



CLASSIS NIAGARA OF THE CHRISTIAN REFORMED CHURCH



Wednesday, February 18, 2009; **2:00 P.M.**
Brock University Board Room, St. Catharines
(host church is Rehoboth CRC of Niagara Falls,
the calling church of the Brock University Chaplain, Dr. André Basson)

Chairman: Kevin Stieva; **Vice-chairman:** Rev. Rudy Ouwehand; **Stated Clerk:** John TeBrake

PRIOR TO MEETING, Delegates:

1. **Please bring and submit your Classical Credentials prior to the meeting**
2. **If this is your first time as a delegate to a Classis Niagara meeting, please read and sign the Form of Subscription.**

There will be a designated table for both the above

NOTE 1:

During this meeting of Classis Niagara, Minister and Elder Delegates to Synod of 2009 (June 13 to 20) need to be chosen. Please see page 3 of this agenda with respect to rules and procedures Re Delegates to Synod.

The first minister delegate is to be chosen by free-vote election. The second minister delegate is to be chosen in rotation and for 2009 is **Rev. Ryan Braam**, Grace CRC in Welland

The following ministers were chosen by election (E) and rotation (R) Classis Niagara delegates for the years shown:

2008: Revs. Jim Dekker (E) and Greg Fluit (R)
2007: Revs. Derek Bouma (E) and Harold Winter (R)
2006: Revs. Andrew Beunk (E) and Jim Dekker (R)
2005: Revs. Derek Bouma (E) and Walt VanderWerf (R)
2004: Revs. Pieter Heerema (E) and André Basson (R)
2003: Revs. Walt VanderWerf (E) and Jerry Hoytema (R)

Please indicate any nominations for elder delegates on the reverse of your classical credential forms.

NOTE 2:

There will be a **STRICT EXECUTIVE SESSION** of Classis at approximately 3:30. It is expected that this part of the meeting may require one to two hours. This part of the meeting will be open only to delegates from the churches to the Classis.

1. **Welcome and opening devotions**
2. **Constitution of Classis** by the Chairman, Rev. Kevin Stieva
 - Credentials/roll call presented by the host church, Rehoboth CRC
 - Acknowledgment of signing of first-time delegates.
 - Declare Classis constituted
3. **Time schedule:** meeting will **commence at 2:00 P.M.** Dinner will be from 6:00 to approximately 7:15 PM. Breaks will be scheduled at the call of the Chairman. The afternoon break will be at approximately 3:30, followed by a **Strict Executive Session** of Classis. Scheduled speaker:
 - Mr. Ben VanHoffen, representing CRWRC, at approximately 3:00 p.m.
4. **Committee appointment confirmations:**
 - 4.1 Credentials: Riverside (to chair) and Providence
 - 4.2 Advisory re overtures: Bethel (to chair) and Bethany. Overtures are at agenda item 11, pages 8-10

5. Classical Administrative Committee Reports

- 5.1 Executive Committee (*page 3*)
- 5.2 Stated Clerk / correspondence (*page 4*)
- 5.3 Treasurer report
- 5.4 Classis Ministry Leadership Team
- 5.5 Classical Nominating Committee (*page 5*)
- 5.6 Safe Church Team
- 5.7 Church Counselor reports: Rev. Duane VanderLaan, re Maranatha; Rev. Derek Bouma, re Bethel; Rev. Steven deBoer, re Trinity
- 5.8 Regional Pastors' report: Rev. David Tigchelaar and/or Rev. Rudy Ouwehand

6. Classical Ministries Committee Report (*page 5*)

7. Brock University Chaplain's Report (*page 6*)

8. Shalom Manor Chaplain's Report (*page 7*)

9. Church visitor reports:

- Rev. Rudy Ouwehand, Elder Lowell Witvoet – Smithville, Bethany, Fruitland, Bethel
- Rev. Henry Eshuis, Elder Cor VanSoelen – Jubilee Fellowship, Maranatha, Grace
- Rev. Jim Dekker, Elder Bill Thies – Rehoboth, Mountainview, Trinity
- Rev. Jerry Hoytema, Elder John VanHoffen – Providence, Riverside, Covenant

10. Report of Credentials Committee

11. Report of Overture Advisory Committee – Overtures have been received as follows:

- From Grace CRC, re a position statement regarding homosexuality (*pages 8,9*)
- From Mountainview, Smithville, and Providence CRCs, an overture to evaluate the ministries and expenses of Classis (*pages 10*)

12. Denominational and Other Reports

- 12.1 Denominational reports: (*pages 11-18*)
- 12.2 Redeemer University College (*page 19*)

13. Next meeting:

Date: May 20, 2009;

Agenda Deadline: April 1, 2009

Location:

Chairman: Rev. Andrew Beunk

Vice-chairman: Rev. Kevin Stieva

Credentials: Bethel (to chair) and Bethany

Overture Advisory: Fruitland (to chair) and Mountainview

Following meeting: October 21 2009

14. Expressions of thanks and closing devotions

Excerpt from Rules and Procedures Re Delegates to Synod

G. DELEGATES TO SYNOD

1. At its January [thus now February] meeting, Classis shall appoint one minister delegate and alternate by a rotation schedule, and one minister delegate and alternate by the free vote method. (*Jan 21, 2001*) At its meeting of Sept. 17, 2003, Classis approved the following process:
 - the first minister delegate is elected by free vote;
 - the minister having the greater than 50% of the votes and the highest number of votes would be the first minister delegate
 - the minister with the next highest number of votes would be the first minister alternate
 - the minister with the third highest number of votes would be the second minister alternate
 - then the second minister delegate is chosen by rotation, in alphabetical order of location of church. If a minister is unable to serve or if the church is vacant, the rotation moves to the next in alphabetical order
 - A minister shall have served the churches of classis Niagara for at least 12 months before being eligible to be delegated to Synod.
2. Councils are encouraged to submit the names of elders willing and able to serve in this capacity on their credentials to the February meeting of Classis.
3. Elder delegates may request reimbursement for lost wages up to the amount determined by Classis.

AGENDA ITEM 5.1: EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE REPORTS

Report of meeting of Executive Committee of the Classical Ministries Committee (CMC-EC), Nov. 19, 2008

Note: Part of this report is intended to be reported only at a strict executive session of Classis Niagara. This part is not included in the general distribution of this report.

Present: Rev. Jim Dekker, Rev. Kevin Stieva, Frank Engelage, John TeBrake

1. Confidential Item (this will be reported in a **strict executive session** at the February 2009 meeting of Classis Niagara):
2. Our Classical Ministries Coordinator, Frank Engelage, suggested that we should plan a meeting soon of all the members of the Classical Ministries Committee. The purposes of this meeting would include (a) considering the need and possible options around the position of Prayer Coordinator; (b) considering the need to reinstitute what was formerly the Home Missions Committee; and (c) obtaining that group's sense of directions and next steps for Classis Niagara.

