



# Living the Call

A REPORT FROM THE CHRISTIAN REFORMED CHURCH IN NORTH AMERICA

## FAITH FORMATION

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

The year was 1983, and as a new member of my local church, I was eager to reengage with God’s Word. Though I had been a Christian for many years, and had participated in a cursory reading of the Bible, I had never participated in an in-depth study of its rich truths. So when my pastors offered a Bible survey course, I eagerly responded. This was the beginning of a journey that continues to this day. The Bible survey course — the Old and New Testaments — was followed by an in-depth study of the book of Romans. Several passages and verses from that study stay with me to this day:

*For am not ashamed of the gospel, because it is the power of God that brings salvation to everyone who believes, first to the Jew then to the Gentile. —Romans 1:16*

*Do not conform to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God’s will is — his good, pleasing and perfect will. —Romans 12:2*

*In all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose. —Romans 8:28*

For me, the journey of learning who I am in Christ Jesus is the essence of life. The awakening and strengthening of my faith is a critical element of God’s work in me. Today, in the Christian Reformed Church, we call this the process of *Faith Formation*. Because this is such a critical element of who we are as Christians, we dedicate resources and energy to ensuring that we all have the opportunity to experience God’s transforming work in our lives. In ordinary and in critical times we try to provide resources that serve as catalysts for this transformation.

In this issue, there are contributing reports from Calvin University and Faith Formation Ministries, with additional references from Faith Alive Christian Resources and *The Banner*.

I was an adult, with a family, when I recommitted and reengaged with the gospel. However, as covenant congregations within this denomination, we recognize the importance of faith formation at all ages — ranging from children’s ministry, to those of us who are in the so-called ‘third third’ of life. I encourage you to personally engage with the

## Calvin University

Calvin University turned one this past summer, and our first year with our new last name looked quite different than any other in our 145-year history. The year brought its share of challenges, no doubt. But what became crystal clear is that when a compelling mission meets an exciting vision, it is hard to slow down that momentum.

Our mission at Calvin is to equip students to think deeply, to act justly, and to live wholeheartedly as Christ's agents of renewal in the world. Our vision is to become a liberal arts university with an expanded global influence that is seen as a trusted partner for learning across religious and cultural differences and throughout the academy, the church, and the world.

In 2020, we leaned into that vision, and did so with the generous support of our donors, who pledged a record \$64 million to the university during the 2019-2020 fiscal year.

### Expanding programing

The largest gift in the institution's history was part of this record-setting year. The \$22.25 million gift, provided by an anonymous donor couple, established the Calvin University School of Business—the first school established in the new university structure. With the new school comes new opportunities to serve a wider range of learners—a key goal in our vision. It's a goal we made great progress on this year with the addition of two new masters programs (media and strategic communication, geographic information science), adding the option of a fully online master of education program (pending approval by the Higher Learning Commission), and implementing our new Spanish Immersion Program that serves high school students. These are just a few examples and are just the beginning. The university added the associate provost position in January 2020 to help continue to find ways to reach new learners with programming that meets their needs.



### Deepening faith commitment

As we add new programming and continue to strengthen our existing programs, we remain committed to our vision's central goal: for our faculty, staff, and students to embody a faithful and engaged Reformed Christianity. Our vision says we will "further invest in our faculty and staff to make sure they are well trained at showing students how their Reformed faith engages with all areas of culture." An \$11 million gift we received from the estates of Rimmer and Ruth de Vries will help us do just that. The de Vries Institute for Global Faculty Development provides opportunity for all of our faculty to deepen their commitment to teach from a Reformed Christian perspective and it will also expand our ability to shape Reformed Christian thought leadership around the world.

In 2020, one thing is certain: Calvin University is meeting these uncertain times with a compelling mission and an exciting vision.

**DR. MICHAEL LEROY**  
PRESIDENT, CALVIN UNIVERSITY  
CALVIN.EDU

## Faith Formation Ministries

Faith Formation Ministries (FFM) encourages and equips churches and ministry leaders to walk with kids, teens, and adults on their life-long, life-wide faith journeys. Together we seek for all generations to have intentional and resilient faith.

Regional catalyzers provide free coaching, workshops, and other opportunities to help church leaders. Other team members support children's ministry, youth ministry, and Dwell curriculum users. And we curate and create practical, budget-friendly resources that churches and families can use.

