid document that is no more useful than an occasional reference point, but only one of many when it comes to churches making decisions.

Council of Beaverdam CRC,
Hudsonville, Michigan
Tim Miedema, clerk

Overture 16: Appoint a Task Force to Revise the Church Order Articles Related to the Office of Deacon

I. Introduction

The CRC has a rich tradition of diaconal ministry. The office of deacon is not only biblically based but also has a rich calling in the CRC Church Order that is impressive and motivational. That strong calling has led to effective work at local, national, and international levels as deacons have linked local resources to collaborate for ministry in exciting ways at all those same levels.

Yet most churches, in the context of ministry needs today, struggle with using the office of deacon as effectively as they would hope. Part of the struggle is one of selection. The majority of deacons at any given point in time are in their first term in office. Despite the 1973 report “The Nature of Ecclesiastical Office” that established the equality of all offices, deacons are often still perceived as “elders in training.” Given the economic crisis we are living in today, the extraordinary context of our global connectedness, and the extraordinary needs and opportunities our churches experience in their everyday life, a renewed and stronger deacons’ ministry is urgent.

Another barrier to effectiveness is that the mandate of the office, in terms of ministry of mercy, is so large that the traditional structure and function, as described in the Church Order, no longer helps the church address its ministry of mercy as well as it could. In order to address this concern, Classis Grandville asks Synod 2010 to address this concern.

II. Background

As stated in the introduction, the Christian Reformed Church has a strong diaconal ministry history due in large part to the establishment of the office of deacon. The intent of this overture is to build on that rich history and allow the office to function effectively in today’s context.

The following Charge to Deacons is a powerful statement requiring no changes:

I charge you, deacons, to inspire faithful stewardship in this congregation. Remind us that “from everyone who has been given much, much will be demanded” (Luke 12:48b). Teach us to be merciful. Prompt us to seize new opportunities to worship God with offerings of wealth, time, and ability. Realize that benevolence is a quality of our life in Christ and not merely a matter of financial assistance. Therefore, minister to rich and poor alike, both within and outside the church. Weigh the needs of causes and use the church’s resources discerningly. Be compassionate to the needy. Respect their need for dignity; hold in trust all sensitive matters confided to you. Encourage them with words that create hope in their hearts and with deeds that bring joy into their lives. Be prophetic critics of the waste, injustice, and selfishness in our society, and be sensitive counselors to the victims of such evils. Let your lives be above reproach; live as examples of Christ Jesus; look to the interests of others.

Rev. Douglas R. Fauble, in his book, *A Leader Among Servants: A Manual for Deacons* (1989, Chicagoland Diaconal Taskforce), gives a wonderful summary of the history of diaconal ministry in the CRC. He notes the many synodical efforts to establish a diaconal structure that connects deacons in a vital network of ministry, worthy of the biblical calling of mercy and justice. Rev. Fauble lays out a ready formula for a strong classical diaconal structure that nourishes deacons at the local level, and partners in national and international ministry with CRWRC and others. He notes that Synods 1910, 1920, 1947, 1960, 1965, 1972, and 1976 addressed the structural question, and Synod 1987 established diaconal conferences.

From its start in 1962 through 1995, CRWRC worked closely with the diaconal structure of the CRC. The Canadian churches have a strong diaconal tradition with active deacon conferences supported now by Diaconal Ministries of Canada. While some U.S. classes have strong deacon conferences, that is the exception rather than the rule in the United States. Where the conference structure is strong, there is good training and networking for deacons, and solid support is provided to critical ministry organizations that target needs in the classis or region.

Yet during the years that CRWRC focused on working with the diaconal structure as part of its domestic work, churches in both Canada and the United States reported only minimal diaconal involvement outside their church membership. Local ministries were readily supported as the means to reach the community. Since 1995, CRWRC has helped churches establish new structures to work in the community. The local diaconate does not have the structure and support needed to carry out the charge it has been given. The intent of our overture is to address this issue.

Rev. Fauble uses thoughts from Karl Barth, a theologian who significantly influenced European Reformed communities in their diaconal structures to establish selection criteria (p. 67): “Barth identifies three assumptions regarding the deacons. First, the deacon must be aware of, but not stopped by, prevailing social, economic, and political conditions. Second, the deacon must meet the needs of people beyond the point that the state meets needs. Aiding only the outer person does not care for the whole person. Instead the deacon must care for the inner, spiritual dimension of a person. To Barth, a deacon’s work is more than social welfare. Third, the deacon’s work should not replace each Christian’s work of service. Instead, in relationship

to diaconal work done by Christians, the deacons' task is to 'prompt them in their response to Christ and His Gospel and to seek the fruit of that response in their life of deaconing toward their fellow man'."

Barth's three concerns resonate closely with the CRC Charge to Deacons. It is time to structure and support the office accordingly by giving consideration to what gifts are needed to fill the office and how best to serve in the office. If deacons are chosen for their skill and passion in meeting the transformational needs in their community and world and are given the freedom to create administrative structures that accomplish this, our churches will become known as havens of God's grace and mercy. This is a vision of the CRCNA as it seeks to transform lives and communities worldwide. The traditional functions now accomplished by deacons can still be done, but in a context of a hugely expanded vision and ministry.