Report of meeting of Executive Committee of the Classical Ministries Committee (CMC-EC), Jan. 7, 2009

Present: Rev. Jim Dekker; Rev. Kevin Stieva; John TeBrake

1. The agenda for the February 19 meeting of Classis was reviewed. There are two overtures expected. Mr. Ben VanHoffen, our representative to the CRWRC Board, will provide a presentation about CRWRC. There is a matter that will need to be dealt with in a **Strict Executive Session** of Classis. This session will be open only to delegates to Classis and we planned to commence it after the afternoon break, at approximately 3:30 to 4:00 pm. We will also need to vote for delegates to Synod 2009.
2. Everyone presently serving as a Church Visitor has agreed to continue for 2009. With thanks and appreciation to these Pastors and Elders, the Executive Committee extended their appointments for 2009.
3. Correspondence was reviewed and dealt with (see page 4)
4. Frank Engelage, who was not able to attend this meeting, has informed us that he is following up on obtaining liability insurance for Classis Niagara.
5. We had a discussion about the effects of increasing expectations from councils, consistories, and members; and feelings of inadequacy, on pastors in our Classis and beyond. Our discussion led us to begin to plan a spiritual health seminar as part of the May meeting of Classis, to which members of congregations and particularly councils will be especially invited.
6. Our next meeting is planned for Wednesday, February 11, at 9:00 a.m.

AGENDA ITEM 5.2: STATED CLERK / CORRESPONDENCE

Summary of correspondence to January 7, 2009

Note: all items will be available at the meeting of Classis, or can be made available beforehand**From other Classes, for information:**

Agendas and minutes from various neighboring Classes

Correspondence:

	<i>Item Dated</i>	<i>Item</i>	<i>Action</i>
1	Sept 29	From the denominational Faith Formation Committee [cf Agenda/Acts of Synod 2008, pages 231-242, 473] a request that Classis Niagara set aside some time in one of our sessions in 2009 to engage in prayer and a discussion similar to the one at Synod 2008, on key faith formation matters. The committee suggests involving the delegates from Classis Niagara in planning and conducting these activities.	Executive Committee will plan this for the May meeting of Classis Niagara.
2	Oct 13	From Rev. David Koll, Candidacy Committee of the CRC, a package of resources for Classis Ministerial Leadership Teams (CMLTs) in response to Synod's (2006) request that the Candidacy Committee ... provide clear leadership and advice to CMLTs on the financial equity and balance of support for all who are studying for the ordained ministry"	Forwarded to the Classis Niagara CMLT
3	Oct 20	Nomination forms as per Classis Niagara October 15 meeting, for George deRoo and Frank Engelage for the Board of Trustees (BOT), CRCNA (see related item # 7 below)	RFI
4	Oct 22	To Rev. Gerard Dykstra, Executive Director of the CRCNA, a copy of the concurrence report from the Synodical Deputies' concurrence with Classis Niagara's decision that the position of Youth Director/Youth Pastor at the Mountainview CRC in Grimsby, to be filled by Rick Roeda, is consistent with denominational guidelines.	RFI
5	Oct 22	From Ms. Dee Recker, Director of Synodical Services, CRCNA, a survey requested to be completed regarding the use of the 2000 Guide for Conducting Church Visiting .	Forwarded to Classis Niagara's church visitors to complete
6	Nov 24	From Rev. Gerard Dykstra, information and credential forms with respect to the meeting of Synod, June 13-20, 2009	Voting for delegates is on the agenda of the February 18 meeting
7	Dec 8 & 9	From Ms. Dee Recker, on behalf of the Nominating Committee of the CRCNA, asking if we can recommend any additional nominees for the BOT from our Classis in order to broaden the range of backgrounds available for nomination (see related item # 3 above)	Will be considered at the February meeting
8	Dec 22	From Rev. Gerard Dykstra, a reminder that "Synod 2005 encouraged each classis to include at least one ethnic minority person in its Synodical delegation beginning with Synod 2006".	RFI
9	Dec 23	From Rev. Gerard Dykstra, which was sent to all Stated Clerks and Synodical Deputies, information with respect to planned online meetings, in groups of up to 25, of Stated Clerks and Synodical Deputies, in "an effort to help us all coordinate our work and better perform in our roles"	RFI

AGENDA ITEM 5.5: CLASSICAL NOMINATING COMMITTEE

Report of the Classis Niagara Nominating Committee

Classical Appointments

The Nominating Committee hereby recommends that...

1. Rev. Duane VanderLaan be reappointed to the CMLT for another three year term.
2. Cor VanSolen be appointed to the Nominating Committee for a three year term.
3. Rev. Greg Fluit appointed to the Brock Chaplaincy Committee for a three year term.
4. Rev. Ryan Braam be reappointed to the Safe Church Team for another three year term.
5. Classis Niagara ratify Bethany CRC's appointment of Jerry Kiers as their representative on the Safe Church Team.

AGENDA ITEM 6: CLASSIS MINISTRIES COMMITTEE REPORT

Brock Campus Ministry Committee Report for Classis Niagara

The BCMC has met four times (April, June, September, December) since our last report to classis which was for the May 21, 2008, meeting of classis. As we have reported before, the highlight of each meeting is listening to the report from our chaplain, the Rev. André Basson.

The committee structure has changed with the departure of the Rev. Harold Winter whose stable leadership will be greatly missed. His position has been ably filled by the current alternate, the Rev. Greg Fluit. However, that leaves the committee with no alternate at present. Rev. Lloyd Burghart is the current chair and Andrea Zantingh, the secretary.

Current concerns relating to the ministry revolve around the necessity to stop the traditional cookie ministry and replacing it with a weekly Toonie Supper which can be held at the Church of the Transfiguration in St. Catharines. However, it now appears that implementation of these suppers cannot occur this school year.

At present, there is no student representative on the BCMC, however André reports that he has an excellent group of students with whom he meets regularly and quite possibly as person can be found in that group. He has had two successful retreats with students (September and November) and plans a solidarity trip to Namibia later this spring. Ian DeShiffart is a promising Campus Ministry Intern and Student leader for this year (2008-2009). The students themselves have begun a breakfast meeting which is a promising way of working with André's model for ministry in which the students themselves reach out to non-Christians with whom they regularly come in contact.

In addition to student contacts, André also has many opportunities to work with faculty and staff, both through his teaching and counseling opportunities. Brock Campus Ministry itself has gone through major changes with the retirement of the ecumenical chaplain, the Rev. George Addison, and the hiring of his replacement. This change has allowed André to gain a new office and greater visibility and space for student contacts. However, the changes have also necessitated new working relationships within Campus Ministry Office. One of these is the hiring by the university of multi-faith coordinator,

André reports that the relationship between Brock Christian Fellowship (BCF) is the best it has been since he began at Brock. He continues also to meet from time to time with Campus for Christ and Brock Pride.

André is quite involved in Christian Reformed Campus Ministry Association which is comprised of all the CRC university chaplains in both Canada and the United States. The CRCMA retreat for 2009 is being hosted by the Brock Campus Ministry. This involvement reminds us that our ministry here in Niagara is unique among the various campus ministries in that it is the only ministry that is entirely classically supported. CR Home Missions is involved in all of the other ministries, but our ministry stand alone. However, CRHM has developed an evaluation tool and our committee hopes to use this tool to help us evaluate just how the Brock ministry is performing. We look forward to this evaluation in the fall of 2009 as the Brock Campus Ministry begins its 21st year.

The BCMC members are the Revs. Lloyd Burghart and Greg Fluit, Jake Snieder, Kees VanderLeek, Andrea Zantingh, and of course, André Basson.

