



Christian
Reformed
Church

2018 Issue 3

Living the Call

A REPORT FROM THE CHRISTIAN REFORMED CHURCH IN NORTH AMERICA

GOSPEL PROCLAMATION AND WORSHIP

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

Serving on worship planning teams at two Christian Reformed congregations where we were previously members taught my wife and me that worship planning is both daunting and satisfying. It is challenging to find songs and liturgical components appropriate for the biblical text from which the pastor's message is still emerging. It is also rewarding when, after the service, it is clear that the Holy Spirit has woven it all together in ways that bring glory to God and edify the worshippers.

I have seen similar evidence of God's hand when I consider my journey as a worship planner over these years. Many of the signposts along my journey that have directed my path and shown me God's leading can be found in publications.

Imagine the delight I experienced when the *Sing! A New Creation Leaders' Edition* arrived in 2002. Percussion rhythms were included. Sign language cues were provided for more than 30 songs. Songs from around the globe were included—with nearly a dozen different languages. It was a worship planner's dream.

Soon afterward, *The Worship Sourcebook* arrived. This tool included prayers, responsive readings, opening words of worship, and responsive readings related to biblical texts. It provided resources for Advent, Christmas, Epiphany, Lent, Palm Sunday, Maundy Thursday, Good

Friday, Easter and other celebrations in the Christian year. This was a worship planner's paradise.

Next, in a span of about five years, came three new songbooks. *Singing the New Testament* provided new as well as familiar hymns coordinated with biblical texts. Then, *Psalms for All Seasons* was published, giving us new encouragement to rely upon the Psalms in our worship. And finally, five years ago, *Lift Up Your Hearts* made its debut, a comprehensive collection of music for worship. It was a worship planner's joy.

Notice that the signposts on this journey are resources, not textbooks. There's not one form of worship that fits all congregations and contexts. Relying on ancient and historic patterns as well as Reformed understandings of covenantal worship, these worship tools are sources to draw from, whether your church has traditional, blended, contemporary, or still another form of worship.

Gospel proclamation and worship are central to who we are as a Christian Reformed Church. To equip local congregations in this core calling, the CRCNA and its partners, such as the Calvin Institute of Christian Worship, continue to provide resources for hundreds of congregations. Thanks be to God!

BY STEVEN TIMMERMANS,
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Worship Ministries



Worship Ministries had its official beginning in 2016 with this vision: *“that every worshipping community in the Christian Reformed Church in North America experience Spirit-filled gospel proclamation and worship that is directed to God, is biblically based and theologically Reformed, and is characterized by creativity, discernment, spiritual vitality, the faith formation of all worshipers, and a call to serve others.”*

I could write a book unpacking all of that, but here is the challenge: our worshipping communities sound and look very different from each other. To help us, as staff, understand that diversity and minister effectively within it, we pulled together a team of regional representatives that is about as diverse in age, geography, worship style, context, and ethnicity as is possible with a small group.

While we can easily identify the differences in our worship, we believe that this vision is the basis for our unity, the foundation on which our worship is built.

But how do we work toward realizing that vision? We believe it boils down to making sure that every worship leader in our church (which includes, planners, pastors, musicians, artists, and technicians to start) has a supportive network of colleagues, and is equipped for their calling.

More specifically, we look for opportunities for worship leaders to gather for mutual encouragement in person and online. We offer Peer Learning Groups, free webinars that are recorded and available 24/7, and we publish the quarterly resource *Reformed Worship*. New initiatives include the support of an affordable, fully online, Certificate of Worship Leadership.

Worship in the CRC has changed significantly in the last generation. Today much of our worship planning and leadership is done by non-ordained staff or volunteers. These men and women have been given the holy and priestly task of leading us in the worship of our Triune God.

They put words on our lips and in our hearts. They are responsible for a song diet that will form our faith and our imaginations. They put together the words spoken and the prayers prayed, which become our spiritual vocabulary and habits. These words teach us how to understand our relationship with God, with others, and the world.

Our worship leaders also organize schedules, plan and lead rehearsals, know how to work with technology, comply with copyright law, navigate the large worship repertoire available, deal with group dynamics and manage conflicts. Theirs is a pastoral and technical task, and yet many have little preparation or support to accomplish it.

It is a privilege as Worship Ministries staff and regional volunteers to support them.

REV. JOYCE BORGER
DIRECTOR, WORSHIP MINISTRIES

Calvin Theological Seminary

Calvin Seminary's mission is to form disciples who will form communities of disciples for Jesus Christ throughout the world.

On May 19, 2018, Calvin Theological Seminary graduated sixty students, who come from twelve different countries, making an impact down the street and across the world.

Serving Latino/a Leaders – Two New Online Courses in Spanish

In the fall, Dr. Avila will teach a completely online course in Spanish on Ephesians, followed by an Old Testament course, also in Spanish, in the spring. Online courses allow persons to live, work and minister where they are, while receiving a Calvin Seminary education through a cohort-based class model. Until now, our online and hybrid courses were only available in English. Institutional support allows us to offer the Spanish language courses at a significant discount. Register for these masters level courses by emailing ministeriolatino@calvinseminary.edu.

