



## CLASSIS NIAGARA OF THE CHRISTIAN REFORMED CHURCH



Wednesday, October 17, 2007; 2:00 P.M.  
Mountainview Christian Reformed Church, Grimsby

**Chairman:** Rev. Greg Fluit; **Vice-chairman:** Rev. Ryan Braam; **Stated Clerk:** John TeBrake

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### **PRIOR TO MEETING, Delegates:**

1. Please submit your **Classical Credentials to the host church (Rehoboth)**
  2. **First-time delegates are asked to read and sign the Form of Subscription.**
- There will be a designated table for both the above**

## **A G E N D A**

It is planned to allow time for a discussion of CO Article 41 items brought forward via Classical Credentials at previous meetings. At the time of the preparation of the agenda the format had been planned but not finalized.

**Denominational Nominating Process:** At the October meeting, Classis Niagara only needs to consider Region 4 Board Members for Calvin Theological Seminary. The current delegate (Rev. James Poelman) and alternate (Rev. Shawn Brix) are concluding their first three-year terms and are eligible for re-election. If there are no objections or reservation raised, this slate will be submitted to Synod 2008 for appointment.

1. **Welcome and opening devotions:**
2. **Constitution of Classis** by the Chairman, Rev. Greg Fluit
  - Credentials/roll call presented by the host church, Mountainview
  - 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. Scheduled Speaker:
  - Mr. Ron VandenBurg, to promote the Sea to Sea Bike Tour in the summer of 2008; will invite churches in Classis Niagara to a celebration service on August 28, 2008. (Please see the Appendix on page 21 for information about the planned Sea to Sea Bike Tour)
4. **Committee appointment confirmations:**
  - 4.1 Credentials: Mountainview ( to chair) and Rehoboth
  - 4.2 Advisory re overtures: Covenant (to chair) and Jubilee Fellowship (there have been no overtures received)
5. **Classical Administrative Committee Reports**
  - 5.1 Classical Interim Committee (*pages 3-5*)
  - 5.2 Stated Clerk / correspondence (*page 6*)
  - 5.3 Classical Finance Committee (*2008 proposed budget and ministry shares, pages 7, 8*)
  - 5.4 Classis Ministry Leadership Team (*pages 9-11*)
  - 5.5 Classical Nominating Committee
  - 5.6 Safe Church Team
  - 5.7 Church Counselor reports: Rev. Duane VanderLaan, re Maranatha
  - 5.8 Liaison Committee, re Maranatha
  - 5.9 Regional Pastor's report: Rev. Peter DeBruyne
  - 5.10 Ad-hoc Committee re proposal to merge CMC/CIC
6. **Classical Ministry Committee Report** (*page 11*)
7. **Brock University Chaplain's Report** (*pages 11-13*)
8. **Shalom Manor Chaplain's Report**

**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 has been received

**12. Denominational and other Reports**

12.1 Denominational reports: *(pages 14-20)*

12.2 Redeemer University College; Mr. Tim Wolfert, Director, Alumni & Community Relations *(pages 20, 21)*

**13. Next meeting:**

*Date:* February 20, 2008

*Agenda Deadline:* January 4, 2008

*Location:* **TBA – are there any invitations?**

*Chairman:* Rev. Ryan Braam

*Vice-chairman:* Rev. Steven deBoer

*Credentials:* Covenant (to chair) and Jubilee Fellowship

*Overture Advisory:* Maranatha (to chair) and Trinity

*Following meetings:* May 21, October 15 2008

**14. Expressions of thanks and closing devotions**

**AGENDA ITEM 5.1: CLASSICAL INTERIM COMMITTEE;**

**(A) Report of Meeting, March 22, 2007**

**Present:** Rev. Jim Dekker, Frank Engelage, Emma Winter (Treasurer of Classis)

1. Rev. Dekker led in an opening prayer.
2. Discussion about situation and credentials of Mike Collins, who has accepted the call from Covenant CRC as Associate Pastor with responsibilities as Church Planter for Thorold. Mike will be installed on October 7 in morning worship at Covenant CRC.

Covenant CRC requests that Classis Niagara at its October 17, 2007 meeting at Mountainview CRC in Grimsby, and with the approval of the Synodical Deputies, permit Mike Collins to retain his ordination as Ministry Associate in Classis Niagara, with the credentials transferred to Covenant from Mountainview without having to sustain another examination.

Ground: The appended job description for Church Planter is coincident with the requirements for Ministry Associate.

**Job Description:**

**Overview:**

The church planter will be a person, who has heard God's call to this ministry, has a heart for the lost, and a strong vision for leading other Christians to plant a church in Thorold, Ontario. This person must walk closely with God, be spiritually discerning, warm and caring, and have the ability to build and develop personal relationships with the launch team, people in Thorold, and an openness to work with university and college students.

This person should have strong organizational and discipling skills, be willing to help the church develop, move through phases, and seek to always help it grow spiritually, in programs, and in administrative function. This person needs to be a team leader and help develop other staff (during the second and third years of operation.)

At the same time, this person needs to be a team player, a person who will work with the calling churches. The planter must recognize the faith background of the calling community, embrace the confessions of faith of the Christian Reformed Church, and network with the calling parent churches and Classis Niagara.

It is expected that the church planter will personally practice and model the spiritual disciplines of prayer, bible study, meditation and continuous professional education. It is also expected and encouraged that the planter will balance ministry with personal and family life.

**Responsibilities**

The following are the key responsibilities of the Church Planter's position. It is recognized that such responsibilities may be handled directly or through the development and supervision of others:\*

1. Develop and cast the vision for mobilizing a reproducing community of faith in Thorold, Ontario.
2. Develop an understanding of the culture of Thorold through networking and building relationships. Then, use this knowledge to develop a mission statement that identifies the target group, and a strategic plan with measurable objectives.
3. Gather together a launch team to give overall leadership to the ministry in the conception phase; promote excellence and integrity in the new community of faith, faithfully reflecting and representing Christ.
4. Develop, process, and build ownership within the launch team for the vision, mission statement, and core values for the new ministry..
5. Minister pastorally, evangelistically, prophetically, and educationally to the people the Lord gathers. Build capacity for serving in all areas by raising up leaders through modeling, coaching, mentoring, and mobilizing. "Prepare God's people to do the work of ministry." (Ephesians 4:12)
6. Identify, train, and mobilize reproducing leaders, who will serve as ministry partners and leaders of small groups, according to their identified gifts and passions.
7. Cultivate prayer in all aspects of the ministry, both within the launch team, the new community of faith, and for Thorold and the surrounding area.
8. Evangelize and disciple new Christians.
9. Maintain positive relationships and open communication with the parent network of churches and Classis Niagara.
10. Create ownership of the ministry by helping people "catch the vision" and take responsibility for the evangelistic growth and success of the new ministry.

11. Build capacity for a growing ministry through reproducible, multiplying systems of leadership development, evangelism, discipleship, and small groups.
12. Demonstrate financial responsibility and mobilize stewardship training.
13. Maintain your own personal, emotional, and spiritual health through prayer, Bible study, and time alone with the Lord. Take time for personal retreats.
14. Enjoy your work, enjoy God's calling, and do all this with a servant's heart.

