



Christian
Reformed
Church

2019 Issue 4

Living the Call

A REPORT FROM THE CHRISTIAN REFORMED CHURCH IN NORTH AMERICA

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)

FAITH FORMATION

From the Executive Director's Desk

Prior to becoming executive director of the CRCNA, I served in Christian higher education. These experiences proved to me that this time in young people's lives is critical to their faith formation. At both Calvin University and Trinity Christian College, I witnessed the formative influences these institutions provide their students.

While it is true that similar effects happen in other universities through chaplains, InterVarsity, Cru, and other co-curricular campus ministries, the beauty of Christian colleges is that the classroom and the co-curriculum provide the same, consistent influence.

Consider, for example, the two times I was blessed to lead semester-long, off-campus experiences in Rehoboth, New Mexico. During these trips I witnessed the rich learning that occurred as students began to understand more deeply the 100+ years of the CRC's mission work among Navajo and Zuni people.

Imagine my delight this summer when one of those former Calvin students was a delegate to Synod! While it wouldn't be correct to infer that an off-campus semester was the only cause of her becoming a Synod delegate, I suspect the rich tapestry of learning experiences—including off-campus study—as a Calvin student helped shape her to a mature faith. This, in turn, has resulted in local church leadership.

A second off-campus learning experience is also worth sharing. This one didn't

take the form of an entire semester, nor did it require going far away. At Trinity, we participated in an initiative of the *White House's Office of Faith-Based and Neighborhood Partnerships*. This service-learning experience stretched over a number of semesters, and saw Trinity students working side by side with Muslim university students in a project to develop a cycling and walking path in the community.

We surveyed the students before and after their experience. One of the questions was related to their faith commitment. The results were impressive. They clearly showed that this interfaith experience for the Trinity students deepened their faith!

As a young person moves from the teen years into young adulthood, the college experience is a critical component of faith formation. As the foundational influence of family broadens to include the significant influence of so many others—professors, resident assistants, peers—our support of Calvin University and the other Reformed colleges and universities leads to the shaping and forming of lives for leadership in the church and in society.

The following pages outline some of the wonderful faith formation ministries taking place across our denomination for people of all ages. I hope you will find them helpful.

BY STEVEN TIMMERMANS,
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Calvin University

This summer, Calvin College became Calvin University, a change that's part of an exciting vision which aims to extend Calvin's reach, while deepening its roots. All of this is being done so that more learners can be equipped to think deeply, to act justly, and to live wholeheartedly as Christ's agents of renewal in the world. Students learning how their faith influences how they think, act, and live has and will continue to remain central to our mission and true to our Reformed tradition.

So the "why" (our mission) will certainly not change. It's the "what" we offer, "whom" we serve, and "how" we do this work that has and will continue to evolve moving forward.

As Calvin pursues an exciting vision of becoming a liberal arts university with an expanded global influence that is seen as a trusted partner for learning across religious and cultural differences and throughout the academy, the church, and the world, we are focusing on four goals.

Embody a faithful and engaged Reformed Christianity

We will continue to be shaped by Reformed Christian confessions, as faculty, students, and staff engage with Christians across the nation and around the globe to live out their faith in fresh ways. This means we will further invest in our faculty and staff to make sure they are well trained at showing students how their Reformed faith engages with all areas of culture.

Grow student enrollment by diversifying academic offerings

To extend the reach of our mission, we will attract new students by offering a range of programs and services, degrees, and credentials. We are thinking strategically about how we best serve people across a lifetime, with programming that goes beyond the undergraduate level.



Collaborate to enhance learning

To engage the complex challenges of the modern world, we will encourage collaboration that bridges academic disciplines and fosters external partnerships. We see opportunity for more transdisciplinary learning and research and to strengthen our institutional commitment with local and global partners.

Build spaces that inspire learning and promote community

By investing in our learning environments, we will support a thriving educational community that promotes the well-being of people and creation. We see opportunities to create spaces where learning, community, and spiritual formation happen through chance encounters.

Again, all of this work is being done so that we are equipping students to be Christ's agents of renewal in all areas of culture, all over the world. To learn more about Calvin University's vision for the future, visit calvin.edu/vision2030/

DR. MICHAEL LE ROY
PRESIDENT, CALVIN COLLEGE
CALVIN.EDU

Faith Formation Ministries

How can churches walk with kids, teens, and adults on their life-long, life-wide faith journeys?

Faith Formation Ministries (FFM) helps CRC church leaders, ministry volunteers, and families find creative pathways toward growing in faith and becoming more like Jesus.

Regional catalyzers provide free coaching, workshops, and other opportunities for church leaders. Other team members support children's ministry, youth ministry, and *Dwell* curriculum users. And we curate and create practical, budget-friendly resources that churches and families can use.

This past year much of our work focused on family faith formation and on planning for a *Dwell* children's ministry curriculum refresh. Here are some snapshots of how we supported CRC churches in those two areas.

