

MINISTRY REPORT TO CLASSES AND COUNCILS

JANUARY 2011



CHRISTIAN
REFORMED
CHURCH

In This Issue

Director of Denominational Ministries

Congregational Support

Chaplaincy and Care Ministries

Disability Concerns

Faith Alive Christian Resources

Loan Fund

Office of Social Justice and Hunger Action

Pastor-Church Relations

Safe Church Ministry

Sustaining Congregational Excellence

Sustaining Pastoral Excellence

Diaconal Ministries

CRWRC

Educational Institutions

Calvin College

Calvin Theological Seminary

Mission Organizations

Urban Aboriginal Ministries

Back to God Ministries International

Home Missions

World Missions

Partners in Ministry

Dynamic Youth Ministries

Partners Worldwide

From the Director of Denominational Ministries

What joys and challenges did God lead us through in 2010? As ministries of the CRC, we would like to reflect on the year to share the challenges He led us through and to celebrate the impact God has allowed us to have in His Kingdom work.

This year, our ministries have continued to respond to the challenging economic factors with careful stewardship. We are thankful for your continued support through strong ministry shares and through your prayers as we continue to journey in faithfulness together.

As ministries, we have continued to work on partnering with you, as local churches and ministries to "Create and Sustain Healthy Congregations for the

purpose of Transforming Lives and Communities Worldwide". We desire to walk alongside you as we listen, learn, discover, and discern together how to encourage pastors and leaders, create healthy, vibrant congregations who are a missional presence in their communities and around the world.

Together, we are training young people, equipping business people, responding to disasters and poverty, engaging young adults, training leaders around the world, bringing the gospel in various languages, bringing a Reformed voice, planting churches, and developing communities.

Through these ministry reports, we pray that you sense our gratitude to God for bringing us through another year of serving Him. Praise be to God!

Chaplaincy and Care Ministries

A number of things have been happening in connection with this office that suggest encouraging developments:

- An increase in the number of recruiting opportunities

Out of twelve letters sent to seminaries and Christian colleges this spring, ten have responded favorably. In previous years we have never done more than two or three campus recruiting events.

- An increase in number of endorsement requests.

We continue to get inquiries from students who are contemplating seminary, already in seminary, or taking a unit of CPE (Clinical Pastoral Education) and who want to explore chaplaincy as a career. We also get occasional inquiries from pastors who are interested in transitioning from parish ministry to chaplaincy.

- Churches arranging to honor chaplains on Chaplaincy Sunday

The only tangible measure of this interest might be the number offerings taken and the total amount of those offerings. Since these trickle in over a month or more following the event (this year on November 21), we cannot substantiate growth here as yet (possibly by our next report), but I am encouraged by the number of phone and email contacts.

- Plans developing for 2011 Chaplains Conference

We are excited about the topic and the workshop leader that we have chosen for our conference in 2011: "Telling Your Story" and workshop leader than singer/song writer/story teller Michael Kelly Blanchard. Michael will also provide a concert while in Grand Rapids next June.

- Visits to churches, classes, chaplains and chaplain cluster groups

In the first eight months of service in my new position I or my predecessor Herm Keizer have enjoyed the chance to speak about chaplaincy in two classis meetings and several church services or Sunday Schools.

Disability Concerns

This past year Disability Concerns has made significant changes and initiatives.

- The CRC and the Reformed Church in America partnership in Disability Concerns engaged in shared ministry by jointly publishing our newsletter, *Breaking Barriers*, by networking, and by sponsoring a conference.
- To support churches in their ministry with people with mental illnesses, Disability Concerns, with Faith and Hope Ministries of Classis Quinte, developed a study series—*Let's Talk! Breaking the Silence around Mental Illness in Our Communities of Faith*—which has been downloaded over 100 times from our website as of November, 2010.
- After serving for one year as both director of Disability Concerns and Interim Director of Chaplaincy Ministries, Mark Stephenson transitioned out of chaplaincy and back to full time with Disability Concerns.
- We have made many connections with people through our website, Network, and Facebook pages. Viewing of Disability Concerns pages nearly tripled since last year. Many lively conversations are taking place on the Network. On one of the DC Network pages, Katrina, a mother of a child who has Down syndrome, was asked what she has found helpful from people at her church. Among many helpful ideas, she wrote, "When in doubt, ask! We realized at one point, before our child entered our lives or our family member became disabled, we also had no clue about how to talk or act around people with disabilities, and we [as parents] are happy to help with advocacy and educating others to raise awareness and acceptance."