### **Characteristics of the Church Planter**

The ideal church planter is one who possesses the following qualities:\*

1. Visioning capacity
2. Intrinsically motivated
3. Creates ownership of ministry
4. Relates to the unchurched
5. Spousal cooperation
6. Effectively builds relationships
7. Committed to church growth
8. Responsive to community
9. Uses giftedness of others
10. Flexible and adaptable
11. Builds groups cohesiveness
12. Resilience
13. Exercises faith

*Note: While it is recognized that no one will be perfect in all of these qualities, they are intended to provide an overall composite picture and represent general behavioral directions that are to be provided by the Church Planter.*

\*Adapted from *NewChurchNet (A Ministry of Christian Reformed Home Missions) Church Planter Profile* ([www.newchurchnet.org](http://www.newchurchnet.org))

3. Discussion with Emma Winter about treasurer's duties—as per request made at recent Classis meeting for her and John TeBrake to log hours and monitor work.

Summary: The task of treasurer has grown greatly with ever more technical government regulations regarding charitable organizations needing scrutiny and compliance. Furthermore keeping track of and keeping the frequently changing treasurers of congregations informed of such regulations is constant work. It would be helpful for congregations to maintain stability in treasurers by keeping them in the task for longer periods.

Currently Emma or her assistant are working five days a month on Classis Niagara business. She does not regularly charge for materials used for Classis work.

#### *Observations:*

- 1) Annual compensation for the Treasurer and Stated Clerk is \$3200. This is much too low to be considered fair and nowhere near "market value" for professional staff.
- 2) Classis employees should charge for materials.

#### **CIC recommends that:**

- 1) Compensation for Treasurer and Stated Clerk be raised incrementally for the next few years to reach fair rates.
  - 2) The following rates of compensation:
    - For 2008--\$4000
    - For 2009--\$5000
    - For 2010--\$6000
  - 3) Thereafter the compensation be reviewed annually.
4. Payment for Classical Supply from vacant churches to supplying church recommended to be raised to \$100.  
Ground: This is in keeping with neighbouring Classes in the CRCNA
5. Proposed Budget recommended to Classis. (See at pages 7 and 8)

6. CMLT: **CIC recommends:**

CMLT share be set at \$1 for 2008, with annual review.

Ground: Though CMLT is well-funded now, it is important NOT to drop as a budget line item one year and add it another year. Continuity is important.

7. Re Treasurer's reporting at Classis: The treasurer should have the privilege of the floor to comment on issues with budgetary implication.

Respectfully submitted, Jim Dekker

**(B) Report of Meeting**, September 5, 2007, 10 A.M. at Covenant CRC

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

1. Opening – Rev. Jim Dekker
2. Correspondence to September 1 was dealt with
3. Review/finalize agenda, October 17 – completed, no unusual items
4. Pulpit supply for Manaratha, January to May 2008 – approved
5. Other items:
  - Frank will contact someone to lead a discussion at the October meeting of the topic most frequently addressed under Article 41 on the new Classical Credential forms, having to do with fringe/non-attending/non-involved/delinquent members
6. Next meeting with Rev. Greg Fluit and Rev. Ryan Braam, chairman and vice-chairman of the October meeting: Wednesday, October 10, noon, at Bethany CRC
7. Closing – John TeBrake led in closing prayer

**(C) Pulpit Supply Schedule, January to May, 2008**

	<b>Maranatha</b>
Jan 13	deBoer
Jan 27	Dekker
Feb 10	deWaard
Feb 24	Fluit
Mar 9	Ouwehand
Mar 30	Stieva
April 13	VanderLaan
April 27	VanSmeerdyk
May 11	Winter
May 25	Beunk

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

**AGENDA ITEM 5.2: STATED CLERK/CORRESPONDENCE**

**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 neighbouring Classes

**Correspondence:**

	<i>Date</i>	<i>Item</i>	<i>Action</i>
1	May 17	To the Banner, announcement re eligibility of Mr. Ken VanDyk for call as Minister of the Word in the CRCNA	Received for Information (RFI)
2	May 17	To Rev. Gerard Dykstra, Executive Director of the CRCNA, the result of the vote at the May 16 meeting of Classis Niagara for the Region 4 BTGH Board Member	Classis Niagara ballot result to be added to those of Classes Hamilton, Huron, and Chatham. The total vote resulted in Ms. Alice Kramer being chosen to represent Region 4
3	June 4	To people appointed to various committees, as recommended by the Nominations Committee and approved by Classis at its May 16 meeting	RFI
4	July 12	From Mr. John H. Bolt, Director of Finance and Administration at CRCNA, GR, the annual Ministers' Compensation Survey and other financial information	RFI; also sent to all ministers, church treasurers, Classical Treasurer
5	July 19	To the Banner, announcement re the planned October 17 meeting of Classis Niagara	RFI
6	July 31	From Rev. Gerard Dykstra, the usual annual package of information for Stated Clerks	RFI
7	August 13	To all active ministers in Classis Niagara, a reminder that all committee and other reports for Classis are due by September 1	RFI
8	August 15	From Ms. Jean Kallemeyn, Staff Ministry Specialist, Pastor-Church Relations Office at CRCNA in GR, requesting an update on non-ordained staff employed by churches in a significant leadership role.	RFI; Stated Clerk will obtain information from churches in Classis and submit
9	August 20	From Rev. Jim Osterhouse, on behalf of Synodical Ministerial Candidacy Committee, requesting the names and contact individuals of any training venues for ministry associates in our Classis	RFI; forwarded to Rev. Derek Bouma, chair of Classis Niagara Classis Ministerial Leadership Team (CMLT)
10	August 13	From Mr. Ron VandenBurg, request to address Classis re Sea to Sea Bike Tour in summer of 2008	On agenda
11	August 23	From Rev. Mark Stephenson, Director of Disability Concerns, offers to present workshop	CIC suggests this be done at February or May meeting
12	Sept 5	From Rev. Peter DeBruyne, Regional Pastor for Classis Niagara, proposing to divide Classis into two districts, each with its own Regional Pastor	CIC supports this, and suggested he present the proposal to the office of Pastor-Church Relations, which is responsible for appointing Regional Pastors

**AGENDA ITEM 5.3: CLASSICAL FINANCE COMMITTEE (BUDGET & MINISTRY SHARES FOR 2008)****(A) Proposed Budget**

	<b>2007 Budget</b>	<b>Proposed 2008 Budget</b>
<b><u>Classis Expense Fund:</u></b>		
<b><u>Members:</u></b>	<b>3,455</b>	<b>3,413</b>
Shares	13,792	13,652
Interest Income	2,000	2,000
	<b>15,792</b>	<b>15,652</b>
Delegates, Meals & Mileage	2,500	2,500
Minister's retreat	750	750
Office Expense	2,800	2,800
Stated Clerk Remuneration	3,200	4,000
Treasurer Remuneration	3,200	4,000
	<b>12,450</b>	<b>14,050</b>
<b><u>Brock Campus Ministry:</u></b>		
Shares	91,434	93,042
Chaplain Salary	50,974	51,922
Travel Allowance	3,120	3,120
Housing	17,200	17,200
Pension Assessment	7,000	7,000
Medical Insurance	4,000	4,000
Wage Expenses	2,640	3,300
Professional Development	1,500	1,500
Ministry Expenses	5,000	5,000
	<b>91,434</b>	<b>93,042</b>
<b><u>Shalom Manor Chaplain:</u></b>		
Classis Hamilton	32,757	37,455
Classis Niagara	28,894	32,355
Non CRC Churches	5,000	5,000
Shalom Church Services	13,018	13,064
	<b>79,670</b>	<b>87,875</b>
Books and Conf Fees	1,500	1,500
Clergy Res. Allowance	16,800	16,800
Pulpit Supply	1,000	1,000
Chaplain Salary	42,230	49,275
Travel Allowance	4,000	4,000
Wage Expenses	2,640	3,300
Health & Drug Plan	4,000	4,000
Pension Assessment	7,000	7,500
Telephone	100	100
Misc.	400	400
	<b>79,670</b>	<b>87,875</b>

