



Christian
Reformed
Church

2018 Issue 2

Living the Call

A REPORT FROM THE CHRISTIAN REFORMED CHURCH IN NORTH AMERICA

MERCY AND JUSTICE

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)

From the Executive Director's Desk

Should the church be concerned about justice? The Christian Reformed Church says, "yes." In fact, Synod 2017 declared an annual day of justice to help congregations "consider the meaning of biblical justice, to lament injustices in the world, and to commit themselves to the transforming work of standing alongside people whom society oppresses and pushes to the margins." The first such Day of Justice will take place on August 19, 2018.

This idea of Christians pursuing justice is first and foremost biblical. Throughout scripture, we hear that God loves justice. He requires his followers to care for the poor, feed the hungry, restore creation, and work to bring about a return to shalom. Pursuing justice goes hand in hand with the pursuit of righteousness.

What does this pursuit of justice look like? Calvin Theological Seminary professor, Matthew Tuininga, has done some great research on this topic. In his reflection, "Let the Church be the Church" (accessible on his blog) he shares that the Genevan church of John Calvin's day, "had two diaconates—one that cooperated closely with (and was funded by) the state, and the other that operated independently from the state and focused on serving refugees and immigrants."

Tuininga concludes, "For Calvin, when Jesus proclaimed that he had come to preach good news to the poor and liberty for the oppressed, he was calling the church to do the same. To let the church be the church is to equip the church for Spirit-empowered witness, in word and in deed, to the justice and righteousness of the coming kingdom of God."

The Christian Reformed Church continues to live out this aspect of our faith. We have the Office of Social Justice and Centre for Public Dialogue, which educate us on justice issues and advocate for just legislation. World Renew enables us to respond to the needs of those living in poverty or recovering from disaster, and partners closely with our advocacy and education organizations. We also have ministries that focus on disability awareness, creating environments that are free from abuse, responding to historic injustices against Indigenous people, and fostering racial reconciliation.

All of these ministries together are a sign of us striving to be faithful to the life that God has required of us.

BY STEVEN TIMMERMANS,
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

World Renew

In responding to God's call to do justice and love mercy, World Renew addresses poverty, disaster, and injustice worldwide so that people may come to know the fullness of God's love and saving grace. On your behalf, this ministry reaches into local communities to ease suffering, spread hope, and reconcile relationships. The following questions and answers give more insight into these interventions.

Q: How is World Renew responding to the increasing number of disasters around the world?

A: World Renew provides emergency assistance in disaster. We support peace building and trauma healing in displaced communities. We train communities to end violence; teach families to use innovative agriculture techniques that conserve resources; and improve crop storage and agroforestry practices so that communities can survive the next disaster. *See worldrenew.net/peaceandjustice.*

Q: A third of young adults in North America do not affiliate with any religion. How is World Renew reaching out to them?

A: While some young people are wary of the institutional church, they long for authentic involvement in the world. World Renew is engaging more youth and young adults in innovative opportunities through church and school projects, volunteer opportunities, and internships. Young adults participate in advocacy trips to engage political leaders. *Find out more about our programs for youth and young adults at worldrenew.net/volunteer.*

Q: People and churches want direct connections with the people and communities they are supporting. How is World Renew accommodating those needs?

A: World Renew has increased opportunities for disaster response volunteers in North America. We have expanded our field visit offers, engaged more CRCs with churches overseas through the Church Partnership Program, and increased our global volunteer opportunities. *Find out more at worldrenew.net/geo.*



Q: Recently, there is distrust for charity organizations that report harassment and abuse of their workers. What is World Renew doing to insure that these incidents would be handled appropriately?

A: World Renew adheres to several codes of conduct and humanitarian policies, including certification in Core Humanitarian Standard. We have increased staff training and orientation to reduce vulnerability to abuse and established structures for identifying and reporting incidents for immediate action. *For more information about the Humanitarian Accountability Partnership, go to www.chsalliance.org.*

Q: We want to know that World Renew is building the cause of Christ as well as alleviating poverty and hunger. Are your partner churches taking a significant role in representing Christ in their communities?

