



Living the Call

A REPORT FROM THE CHRISTIAN REFORMED CHURCH IN NORTH AMERICA

GOSPEL PROCLAMATION AND WORSHIP

From the Executive Director's Desk

The Christian Reformed Church seeks to express God's love by living out five callings:

Faith Formation

As a community of believers, we seek to introduce people to Jesus Christ and to nurture their faith through all ages and stages of life. (Report in August)

Servant Leadership

Understanding that the lifelong equipping of leaders is essential for churches and ministries to flourish, we identify, recruit and train leaders to be servants in the Kingdom of God. (Report in October)

Global Mission

Called to be witnesses of Christ's Kingdom to the ends of the earth, we start and strengthen local churches in North America and around the world. (Report in February)

Mercy and Justice

Hearing the cries of the oppressed, forsaken and disadvantaged, we seek to act justly and love mercy as we walk humbly with our God. (Report in April)

Gospel Proclamation and Worship

Believing that faith comes through the hearing of God's Word, we proclaim the saving message of Jesus Christ and seek to worship him in all that we do. (Report in June)

"For we have no power to face this vast army that is attacking us. We do not know what to do, but our eyes are on you." 2 Chronicles 20:12

The Old Testament tells the story of King Jehoshaphat when he faced the mighty armies of Moab and Ammon. He, and all of the people with him, felt powerless — they were outnumbered, they were outmatched, there was no possible way that they could win against such a vast army by engaging in a direct battle — but yet, there was something they could do. The king remembered a truth that was passed on from generation to generation. There is a God in heaven who they worshiped — the creator of the universe, the creator of all things living, the father of all humanity, who could do all things — and in whom all things held together; the one God Almighty is our strength.

Jehoshaphat's response to this mighty army was to worship — to praise God in the midst of the difficulty, in the midst of the impossibility. And God did not disappoint; God delivered! The Bible tells us that, "After consulting the people, Jehoshaphat appointed men to sing to the LORD and to praise him for the splendor of his holiness as they went out at the head of the army, saying: "Give thanks to the LORD, for his love endures forever" (2 Chronicles 20:21).

I know that we sometimes feel like King Jehoshaphat. The Christian Reformed Church in North America currently faces many challenges. Though we have much to celebrate, we also have much to lament. Our reality includes conversations about human sexuality at Synod of 2022, in addition to numerous other matters. Our prayer continues to be that all of our synodical delegates would pray the prayer of King Jehoshaphat — *we do not know what to do, but our eyes are on you*. We see this worshipful response to difficult times repeated many times in the Bible — when going into battle, or facing difficulty, our response should be *Worship!*

In this issue, you will see contributions from various ministries including Worship Ministries, Calvin Theological Seminary, and Calvin Institute of Christian Worship. It is only right that this issue of *Living the Call*, focused on worship, is the one immediately preceding the Synod of 2022. Our worship has a way of removing our focus on ourselves, and turning our entire attention to God. The beauty and variety of worship in the CRC is also on display in the [recent video](#) posted by Worship Ministries — we thank God for the gifts he has given his people.

Calvin Theological Seminary

The Calvin Theological Seminary (CTS) faculty and Board of Trustees have approved a revamped Master of Divinity (MDiv) degree, scheduled to launch for in-person and hybrid learning in the fall of 2022.

The updated program, designed to be completed in as few as 3 years in person or 4 years for distance learning students, has been reduced from 101 to 87 credits. Distance learning students will complete a one-week residency on campus each semester.

“We spent nearly two years in study with the goal of retaining the center of our Reformed theological perspective and reputation of academic excellence while seeking to serve more effectively various students who have different contexts and vocational callings,” said President Jul Medenblik.

The main curricular changes to the MDiv include renewed program goals and more effective strategies for teaching skills, such as preaching and using biblical languages to interpret Scripture.