**Classis Ministry Committee:**

Shares	18,670	19,376
Coordinator Salary	8,440	8,693
Coordinator Expenses	2,400	2,400
Administrative Assistant	1,140	1,500
Office Expenses	200	200
Conferences etc.	500	500
Website	400	400
Prayer Ministry Expenses	500	500
Youth Leader Support Team		
Salary & Expenses	3,090	3,183
Youth Talks Subsidy	2,000	2,000
	<b>18,670</b>	<b>19,376</b>

**Student Fund:**

Shares	<b>30,032</b>	<b>3,413</b>
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**Church Plant:**

Shares	<b>24,136</b>	<b>23,891</b>
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**B. Ministry Shares for 2008**

**Denominational Shares:**

	<u>2008</u>	<u>2007</u>
<b><u>To be sent to Burlington:</u></b>		
Back to God Hour Radio	44.11	42.83
Calvin College	10.60	11.40
Redeemer College	44.94	42.07
Calvin Theological Seminary	35.56	34.52
CRC Publications	13.74	13.34
CRC Home Missions	44.00	46.86
Sustaining Cong. Excellence	10.00	10.00
CRC World Missions	55.16	53.55
Denominational Services	34.00	38.91
Specialized Ministries	30.90	19.66
Special Assistance Fund	1.36	1.32
<b>Total Denom. Ministry Shares</b>	<b><u>324.37</u></b>	<b><u>314.46</u></b>

**Classical Ministry Shares:**

<b>Members</b>	<b>3,413</b>	<b><u>Budget</u></b>	<b>3,455</b>
<b><u>To be sent to Classical Treasurer:</u></b>			
Classis Expense Fund	4.00	13,652	4.00
Church Plant	7.00	23,891	7.00
Classical Ministries Committee	5.68	19,376	5.41
Campus Ministry – Brock	27.26	93,042	26.52
Shalom Manor Chaplain	9.48	32,355	8.38
Student Fund	1.00	3,413	8.71
<b>Total Classical Ministry Shares</b>	<b><u>54.42</u></b>	<b><u>185,729</u></b>	<b><u>60.02</u></b>

**2007 Classical Appointments - \$85 per sermon and .41 cents per km**

**2008 Classical Appointments - \$90 per sermon and .50 cents per km**

**AGENDA ITEM 5.4: REPORT OF THE CLASSICAL MINISTRY LEADERSHIP TEAM**

**(A) Report**

**1. New Applications for Aid**

Kyle Kloostra (member of Mountainview CRC, Grimsby).

Upon interviewing Kyle and reviewing his application, the CMLT recommends Kyle for Classical support, without reservation.

**2. Finances**

i. We have, as of July 31, 2007, an account balance of \$70,445.43.

ii. We continue to recommend no ministry share for the CMLT fund.

iii. We recommend financial support for Kyle in the amount of \$10,260 (US) for tuition and \$1,500 (US) for books for the 2007/2008 academic year.

**3. Revised Mandate for the CMLT**

The revised mandate for the CMLT has been submitted to the CIC for their review.

The CMLT recommends Classis' approval of this new mandate.

Reporting for the CMLT, Rev. Duane VanderLaan

**(B) Proposed Mandate**

**PRIMARY MANDATE**

On behalf of Classis Niagara, the Classis Ministerial Leadership Team (CMLT) shall carry out the following guidelines, approach, and stipulations re the financial, emotional and spiritual support of students from Classis Niagara, ordinarily attending Calvin Theological Seminary with a view toward ordained ministry in the Christian Reformed Church:

***Classical Guidelines for Students and Churches:***

1. When someone senses the call into ordained ministry within the CRC and is nearing the end of their undergraduate studies, they are encouraged to get in contact with the SMCC (Synodical Ministerial Candidacy Committee). This Committee will give them a brief introduction to the Candidacy process.

2. The individual will then complete the "Candidates Application to Council Form." This allows the individual's council to affirm their call into ministry. Following an interview the council will fill out the "Council Recommendation Form." These completed forms will then be forwarded to the CMLT.

3. The CMLT then interviews the individual as to his/her knowledge of the Bible and Reformed doctrine, and as to his/her personal piety and sense of vocation, and makes a decision concerning endorsement. At this time the CMLT also requests the following documentation.

- a. A high school diploma (or equivalent) and transcripts of any further education
- b. Completed Application Forms for Financial Aid (available from the secretary of the CMLT)
- c. A Statement by a qualified physician as to the physical fitness of the applicant
- d. A statement of reasons for attending a seminary other than Calvin Theological Seminary (If that is the case).

If the CMLT decides to endorse the individual it then helps the student set up a Financial Plan and a Study Plan. The CMLT also completes the CMLT recommendation form and forwards all pertinent paper work onto the Synodical Ministerial Candidacy Committee (SMCC).

4. The SMCC then decides whether or not to admit this individual into the Candidacy Process.

5. Upon SMCC approval the individual's Council and CMLT are responsible for regular encouragement, mentorship, and aid as they continue through the process.

***Loans and Repayment of the Loans***

1. Student aid will given in accordance to the CMLT Classis Niagara Funding Policy.

2. It is the Student's responsibility to apply for aid for each year of their study.

3. Student aid for the seminary student shall be granted in the form of interest-free loans, which shall be repaid only in case the student discontinues his/her studies or leaves the ordained CRC ministry for some other denomination or vocation, within 5 years after ordination.
4. The loan will be forgiven following graduation and ordination in the CRC, at the rate of 20% (of the original total loan) per year of service.
5. Each year a student must submit a new application for aid to the secretary of the CMLT by March 15. This should be accompanied by a transcript of his/her academic record covering the period since his/her last application as well as a statement of his/her financial situation.
6. It is the student's responsibility to keep the secretary of the committee informed about changes of address and any change in his/her vocational goal and approved course of studies.

### **Classis Approach Toward (Prospective) Students**

- *Personal Encouragement*  
Two or Three members of the CMLT offer such encouragement. Such a member helps to introduce the students for the Candidacy process and the expectations of the Committee and the Denomination. They will maintain contact with the students making an annual visit and offering encouragement throughout their course of study. In this way they will help to monitor study progress as well as overall well-being and spiritual health of the student and his/her family. The CMLT will also work with the churches to help them to understand the new process and to encourage the churches to support and celebrate with the student as they make their way to ordination.
- *Personal Responsibility*  
The Classis emphasizes that the students are personally responsible for the funding of their education leading to ordained ministry in the CRCNA. Assistance from the CMLT is granted to attract students, as well as to give additional funding according to exceptional cases of extreme need.
- *Personal Incentive*  
All students from Classis Niagara who are approved by the CMLT for support in accordance with the above-stated guidelines will receive funding according to the guidelines of the Fund Policy adopted by Classis May 21, 2003.
- *Exceptional Cases*  
In situations where there is extreme need on behalf of the students, students are to present their requests to their local congregation, and if the need goes beyond the abilities of the local diaconate to provide assistance, the diaconate may request additional funding from the CMLT.