Faith Alive Christian Resources

Publishing: The year 2010 is filled with mixed blessings. Publishing efforts to broaden our "voice" to a larger global audience are seeing good growth. A partnership with Andamio Publishers in Spain has doubled the number of titles offered by our global publishing imprint, Libros

Desafio, resulting in a significant increase in our ministry impact and our revenue.

The Day Metallica Came to Church released in August 2010 as the first title in Faith Alive's new Square Inch imprint—an imprint with a vision for finding new voices within and for the global Reformed church audience. Voices designed to create critical dialogue and discussion through story and experience. To date, the book has received significant media and sales attention through *Christianity Today*, *Publisher's Weekly*, Amazon, and heavy metal websites—all firsts for Faith Alive.

While sales of core curriculum continue to decline in 2010, Faith Alive is preparing major new curriculum releases for Fall 2011. Stay tuned for more details.

Banner: The Banner team continues to work hard at developing its website at www.thebanner.org. We're implementing plans to increase our online news coverage (to update it weekly), enable reader discussion of feature articles, expand our media reviews in the Web version of Tuned In, and provide crosslinks and suggestions for further reading on whatever might grab our Web visitors' fancy. We're ready to roll, pending the conversion to a new database structure that we have been promised will be up and running in early 2011.

Loan Fund

The Loan Fund offers loans to Christian Reformed Churches in the United States for acquisition of church facilities, parsonages, and land. Loans are also made for improvements and repairs to church property. These loans are usually made with rates and fees that are more favorable than those offered by traditional lenders such as banks or thrifts.

The primary source of funds for lending activities is funds invested in the Loan Fund by members, churches, and classes of the Christian Reformed Church as well as organizations related to the Christian Reformed Church. The Loan Fund also obtains funds from revenues generated by its lending activities and interest received on deposits of its funds. The Loan Fund is unique in that it does not solicit gifts nor does it receive ministry shares to support any of its activities.

Fiscal 2010 continued the significant decrease in lending activity from the previous year. Loans receivable decreased by only \$3.2M to \$25.6M, the first decrease in since 2003. A sign that the current economic problems are still affecting our churches was the fact that only four new loans totaling \$1.4 M were approved in fiscal 2010.

The end of 2010 marks the passing of the baton to a new Director of the Loan Fund. This change occurs on December 31, 2010 as we say good-bye to Director Carl Gronsman and thank him for giving many years of excellent leadership to the Loan Fund. We welcome Mr. David Veen as the new director and wish him well as he begins this new chapter in his life.

Office of Social Justice and Hunger Action

2010 has been a landmark year for the Office of Social Justice. Our congregational outreach efforts have doubled with the addition of three new staff people: one part-time Canadian who also works with the Centre for Public Dialogue, a new full-time U.S. mobilizer, and a seminary intern who pulls double duty as a Canadian citizen in the U.S.

The advocacy process is easier than ever for CRC members with the acquisition of Salsa, an online tool that allows constituents to email their legislators directly from the OSJ website. Salsa also allows the OSJ to measure the number of individuals taking action on each particular bill, helping us improve our effectiveness.

This fall, the OSJ helped kick off A Show of Hands, a denomination-wide campaign on the Millennium Development Goals. These eight measurable goals--like reducing disease and illiteracy, and improving primary school education and foreign assistance--work together to overcome the barriers that keep the poor powerless, voiceless, and vulnerable.

More than 30 churches in the U.S. and Canada added their voices to those of 100 million Christians around the world praying for and promising to stand with the poor. Individuals traced their handprints as a physical commitment to helping hold world leaders accountable to achieving the eight MDGs.

We hope to continue this campaign in the spring, through various agency resources and events. To keep up with the latest, visit www.handsformdgs.org.

Pastor-Church Relations

Throughout 2010, the staff of Pastor-Church Relations was engaged in a variety of direct interactions with pastors and churches. These involved both consultative and educational activities throughout Canada and the United States. One of these events involved facilitating a retreat with sixteen pastor couples in Moncton, NB. Also, to increase capacity in consultation, P-C R has identified some experienced consultants who can work on behalf of P-C R or who can be recommended to churches for additional contract work.