III. Overture

Classis Grandville overtures Synod 2010 to appoint a task force that will rewrite the articles of the Church Order relating to the office of deacon at the church and major assembly levels. The intent of the rewrite would be to allow churches and higher assemblies to structure their diaconal ministry in ways that

- allow for effective coordination of ministry efforts that transform the community and the church, as members minister in and with their community. This harnesses "God gifts" in the community for community benefit. The gifts of churches and their members, as well as the gifts lying dormant in the community, need to be stewarded. Church resources can be leveraged in amazing ways if they harness latent community gifts. Helping neighbors steward their resources is another pathway to heart change, significant living, opening conversations, and relationships that draw people to Jesus as Savior, Redeemer, and King.
- select leadership based on gifts commensurate with the office and vision for ministry.
- lead church members to exercise their gifts and so enhance their own faith walk as they minister with community, nation, and world.
- establish terms of deacon tenure that provide for consistent ministry oversight, implementation, and coordination.
- address the place and role of deacons at the higher assemblies.

Grounds:

1. The current structure and tradition do not address the ministry context or the expectations of the equality of office established in Report 44 to Synod 1973.
2. The mandate in the charge to deacons cannot be fulfilled under the structure as outlined in the Church Order.
3. Past efforts to address this (i.e., asking for stronger classical diaconal committees) has not resulted in churches being the agents of transformation in their communities.

Classis Grandville
Daniel B. Mouw, stated clerk

Overture 17: Receive the Report of the Church Order Revision Task Force for Information; Broaden the Mandate of the Task Force

I. Background

Though we are grateful for the work of the Church Order Revision Task Force, the task force itself alerts us to some difficulties concerning its work. One difficulty results because of its mandate. The Board of Trustees (BOT) asked Synod 2007 to “initiate a process for a complete revision of the Church Order and its Supplements both for the purpose of an orderly updating as well as a rewrite of synodical regulations that govern the life of the denomination and the churches in the present situation . . .” (*Agenda for Synod 2007*, p. 41). Synod 2007 only decided to “initiate a process for a revision of the Church Order and its Supplements for the purpose of an orderly updating to incorporate the synodical decisions and regulations that govern the life of the denomination and the churches . . .” (*Acts of Synod 2007*, p. 597).

When the task force asked the BOT about its mandate, the BOT informed it that “the primary responsibility of the task force was to update the Church Order and bring consistency to its provisions. A more substantial revision of the Church Order would have to await a clearer directive from synod” (*Agenda for Synod 2010*, p. 511). The task force was not to rewrite synodical regulations but was to incorporate decisions made by synod to bring consistency to the Church Order.

The difference between what the BOT requested of synod and what synod actually granted created a dilemma for the committee. Though it mentions that certain revisions are beyond its mandate, in several places it goes beyond its mandate and rewrites synodical regulations. For example, it deletes the requirement that “At one of the services each Lord’s Day, the minister shall ordinarily preach the Word as summarized in the Heidelberg Catechism, following its sequence” (Article 54-b) and deletes the requirement that home visitation be done annually (Article 65). These are good and necessary changes, but not enough changes like these are made. For example, a regulation similar to that of annual home visitation is the requirement that church visitors visit all churches in the classis annually (Article 42). Though the task force makes a number of changes to this article, it does not change the requirement about the frequency of such visits. These examples illustrate how a very narrow mandate hindered the committee in its work and also illustrate that Synod 2010 is being presented with a piecemeal revision of the Church Order.

The committee also alerts us to five broader issues that must be addressed: the areas of ministry associates, noncompliance, church diversity, cultural diversity, and Classis Red Mesa (*Agenda for Synod 2010*, pp. 512-13). Again, the narrow mandate given to the task force kept it from doing the work that needs to be done on this important document.

Synod should not deal with the Church Order in such a piecemeal fashion. The Board of Trustees was correct when it asked Synod 2007 for the appointment of a committee or task force that would rewrite certain parts of the Church Order. Though an orderly updating of the Church Order to incorporate recent synodical decisions is helpful, it falls short of our desire to make the Church Order the most useful and effective tool it can be. Synod should receive the report of the task force as information and give the task

force a broader, more comprehensive mandate that is consistent with the initial request of the BOT.

II. Comments on the work already done

To assist the task force in its ongoing work, we present the following comments:

A. Article 1-a (*Agenda for Synod 2010*, p. 514) – Stating 1 Corinthians 14:40 in the version of the Bible currently used by our denomination is an improvement. However, to use this verse in this article is an improper use of Scripture. As the proposed introduction points out, when Paul talks about “everything” in this verse he is talking about what happens in the worship service. We claim too much when we use Paul’s words as some sort of biblical rationale for the Church Order. We should drop the citation of 1 Corinthians 14:40 and simply say something like: “. . . and desiring to assist its churches in their ministries, regulates its ecclesiastical organization and activities in the following articles.” Also, the paragraph in the proposed introduction which discusses this Scripture text (p. 532) should be deleted both because it uses Scripture improperly and because it breaks the flow of the discussion about changing the Church Order. In addition, the last six words of the proposed introduction, which again quote this text (“in a fitting and orderly way” – p. 534), should be deleted.