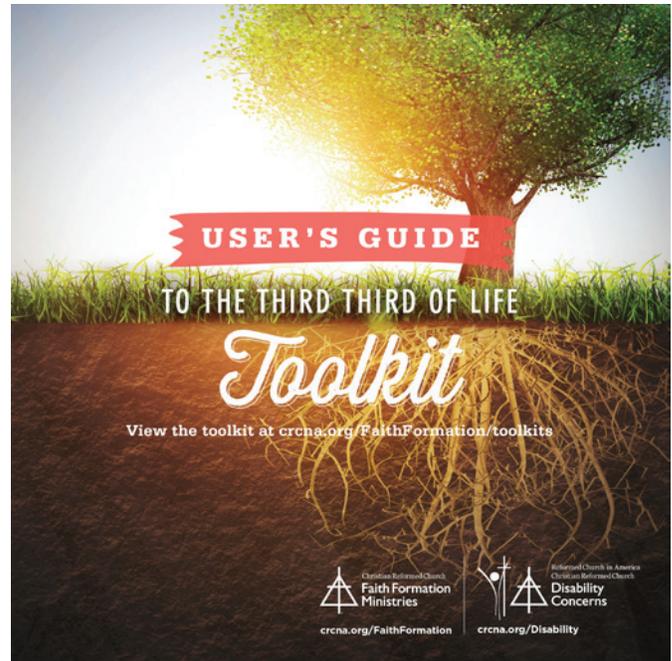
In the past year, much of our work focused on developing and refreshing the *Dwell* curriculum and releasing the [Third Third of Life Toolkit](#) in partnership with Disability Concerns. Since March, we've also been responding to the needs of churches, ministry volunteers, and families wondering how to be the church in a coronavirus context. Here are some examples of our work in these areas:

### Dwell curriculum support

- Our resource team created many new [Dwell at Home resources](#) for family faith formation, including [Jesse Tree: God's Big Advent Story](#) and [God's Big Easter Story: A Holy Week Journey for Families](#) to assist families in exploring the Advent and Holy Week stories at home, as well as series of topical tip sheets for parents called [5 Ways](#).
- We made *Dwell* Digital free to CRCs, allowing leaders to share lessons with parents during COVID-19.
- Our *Dwell* team began planning for *Dwell* Labs, an online space where current *Dwell* users can try out new curriculum activities and share feedback and ideas.

### Adaptive support for ministry leaders, churches, and families

- FFM partnered with Disability Concerns to develop the [Third Third of Life Toolkit](#), a collection of free online resources for ministry to and with people ages 55 and over.



- FFM curated several resource landing pages to assist families and church leaders to adapt to new methods of church in a pandemic reality.
- Our regional catalyzers began offering online workshops and webinars for CRC churches and small groups.
- FFM staff hosted and participated in roundtable Zoom discussions on intergenerational worship and children's ministry planning, supporting ministry leaders and providing space for questions and collaboration.

We are thankful for the opportunity to serve and support CRC churches and ministry leaders as together we live out our calling of faith formation!

DR. CHRIS SCHOON  
DIRECTOR, FAITH FORMATION MINISTRIES  
[CRCNA.ORG/FAITHFORMATION](http://CRCNA.ORG/FAITHFORMATION)

## The Banner

Published monthly by the CRCNA, *The Banner* magazine shows how the Christian faith in its Reformed expression makes sense for today's world. We hope you'll find our articles—from news to features to reviews—lively, informative, inspiring, and challenging. Here are a few resources specifically related to Faith Formation:

- Cross Examination is our apologetics column, answering questions young people often ask. Read them all at [thebanner.org/department/cross-examination](http://thebanner.org/department/cross-examination).
- *Hope for the Politically Homeless* is a recent six-part series we published with the help of the Centre for Public Justice. It deals with political discipleship in these divisive times. Read the articles here: [thebanner.org/tags/political-home](http://thebanner.org/tags/political-home).
- The Discover column is faith formation for children and youth, here: [thebanner.org/department/discover](http://thebanner.org/department/discover).
- In our Big Questions column, we have a regular section devoted to questions about faith formation. Those can be read here: [thebanner.org/column/faith-formation](http://thebanner.org/column/faith-formation).
- *The Banner* offers several collections of articles under a variety of topics, including Just for Kids, the Reformation, Abuse of Power, and Reformed Basics: [thebanner.org/free-resources](http://thebanner.org/free-resources).