Other activities in 2010 were intended to enhance the lives of congregations, their pastors and church staff. For example, in 2010 the staff of P-C R developed a training tool on evaluation titled "Evaluation Essentials for Congregational Leaders, Setting the Table for Healthy Conversations". This came in response to the many requests for evaluation materials and the challenge of doing it well in a variety of congregational settings.

The Specialized Transitional Ministry continues to grow with four new STMs being endorsed in 2010, bringing the total to 12. This unique and needed ministry engages the challenges arising from the difficult transitions of congregations, challenges that increase the need for trained leadership such as an STM but often

occur at a time when the financial resources of a congregation are stretched.

2010 was also the year in which the credentialing of professional congregational staff gained some momentum. At this time, there are 4 individuals pursuing credentialing, a process intended to increase the consistency and expertise of paid congregational staff.

Safe Church Ministry

Looking back, the year was filled with challenges and opportunities. One new Safe Church Team was launched for Classis Wisconsin; and Classis Yellowstone re-launched a team following a three-year hiatus. Conversations around forming a regional team began on the US east coast (Classis Atlantic Northeast, Hudson, and Hackensack). Two other Classical teams have found it difficult to continue – Classis Minnkota and Classis Quinte. This cycle of gain and loss speaks to the passion in the classes to form safe church teams and also the amount of time and energy that is poured out on behalf of this ministry. We need to continually uphold the safe church teams in prayer and encourage the team members as they engage the churches in times of crisis and as they offer education for the prevention of abuse.

This past year, Safe Church Ministry also began to promote a program for the integration of sexual offenders into congregations. The program is called the *Covenant of Conduct*. This past year, we doubled the number of churches that requested and are using the program. Looking ahead, the office looks forward to developing and offering new education resources for Safe Church Team members to use in their training and for use by general members to increase their awareness of abuse dynamics and related issues.

Sustaining Congregational Excellence

SCE recently completed its third year of programming. They have been exciting years of discovery, adjustment, learning—and healthier congregations. SCE's purpose is to create and sustain healthy congregations so they can be used by God to transform lives and communities. The focus is on smaller congregations (150 active members or less). Currently 62 percent (648) of all CRCs fall into this category. Here is what has been happening:

- 58 percent of eligible Canadian churches and 59 percent of eligible US churches have participated in SCE.
- 112 *Health & Renewal* (HR) projects funded in 103 congregations (87 in the US & 16 in Canada). Projects foster health in congregations and often involve outreach.
- 327 *Technology & Equipment* grants awarded to 271 congregations (46 in Canada & 229 in the US). Equipment purchased includes laptops, projectors, microphones, etc.
- 11 *Coaching for Churches* grants awarded (9 in the US & 2 in Canada). An SCE coach walks alongside a pastor

and ministry leader as they explore some aspect of church health.

- 20 *Learning Events* held (15 in the US & 5 in Canada) with 224 congregations participating. Learning events are opportunities for pastors, ministry leaders, and their spouses to share and learn about healthy congregations.

An evaluation of the SCE program was completed by an independent evaluator in 2010. Results indicated SCE is impacting smaller congregations in significant ways. "Smaller churches feel valued, recognized, and are better able to do effective ministry."

Sustaining Pastoral Excellence

December 2010 marked the end of the eighth year of the SPE project. At the time of writing, 71 percent of all CRC pastors and ministry associates (representing 58 percent of all CRC churches) had been in an SPE peer learning (PL) group. To date 169 PL grants have been awarded to 131 groups. Even after eight years, interest is still very strong.

In November, over 60 non-participating pastors attended an SPE meeting to learn about peer groups. What do participating pastors think about PL groups? "Peer groups are critical for pastors." "We are better pastors because of what this grant has allowed us to do."

Sixteen couples attended the Pastor Couple Learning Event held in October. These opportunities for encouragement, refreshment, and continuing education are positively impacting the participants. "Blessing and refreshing those in church leadership blesses the church, the kingdom."

Twelve percent of pastors'/ministry associates' spouses have been in one of the 14 groups that have received a grant. The groups are filling a need. "We can't say enough about the sense of community and decreased isolation that comes from meeting together. It's been amazing."