**Stipulations** (or Contract to be drawn up by a legal counsel appointed by Classis)

**Committee Members and Their Tasks:** (4 members, three of whom must be ordained pastors)

*Chair:* The chairperson sets the agenda for all meetings, reports to Classis regarding the work of the CMLT, directs requests for information regarding CMLT and its support policies and procedures, and ensures that the general work of CMLT is completed.

*Secretary/Treasurer:* This combined position is the responsibility of the non-ordained member. They are responsible for recording minutes of the meetings, maintaining records of students who are being supported including current addresses, handling all correspondence, placing notices in bulletins as well as denominational publications to inform students that applications for financial aid will be received, and disbursing funds for students.

*One Committee Member:* Appointed annually to arrange a Classical Seminary Sunday so that students supported by Classis Niagara who are licensed to exhort may be given an opportunity to exhort in the churches of Classis Niagara.

*The Three Ordained Committee Members:* Will work with prospective students and those already supported by Classis Niagara, with a view to help them to understand the Candidacy Process and to encourage them by way of direct interaction, prayer, teaching, and communication.

**Frequency of Meetings:**

The CMLT meets ordinarily twice a year – once in late March to process new applicants to the Candidacy Process and well as new Financial Aid Applications for currently supported students and once in November to review the progress of students. Further meetings may be scheduled if deemed necessary.

**SECONDARY MANDATE**

Since Classis recognizes and supports the need for Specialized Ministries staff, the CMLT shall provide support to such students by way of prayer, words of personal encouragement, and financial aid as it is able. All financial aid from the CMLT to such students shall be repaid by the students, unless the student (after graduation) is working in a ministry capacity at a CRC or one of its agencies, in which case a student's loan will be forgiven at the rate of 20% (of the original total loan) per year of service. It should be understood that only graduate students may apply for this support.

**AGENDA ITEM 6: CLASSICAL MINISTRY COMMITTEE REPORT**

**(A) Shalom Chaplaincy Committee Report:**

Our committee is thankful that immediately following pastor VanArragon's retirement we have a new chaplain to serve the Shalom Manor residents. Pastor VanderBerg has purchased a home in Grimsby and will be installed on Sunday, September 9. The following Sunday he is scheduled to preach in his calling church, the Rehoboth CRC of Niagara Falls.

In our discussion with the chaplain it was agreed that several members of our committee will occasionally attend the Sunday services and regularly meet with the chaplain to share with him ideas and views about how the residents can be most blessed in their Sunday services. The number of Dutch services will be limited to one per month. This decision is to be reviewed after one year. Our Dutch services will be conducted by the few remaining Dutch preaching ministers and by those who have been reading Dutch sermons in the past.

Our committee consists of eight members. Besides the two members from each classis there is also a delegate from the group of supporting Reformed Churches, two board members and the Shalom Manor manager of recreation and volunteer services. As a committee we are looking forward to working with our new chaplain.

The overall task of providing the spiritual care in Shalom Manor is quite a demanding task. We, therefore, urge the churches to remember this important ministry in their prayers and to continue their financial support to our chaplain's ministry among our elderly brothers and sisters.

For the committee, Peter W. DeBruyne

**AGENDA ITEM 8: BROCK UNIVERSITY CHAPLAIN'S REPORT**

Dear Members of Classis Niagara,

Theologically speaking, Paul's *Letter to the Romans* is probably one of the most difficult books in the New Testament. Imagine reading it in the original Greek with a couple of students in the sweltering heat of a southern Ontario summer! When the students approached me just after the exams, I had misgivings, especially since they wanted to do it for mere interest's sake and because one was clearly in the final stages of her pregnancy. But what an experience it turned out to be. For two to three hours per week, I listened to their (often faultless) translations of Paul's very difficult Greek, not to mention the pleasure I had of our wide ranging discussions regarding the apostle's theology. A week after we finished the book, the student had her baby who I am quite certain will turn out

to be an authority on Paul, if only by osmosis. However, not once did any of us regret not spending the time enjoying a summer vacation.

Another student - and a committed Catholic no less - came into my office every week this past summer for a book discussion. We began with *Above All Earthly Powers* by David Wells, a very conservative approach to the evangelical movement in North America. Currently we're working our way through a book by Cardinal Ratzinger (as he was known at the time) on the state of the Church at the end of the second millennium.

In May, I attended the annual CRC Campus Ministry Association Conference which was held in Kananaskis. The conference was attended by both campus ministers and church planters. As usual it was a valuable opportunity to re-connect with other campus ministers and exchange ideas.

In the past three months, I have also worked on a new webpage for Brock's Christian Campus Ministry. I have submitted a draft of the webpage to the members of the Brock Campus Ministry Committee, as well as to Peter Schuurman and Bert Witvoet for their comments. The webpage is currently in the hands of a professional webpage designer and I hope to have it online very soon.

My work as member of Brock's Research Ethics Board continued unabated throughout the summer, with at least two research proposals arriving on my desk every week for my comments and recommendations. During August, I was also asked to serve briefly as vice-chair of the REB.

As so often happens when a Brock student or faculty member passes away, a Brock Chaplain attends the funeral service (even if it's out of town) and Brock Campus Ministry organizes a memorial. I have been entrusted with the responsibility of organizing the memorial of one student and a faculty member. Since both passed away during the summer when most students and faculty were on vacation, the memorials will be held towards the end of September. In October, I have been asked by a member of the Brock staff to officiate at his wedding.

But summers are also always a golden opportunity to reflect on one's ministry the past year and to plan for the coming year. In September, Henrietta Swinkels, a member of Jubilee CRC who is currently enrolled in McMaster University's M. Div. program, will be joining me as an intern. Henrietta and I have already had a number of meetings to review what has been done in the past and to plan new programs. I am particularly excited about Henrietta's eagerness to work closely with Brock Christian Fellowship and Campus for Christ. Meetings with their respective executives are scheduled for sometime early in September.

We have arranged a luncheon for new and returning CRC students and their friends on September 16. The invitation which is open to both Brock and Niagara College students, has been advertised in CRC bulletins across Ontario. Later in the month, we hope to have a retreat to establish an informal support group of Christian students. This group, we believe, will be especially valuable to our new students, many of whom may find themselves isolated on campus because of their faith. It is further hoped that the group will also be a source for cultivating a Christian leadership corps at Brock. More retreats are scheduled for the end of November and the end of March respectively.

For the new academic year, we have also planned a number of regular social evenings and book / movie discussion groups for both faculty and students. Some members of faculty have indicated an interest in discussing the relationship between science and religion. The Dean of Humanities, Prof. Rosemary Hale, has lent her support to our proposal for a regular Wednesday discussion group (hopefully, a worthy successor to Peter's Wednesday *Time-Outs*), involving students and faculty. I have also been assured of the support in this regard of the current Brock University Student Union President, James O'Brien.

While our annual Thanksgiving Dinner for International Students did not materialize last year, we hope to have one this year. Advertisements will soon appear in Classics Niagara church bulletins asking for volunteers and contributions.

Henrietta has further agreed to help improve the interior of the Rita Welch Meditation Centre. Although structural renovations have been completed, much still remains to be done about the interior decorating.

I am currently working on a new format for the *Brock Epistle*, one that will appear at least once or perhaps even twice annually. It will be in a glossy format, and contain pictures and short news items on Brock CRC Campus Ministry events.

