



Living the Call

A REPORT FROM THE CHRISTIAN REFORMED CHURCH IN NORTH AMERICA

GLOBAL MISSION

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

“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.”

This quote is part of our five-fold calling as Christian Reformed people. While we all share in this joint calling from God, we also recognize that some of us aren’t given the opportunity to travel to “the ends of the earth.” Instead, for many of us, we live out this calling by supporting others who faithfully travel these roads on our behalf.

While I consider myself mostly in this camp, I had the opportunity in the closing days of 2019 to experience a taste of what missions “to the ends of the earth” is like.

In late December, I travelled to Ethiopia. While there, I provided two days of seminars to teachers at a Lutheran elementary school. These seminars focused on worldview understanding and its implications for the classroom—a topic that these teachers had not explored during their university educations or other parts of their training.

As I prepared for these seminars, I drew heavily from the Educational Care curriculum of Raise Up Global Ministries that has been used for many years by Resonate Global Mission leaders around the world.

I was grateful for the teachers’ reception to these lessons and trust that as they more deeply root their teaching in Biblical worldview foundations, it will benefit their students. I also pray that this elementary school education will have a lifelong impact on students who will someday be leaders in their homes, churches, communities, and even nation. It was an experience I will never forget!

But our experiences with mission aren’t limited to those far away. Consider, for example, another experience I had recently. Not too long ago, I attended a federal government function for faith and humanitarian sector leaders. We were learning about U.S. government plans to address the problem of undocumented residents in ways that reflect both justice and mercy. At lunchtime one day, an incredible opportunity unfolded.

During the lunch, I sat next to a university student who was doing an internship with a secular agency that addresses these challenges. He said to me, “I’ve never been around so many Christians.” He explained that in his west coast community, he interacted only with those of no faith, and explained that was his posture as well. After confessing he was Biblically

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Steve Timmermans (center) spent some time in December training teachers at a Lutheran elementary school in Ethiopia.

illiterate, he asked me how to learn more about the Christian faith!

Yes, I was called to be a witness—not on the other side of the world—but right here in North America. I was so surprised, I may have forgotten approaches I’ve learned over the years. I simply said, “Start reading the stories of Jesus in the Bible, and make the first one the Good Samaritan.”

I suspect I will not see this young man again, but I pray that my witness planted seeds that the Holy Spirit will bless. Yes, we are all called to be witnesses across this globe, and the opportunities come sometimes when we least expect it! On the following pages are some great stories, resources, tools, and contacts to assist you and your congregation as you explore ways to live out your calling to global mission.

**BY STEVE TIMMERMANS,
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR**

Mission Close to Home

Classis is not just a meeting; it’s also a group of churches that can both support one another in mission and live collectively into a kingdom calling. There are a variety of ways this happens, as churches can work together to increase their missional imagination. Looking more specifically at church planting, we see it is something that an individual congregation takes up as a parent church but is almost always a larger collective effort, whether that’s through prayer support, mentoring, networking, funding, or other ways.

Recently, Classis Heartland has started developing a residency program for church planters, to ensure they have the ability to intentionally learn alongside others with experience. Similarly, a church planting network has been developing in Southern Ontario to support not only individual church plants, but also supportive structures that help church plants succeed (like classis!).

Classis Chatham has been leaning into a vision for church planting by helping existing churches wonder if God might be calling and equipping them to be a parent church and, if so, where in their nearby community might be fertile soil for planting.

Similarly, Classis Hackensack and Classis Hudson are embracing the “Nehemiah Project” to help set them on a collective trajectory of preparing for and moving forward with new ministry opportunities. In each case, we see that classis does not plant churches, but can be a way that churches together open up the imagination and possibilities for reaching into their neighbourhoods in new ways.

**BY AL POSTMA,
CLASSIS RENEWAL, PASTOR CHURCH RESOURCES**

Resonate Global Mission

Discovering God's Call

If we are to tell the good news to all people, we need people to hear God's call in their lives. **The Christian Reformed Church needs leaders to undertake mission-focused ministry.**

This past year we've celebrated the life and ministry of Johanna Veenstra, our first international missionary, who began her ministry in Nigeria 100 years ago. Our denomination has a long history of bringing the gospel to the ends of the earth—work we've done imperfectly, but with a desire to be faithful to the Great Commission.

Like Johanna, we can be confident that God has a role for us to play in his mission. Wherever the members and churches of our denomination may be, Resonate wants to equip and support our churches for whatever work God has called them to. But "how can they hear without someone preaching to them? And how can anyone preach unless they are sent?"

Resonate Global Mission and our other mission organizations are in urgent need of people ready to take this leap of faith. Resonate alone has 14 open positions at the time I'm writing to you. At the local level, too, I know that many churches and classes are struggling to recruit church planters and campus ministers.