Submitted by Rev. Lloyd Burghart

AGENDA ITEM 7: BROCK UNIVERSITY CHAPLAIN'S REPORT

Brock Campus Ministry Report:

Dear Members of Classis Niagara,

Quite regularly, I am approached to arrange and lead a secular memorial service for a Brock student or faculty member. In some cases, the request is quite explicit: "No religion, please!" While at least one of my two colleagues would have no qualms about participating in such a service, it's difficult for me to refuse when, due to circumstances, he is unavailable. At the same time, each of the three secular memorial services I was asked to lead at Brock last year gave me amazing opportunities to connect with members of the university community and their families, and to present to them a different aspect of the Christian faith than the one some of them have come to regard with suspicion and even outright resentment.

The one secular memorial was for a student who had been a Star Wars aficionado. Members of Star Wars fan clubs from all over Ontario and New York State attended in full costume! As is my custom, I met with the student's parents and family beforehand, not just for the sake of planning the service, but to show that, even though I never knew their son, I nevertheless shared their grief and to give them the opportunity to share their grief with me. As a result of the close to two hours I spent with the parents around their dining room table, they came to trust me and appreciate the faith I represented, to such an extent that from time to time since the memorial I have been receiving a long email from them asking for advice regarding one of their deceased son's siblings who is still trying to come to terms with his brother's death.

As I reflected on what I was going to say during the service and tried to build it around what I still remembered of the Star Wars movies I had seen, I realized that in important respects Star Wars represented a secular alternative to the Christian story of salvation. But instead of trying to convince the two hundred and fifty plus people who attended the memorial that their alternative was a delusion, I concluded what I had to say in my meditation by briefly explaining how I as a Christian saw death and how, even in my grief, it fills me with hope and expectation.

More recently, I was also asked to do a secular memorial for a faculty member. The person who approached me had attended the memorial I had done for another faculty member and seemed to have been duly impressed. However, the deceased's partner had made it clear that he wanted no mention made of religion or faith anywhere in the service. But what an amazing and spiritually profound conversation did we have when I finally met with him to discuss the details of the memorial!

The old dictum, "God works in mysterious ways," applies especially to campus ministry where avoiding people who are hostile to the Christian faith, or situations in which any mention of it will be frowned upon, is to miss golden opportunities for the work of the Kingdom.

Equally a reason for celebrating God's grace in the past few months has been the way in which a cadre of student leaders has emerged in the Christian Reformed Ministry at Brock. One Thursday evening, when I was unable to lead my regular student discussion group, one of the student leaders immediately stepped forward and offered to do it. Apparently, not only did the discussion continue way beyond the usual one hour, but it was also far more participatory than usual. They even managed to draw students who didn't belong to the group into their discussion!

Partly as a result of our discussions on breaking out of the Reformed Christian bubble and engaging the rest of the student community, an increasing number of students have come forward with amazing initiatives and ideas on how to achieve this. Clearly, the time has come for more formal leadership training. The first session has already started. The focus is not just on leadership skills, but also on issues such as prayer and spiritual growth, for example, issues that are essential to being an effective Christian leader.

In regard to the three very successful retreats organized by Brock's Christian Reformed Campus Ministry in the fall term, a full report written by some of the students who participated will appear in the first issue of the new *Brock Epistle* which I hope will be in every congregational mailbox before the next meeting of Classis. This issue will also carry items on the anticipated weekly suppers for students, scheduled to commence at the beginning of the fall term, 2009. The results of the internal evaluation of Brock Christian Reformed Campus Ministry will be covered in the second issue.

On behalf of everyone involved in this ministry at Brock, I once again wish to express our gratitude for the continued support of the congregations of Classis Niagara. Please do not cease praying for this important aspect of the work of God's Kingdom on the Brock campus!

Yours in our Lord Jesus Christ

Dr. André F. Basson, CRC Campus Minister, Brock University, St. Catharines, ON.

AGENDA ITEM 8: SHALOM MANOR CHAPLAIN'S REPORT

Shalom Manor & Garden Chaplain's Report

Greetings! In this short writing I will report on the past memorial service, worship services in times of outbreak, transition from Dutch to English and the change in our chair of the Chaplaincy committee.

This past November we had our semi-annual Memorial service. At these services, held on Saturday afternoons, family members and staff are invited to come and remember residents who have recently died. At the November service, we remembered eleven residents. This is an unusually low number. To set it in perspective, we remembered twenty-one residents in the memorial service held this past spring. In spite of the low number, over one hundred family members attended the service. Judging from comments made, these services are greatly appreciated by the families. As they are by me. When I see the pictures of deceased residents projected, one by one, on the over screen, I am flooded with memories and emotions.

A note of possible interest. Over the years, we average thirty-eight deaths a year at Shalom Manor & Gardens. In 2008, we had seventeen deaths. This in spite of our residents coming into Shalom Manor at a much older age. Three of our last four new residents were over ninety years old.

This past November we had our first breakout. When there is a breakout of an infectious disease residents are restricted to their own floors. This means that there are no worship services. This has been changed. If the residents of the Gardens are healthy, I will gather with them in the auditorium for worship. The service will be broadcast to all the t.v.s in the rooms and lounges. If the residents of the Gardens are infected, I, together with a music accompanist and soloist will worship. This worship service will then be broadcast to all the t.v.s in the Manor and Gardens. In both cases, bulletins will be distributed on all the floors so that all the residents can worship along. No longer will the rhythm of weekly worship services be broken.

At the fall Chaplaincy committee meeting, it was agreed that starting in the year 2009, worship services would no longer be held in Dutch. The reasons for this are: all residents of the Manor and Gardens understand English, there are residents who do not understand Dutch, there are staff members attending the worship service who do not understand Dutch, and, getting ministers who can lead a Dutch service is increasingly difficult. This is a major change, possibly a difficult change for some. I pray that all may be blessed by our weekly worship services.

This past fall, Rev. P. De Bruyne's term serving in the Chaplaincy Committee ended. The committee lost a competent and dedicated chair. He was a great support for me as I began my chaplaincy here. The committee and I will miss his leadership. Rev. Steve De Boer has agreed to serve as chair of the Chaplaincy committee. We wish him God's blessing. And, I look forward to doing ministry with "my pastor."

Submitted by Rev. Fred VanderBerg, Chaplain

AGENDA ITEM 11: OVERTURES

OVERTURE 1: from Grace CRC, Welland:

Preamble

In our age of growing relativism, pluralism and politically correct jargon, many people find it difficult to take a stand on any moral matter. There is a general fear that taking a stand on a moral issue may cause the person "standing" to be labeled as intolerant, or that the stand may offend another person. Therefore, many people choose not to speak up based on religious or moral principle because they would rather not create more conflict in an increasingly conflicted society.

This is painfully true for the church in North America. The church often finds itself torn between two polarities on moral issues. On the one side, there is the love and grace of Christ who embraced sinful and immoral people (Lk. 19:1-10; Jn. 4:15-26; Jn. 8:1-11 etc.) and we wish to embody Christ's sense of love, and hospitality for the outcast and the sinner. Yet, on the other side we also see that there is no room for any lingering sin in the presence of a Holy and Righteous God (Ps. 89:14; 1 Jn. 1:5-10). Thus the church finds itself struggling with the question of how do we embody both the grace and holiness of God without compromising either?