I am also organizing meetings on behalf of Brock Campus Ministry with the executives of the Brock Jewish Students' Association and the Muslim Students' Association. Discussions are continuing with Prof. Harald Tomesch, President of Brock Concordia Lutheran Seminary, about further co-operation.

My teaching commitments in the Fall term are limited to one lecture on palaeography towards the end of the term as part of my appointment as Adjunct Professor in the Medieval and Renaissance Studies Program. In the Winter term, I have committed myself to teach one course in the Classics Department and to give one lecture on the Reformation and one on Witchcraft, again in the Medieval and Renaissance Studies Program.

Several congregations of Classis Niagara asked me to preach as pulpit supply during the summer. Once again, I would like to remind local CRC congregations that I am available to lead worship and to inform members of the CRC ministry at Brock.

Although I will always consider it vitally important to continue to strengthen the ties between Brock CRC Campus Ministry and local congregations in any way I can, I also believe that this ministry can only benefit from improved relations with non-CRC churches in the St. Catharines area. For this reason, I am exploring ways and means of establishing ties with some of them in the coming year.

In conclusion, I would like to thank the churches of Classis Niagara again for their generous support of this very important ministry at Brock. Please continue to remember us in your prayers at the beginning of the new academic year!

Yours in Christ

André F. Basson

**AGENDA ITEM 12.1: DENOMINATIONAL REPORTS**

# Ministry Report to Classes and Councils

SEPT 2007



## Grace Through Every Generation

remembering rejoicing rededicating

Christian Reformed Church

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### From the Director of Denominational Ministries

Have you ever found yourself in a place you least expected to be, yet knew it was exactly where God wanted you to be? That is where I find myself as I begin my work as the Director of Denominational Ministries. Honored and humbled to be called by God, yet excited to use my gifts and experiences in service to him. God has filled me with a passion for him and for his church. My heart overflows with joy as I watch, and am among, his people using their gifts in ministry, as I see people finding hope that had no hope, and as I see the church being the hands and feet of Christ. There is no greater joy!

The ministry reports below come from the ministries I will be working with. I am excited to hear and see how God has worked and continues to work through all the denominational ministry staff. We are challenged, as denominational staff, to listen to and learn from all of you so that we can serve and support the local church and create new opportunities to do ministry together. I am excited to see God work through the CRC in our local communities and around the world.

I love the Christian Reformed Church. God is using us in powerful ways, yet I believe he continues to challenge us. He challenges us to a bigger vision—one where we can understand even more of his love and his grace; one where we are transforming more lives and communities; one where we are equipping the local church; and one that reflects unity as we work together as the body of Christ.

- Sandy Johnson

### Aboriginal Ministries

The Edmonton Native Healing Centre hosted a Youth Unlimited Encounters group from Welland, Ontario. Four young women and five young men were accompanied by their youth pastor, Mark McDermott. The youth helped set up the ministry's new thrift store, gave aid to the Arrowhead Riders Bike program, helped Covenant CRC with a Vacation Bible School program, and took a trip to the Nordegg area of the Rocky Mountains. The experience provided a blessing in cross-cultural ministry and relationship building for both the young people and First Nations community members.

"Steps Along the Red Road Following Christ the Creator" is the title of a series of 12 pieces of art work painted by Ovide Bighetty in a commission for Indian Metis Christian Fellowship (IMCF), Regina. Each image is accompanied by an eagle feather and a Christian Aboriginal teaching. The framing of this artwork was completed by volunteers on June 20 and the first exhibition was held the next day at National Aboriginal Day celebrations in North Central Regina. Reproductions of the artwork are available from IMCF.

Each Thursday morning the community of the Indian Family Centre in Winnipeg gathers together for worship. The ministry's worship/sharing circle provides a time to read and reflect on scripture and spiritual teachings, to share the joys and struggles of life, sing songs, and pray together. The worship circle is central to the week's activities, giving direction and hope. The concept of the "circle" is very important in the world-view of Canadian Aboriginal people. It represents wholeness, unity, and equality; it teaches how to relate to our Creator, our neighbors, and creation. When we sit in a circle and share our thoughts, feelings, struggles and joys, each person has a voice. No one is higher or lower, no one is more important than the other; each has gifts to share.

### Abuse Prevention

The importance of the topic of faith formation cannot be understated. *What* our youth learn about Jesus will shape their spiritual lives for years. *How* our youth learn about Jesus is important, too.

Good leadership and faith formation go hand in hand. Youth learn by imitating the examples of those around them; therefore, how one leads is crucial to faith formation. Good leaders prepare for their classes; they care about young people; and they relate tough topics in youth-friendly ways. Good leaders also demonstrate good boundaries—not every child wants a hug and not every hug leaves a child feeling safe. Children and teens will imitate those boundaries in their relationships with peers and friends. With this kind of good leadership, children can grow in faith and in character—reflecting the image of Jesus.

The office of Abuse Prevention trains volunteer and staff leaders to form good boundaries with the youth in their care. Let's create a safe foundation for *faith formation*.

### Chaplaincy Ministries

One very important step in faith formation is the ability to recognize in others the image of our God. God created men and women in His image. Even though sin has clouded that image, we are image bearers of our Creator.

In Chaplaincy Ministries, we celebrate that image by caring for all who come to the institutions in which we minister. We celebrate the compelling power of that image when we are called to be tenders of the spiritual dimension of human life.

Many of us are called to minister in secular institutions where the image of God speaks in wonderful ways. We are amazed that these institutions pay the salaries of religious people so that they can work with people created in God's image. We take very seriously this call to faith and acknowledge that God is present in those to whom we minister: the sick, the demented, the warrior, the murderer, the drug addict, the dying, and those who have no faith. We pray that they will see in us the image of the recreated self—a loving, caring Christian—a lover, not a judge.

Our prayer for members of the Christian Reformed Church is that recognizing the image of God in others will form a faith; that we will treat people with care and kindness because our Father made them in his image and desires to remake them in the image of his Son.

### Disability Concerns

Disability Concerns helps churches become better at including people with disabilities in the life and ministry of the church. We say, "Everybody belongs. Everybody serves." As the Christian Reformed Church enters the Year of Faith Formation, Disability Concerns stands ready to help churches foster healthy, inclusive communities where faith formation happens.

When churches welcome the full participation of people with disabilities in their faith and life, the entire congregation grows in its walk with God. God gives each individual in every congregation, including people with disabilities, unique gifts which no one else can provide.

At the opening of this year of Faith Formation and in celebration of Disability Concerns' 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary, we are sending materials to all Christian Reformed churches to help them in this process. We encourage churches on Oct. 21, or on another date if more convenient, to place special emphasis on the full inclusion of all people, especially people with disabilities, using the theme: *Recognizing the Image of God*.

Disability Concerns, along with three other organizations, was awarded a grant of \$20,000 to assist us in this work. The grant comes from the Calvin Institute for Christian Worship with funds provided by Lilly Endowment Inc. It provides the opportunity to develop resources to educate and to assist churches in the inclusion of persons with disabilities into the full worship experience and life of the local congregation.

### Dynamic Youth Ministries

Dynamic Youth Ministries (DYM) walks beside churches and their leadership as they pour the love of Christ into their children and youth. Each of us has a story of faith formation that is unique, connecting us to a person or situation that changed our lives forever. Following are specific avenues each ministry uses to grow and foster opportunities to see God on the faces of each other and grasp Him with our whole hearts.

