

## Organizational Framework Report

### 1. Background:

*“We stand before a new and exciting era for mission through the Christian Reformed Church. We believe God is leading Home Missions and World Missions to become a single mission agency within the CRC. A joined Mission agency with a comprehensive local and global vision and mandate will enable the Christian Reformed Church to serve our Lord with greater strategic effectiveness and improved stewardship of resources.”<sup>1</sup>*

The above paragraph aptly names the end goal the HM/WM Organizational Design Team has been working towards since Synod met last June 2015 in Sioux Center, Iowa.

Under the leadership of our Interim Executive Leadership Team, our Organizational Design Team has been working alongside five other sub-teams, each charged with specific mandates that will allow this end goal to come to fruition. Our Organizational Design Team has been hard at work designing both an **organizational framework** and discerning a **broad strokes picture** of an **organizational structure** for this New Mission Agency over the last four months. As we’ve carried out our work we’ve intentionally engaged with and involved staff and stakeholders as much as possible. We will share some of that process with you in this report.

As we share with you a report of our **organizational framework** work to date, we would do well to remind ourselves of some of the ongoing shifts that have been happening around the world that contribute to making this a **Kairos** moment for the formation of a new Mission agency.

- *The changing face of global Christianity*

The world has changed dramatically since the early 20th century, when our current agency structures were developed. Over time the center of Christianity has moved from North America and Europe to Asia, Africa, and Latin America. The vibrant growth and health of the church in the global south are matched by a relative decline in the global north. Nations such as Korea, China, and Brazil, which were once the recipients of missionaries, are now major missionary sending countries.

- *A changing mission context for the North American Church*

Meanwhile North America has increasingly become a ‘post Christendom’ mission field. One hundred years ago most people living in North America, even if they were not committed Christians, had at least some Christian heritage and some basic concepts about God, the Bible, and the church. Today that is very different. Increasingly the U.S.A and Canada are countries that need to hear and see the gospel being lived out in ways that can recapture the spiritual imaginations of its people. Many of our congregations are wrestling with how to adapt and flourish in their rapidly changing contexts. Exposure to the global church through overseas mission trips, the arrival of immigrants from other parts of the globe, and the connecting influence of the internet have begun to help the North American church recognize that they also have much to learn from the vibrancy and sacrificial practices of Christian brothers and sisters from around the world. Categories such as HOME and WORLD missions no longer make as much sense as they once did. Indeed those categories may well block us from participating in some of what God’s Spirit is already doing in our increasingly connected world.

- *A changing role for a denominational missions agency*

The existing mandates of both World and Home Missions in large part still reflect a 20<sup>th</sup> century emphasis on denominational agencies primarily doing missions ‘on behalf’ of the North American church. Earlier in their histories, Christian Reformed Home Missions ‘planted’ new churches in North America while Christian

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<sup>1</sup> CRCNA Acts of Synod 2015, pg. 507

Reformed World Missions sent missionaries overseas ‘on behalf’ of the local church. Increasingly this emphasis on doing mission ‘on behalf’ of the church no longer fits twenty first century realities. As western culture increasingly shifts to post-Christendom, it is increasingly vital that local churches and classes learn to participate in contextual mission both domestically and overseas in ways that engage the gifts of all God’s people.

This has huge implications for our new mission agency and includes the following shifts, many of which have already begun:

- a. A shift from seeing missions as one of many activities of the church to seeing mission as the essence of the church’s vocation which permeates everything she does.
- b. A shift from seeing missions as being the responsibility of a few ordained professionals to participating in God’s mission as the calling of every believer.
- c. A shift from an agency doing missions on behalf of the local church to truly participating in God’s mission together.
- d. A shift from seeing missions as primarily happening from North America to the rest of the world to one of seeing God’s global people participating in God’s mission from everywhere to everywhere.
- e. A shift from agencies acting like the main repositories of mission expertise to one of agencies becoming connectors and catalysts serving a growing global learning community of locally rooted missionaries, congregations and ministries.
- f. A shift from centralized staff who direct agency programs from a distance to one led by incarnational leaders who are embedded and involved in specific places and ministries.
- g. A shift from doing missions primarily in isolation from others to one of participating with other partners and denominations in announcing and living out God’s best kingdom intentions for God’s world.

