



CLASSIS NIAGARA OF THE CHRISTIAN REFORMED CHURCH



Wednesday, October 15, 2008; 2:00 P.M.

Maranatha Christian Reformed Church, St. Catharines

Chairman: Rev. E.J. deWaard; **Vice-chairman:** Rev. Andrew Beunk; **Stated Clerk:** John TeBrake

PRIOR TO MEETING, Delegates:

1. Please submit your Classical Credentials to the host church
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

The following are planned to be included in the agenda for this meeting:

- A. Rev. Bruce Adema, Director of Canadian Ministries, CRCNA, will lead Classis in a discussion about churches balancing the responsibilities of denominational ministry shares and their increasing participation in local ministries, and how that plays out as churches prepare and implement their budgets
- B. Nominations for denominational Board of Trustees, and denominational agency boards for Region 4 (Classes Chatham, Hamilton, Huron and Niagara). At this meeting, our Classis is asked to nominate persons as follows:
 - a. Board of Trustees of CRCNA: current delegate for Classis Niagara is Rev. Andrew Beunk. He is concluding his second three-year term and is not eligible for reelection. Nominations of **non-clergy** persons are requested for this position;
 - b. Back to God Ministries International – no action is required
 - c. Calvin College – no action is required
 - d. Calvin Theological Seminary – the current delegate is Rev. Frederick Heslinga. He is concluding his second three-year term and is not eligible for reelection. Nominations of **non-clergy** persons are requested for this position
 - e. Christian Reformed Home Missions – current delegate is Mr. Michael Talsma, alternate Mr. Al Martens. Both are concluding their first three-year term and are eligible for reelection. If no reservations are raised re the nominees, this slate will be submitted to Synod 2009 for appointment.
 - f. Christian Reformed World Missions – no action is required
 - g. Faith Alive Christian Resources – current delegate is Rev. Pieter Pereboom. He is concluding his first three-year term and is eligible for reelection. If no reservations are raised re this nominee, his name will be submitted to Synod 2009 for appointment.
- C. The Mountainview CRC of Grimsby has requested Classis to endorse their staff position of Youth Director/Youth Pastor as one consistent with the guidelines of the CRCNA of Ministry Associate. The Executive Committee has reviewed the position description, and **recommends that Classis approve the request** in accordance with Church Order Article 23-a. The Synodical Deputies from Classes Toronto, Hamilton, and Chatham concur that the position description provided by the Mountainview CRC is in keeping with Synodical guidelines for Ministry Associates. (Unlike most decisions requiring their concurrence, Synodical Deputies are not required to attend a Classis meeting with respect to Article 23-a matters).

The Mountainview CRC has called Pastor Rick Roeda who is currently serving San Diego CRC in Classis California South, where he has been ordained as a Ministry Associate in Youth Ministry in accordance with CO Article 23-a. Subject to appropriate documentation to be received from Classis California South, and from the Council of the San Diego CRC, the Executive Committee **recommends that Classis approve that the Mountainview CRC ordain Mr. Roeda as Ministry Associate as Youth Director/Youth Pastor in accordance with CO Article 23-a.**

1. **Welcome and opening devotions**
2. **Constitution of Classis** by the Chairman, Rev. E.J. deWaard
 - Credentials/roll call presented by the host church, Maranatha
 - 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.
4. **Committee appointment confirmations:**
 - 4.1 Credentials: Smithville (to chair) and Grace
 - 4.2 Advisory re overtures: Riverside (to chair) and Providence (there have been no overtures received at the time of preparation of this agenda)
5. **Classical Administrative Committee Reports**
 - 5.1 Executive Committee (*page 3*)
 - 5.2 Stated Clerk / correspondence (*page 4*)
 - 5.3 Treasurer report / Budget 2009: Planned to be forwarded to Councils approximately Sept. 25
 - 5.4 Classis Ministry Leadership Team
 - 5.5 Classical Nominating Committee
 - 5.6 Safe Church Team
 - 5.7 Church Counselor reports: Rev. E.J. deWaard, substituting for Rev. Duane VanderLaan, re Maranatha; Rev. Derek Bouma, re Bethel
 - 5.8 Regional Pastors' report: Rev. David Tigchelaar and/or Rev. Rudy Ouwehand
6. **Classical Ministries Committee Report**
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** – no overture had been received at the time of agenda preparation
12. **Denominational and Other Reports**
 - 12.1 Denominational reports: (*pages 10-15*)
 - 12.2 Redeemer University College, Dr. Justin Cooper, President (*page 8*)
13. **Next meeting:**

Date: February 18, 2009
Agenda Deadline: January 1, 2009
Location: Hosted by Brock University Chaplaincy Committee (Precise location to be announced)
Chairman: Rev. Andrew Beunk
Vice-chairman: Rev. Kevin Stieva

Credentials: Riverside (to chair) and Providence
Overture Advisory: Bethel (to chair) and Bethany

Following meetings: May 20, and October 21 2009

14. Expressions of thanks and closing devotions

Agenda Item 5.1: Executive Committee of the Classical Ministries Committee of Classis Niagara

