



transforming lives  
and communities  
worldwide

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### Abuse Prevention

The well-worn expression, “It takes a village...” applies to the ministry of Abuse Prevention. The ministry relies on a “village” of volunteers, colleagues and web sites to make resources and information available to individuals and to churches.

In the Abuse Prevention “village”, there is a network of seventeen Safe Church Teams across Canada and the US. With an average size of ten members, the teams represent nearly 170 volunteers who are able to provide assistance to churches through education or on an advisory panel.

Within many CR congregations, safe church committees dedicate their time to help their church reduce the risk of abuse and encourage safe practices among volunteers serving in youth ministry programs.

In the Abuse Prevention “village”, colleagues at Faith Alive Christian Ministries and other denominational offices help edit, coordinate, publish, design, ship, and web-post pages of information and resources so that

individuals and churches have access to a variety of materials in a more timely manner than ever before. Methods of design and implementation change, and materials produced for an event are handled more creatively and with greater speed than the year before – or the month before!

For an example of this widespread networking, check out Abuse Awareness 2008 on the web [www.crcna.org/order](http://www.crcna.org/order). Individuals and churches can order a wider array of materials and resources than ever before and most of it available by a click of a button into a virtual “shopping cart”.

### Chaplaincy Ministries

Chaplaincy Ministries transcends many boundaries both outside and within the Christian Reformed Church.

Our work takes us beyond the organizations of the CRCNA. Not only Calvin Theological Seminary, but other seminaries, and our colleges are contacted for recruitment. We contact every calling church, every classis, and every employer—civilian and military—for endorsement of chaplains for ministry.

We are in contact with The American Association of Pastoral Counselors, the Association of Clinical Pastoral Education, the Association of Professional Chaplains, the Canadian Association of Pastoral Practice and Education, and the Council on Collaboration when working toward standardization of credentialing our chaplains.

We meet annually with the Association of Religious Endorsing Bodies and the National Conference on Ministry in the Armed Forces when setting standards and reviewing best practices for endorsers. We also provide interviews with major newspapers on issues facing the chaplaincy.

We meet regularly with the Chiefs of Chaplains from the Armed Forces in the U.S. and Canada. We work with the Offices of Corrections to place chaplains in the prison systems at both the federal and state levels.

We also interface with agencies housed in the denominational building. The CRWRC received and used pictures from one of our chaplains who was on an aircraft carrier when the tsunami hit Indonesia. We work closely

with the Office of Social Justice on restorative justice and issues of peace and war. We work with Home Missions to plant churches in prisons. We work with specialized ministries on several levels. We send material to *The Banner* and other CRCNA publications for publicity and public policy.

Chaplaincy Ministries has no problem transcending boundaries. It is a necessary part of our responsibilities.

### Disability Concerns

At a meeting of disability concerns volunteers in Michigan several years ago, it was suggested that a workshop on disability and ministry would be good to plan. The group agreed, and several volunteered to help.

Not content to have only people from disability concerns involved, representatives from the Gray Center (which specializes in autism) and the CLC Network (which specializes in inclusive Christian education) were also invited to participate. It was recognized that inviting people from other organizations would make the conference better for several reasons—providing greater expertise for planning, extending the network of people we could contact for presentations, and enlisting broader support for the workshop by tapping into different audiences.

The workshop, called One Body Together in Christ, had over 140 participants the first year and over 160 participants the second year. That second year, Friendship Ministries (a one-on-one Christian education ministry) also became part of the planning team.

The four organizations worked together to receive a grant from Calvin Institute of Christian Worship to co-sponsor the workshop and partner with a number of local churches throughout the year. This fall, we anticipate hosting over 200 people at the workshop by teaming up with Western Theological Seminary and with the National Council of Churches in Christ Committee on Disabilities.

Dozens of churches from many different denominations have been blessed with greater motivation for and knowledge of inclusive ministry thanks to invitations which broadened the circle.

Disability Concerns continues to find ways to connect with churches and other organizations for effective ministry. For example, our newsletter, *Breaking Barriers*, is now available in Spanish (*Rompiendo Barreras*) on our website ([www.CRCDisabilityConcerns.org](http://www.CRCDisabilityConcerns.org)).

Please let us know how we can partner with your congregation by contacting us at 888-463-0272 or at [disabilityconcerns@crcna.org](mailto:disabilityconcerns@crcna.org).

### Dynamic Youth Ministries

**Calvinist Cadet Corps:** God continues to bless the ministry of the Calvinist Cadet Corps as it spreads through Africa. The number of Cadet clubs in Kenya with North American sponsors grew from six last year to

fifteen this year. A training session taking place in July promises to add more, as interest grows.