Please encourage the leaders in your congregation to consider God's call to mission-focused ministry. In this simple way you can make an eternal difference.

Living Acts 1:8

When Jesus tells us to be his witnesses in Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria, and the ends of the earth, he doesn't simply mean for us to go "everywhere." His command paints a picture of what living out God's mission means.

Jesus begins here, home for all his disciples, showing us that God's mission starts at home. Next, Jesus reminds his disciples to proclaim his gospel to the entire region. And Jesus' disciples would have taken note at being sent to Samaria, a place in their backyard populated by people different than them.



Young people from North and Central America participate in Resonate's Cohort

Our work on God's mission isn't done until people from every nation, tribe, and tongue worship Jesus! That's why Jesus includes the whole world in his final instructions on earth. Resonate is here for you to join God's mission—no matter where he has called you.

**ZACHARY KING, DIRECTOR
RESONATE GLOBAL MISSION**

Regional Contacts for Mission

Regional Mission Leaders: your connection to mission around the corner and around the world

Eastern Canada: Kevin DeRaaf kderaaf@crcna.org

Western Canada: Rich Braaksma rbraaksma@crcna.org

Central USA: Peter Kelder pkelder@crcna.org

Eastern USA: Marco Avila mavila@crcna.org

Great Lakes: Amy Schenkel aschenkel@crcna.org

Western USA: Ben Katt bkatt@crcna.org

Back to God Ministries International



BTGMI's Chinese ministry team uses video ministry to reach Chinese speakers worldwide

Have you ever been out to dinner and seen people staring at their phones rather than their friends or loved ones at the restaurant with them? Seeing people “glued” to their phones makes it easy to view social media and digital communication as a bad thing. And in some cases, it is.

But as Reformed Christians, we know that God can redeem anything. He can use anything for His glory and to spread His Gospel message. Thanks to faithful giving from churches and members of the Christian Reformed Church, God is redeeming social media and the digital age for His glory.

Here are three examples of how BTGMI's three-fold mission plays out through media around the world.

Sharing the Gospel

“Alexa, play my devotional.”

This year marks 70 years of BTGMI's *Today* daily devotional. This will also be the first year that *Today* will reach more people by email than by print booklets. The devotional is also available on the website, as a podcast, and even through smart speakers like Amazon Alexa or Google assistant.

Discipleship

BTGMI's Chinese ministry team is using a new “check-in” feature on WeChat, the most popular social network

in China, to allow people like Lan to connect with other Christians right on their smartphones.

“Through the application, we can keep in touch about the spiritual health of our brothers and sisters and provide timely help and prayer,” Lan recently told us. “I have often been very encouraged by things my brothers and sisters in this group have shared, too, especially when I have been particularly down.”

Equipping the Global Church

In the last year, there have been militant attacks in Burkina Faso specifically targeted at churches. The entire country, but especially the northeastern area, is experiencing an increasing level of violence, forcing some people to flee their homes for safer areas. As many as 41 people were killed in one month.

Despite these obstacles, people like Tinashe are growing in her faith through BTGMI French radio broadcasts. “Tinashe believes strongly in Christ,” BTGMI's Rev. Marc Nabie says. “The radio is her faithful partner. To feed her faith she has to listen, and our broadcast is her favorite.”

KURT SELLES, DIRECTOR
BACK TO GOD MINISTRIES INTERNATIONAL

BTGMI Reaches Our World through Media in these languages:

- Arabic
- English
- Chinese
- French
- Hindi
- Indonesian
- Japanese
- Portuguese
- Russian
- Spanish
- Korean (in partnership with the CRC's Korean Council)

For more information about these ministries visit backtgod.net/ministries.



Tools You Can Use

ReFrame Media, the English outreach of BTGMI, produces a wide array of media experiences through six programs that invite you to see God's story in your life.

Visit reframemedia.org and discover how the following can benefit your congregation:

Today: A daily devotional that helps people refresh, refocus, and renew their faith.

Family Fire: An online community exploring what it means to be "Holy Spirit led" in our family relationships.

Kids Corner: A half-hour kids audio adventure for radio and podcast. Fun stories show kids how they are an important part of God's big story.

Think Christian: An online magazine where Christians bridge the perceived gap between faith and culture.

Groundwork: A half-hour radio program and podcast that helps you build a biblical foundation for your life.

Church Juice: A website where church leaders can learn how to intentionally engage their congregations and communities in meaningful ways.

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 Global Mission:

CRC News — Subscribe at crcna.org/subscribe 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 "Global Mission", or review available resources

Resonate Global Mission e-updates — Stay up to date with ministry stories and prayer requests by subscribing to our email updates. resonateglobalmission.org/resources

Back to God Ministries International — Join our email list and stay updated BacktoGod.net

Call 1-800-272-5125 with any of your ministry questions.