Report of Meeting, August 28, 2008

Present: Rev. Jim Dekker, Mr. Frank Engelage, Mr. John TeBrake (Rev. Kevin Stieva was unable to attend due to obligations with respect to a funeral)

- Correspondence was dealt with (see page 4)
- Pulpit Supply for January to May 2008, for Maranatha CRC and Bethel CRC was confirmed (see below)
- Agenda for the October 15 meeting of Classis was finalized.
- At the May meeting of Classis, Classis had approved that one hard copy of the Agenda and of the Minutes of each meeting be distributed [by regular mail] to each Council. The Executive Committee now **recommends that in the future, agendas (including Classical Credential forms) and minutes of all meetings of Classis should be e-mailed only to all churches in our Classis.**
Grounds:
 - We understand all churches have access to e-mail
 - This will take advantage of existing technology
 - This will further reduce mailing costs
- Next meetings:
 - We plan to meet Thursday, September 23 at 8:00 am to consider and prepare for presentation to Classis a proposed budget for 2009
 - We also plan to meet Thursday October 9, at 9:00 with the Chair (Rev. E.J. deWaard) and Vice-chair (Rev. Andrew Beunk) of the October 15 meeting

Pulpit Supply Schedule, September 2008 to May 2009

	Maranatha	Bethel
<u>2008</u> , (previously presented)		
Sept 14	Fluit	Ouwehand
Sept 28	Stieva**	VanderLaan
Oct 12	Winter	Beunk
Oct 24	Bouma	Braam
Nov 9	Collins	deBoer
Nov 23	Dekker**	deWaard
Dec 14	Ouwehand	Fluit
Dec 28	VanderLaan	Stieva

(** arranged own exchange)

2009, continued next page

<u>2009</u>	Maranatha	Bethel
Jan 11	Winter	Beunk
Jan 25	Bouma	Braam
Feb 8	Collins	deBoer
Feb 22	Dekker	deWaard
Mar 8	Fluit	Ouwehand
March 22	Stieva	VanderLaan
April 19	Beunk	Winter
April 26	Braam	Bouma
May 17	deBoer	Collins
May 24	deWaard	Dekker

Any scheduling changes should be arranged and confirmed by the pastor and the council of the church involved

Agenda Item 5.2: Summary of correspondence to September 1, 2008

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>Date</i>	<i>Item</i>	<i>Action</i>
1	June 5	To newly-appointed Classis Niagara committee members confirming their respective appointments	RFI
2	June 9	To Rev. Allan Groen, Stated Clerk for Classis Alberta North; and to Mr. John Zylstra, Chairman, Faith Fellowship CRC Council, Fairview, Alberta – confirmation that Mr. Ken VanDyk was examined by Classis Niagara in accordance with CO Article 7 and that Classis Niagara declared him eligible for call	RFI
3	July 2	From Mountainview CRC, Grimsby, request to endorse their staff position of Youth Director/Youth Pastor as one being consistent with Synodical guidelines for Ministry Associates	Placed on the Agenda for October 15 meeting of Classis
4	July 7	From Mr. John H. Bolt, Director of Finance and Administration, CRCNA – information with respect to Ministry Shares, Ministers' Compensation, other Financial Information	RFI; this information was also sent to the Treasurer of each church
5	July 14	From Rev. Gerald Dykstra, Executive Director, CRCNA, summary of Synodical decisions.	RFI
6	July 28	From Calvin College – information about the Worship Renewal Grants Program, and about two upcoming worship workshops to be presented in several locations in the coming year	RFI; copy of letter to be sent to churches in Classis Niagara with the agenda mailing

7	July 31	From Diane (“Dee”) Recker, Director of Synodical Services, CRCNA – annual “reminder” information for Stated Clerks of Classes	RFI
8	July 31	From Dee Recker, request for nominations to BOT and denominational agencies	Placed on the Agenda for October 15 meeting of Classis
9	August 1	From Pastor-Church Relations Office, request for information about non-ordained staff members who fill significant leadership roles in our churches	Distributed request to clerks of councils; will forward collected information back to Pastor-Church Relations
10	August 10	From Rev. Walter VanderWerf, previously pastor of Maranatha CRC in St. Catharines, a letter to Classis Niagara confirming his acceptance of a call from the Duncan CRC (British Columbia)	RFI; letter has been forwarded to pastors in Classis Niagara, and will be printed in the agenda (see below)
11	August 21	From Dee Recker, communication that Rev. John Poortenga was released from ministry at The River CRC of Redlands, California, according to CO Article 17.	RFI; forwarded to Councils of Classis Niagara

Pastor Walt Vanderwerf
 1415 St Paul Street West
 St Catharines, ON
 L2R 6P7

To Classis Niagara,

Greetings to you in the name of the Lord!

It is with great joy that I received a call to Duncan Christian Reformed Church (British Columbia) in July 2008. I have now officially accepted that call.