This is also the year for the Cadets' triennial international camporee, and registrations indicate that it will be the third largest in a 42-year history of such events. The men and boys are traveling to private land about 150 miles north of Toronto for a week of wilderness experience. Please pray that God will be glorified through the camporee and throughout the ministry.

**GEMS Girls' Clubs:** In May, a team of GEMS trainers and staff returned to Zambia, Africa to train more women to serve as GEMS counselors, start more GEMS Clubs, visit the children in the orphan home that GEMS helped build, and look for land for a school, library, and a GEMS Service Center. To date 28 clubs have been started in Africa and over 1,000 girls meet with their counselors every Saturday morning in five different areas of Zambia. We thank God that he has given us the privilege of joining him in his work in Zambia.

In August, 625 women from the US and Canada will meet in Asheville, NC to celebrate God's faithfulness to this ministry throughout the last 50 years and to receive inspiration and training in ministry. We look forward to this special opportunity to praise and worship God and to offer our collective thanksgiving for what he has done.

**Youth Unlimited:** Summer has arrived which means Youth Unlimited is in its favorite and busiest time of year. This summer, youth and leaders at SERVE, ENCOUNTER and the Young Calvinist Convention will identify and experience how they can impact the communities around them and across the world. Participants will learn how to put their faith into action and care for the needs of others so they can be in a place to feel God's grace and see his power as they live for him. These events will take place as far south as Mexico, as far north as Canada, as far west as California and as far east as Africa.

With great anticipation we look forward to the stories that will come from these experiences because of our belief in God and his desire to use the local church and their youth to further his kingdom.

### Faith Alive Christian Resources

**The Banner:** Every household *Banner* is a great example of collaboration among the CRC agencies. When the decision was made to send *The Banner* free to every CRC household, it incorporated a plan whereby eight pages of the magazine (the *Church @ Work* section) would be allocated to coverage of agency ministry news rather than the former practices of creating a separate publication (*CRC Source*) and of agencies creating their own newsletters. Check out Bob's Blog on the *Banner* website!

**Other products:** As Faith Alive plans for products, it often approaches other organizations to consider co-publishing options. Some examples:

- The *Worship Sourcebook* was co-published by Faith Alive, the Calvin Institute of Christian Worship and Baker Book House.
- The course for youth titled *Fossils and Faith* was co-published by Faith Alive and Christian Schools International.
- The bi-denominational hymnal currently being developed will be co-published by Faith Alive and the Reformed Church in America.

**Organizational collaboration:** Faith Alive has also developed win-win partnerships with several other organizations. Among them are the following:

- Through a partnership agreement with the RCA, Faith Alive has become the resource provider for the RCA as well as the CRC.
- Through other partnership agreements, a number of Faith Alive's products are endorsed and promoted by the Evangelical Presbyterian Church and by Presbyterians For Renewal, an evangelical group of churches within the Presbyterian Church USA.
- More recently, the Presbyterian Church USA has agreed to carry our *Friendship* and *Kid Connection* curricula.

All these partnerships have helped Faith Alive staff gain new perspectives on providing resources for churches and, we believe, have enriched our ministry.

### Pastor Church Relations

Pastor- Church Relations (PCR) works with congregations and church leaders throughout the denomination. Its mandate is to be actively engaged outside the physical boundaries of its office – serving, interacting, educating, and intervening.

In recent years there have been further extensions of our ministry:

- In cooperation with the Sustaining Pastoral Excellence program, there has been a growing outreach to the spouses of pastors, seeking to support and give them an opportunity to interface with one another.
- PCR has expanded its work with pastors by interacting with candidates for ministry before they receive their first calls. In this way they meet the staff of PCR and can be introduced to the availability of denominational ministries. On the other end of ministry careers, PCR has become active in planning programs for retirement.
- There has been greater initiative to define the roles of ministry staff throughout the denomination. Closely related to this is the greater emphasis on the place of Ministry Associates in the CRCNA, and the role of PCR in responding to them.

The CRCNA represents churches in a broad geographical area and has developed ways of

responding the needs of congregations and church leaders in a collaborative mode.

### Service Link

The 2008-09 fiscal year marks ServiceLink's 14<sup>th</sup> year as the volunteer program of the Christian Reformed Church in Canada. It was begun in 1995 as a collaborative effort between agencies and programs based out of the Canadian denominational office and today continues to work in partnership with various ministries – in Canada as well as beyond our national borders.

Volunteer opportunities are designed with the intent of building partnerships and relationships between individuals and communities that will enhance mutual learning and collaboration of efforts towards a common goal. Positive relationships allow for richness in serving and for understanding how the body of Christ functions outside one's own experiences.