B. Article 4-c (pp. 514-15) – The task force proposes the use of the words “adult confessing members” to bring this article in line with Article 59-b. As long as we are revising this sentence, we should make it positive instead of negative (“limited to”) and should also revise the words “the right to vote.” Though that phrase can be defended, “rights” language is more characteristic of the world than it is of servants of Christ who are called to look to the interests of others. This sentence should be revised to read: “All adult confessing members shall have the privilege of voting.”

C. Article 18-b (pp. 515-16) – Both the title of minister of the Word and the authority to perform official acts of ministry are “conferred by the church.” There is no good reason to say that in one case and not in the other. The phrase “conferred by the church” is unnecessary and should be deleted.

D. Article 21 (p. 516) – This article says, “The churches shall encourage young persons to seek to become ministers of the Word . . .” In recent years our denomination has been blessed as a number of older people have entered the ministry. Age discrimination is not tolerated in the world; it should not be encouraged in the church. Churches should encourage gifted people of all ages to become ministers. The task force proposes that revision in the part of Article 21 it moves to Article 43 (pp. 519-20), which now reads, “. . . to provide support and encouragement for individuals preparing for ministry in the Christian Reformed Church.” Similar language should be used in this article so that it reads “The churches shall encourage individuals to become ministers of the Word. . . .”

E. Article 37 (p. 517) – The task force proposes the words “adult confessing members” in Articles 3 and 4 (pp. 514-15) to bring these articles in line with Article 59-b. The same terminology should be used in Article 37 in place of “all members entitled to vote.”

F. Article 38-c (pp. 517-18) – The task force indicates that the last part of the current article is too specific and proposes that it be included in the Supplement. The words “including the transfer of its pastor and other ministry staff” are also too specific and should either be deleted or moved to the Supplement.

G. Article 42 (pp. 518-19) – Though the addition of church counselors to this article is appropriate, the way the article is written, with an overview statement in 42-a and explanatory statements in 42-b and 42-c, is redundant. In addition, consistency in the article in terms of what is said about church visitors and the counselor can be improved by following the same pattern, namely qualifications, tasks, and reporting. Also, the requirement of annual church visiting should be changed. Church visiting is a good practice, but a visit every year is not necessary or welcomed by most churches. It is probably true that most classes do not follow this regulation. Whether they would follow a regulation calling for a visit every other year is debatable, but at least such a regulation is more realistic and more attainable. If a church wishes to be visited more frequently, the article indicates that it may request a visit. Since this article describes the duties and reporting responsibilities of the counselor, Article 9 should simply read, “In nominating and calling a minister, the council shall seek the approval of the counselor appointed by classis. The council and counselor shall sign the letter of call.”

Article 42 should be revised as follows:

Article 42-a: “The classis shall appoint church visitors to visit each church in classis once every two years. One or more teams of officebearers, composed of two ministers or one minister and one elder chosen for their experience and counsel, shall be appointed. Church visitors shall ascertain whether the officebearers of the church faithfully perform their duties, adhere to sound doctrine, observe the provisions of the Church Order, and promote the building up of the body of Christ and the extension of God’s kingdom. Churches are free to call on the church visitors whenever they desire their counsel. Church visitors shall submit a written report of their work to classis.”

Article 42-b: “The classis shall appoint a counselor to provide assistance to a church in the process of calling a minister of the Word. The counselor shall be an officebearer, normally a minister of the Word, whose ministerial credentials or membership resides in a congregation other than the calling church. The counselor shall ensure that the church observes ecclesiastical regulations and sound process. The counselor shall submit written reports to classis during and at the conclusion of the calling process.”

If synod judges that Article 42 must have an overview statement that introduces the content of the article, Article 42-a should simply read:

“The classis shall appoint church visitors and counselors to provide assistance and advice to its member churches.” If this is added, Article 42-a and b above would become Article 42-b and c.

H. Article 43 (pp. 519-20) – Since there is no further reference to the Classical Ministry Leadership Team in this article, the abbreviation CMLT should be deleted. (The same is true with the abbreviation MEPMC in Articles 7 and 8.)

I. Article 67 (p. 524) – The proposed addition would read better if it were “no church in ecclesiastical fellowship” instead of “a church in ecclesiastical fellowship.”

J. Article 70 (p. 525) – With the exception of this article and Article 69-b, the Church Order consistently uses the word *shall*, not *should*. This article (and Article 69-b) should be brought into conformity with the rest of the Church Order by changing the word *should* to *shall*. The last sentence in the proposed revision is commentary, not regulation. We could say that worship services (Articles 51-54), baptisms (Articles 56-58), weddings (Article 69), and so forth provide opportunities to do and teach any number of things, but that is not the purpose of the Church Order. This sentence should be deleted. As the task force indicates, the things expressed in this sentence are already in the *Manual of Christian Reformed Church Government*, where they appropriately belong.

K. Supplement, Article 18 (pp. 527-28) and Supplement, Article 53 (p. 530) – The last word in 2 of the 2001 synodical decision cited in these supplements is *evangelist*, a term no longer used among us. Today we use the term *ministry associate*. To avoid confusion, those words should be used, probably bracketed to indicate that the synodical decision used a different word.