- **Cadets:** When does a person's faith formation begin? Some say it begins before birth with the reading aloud of God's Word. Agree or not, we know that faith formation does begin at a young age. The Cadet Corps is happy to be a part of such a process with this year's theme of "Now . . . Pass it On!" Throughout the year, and especially on Cadet Sunday, Cadets and leaders will be reminded of the truths of doctrine and life, and the importance of sharing them with others, generation after generation.
- **GEMS:** Through curriculum, badge activities, and annual theme materials written by GEMS Girls' Clubs, the truth of scripture and the application of that truth are taught. Through the relationships formed between girls and their mentors or counselors, this truth is modeled, and faith is nurtured. The 2007-08 GEMS' theme will be "Abba, I Belong to You" based on 1 John 3:1. Helping girls understand more about God's love and who they are in him—his dearly loved children—will indeed contribute to the formation of their faith.
- **Youth Unlimited:** The consultation, resources, and support of Compass 21 create a necessary unification of the church for the benefit of students and their journeys. While at a *SERVE* or *ENCOUNTER* mission project, work turns into witness as teens are placed outside their comfort zones into environments that challenge them, moving them past a taught doctrine toward a personal belief upheld by action. At *Convention*, the ability to worship with others brings the challenge to push beyond a surface relationship with Christ, marking a milestone that can be built upon at home. Each of these opportunities uniquely crafts who God is to the students and brings them closer to who he has created them to be.

### Faith Alive Resources

**The Banner:** A recent marketing survey corroborates anecdotal evidence that readership of *The Banner* and appreciation for it is very high. Since communication today is expanding rapidly beyond print channels, *Banner* staff is developing a plan to expand our online presence by expanding web-only content, adding a blog, providing downloadable audio files of *Banner* articles, and offering MP3 files of content related to subjects in the magazine.

**Amistad:** After many years of effort, the second year of the Friendship curriculum has been translated into Spanish; these translated materials are called *Amistad*. 1500 students in over 100 Friendship groups throughout Latin America will benefit greatly from this addition to the curriculum they have been using.

**New Hymnal:** Synod 2007's approval of the cooperative development of a new comprehensive hymnal by the CRC and the RCA will begin an extensive process of identifying songs for the new hymnal. The process will include various methods for getting input, including meetings of a large group of representatives from both the CRC and the RCA, the publication of smaller songbooks containing samples of new songs, soliciting input from people via a website, and so forth. The target date for publishing the new hymnal is 2013.

**Disciples:** Many churches are implementing this comprehensive, multi-year program for adults this year. Check out the website [www.growdisciples.org](http://www.growdisciples.org) for updated information.

**Year of Faith Formation:** Churches continue to benefit from the ongoing enhancements to this website at [www.walkon.org](http://www.walkon.org).

**Training events:** To check out if training events for children's ministry are being held in your area, go to [www.faihtaliveresources.org](http://www.faihtaliveresources.org) and scroll down until you see "Training Events and Resources" in the left hand column. If you'd like to schedule some training, contact Jolanda Malburg at [malburgj@crcna.org](mailto:malburgj@crcna.org).

### Office of Social Justice and Hunger Action

As Christians, we want to make known God's love throughout the world – especially seeking to love those on life's margins as the prophets and Jesus himself taught us. God does not ask believers to focus on the poor, the widow, the orphan, simply because it benefits the poor, the widow, and the orphan. God wants our hearts to bend toward justice. He wants our minds to be formed by a vision of the Kingdom. He wants us to be people who hunger and thirst for righteousness, because it is the way we were created to be. We do justice not only for the benefit of the least, the lost, and the last. We do it for our own benefit too.

Faith formation means teaching, empowering and sustaining justice-seeking work in every congregation because that justice-seeking is bending hearts and forming minds and shaping people.

The Office of Social Justice and Hunter Action has partnered with CRWRC and CRWM to begin a new movement of justice-seeking in our churches. We are networking churches with one another, providing resources to educate and inspire them, and connecting to advise and encourage new Social Justice groups to form in every congregation.

We trust God's leading as our methods and practices are developed—following the God who says, "I am about to do a new thing; now it springs forth, do you not perceive it?" (Isaiah 43:19). We see a hunger and a heart for justice springing forth in the CRC, and we want eyes throughout this denomination to be formed so that we can perceive justice more and more.

### Pastor-Church Relations

Congregations in the CRCNA are placing new emphasis on faith formation, not only for current members but also for those newly baptized as infants or as those newly immersed into the community of Christian faith.

Intentional effort toward maturity is being emphasized in the variety of congregations called "Christian Reformed." For many of these congregations, this means calling pastors skilled in faith formation and hiring staff that specialize in particular aspects of faith formation. For example, the growth of congregational staff specializing in children, youth, adults or senior adults continues to accelerate. Pastor-Church Relations works to equip and encourage staff as well as the pastors of these churches.

In working with pastors and staff, Pastor-Church Relations emphasizes the integration of faith development into the identity of the church professional so that the richly textured biblical and historical faith informs the core and work of these individuals. In addition, we place particular emphasis on both the beginning phases and the later phases of ministry. The mentoring initiative, focusing on the first five years of professional ministry, emphasizes the development of Christian character and the related deepening of pastoral identity. Pre-retirement seminars and

materials address later stages of faith formation and call pastors and staff approaching retirement back to their own baptisms and the foundational identity that baptism defines.

For pastors, staff and congregations, faith formation blossoms out of a rich understanding of what it means to die and rise with Christ. Pastor-Church Relations engages pastors, staff and congregations with an increasing appreciation for this foundational nature of our baptismal identity.

### Race Relations

The Office of Race Relations was established by synodical mandate as a result of the struggle of people of color to be not only seen but also heard and accepted into the life of the CRC. It is the intention of Race Relations, through its ministries, to help the CRC follow God's desire for his church to be transformed and enriched to become a truly inclusive multicultural family of God by embracing a new identity and a new multicultural heritage.

This new heritage requires us to embrace the diversity represented by all our neighbors as part of our spiritual growth. Despite the apostle Paul's admonition that in the eyes of God there exists no difference between Jew and Gentile, people continue to gather into congregations bound together by a common family, racial and ethnic heritage rather than by the shared act of praising God.

As the CRC celebrates 150 years in North America, we are starting to witness the fruit of transformed attitudes and actions among many congregations. The challenge and hope for us in the Office of Race Relations is that the transformation will transcend the many layers of our church, from worship to hospitality and all ministries in between. Our prayer is that congregations and communities will adopt this new multicultural identity and begin to be effective in their work of representing God's diverse and unified family to the world.

### Sustaining Excellence

When pastors submit a proposal for a Sustaining Pastoral Excellence peer learning group, they're asked to list their group spiritual formation goals. To some this may seem a peculiar request. It might be assumed that since pastors are involved with activities that naturally lead to spiritual or faith formation on a daily basis, they don't need to be intentional about it. But faith formation does take intentional effort. On a mid-year report one group noted a question that they'd been discussing, "What do we, as leaders, need for our own spiritual enhancement?"

Testimonies from peer group participants indicate that intentionally pursuing formation of faith bears much fruit. One group reported, "We are intentionally setting aside time throughout the day and week to develop a regular spiritual rhythm of seeking the presence of God. [Group] members indicate they sense God's presence more . . . and they see the hand of God more clearly in their ministry."

