



Christian
Reformed
Church

2021 Issue 5

Living the Call

A REPORT FROM THE CHRISTIAN REFORMED CHURCH IN NORTH AMERICA

SERVANT LEADERSHIP

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 novel *Journey to the East* by Hermann Hesse tells the story of a group who go on a pilgrimage in search of "ultimate truth". One of the travelers is the servant, Leo. As the story unfolds, it becomes apparent that Leo is the most effective in molding the team together as a cohesive whole. Despite being a servant, Leo is the leader who benefits the entire group.

Hesse, whose ancestors served in mission in India and contributed to translating the Bible into Malayalam, was deeply influenced by his pietistic Lutheran faith, and this no doubt contributed to the formulation of his story.

This story of Leo so captivated Robert Greenleaf, the American author of the essay "Essentials of Servant Leadership" that he dedicated his life to researching leadership principles. He eventually founded the Greenleaf Center for Servant Leadership. This work has been particularly noted in the secular leadership world as pivotal and influential. There is now a plethora of material on servant leadership in every sector of our world.

What a revolutionary concept — demonstrating love, care and concern for others, and putting others first so that the entire group and organization can thrive. Yet, this concept was already

demonstrated by Christ thousands of years ago.

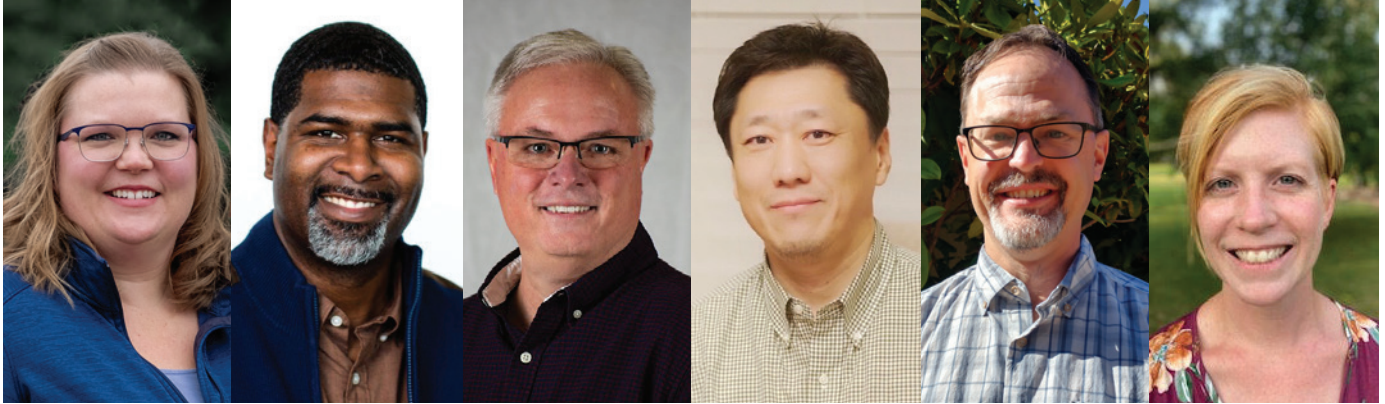
I find that it is often the case that biblical truths, internalized by learners at a young age, make their way into secular writing. That work influences others in profound ways and leads to "new" ways of thinking, being, and behaving for the betterment of society. Said another way, God can, and often does, use every one of us, and the work of our hands and minds to do his will and influence the world.

This was certainly true for Hermann Hesse. His family started out influencing those in India who spoke Malayalam, thereby ensuring that these residents of India had access to the word of God. These Godly principles, combined with a wonder for new civilizations, influenced Hesse to write *Journey to the East* — which in turn produced the modern concept of servant leadership — a throwback to the old concept of servant leadership that we find in Mark 10:42–45.

