



Christian
Reformed
Church

2019 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

Many people have a handful of go-to books that they frequently consult. One of those books for me is a book the CRC published back in 1989: *Effective Leadership in the Church*. I use it because it explains **servant leadership** by pointing to Christ: *Jesus Christ himself exemplifies both [power and servanthood]: he rules with power "far above all rule and authority and power and dominion" (Eph. 1:21) but he also stoops down to wash the feet of his disciples (John 13) (p. 11).*

It's important to keep both dimensions in perspective. We all have experienced leadership where the leader's main infatuation is with his or her own authority. We, too, have probably experienced a leader who serves others so well, that authority is lost. It takes both to be a good leader.

The book goes on to define Christian leadership by saying, "*Effective Christian leadership is the process of helping a congregation embody in its corporate life the practices that shape vital Christian life, community, and witness in ways that are faithful to Jesus Christ and the gospel and appropriate to the particular congregation's setting, resources, and purpose*" (p. 17).

Notice that this definition suggests leadership is a **process**. Recently, a

newly appointed denomination leader from overseas spent the day with me. He was most amazed at the intersection of leadership and teamwork— that working with a team includes both pre-planning on the part of the leader and a posture of listening to and serving the team members. Leadership truly is a process of balancing the authority provided with the need to serve others.

Finally, this 1989 publication posits one additional significant dynamic in Christian leadership: the role of the congregation. Far too often, we look for a charismatic leader upon whom we place all of our hopes. While we can point to mega-churches who rely upon such leaders, we can also recall situations where these leaders have taken a nosedive under the weight of these superhuman expectations.

Our churches need to focus on the mission that we all have been given. Church leaders and pew sitters alike need to follow the call of God, with the authority each of us has been given, striving to be servants of each other, while "fixing our eyes of Jesus, the pioneer and perfecter of faith" (Hebrews 12:2a).

STEVEN TIMMERMANS
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Candidacy Committee



Phil 3:20 tells us our citizenship is in heaven, not on earth. Our Reformed theology tells us we are all pilgrims on a journey. One way we are encountering and living into this reality in the CRCNA is through welcoming leaders and congregations of new immigrant groups into our denominational life and fellowship.

The Candidacy Committee is one tool of the denomination for such a welcome. In partnership with the Consejo Latino (a leadership group of Spanish speaking CRC leaders), the Candidacy Committee hosted a group of 14 Spanish speaking pastors and leaders to give them an opportunity to see the CRCNA and its ministries more closely.

The group itself represented five different national backgrounds. Their experience together helped each one build relationship with other Spanish speaking persons entering the CRC, and also with various denominational ministry leaders and current pastors. A highlight of the trip was a visit to Graafschap CRC (Holland, Michigan), where the history of the CRC is presented via a very engaging Heritage Center.

14 Spanish speaking pastors visited the Graafschap Heritage Center as part of their orientation to the CRC.

The group praised God for the welcome they received and the heritage they heard of. And we as a denominational ministry praise God for the ministry gifts represented by each of these persons. We indeed join together in a common story of ministering in the diversity of 21st-century North America.

DAVID KOLL
DIRECTOR OF CANDIDACY
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Chaplaincy and Care Ministry

In 77 years, Chaplaincy and Care Ministry has enabled chaplains to extend the Gospel and the church's ministry into the lives of people in crisis. Due to the specialized nature of their work, chaplains often work in isolated settings, requiring unique training, experience, and supervision.

In the past few years, we have seen more people going into chaplaincy. We currently endorse 145 active chaplains, and we are working with an additional 224 students and other prospective chaplains. While we are excited about this growth, it also presents a unique challenge to our two-person ministry staff.

Chaplaincy and Care Ministry supports chaplains through fellowship, training, and endorsement. This past year, 134 people attended our annual Chaplains Training, where they learned from dynamic speakers, shared resources, and built meaningful relationships. We also test-ran three local trainings for chaplains, and conducted thousands of interactions through meetings, email, and phone calls. Despite these efforts, our growing numbers make it challenging for us to be meaningfully present in our chaplains' ministry.