In June, Synod mandated the Board of Trustees (BOT) to explore options for continued funding for SPE — after Lilly Endowment funding ends in December 2011. At the September meeting, the BOT received a report on SPE. Deep appreciation for SPE was expressed by several members.

CRWRC

Everyday heroes...Who are they? At CRWRC, we meet amazing heroes every day. Some of our heroes are reading this report right now. Some support CRWRC's work with their prayers, tithes, and offerings. Some are volunteers and staff who risk their own security to attend to the well-being of others. And some are poor farmers or daily wage earners who sit up at night to practice new skills like reading and writing.

2010 was a heroic year. Despite the global recession, CRWRC provided \$11.4 million in emergency assistance in the world's poorest places, reaching

600,000 disaster survivors in 22 countries, assessing the needs of 20,000 disaster-affected North Americans and rebuilding 600 storm-damaged homes.

CRWRC works internationally to address the "everyday disaster" of poverty. In 2009-10, CRWRC received 13 million ministry dollars through your gifts and offerings, and with it leveraged \$38 million in development activity through grants and networks. These activities, carried out by 100 Christian organizations and 35 international staff, touched the lives of 500,000 people in 4,500 communities.

In all, CRWRC served communities in 34 countries in 2010, responding to disaster and poverty in ways that directly touched the lives of 1.6 million people. This work was in part made possible by 3,452 volunteers who donated 345,993 hours to bring hope and help to people in need—the equivalent of 166 full-time employees for a year. Everyday heroes? They surround us every day....Thank you.

Calvin College

At Calvin we have had conversations regarding enrollment, programs, staffing and budgets for the future as we seek to become a more lean institution. Given challenging economic factors, a decrease of 18-year olds, and uncertain job markets, recruitment is challenging, however incoming classes of over 1,000 are still our goal.

Calvin is a tremendous institution that has been bathed in grace through the prayers and generosity of generations of CRC members. Ministry shares continue to be strong and faithfully given. We have been blessed and we have been tested. Yet, what Calvin has practiced for 134 years is a Christian higher education that the world needs now more than ever. We continue to work as an institution of the CRC from a position of faithfulness, a commitment to Christ and a love for Calvin and what it represents in the world of Christian higher education, and in the world of academia.

We have been blessed by the generosity those who have shared their God-given wealth to build and improve Calvin to serve future generations. After 45 years on the Knollcrest campus we are grateful for these gifts which have enhanced our campus community so significantly.

We have a committed faculty and staff and a vibrantly Christian student body. Training young people to serve God's kingdom worldwide is a calling. Much of our global reach is in partnership with the CRC and enhances the living and learning on campus, and expands opportunities and connections around the world. See: www.calvin.edu.

Calvin Theological Seminary

Rev. Jul Medenblik will begin his term of CTS president next summer, 2011. President Plantinga and President-elect Medenblik are working together this year to provide for a smooth transition next summer.

President Plantinga has completed a rewrite of "A Sure Thing," a course for high school students. He is also doing a major rewrite of the Belgic Confession section of "A Place to Stand" for the 450th anniversary of the Belgic Confession in 2011

Thanks to pastors and others for recommending great students for Facing Your Future! This summer 34 students experienced theological education at CTS and ministered in Paterson, New Jersey, Tualatin, Oregon and Toronto, Ontario.

This past year congregations collected special offerings of over \$100,000 to support Facing Your Future and Ministry Incentive Plan (a revolving student loan fund)! Praise the Lord!

The seminary's certificate program is catching on! These programs are geared toward church members and church staff interested in specialized training, but not planning to complete a degree program. Certificate programs are available in nine areas. Applicant must be high school graduates, and can find more information at www.calvinseminary.edu/degrees/certificates/

CTS invites you to become a Facebook friend of the seminary to receive regular updates on life at CTS and advance information on when someone from the seminary may be coming to your region of the country.

Urban Aboriginal Ministries

In June 2010, Church leaders, politicians and community leaders gathered in Winnipeg to witness the re-birthing of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission. It was a re-birthing since the Truth and Reconciliation had been paralyzed by disagreements amongst the original leaders. (The Commission had been struck after Prime Minister Harper's apology in June 2008 to First Nations people for the harm caused by residential schools across Canada.) In addition to observers in Winnipeg the Christian Reformed Church continued to bless the Aboriginal people through its urban aboriginal ministries: Indian Family Centre, Winnipeg; Indian Metis Christian Fellowship, Regina; and Native Healing Centre, Edmonton.