I had never heard of Malayalam until about the year 2000. I was leading a men's ministry and Bible study in Paterson, New Jersey, and many individuals from the neighborhood

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Candidacy Committee



In 2019, the Candidacy Committee and Calvin Theological Seminary began to strategize ways to enhance their shared [*Ecclesiastical Program for Ministerial Candidates*](#) (EPMC) for those who obtain MDIVs from other seminaries and seek ordination in the CRCNA. We surveyed past participants in the program, delegates to synod, and classis leaders regarding the program's effectiveness.

As areas for growth were identified, it became evident that we would need to appoint a subcommittee to oversee and implement the desired improvements. That team—the EPMC Facilitation Team—was appointed in 2020. Over the course of this last year they have met monthly to lay the administrative groundwork for changes in the program.

This fall, the team began their relational work with EPMC participants. Each newly enrolled participant was assigned a team of two EPMC Facilitation Team members (who are CRC pastors). In an initial interview, the team got to know the background and education of the participant so they could create an “individualized learning plan” for them. These plans take into account a participant's individual need for development in Reformed understanding, connection and commitment to the CRC, emotional and spiritual readiness, and developed competency in a range of ministry areas.

Some of the members of the EPMC Facilitation Team (From L-R): Rev. Emily VandenHeuvel, Rev. Darrell Delaney, Rev. Shawn Brix, Rev. Kang Won Kim, Rev. Rob Toornstra, Rev. Ashley Bonnes. (Missing: Rev. Al Gelder, Joan Beelen, Jen Rozema)

The team will continue to communicate regularly with the participant through the program for support and guidance, joining them in continued discernment about their call. They will also work with the Candidacy Director to continue developing administrative processes for greater clarity, effectiveness, and accessibility.

SUSAN LACLEAR
DIRECTOR OF CANDIDACY
WWW.CRCNA.ORG/CANDIDACY

Tools You Can Use

[Online application to the EPMC program](#)

[Learn about candidacy and ordination in the CRC](#)

Chaplaincy and Care Ministry



70 Christian Reformed chaplains work in healthcare settings that include Hospice, Veterans Affairs, and Long Term Care. They minister to patients, residents, families, and staff, in the worldwide COVID-19 pandemic.

Chaplain John DeVries shares what this has been like:

This is the story of the first time we allowed a family member into the hospital to have a window visit outside a COVID patient's room. This was a 57-year-old male patient (the same age as me) who was actively dying. I met the patient's wife in the waiting area of the ICU. She was very tearful and wanted to be at peace with the decision to take him off the ventilator and let him go. He had spent some time away from the church and his faith, but in the past year had renewed his relationship and faith commitment. She wanted to be sure of God's love for her husband.

I assured her of God's unconditional and everlasting love of her husband. This allowed her the peace to let him go. We went into the unit and up to his window. The nurse in the room told me to have her call his room on her cell phone. He then put the phone up to the patient's ear. She spent the next 15-20 minutes telling him she loved him and all the things she wanted him to know. When she had finished talking to her husband, the team talked with her outside the room in the most caring and respectful way. She said it was okay to remove the ventilator.

I gave her the space to be outside the room by herself, looking through the window as the ventilator was removed and he died peacefully. (I was nearby on the unit in case she needed some support.) This was a sacred moment when God used the members of the team to give support to the patient's wife and help her through the most difficult situation she had ever faced to this point in her life. I was honored to be part of this as a chaplain and reinforced in my call to this ministry.

Our chaplains in healthcare and in our other settings provide spiritual care to people in pain or spiritual distress. By being there in moments that matter, God's grace and love are extended into ICUs and so many other places beyond the walls of the church.