L. Introduction (pp. 531-34) – The introduction is wordy and can be improved by a tighter use of language and by some reorganization. There are also some questionable statements that weaken this section (e.g., we “must reflect Christ in the way we function, choose leaders, assemble,” the Church Order is “Designed for Change,” and so forth).

Introduction (p. 532) – The statement that “any [substantial] changes must be approved by a subsequent synod before they take effect” misrepresents Article 47 and its Supplement. The supplement indicates that changes submitted by synodical study committees need not be approved by a subsequent synod before they take effect since churches and classes have had prior opportunity to consider those changes, “because such reports are received by November 1 of the year before synod meets” (2009 *Church Order and Rules for Synodical Procedure*, p. 79). The sentence in the proposed introduction must be revised so it accurately represents the Church Order. In addition, the lengthy quotation of John Calvin in this already lengthy section about changing the Church Order should be summarized both for the sake of brevity and clarity, especially because the task force states that we are seeking to use language that is commonly used and understood.

III. Overture

Classis Lake Erie overtures Synod 2010 to

A. Receive the report of the Church Order Revision Task Force for information and give the task force a broader mandate that permits it to rewrite the Church Order in light of our current practice and ministry context.

Grounds:

1. The task force has alerted us to difficulties with its current mandate and to a number of areas that need to be addressed if the Church Order is to become an effective tool for the entire denomination.
2. The Church Order should be studied and revised in a comprehensive, not a piecemeal, way if it is going to be an effective tool for the entire denomination.

B. Give the specific comments presented in this overture on the report of the Church Order Revision Task Force to the task force.

Ground: These comments will assist the task force as it considers its work.

Classis Lake Erie

Robert A. Arbogast, stated clerk

Overture 18: Remove Declaration F of the 1991 Decision on Creation and Science

I. Background

Synod 1988 established a study committee on creation and science to address various theological questions surrounding the views of three professors at Calvin College that had proved to be controversial.

Overall, the report that was presented to Synod 1991 is a positive and well-crafted statement of how a Christian in the Reformed tradition ought to think about the relationship between faith and science. In addition, the statement provides good guidance to the church on these issues. Particularly, the closing sections of the report “An analysis of the problem confronting the church” (*Agenda for Synod 1991*, pp. 401-405), “Words of counsel and advice” (pp. 405-407), “A summary of conclusions” (pp. 407-409), “Declarations” (p. 409-10), and “Pastoral advice” (pp. 410-11) are very useful in helping the church and Christian scientists think about the creation and evolution issue and even broader faith-science issues. The 1991 Committee on Creation and Science Report is available online at www.crcna.org/pages/synodical.cfm.

The subject of our overture is Declaration F—recommended by a minority of the Committee on Creation and Science. Declaration F originally read

The church declares, moreover, that the clear teaching of Scripture and of our confessions on the uniqueness of human beings as imagebearers of God rules out all theories that posit the reality of evolutionary forebears of the human race (cf. V, C, 2).

(*Agenda for Synod 1991*, p. 410)

Declaration F was adopted by Synod 1991 in the following form:

The church declares, moreover, that the clear teaching of Scripture and of our confessions on the uniqueness of human beings as imagebearers of God rules

out the espousal of all theorizing that posits the reality of evolutionary forebears of the human race.*

*Note: Of course, private research, theorizing, and discussion are not addressed by this declaration. Some points of the pastoral advice are helpful on how such activities should be carried out.

(*Acts of Synod 1991*, p. 767)

To which was added by synod the following morning, “Declaration F is not intended and may not be used to limit further investigation and discussion on the origin of humanity” (*Acts of Synod 1991*, p. 774).

This awkwardly worded position, when read in light of the note and addendum, seems to be internally contradictory and leaves the reader wondering what it really means. The statement seems to be discordant from the rest of the report. It appears that the advisory committee that introduced the final wording and synod itself in adopting that motion and then qualifying it later were hesitant to state so dogmatically the position advocated in Declaration F as originally proposed by the minority of the Committee on Creation and Science. This negative and restrictive statement seems out of place in light of the teaching of the full report.

We believe that it is time to remove this discordant item and let the remainder of the report stand as the official position of the CRC.

II. Overture

Classis Rocky Mountain overtures Synod 2010 to (1) remove Declaration F from the Synod 1991 decision on creation and science and (2) declare that Declaration F is no longer part of the CRCNA’s official position statement on creation and science.

Grounds:

1. Declaration F¹ with the proviso in the note and the addendum is the official position of the CRCNA and is a pronounced feature of the summary that is found on the CRCNA website (www.crcna.org/pages/positions_creation.cfm) and in the summary of positions document (Doctrinal and Ethical Positions, 2008 version, p. 12). As such, it obscures the more positive attitude toward science found in the report and in the Reformed tradition in general.
2. The majority of the Study Committee on Creation and Science argued against Declaration F with the following reasons that still seem compelling:
 - a. Historically the Christian church in general has been reticent to issue formal declarations or confessional statements in this area. The CRC also has not considered it necessary to issue such a confession regarding this matter. There is wisdom in such a position.
 - b. Many members of the CRC are working in this area and are considering the evidence and, what is not yet clear, the impact it may have both on scientific theory and the understanding of the biblical

¹ Throughout the grounds “Declaration F” will refer to the advisory committee’s modified version, including the note, and the next day’s addendum, in other words, the final form of Declaration F as adopted by Synod 1991.

account. The church should allow them to contribute to a resolution of the problem. Further study in this area is necessary.