Family faith formation support

- Developed a free online Family Faith Formation toolkit for church leaders (crcna.org/FaithFormation/toolkits).
- Released *Everyday Family Faith*, a unique, interactive family devotional (FaithAliveResources.org).
- Released *Dear Parent*, a book on the basics of family faith formation (FaithAliveResources.org).
- Led a cohort of eight CRC churches who planned new family faith formation initiatives.
- Led a variety of family faith formation workshops at CRC churches.



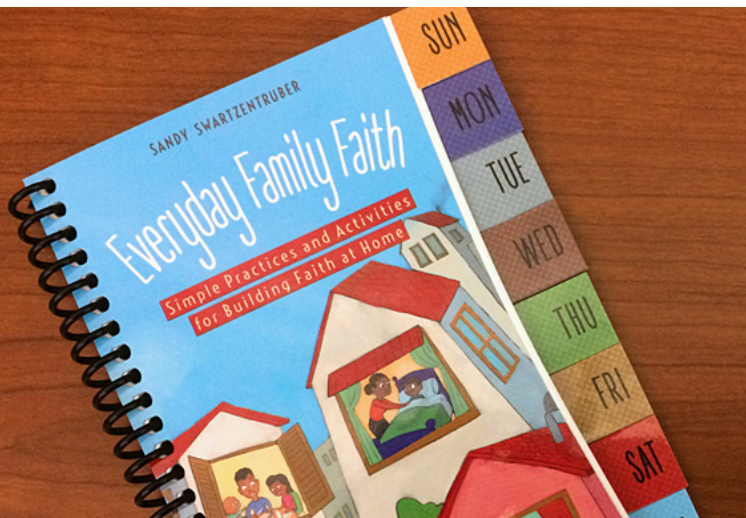
Dwell curriculum support

FFM is responsible for overseeing the ongoing refreshing of the CRC's *Dwell* children's ministry curriculum. This past year FFM

- hired Jill Benson to serve as the denomination's *Dwell* Curriculum Coordinator.
- developed *Dwell* Digital to give subscribing churches enhanced digital access to the curriculum and, eventually, access to new lesson content and training opportunities.
- began planning for an ongoing refresh of the *Dwell* curriculum, including a new series of resources to connect church and home.

We are thankful for the opportunity to serve and support CRC churches and ministry leaders as together we live out our calling of faith formation!

DR. CHRIS SCHOON
DIRECTOR, FAITH FORMATION MINISTRIES
CRCNA.ORG/FAITHFORMATION



People You Should Know



Mary Hulst was a keynote speaker at Inspire 2019 where she shared about “Raising Up the Next Generation of Leaders.” You can listen to her address at <https://network.crcna.org/crcna-and-synod/inspire-2019-audio-recordings>

Calvin Chaplain

Mary Hulst has served as Calvin University’s chaplain since 2009. She lectures around the country on preaching, teaches workshops for preachers, and consults with churches and search committees on how to listen to sermons. Her book *A Little Handbook for Preachers* was released in 2016. In 2018, Hulst presented “Why Millennials Are the Hope of the Church” at the January Series. In that talk, she offered a list of questions churches should be asking their millennial attendees. <https://calvin.edu/directory/series/mary-hulst>

Calvin Prison Initiative

Todd Cioffi is the co-director of the Calvin Prison Initiative, a partnership between Calvin University and Calvin Theological Seminary that offers up to 20 inmates in the Michigan Department of Corrections each year an opportunity to earn a bachelor’s degree in ministry leadership. Cioffi also is a professor at Calvin, with expertise in the areas of systematic theology, philosophy, Christian ethics, and religion and politics. <https://calvin.edu/directory/people/todd-v-cioffi>

Children’s Ministry Catalyzer

Mimi Larson (childrensministry@crcna.org) is available to assist CRC children’s ministry leaders with their questions and challenges and provide helpful resources and tools.

Dwell Curriculum Coordinator

Jill Benson, dwell@crcna.org. Jill plans and manages the ongoing refreshing of the CRC’s *Dwell* children’s ministry curriculum, assists with building a vibrant *Dwell* user community, and provides helpful resources and training tools.

Faith Formation Ministries Regional Catalyzers

Regional Catalyzers (RCs) have one goal: to help you strengthen the faith formation efforts of your congregation. Our Regional Catalyzers are experienced ministry leaders who are here to encourage and equip your church’s faith formation leaders, lead workshops, and connect you with helpful ministry resources. Find your church’s RC at crcna.org/FaithFormation/coaching.

The Banner

Got a news tip? Email news@thebanner.org. Got a Big Question you want answered, a letter to the editor, a feature suggestion, or a submission? Email info@thebanner.org

Youth Ministry Catalyzer

Ron DeVries, (youthministry@crcna.org) is available to help CRC youth ministry leaders with youth ministry issues and provide helpful resources and tools. Ron also oversees the CRC’s network of Youth Ministry Champions.

Youth Ministry Champions

Faith Formation Ministries oversees a growing network of Youth Ministry Champions. Each champion connects to a classis to empower and encourage youth ministry workers and to serve as a voice on behalf of youth leaders at classis. Visit crcna.org/youth to find the Youth Ministry Champion for your classis.