**SARAH DELIA HETH**  
ASSOCIATE EDITOR, THE BANNER  
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### Continued from p. 1

available material, and also to encourage others — everyone within your sphere of influence — to prayerfully engage with these and other faith formation resources. God wants to do a work in each of us, regardless of age or any other human classification to which we often make reference. God is looking for disciples — people committed to him, and who are desiring to walk in his steps.

May we not be ashamed of the gospel; may we be committed to the work that God wants to do in us by transforming our hearts and minds; and may we realize that everything we go through in this life can be transformed and used for some good by the Master. May we embrace his vision for us all.

**BY COLIN P. WATSON SR.,**  
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

## Tools You Can Use

### Adult/Small Group Resources

Bible studies, topical studies, and other resources.

### Calvin Institute of Christian Worship

The CICW is an interdisciplinary study and ministry center located at Calvin University and Calvin Theological Seminary. CICW offers a wide range of practical resources and scholarly works for congregational leaders, pastors, teachers of worship, students, artists, and all interested in worship. These resources serve as tools for preparing, planning for, and leading worship as well as for studying the history, theology, and practice of worship worldwide. The website provides free resources primarily in the form of articles, audio files, slideshow and video presentations, plus links to purchase Worship Institute books, cds, and hymnals.

### Calvin Shorts

Calvin Shorts is a series for global Christians who want to understand God's world better. Each book examines a single topic and suggests ways to think and act faithfully. These books are great for discussion in small groups, book clubs, and in classroom settings. Titles include: *Christians and Cultural Difference*, *Disability and Inclusive Communities*, and *Sport.Faith.Life.*, among other topics.

### Centers & Institutes

Calvin's centers and institutes provide the time and space for scholars to pursue robust study and research in their fields. These centers for learning further the mission of the university, contribute to local, national, and global conversations on a variety of issues from preaching to politics, and can be useful for congregations and individuals as well.

### Church Leadership Resources

Books and materials for church leadership and development, congregational care and growth

### Dear Parent: A Guide for Family Faith Formation

by Laura Keeley and Robert J. Keeley

This booklet will help parents lay the groundwork for faith formation in their family. It's based on four Building Blocks of Faith. Each chapter ends with discussion or thought questions, ideas for living the chapter topic out in the family, and a short resource list.

### Dwell Sunday School Curriculum

Dwell can help God's big story come alive for the kids in your church. Visit [DwellCurriculum.org](http://DwellCurriculum.org) for more information including samples, scope and sequence, and a video tour. And teachers now have full access to all leader resources in the entire curriculum with a subscription to the new Dwell Digital.

**Elementary Church School Curriculum** Leader material and resources for children in kindergarten through 5th grade

### Everyday Family Faith: Simple Practices and Activities for Building Faith at Home

by Sandy Swartzentruber

Looking for ways to strengthen family faith formation in your church? This family faith pocket guide provides simple, do-able ideas that help families build natural faith habits at home.

### Free Family Resources

Tip sheets and activities designed to encourage and equip families as they nurture faith at home

### The Dwelling eNews

A quarterly e-newsletter created specifically for Children's ministry coordinators and leaders, includes helpful articles, creative tips, and more

### The Third Third of Life Toolkit

A collaboration between Faith Formation Ministries and Disability Concerns, this online resource toolkit contains thought-provoking articles and books, tools, faith practices, and more that will help you and your church's ministry leaders minister to and with people in the third third of life.

## People You Should Know

### Calvin Chaplain

Mary Hulst has served as Calvin University's chaplain since 2009. She lectures around the country on preaching, teaches workshops for preachers, and consults with churches and search committees on how to listen to sermons. Her book *A Little Handbook for Preachers* was released in 2016. In 2018, Hulst presented "Why Millennials Are the Hope of the Church" at the January Series. In that talk, she offered a list of questions churches should be asking their millennial attenders.

### Calvin Global Campus

Kevin den Dulk is the associate provost of Calvin Global Campus, a working name for the office that, as part of Vision 2030, is extending Calvin's mission to reach new populations. The position is intended to be an entity for incubating creative ideas, for trying new things out, and for creating a platform for new populations to encounter a winsome and capacious perspective on Christ-centered learning. Since 2011, den Dulk has served in various leadership roles at Calvin, including as both chair and professor in the political science department and executive director of the Paul B. Henry Institute for the Study of Christianity and Politics.

