



COD Highlights

To: **CRC Councils and Classes**

From: Colin P. Watson, Sr., Acting Executive Director of the CRCNA

Date: February 26, 2020

Highlights from meeting of Feb. 19-21, 2020

Grand Rapids, Mich. – The Council of Delegates of the Christian Reformed Church in North America met in the CRCNA Grand Rapids offices and at Brookside CRC on February 19-21, 2020.

During this meeting, the Council:

- Heard background information regarding recent decisions of the CRCNA Canada Corporation to comply with Canadian charitable law. Asked questions of clarification. Spent time in prayers of lament for the disunity this involves and asked for wisdom as the denomination moves into the future.
- Received with deep regret the resignation of Steven Timmermans, executive director of the CRCNA.
- Appointed Colin P. Watson, Sr., to the role of acting executive director through Synod 2020. Watson shared that God continues to be in absolute control, and that he wants us to be unified so that “the world may know.”
- Spent time in prayer for Steve Timmermans, Colin Watson, and the denomination.
- Appointed a team of 10 people: 3 Canadian staff, 3 U.S. staff, 2 Canadian COD members, and 2 U.S. COD members to an ad hoc team to address ecclesiastical, structural, and legal matters moving forward.
- Received reports from the former executive director, the director of ministries and administration, director of Canadian ministries, director of Resonate Global Mission, director of Back to God Ministries International, and *Banner* editor.
- Recommended several people to Synod 2020 for appointment as classical delegates to the COD, and one person to the Judicial Code Committee.
- Appointed several people to key roles. This includes young adult representatives and their alternates to Synod 2020, synodical deputies, alternate synodical deputies, World Renew board delegates, and members to the Bible Translation Committee.
- Took note of the challenges that these Canada Revenue regulations will cause for the binational classis of Lake Superior. Also noted that the Navajo nation (Classis Red Mesa) has similar concerns about corporate/legal matters. Offered both classes access to legal counsel through the denominational office to work through these issues.
- Accepted the notices of retirement of the director of ministries and administration (effective January 2021) and director of finance and operations (effective July 2021). A plan is in place to appoint interim replacements until a new executive director is hired and can participate in a recruitment of permanent replacements.
- Reviewed a copy of Church Order changes that were approved by Synod 2019 and forwarded them to Synod 2020 for adoption.
- Received with thanks a report from Rev. Louis Korf, a neutral moderator, on the formation of the new Classis North Cascades. That report will now be provided to Synod 2020.

- Approved, in principle, a document on the definition of *heresy* as drafted by Dr. Ronald Feenstra. Asked Rev. Dr. William Koopmans to work with Dr. Feenstra on incorporating feedback from Dr. Karin Maag and Rev. Kathy Smith into the document. The final version will be forwarded to Synod 2020.
- Heard about a Lent Photo Challenge to help people of many generations become more rooted in their spiritual journeys. Information is available at crcna.org/network (search for “Lent Photo Challenge”).
- Received a Reimagining Ministry Shares Processing Report and forwarded it and its recommendations to Synod 2020 for adoption.
- Heard a report on a decision not to heed Synod 2019’s suggestion to provide a public list of pastors who have successfully gone through U.S. or Canada immigration.
- Asked that synod encourage all CRC congregations to consider using Dwell children’s curriculum, noting that Dwell digital subscriptions will be free for all CRC congregations in the coming ministry year. Asked synod to encourage congregations to consult with Faith Formation Ministries about youth ministry and faith formation resources.
- Forwarded evaluation reports from servant leadership ministries and Calvin Theological Seminary to Synod 2020 for approval.
- Recommended that Synod 2020 adopt a proposal to celebrate the 25th anniversary of the ordination of women (and the leadership of non-ordained women).
- Received a report on classis ministry plans and forwarded the report to Synod 2020.
- Received several reports and toolkits related to addressing the abuse of power as assigned by Synod 2019. This included a Code of Conduct that is recommended to Synod 2020 for adoption. It also includes a toolkit for training officebearers, a report on counseling services, a request that classes include funds for counseling as part of their budgets, and a report on strengthening safe church ministries. A proposed system and policy for recordkeeping was returned to staff for more work.
- Reviewed a draft report on syncretism and recommended that a diverse team that includes Indigenous people be pulled together to enhance the report and bring it back to the COD.
- Approved grounds for a previous COD decision to ask that Synod 2020 appoint a study committee to consider questions raised by Synod 2019 regarding historical research on decisions and rationale for dealing with political and justice issues.
- Received a report on the CRCNA ministries efforts to respond to global humanitarian crises. This will be forwarded to Synod 2020.
- Adopted a change of name for Back to God Ministries International to ReFrame Ministries, with a tagline “God’s Story. Today’s Media.” The new name will be recommended to Synod 2020 for approval.
- Endorsed a church planting grid for the benefit of staff leadership.

In addition to the ecclesiastical meeting of the COD, this meeting also included the meeting of four corporate entities: CRCNA Canada, CRCNA U.S., BTGMI Canada, and BTGMI U.S. Highlights from these meetings include:

CRCNA Canada Corporation:

- Approved the construction of a plan similar to a strategic planning process to help examine and determine an appropriate organizational structure for ministries in Canada. They also agreed to review its bylaws to make sure they meet the requirements of Canadian law.

- Approved in principle, a plan to produce a set of practices to support local churches in doing good governance.
- Heard a report on Indigenous Ministries and appointed a new member to the Canadian Indigenous Ministries Committee.
- Heard a report from the Centre for Public Dialogue and Committee for Contact with the Government.
- Received the Canadian audit committee and financial report.
- Approved that the Canadian Ministries Director, in consultation with the Worship Ministries Director and other worship ministry leaders, reach out to Canadian churches to determine the needs of Canadian congregations in regard to worship, and to bring possible next steps forward.

BTGMI Canada Corporation

- Approved the construction of a plan similar to a strategic planning process to help examine and determine an appropriate organizational structure for BTGMI ministries in Canada. They also agreed to review its bylaws to make sure they meet the requirements of Canadian law.
- Received information about health and dental insurance plan premiums.

CRCNA U.S. Corporation

- Adopted revised job descriptions for several positions in response to changes made by the CRCNA Canada Corporation.
- Received a report from the U.S. Committee for Guidance and Support of the Office of Social Justice.
- Received a report on the Grand Rapids facilities renovation project, noting advancement efforts that are soon to be implemented.

BTGMI U.S. Corporation

- Adopted a revised job description for the Back to God Ministries International director position following actions made by the CRCNA Canada Corporation.
- Received a report on the BTGMI audit.

For more information, please contact:

Colin P. Waston, Sr., acting executive director of the CRCNA
executive-director@crcna.org

Upcoming meeting dates:

- May 6-8, 2020, Grand Rapids, Michigan
- October 14-16, 2020, in Minneapolis, Minnesota
- February 17-19, 2021, Grand Rapids, Michigan
- May 5-7, 2021, Grand Rapids, Michigan