This letter is written in gratitude to our Lord for the years of ministry I was enabled to work among you. I am thrilled to report that God has restored me to complete health, and I am quite ready to move on to the next phase of my ministry. Over the past 12 years I was given strength by God to preach in many of your churches; and to take part in leadership on the classis level as a member of the board of Home Missions, as a member of the Classis Ministry Committee, and as a prayer co-ordinator for this classis. I count it a privilege to have been part of the early stirrings of planting a church, and watching my friend and colleague begin the work in Thorold.

I thank God for you. I’ve worked closely with a number of you on ministry projects: prayed with you, worshiped with you, heard God speak through you, been challenged by you in so many ways. You have prayed for me, especially in the last few years, and given me much encouragement to continue in ministry. I will miss the times we could vision ministry together, laugh together, enjoy one another’s company in the Lord.

I have been a strong believer in communicating with God through prayer and Scripture, trusting that he hears us. My prayer for this classis is that she continue to do the work of the Lord, led and empowered by the Spirit of Jesus, preaching the gospel by any means. Please continue to make prayer a vital part of your meeting times. May God richly bless you as you discover his kingdom at work among us.

I am his servant.
 Pastor Walt Vanderwerf

Agenda Item 7: Brock University Chaplain's Report

Dear Members of Classis Niagara,

“How can I help you in your ministry?” When a student I’ve known for some time came into my office the other day and asked me this question, I could have jumped for joy. Clearly, students were beginning to want to play an active role in Brock CRC Campus Ministry.

I’ve known this student – let’s call him J – for more than a year now. We often ran into each other at Brock Christian Fellowship and Campus for Christ meetings which both of us attended regularly. Since J also had a job at the gym on campus, I saw him whenever I worked out. Over the course of time, we became friends and eventually J even began to tell me about his faith journey. I mentioned our social justice trips to South America and Africa as well as other aspects of the ministry I was doing at Brock. J became interested and has now come to the point that he wants to be actively involved.

A few weeks ago, J sent me an email expressing his frustration at failing to interest his co-workers at the gym in his Christian faith. I explained that ministry to non-Christian students on campus begins with trying to become friends with them, sharing some of their interests, and responding to their needs, just as Jesus did in his ministry. Once a relationship of trust had been established, God will provide the opportunity to talk about faith. After all, we can only do so much. At the end of the day, only the Holy Spirit can do the convincing.

Students like J – and there are many others – continue to inspire me to see the CRC Campus Ministry in terms of a team effort. To strengthen the team’s common purpose, we will have a mini-retreat in Thorold on September 13 to plan for the coming year. The focus will be on finding ways and means to connect with non-Christian students on campus where they’re at. Attempts in the past to get these students involved in regular Campus Ministry events or programs have not been very successful. What authors M. Frost and J. Hirsch (*The Shaping of Things to Come: Innovation and Mission for the 21st-Century Church*, Hendrickson Publishers, 2003, p. 46) write in this regard about the church also applies to campus ministry: “If the church is simply a community of like-minded people, inviting other like-minded people to join them, then it will always be severely impeded in its attempt to win the world for Christ.” Instead, Frost and Hirsch recommend what they call an incarnational approach which they qualify as “living holy lives, praying for not-yet Christian friends, socializing regularly and building friendships with them, and introducing them to [...] evangelist friends.” In this way, they claim, one will be “creating fertile soil for God to do his exclusive work, giving people the gift of faith” (*The Shaping*, p. 59).

Of course, our regular programs will continue, but their aim will be – more intentionally so than in the past – to equip the students who make up our Campus Ministry team at Brock to connect with non-Christians on their own turf wherever they can and eventually to establish discipleship groups of their own. As a team we will need to get together at least once a week to listen to each other’s stories, to pray for each other, and to encourage and support each other.

Two weeks after our mini-retreat, fifteen students (both new and returning students) and I will be spending a weekend camping near Arden in the Land O’Lakes region of Ontario. The intention is to help first-year students make the transition to campus life, and make new friends. Hopefully, some of the senior students will be willing to become their informal mentors not only for the duration of the retreat but also for as long as they need to be.

Apart from J, a number of other students have indicated an interest in being part of our team. A former editor of the Brock student newspaper, *The Brock Press*, has offered to help with the layout of our new CRC Campus Ministry newsletter which will be published twice a year. Every family mailbox in Classis Niagara will soon receive its own copy! This year, at least two students with strong connections to Brock Christian Fellowship and Campus for Christ will also be serving on our CRC Campus Ministry team. As a result, we look forward to even stronger relations with both these important Christian organizations on campus.

With the retirement of Rev. George Addison, the Ecumenical (Anglican, Presbyterian and United Church) Chaplain, and the possible departure on sabbatical of Brother Raoul Masseur, the Roman Catholic Chaplain, all official contact between the university administration and Brock Campus Ministry is now increasingly channeled through the office of the CRC Campus Minister. Although this will be adding

quite substantially to my workload, I nevertheless feel privileged in being able to enhance the profile of my denomination on campus in this way.