- c. The church should not bind the consciences of its members beyond what is the clear and indubitable teaching of Scripture and the creeds (cf. Section VIII, Summary Conclusion J, the second part) (*Agenda for Synod 1991*, p. 412).

Point c is especially pertinent. Even though the note and addendum that gave final form to Declaration F allow some latitude, Declaration F remains the official statement of the church with respect to evolutionary forebears of the human race that does in fact bind the consciences of those who disagree with it.

3. Declaration F seems to be contrary to the humility indicated in the report itself in sections VI, M and VI, N that acknowledged that “the apparent conflict between Bible and science on the question of origins cannot be completely resolved in the present state of our knowledge” and that “on this issue we are going to have to live with a *docta ignorantia*, a well-informed admission of ignorance” (*Agenda for Synod 1991*, pp. 404-405).
4. While all of the official qualifications surrounding Declaration F largely keep it from having the originally desired effect of forbidding these views in the absolute sense, the church would be better served simply to remain silent on this issue and to stand by the remaining declarations that are more consonant with the report as a whole.
5. There are scientists in the CRC who find the evidence for some form of evolutionary forebears of human beings increasingly convincing, particularly in light of whole genome sequencing of humans, other primates, and other organisms. Such findings of science were anticipated by the Study Committee on Creation and Science (*Agenda for Synod 1991*, p. 432). To acknowledge this does not mean that these scientists deny any other of the declarations or other conclusions from the report. Scientists and theologians operating from a Reformed perspective continue to wrestle with these findings and how they might be reconciled with Scripture and our confessions.
6. There are approaches to this issue that allow for evolutionary forebears of the human race but also preserve the uniqueness of humanity as being created in the image of God and preserve the event character of the early chapters of Genesis.² One of the negative votes recorded (*Acts of Synod 1991*, p. 768) refers to “the history and tradition of Reformed scholarship in this area (e.g., B.B. Warfield, A.A. Hodge, Albertus Pieters, James Orr, Francis Patton, James McCosh, Herman Bavinck),” suggesting that Declaration F is too strongly worded in light

² For example, in a dualist anthropology it could be argued that only the biological part of the human being has an evolutionary history (i.e., that God created the first human being in his image from an evolutionary forebear with the incorporation of a human soul). This seems to be the position taken by the early Presbyterian B.B. Warfield and the position of Roman Catholic dogma. Alternatively, in a more holistic anthropology it could be argued that a God-directed evolutionary process led to a creature that experienced a revelatory encounter with God, and only then did that creature become fully human in the image of God.

of Reformed scholars' attempts to address the question of evolutionary forebears of the human race.

7. The report itself, in the opening paragraph of section IX, suggests patience on this matter:

From the days of St. Augustine the church has been advised not to accept or to reject too hastily existing scientific theory . . . In times of such uncertainty, when the evidence may not yet have been either fully discovered or completely assessed, the church must testify to that which is central to the teaching of Scripture and to her own confession. Beyond that there should be an attitude of patient confidence as we wait for the resolution of the present debate.

Declaration F shows no such patience.

8. The rest of the report sufficiently guards against the excesses of a view that holds Scripture hostage to the latest findings of science.
9. No necessary affirmation of evolutionary forebears is implied by rescinding Declaration F.

Classis Rocky Mountain

Jacob P. Boonstra, stated clerk

Overture 19: Revise Biblical-Theological Argumentation That Presents Evidence in Favor of Ordination of Women Ministers, Elders, and Ministry Associates

I. Background

Synod 1995 approved the following recommendation:

That synod recognize that there are two different perspectives and convictions, both of which honor the Scriptures as the infallible Word of God, on the issue of whether women are allowed to serve in the offices of elder, minister, and evangelist.

(Acts of Synod 1995, p. 727)

Synod 1995 also made the ordination of women elders, ministers, and evangelists a local option for congregations and classes, subject to review after five years by Synod 2000.

When Synod 2000 reviewed the local option practice of ordaining women elders, ministers, and evangelists, it adjusted regulations in the Church Order Supplement, Article 3-a to make the ordination of women less local and more broadly denominational. Synod 2000 also approved the following motion:

That synod declare that the section regarding "biblical-theological argumentation" in the review committee's report (see *Agenda for Synod 2000*, pp. 355-73) provides the biblical evidence required to undergird the declaration of Synod 1995 that the perspectives and convictions re women in office articulated in the CRC "honor the Scriptures as the infallible Word of God."

(Acts of Synod 2000, p. 699)

It is significant that Synod 2000 did not simply receive for information the biblical-theological argumentation portion of the review committee's report. Rather, in addition to approving a number of recommendations, Synod 2000 approved the biblical-theological argumentation portion of the report, giving

it the status of providing the biblical evidence required to undergird the declaration of Synod 1995. Therefore, since it was approved by Synod 2000, the biblical-theological argumentation portion of the review committee's report is subject to editing by subsequent synods.

Such editing of the biblical-theological argumentation (*Agenda for Synod 2000*, pp. 355-73) is necessary in view of the following lexicographical and grammatical considerations.

