



What's in a Name?

We're called the **Christian Reformed Church in North America**. A closer look at our name reveals a lot about who we are.

- We call ourselves *Christian* because we are followers of Jesus Christ. We believe that Jesus is the Son of God. Our most important beliefs about God, Jesus, the Holy Spirit, creation, and the Bible are shared by Christians around the world.
- We're called *Reformed* because we grew on a branch of the church tree that was heavily influenced by the Protestant Reformation in sixteenth-century Europe. Various leaders sought to reform the Roman Catholic Church but ended up sparking a new movement of separate Christian churches. The teachings of the Reformer John Calvin made a great impact in the Netherlands, England, and Scotland. The churches influenced by Calvin became known as "Reformed." This name was transplanted in North America with the arrival of Dutch immigrants.
- We believe God has called us together as a *Church* to be a people who belong to him and are called to live for him.
- *North America* tells you where we are situated. We are connected with, yet distinct from, other Reformed denominations around the globe.

What's Unique about the CRC?

We'll admit to being biased, but here are some of the things that make our denomination distinctive:

- We prize God's Word. Preaching is a central part of our worship, and we read the Bible on our own and with our families as well. The Bible is more than a religious how-to book or a set of stories with a moral. It is the one true story of what God has done, is doing, and will do, in partnership with us, to bring about a new world.
- We believe that everything begins with God. God's love and power give hope to the world and spark our own service in God's kingdom.
- We emphasize Jesus' message of the coming of God's kingdom—the present and future reign of God that extends through the whole world into every part of life and culture.
- We value lifelong learning. Many schools, from preschool to university to advanced degree programs, have been birthed out of the CRCNA to transform lives and communities.
- We serve our neighbors in our own communities and around the world through denominational ministries that we all share and support.
- These denominational ministries and initiatives reflect our five-fold calling:
 - **Faith Formation**
 - **Global Mission**
 - **Gospel Proclamation and Worship**
 - **Mercy and Justice**
 - **Servant Leadership**

Finally, we are thankful to God that we have been able to celebrate more than 160 years of ministry. By God's grace, we want to continue to participate in God's kingdom in the years ahead.

Come and join us!



TRANSFORMING LIVES AND COMMUNITIES WORLDWIDE

welcome
to the
Christian
Reformed
Church



crcna.org

155214

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Welcome!

Since you're looking at this brochure, we're going to assume that you're curious about this church. Maybe it's the first time you've come to this church and you need an introduction. Or maybe you simply want to know what *Christian Reformed* means. Whatever the reason, we're glad you have come. And we're happy to introduce ourselves.

This church is part of a denomination called the Christian Reformed Church in North America (CRCNA). You can think of a denomination as a "league" of member churches. Sports leagues such as the NHL or the NFL support and coordinate their member teams. Likewise, a denomination provides support, ground rules, and organization for its congregations. But the real action happens in the congregations when they come together to worship God and join God's mission in the world.

As denominations go, the CRCNA isn't large. We have about 1,000 congregations across the United States (about 750) and Canada (about 250). But even though we're a small denomination, we have found that we can accomplish a lot when we work together!

Like an extended family, the congregations that make up the CRCNA are a varied lot.

- You can find us in Alaska, Nova Scotia, British Columbia, Florida, and many points in between.
- We come in different sizes. Some congregations have several handfuls of people. A few have several thousand.
- You can find us in rural, suburban, and urban neighborhoods.
- Aside from using English, we might worship in seventeen other languages, including Mandarin, Spanish, Korean, Laotian, Dutch, French, or Navajo.



- Depending on the churches you visit, you will experience varied forms of worship, from a more "traditional" style with organ and choir; to contemporary music, bands, and multimedia; to a blended approach that varies from week to week.
- We meet in homes, storefronts, school gyms, campus chapels, retirement homes, and very large church buildings.

This diversity is important to us because we're serious about connecting with people in whatever context we find ourselves. Under the denominational umbrella, we remain like a big family. We have ties that deliberately bind us together.

Our Vision

One of those ties is our denominational vision statement. It's a picture of what the CRCNA is now and what we hope it becomes more and more:

The Christian Reformed Church is a diverse family of healthy congregations, assemblies, and ministries expressing the good news of God's kingdom that transforms lives and communities worldwide.

We take *diversity* seriously. We're alert for ways in which we may be racist, discriminatory, or sexist in our congregations, and we work to correct that. Several denominational ministries focus on helping

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all congregations become more discerning and diverse. And we've started churches specifically to reach recent immigrants or others who may be marginalized in some way.

We want our congregations to be healthy. Members are encouraged to grow in their relationships with God, with each other, and with the world through dynamic worship and through excellent resources for lifelong learning. We provide tools and support to help congregations grow and make an impact in their communities. Several denominational ministries make healthy congregations and pastors the specific focus of their work.

We have a thrilling message to share with the world: the good news of God's kingdom. All of us experience the brokenness of a world that's not the way it's supposed to be. Abuse, unemployment, hunger, war, cancer, and pollution are just a few of the ways we feel the pain of the world's brokenness. Yet we live with hope and joy because we believe that in Jesus, God is redeeming the world and its people. God's power frees us from sin and addictions and sickness and makes us the kind of people we were created to be.

But that good news is much bigger than changing individual lives. Wherever people live out God's good news, it transforms lives and communities worldwide. God is actively restoring the good world he created—and we're invited to participate in that restoration. Through our denominational agencies the CRCNA reaches communities around the globe:

- Broadcasting a biblical message over the radio in many languages

- Mentoring university students on campus across North America
- Training leaders for church, school, and community across the African continent
- Supporting health and rights training for young adults in developing countries
- Rebuilding demolished homes after hurricanes and other disasters

We believe that when Jesus returns, all of creation will be restored. And we want to be partners right now in God's transforming presence in the world.

Where Do We Come From?

Like many North American denominations, the CRCNA is rooted in European immigration and has blossomed into a multiethnic, multicultural denomination.

The denomination began as a transplant from Europe, specifically from the Netherlands. In the late 1840s, some Dutch farmers and Reformed pastoral leaders left the Netherlands to seek a better life and greater religious freedom in America. They initially homesteaded in what is now (not surprisingly) called Holland, Michigan. The CRCNA also welcomed a flood of post-World War II Dutch immigrants, especially in Canada.

More waves of immigration followed in the next decades. Thousands of Koreans as well as other Asian, Hispanic, and African immigrants have found a home in the CRCNA. As a result, our denomination has taken on an increasingly North American face as people from many backgrounds, cultures, and ethnic origins find a home in our congregations.