**REV. TIM RIETKERK, ENDORSER
DIRECTOR, CHAPLAINCY & CARE MINISTRY
CRCNA.ORG/CHAPLAINCY**

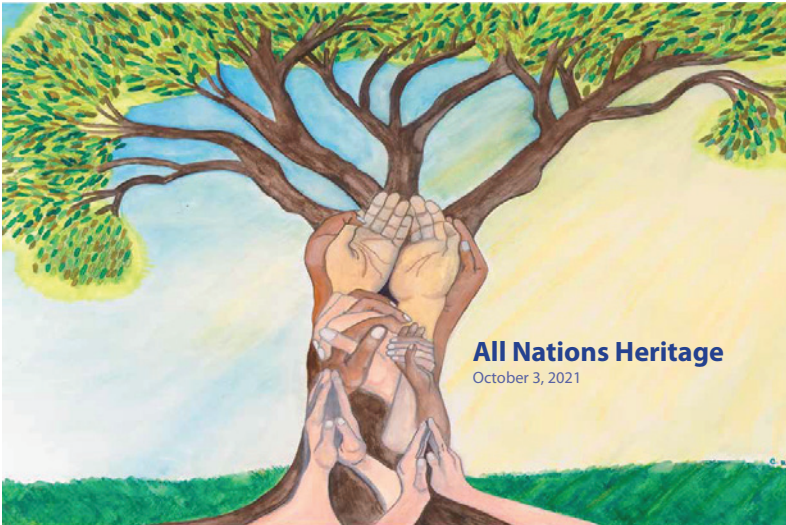
People You Should Know

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Diversity



Do you know what the most powerful ministry is in the church? I think it's the ministry of listening. Research shows that the average person in any conversation only listens seven seconds before readying their response. You and I are more addicted to speaking than listening. Listening to another person means honoring them with your undivided attention, paying attention to someone because she's worth it. When people feel heard, they are opened to change and new possibilities about the world.

I am listening to diverse leaders in this great denomination because they are leading the way in growing the Christian Reformed Church into the mosaic church that makes Jesus smile with great joy. Korean leaders in Southern California and the East Coast are planting churches that cross racial and socioeconomic boundaries for the mission of the Church. African American leaders in North Carolina are reaching college students at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. First Nation leaders have performed yeoman pastoral work to Navajo and Zuni residents in the Southwest U.S. despite the challenges of the coronavirus. Latino leaders have been training future leaders and leveraging new opportunities to increase the growth of the CRC. These leaders are teaching me to become a better listener than speaker.

October 3 was All Nations Heritage Sunday, a day for Christian Reformed churches to take advantage of opportunities to try singing in a different tongue and honoring globalized leaders by listening to the story of God and the testimonies of God's Spirit at work in the world from their lips. Every year, it is a time to join the gifts of God's people by listening for signs of Jesus in our own neighborhoods or hamlets. My hope and prayer would be to seek out these marvelous churches and leaders, support their ministries, pray for their success, and make room as God adds to membership of our collection of Christ followers.

REV. REGINALD SMITH
DIRECTOR OF DIVERSITY
CRCNA.ORG/RACE

Tools You Can Use

September [Diversity Newsletter](#)

[All Nations Heritage Sunday](#) (see ORR website)

[God's Diverse and Unified Family](#) report

People You Should Know

[Worship Ministries](#) catalyzers Katie Roelofs (kroelofs@crcna.org) and Jeremy Simpson (jsimpson@crcna.org) on questions and advice about diverse worship.

Resonate Global Missions' Marco Avila (mavila@crcna.org) and Consejo Latino's Harold Caicedo (jehar27@hotmail.com) on planting Latino churches and developing leaders.

Advice on the joys and pains of becoming a multiracial church: see Reginald Smith (rsmith@crcna.org) at the Office of Diversity.

Pastor Church Resources

Pastor Church Resources (PCR) serves pastors, churches, and classes as they seek to promote healthy relationships, encourage one another in ministry, and discern next steps in seasons of growth, transition, or challenge.