Loving Your Neighbor Conference: Ministry Among Migrants, Immigrants and Refugees

Two years ago, Calvin Seminary held a "Loving Your Neighbor" conference that was well received by those who attended or later viewed sessions. This summer, July 30-August 1, the conference returns again, with a focus on ministry among migrants, immigrants and refugees. Dr. Paul Lim from Vanderbilt University will be our keynote speaker, and will be joined by other prominent thinkers, including Dr. Matt Kaemingk who will share from his latest book, *Christian Hospitality and Muslim Immigration in an Age of Fear*. To register, visit calvinseminary.edu/neighbor

Why Attend a Seminary? Why Attend Calvin Theological Seminary? New Forum Issue!

What does it mean to be called to ministry? How does a seminary equip people for that calling? How do we connect the church and the classroom together in training leaders of the church? Those questions and



more are the theme of a special edition of the *Forum*, a semi-annual magazine that addresses questions and themes being discussed at the local church by providing theological content and thought surrounding these themes. The spring issue will focus on the theme of "Church Discipline". Browse archived versions of the *Forum* at calvinseminary.edu

Center for Excellence in Preaching (CEP) – Not Just for Preachers!

For thirteen years the Center for Excellence in Preaching, directed by Rev. Scott Hoezee, has sponsored seminars and workshops to help preachers and parishioners in their ministry. The CEP website is a wonderful resource to hear good sermons, find insights on Bible passages, and identify good books to read. While geared toward pastors, the site can be beneficial to anyone in the church. The site has had a recent spike in traffic. Through the first 4 months in 2018, we averaged 18,500 different visitors per month, had 125,000 visits overall, and saw over half a million pages of materials downloaded. Why not check it out yourself and see why the CEP website receives, on average, over 1,000 visits every day! cep.calvinseminary.edu

REV. JUL MEDENBLIK
PRESIDENT, CALVIN THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY

Calvin Institute of Christian Worship



The Calvin Institute of Christian Worship (CICW), located at Calvin College and Calvin Theological Seminary in Grand Rapids, Michigan, is an interdisciplinary study and ministry center that promotes the scholarly study of the theology, history, and practice of Christian worship and the renewal of worship in worshipping communities across North America and beyond.

Here are a few of the resources available to you through CICW:

- Purchase a bilingual Spanish/English or Korean/English children's book on the Lord's Supper.
- Check out the more than 40 free resources (audio and video) from the 2018 Calvin Symposium on Worship, an annual conference hosted by CICW and the Center for Excellence in Preaching.
- Form an exploratory team to see if your church would benefit from applying for a 2019 Vital Worship Grant. Application due January 10, 2019.
- Sign up to receive the monthly web highlighter which links to new and featured resources.

Visit worship.calvin.edu to learn more.

People You Should Know

Regional Representatives (Volunteer) for Worship Ministries

Region 1 (Canada West): Rev. Gary Bomhof
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Region 5 (USA Central): Rev. Sandra VanOpstal
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Tools You Can Use

The Bridge App — Effective communication with members remains as essential as ever for sustaining a healthy church community. The Bridge App exists to connect churches with their communities, and community members to the body of Christ. CRC churches in Canada can see more information and can sign up by going to www.thebridgeapp.org. It is our aim that, after a successful launch of The Bridge App in Canadian classes, roll-out would begin in our US classes as well. Learn more at thebridgeapp.org

Library of recorded Worship Ministries webinars on topics such as “Creative Use of the Psalms in Worship”, “Visual Arts in Your Church”, and “Generations Leading and Worshiping Together.” Visit crcna.org/worship

Peer learning book groups — Join others to talk and learn about worship. New online and in-person groups are forming in September and February. Contact worship@crcna.org

Online Certificate of Worship Leadership — Join a CRC cohort and together engage with an ecumenical group of students online through Samford University. Contact Worship Ministries for more information. Applications due July 15, 2018.

Reformed Worship — A quarterly journal for worship leaders and planners available in print and digitally. Subscribe at ReformedWorship.org

The Network is your go-to destination to connect with your peers across the CRC on all things church and ministry. The site is a wealth of resources, blogs, and discussions on over 60 different ministry topics. As we seek to proclaim the Good News in our churches and communities, discover books, litanies, outreach ideas, personal stories, and more sprinkled across topics such as Evangelism, Small Groups, and Worship. In Global Mission, for example, the *Changed for Life* curriculum helps your church plan an effective short-term mission trip. The above resources are just a small sample of the MANY helpful tools you’ll find on the site. Head to *The Network* homepage (crcna.org/network) to explore all of the resources today!

Want to Learn More?

Stay up-to-date on what the CRCNA is doing in Gospel Proclamation & Worship by:

- **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 “Biblical Justice”, or review available resources

Call 1-800-272-5125 or visit crcna.org/resources for additional information