According to the biblical-theological argumentation (hereafter BTA) approved by Synod 2000, the general analogy of Scripture presents so much data in favor of ordaining women that "there would have to be explicit and universally binding scriptural arguments against this teaching in order to overturn it" (*Agenda for Synod 2000*, p. 369).

The BTA also notes that in the CRC

Some think that such evidence exists in 1 Corinthians 11:2-16, 1 Corinthians 14:33b-35, and 1 Timothy 2:9-15. These texts may not be dismissed; they are to be dealt with according to Reformed hermeneutics, and their teaching must be honored. Rightly interpreted, these passages, too, can properly be understood to be in harmony with the general analogy of Scripture that has just been presented.

(*Agenda for Synod 2000*, p. 369)

II. A Review of Two Critical Texts

A. 1 Corinthians 11:2-16

The BTA approved by Synod 2000 notes that

In Corinth the believing women were exercising their new-found freedom in Christ and were participating in the worship service by praying and prophesying. Paul in no way discouraged the women from praying and prophesying, but he did insist that they show proper decorum in doing so, probably by wearing long hair and an appropriate head covering. To support his concern, he states in 1 Corinthians 11:3, "I want you to realize that the head of every man is Christ, and the head of the woman is man, and the head of Christ is God.

(*Agenda for Synod 2000*, p. 369)

A key element in the interpretation of this passage is the meaning of the term *head* (*kephalê*). The BTA approved by Synod 2000 states that the word *head* is used metaphorically in this passage, not literally.

There are two reasons to suggest that here Paul is using "head" to mean "source." First, in Greek the term "head" (*kephalê*), when used in a metaphorical way, did not mean "have authority over." It wasn't until later in Ephesians and Colossians, that Paul used it that way when he referred to Christ, so the Corinthians most likely would have understood *kephalê* as "source." Second, when Paul elaborates later on the man-woman relationship (1 Cor. 11:8-9), he elaborates on the idea of "source" ("for man did not come from woman but woman from man . . ."). In the context, then, *kephalê* ("head") probably has that same meaning in verse 3.

(*Agenda for Synod 2000*, p. 369)

However, in contrast to the BTA approved by Synod 2000, studies of the use and meaning of the term *head* (*kephalê*) indicate that the term was being used metaphorically to refer to authority even before Paul wrote 1 Corinthians. A study by Dr. Wayne Grudem, published in the *Trinity Journal* in the spring of 1985, found that in ancient Greek writings, the word *kephalê* was most often used literally to refer to a creature's physical head. Yet in some

cases *kephalê* was used metaphorically to refer to “a person of superior rank, or ruler, ruling authority.” The following instances of such metaphorical use (denoting authority) have been discovered in Greek literature pre-dating the apostle Paul’s writing of 1 Corinthians.

The Septuagint – 3rd to 1st Century B.C.	13 instances
Herodotus – 5th Century B.C.	2 instances
Plato – 5th to 4th Century B.C.	1 instance
Testament of 12 Patriarchs – 2nd Century B.C.	1 instance

Therefore, the BTA approved by Synod 2000 erred when it stated that “in Greek the term ‘head’ (*kephalê*), when used in a metaphorical way, did not mean ‘have authority over’” when Paul wrote 1 Corinthians.

It should also be noted that in Grudem’s study of 2,336 uses of *kephalê* in Greek literature ranging from the 5th century BC to the 4th century AD, he uncovered no instances in which the word meant “source, origin: person or thing from which something else is derived or obtained.”

This would explain why most New Testament Greek lexicons have not mentioned *source* as a possible meaning of *kephalê*. However, there is an entry in the Liddell, Scott, Jones lexicon (LSJ) (ninth edition [Oxford: Clarendon, 1968], p. 945) that includes the following possible definition of *kephalê*:

- II. 1. Of things, extremity
 - a. In Botany
 - b. In Anatomy
 - c. Generally, *top, brim* of a vessel...*capital* of a column
 - d. In plural, *source* of a river, *Herodotus* 4.91 (but singular, *mouth*); generally, *source, origin, Orphic Fragments* 21a; *starting point* [examples: the head of time; the head of a month].

Three things should be noted about this LSJ entry. First, it refers to things and/or objects, not people. Second, the metaphorical meaning of *kephalê* is based on the concept of *extremity* (i.e., a person’s head and feet are at the extremities of the body). Third, it is when the term is in the plural that it means *source* of a river; in the singular it refers to the *mouth* of a river.

Still, the LSJ entry might imply that the word *kephalê* could mean *source* in 1 Corinthians 11. To clarify the intent of the LSJ entry, the editor of the LSJ wrote the following in a personal letter to Dr. Wayne Grudem, dated April 14, 1997:

The entry under this word in LSJ is not very satisfactory. . . . I was unable to revise the longer articles in LSJ when I was preparing the latest Supplement, since I did not have the financial resources to carry out a full-scale revision.

I am in broad agreement with your conclusions. . . . *kephalê* is the word normally used to translate the Hebrew *r’osh*, and this does seem frequently to denote leader or chief *without much reference to its original anatomical sense, and here it seems perverse to deny authority.*

(italics added by Grudem, cited by Wayne Grudem in the *Journal for Biblical Manhood and Womanhood*, Volume 2, No. 5, Winter 1997)

We must conclude, therefore, that the BTA approved by Synod 2000 erred in stating that when Paul wrote to the Corinthians, they “most likely would have understood *kephalê* as ‘source.’”