All things considered, it promises once again to be a very busy, yet exciting year for Brock CRC Campus Ministry. I feel especially encouraged and inspired by the way in which God has provided me with a wonderful team of enthusiastic students, as well as made it possible for me to increase my connections with faculty and staff.

In the coming year, I again look forward to leading worship services in the various congregations of Classis Niagara as often as my work at Brock would allow. In the past year, I have even been invited to preach in a number of local Mennonite churches. However, I hope that in the course of the academic year, one or two of my Brock students will be able to accompany me on each preaching engagement to give a personal testimony of the impact of Brock Campus Ministry on their lives.

In conclusion, I would like to thank Classis Niagara for continuing to support its ministry on the Brock campus, not only financially but above all through prayer.

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

When you read this report, I will have been ministering at Shalom Manor & Gardens for just over a year. In this report, I will reflect on what I have discovered in this year. When I led worship that first Sunday, the worship space filled with curious residents, their family members, search committee members, visiting pastors and my own family, I had hopes but not expectations. Almost immediately, I discovered that my ministry is diverse. My time is divided between organizing the spiritual activities that take place at Shalom Manor & Gardens (table devotions, Sunday worship, memorial services), writing sermons and leading worship, visiting with residents, listening to the concerns of their family members, being pastor for staff members and sometimes for volunteers, leading funeral services and writing an occasional report. In those first days, trying to find my way through the daily requirements of my ministry, the sense of calling which I had before arriving was soon confirmed. For this I am grateful.

As the year progressed, I discovered that the work of management, staff and chaplain are well integrated. Every Monday, Wednesday and Friday, the management team and I gather to pray for the residents and the staff. Staff members regularly alert me to spiritual needs of residents. After a death of a resident, particularly if it was a long time resident, I gather with staff members to reflect and pray. The recreation department and I put together the Memorial Services. The volunteer co-ordinator co-ordinates the volunteers for all worship services and co-ordinates the volunteer music accompanists. Theresa, the receptionist, formats and duplicates all of our worship bulletins. This degree of integration and co-operation increases the effectiveness of my ministry and allows me to focus on the spiritual needs of the residents.

Approaching the end of my first year, I discovered that each season at Shalom Manor & Gardens has its own rhythm. During the summer season, visits from family and friends are fewer. Staff members work different shifts, they work in different locations, and sometimes they are on vacation. There are fewer volunteers. Yet, there is an atmosphere of relaxation. Many residents venture outside enjoying the sunshine and beautiful gardens, some walk the sidewalks around Shalom Manor & Gardens. Often, residents are seen sitting around an outside table enjoying a barbeque lunch. In the fall season, the

rhythm of activities increases. More choirs and bands come into the home. There are more day excursions to places of interest. Although busier, the sun rising later and setting earlier, the increasing crispiness of the air, the changing colours and falling of the leaves are noticed. There is an atmosphere of contentment and trust among the residents. The winter season is characterized by shutdowns: residents are restricted to their floors, the Breeze Café and store are closed, visitors are few, Sunday worship does not take place. Nursing staff is busy fighting sickness. House keeping is busy fighting the spread of infections. More residents are dying. In the cold winter season there is a rhythm of survival. The Spring season is marked with hope. This begins with Good Friday and Easter, increases when the grass turns green and trees break out in leaf and climaxes when the doors leading into the outside gardens are flung open! In the season of spring there is a rhythm of new life. And so, every season in Shalom Manor & Gardens has its own rhythm.

In this year, I discovered that old age has everything to do with life. I discovered that when old people walk in the ways of God, there are rich blessings in this season of their lives.

(Received from Rev. Fred VanderBerg, Chaplain, Shalom Manor)

Agenda Item 12.2: Report from Redeemer University College

REDEEMER UNIVERSITY COLLEGE ~ Summer 2008



Greetings from Redeemer University College. Although the students are absent during the summer months, we are busy with many activities and events taking place on campus, along with preparations for the upcoming academic year. We trust that you have been refreshed after the summer holidays.

We are encouraged by the positive outlook for our 2008-09 enrolment, now projected for 830 full-time students. Though slightly below our target of 840, good student retention has helped us increase our expected numbers from this past year's enrolment of 818 FTE students. Recent results from student satisfaction surveys support this positive development.

We have been blessed with a number of promising faculty to replace retirees (Dr Al Wolters and Dr Henry Brouwer) and others who have left. They include: Dr Vahagn Asatryan in Business; Professor Christina Belcher (appointed a year ago in Education); Professor Kevin Flatt in History; and Dr Ryan O'Dowd in Religion and Theology. Also beginning in January 2009 are Dr Darren Brouwer in Chemistry and Professor Jonathan Kooiman in Business. Ben Stegeman, Director, Stewardship and Planned Giving has also retired after 25 years, although he is still working part-time one day a week. Mrs Judith Drost Storey, who is the new Development Director, comes from McMaster University with 8 years of directly related experience. It is also with sadness that we have lost one of our longest-serving and well-known faculty members, Dr Theodore Plantinga, Professor of Philosophy and Department Chair, who died peacefully on July 4 after a battle with cancer. Dr Plantinga was one of the original faculty members in 1982.