A: All of World Renew's partners are churches or Christian organizations except in countries where organized Christianity is banned. We train church and community leaders in biblical worldview application, technical skills, and organizational management. This knowledge strengthens their capacity as a sustainable witness and extension of God's mercy and justice.

IDA KAASTRA-MUTOIGO
DIRECTOR, CANADA

CAROL BREMER-BENNETT
DIRECTOR, US

Mercy & Justice Ministries of the CRCNA



In Luke 10:25-37, Jesus tells the story of the Good Samaritan. He tells the parable in answer to the question from a religious leader, “Who is my neighbor?” This well-known parable demonstrates that our neighbors are not only those who are close by, our family, our friends, or those in our current social or religious groups. Our neighbors are also those we would consider to be different from us in every way, socially, religiously, economically and nationally.

In the story, Jesus uses a Samaritan, someone different and excluded from the Jews, to teach us how to be a good neighbor. He concludes by saying, “Go and do likewise!” In today’s terms, our neighbor in the parable may not be Christian or might be from a foreign land. Our neighbor might also be unemployed or otherwise marginalized, for such was the state of the man set upon by robbers.

Jesus’ parable demonstrates the need to reach out to these neighbors in need despite our differences. He suggests that we show his love in three ways. First, we are to have compassion on them and empathize with their plight. Secondly, we are to help personally, as we are able. Finally, and the Samaritan did this with the innkeeper, we are to work through others (third party influencers and those able to improve the condition of the helpless) to provide assistance and advocate for support.

It is in keeping with these principles that the synod of the Christian Reformed Church has frequently encouraged the denomination and its agencies to act justly and love mercy. This has resulted in the following ministries:

- **The Office of Race Relations** reminds us that we are all called to be ministers of reconciliation, because Christ has reconciled us to himself
- **Safe Church Ministry** helps us listen to the survivors of abuse and work together to prevent future abuse from happening.
- **Disability Concerns** opens our eyes to the needs of our members who are living with a disability and finds ways to ensure that our churches celebrate and make use of their gifts.
- **The Office of Social Justice** highlights the realities that marginalized people face and encourages us to act, individually and collectively, as advocates for their benefit.
- **The Centre for Public Dialogue** works to promote the flourishing of all people by standing with vulnerable and marginalized people in Canadian communities and advocating with them.
- **The Canadian Aboriginal Ministry Committee** supports healing and reconciliation between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people in Canada.

These ministries demonstrate some of the ways in which we, as a Christian Reformed Church, are collectively caring and advocating for the stranger, the forgotten ones, and the displaced. As we work together and live into the reality of the presence of the Kingdom of God, the love of Christ and his command to “go and do likewise” find their fulfilment.

COLIN WATSON
DIRECTOR OF MINISTRIES & ADMINISTRATION

DARREN ROORDA
CANADIAN MINISTRIES DIRECTOR

People You Should Know

Aboriginal Ministry (Canada) - Shannon Perez, sperez@crcna.org

Centre for Public Dialogue (Canada) – The Centre is guided by a grassroots committee of CRC and RCA members. Connect with the committee member in your area by contacting publicdialogue@crcna.org.

Disability Concerns – There is a network of Regional Disability Advocates, with one in nearly every classis. To find yours, visit crcna.org/disability and look under “become an advocate” or email disabilityconcerns@crcna.org.

Office of Social Justice – OSJ has regional Climate Witness Project organizers in both the United States and Canada, as well as several justice mobilizers, who can assist you with a variety of justice topics. Contact Kris VanEngen kvanengen@crcna.org for more information.

Office of Race Relations – Race Relations has three regional Race Relations Advocates: Canada – Bernadette Arthur, barthur@crcna.org; US Mid-West – Viviana Cornejo, vcornejo@crcna.org; US-West – Rudy Gonzalez, rgonzalez@crcna.org.