To that end we have seen many congregations struggle endlessly with the issue of homosexuality. God is love; therefore we know that God does NOT "hate gays" as many placards have blasphemously stated. On the contrary, now many churches are working hard to demonstrate God's love for people with homosexual tendencies. Yet, some churches go beyond the boundaries of God's law and claim that homosexual activity is permissible if it is within the confines of a committed monogamous relationship. This is clearly unbiblical (Lev. 18:22, 20:13; Dt. 23:17-18; Rom. 1:24-28, 32; 1 Cor. 6:9-10).

Yet there have been several denominations that have ignored these clear Biblical truths and have subverted the word of God through their functional doctrine. As members of the Christian Reformed Church we cannot foolishly assume that we will be immune to such false doctrine infiltrating our churches. Therefore, it is imperative that the Christian Reformed Churches of Classis Niagara adopt an official position on what the Bible teaches regarding homosexual activity.

Recommendation:

That Classis Niagara adopt the following statements as their official stance on what the Bible teaches regarding homosexuality, and our subsequent responsibility to these teachings.

Classis Niagara affirms that the word of God states that all homosexual activity is contrary to God's law (Lev. 18:22, 20:13; Dt. 23:17-18; Rom. 1:24-28, 32; 1 Cor. 6:9-10). Therefore there is no excuse for any homosexual activity - it is a sin.

One cannot reason that a person may be "born with homosexual tendencies," and therefore they have a right to act on those homosexual tendencies. First of all God's word clearly teaches that since the fall of man that every human-being is sinful from the time of conception (Ps 51:5). Yet that does not give us an excuse for our sin; "for all have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God" (Rom. 3:23). Rather, apart from Christ, our sin only condemns us further before the face of God (Rom. 5:20), and does not give anyone an excuse to keep on sinning (Rom. 6:1-2). Secondly, to claim that a person is born with homosexual tendencies is to blame God for such sinful behaviour. "The Bible teaches that man cannot blame God for his sinful behavior, because God doesn't tempt man. Man is drawn away by his own lust: "Let no one say when he is tempted, 'I am tempted by God'; for God cannot be tempted by evil, nor does He Himself tempt anyone. But each one is tempted when he is drawn away by his own desires and enticed. Then, when desire has conceived, it gives birth to sin; and sin, when it is full-grown, brings forth death" (Jas. 1:13-15)." Therefore, all homosexual activity is sin, including homosexual activity that is limited to a committed, monogamous relationship.

Classis Niagara also affirms God's love for people who struggle with homosexual tendencies (Rom. 5:8). God hates the sin, but loves the sinner. God promises forgiveness for every individual who repents from their sin and wholeheartedly pursues a life of Godliness (1 Jn. 1:7,9). Such promises are true for every repentant person, including people with homosexual longings. This is part of the Holy Spirit's work of sanctification in which every sinner daily experiences the rhythm of dying to the old self and coming to life in the new (Rom. 6-8).

Therefore, Classis Niagara will not allow anyone to hold a place of leadership (official office, or any teaching role) in any church or ministry who holds a view that is contrary to this understanding of homosexuality. As far as the

Holy Spirit has directed us, the aforementioned understanding of homosexuality is in complete agreement with the teachings of scripture.

Grounds:

1) Many members of our own congregations have already begun to formulate their own views of homosexuality apart from the teachings of scripture. Such views are based on popular opinion and political correctness. These views have an insidious way of infiltrating the worldviews of our congregants so as to darken their minds and hearts to the truth of God's word.

2) If the church does not take an active stance against the popular, secular view of homosexuality the church will do a great disservice to the advancement of the Kingdom of God. Many churches have faltered already bringing more confusion to a society that desperately needs the unadulterated word of God. It is the church's responsibility to speak the truth in love and allow the Holy Spirit to advance the Kingdom of God through the loving truth of God's word for a broken and hurting world.

3) The church in North America is becoming dangerously inclusive and tolerant of sin. The apostle Paul clearly indicates that immorality needs to be dealt with swiftly and directly so the spirit of the immoral one "may be saved on the day of the Lord" (1 Cor. 5:1-5). Failure to do so is to allow the 'old yeast' of sin to continue to work its way through the church community (1 Cor. 5:6-8).

4) Over the last few decades the functional practice of the CRCNA has shown a lessening regard for the terms of the form of subscription. The issue of homosexuality is one of many ways that the practice of the CRCNA is beginning to deviate from the official stance of the CRCNA. Part of the driving force behind this overture is a call for all leaders and office bearers to seriously consider what their signature on the form of subscription actually means in regard to all of their teachings and conversations.

5) *"The people who claim to be compassionate toward homosexuals by excusing and approving of their perverse behavior are liars and false teachers. Their attempts to reinterpret the Bible to make it accepting of homosexuality are nothing more than pitiful excuses made for those who do not want to repent. They are leading homosexuals down the broad path which leads to destruction (Mt. 7:13). They are the true enemies of the homosexual community."*¹

In this overture, it is our sincere desire to seek the will of God, and his desire for "all men to be saved and to come to a knowledge of the truth" (1 Tim 2:4). It is out of our love for the homosexual community that we wish to present them with the unadulterated truth of God's word and his promise to forgive the sins of those who repent and follow Jesus.

Respectfully submitted,

The Council of Grace Christian Reformed Church, Welland

¹ Second paragraph of "Conclusion" from <http://www.reformedonline.com/view/reformedonline/homosex.htm> , referenced last on December 11, 2008

OVERTURE 2: From Mountainview, Smithville, and Providence CRCs

Proposed Overture for the February 18, 2009 Session of Classis Niagara:

At the October meeting of Classis Niagara, classis' budget for 2009 was passed. In order to finance a budget that increased by 8%, classical ministry shares increased over \$9 per member from \$54.42 to \$63.54.

As noted at the same meeting, 7 of 13 churches had contributed 50% or less of their required classical ministry shares, with two churches contributing less than 25%. Another church had significantly altered their membership numbers, decreasing the number of members for which they were to pay ministry shares by 144. This shortfall will be added to the amount expected by the other twelve churches.

Troubled by these facts, Pastors Kevin Stieva, Greg Fluit, and Steve deBoer met to share our concerns and discuss how to address them both as pastors and churches. Together we noted the following:

- The level of classical spending increases each year.
- Giving trends are not increasing: In 2005, churches gave between 90% to 102.7% of their classical commitments, with an average of 98.6%, and 6 of the 13 churches giving under 100%. In 2007, churches gave between 72.2% and 102%, with an average of 93.15%, and 11 of the 13 churches giving under 100%.
- Overall, active membership among the churches of Classis' Niagara is declining: In 2007, there were 3455 members. In 2008, 3382 members, and for 2009, 3197 members.
- Spending increases seem to have little tangible benefit for our local churches.
- There is growing desire within our membership and even within the denomination for churches to be engaged in local ministry. This local/missional ministry is particular to each church and community and therefore is not something classis can provide.
- Since financial support is limited, a tension between funding classical responsibilities and the desire to carry out local ministries has developed. It is likely that this tension will/has show(n) itself in churches making decisions to engage in local ministry initiatives at the expense of their classical commitments.