In view of all of these shifts one might ask if a denominational mission agency still has a role to play. We believe very much that it does even though it may well be a modified role from what it played in the past. We see a denominational mission agency as performing at least four vital functions:

- a. Catalyzing a shared Reformed vision of mission rooted in our Kingdom theology<sup>2</sup>
- b. Developing a rich context for mutual learning and innovation which builds on both the experiences of local congregations and ministry partners, and the previous decades of work of our agencies.
- c. Networking congregations, classes, and other ministry partners around specific mission projects.
- d. Accompanying congregations and classes through embedded long-term incarnational mission leaders both in North America and globally.

## 2. A developing Organizational Framework (Sandbox Strategy)

Early in our work as a Design Team, we recognized that in order to utilize this second approach to the design of this new mission agency we would be well served by the collective wisdom of many in shaping the kind of organizational clarity we would need to be able to move forward together. To help us do this, we organized our design process by heavily drawing from a book on organizational design entitled ‘*Leading from the Sandbox*’ written by T. J. Addington, an experienced ministry leader in the Evangelical Free Church of America. Central to this book is a question: **How do you develop, empower, and release high-impact teams of missionally aligned and healthy individuals working strategically together under good leadership towards common objectives, with accountability for results?**

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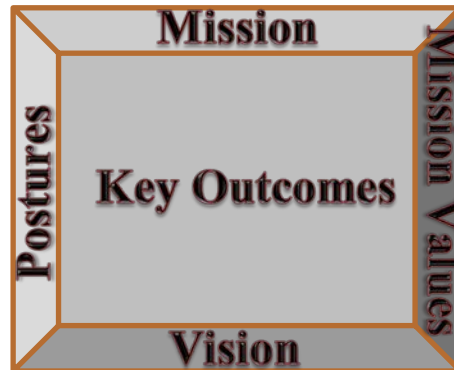
<sup>2</sup> Our World Belongs to God, A Contemporary Testimony (Article 30)

Addington lists a number of traits that characterize these kinds of high-impact teams:<sup>3</sup>

- Teams like this are all about alignment of the whole organization around a passionately held common mission.
- Teams like this are synergistic in harnessing the various gifts on the team and focusing on the bottom line –achieving the commonly desired outcomes.
- Teams like this are egalitarian in culture – in other words they encourage robust dialogue and empower members of the team to make decisions that are contextual and move towards those outcomes.
- Teams like this are led by healthy leaders who love to empower and release team members to do their own thing.
- Teams like this are characterized by a commitment to results, good emotional intelligence among members, and meaningful meetings that bring clarity to execution.

In order to develop teams like this, Addington uses the metaphor of a sandbox to describe the critical design work necessary to develop alignment and clarity of focus. The ‘sandbox strategy’ is a simple tool that allows for alignment around ministry philosophy rather than methods.

*“Almost all of us can remember a time when we were young and played in a sandbox. Creativity and work were synonymous in the sandbox. You could build whatever you wanted and let your imagination go. Whether you were building castles or making roads for a Barbie or G.I. Joe, it was a great place to be. But you quickly learned the sandbox was only fun as long as two things were true: You got along with those you were playing with, and the sand stayed in the sandbox. We communicated to our personnel that they have maximum freedom to ‘play inside the sandbox,’ to make ministry decisions consistent with the sides of the sandbox (empowerment). We will also hold them accountable for staying inside the sandbox (alignment) and for carrying out the mandate provided by the sides of the sandbox (accountability).”<sup>4</sup>*



<sup>3</sup>T. J. Addington, *Leading from the Sandbox*, NavPress, pg. 17

<sup>4</sup> T. J. Addington, *Leading from the Sandbox*, NavPress, page 41-42

## **KEY OUTCOMES**

*What we aspire to*

### **Key Outcome #1**

Locally rooted and globally connected congregations and ministries actively making disciples who introduce people to Jesus.

### **Key Outcome #2**

Growing numbers of disciples faithfully participating in the renewal of creation, culture, and society for God's kingdom.

### **Key Outcome #3**

A connected tapestry of ministry networks beautifully expressing the unity of the God's people by working together for the spiritual and social renewal of their communities.

## **VISION**

*What we see*

We see God transforming and bringing shalom  
to communities and creation  
through the actions of disciples  
proclaiming and living out the good news of God's kingdom together.

## **MISSION**

*What we will do*

The New Mission Agency exists to glorify God  
by walking with, serving, catalyzing and connecting congregations  
and other communities of disciples  
so that all of God's people are participating in God's mission.