B. 1 Timothy 2:9-15

Of the three key passages identified by the BTA, this one is the most important because it is the most explicit. The BTA notes,

Four features of 1 Timothy 2:9-15 deserve mention: (a) in the church women should pray and dress modestly and adorn themselves with good deeds rather than external finery (2:9-10); (b) women are to learn but must do so in quietness and full submission (2:11); (c) Paul does not permit a wife (or woman) to teach or usurp authority over a husband (man) (2:12); (d) he bases this restriction on creation and the fall (2:13-14) but concludes with a message of hope for the woman (2:15).

Timothy was left in Ephesus to combat false teachers (1 Tim. 1:3-7) who were promoting speculative theories and wrong ideas about the law, leading many astray. They seem to have had considerable influence among some women, especially younger widows (5:11-15). It seems that some of the younger widows (5:13) were even propagating this false teaching and some (5:15) had already capitulated to Satan. The false teachers seemed to be forbidding marriage and advocating other ascetic practices (4:3). The injunctions in 1 Timothy 2:11-15 can best be understood against this polemical background.

The meaning of verse 12 is crucial, though it raises three disputable issues. It seems likely that here again Paul is addressing the marriage relationship. The word "submission" is the same one used in Ephesians 5:22 and 1 Corinthians 14:34, where marriage is being discussed. And since 1 Timothy 2:15 refers to women being saved through childbearing, Paul seems to have the marriage relationship in mind—as he does in 1 Corinthians 14:33b-35.

(Agenda for Synod 2000, pp. 370-71)

Since the report singles out verse 12 as being "crucial," we should note how the BTA explains it as being in harmony with the ordination of women elders, ministers, and evangelists. The NIV translation reads, "I do not permit a woman to teach or to have authority over a man." However, the BTA approved by Synod 2000 says,

Although the word *authentain* in 1 Timothy 2:12 can mean "to have authority over," it seems likely that here it has the more pejorative force of "to usurp authority over," as in the King James translation. One point in favor of the latter is that Paul uses a different word in 1 Corinthians 7:4 when he affirms that in marriage a woman has authority over the body of her husband just as the husband has authority over the body of his wife. Given the context of teaching in 1 Timothy 2:12, what is probably being prohibited is the exercise of the wrong kind of authority within marriage, the domineering kind of usurping authority.

Paul's injunctions in 1 Timothy 2:11-12 are rooted in an appeal first of all to the creation story: Adam was first formed, then Eve (2:13). (Paul made the same appeal in I Cor. 11:8-10 in grounding his injunction for women to wear head coverings in worship.) This affirmation is best understood here as countering the false teachers who were forbidding marriage and advocating other ascetic practices by not adequately recognizing the good creation order (1 Tim. 4:1-5).

(Agenda for Synod 2000, p. 371)

At issue here is whether the term *authentain* is used pejoratively as meaning "to usurp authority" or if the term is used positively as meaning "to exercise authority." After all, if the inspired apostle Paul only forbade *the abuse of authority* over men by women in the church, then he didn't forbid *the proper use of authority* over men by women in the church.

1 Timothy 2:12 includes the following grammatical construction: main verb with negative (I do not permit) + infinitive (to teach) + conjunction (nor) + infinitive (*authentain*).

An extensive study of ancient Greek grammar indicates that when two verbs are linked by the conjunction “nor” the verbs are either both positive or both negative. In 1 Timothy 2:12, since the meaning of the first infinitive (to teach) is positive, we would expect the other infinitive (*authentēin*) to be positive as well. Therefore, based on the grammatical structure of verse 12, we would interpret *authentēin* with the positive meaning of “to have authority” or “to exercise authority,” but not with the pejorative meaning of “to usurp authority”.

(Andreas J. Kostenberger, “A Complex Sentence Structure in 1 Timothy 2:12,” published in *Women in the Church: A Fresh Analysis of 1 Timothy 2:9-15*, pp. 81-103, Baker Books, 1995)

The positive meaning of *authentēin* has been confirmed by extensive lexicographical studies on the part of H. Scott Baldwin of Singapore Bible College. Though the word *authentēin* occurs just once in the Bible, H. Scott Baldwin has searched out, recorded, translated, and analyzed 82 other examples of *authentēin* in ancient Greek literature, papyri, and other inscriptions. He points out the mistakes some have made, confusing the meaning of the verb *authentēin* and the noun *authentēs*, “murderer,” which apparently comes from a different root and has a different meaning, as was already noted in a 5th century A.D. lexicon. Baldwin excludes pejorative meanings such as “usurp authority,” “domineer,” “instigate violence,” or “proclaim oneself author of a man,” which some recent articles have claimed for the word.

(H. Scott Baldwin, “A Difficult Word: *authentēo* in 1 Timothy 4:12,” published in *Women in the Church: A Fresh Analysis of 1 Timothy 2:9-15*, pp. 65-80, Baker Books, 1995. See also Baldwin’s “Appendix 2” published in the same volume, pp. 269-306.)