Tools You Can Use

Calvin Institute of Christian Worship — The CICW is an interdisciplinary study and ministry center located at Calvin University and Calvin Theological Seminary. CICW offers a wide range of practical resources and scholarly works for congregational leaders, pastors, teachers of worship, students, artists, and all interested in worship. These resources serve as tools for preparing, planning for, and leading worship as well as for studying the history, theology, and practice of worship worldwide. The website provides free resources primarily in the form of articles, audio files, slideshow and video presentations, plus links to purchase Worship Institute books, cds, and hymnals.

Calvin Shorts — Calvin Shorts is a series for global Christians who want to understand God's world better. Each book examines a single topic and suggests ways to think and act faithfully. These books are great for discussion in small groups, book clubs, and in classroom settings. Titles include: *Christians and Cultural Difference*, *Disability and Inclusive Communities*, and *Sport.Faith.Life.*, among other topics. calvin.edu/press/calvin-shorts/

Centers & Institutes — Calvin's centers and institutes provide the time and space for scholars to pursue robust study and research in their fields. These centers for learning further the mission of the university, contribute to local, national, and global conversations on a variety of issues from preaching to politics, and can be useful for congregations and individuals as well. calvin.edu/academics/centers-institutes/

Dear Parent: A Guide for Family Faith Formation by Laura Keeley and Robert J. Keeley — This booklet will help parents lay the groundwork for faith formation in their family. It's based on four Building Blocks of Faith. Each chapter ends with discussion or thought questions, ideas for living the chapter topic out in the family, and a short resource list. Visit FaithAliveResources.org to order.

Dwell Sunday School Curriculum — *Dwell* can help God's big story come alive for the kids in your church. Visit DwellCurriculum.org for more information including samples, scope and sequence, and a video tour. And teachers now have full access to all leader resources in the entire curriculum with a subscription to the new *Dwell* Digital.

Digital Library — The Digital Library gives free, online access for CRC churches and members to hundreds of Faith Alive Christian Resources titles—including curriculum, Bible studies, and more. With the Digital Library, made possible by your church's support of Ministry Shares, you and everyone in your church can access hundreds of resources in a more convenient way—any time of the day or night, from anywhere, on any device connected to the web.

Everyday Family Faith: Simple Practices and Activities for Building Faith at Home by Sandy Swartzentruber — Looking for ways to strengthen family faith formation in your church? This family faith pocket guide provides simple, do-able ideas that help families build natural faith habits at home. Visit FaithAliveResources.org to order.

Faith Alive 2018-2020 Catalog — Visit FaithAliveResources.org/Catalog to download your own copy of the new Faith Alive catalog or to order a print copy. This catalog features products that support faith formation for people of all ages, from preschoolers to adults, including

- children's ministry and Sunday school curriculum
- youth group resources
- small group studies
- resources for worship planning
- products to support church leaders
- and much more!

Family Faith Formation Toolkit — This online resource collection will help your church develop a vision for family faith formation and equip parents and caregivers with practices and resources. Visit crcna.org/FaithFormation/toolkits to view.

The Banner — The Banner, an award-winning magazine of the CRCNA, is free to anyone who wants it. Visit thebanner.org/signup or call 800-777-7270 to subscribe. You can also visit thebanner.org/free-resources and search their collections of articles under a variety of topics including Just for Kids, the Reformation, Abuse of Power, and Reformed Basics

Faith Formation At Classis

When Classis California South went through a recent renewal & restructuring, they decided that one of the core values they would organize around was “equipping churches to help followers of Christ grow in every stage of their walk.” By bringing in workshop leaders and spending time intentionally exploring how God is calling each person and congregation to grow, the classis itself provided the sort of space where discipleship and faith formation can be strengthened in the churches. For those reading this digitally, check out their overview video at this link: [Classis CA South](#)

In the last few years, many classes have been finding new ways to support faith formation among churches and members. Classis Arizona hosted a discipleship conference at the Village Church in Tucson, giving participants a chance to hear the Village Church’s story more in depth, learn about their approach to discipling, and wonder how God might work in each church’s unique context. They also hired a Discipleship Coordinator for the classis churches as part of their strategic plan.

Classis Pacific Northwest hosted an “Atonement Summit” with a theology professor from Calvin Seminary to dig into how the church understands Christ’s work on the cross. And Classis Grand Rapids East will be co-hosting a conference in February 2020 with Ruth Haley Barton, author



Classis Red Mesa has been hosting the Cottonwood Pass Bible Conference for nearly 100 years.

of books such as *Strengthening the Soul of Your Leadership*, to explore the faith formative journey that serving in the church can be.

Classis Red Mesa is coming close to celebrating a century of hosting the Cottonwood Pass Bible conference which offers leadership development, a time of rest and reflection, and space for the community to share their faith with one another.

These are simply a few examples of the many ways that, as a network of churches, classis is living into its strategic place of supporting faith formation within the CRC.

Want to Learn More?

Stay up-to-date on what the CRCNA is doing in Faith Formation 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 “Faith Formation”, or review available resources

- **Find Resources** — Search thousands of resources available at crcna.org/resources

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