Research at the university is thriving as can be seen in academic conferences attended, articles and books being published, and the steady growth of research funding, including external funding from the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council (SSHRC) and the Natural Sciences and Engineering Research Council (NSERC). The total of this funding in 2007-2008 was \$148,532. Redeemer University College is pursuing a partnership with the soon-to-be-announced Paideia Centre for Public Theology,

and together they are in the process of organising an ambitious academic conference on the topic of Christian world view to be held in January 2009.

Redeemer's annual membership meeting will be held on Friday, September 26. A faculty artists recital is also planned for 8:00 pm in the Auditorium after the membership meeting. Please reserve the date. We also look forward to this year's Zylstra Lectures on November 5, 2008 by Dr Gideon Strauss of the Work Research Foundation. Finally, please note that Tuesday, March 3, 2009 is Redeemer's annual Ministers' Conference. Our speaker will be Dr Thomas Long, Bandy Professor of Preaching at Candler School of Theology, Emory University in Atlanta. Please check our website at www.redeemer.ca for updates about events, lectures and concerts.

We also have a sense of excitement as we look at the campus upgrades that are being completed—our new campus signage, the renovation of the last of our townhouse residences Cranmer Court, completion of the west entrance paving and the start of the trail system in our conservation area. All these projects are paid for from our capital campaign and the funds from the project with Stonehenge Developments.

Thank you for your continuing support of Redeemer through prayer and financial giving. Church donations for the past fiscal year were \$743,000, which is an increase over the amount given the previous year. These gifts are essential for our student financial aid program, making a Christian university education accessible to more students. We praise God for his blessings and faithfulness.

Dr Justin Cooper, President

Ministry Report to Classes and Councils

SEPT 2008



transforming lives
and communities
worldwide

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Abuse Prevention

The well-worn expression, “It takes a village...” applies to the ministry of Abuse Prevention. The ministry relies on a “village” of volunteers, colleagues and web sites to make resources and information available to individuals and to churches.

In the Abuse Prevention “village”, there is a network of seventeen Safe Church Teams across Canada and the US. With an average size of ten members, the teams represent nearly 170 volunteers who are able to provide assistance to churches through education or on an advisory panel.

Within many CR congregations, safe church committees dedicate their time to help their church reduce the risk of abuse and encourage safe

practices among volunteers serving in youth ministry programs.

In the Abuse Prevention “village”, colleagues at Faith Alive Christian Ministries and other denominational offices help edit, coordinate, publish, design, ship, and web-post pages of information and resources so that individuals and churches have access to a variety of materials in a more timely manner than ever before. Methods of design and implementation change, and materials produced for an event are handled more creatively and with greater speed than the year before – or the month before!

For an example of this widespread networking, check out Abuse Awareness 2008 on the web www.crcna.org/order. Individuals and churches can order a wider array of materials and resources than ever before and most of it available by a click of a button into a virtual “shopping cart”.

Chaplaincy Ministries

Chaplaincy Ministries transcends many boundaries both outside and within the Christian Reformed Church.

Our work takes us beyond the organizations of the CRCNA. Not only Calvin Theological Seminary, but other seminaries, and our colleges are contacted for recruitment. We contact every calling church, every classis, and every employer—civilian and military—for endorsement of chaplains for ministry.

We are in contact with The American Association of Pastoral Counselors, the Association of Clinical Pastoral Education, the Association of Professional Chaplains, the Canadian Association of Pastoral Practice and Education, and the Council on Collaboration when working toward standardization of credentialing our chaplains.

We meet annually with the Association of Religious Endorsing Bodies and the National Conference on Ministry in the Armed Forces when setting standards and reviewing best practices for endorsers. We also provide interviews with major newspapers on issues facing the chaplaincy.

We meet regularly with the Chiefs of Chaplains from the Armed Forces in the U.S. and Canada. We work with the Offices of Corrections to place chaplains in the prison systems at both the federal and state levels.

We also interface with agencies housed in the denominational building. The CRWRC received and used pictures from one of our chaplains who was on an aircraft carrier when the tsunami hit Indonesia. We work closely with the Office of Social Justice on restorative justice and issues of peace and war. We work with Home Missions to plant churches in prisons. We work with specialized ministries on several levels. We send material to *The Banner* and other CRCNA publications for publicity and public policy.

Chaplaincy Ministries has no problem transcending boundaries. It is a necessary part of our responsibilities.

Disability Concerns

At a meeting of disability concerns volunteers in Michigan several years ago, it was suggested that a workshop on disability and ministry would be good to plan. The group agreed, and several volunteered to help.

Not content to have only people from disability concerns involved, representatives from the Gray Center (which specializes in autism) and the CLC Network (which specializes in inclusive Christian education) were also invited to participate. It was recognized that inviting people from other

organizations would make the conference better for several reasons—providing greater expertise for planning, extending the network of people we could contact for presentations, and enlisting broader support for the workshop by tapping into different audiences.