The faith formation that is taking place as a result of peer groups is also impacting some congregations. One pastor noted that, "the [peer group] experience led to spiritual formation within the congregation."

The Sustaining Congregational Excellence program, introduced in March, has identified three practices that are essential to congregational health: prayer, developing a sense of purpose, and looking outward. When put into action, these practices will result in faith formation for congregations. The first round of *Health & Renewal* proposals was recently awarded. When the reports start to arrive, hopefully they will indicate that the experience led to spiritual formation within the congregation.

### CRWRC

Separating organizations into "word" and "deed" ministries is too simplistic in today's world. While founded as a "deed" ministry to meet the needs of refugees and disaster survivors, the work of the Christian Reformed World Relief Committee today is complex, involving a variety of elements as it shares God's word, strengthens churches, and builds Christian faith across the globe. Consider these stories from the past quarter:

Through Disaster Response Services, church volunteer groups went out to serve for 1 or 2 weeks. These opportunities impacted them and the people they served. One volunteer commented, "*Listening to so many of the people praising God for the little they had made me open my eyes to how I need to praise God every day for all He has given me.*" A client whose home was repaired said, "*You gave us hope where there wasn't much and brightened our lives tremendously not only by what you did, but also by the honor of getting to spend some time with people who really care about others...I know God will bless you for the kindness and generosity you've shown us and others!*"

The International Relief Team continues to respond to crises in places like Chad, Burundi, Ethiopia, Sudan and Sri Lanka. In the predominantly Muslim communities of Aceh, Indonesia, CRWRC has been working through local Christians to respond to the 2005 tsunami. Recently the United States Agency for International Development trained in Aceh and said that of the 22 organizations working there, the CRWRC – despite being Christian – was "*closest to the community's heart.*"

CRWRC staff is working in 30 countries with more than 130 churches and community organizations to transform lives. They respond to physical needs like adult illiteracy, child mortality, poor harvests, lack of business opportunities, and AIDS. To see an example of their work and to learn more about how the CRWRC is meeting the physical needs of people living with AIDS while fostering behavior change and increased faith in Christ, visit [www.embraceaids.org](http://www.embraceaids.org). You will see how they model and teach Christian values, strengthening the witness of the local church.

### Partners Worldwide

Partners Worldwide is a faith-based, international ministry of business and professional people who follow Jesus Christ by eliminating poverty and transforming lives. Our approach is to grow businesses and create jobs in areas of need by developing business partnerships, offering business mentoring and training, increasing access to capital, and serving as an advocate on behalf of the poor.

God's grace is being revealed through the understanding that being a businessperson is an outstanding Christian calling. There are countless stories about the growth and development of people's faith through the business-to-business partnerships that are foundational to the ministry at Partners Worldwide. Through partnership, a North American businessperson walks alongside an international businessperson, creating sustainable jobs, alleviating poverty, and transforming lives. The growth of faith often comes through relationships that are developed with people of like minds and hearts. Partners Worldwide members continue to testify to the work of the Holy Spirit in and through them as a result of these partnerships.

Partners Worldwide is very excited about the many ways that God is at work. Our mission remains focused on encouraging and equipping Christian businesspeople to work together with small and medium-sized businesses for the purpose of expanding God's Kingdom through the creation of meaningful employment in developing countries. In 2006, Partners Worldwide members were involved in creating and sustaining 7,866 jobs touching the lives of over 17,000 people. We accomplish this through growing together with our members in faith, ministry and stewardship.

### Calvin College

For one week each August, about 33 student leaders representing Calvin's varsity athletic teams travel to the Gainey Ranch in southwest Montana for a retreat created to train and equip these capable leaders with the necessary skills to make a huge impact at Calvin and in their future vocations.

The goals are to provide time and space for student-athletes to focus on knowing God and self better, to equip them with the knowledge, skills and resources needed to effectively lead their teams, and to create a Christian community among student-athletes that extends far beyond individual teams.

The retreat focuses on strategies for leading and strengthening the self, and on a team building series offered by the Calvin Office of Christian Formation for Athletics and Team Building. It ends with a commissioning service where student-athletes are challenged to return to the Calvin community and use what they learned to make a profound impact on their teams. Many athletes have reported a great improvement in their team cultures as a result of this annual summer retreat!

One of the questions asked is: "Why is it that the teams with the most talent don't always win?" At Calvin we believe that the most successful teams are those that focus not only on skill and strategy, but also on working together as a team. Implementing biblical values, we teach our teams to relate and work well together, which inevitably results in improved performance. Using our Team Development Curriculum, we train athletes to be good leaders and good team players. We count these matters of lasting value in the process of Christian formation.

### Calvin Theological Seminary

As the CRC observes a Year of Faith Formation, it is important to note at least a couple of ways the Bible speaks of faith. There is the *disposition* of faith—believing, trusting, hoping, obeying. There is also the *content* of faith—what Christians believe, the heart of which is that Jesus is Lord and is risen from the dead! Calvin Theological Seminary seeks to be an agent of faith formation in both senses as they come together in the *practice* of faith.

As a seminary, we seek to form pastors and church leaders who are people of strong faith and unswerving commitment to God—people who don't just talk about faith but have faith formed by practices of prayer, worship, community, study and discernment. Our goal is that students will be equipped to lead the church into deeper faithfulness because they have *experienced* faith-in-community in their years at seminary, particularly through their "Formation for Ministry" experience in small groups, with mentors, and through internships.

Calvin Seminary also seeks to give leadership to the CRC and beyond in the *content* of faith. Much modern spirituality is a fuzzy faith in faith itself. Praise God that as the CRC enters its 151<sup>st</sup> year it is still clear that saving faith means embracing the truth of God revealed in Scripture, the heart of which Paul captures when he so

powerfully defines “the word of faith we are proclaiming: That if you confess with your mouth, ‘Jesus is Lord,’ and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved” (Ro. 10:9).

The seminary is committed to forming pastors and ministry leaders who know the Scriptures, teach the Scriptures to others, and teach others to teach the Scriptures in ways that all will be equipped for service.

### Back to God Hour

The Back to God Hour is the media voice of the Christian Reformed Church, proclaiming Christ in nine languages around the world: Arabic, Chinese, English, French, Indonesian, Japanese, Portuguese, Russian, and Spanish.

The Back to God Hour not only calls peoples everywhere to a relationship of faith in Jesus Christ, but is also committed to nurturing and discipling believers toward maturity. We partner with churches and Christian agencies around the world to help believers connect with local congregations. One-on-one relationships are developed by ministry staff and volunteers, and devotional materials are distributed (540,000 daily devotional booklets are printed yearly in seven languages.). In addition, Bible study programs are offered in several languages. Currently, in French-speaking Africa alone, 30,000 are enrolled in Bible study.

The Back to God Hour is also launching a major initiative to reach children and youth. *Kid's Corner*, our English radio drama for children, now is aired on over 500 stations throughout North America and is supported by a Kid's Corner website. *The Ark Clubhouse*, a video program for children, is produced in Portuguese and Spanish. *Evergreen House*, an Indonesian television program for children, began to air last year. Our Chinese ministry recently launched a website targeting children and parents. This website includes an audio radio drama for children and resources for parents who want a Christian perspective on raising children and dealing with family issues.

The Back to God Hour encourages your continued prayers for those who are growing in faith through our ministries.