Time and again volunteers return from assignments sharing how God provided them with meaningful moments when people from different races and backgrounds came together through the working of the Holy Spirit. One such group member who traveled to Nicaragua shared it this way. "I firmly believe that from time to time, God by his grace allows us brief glimpses of heaven; all we need to do is pay attention." A celebration event had been planned for their team as they were ending their time in a small village. "This celebration was one of those times. The village opened their homes and hearts to us. They fed us, they worshipped with us, they celebrated a team members' birthday with us -- they prayed for us and our church back home. The entire event was a moving experience for us all."

As God's people move beyond the norm of everyday living, transcending boundaries never before encountered, he brings them closer to the fullness of his kingdom.

### CRWRC

Do you recall the scene from the movie "Charlotte's Web," where Charlotte nimbly and artfully leaps and connects threads to construct a beautiful web? CRWRC is engaged in this dance daily, building a web of relationships, building the "power of one community." Sometimes the connections made are quick and artful; sometimes there is clumsiness and bureaucracy. At the end of the day, though, the web is there, glowing as a testimony to God's grace and love, and to his perseverance with his servants.

One such web shines today in Banda Aceh, Indonesia, more than three years after the tsunami in December 2004. CRWRC Canadian director Ida Kaastra Mutoigo and Relief Program Manager Grace Wiebe recently traveled to Banda Aceh, where CRWRC (thanks to the outpouring of support from Christian Reformed churches in North America) engaged in relief work, building homes and restoring livelihoods.

Through collaboration with a number of agencies (including Tearfund UK, Mennonite Central Committee, and the Canadian International Development Agency), CRWRC's intervention multiplied. CRWRC's operating arm in Banda Aceh was instituted as GenAssist—operated entirely by staff from Indonesia. Without this web of relief, despair may not have been overcome by hope and compassion. Ida writes: "One leader from Lhoong... wondered if anyone in the world cared for them... but when he heard a helicopter swooping overhead, he knew they were not alone. They consulted their religious leaders and were assured that it was alright to receive help from outside." You see, the people in need of relief are as much a part of the web of relationships as the agencies, organizations, and churches!

### **Partners Worldwide**

To collaborate means "to work with one another." Partners Worldwide is an international business ministry that focuses on connecting businesspeople together in partnerships to "collaborate" on creating jobs to end poverty. Partners Worldwide works closely with CRWRC to facilitate synergy between economic empowerment and community development that can strategically accelerate and intensify sustainable economic and social change in the community.

Partners Worldwide and CRWRC staff and volunteers work together to help build capacity in the resources, relationships, responsibilities and rewards of partner groups—both in the business sector and in the developing communities we work in. A key aspect of our relationship is the importance of networking for strategic learning and cooperation among stakeholders for community transformation.

Partners Worldwide is also involved in a multi-agency task force with CRWRC and World Missions addressing the need to more effectively equip churches that are looking to engage in cross-cultural partnerships. The work of this group is a great example of how cross-functional ministries of the Christian Reformed Church are working together to provide local churches with the tools and resources they need for transforming lives and communities worldwide.

### **Calvin College**

Calvin transcends boundaries through its strong international programs on and off campus. Collaborations with World Missions, Home Missions and CRWRC enrich the college and the church and give students and faculty a strong sense of partnership with the church.

In 2007, Calvin was one of four colleges and universities nationwide to be awarded the prestigious Senator Paul B. Simon Award for Internationalizing the Campus. The goal of equipping students to participate in and shape the world community requires that global and cultural understanding permeate every area of college

life, including the hiring of faculty, recruitment of students and design of the curriculum.

Diversity among international students has increased significantly over the past decade. Calvin also understands the need for hands-on learning experiences in global education.

Sixty percent of seniors study overseas at least once during their time at Calvin. The semester in Spain began in 1983, and other programs have blossomed with semesters now in China (with CRCWM), England, Honduras (with CRWRC), Hungary, Ghana, Spain, and France, as well as in New Mexico and Washington D.C. There are also internship opportunities in developing countries. The January interim takes hundreds of students to places around the world each year. Recently, Calvin was named in the Open Doors Report as fourth among baccalaureate institutions for the number of students studying abroad.

Calvin students held the third annual Faith and International Development Conference on campus in late January with participation of over 400 students from the U.S. and Canada. Speakers included Ida Mutoigo, the Canadian director of CRWRC.

The two fastest growing majors at Calvin College are pre-seminary and international development. This trend is largely due to the strong passion and experience of students in global matters and justice issues, as well as enhanced programs in Christian formation on campus.

We are grateful to our partners in the CRC for their strong support of these excellent partnerships.