“All of these changes look at the whole person and their goals for ministry, in light of God’s calling,” Medenblik said. “We have a shared core of rich learning for all MDiv students, but this updated curriculum will further honor students’ unique paths and diverse ministry contexts.”

Program Outcomes

CTS seeks to form MDiv graduates who deeply consider the questions of: what is our ministry context, how does the gospel engage our context, what is God calling us to in this context, and what is the person and role of a servant leader in this context?

These four updated program questions served as the guiding goals in forming the revamped curriculum.

Biblical Languages

Recognizing that MDiv students have diverse vocational interests and therefore different goals when learning biblical languages, the new curriculum offers two tracks of biblical language study.

“Some students have the goal of learning ancient languages in-depth,” said Dean of Faculty Gary Burge. “The language-learning pedagogy that CTS has been using for years will remain to help these students to achieve their goal.”

This pedagogical track includes 6 credits each of Hebrew and Greek for students who wish to do advanced graduate work or be able to engage the original



Since 1876 CTS serves to raise up local and global church leaders.

languages of Scripture with relatively little assistance from digital resources.

A second pedagogical track of 3 credits each of Grammar Tools for Hebrew and for Greek focuses less on memorization of vocabulary and detailed grammatical structures, and instead provides an introduction to grammar and strategic use of digital resources so that students are prepared to use the languages regularly in ministry.

Preaching

The new MDiv curriculum also offers customized preaching requirements for each student, contrasting the former one-size-fits-all approach in which all students take the same courses.

“Some entering students have been preaching for years or have had an excellent preaching mentor,” said Burge. “Some students want an MDiv degree but have no interest in preaching regularly. They perhaps want to do parachurch work or serve as a hospital chaplain.”

“This new method of educating for preaching takes into account students’ diverse gifts and their vocational intentions, customizes training according to students’ individual needs, requires more evaluated sermons in ministry settings, and achieves curricular preaching goals with fewer credits,” said Burge.

Seasoned and emerging ministry professionals interested in applying to the new MDiv program may visit calvinseminary.edu/newmdiv to learn more.

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Worship Ministries

What a privilege it is to support worship leaders across the denomination as they are used by God for the priestly and pastoral work of leading God's people in the holy act of worship. A particular joy as staff has been seeing and hearing how relationships that were begun through the efforts of Worship Ministries are a source of ongoing encouragement and support.

As staff we are always eager to meet and engage with the worship leaders of our churches and hear what God is doing through them. One way we are doing that is by hosting online events for worship leaders by classis. We have also hosted regular online roundtables for mutual encouragement and to discuss timely topics. To find out more about such opportunities sign up for our monthly newsletter at crcna.org/worship.

We also featured many congregations in the video [#ThisIsCRCWorship](#), showcasing both the beauty of our diverse worship expressions as well as how much we hold in common. Use the QR code on this page or go to our [YouTube channel](#) to watch the video yourself. On the YouTube channel you will also find a library of sermons for churches to download and use as needed as well as numerous webinars on worship related topics.

Finally, if you are looking for a calendar that brings together all the worship resources from various ministries that are available for a particular Sunday you may want to bookmark our [Calendar of Events and Timely Resources](#) found on the Network.

As always we are eager and available to assist your congregation and worship leaders.

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Tools You Can Use

Monthly enews: sign up at crcna.org/worship

Facebook page: CRC Worship Ministries

Sermon and Worship Webinar Library:
youtube.com/c/WorshipMinistriesCRC

Reformed Worship: ReformedWorship.org

The Network: network.crcna.org/users/worshipministries

Endorsed Coaches

For information on the Endorsed Coaches program see: crcna.org/worship/endorsed-coaches

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Calvin Institute of Christian Worship



Calvin Institute of Christian Worship

The Calvin Institute of Christian Worship (CICW) celebrates these recent program activities:

- The 2022 Calvin Symposium on Worship was held in person on Calvin's campus, and included the launch of "[Communal Worship, Catalytic Connections](#)," a program with Calvin students and faculty in spring semester courses.
- A [new online, graduate-level certificate in "Cultural Intelligence for Christian Leaders"](#), is available through Calvin's Global Campus in partnership with CICW.
- [25 new Worshiping Community grants](#) were awarded in the Vital Worship Grants Program, including one to Creston CRC in Grand Rapids, Michigan, to explore the importance of hospitality in worship. This year brings our total number of grants to 1,000.
- Wisdom and learning in the new book, [Living Under Water: Baptism as a Way of Life](#), by CRC pastor Kevin J. Adams.