All of this was presented and discussed at our respective Council meetings, culminating in the following joint overture:

The Councils of Providence (Beamsville), Smithville, and Mountainview (Grimsby) overture Classis Niagara to evaluate the ministries and expenses of Classis with the intent of reducing classical shares to enable churches to use these funds for local ministry initiatives.

We further recommend Classis Niagara convene an *ad hoc* committee to conduct this evaluation and recommend to Classis where reductions can be made, reporting at the May 2009 session of Classis, for impact of the 2010 budget.

Our Councils offer the following suggestions to the *ad hoc* committee for consideration:

- 1) The possible organization of the Shalom Chaplaincy Ministry as its own church (much like that of Holland Home, Brampton), with the goal of self-sufficiency, over time.
- 2) A full evaluation of the ministry of the Brock Chaplaincy, and all related expenses.
- 3) Review specific salaried positions, including position(s) related to the Youth Leader Support Team, and the Classical Coordinator position.
- 4) Review the work and remuneration of the Stated Clerk and Treasurer, with a comparative analysis of neighboring classes (Hamilton, Toronto, Quinte).

We want to be clear that our goal is not to dismantle and do away with the ministries of classis. Our goal is simply to evaluate the ministries and expenses of classis with the intent to reducing costs. Every organization, association, assembly does well to periodically evaluate its effectiveness, expenses and the relationship between the two. We feel it is time for classis to do the same.

AGENDA ITEM 12.1: DENOMONATIONAL REPORTS

MINISTRY REPORT TO CLASSES AND COUNCILS

JANUARY 2009



**CHRISTIAN
REFORMED
CHURCH**

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- Train, mentor, and disciple leaders so that they are biblically formed, prayerful, competent, and display a Christlike character
- Join partner organizations in developing leaders in churches and communities worldwide

The CRC has a history of developing leaders, and we continue to look for new opportunities to do so in our current cultural context. In September, the Board of Trustees of the CRCNA approved the concept and operational plan of The Leadership Exchange, which is hoping to equip and develop local leaders in a variety of settings “through exchange of understanding and practice.” Our hope and prayer is that The Leadership Exchange becomes part of the important culture of leadership we are developing in the CRC. As you read through these reports from our ministries, you will hear our sincere desire to be intentional about developing leaders along with you for God’s kingdom work.

Abuse Prevention

Late in October, Classical Safe Church Team chairpersons from 18 classes gathered to discuss the successes and challenges of their work. The group moved from acknowledging the pain of isolation to finding strength in the humor and wisdom of colleagues who face similar issues in classes across North America. Tim Postuma challenged the chairpersons to network in new ways based on the changing technology available through the office of Abuse Prevention. Coffee breaks spilled overtime as chairpersons discovered new resources and shared best practices. They opened up their laptop computers, and reviewed and downloaded Power Points that they will share with Safe Church Team members at home. An excitement began to fill the air.

Norma Coleman-James led the chairpersons in describing their vision for the future. It became evident that there was unity and purpose among these twenty-four hard-working volunteers. A small thread of hope became a rope that everyone could grasp. There was relief in the audience even as they

From the Director of Denominational Ministries

Leaders are important in the work of the local church, classis, communities, our denomination—in all Kingdom work. That is why our denominational ministry plan identifies *Developing Leaders* as one of our ten strategic objectives. The plan identifies that 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

acknowledged that there is a way to go before their vision is a reality.

These Safe Church Team leaders gained much by stepping out of their individual territories and embracing a common vision. Without the encouragement of others, the work of abuse prevention and abuse response is a difficult task. These leaders found an abundance of encouragement during this one 24-hour period. We commend them for their diligence as they bring new energy and vision back to their respective classes. Continue to pray for them.

Chaplaincy Ministries

Chaplaincy Ministries is pleased to report that the vast majority of our chaplains are involved in professional development education and training. The military chaplains are usually members of the Military Chaplains Association and are trained in two professional development tracts: military schooling and civilian special education opportunities. Our civilian chaplains are members of several professional credentialing organizations. These professional associations require our chaplains to maintain a level of competence and provide progressive leader training. Many of our chaplains hold leadership positions in these associations and in the institutions where they minister. The development of leaders is valued by Chaplaincy Ministries.

Disability Concerns

Without intending to, most churches erect barriers to the participation of people with disabilities. Architectural barriers restrict use of church buildings and even prevent some from entering. Communication barriers exclude people with visual or hearing impairments. Attitudinal barriers result in people with disabilities being ignored or not encouraged to use their spiritual gifts.

Local church leaders are able to help churches overcome these barriers. Disability Concerns provides a variety of tools to assist local leaders.

- *A Compassionate Journey*, published by Disability Concerns and available through Faith Alive, gives council members and congregational care teams a resource to learn how to provide care to people with disabilities or chronic illnesses.
- Our quarterly newsletter, appropriately called *Breaking Barriers*, gives congregational leaders a brief and free resource to distribute to their congregation which offers stories and resources to help congregations provide a warm welcome.

- Our website, www.CRCDisabilityConcerns.org, provides worship and caring resources as well as English and Spanish versions of *Breaking Barriers*.
- Conferences and other training sponsored by Disability Concerns provide training.
- About 600 volunteers, recruited by Disability Concerns, serve in Christian Reformed churches and classes as advocates for people with disabilities. The staff of Disability Concerns, one full-time director, and two part-time administrative assistants support these volunteers in a variety of ways including an annual training session for the regional advocates.
- Consultation is provided by the Director of Disability Concerns as well as local volunteers to help church leaders identify resources and implement best practices to remove barriers and open wide the doors and hearts of the church for all of God's people.

Please let us know how we can partner with your congregation by contacting us at 888-463-0272 or disabilityconcerns@crcna.org.

Dynamic Youth Ministries

Dynamic Youth Ministries (Cadets, GEMS, and Youth Unlimited) offers a variety of leadership training opportunities.

The Cadet Corps works to develop leadership in men and boys. Men are trained at the council level through an ambitious program called Developer of Counselor Education (DCE). Each DCE agrees to come to three weekends of training over a three-year period of time. While in training, he learns to do three things: 1) assess the learning needs of counselors in his council, 2) develop learning experiences (workshops, etc.) to meet those needs, and 3) present the workshops. Typically, councils meet every month during the Cadet season and have a team of DCEs. Each meeting offers a variety of workshops to choose from, enhancing the training and giving variety to it.

In addition, the Corps provides annual regional conferences in six areas throughout North America and one international convention for counselors and their families. The international convention takes place in two of every three years, but not in the year of an international camporee.

Training is also built into the program for boys. At the Cadet club, boys are divided into small groups called cadres. Each boy is given a position of responsibility and authority within the cadre. The leaders are called cadre chiefs. Their job is to help

the counselor keep the meeting under control and provide a good example to the rest of the group. As boys become older, they are encouraged to stay in the ministry as junior counselors and then counselors.

GEMS provides multiple leadership development opportunities for women and girls. Annual leadership training opportunities for women are offered at the local, regional, and international level. Each workshop and conference is intentionally designed to equip women with the resources, know-how, and desire to lead others successfully. Within the last year, over 3,400 women have attended at least one leadership training event.

When strong leadership gifts are identified in a woman, she may be invited to serve the ministry in a larger way. These women are asked to serve on the Executive Board, as a Leadership Trainer, or as an Area Coordinator. All receive specialized training in leadership before they assume their roles and then annually throughout their tenure.