### Home Missions

Faith formation is at the very heart of Christian Reformed Home Missions. Helping people to better form their faith in Jesus Christ is an integral part of every ministry we support. It takes place through our 12 ministry teams that partner with classes, congregations, and members of the CRC. These teams, located across the United States and Canada, integrate regional Home Missions staff with local and classis leaders to set goals and cast mission vision in the following focus areas:

- **New Church Development.** New churches are especially committed to bringing new believers into faith in Christ. Seventy-five new churches currently receive financial assistance from Home Missions, with twenty more in the early planning stages.
- **Educational/Campus Ministries.** These ministries help students and faculty form their faith on campuses across North America. Home Missions provides financial support to Christian Reformed pastors on 22 university campuses (including Rehoboth/Zuni Mission schools) and coaching and vision-casting support to more than 30 campus workers.
- **Small Groups.** This ministry, which includes Coffee Break, assists church members and those outside the church in their faith walk. Coffee Break reaches more than 500 Christian Reformed and nearly 400 non-Christian Reformed congregations throughout North America. Thousands have come to know Jesus Christ as their personal savior at Coffee Break.
- **Mission-Focused Churches.** Mission-focused ministries and grants help revitalize CRC congregations and encourage them to focus on outreach, developing the faith of those within their communities.
- **Leadership Development.** Home Missions is also helping to form the faith of future CRC leaders. We currently fund 15 Leadership Development Networks (LDNs), which are three-year, “on-the-job” training courses that give trainees classroom instruction in biblical/theological knowledge, ministry skills, and spiritual formation.

Whether an established church launches an evangelism and outreach campaign or a Coffee Break group introduces a non-believer to Christ, Home Missions' ministries are all about putting faith into action.

### World Missions

Christian Reformed World Missions is tasked with leading the CRC in fulfilling the great commission. We are heavily involved in seeing that the seeds sown are also nurtured towards maturity. We strive to help those who come to Christ to grow in their faith and to be active members of his church. This is something we seek both in North America and abroad.

Two examples of how World Missions works in faith development are found in the Nehemiah Center and the Daniel Center. Both are centers of community transformation, leadership development and personal spiritual growth—the former in Nicaragua and the latter in Nigeria. They have been of such blessing in their communities, that other countries have expressed interest in hosting similar centers.

Because we are based in North America but work in other countries, we have developed different approaches to carrying out our task. At home we work to mobilize CRCNA congregations to get involved in mission programs that proclaim the gospel, foster prayer, and give members a better vision and connections in missions so that they can work with sound partners abroad or go out and do missionary work.

Part of our strategy in reaching those in other countries starts with working to strengthen both the CRCNA and our international partners through church planting, discipleship, Christian education at all levels, and leadership development programs. These partnerships make us part of global networks and movements with a common vision for the Kingdom of Christ. With them we explore a Reformed worldview, which in turn is implemented in the lives of individuals and communities.

## AGENDA ITEM 12.2. REDEEMER UNIVERSITY COLLEGE – Summer 2007

Greetings from Redeemer University College. We trust you have enjoyed a refreshing summer. The start of this academic year will mark a milestone in Redeemer's history - Redeemer opened its doors to students for the first time in September 1982 with 8 full-time faculty and 97 students! On **Saturday, September 29, 2007 at 3:00 pm** Redeemer will host a Celebration Service where we will remember where we have come from, give thanks for where we now are and look forward in anticipation to where the Lord will lead us in the future. Everyone is invited to join us for this celebration.

Redeemer hosted the IFES (International Fellowship of Evangelical Students) World Assembly 2007 from July 11-19, which was the largest conference event we ever had. Delegates from 158 international student movements met to celebrate God's growing work among students world wide and a total of 610 participants used Redeemer's facilities and accommodations throughout the 2 weeks.

For 2007-08 we continue to be encouraged by the positive outlook for admissions and, in spite of softer retention numbers, expect to meet and even exceed our enrolment target of 811 full-time equivalent (FTE) students in September – compared to 826 FTE students in September 2006. This lower number reflects the exit of the double cohort; a record number of 185 students graduated in May '07.

We have replaced 4 faculty members, who left at the end of the academic year, and have added 1 additional member in Teacher Education, Dr Mary Ashun. The replacements positions are Dr David Zietsma in History, Dr Kyle Spykma in Mathematics-Physics, Ms Bernice Stieva in a sessional position in Education for 2007-08 and Ms Helen Vreugdenhil in a sessional appointment in History. Professor Christina Belcher has accepted the Teacher Education position to begin in July 2008. We are pleased to welcome these new faculty members, as well as new staff members. We now have 44 full-time, with 39 part-time faculty members, who are committed to provide Christian education to our students.

Faculty have been active in research and publication. Several have had books published and growing numbers are receiving outside research funding from the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council (SSHRC) and the Natural Sciences and Engineering Research Council (NSERC). The publication work of the Pascal Centre (faith and science) and the Dooyeweerd Centre (Christian philosophy) also continue.

The upgrade of our campus is almost complete, with new signage and work on a second soccer field and an interpretative trail system in the conservation area yet to be completed. Luther Court has also

been renovated, leaving only Cranmer court residences to be upgraded in 2008. We have also launched the \$3 million *Growing With Integrity* Student Support campaign to fund a variety of enrolment-related initiatives and to help keep a Redeemer education affordable for more students.

Thank you for your continuing support of Redeemer through prayer and financial giving. Church donations for the past fiscal year were \$711,000, which is an increase over the amount given the previous year. We praise God for his blessings and faithfulness.

Reserve Tuesday, March 4, 2008 for Redeemer's annual Ministers' Conference - speaker still to be confirmed.

Dr Justin Cooper, President

## APPENDIX – REPORT OF SEA TO SEA BIKE TOUR 2008 PLANS

Greetings,

On **August 23 and 24, 2008**, the **Sea to Sea Bike Tour** will be rolling into the Niagara area. Like the Canadian version before it, this bi-national bike tour is asking the Niagara area to organize a celebration service. Because of our proximity to the United States, Niagara area would be a great representative to the bi-national nature of the event. At present, we are in search of a venue.

The Sea to Sea 2008 Bike Tour's funding raising project is **working toward ending the cycle of poverty** for individuals, families and communities by raising awareness and funds to support poverty-alleviation programs initiated by the Christian Reformed Church and its partners and by motivating people to use their time and skills to help those living in poverty.

Funds generated through the tour will be used to support new or ongoing initiatives in the areas of development—each one ending the cycle of poverty for individuals, families and communities in places all over the world.

**We propose that our classis area churches be the hosts for the weekend.** The cyclist will be arriving in Niagara on the Saturday. Upon their arrival, our classis would provide a variety of services to the bikers- billets, laundry, errand runs, and even haircuts and massages. We have a number of Sea to Sea veterans, so we can explore the ways the classis area churches can be good hosts to the cyclists.

On the Sunday, The celebration day would invite our community churches in the Niagara area, friends, families, and supporters to come out to meet the bikers; celebrate with them; and fundraise for the cause explained above. The service would start at 10:00 am for about an hour, after which people would be encouraged to picnic together and enjoy the scenery of Niagara Falls. We could then close the day around 4:00 with a worship time together. Based on similar past events, we speculate that we might draw between 2,000 to 4,000 people to the event. **We propose that on August 24, all classis churches cancel their services and ask their members to gather for worship together at the Sea to Sea celebration venue.**

We ask that you prayerfully consider this request.

Ron VandenBurg, Niagara Celebration Chair    [www.seatosea.org](http://www.seatosea.org)