The workshop, called One Body Together in Christ, had over 140 participants the first year and over 160 participants the second year. That second year, Friendship Ministries (a one-on-one Christian education ministry) also became part of the planning team.

The four organizations worked together to receive a grant from Calvin Institute of Christian Worship to co-sponsor the workshop and partner with a number of local churches throughout the year. This fall, we anticipate hosting over 200 people at the workshop by teaming up with Western Theological Seminary and with the National Council of Churches in Christ Committee on Disabilities.

Dozens of churches from many different denominations have been blessed with greater motivation for and knowledge of inclusive ministry thanks to invitations which broadened the circle.

Disability Concerns continues to find ways to connect with churches and other organizations for effective ministry. For example, our newsletter, *Breaking Barriers*, is now available in Spanish (*Rompiendo Barreras*) on our website (www.CRCDisabilityConcerns.org).

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

Dynamic Youth Ministries

Calvinist Cadet Corps: God continues to bless the ministry of the Calvinist Cadet Corps as it spreads through Africa. The number of Cadet clubs in Kenya with North American sponsors grew from six last year to fifteen this year. A training session taking place in July promises to add more, as interest grows.

This is also the year for the Cadets' triennial international camporee, and registrations indicate that it will be the third largest in a 42-year history of such events. The men and boys are traveling to private land about 150 miles north of Toronto for a week of wilderness experience. Please pray that God will be glorified through the camporee and throughout the ministry.

GEMS Girls' Clubs: In May, a team of GEMS trainers and staff returned to Zambia, Africa to train more women to serve as GEMS counselors, start more GEMS Clubs, visit the children in the orphan home that GEMS helped build, and look for land for a school, library, and a GEMS Service Center. To date 28 clubs have been started in Africa and over 1,000

girls meet with their counselors every Saturday morning in five different areas of Zambia. We thank God that he has given us the privilege of joining him in his work in Zambia.

In August, 625 women from the US and Canada will meet in Asheville, NC to celebrate God's faithfulness to this ministry throughout the last 50 years and to receive inspiration and training in ministry. We look forward to this special opportunity to praise and worship God and to offer our collective thanksgiving for what he has done.

Youth Unlimited: Summer has arrived which means Youth Unlimited is in its favorite and busiest time of year. This summer, youth and leaders at SERVE, ENCOUNTER and the Young Calvinist Convention will identify and experience how they can impact the communities around them and across the world. Participants will learn how to put their faith into action and care for the needs of others so they can be in a place to feel God's grace and see his power as they live for him. These events will take place as far south as Mexico, as far north as Canada, as far west as California and as far east as Africa.

With great anticipation we look forward to the stories that will come from these experiences because of our belief in God and his desire to use the local church and their youth to further his kingdom.

Faith Alive Christian Resources

The Banner: Every household *Banner* is a great example of collaboration among the CRC agencies. When the decision was made to send *The Banner* free to every CRC household, it incorporated a plan whereby eight pages of the magazine (the *Church@Work* section) would be allocated to coverage of agency ministry news rather than the former practices of creating a separate publication (*CRC Source*) and of agencies creating their own newsletters. Check out Bob's Blog on the Banner website!

Other products: As Faith Alive plans for products, it often approaches other organizations to consider co-publishing options. Some examples:

- The *Worship Sourcebook* was co-published by Faith Alive, the Calvin Institute of Christian Worship and Baker Book House.
- The course for youth titled *Fossils and Faith* was co-published by Faith Alive and Christian Schools International.
- The bi-denominational hymnal currently being developed will be co-published by Faith Alive and the Reformed Church in America.

Organizational collaboration: Faith Alive has also developed win-win partnerships with several other organizations. Among them are the following:

- Through a partnership agreement with the RCA, Faith Alive has become the resource provider for the RCA as well as the CRC.
- Through other partnership agreements, a number of Faith Alive's products are endorsed and promoted by the Evangelical Presbyterian Church and by Presbyterians For Renewal, an evangelical group of churches within the Presbyterian Church USA.
- More recently, the Presbyterian Church USA has agreed to carry our *Friendship* and *Kid Connection* curricula.

All these partnerships have helped Faith Alive staff gain new perspectives on providing resources for churches and, we believe, have enriched our ministry.

Pastor Church Relations

Pastor- Church Relations (PCR) works with congregations and church leaders throughout the denomination. Its mandate is to be actively engaged outside the physical boundaries of its office – serving, interacting, educating, and intervening.

In recent years there have been further extensions of our ministry:

- In cooperation with the Sustaining Pastoral Excellence program, there has been a growing outreach to the spouses of pastors, seeking to support and give them an opportunity to interface with one another.
- PCR has expanded its work with pastors by interacting with candidates for ministry before they receive their first calls. In this way they meet the staff of PCR and can be introduced to the availability of denominational ministries. On the other end of ministry careers, PCR has become active in planning programs for retirement.
- There has been greater initiative to define the roles of ministry staff throughout the denomination. Closely related to this is the greater emphasis on the place of Ministry Associates in the CRCNA, and the role of PCR in responding to them.