Leadership training is also available to older girls in the program. A middle school aged girl who has been successful in GEMS is eligible to take part in the Counselor-in-Training program. Through self assessment tests, one-on-one mentoring, and experiencing regular opportunities to lead, these young women begin to see their leadership skills grow exponentially.

Youth Unlimited (YU) recognizes a need to shift additional focus to developing leaders who can meet the pressing and practical needs of today's youth ministry. Through training, networking, and offering resources, YU equips youth leaders and the local church to share the love of Jesus Christ with their students in relevant ways.

YU is developing leaders through Compass 21, Convention, and Missions. Through C21, facilitated weekend retreats for local churches are offered with six to nine month follow-up and support for their youth ministry leaders. We also offer several workshops that can be tailored to the needs of youth leaders in their local areas.

Convention offers leadership training for students and youth leaders—from mainstage, with the biggest names in youth ministry, to breakout seminars geared for more focused discussions.

Missions offers leadership training through the Mission Leadership Summit held every year in January or February. This summit equips those who organize mission experiences for youth to make the experiences life transforming.

YU offers additional youth leader resources such as *eEquip*, *Getting Dusty*, Middle School Curriculum, *Youth Ministry Imprints*, theme based *Youth Group Devotions*, and our website (www.youthunlimited.org).

Faith Alive Christian Resources

After spending several weeks in various orientation activities, Mark Rice officially became director of Faith Alive on November 24. Prior to coming to Faith Alive, Mark spent many years in various marketing and communications positions at Zondervan Corporation; his most recent position was vice president of book marketing. Mark succeeds Gary Mulder who retired after serving in this position for the past 24 years.

Faith Alive will be publishing several new resources for church leaders during the next six months or so months. Watch for the following:

- *Elder/Deacon Training DVD*: A basic video based training resource for new elders and deacons.
- *Elder Handbook*: This book will summarize the duties, responsibilities, and challenges of elders.
- *Deacon Handbook*: We are replacing our two current deacons' books with this book which will summarize the duties, responsibilities of deacons as well as the challenges they face.
- *Missional Structures for Today's Church*: A book on options for local church structures.
- We've also revised the popular *Discover Your Gifts* course; the new version is shorter and includes an online questionnaire.
- Finally, many churches have signed up for the *Nurture* newsletter for parents in their church.

Check out all these resources at www.Faithaliveresources.com or call 800-333-8300.

Office of Social Justice and Hunger Action

In addition to the resources found at www.crcjustice.org, the Office of Social Justice and Hunger Action (OSJHA) utilizes its large network to equip and develop leadership.

In the U.S., the Micah Challenge works with students at Calvin, Dordt, Trinity, and other Christian colleges to resource and disciple student leaders. From designing and executing campus events, to organizing communal prayer through our Millennium Development Goal prayer guide, the Micah Challenge is deeply committed to setting individuals on their own path toward justice. Micah Sunday is an annual mobilization of Micah Challenge communities around the world.

Our home office in Grand Rapids is staffed with young leaders on the cutting edge of technology and youth empowerment. Through Justice Seekers, our social networking site, we are able to engage in thoughtful, biblical discussion on current events and

advocacy opportunities. Our members run the political gamut, which broadens our discourse and truly challenges independent thought and decision-making.

As part of congregational justice mobilizing, the OSJHA along with CRWRC has hosted monthly pastor roundtables. Past topics have included election-year guidelines and immigration. The discussions are a great way for pastors to grow from one another and stay current on denominational resources.

In addition, the OSJHA continues to partner with other social justice organizations such as Bread for the World, Sojourners, and Friends of Sabeel in order to educate and mobilize our constituents. Being part of such a vast network provides a rich global perspective and helps us develop and enable leaders all over the world.

Pastor-Church Relations

Pastor-Church Relations is strategically involved in the denominational objective of developing leaders. Through intervention in difficult situations, through the pastor mentoring program, by meeting with EPMC students, and by advocating for congregational staff, leaders in various situations are being served.

One competency that is tested in church leaders is that of navigating conflict as people with diverse values and desires come together in congregations. When conflict spins out of control, many become discouraged and often leave their leadership roles when the conflict is resolved. Pastor-Church Relations supports leaders by advocating for healthy conflict patterns thereby encouraging leaders to remain in ministry for the long haul.

Additionally, all newly ordained pastors are mandated by synod to have a mentor in their first five years of ministry. Pastor-Church Relations helps form these partnerships by introducing the program to candidates for ministry, by brokering mentoring relationships through regional pastors, and by providing a manual that helps guide the conversations between mentor and mentee.

Recently, Pastor-Church Relations has played an important role in developing resources and events to support the spouses of clergy. There have been gratifying responses to these efforts and the morale of clergy spouses has been positively affected.

Also, through its Staff Ministry Committee, Pastor-Church Relations assists congregational staff and the churches they serve develop healthy, long lasting staff ministry that strengthens ministries to all, especially children and youth, thereby contributing to the long term development of young and growing leaders.

Race Relations

The Office of Race Relations, in conjunction with church leadership teams, church planters, Calvin College, and Calvin Theological Seminary, develops facilitator/trainers through the ministry of the Dance of Racial Reconciliation (DORR) workshops as well as the Facilitator Development Workshop. So far, we have identified several dozen men and women, from all walks of life and all ethnic groups in both North and Latin America, who have become leaders and have established a value for biblical diversity, have gained understanding through the analysis of systemic racism, and have embraced the ministry of racial reconciliation.

The Race Relations Scholarship Program encourages students who have a desire to engage in the ministry of racial reconciliation in their churches, schools, and communities. For the 2008-2009 academic year, we have sixteen students who are engaged in some kind of reconciliation work.

The Office of Race Relations invites and encourages people of color to serve on the Multiethnic Conference Committee to plan and organize this conference. These committee members come from various positions within the denomination. As members of this committee, they gain valuable experience and leadership qualities that they then are able to take into other areas of ministry.

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

Sustaining Congregational Excellence

Within any given church there are a number of leadership positions—all of which are important to the health of the congregation. The CRCNA Board of Trustees has said that healthy churches encourage servant leadership. According to Wikipedia, this type of leadership “encourages leaders to serve others while staying focused on achieving results in line with the organization’s values and integrity.” Sustaining Congregational Excellence (SCE) offers three ways in which servant leadership can be enriched, developed, and encouraged.

- Through Health & Renewal grants, congregations creatively think about projects which can foster health within their unique family of believers. While projects cover a wide range of ideas, leadership is a recurring focus. Coit CRC in Michigan is currently developing youth as future leaders in their church and community. The youth group leaders of Missions Hills Community Church in British Columbia recently attended a

conference and returned refreshed and encouraged. The worship team leaders of Ocean View CRC in New Jersey participated in a project which built up, renewed, inspired, developed, and encouraged them.

- Through seven annual SCE learning events, pastors, church leaders, and their spouses explore topics related to congregations. Stories and best practices are shared. Presentations, group work, and fellowship aim toward informing, encouraging, and supporting our leaders.
- Coaching will be added to SCE programming in 2009. Grants will be available for churches who would like an SCE coach to work with them. Leadership coaching will give assistance to church leadership as they guide their congregation in a new ministry initiative and/or help the congregation process change.