As rendered by the NIV translation, the word *authentēin* simply means “to have authority” or “to exercise authority.”

Therefore, based on grammatical and lexicographical studies, it must be noted that in the BTA, the section presenting the case for women’s ordination erred where it said of *authentēin* in 1 Timothy 2:12, “it seems likely that here it has the more pejorative force of ‘to usurp authority over,’ as in the King James translation” (*Agenda for Synod 2000*, p. 371).

III. Overture

Based on the above lexicographical and grammatical evidence, Classis Minnkota overtures Synod 2010 as follows:

A. That Synod 2010 note the following errors in the portion of the biblical-theological argumentation that presents evidence in favor of the ordination of women ministers, elders, and evangelists (now ministry associates):

1. The biblical-theological argumentation approved by Synod 2000 erred in stating that in 1 Corinthians 11, the word *kephalē* most likely means *source* instead of referring metaphorically to someone who has authority.
2. The biblical-theological argumentation erred in stating that in 1 Timothy 2, the word *authentēin* most likely means “to usurp authority” instead of meaning “to exercise authority.”

B. That Synod 2010 revise the biblical-theological argumentation approved by Synod 2000 (*Agenda for Synod 2000*, pp. 355-73) by correcting these errors.

Grounds:

1. The biblical-theological argumentation itself states, "These texts may not be dismissed; they are to be dealt with according to Reformed hermeneutics, and their teaching must be honored" (*Agenda for Synod 2000*, p. 369).
2. The biblical-theological argumentation approved by Synod 2000 (*Agenda for Synod 2000*, pp. 355-73) is still very much in use. Visitors to the CRC website are referred to the biblical-theological argumentation "to discover the biblical-theological argumentation undergirding the CRC's approach to this issue." (See www.crcna.org/pages/positions_women_office.cfm.)
3. It would be irresponsible for the CRC to continue to commend the biblical-theological argumentation approved by Synod 2000 without correcting the lexicographical and grammatical errors it contains.

Classis Minnkota

LeRoy G. Christoffels, stated clerk

Communication 1: Classis Central Plains

As a young man Mr. Wesley Heersink was sexually abused by a person entrusted with leadership in his local church, a Cadet counselor. The effects of the abuse Wesley experienced were both devastating and lifelong. In recent years Mr. Heersink sought assistance and restitution from the congregation in which the abuse occurred. Unsatisfied with the congregation's response, he appealed that decision to classis and, subsequently, the classical decision to synod.

Synod 2006 did not sustain his appeal because the local church had not violated or ignored existing CRC guidelines. Though synod did not sustain Mr. Heersink's appeal, it became apparent that existing CRC guidelines do not provide adequate guidance in cases such as Mr. Heersink's where an abuse victim seeks assistance and restitution many years after the abuse occurred. Thus Synod 2006 appointed a task force

to consider how best to respond to the underlying issues raised by Mr. Heersink's appeal: namely, how the denomination ought to be responding, whether in financial terms or otherwise, to the very real consequences of sexual abuse in the lives of current and former members.

(Acts of Synod 2006, p. 679)

That task force's report is on the agenda of Synod 2010.

As that report is considered, Classis Central Plains believes it would benefit synod greatly to hear from those affected by Mr. Heersink's case, including the Heersink family. Thus, we share the following letter from Mr. Stanley Heersink, brother of the late Mr. Wesley Heersink and a member of one of our congregations.

Brothers and sisters in Christ,

This letter comes to you with deep appreciation for the work of the Abuse Victims Task Force. It has my full support. I encourage you to adopt its recommendations and to act upon them. It will not be easy to act upon all of its recommendations. Doing so will require a significant financial commitment. It will require accepting responsibility for past wrongs and wounds. And it will require a commitment to journey the long, painful path to healing with victims of abuse. Even so, if we are to faithfully be the church of Christ we can do no less.

The report puts our focus where it should be, on victims of abuse, not on the church's perceived need to protect itself. That was how Wesley experienced the responses he received at the

congregational, classical, and synodical levels—as attempts by the church to protect itself. Not only was the process of seeking assistance and restitution from the congregation in which the abuse Wesley experienced occurred difficult for Wesley. The subsequent processes of appealing the council’s response to classis and of appealing the classis’ response to synod were extremely difficult for Wesley. Throughout, he felt re-victimized by the church. His health was negatively affected. And not long after the decision of Synod 2006 not to sustain his appeal, Wesley died.

Throughout the process, Wesley asked, again and again, “Don’t you believe the Bible?” The Abuse Victims Task Force believes the Bible. And it takes the Bible’s teachings seriously. It has done both the church and victims of abuse a great service in its reports and recommendations. Wesley died. It is not his case we pursue. Even so, on behalf of all other abuse victims and their loved ones, I urge you to adopt and implement the task force’s recommendations. They provide the guidance necessary for our church to respond to cases like Wesley’s with the compassion, mercy, grace, and love that provide hope and healing. As the church of Christ, we cannot do otherwise.

Sincerely,
Stanley Heersink

Classis Central Plains
John Gorter, stated clerk

Personal Appeal

1. Rev. N. Punt

Appeal of the Rev. Neal Punt from a decision of Classis Holland not to address by way of special discipline material in print written by an officebearer in the CRCNA.