The CRCNA represents churches in a broad geographical area and has developed ways of responding the needs of congregations and church leaders in a collaborative mode.

Service Link

The 2008-09 fiscal year marks ServiceLink's 14th year as the volunteer program of the Christian Reformed Church in Canada. It was begun in 1995 as a collaborative effort between agencies and programs based out of the Canadian denominational office and today continues to work in partnership with various ministries – in Canada as well as beyond our national borders.

Volunteer opportunities are designed with the intent of building partnerships and relationships between individuals and communities that will enhance mutual learning and collaboration of efforts towards a common goal. Positive relationships allow for richness in serving and for understanding how the body of Christ functions outside one's own experiences.

Time and again volunteers return from assignments sharing how God provided them with meaningful moments when people from different races and backgrounds came together through the working of the Holy Spirit. One such group member who traveled to Nicaragua shared it this way. "I firmly believe that from time to time, God by his grace allows us brief glimpses of heaven; all we need to do is pay attention." A celebration event had been planned for their team as they were ending their time in a small village. "This celebration was one of those times. The village opened their homes and hearts to us. They fed us, they worshipped with us, they celebrated a team members' birthday with us -- they prayed for us and our church back home. The entire event was a moving experience for us all."

As God's people move beyond the norm of everyday living, transcending boundaries never before encountered, he brings them closer to the fullness of his kingdom.

CRWRC

Do you recall the scene from the movie "Charlotte's Web," where Charlotte nimbly and artfully leaps and connects threads to construct a beautiful web? CRWRC is engaged in this dance daily, building a web of relationships, building the "power of one community." Sometimes the connections made are quick and artful; sometimes there is clumsiness and bureaucracy. At the end of the day, though, the web is there, glowing as a testimony to God's grace and love, and to his perseverance with his servants.

One such web shines today in Banda Aceh, Indonesia, more than three years after the tsunami in December 2004. CRWRC Canadian director Ida Kaastra Mutoigo and Relief Program Manager Grace Wiebe recently traveled to Banda Aceh, where CRWRC (thanks to the outpouring of support from

Christian Reformed churches in North America) engaged in relief work, building homes and restoring livelihoods.

Through collaboration with a number of agencies (including Tearfund UK, Mennonite Central Committee, and the Canadian International Development Agency), CRWRC's intervention multiplied. CRWRC's operating arm in Banda Aceh was instituted as GenAssist—operated entirely by staff from Indonesia. Without this web of relief, despair may not have been overcome by hope and compassion. Ida writes: "One leader from Lhoong... wondered if anyone in the world cared for them... but when he heard a helicopter swooping overhead, he knew they were not alone. They consulted their religious leaders and were assured that it was alright to receive help from outside." You see, the people in need of relief are as much a part of the web of relationships as the agencies, organizations, and churches!

Partners Worldwide

To collaborate means "to work with one another." Partners Worldwide is an international business ministry that focuses on connecting businesspeople together in partnerships to "collaborate" on creating jobs to end poverty. Partners Worldwide works closely with CRWRC to facilitate synergy between economic empowerment and community development that can strategically accelerate and intensify sustainable economic and social change in the community.

Partners Worldwide and CRWRC staff and volunteers work together to help build capacity in the resources, relationships, responsibilities and rewards of partner groups—both in the business sector and in the developing communities we work in. A key aspect of our relationship is the importance of networking for strategic learning and cooperation among stakeholders for community transformation.

Partners Worldwide is also involved in a multi-agency task force with CRWRC and World Missions addressing the need to more effectively equip churches that are looking to engage in cross-cultural partnerships. The work of this group is a great example of how cross-functional ministries of the Christian Reformed Church are working together to provide local churches with the tools and resources they need for transforming lives and communities worldwide.

Calvin College

Calvin transcends boundaries through its strong international programs on and off campus. Collaborations with World Missions, Home Missions

and CRWRC enrich the college and the church and give students and faculty a strong sense of partnership with the church.

In 2007, Calvin was one of four colleges and universities nationwide to be awarded the prestigious Senator Paul B. Simon Award for Internationalizing the Campus. The goal of equipping students to participate in and shape the world community requires that global and cultural understanding permeate every area of college life, including the hiring of faculty, recruitment of students and design of the curriculum.

Diversity among international students has increased significantly over the past decade. Calvin also understands the need for hands-on learning experiences in global education.

Sixty percent of seniors study overseas at least once during their time at Calvin. The semester in Spain began in 1983, and other programs have blossomed with semesters now in China (with CRCWM), England, Honduras (with CRWRC), Hungary, Ghana, Spain, and France, as well as in New Mexico and Washington D.C. There are also internship opportunities in developing countries. The January interim takes hundreds of students to places around the world each year. Recently, Calvin was named in the Open Doors Report as fourth among baccalaureate institutions for the number of students studying abroad.