In Winnipeg, Director Michele Visser has led the local ministry through significant leadership changes while also developing new program activities through the participation of community leaders.

In Edmonton, Director Harold Roscher led the organizing of the June 2010 'The Call of the Drum' a Christian Aboriginal celebration of National Aboriginal Day. The ministry's Striving For Excellence program supported Aboriginal youth through the acquisition of life lessons and skills for success in life.

In June 2010, the Saskatchewan Synod of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Canada committed its resources to the Council of Indian Metis Christian Fellowship by signing a memorandum of understanding. The ministry's Chimatawa Dance Troupe has gained recognition for its performance of both traditional Aboriginal and modern hip-hop dances.

In July 2010 the Canadian Aboriginal Ministry Committee was blessed when Steve van de Hoef began his work as staff to the Committee (as well as to the Office of Social Justice and the Christian Reformed Centre for Public Dialogue).

Back to God Ministries International

Back to God Ministries International shares the timeless Gospel through timely technology reaching every generation. Through media we reach people in 189 countries—including places that are "closed" to the Gospel. In 2010 BTGMI international staff received contacts from more than six million people, testifying how the Gospel made an impact in their lives.

BTGMI responded to financial challenges with careful stewardship of resources. Thanks to faithful ministry support partners, we continued strategic programs and positioned new ministries for future outreach.

- Through a new media outreach partnership in India, partnering with Words of Hope and Good Books Ministries in India, we broadcast and provide discipleship in Hindi and four local languages.
- The dedication of a new ministry center in Brazil expands and empowers our media witness throughout Latin America.
- Our French media outreach in Haiti was interrupted by the 2010 earthquake. However, many broadcasts were restored and 1,200 participants returned to the Bible studies! In November 2010 Haiti staff celebrated with 120 students—the first to complete the program.
- BTGMI launched a new English-language Bible teaching program, *Groundwork*. A website and Facebook page provides opportunities for listeners to respond to specific programs.
- In partnership with Timothy Leadership Training Institute, CRWM and CRWRC, BTGMI provided leadership training to communities of faith that form in response to our media work. In Indonesia, 142 local coordinators are providing leadership and discipleship for more than 13,500 listeners in rural areas.

For updates about ministries in all ten languages visit BacktoGod.net.

Home Missions

Christian Reformed Home Missions partnered with Christian Reformed churches across North America to support 151 ministries in 2010. God is working through these new churches, campus ministries, and other ministries to transform lives and *renew communities together*.

Playing the role of strategic partner, Home Missions helped start more than one dozen new churches and campus ministries in 2010. These new ministries include *Square Inch Church*, a new youth-oriented church in an

up-and-coming urban Grand Rapids, Michigan neighborhood; and new church plants located in the communities of St. Thomas, Ontario and Davis, California.

Home Missions partnerships with local churches and classes also led to the formation of two new campus ministries this year: *Campus Edge Fellowship* at Michigan State University in East Lansing, Michigan; and a new campus ministry at the University of British Columbia Okanagan in Kelowna, BC launched by *The Well*, a Home Missions-supported church plant. In all, Home Missions supports 23 campus ministries and 21 students who are part of the Emerging Leader program.

Home Missions also emphasized the development of “clusters”—local groups of ministry leaders intentionally connecting with each other for the growth of the mission. As we move forward, this will be a key strategy in our new ministry multiplication and church revitalization effort. In 2010, twenty new clusters began forming, from Denver, Colorado to Toronto, Ontario.

Through coaching sessions, Home Missions regional teams helped provide consultation and support for churches going through transition, and also helped churches become more of a missional presence in their communities.

World Missions

Recognizing the important role leaders play in guiding congregations, Christian Reformed World Missions focuses on building up national leaders to serve their communities and congregations. In the last year, over 8,300 people participated in leadership development programs through World Missions.

In Cambodia, a nation with a generation of potential leaders lost in the genocide, leaders of the young Church are growing in their understanding of the Bible and its impact on every part of life. Pastors in Bangladesh, who support themselves by farming, are seeing that they are caretakers of God’s earth and His people. In West Africa, church leaders are learning how to disciple new believers and encourage spiritual growth in long-time believers. And in Guatemala, local leaders are being mentored to share God’s love and grace within Guatemala’s prison cells and slums.