### Calvin Institute of Christian Worship

John Witvliet is director of the Calvin Institute of Christian Worship and professor of worship, theology, and congregational and ministry studies at Calvin University and Calvin Theological Seminary. Witvliet's areas of interest include the history of Christian worship, worship practices in various denominations, biblical and systematic theology of worship, the role of music and the arts in worship, choral music, and consulting with churches on worship renewal.

### Children's Ministry Catalyzer

Mimi Larson ([childrensministry@crcna.org](mailto:childrensministry@crcna.org)) is available to assist CRC children's ministry leaders with their questions and challenges and provide helpful resources and tools.

### Dwell Curriculum Coordinator

Jill Benson ([dwell@crcna.org](mailto:dwell@crcna.org)) plans and manages the ongoing refreshing of the CRC's Dwell children's ministry curriculum, assists with building a vibrant Dwell user community, and provides helpful resources and training tools.

### Faith Formation Ministries Regional Catalyzers

Regional Catalyzers (RCs) have one goal: to help you strengthen the faith formation efforts of your congregation. Our Regional Catalyzers are experienced ministry leaders who are here to encourage and equip your church's faith formation leaders, lead workshops, and connect you with helpful ministry resources. Find your church's RC at [crcna.org/FaithFormation/coaching](http://crcna.org/FaithFormation/coaching).

### The Banner

Got a news tip? Email [news@thebanner.org](mailto:news@thebanner.org).  
Got a Big Question you want answered, a letter to the editor, a feature suggestion, or a submission? Email [info@thebanner.org](mailto:info@thebanner.org)

### Youth Ministry Catalyzer

Ron DeVries ([youthministry@crcna.org](mailto:youthministry@crcna.org)) is available to help CRC youth ministry leaders with youth ministry issues and provide helpful resources and tools. Ron also oversees the CRC's network of Youth Ministry Champions.

### Youth Ministry Champions

Faith Formation Ministries oversees a growing network of Youth Ministry Champions. Each champion connects to a classis to empower and encourage youth ministry workers and to serve as a voice on behalf of youth leaders at classis. Visit [crcna.org/youth](http://crcna.org/youth) to find the Youth Ministry Champion for your classis.

## Faith Formation At Classis

A classis is a community of churches journeying together on the road of discipleship. This journey can support faith formation among the churches, but the experience of classis can also be faith-formative in and of itself.

An example of supporting one another is Classis Lake Superior which, like many classes, has a youth champion, Travis Deur. Recently he has been emailing churches in the classis looking for small group ideas, resources, and best practices to crowdsource options for the churches. This isn't the first time he's done this, and when he's gathered the ideas and resources together he shares them back with all the churches. Seeing what others are doing can spark imagination and give encouragement as churches each look to support faith formation in their own congregations and contexts. These networking opportunities mean churches within the classis are better off because they're part of this wider community.

In Classis Toronto, the executive and ministry teams recently gathered with representatives of the two campus ministries for a meeting that was entirely shaped by listening prayer as a way to discern where the Spirit was moving in their classis. The only agenda item for this gathering was to listen and share images

and words that the Spirit gave to the participants, and to spend time discerning where there were connecting points. This type of listening prayer is set to become a regular feature of classis meetings in the future, and it's not hard to see how participants in these meetings are able to take this experience back to their own congregational settings. Widening the scope of discernment practices as a community is a deeply faith-formative process that can have a wide-reaching impact.

Lastly, spiritual formation is always something worked out with fear and trembling. I've walked with several classes through conflict, which often feels like a disruption to discipleship. Church leaders who participate in these classis meetings often feel a sense of discouragement. At the same time, I often wonder with those leading through the conflict in a classis setting how the conflict itself may be a faith-formative opportunity. The church has never existed without conflict (just read Paul's letters!). It is often a way God sharpens us, humbles us, challenges us, grows us, and forms us in our faith together.

—AL POSTMA,  
CLASSIS RENEWAL WITH THE  
CONNECTIONS TEAM OF THE CRCNA

## Want to Learn More?

Stay up-to-date on what the CRCNA is doing in Faith Formation through:

- **CRC News** — Subscribe at [crcna.org](http://crcna.org) for a weekly digest of stories in your inbox
- **The Network** — Visit [crcna.org/Network](http://crcna.org/Network) to post your questions, participate in discussions around

the topic of "Faith Formation", or review available resources

- **Find Resources** — Search thousands of resources available at [crcna.org/resources](http://crcna.org/resources)

**Or call 1-877-272-5125 with any of your ministry questions.**