Quick To Listen Initiative

Few skills are more foundational to the work of PCR than the skill of listening well. Yet, as simple as it sounds to listen well, we find congregations often struggle to practice listening at the scale and depth required, especially when anxiety is high. For this reason, beginning in February 2022, PCR will be sharing one of our favorite tools to encourage better listening in congregations: a talking piece for a listening circle. From youth groups to Coffee Break to committee meetings to council, a *talking piece* can provide a simple but effective structure to transform meetings into *listening circles* where participation is valued and trust is nurtured.

Congregational Wellbeing

We continue to see churches carrying trauma and pain from their COVID-19 experiences. We hope that congregations are making space to talk about the impact of these challenges as well as the feelings associated with them. Without such conversations the trauma and pain is likely to emerge in unpredictable ways later on—whenever a congregation has another challenging experience. Stay tuned for resources that we are developing to help churches have these post-COVID conversations.

Pastor Restoration Grants

The challenges of ministry during the pandemic have contributed significantly to pastor burnout. In the course of our consulting work, we routinely hear pastors experiencing symptoms such as: exhaustion, lack of focus, self-doubt, and loss of motivation—some pastors even questioning their call to ministry. Financial Shalom and PCR is making grants of \$2,600 (US) available to pastors and churches to address pastor burnout. The grant intends to cover certain expenses for participating churches and fund a brief leave for pastors to retreat and learn with peers, as well as engage the services of a spiritual director, therapist, or coach.

Tools You Can Use

Article 17 Guidance Website

Good process ensures difficult church and pastor separations happen fairly. PCR has created a website to assist church councils, pastors, and classis functionaries to maintain good process for Article 17 separations. The website lays out Church Order's process clearly. Additional resources will be added from our consulting experience and classes' procedural experience. crcna.org/pcr/article-17

Birkman Assessments

Pastors have been experiencing vocational uncertainty as they face a dramatically new ministry landscape and heightened levels of anxiety and conflict exacerbated by the pandemic. The Birkman Assessment is a tool to discern ministry fit and raise self-awareness. Pastors considering a change should first evaluate how they respond to stress and discover how they may uniquely contribute to the new frontiers in ministry. crcna.org/pcr/pastors/vocational-ministry-assessments

Bivocational Growth Fellowship

Pastors who are currently engaged in or considering bivocational ministry are invited to learn more about the Bivocational Growth Fellowship, a yearlong program offered by Financial Shalom. Applications for the 2022 cohort will be available in late fall 2021. crcna.org/FinancialShalom/bivocational-growth-fellowship

Challenging Conversations Toolkit

Based on some of the best practices PCR recommends for helping churches navigate challenging conversations, this resource is meant to help small groups in your church listen deeply to Synod 2022's Human Sexuality Report and to each other as your church considers what to do next. crcna.org/pcr/churches/challenging-conversations-toolkit



Raise Up Global Ministries

Across cultures, people remember, learn, and grow from what they discuss or put into practice. For effective learning and life change, the programs of Raise Up Global Ministries develop interactive content and training for you and the global church community.

Raise Up content fills a gap. Global Coffee Break's (GCB) *Discover Your Bible* (DYB) series is designed for evangelistic Bible study, providing a skeleton of questions for seekers to experienced Christians to explore God's Word together. The DYB leader's guides and training prepare facilitators to personalize the study for their group and its context. The DYB series has more than 50 years of experience in helping people meet Jesus through his Word. Today the studies are used in 24 countries around the world. You can purchase over 45 studies for Coffee Break or small groups at GlobalCoffeeBreak.org/shop

Timothy Leadership Training (TLT) manuals fill the gap for under-resourced church leaders. Pastors and church leaders in places like Peru, Burkina Faso, and India use the seven core manuals of TLT to build ministry skills in pastoral care, stewardship, family dynamics, preaching, and more. Each interactive manual ends with an Action Plan so that participants put learning into practice. A new manual called, *Fear Not: A Christian Attitude on Spiritual Powers* is being piloted by groups around the world and will be released in 2022. TLT manuals are used in more than 35 languages.