Safe Church Ministry – The CRC has encouraged each classis to have a safe church team and each church to have a safe church representative on that team. To find out about your safe church team or to learn more, contact safechurchministry@crcna.org.

Classis Diaconal Committee Helps Others



Classis Alberta North is made up of 27 organized churches, 3 emerging churches, and a campus ministry at the University of Alberta in Edmonton. As part of their ministry, the classis encourages its churches to unite in shared ministries of evangelism and diaconal involvement. This includes several justice ministries. For example, the Northern Alberta Diaconal Conference supports a Honduras Water Project through a partnership with The King's University, World Renew, and Diakonia Nacional in Honduras. Churches in this classis have been funding this project for more than twenty years now and the classis is sending its next team of volunteers to Honduras in May 2018. The trip is open to all CRC members who are college age or older. Three times a year, the NADC also meets with representatives from its churches, for mutual support, encouragement, and learning about the ministries happening within the classis and beyond.

Tools You Can Use

Day of Justice – Synod 2017 encouraged congregations to hold an annual day of justice starting on August 19, 2018. Resources have been curated to help you plan your service. Visit crcna.org/DayOfJustice for more information.

An Act of Re-membering – This interactive, participatory, story-based workshop shares Canada's nations-to-nations history using a variety of voices, including your own! Co-learners use their full senses during this storytelling journey all while walking on a giant map! The workshop attempts to participate in an act of reconciliation through cultivating a "shared history," of Canada. Contact barthur@crcna.org to learn more.

Blanket Exercise – This participatory 90-minute workshop literally walks participants through the history of relationships between Indigenous peoples and other peoples in North America. It helps participants understand why reconciliation is needed and how to take steps toward reconciliation and new relationships. Both Canadian and American versions are available at crcna.org/BlanketExercise.

Climate Witness Project – Help create a new, crowd-sourced collection of Reformed creation-

care worship resources by submitting your creative worship ideas to justice.crcna.org/worship. Act quickly as the submission period closes on May 1, 2018. This collaborative project is brought to you by World Renew, the Office of Social Justice, *Reformed Worship*, and other organizations.

Disability Concerns – has a variety of resources available to assist your congregation. Visit crcna.org/disability and click on "resources" to learn more.

Safe Church Ministry – has a variety of resources on domestic abuse, sexual abuse, bullying and more. Visit crcna.org/safechurch and click on "Resource Directory" to learn more.

Live Justly – is a 10-session group study from World Renew, the Office of Social Justice, and others. Order study guides for US or Canada and download videos for all from worldrenew.net/livejustly.

Biblical Advocacy 101 – Not sure about this whole advocacy thing? Check out this great, free resource from OSJ, the Centre for Public Dialogue, World Renew, Bread for the World, and the Alliance to End Hunger. Justice.crcna.org/action-center.

Want to Learn More?

Stay up-to-date on what the CRCNA is doing in Mercy & Justice through:

- **CRC News** – Subscribe at crcna.org for a weekly digest of stories in your inbox
- **The Network** – Visit crcna.org/Network to post your questions, participate in discussions around the topic of "Biblical Justice", or review available resources
- **Safe Church newsletter** – Every other month, Safe Church team members receive an email newsletter with stories, resources, events and helpful information. Subscribe at crcna.org/safechurch/resource-directory.

- **World Renew E-newsletter** – Visit worldrenew.net to subscribe to a weekly email
- **Breaking Barriers** – Subscribe to a quarterly publication from Disability Concerns. crcna.org/Disability
- **Do Justice** – This blog is a conversation starter for justice in the CRC. Together we're finding new ideas and perspectives, sharing better ways to engage in justice work, remembering our motivation, and growing our faith. Visit crcna.org/DoJustice

Call 1-800-272-5125 or visit crcna.org/resources for additional information