## **POSTURES**

*How we do it*

### A posture of **LISTENING**

*Listening to God and to others as we discern where God's Spirit is moving.*

### A posture of **SERVING**

*Walking alongside, encouraging and serving local leaders, congregations and communities.*

### A posture of **LEARNING**

*Learning from each other and engaging in communities of practice for kingdom transformation.*

### A posture of **BRIDGE BUILDING**

*Nurturing relationships of trust within and across cultures as ambassadors of God's reconciliation.*

## **DISTINCT MISSION VALUES**

*This will undergird our participation in God's mission*

### **We value God's loving care for creation and people.**

We value the wonderful abundance of diverse gifts and cultures represented in and through the nations of the world. We embrace our calling as disciples of Jesus to reject self-centered consumerism and instead seek to live and learn together as faithful and generous stewards of God's best intentions for his good world. We reject any attempt to pretend we come as the saviors or to make others dependent on us. We continually point others to and remind ourselves of God's faithful provision to both meet our own needs and to share with others.

See Genesis 3; 9:8-16; Genesis 17; Psalm 104, especially verse 30; Matthew 5:45; and Acts 14:17.

*God has not abandoned the work of his hands: our Maker preserves this world, sending seasons, sun, and rain, upholding all creatures, renewing the earth, promising a Savior, guiding all things to their purpose. (Our World Belongs to God: A Contemporary Testimony, 4)*

### **We value the comprehensive scope of God's redemptive work in Christ.**

The gospel of Jesus is good news of redemption for our world. Proclaiming and participating in God's kingdom requires addressing all aspects of life and community, as well as the darkness in our own personal lives, as needing redemption and transformation. We reject any attempt to reduce the reconciling work of Christ to individual salvation or to the life after death just as we reject any attempt to reduce it to our own conception of social justice or to a this-worldly prosperity gospel.

On the exclusive claims of Christ, see John 14:6 and Acts 4:12; on God's love and compassion for the world, see Matthew 9:36-38 and John 3:16

*In Jesus, God reconciles the world to himself. God loves all creation; his compassion knows no bounds. (Our World Belongs to God: A Contemporary Testimony 42)*

### **We value the work of the Spirit, forming the mind of Christ in his body by making the Word of God living and active.**

Empowered by the Spirit we seek to take the posture of a servant and become all things to all people for the sake of Christ. We willingly follow the example of Jesus and reject any easy discipleship that comes without cost. We call others and commit ourselves to a radical, counter-cultural discipleship that follows Jesus in the way of the cross by putting others above ourselves and returning good for evil. We resist the temptation to build our own ministry empires or to create or perpetuate divisions in the body of Christ based on race, ethnicity or anything else that brings dishonor to Christ or brings division to His church.

On the rule of Christ over the whole world, see Philippians 2:9-11, Colossians 1:15-20 and Revelation 11:15; on being light, salt and not fitting in, see Matthew 5:13-16 and Romans 12:1-2

*Jesus Christ rules over all. To follow this Lord is to serve him wherever we are without fitting in, light in darkness, salt in a spoiling world. (Our World Belongs to God: A Contemporary Testimony 43)*



## Conclusion

As you read through this report, undoubtedly there are still many unanswered questions. Our intent up to this point has been to create a framework that allows us to begin to see a birds-eye view of what this New Mission Agency will look like without attempting to complete every detail of the emerging picture. Much of that detail work will involve more discerning engagement with others as well as critical decision making by leaders and by those who will be involved in the work all around the globe.

As we have worked together as a Design Team over the last few months, we are more convinced than ever of both the urgent need and the vast potential of this new Mission Agency working alongside of God's people to participate in God's mission everywhere.

We do well to recall the words shared in the report to Synod laying out a case for going through this joining process and remain confident that God's Spirit is work preparing us for a new day of mission!

*“The goal is to create a new joined mission agency that brings the unique strengths and mission strategies of each agency together for greater impact within the Christian Reformed Church in North America and the global church. The joining of Home Missions and World Missions will build on a key strength common to both agencies: their supportive engagement with the church in communities in North America and around the world. A single agency will be able to boldly engage a globalized world.”<sup>5</sup>*

Humbly submitted,

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<sup>5</sup> CRCNA Acts of Synod 2015, pg. 511