This year, our ministry looks to strengthen pastoral relationships with chaplains through a comprehensive communication and ministry plan. Our goal is to increase chaplain involvement through increased connection with our ministry, the church, and each other. We will be implementing survey feedback, revising our newsletter, and increasing our presence on social media. We will invite chaplains to participate in our ministry through sharing stories, posting resources, and engaging with each other. We have started a prayer network, and will be spending more time visiting chaplains and preaching at local churches. In October, we will start hosting monthly Zoom (video) meetings, which will give active chaplains opportunities for



Edmonton Chaplain Cluster Group Gathering in April 2019.

training, prayer, and sharing about their ministries. Through this plan, chaplains will be able to connect with each other, acquire more resources, and have more access to pastoral support.

Being an effective servant for Christ requires a strong community. Chaplaincy and Care Ministry recognizes the challenging work of CRCNA chaplains, and desires to build this community with them. Through meaningful connection, training, and pastoral support, we can enable chaplains to be there in the moments that matter.

SARAH ROELOFS
DIRECTOR, CHAPLAINCY & CARE MINISTRY
[CRCNA.ORG/CHAPLAINCY](https://crcna.org/chaplaincy)

Leadership Diversity

Is it possible to create a hospitable, caring space for women leaders - of all kinds - to engage in building relationships by sharing leadership challenges and growth experiences with each other? Can you imagine these sacred spaces via videoconferencing?

A vision for Women's Ministry Clusters (WMC) came about after a series of conversations listening to women in various leadership roles about developing leaders. We recognize that within the CRCNA there are two different perspectives and convictions on the issue of women in ecclesiastical office. Yet, in all of our churches there are women who provide leadership in some capacity. We also recognize that these women express feelings of isolation, disconnectedness, and a need to support each other in their leadership roles and callings.

We are reaching out to the broader community to complete a short survey in the *Get Involved* tab of the Women's Ministry website (crcna.org/womensministry) as part of our six-month experiment. The invitation says, "We want to connect with you! We are exploring the idea of virtual regional clusters to support leadership training events, hold discussions for planning women's celebrations, share resources, have times for prayer, and more. Take the first step by completing the form below." Respondents receive a confirmation email with details about the next Women's ministry cluster.

We began our first gathering by showing a video of CBS Today's interview with *Dare to Lead* author, Brene Brown, #1 New York Times and Wall Street Journal bestseller. We agreed to practice being vulnerable with each other. The following month, we had a generative discussion about "What ways God has been stretching you, and how you are responding." An emerging theme was *emotions*. That same day, Jacqui Mignault, a WMC participant from Calgary, Alberta, blogged about how God uses our emotions. We asked her to lead our next meeting. The story of Jacqui's experience and what she



A meet-up that took place during Inspire 2019 in Windsor, Ontario.

shared with our group is called "*Swollen Rivers and Welcoming Prayer*" and can be found on crcna.org/network. It has many views and Facebook shares. Praise the Lord! We had no idea this would happen, but the Lord did!

We envision monthly opportunities to support, empower, pray, and grow women leaders at all levels in our churches, classes and ministries, including the wives of church planters and pastors. We envision women affirming their callings, diversity in gifts, and life experiences. We envision women as if they were sitting together around a table having meaningful conversations and embracing their sisterhood in a sacred space! To God be the glory!

DENISE L. POSIE
DIRECTOR, LEADERSHIP DIVERSITY

Pastor Church Resources

Pastor Church Resources' (PCR) mission is to serve 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. We're doing that in a number of new ways.

Wellbeing for Pastors

Just last month, PCR hosted its first ever pastors' conference "Refreshed for the Call" in Calgary, Alberta. Attendees engaged in a variety of activities focusing on their wellbeing. They explored the findings of the *Flourishing in Ministry Study* and were encouraged to engage in a *wellbeing assessment*.

Thriving Together is a new five-year grant program for pastors going through times of transition: early in their 2nd call, later career, and wondering if it's time to move on to a new ministry setting. Gatherings, one-on-one mentoring, *vocational ministry assessments*, and grants for *mentoring groups* are some the program offerings.



PCR hosted its first ever pastors' conference in Calgary, Alberta. This group of attendees travelled to scenic Banff nearby.