Many World Missions missionaries use Timothy Leadership Training (TLT), a “hands-on” training material on biblically based principles, to nurture the development of national church leaders. The program has had far-reaching results, spreading to almost 50 countries. Now, World Missions has created a similar program, called Educational Care, for Christian school teachers. In January, the first lessons will be ready to be used in several African countries.

With great joy and expectation, World Missions looks forward to seeing how God will use these leadership programs to strengthen His Church.

Dynamic Youth Ministries

Calvinist Cadet Corps: The year 2010 saw a new emphasis in the Cadet ministry, with a greater focus on two things: leadership and prayer.

It started in January, with much of the annual board meeting (Congress) devoted to conversations with God. At the same time, we looked at ways to recruit, build, and retain counselors, imparting to them a real sense of calling.

The prayer time didn’t end with Congress. A monthly prayer e-letter is e-mailed to counselors every month, and responses indicate that it is appreciated. Training in the various regions this year has given focus to prayer. And the theme for the November 2010 issue of the boys’ magazine, *Cadet Quest*, is devoted to prayer.

Another step forward this year took place at an October counselors’ conference in Kenya. The Africans, along with four representatives from North America, reviewed the Cadet materials with a mind to make them more culturally fit for Kenya. It was an intensive two day conference, and showed how appreciative the Africans are for having this ministry available to their denomination, the Reformed Church of East Africa. There are about three dozen congregations in Kenya using the Cadet program for their boys, and potential for many more.

GEMS Girls’ Clubs: Over the past year GEMS has experienced continued growth and development. More girls are attending more clubs than ever before. All new curriculum was introduced this fall creating even greater excitement and enthusiasm for the ministry. Counselors continue to receive multiple training opportunities in their own geographic areas as well as at the international level as. And, widespread support for our new GEMS Clubs in Africa and for the Esther School GEMS is building in Chongwe, Zambia continues.

Youth Unlimited: In 2010 God blessed Youth Unlimited (YU) with the opportunity to serve nearly 500 Christian Reformed Churches across Canada and the United States.

Many churches took advantage of the following YU mission experiences and events:

- SERVE had 1,750 participants – an increase from 2009.
- Where U At? urban youth conference had 279 participants – also an increase from 2009.
- Youth Worker Retreats had 165 participants in the first year they were offered.

Many more churches were also blessed by our new Leadership Development program through resources like *eEquip* magazine, *Out of the Trenches* e-resource and the *Compass 21* tool which helped churches set an intentional direction for their youth ministry.

This was the first year we did not host the large venue Convention, but we eagerly anticipate the launch of our new large venue event *Live it*, coming July 2011. As YU reflects back over the year, we are humbled at the opportunities God gave us to serve and blessed by how he used them to advance his Kingdom.

Partners Worldwide

In a global movement of Christian business people, Partners Worldwide is empowering thousands of business owners and entrepreneurs to fulfill their calling to use business in Christ's transformation of lives and his restoration of all things.

This year, the growing movement of business as ministry (BAM) has exploded. In October, 2010, more than 400 business people from 25 countries attended "Marketplace Revolution: Fighting Global Poverty through Business," the biannual international conference of Partners Worldwide, held in Grand Rapids, MI.

For two days, attendees were challenged to reconsider ministry and business development in their unique calling as business professionals. "Bottom line is that many people aren't yet aware of the essential role business has in sustainable development," says Daniel Jean-Louis, partnership manager of Haiti. "We need to confirm the callings of businesspeople and utilize the unique abilities God has given them to transform society."

The impact of these partnerships around the world is astounding! More than 700 dedicated mentors are walking alongside over 18,000 business owners and entrepreneurs, who, within the fiscal year of 2009, have retained 22,016 jobs and created 1,141 more, directly impacting the lives of over 120,000 people through sustainable income!

Beyond that, individuals from all walks of life are being transformed by God, especially as they discover and—for the first time—are affirmed to embrace their calling that their business is their ministry. Praise God for the amazing work He's doing to bring about economic and spiritual transformation around the world through the ministry of Partners Worldwide.