(Note: The SCE program is available to congregations with 150 adult professing members or less.)

Sustaining Pastoral Excellence

A recent Sustaining Pastoral Excellence (SPE) survey indicated that fifty-one percent of CRC pastors see themselves as servant leaders; four tenths of a percent said they are authoritarian leaders. The entire survey report can be found at http://www.crcna.org/pages/spe_surveys.cfm.

SPE believes in encouraging, supporting, and developing leaders. This occurs most frequently through peer learning (PL) groups in which four to eight pastors covenant to gather over a period of one year. The pastors are asked to identify personal and group goals—many of which are directly related to leadership issues.

Seven pastors involved in The Central Plains Peer Learning Group are currently focusing on developing leadership abilities. They saw a need for leadership training as they faced what so many of today's pastors face—churches transitioning through change. Two Canadian groups, one in British Columbia and the other in Ontario, have been looking at leading large CRC congregations, which is significantly different than leading smaller churches. In New Jersey, a group of six pastors are exploring the development of effective leaders for mission-focused churches.

What is the result of PL groups focusing on leadership? One pastor said: "The experience I had by being part of this group has utterly transformed how I will lead my congregation through all the challenges we will face. I now feel free to lead as Christ Jesus would want me to lead."

CRWRC

A large part of Christian Reformed World Relief's (CRWRC's) Kingdom-building ministry involves developing leaders who can transform lives and communities worldwide.

- In the U. S. and Canada: While CRWRC Disaster Response Services responded to Hurricane Katrina in Gaston Point, MS, local church members were encouraged to lead the home repair and reconstruction process themselves. This group ended up supervising the reconstruction of more than 75 homes. Later, members of the same church, through CRWRC support, started a community development organization to respond to long-term needs.
- Internationally: CRWRC works to equip the staff of 105 churches and community organizations with the leadership skills and resources they require to reach over 800,000 people in need. Justin Mbingwa, one of these partner staff members, is a food security coordinator in Malawi and is training 800 farmers in new agricultural techniques.
- At the denominational level: In August, seven young people embarked on CRWRC community development internships in Niger, Honduras, the Philippines, Malawi, and Mozambique. An additional 23 people (of varying ages) are serving with CRWRC's North America Ministry Team through the Americorps program. Each is being mentored by CRWRC or partner staff and working alongside community organizations. They are learning community development skills and are growing spiritually.
- Through collaboration with other CRCNA agencies: Along with Home Missions and Communities First Association, CRWRC trains church leaders to mobilize local community assets and work together to achieve their vision for development. World Missions, Calvin Theological Seminary's Timothy Institute, and CRWRC work together to train church leaders throughout the world on pastoral care, stewardship, preaching, creation care, work and worship, and family violence.

Partners Worldwide

Author John Maxwell wrote, "The first step to leadership is servanthood." This contrasts the common perception that a leader is one with a "take

charge” attitude, not one with a humble heart. Partners Worldwide (PWW) works to develop humble leaders by fostering respectful mentoring relationships between businesspeople.

PWW was founded on using the skills and resources of businesspeople to help create sustainable jobs in areas of need around the world. This movement matches North American businesspeople with business leaders in developing countries. Since many North American business men and women come into the relationship with a perceived position of power, it is vital for them to approach the relationship with a servant’s heart.

In all of our partnerships, PWW emphasizes the importance of mentoring—a foundational aspect of leadership development. For a healthy mentoring relationship, each person must seek a respectful understanding of the other person. For example, North American business leaders must first seek to understand the culture, challenges, and goals of the international entrepreneur before they attempt to move forward with presenting solutions. PWW is seeing a growing number of international entrepreneurs in Africa, Asia, and Latin America use their leadership abilities to foster new mentoring relationships within their communities.

Calvin College

Through teaching and mentoring programs, Calvin seeks to build strong leaders that will further God’s kingdom in classrooms. A small sampling of both volunteer and professional leadership endeavors reaching far beyond our campus are:

- The Van Lunen Center for Executive Management of Christian Schools invites school administrators for one-year fellowships in leadership development.
- The Kuyers Institute for Christian Teaching and Learning reaches teachers around the world, offering a range of resources, events, and projects that stimulate and sustain quality conversations about the relationship between faith, teaching, and learning.
- The Calvin Institute of Christian Worship has a vast array of resources for church leaders on the web at www.calvin.edu/worship. The institute offers grants for creative church and school programs, mentoring and training workshops, and mini-conferences around the U.S. and Canada. The Symposium on Worship held each January brings church staff from around the world together for stimulating workshops and worship, modeling

strong faith formation and worship leadership.

- The Youth Ministry Program offers a broad foundation of courses and mentoring that help students develop the vision, perspective, and context to develop well-educated and spiritually mature youth ministers. Courses on youth faith formation, models of ministry to youth, and internships offer practical experiences that are key to good leadership of youth.
- Calvin’s Service Learning Center connects students and staff with service to others. Faculty members are encouraged to include pedagogy of student service in their in-class materials so that much of student service is academically based. The Service Learning Center partners with churches and community organizations through volunteerism that educates the next generation.

For information on numerous leadership endeavors at Calvin, visit www.calvin.edu.

Calvin Theological Seminary

Leadership courses at CTS stress four important elements in effective leadership: *vision, trust, contextualization, and transformation*. These four elements of leadership correspond to and flow out of the four building blocks of the seminary’s new M.Div. curriculum—*message, person, audience, and goal*.

Beginning in the fall of 2009, the seminary will weave all of its M.Div. courses into this four-part model of ministry engagement. The *message* includes a thorough grounding in Scripture and interpreting Scripture from a Reformed perspective. The *person* represents the Spirit’s ongoing work of formation of the student through the seminary to mold godly, authentic, and mature leaders. The *audience* represents a capacity for discerning what is contextually fitting in ministry. Courses in missions, world religions, church history, and cross-cultural internships equip students to function effectively in an increasingly cross-cultural world. Finally, the *goal* of all ministry is to build communities that are transformed by the life-changing work of Jesus Christ, for the sake of the world, and for the glory of God. The seminary’s goal is to develop and form leaders for that very purpose.

Urban Aboriginal Ministries

At the Edmonton Native Healing Centre, as well as at the Aboriginal Ministry Centres in Winnipeg and Regina, mentoring is the main method of developing leaders. Traditionally, much learning happens within the family unit—our community members have become family in our places of ministry. Here, leaders emerge through the journey of helping individuals discover their gifts, skills, and strengths and through opportunities for developing those skills and gifts.

Aboriginal Ministry Centres use encouragement to build leadership skills within employees and community volunteers. We try to show a holistic view of being created in the image of the Creator. When we find balance in the physical, mental, emotional, and spiritual sides of ourselves, we become healthy image bearers of the Creator. Many of our people live with low self-esteem. Our journey is to show them that the Creator loves each individual and had blessed him or her with unique gifts. Once a person reaches a level of comfort about who they are, and they have learned that they have gifts to share, a spirit of hope begins to propel them forward.

Traditionally, communal affirmation marked a person's transition into a leadership role. This practice of affirmation empowers all leaders to move forward no matter how hard the journey. Mentoring is an important part of this process and provides the fluidity to allow changes to occur within individuals and situations. As Christian leaders, we must extend a generous portion of grace so that our journeys together are mutually beneficial and bring praise and honor to the creator, redeemer, and sustainer of all creation.