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When the foundations are being destroyed, what can the righteous do? The LORD is in his holy temple; the LORD is on his heavenly throne. He observes everyone on earth; his eyes examine them (Psalms 11:3-4).

This is my last Living the Call essay before I retire on June 30, 2022. I count it a privilege and a blessing to have served you, and the Christian Reformed Church, in the role as Executive Director over the past two years. We have endured much, but have not only survived, but are still enjoying the abundant fruit that comes from God.

I worship and praise God that he has allowed us to be a part of His kingdom. I thank God that we can come to him in worship and prayer. I thank God for the Christian Reformed Church in North America, and the resources provided so that we can share these many gifts with others.

Whatever we are going through, personally, in our families, in our communities, and in our nations, may we continue to know that there is a God in heaven who loves us, desires community with us, and welcomes and invites our praise and our worship. May we join with like-minded others and live in this reality of God's love.

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The Bridge App

Churches Discover Creative Ways to Use The Bridge App

When it comes to coaching, resources, or any initiative intended to serve the local church, there is rarely such a thing as a one-size-fits-all solution.

Especially during the season of COVID, local churches have shown great creativity and imagination in the ways they have tailored [The Bridge App](#) to reflect their programs, ministries and unique circumstances.

There are currently more than 140 Christian Reformed congregations using The Bridge App.

Some use the app right ‘out of the box’, while others are customizing the functions in unique ways to fit their ministries.

For example, by using the app’s Custom Button feature, Immanuel CRC (Hamilton, ON) now publishes their daily ‘[Wilderness Wandering](#)’ devotional blog directly to the app’s Home screen, any time of day and from anywhere.

Prayer Resources

- *Prayer Town Hall – video presentation*
- *Network: Free Prayer Resources in the Digital Library*
- *ReFrame Ministries: Prayer*
- *ReFrame Ministries: How Do I Pray*
- *Network: Worship: Prayer*
- *Together Seeking God’s Face*
- *Network: Prayer*
- *Faith Practices Project: Prayer*
- *CRCNA: Pray*
- *Resonate: Prayer Points*
- *Reformed Worship (search, keyword=prayers)*
- *Our Journey: Cultivate*
- *Seeking God’s Face: Praying with the Bible Through the Year*



THE bridge app

Where Life Happens Better...

Together in

COMMUNITY



Transcona CRC (Winnipeg, MB) used The Bridge App to bring members of their congregation together for a virtual Lenten prayer campaign during a time when in-person gatherings were restricted.

“This prayer initiative may have been borne out of COVID, but it has helped us to focus on our walk with God,” says Linda Schreuders, Transcona’s prayer coordinator. Pastor Brian Bolkema adds that the prayer posts have fostered a more deliberate awareness of prayer.

Ideas for utilizing the app’s Prayer function were also discussed during a recent [virtual town hall](#) that brought together more than 20 local prayer coordinators and included presentations by Emily Vanden Heuvel, ReFrame Ministries’ prayer coordinator, and Jon Hoekema, prayer shepherd for the CRCNA.

To find out more about The Bridge App you can [download the brochure](#) or watch the [short video presentation](#). Churches in Canada can contact program manager Dorothy Vandersteen or resource coordinator Ken Bosveld at bridgeapp@crcna.org, while churches in the US are invited to contact Deb at deb@thebridgeapp.org.

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