Training for Elders, Deacons, and Councils

PCR staff is creating an online toolkit that will be a great resource for elders and deacons as they seek to fulfill their role serving their local church. Due to the short terms of service, usually three years, many new office bearers don't hit their stride until their term is almost over. The hope is that the toolkit will help onboard elders and deacons much more quickly allowing for more fruitful and healthy council experiences.

Legacy Churches

It's not news to most that church attendance is declining. For some churches, this means having some hard conversations about what's next. Engaging in the process can and should be a good and healthy experience. PCR is working with Resonate Global Missions to create a resource that will assist churches who are wrestling with *next steps questions*—which don't necessarily lead to a church closing.

Assignment from Synod 2019

PCR is working with Safe Church Ministry on synod's request to address abuse of power—which includes drafting a code of conduct. Training for our pastors and church leaders on this issue is utterly essential for us as a denomination and as part of the church of Jesus Christ.

CECIL VAN NIEJENHUIS AND LIS VAN HARTEN
DIRECTORS, PASTOR CHURCH RESOURCES
CPCNA.ORG/PCR

The Network



It's been almost 10 years since The Network (crcna.org/Network) set out to answer a simple question: What would happen if we created a space for people across the CRC to connect?

What if a deacon in Toronto could compare notes with a deacon in San Diego? What if worship planners, Sunday school teachers, and pastors could ask questions and share resources? What if all of us had a place to discuss ministry questions—both practical and big-picture?

If The Network is a tapestry, these questions are the first threads. Since the site first began, thousands of colorful threads have been added. Today, the site has over 60 different ministry topics that reflect the wide variety of roles and passions God has equipped us with. We are serving as elders, nursery coordinators, and small group leaders. We are planting churches, posting on Facebook, and serving coffee.

And as we serve, we are asking questions, discovering great tools, and learning as we go. And the best part? We're talking about these things on The Network. And the impact of this sharing can be seen, in part, in the numbers:

- Nearly 600 ministry questions have been posted (and over 95% have responses!).
- Each month dozens of new church and ministry positions are shared on the site.
- Monthly page views average 86,000 (with double-digit increases every year).

These numbers tell of a community that is active and growing. They are stories of individuals but also of the whole. And when we step back, we see questions and stories and resources coming together to create a vibrant tapestry. Like ministry, it's messy at times. But it's also beautiful because God is working in it and through it.

Would you add your voice? We'd love to answer any questions and help you get started.

STACI DEVRIES
CONTENT AND COMMUNITY MANAGER
CRCNA.ORG/NETWORK

People You Should Know

Candidacy – Need help with the candidacy process or want to nominate someone for one of Candidacy's programs? Contact David Koll at dkoll@crcna.org

Chaplaincy – Looking for support and resources to support your chaplain ministry? Want advice on the endorsement process? Contact Sarah Roelofs at sroelofs@crcna.org

Classis Renewal Consultant – Rev. Al Postma serves classes with direct support around ministry planning & renewal, as well as support for people serving in classis roles such as regional pastors, church visitors, mentors, stated clerks, church counselors, and others. apostma@crcna.org

Ministry Assessment Consultant – Rev. Samantha DeJong McCarron works with pastors who are exploring ministry fit. Vocational assessments bring clarity to the giftedness of a pastor and open the conversation about what kind of ministry makes that pastor's heart sing. sdejongmccarron@crcna.org

Pastoral Wellbeing – Including: Peer Group Grants, Flourishing in Ministry Study, Continuing Education Grants, and Pastors' Wives' Conference. Lis Van Harten lvanharten@crcna.org

Pastor Church Consultants – Rev. Cecil van Niejenhuis cvanniejenhuis@crcna.org and Rev. Dave Den Haan dendaan@crcna.org are able to assist pastors and church leaders in sorting through dynamics present in times of transition, discernment, and conflict by serving as consulting pastors who can help with practical wisdom and in navigating Church Order parameters.

Searching for a Pastor – Questions about accessing minister profiles, engaging the search process, and seeking interim pastors, may be directed to Kim Rankens. pastorchurch@crcna.org

Women's Leadership – Want to learn more about creating a culture in which, together, men and women thrive in using their gifts and callings in pursuit of God's mission in the world? Contact Denise Posie at dposie@crcna.org

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.