Calvin students held the third annual Faith and International Development Conference on campus in late January with participation of over 400 students from the U.S. and Canada. Speakers included Ida Mutoigo, the Canadian director of CRWRC.

The two fastest growing majors at Calvin College are pre-seminary and international development. This trend is largely due to the strong passion and experience of students in global matters and justice issues, as well as enhanced programs in Christian formation on campus.

We are grateful to our partners in the CRC for their strong support of these excellent partnerships.

Back to God Ministries International

Early this summer, The Back to God Hour underwent a change of name. At the June meeting of synod, The Back to God Hour became Back to God Ministries International (BTGMI). Why the change? So that the agency's name might better reflect the full scope of the agency's mission.

BTGMI, as its name implies, is committed to an international multi-media ministry that both broadcasts the gospel and disciples those who respond to the gospel call. In order to empower our ministry, collaborative partnerships are critically important.

Collaboration begins close to home as BTGMI works with other CRCNA agencies in gospel witness. The most recent example is our partnership with Christian Reformed World Missions in the launch of a new follow-up center in Port-au-Prince to handle listener responses to radio broadcasting within Haiti.

Whenever possible, BTGMI also links with international denominational partners. The Reformed Church of Japan, the Christian Indonesian Church, and the Presbyterian Church of Brazil have joined with us in media ministry within their respective countries.

We have also developed strong partnerships with other media ministries. Most notable is our outreach to the Middle East. Middle East Reformed Fellowship (MERF) and Words of Hope (RCA) join us in broadcasting the gospel in the Arabic language. In international English broadcasting, BTGMI has joined with Words of Hope and FEBA Radio of the United Kingdom to produce simple English programs that communicate to those for whom English is a second language.

BTGMI is also interested in developing new partnerships at the congregational level. The English language division of BTGMI is pilot testing new programs which will help congregations use media effectively to reach their own communities. More information will be made available on this program in the coming year.

Thank you for your partnership in the gospel as together we share the message of good news to the world!

Home Missions

Collaboration is at the heart of Christian Reformed Home Missions, because partnerships with CRC classes, congregations, ministries, and ministry leaders impact every facet of our work.

Increasingly, collaboration is evident in new church development. Home Missions is strengthening this ministry area by becoming more involved in inter-denominational networks and coalitions.

"Collaboration isn't just an option, it is the necessary path of the future," says Rev. Jul Medenblik, who leads the Church Planting and Development Leadership Team (CPDLT). Specifically, the CPDLT has been involved with other denominations in the development and use of a church planter assessment tool offered online through Gallup Press. Additionally, a number of home missions ministry teams have investigated or are already using an assessment center offered through Green Lake Training Center in Wisconsin.

In early 2008, the Home Missions Great Lakes Church Planting and Development team attended the Global Church Advancement (GCA) church planting Boot Camp, which provides resources, guidelines,

and solid Biblical and theological foundations for those considering the call to church planting. In response to its participation in the boot camp, the Home Missions Great Lakes Ministry Team is seeking to strengthen its regular gathering of regional church planters, using some of the teachings and curriculum resources of GCA.

These gatherings will be called Ravah—the Hebrew word for fresh water. “Our prayer is that the support, prayer, and coaching received in and through these gatherings may strengthen our planters and their ministries in our region,” says Ben Becksvoort, Team Leader for the Great Lakes Ministry Team.

Elsewhere, Home Missions Director of Ministry Teams Allen Likkel is collaborating with a group called Ecumenical Partners, which consists of denominations including the Evangelical Lutheran Church of America, the Missouri Synod Lutheran, the Episcopal Church, the Presbyterian Church USA, the United Church of Christ, the Reformed Church of America, the Christian Church-Disciples of Christ, the Moravian Church, and the CRC.

Together, Likkel and representatives from these denominations completed a Lilly Foundation-funded research project on church planting effectiveness. This research resulted in a book, *Extraordinary Leaders for Extraordinary Times*.

World Missions

Christian Reformed World Missions (CRWM) is in the process of a transformation in which it continues to search for and find ways to link its long-time experience on the mission field with the work of Christian Reformed Churches.

"Collaboration" is a watchword for what CRWM has been all about in the last few years, says Joel Hogan, CRWM's director of International Ministries. "We rewrote our mission, vision, and values statement. We have identified what we see for our preferred partnerships." Joel says a key part of the agency's future will be involved in "working together and with people all over the world."

Among other things, CRWM has made it a point to invite representatives of other CRC agencies to take part in its strategic planning process. By seeing what CRWM is planning to do, other agencies have a chance to participate in current efforts or to join with CRWM to develop new ministries. One such partnership is a joint effort with Back to God Ministries International in training church workers in Indonesia.

But partnerships aren't limited to CRC agencies. CRWM also links with individual congregations in ministry. For instance, it is helping a church in Iowa to send translators to Laos and has joined with a church in the Hudsonville, Mich. area to help build churches and others ministry facilities in Haiti.

"It is a new day," said Hogan. "Jesus gave his commission to the entire church not just to us as an agency."