### **Back to God Ministries International**

Early this summer, The Back to God Hour underwent a change of name. At the June meeting of synod, The Back to God Hour became Back to God Ministries International (BTGMI). Why the change? So that the agency's name might better reflect the full scope of the agency's mission.

BTGMI, as its name implies, is committed to an international multi-media ministry that both broadcasts the gospel and disciples those who respond to the gospel call. In order to empower our ministry, collaborative partnerships are critically important.

Collaboration begins close to home as BTGMI works with other CRCNA agencies in gospel witness. The most recent example is our partnership with Christian Reformed World Missions in the launch of a new follow-up center in Port-au-Prince to handle listener responses to radio broadcasting within Haiti.

Whenever possible, BTGMI also links with international denominational partners. The Reformed Church of Japan, the Christian Indonesian Church, and the Presbyterian Church of Brazil have joined with us in media ministry within their respective countries.

We have also developed strong partnerships with other media ministries. Most notable is our outreach to the Middle East. Middle East Reformed Fellowship (MERF) and Words of Hope (RCA) join us in broadcasting the gospel in the Arabic language. In international English broadcasting, BTGMI has joined

with Words of Hope and FEBA Radio of the United Kingdom to produce simple English programs that communicate to those for whom English is a second language.

BTGMI is also interested in developing new partnerships at the congregational level. The English language division of BTGMI is pilot testing new programs which will help congregations use media effectively to reach their own communities. More information will be made available on this program in the coming year.

Thank you for your partnership in the gospel as together we share the message of good news to the world!

### Home Missions

Collaboration is at the heart of Christian Reformed Home Missions, because partnerships with CRC classes, congregations, ministries, and ministry leaders impact every facet of our work.

Increasingly, collaboration is evident in new church development. Home Missions is strengthening this ministry area by becoming more involved in inter-denominational networks and coalitions. "Collaboration isn't just an option, it is the necessary path of the future," says Rev. Jul Medenblik, who leads the Church Planting and Development Leadership Team (CPDLT). Specifically, the CPDLT has been involved with other denominations in the development and use of a church planter assessment tool offered online through Gallup Press. Additionally, a number of home missions ministry teams have investigated or are already using an assessment center offered through Green Lake Training Center in Wisconsin.

In early 2008, the Home Missions Great Lakes Church Planting and Development team attended the Global Church Advancement (GCA) church planting Boot Camp, which provides resources, guidelines, and solid Biblical and theological foundations for those considering the call to church planting. In response to its participation in the boot camp, the Home Missions Great Lakes Ministry Team is seeking to strengthen its regular gathering of regional church planters, using some of the teachings and curriculum resources of GCA.

These gatherings will be called Ravah—the Hebrew word for fresh water. "Our prayer is that the support, prayer, and coaching received in and through these gatherings may strengthen our planters and their ministries in our region," says Ben Becksvoort, Team Leader for the Great Lakes Ministry Team.

Elsewhere, Home Missions Director of Ministry Teams Allen Likkel is collaborating with a group called Ecumenical Partners, which consists of

denominations including the Evangelical Lutheran Church of America, the Missouri Synod Lutheran, the Episcopal Church, the Presbyterian Church USA, the United Church of Christ, the Reformed Church of America, the Christian Church-Disciples of Christ, the Moravian Church, and the CRC.

Together, Likkel and representatives from these denominations completed a Lilly Foundation-funded research project on church planting effectiveness. This research resulted in a book, *Extraordinary Leaders for Extraordinary Times*.

### World Missions

Christian Reformed World Missions (CRWM) is in the process of a transformation in which it continues to search for and find ways to link its long-time experience on the mission field with the work of Christian Reformed Churches.

"Collaboration" is a watchword for what CRWM has been all about in the last few years, says Joel Hogan, CRWM's director of International Ministries. "We rewrote our mission, vision, and values statement. We have identified what we see for our preferred partnerships." Joel says a key part of the agency's future will be involved in "working together and with people all over the world."

Among other things, CRWM has made it a point to invite representatives of other CRC agencies to take part in its strategic planning process. By seeing what CRWM is planning to do, other agencies have a chance to participate in current efforts or to join with CRWM to develop new ministries. One such partnership is a joint effort with Back to God Ministries International in training church workers in Indonesia.

But partnerships aren't limited to CRC agencies. CRWM also links with individual congregations in ministry. For instance, it is helping a church in Iowa to send translators to Laos and has joined with a church in the Hudsonville, Mich. area to help build churches and others ministry facilities in Haiti.

"It is a new day," said Hogan. "Jesus gave his commission to the entire church not just to us as an agency."