Education Care (EC) manuals fill the gap for teachers with little access to Christian education training. The newly revised manuals equip teachers to explore how a Christian worldview impacts classroom discipline, how students learn, and how the school can be salt and light in its community.

Raise Up programs also equip leaders to facilitate rather than tell. Asking questions, drawing out ideas, moving the conversation along, and helping people put into

action what they learned impacts people yet takes skill and practice. Contact a team member for information about training and materials.

SAM HUIZENGA
DIRECTOR, RAISE UP GLOBAL MINISTRIES

Tools You Can Use

New Study: [Discover Revelation 1-3](#), Discover Revelation 4-22 available in January 2022.

Engaging in Spiritual Conversations four-part workshop — Contact Diane Averill or Marian Lensink

Connect Conference presented by Global Coffee Break — Meeting virtually, November 12-13; for more details visit theconnectconference.org

People You Should Know

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EC — Diana Boot
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Women's Leadership Development

When Inspire was postponed and Synod 2021 cancelled, it became clear that we would need to rethink the annual gathering to celebrate women in CRC leadership. We wanted to mark the 25th anniversary of ordaining women in a meaningful way, so I connected with the ministry's advisory team to begin imagining an online event.

Sixty women leaders and clergy gathered in a webinar from across the United States and Canada to learn from Ellen Duffield, a blogger and author of [BRAVE Women and Girls](#). She led the group through an interactive, engaging session related to using our voice for the sake of others, which led to reflection on why we keep silent.

Asked what the most significant learning during the session was, many remarked how powerful it was to gather with other women experiencing similar challenges. Reflecting on the cultural moment in which we find ourselves, one participant commented, "This was timely and inspiring." Learning continued for over half of the women as they gathered to discuss Duffield's book, [The BRAVE Way: Where Will Your Brave Take You Today?](#)

Women leaders learned that bravery is developed and strengthened in safe, authentic spaces of true community. Women from the US and Canada concluded five weeks of virtual gatherings sharing their lived experiences in the current climate of the CRC. Group facilitators testified that the women entered into meaningful, honest, authentic discussion.

The bi-national groups gave women the opportunity to meet and build relationships with like-minded leaders throughout the denomination. Each week participants left the virtual group encouraged to live bravely as peers prayed for each other.



We are planning to continue to build on the connections we've made this year. In October we are bringing Ellen back for another online event to learn about the stages of power and how to be intentional about stewarding and developing our influence.

REV. ELAINE MAY
WOMEN'S LEADERSHIP DEVELOPER,
PASTOR CHURCH RESOURCES

Continued from p. 8

and from various countries and backgrounds attended. One such individual, named Freddie (not his real name), was an immigrant from India who spoke Malayalam and taught himself to speak English by reading the Bible.

He knew several biblical verses in Malayalam, and was able to painstakingly go through the English Bible and understand the language and its structure. Freddie became a friend and one of the most biblically literate laypersons I knew.

I wonder whether that story would have been possible without the presence of Hermann Hesse's parents and grandparents and their work in Bible translation. God continues to work in all things, all people, across time, across geographies, across societal boundaries.

I thank God for the many ministries in the Christian Reformed Church which are focused on servant leadership. In these continuing and difficult times, it is good to know that we serve a God who is not only looking out for our good but is working in such a way that events in the entire universe are being well integrated so that all glory will accrue to him.

May we continue to live into this truth.

COLIN P. WATSON, SR.
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Help is Only a Call, Click, or Chat Away



Click Call Chat

We're making it easier for you and your church to access CRC resources. If you're involved in a church ministry and wonder if your denomination can help with something, just CALL (800-272-5125), CLICK (www.crcna.org/Resources), or CHAT (from any page on www.crcna.org). We're here to serve, and would love to connect you with people and resources to support your ministry.

Want to Learn More?

Stay up-to-date on what the CRCNA is doing in Servant Leadership 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 "Servant Leadership", or review available resources

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