Back to God Ministries International

Evangelism and discipleship are the heart of the mission of Back to God Ministries International (BTGMI). Through media, BTGMI reaches literally millions of people in nine language groups worldwide; a network of partners follows-up and disciples leaders.

A Spanish ministry team leads workshops in eight countries, equipping hundreds of pastors for effective pulpit communication since 2004.

Throughout French-speaking Africa, BTGMI works with 46 staff members and 125 volunteers who disciple new believers through Bible study correspondence lessons. Since 2004, Rev. Paul Mpindi has facilitated ten workshops that have provided training for thousands of pastors and church leaders.

Early in 2007, Indonesian leader Rev. Untung Ongkowidjaya, working in partnership with CRWM and CRWRC, began to develop a strategy to build communities of faith on remote islands. Rev. Untung

has trained 87 coordinators to establish listener communities throughout Indonesia with the goal of reaching 120 communities by mid-2009. More than 11,500 people are part of these discipleship groups. BTGMI and CRWM are exploring ways in which to offer Timothy training in Indonesia to equip lay pastors for effective local ministry.

The BTGMI Arabic ministry, in partnership with Middle East Reformed Fellowship and Words of Hope, uses one-on-one mentoring and seminars (held in undisclosed locations) to train Muslims who have become Christians to evangelize and disciple other Muslims.

In Russia, BTGMI ministry staff led communication workshops for pastors and church leaders at local churches and at St. Petersburg Christian University.

Home Missions

One of eight core values at Christian Reformed Home Missions (HM) is *leadership*—"raising up missionary leaders from each generation is crucial for equipping God's people for God's work." HM carries out this core value through ministries and programs designed to identify, train, and support the next generation of leaders in the CRC.

In classis-based partnerships, HM supports fifteen Leadership Development Networks (LDNs) in the U.S. and Canada. Through these three-year, on-the-job training courses, trainees receive classroom instruction in biblical/theological knowledge, ministry skills, and spiritual formation. Trainees are also involved in local church ministry where they are mentored by an experienced leader to develop ministry skills and spiritual disciplines. Since 2000, the number of LDN participants has increased from 24 to nearly 160. LDNs are conducted in English, Spanish, and Korean. Many LDN graduates enter ministry as pastors, evangelists, church planters, or church staff in the CRC.

HM also focuses on developing and training youth leaders through its Emerging Leaders scholarship fund. Through this program, HM and partners seek to identify, inspire, and equip an emerging generation of young leaders through an intentional mentoring relationship between students and HM campus ministers. For this school year, thirteen North American students have been designated as Emerging Leaders and are being mentored by HM-supported campus pastors.

World Missions

Christian Reformed World Missions has been working to develop leaders worldwide for decades, but lately this has become a strategic area of focus.

- El Salvador (Ruth Padilla DeBorst): Having graduated from the two CRWM sponsored programs, several dozen pastors are leading their congregations in new outreach initiatives—from medical clinics to legal counsel, from recycling to child-care centers. These pastors are also using their training to teach new leaders.
- Kenya (Mwaya Wa Kitavi): The Reformed Church of East Africa has implemented Timothy Leadership Training in an effort to develop leadership. World Missions is exploring a partnership with Word Provision Church, Kenya (WPC)—an independent church with a vision to plant 50 churches among the Maasai (an unreached people group). Their vision is to help 500 people know Christ in the next five years. CRWM, in partnership with Bible League Kenya, will support the WPC's church planting efforts.
- Hungary (Frank Sawyer): A new program, elders training, started this fall with 54 young, middle aged, and elderly students. The students follow courses in areas such as Bible knowledge, Old & New Testament, church history, church creeds and doctrines, ethics, and more. Although this program is established at Sárospatak Seminary, seminary teachers and pastors also go to other places to convene workshops for elders and church leaders.
- Japan (John Gho): John Gho completed a Coffee Break Leader Workshop at Kochi for Shikoku Presbytery. Though the committee expected forty people, seventy people from all over Shikoku Presbytery attended. All of them were serious about learning how to bring people to Jesus Christ. After the training, good reports spread out to several other presbyteries. The possibility of giving this training to those presbyteries during this year is currently in discussion.

AGENDA ITEM 12.2: REDEEMER UNIVERSITY COLLEGE REPORT

REDEEMER UNIVERSITY COLLEGE ~ Fall/Winter Report 2008



Greetings from Redeemer. We trust that you have been blessed during this Advent & Christmas season as we celebrated our Saviour's birth and look to his coming again.

As the first semester of the 2008-09 academic year is drawing to a close, we praise God for his many wonderful blessings. We have had an enrolment of 866 total students with an increase from 818 to 826 FTE (full-time equivalent) students. We were extremely pleased with the publication of the *Globe & Mail's* annual "University Report Card", in which our students gave Redeemer another "A" in overall student satisfaction and "A+"s in a number of categories. The full report is available on www.globecampus.ca if you are interested. At the same time, we are concerned about the decreasing levels of interest in Christian university education among our young people and would ask that you make a special effort to promote the value of a quality Christian university education.

Our faculty have thrown themselves with enthusiasm into their teaching and scholarship this Fall term, and we look forward to the arrival of Dr Darren Brouwer (Chemistry) and Professor Jonathan Kooiman (Business) in January 2009. Continuing Education has been significantly invigorated with the award of a \$500,000 grant to fund the development of this strategic area. The funds will be used over a three year period to allow us to develop programs, workshops and courses that will extend the mission and purpose of Redeemer to new communities.

We are also forming a partnership with the new Paideia Centre for Public Theology and together are organising an ambitious academic conference: "*Mission, Worldview, and the Christian University: Living at the Crossroads*" to be held from **7 - 10 January 2009**. The conference will feature some ten scholars with a strong reputation for Christian scholarship. On November 5 we enjoyed the fifth annual Bernard Zylstra Lectures, given by Dr Gideon Strauss, who led chapel, participating in a panel and spoke on "*Jesus and me ... and Everything*". We look forward to having many of you attend the annual Ministers' Conference on **Tuesday, March 3, 2009** with Dr Thomas Long, Bandy Professor of Preaching, Candler School of Theology at Emory University, Atlanta, as our speaker. More details will follow in a special letter of invitation.

On our campus, the archeological dig that was required on the site of the future second soccer field has finally been completed, having unearthed a 14th century first nations' village. We are now seeking to partner with the City and a local soccer league in order to cover the cost of a new field. We are also pleased to report that \$2.7 million of our \$3.3 million *Support our Students* campaign has now been raised, which is critical to our ongoing efforts to make a Christian university education accessible to more students. We have also decided to wind down the Redeemer Foundation, incorporating its membership and scholarship programs into the university and using this opportunity to increase the number of people who are supporting student financial aid at Redeemer. This is one way we are seeking to address our ongoing challenge of balancing our annual budget.

As you probably heard, I will complete my presidency in June of 2010, giving me another 18 months to achieve a number of important goals to lay the basis for a new President. As we move forward, thank you again for your ongoing support of Redeemer through prayer and the financial giving of your congregations. May the Lord bless you in your ministry.

Dr Justin Cooper, President