



Christian
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Church

Canadian Ministries Report: Fall 2022

A Question

“What do you love about serving in the CRC?” someone asked me recently. As I thought back about my own life experiences, I found myself responding: this is a church from which I have received so much life, and I want to do everything I can to help others receive life through it as well.

The truth is, I love our denomination. That may sound a bit flippant, and maybe even tone-deaf to the pain and struggles we are facing. I have yet to meet anyone who feels that many of our recent denominational discussions and decisions have been fully satisfying and life-giving, regardless of their perspective on the actual decisions that were made.

But love is not just a warm fuzzy. Love shows up in deep feelings of affinity, in appreciation, in satisfaction; love also shows up in disappointments, grief, confusion, disillusionment, and sadness. We are only ever disappointed in things that matter to us. Things we love.

I’m reminded of Paul writing these words to a divided, dysfunctional, and competitive community in Corinth. He was reminding them what they needed in order to continue moving together towards what God had in store for them: *Love is patient, love is kind. It does not envy, it does not boast, it is not proud. It does not dishonor others, it is not self-seeking, it is not easily angered, it keeps no record of wrongs. Love does not delight in evil but rejoices with the truth. It always protects, always trusts, always hopes, always perseveres. Love never fails. (1 Corinthians 13).*

As I talk to a wide variety of people within the CRC, I sense a deep desire for this type of love. We all want the CRC to be life-giving. We want it to be shaped by a type of love that never fails.

A Plan

Our denominational ministries share our love for the church. [Our Journey 2025](#) is a ministry plan that should sound familiar. Not the title necessarily, but the meat of the milestones it talks about. It expresses desires that churches across Canada and the wider denomination have expressed. Denominational ministries are paying increasing attention to strategically supporting our churches through them.

Next time I report to you, expect to hear more specifics about how we’re living into them, but, for now, here they are in brief:

1. Cultivate practices of prayer and spiritual discipline, transforming our lives and communities by the power of the Holy Spirit.
2. Listen to the voices of every generation, shaping us for ministry together.
3. Grow in diversity and unity by seeking justice, reconciliation, and welcome, sharing our faith as we build relationships with and honour the cultures of our neighbours and newcomers.

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4. Share the gospel, live it missionally, and plant new churches in our neighbourhoods as we discover how to connect with our local and global ministry contexts.

Opportunities

There are too many opportunities to list, but I want to highlight three that are timely and important, and I believe will help us love one another in a way that the Apostle Paul would recognize:

- Hearts Exchanged - This is an 8-month learning journey that is helping people learn about their Indigenous neighbours, consider injustices that have been done to them, and take concrete action towards reconciliation. More than 250 people from all Canadian classes have already participated and new cohorts will be beginning this fall. Those who have participated report that the experience has been eye opening and life changing. They greatly value the opportunity to explore this Canadian issue with their brothers and sisters in Christ.
- Canadian National Gathering - Flowing out of Hearts Exchanged is a new opportunity that will be coming up in May 2023. We will be sending more information about the Canadian National Gathering to your classis separately, but I think it promises to be another catalytic moment for Christian Reformed churches in Canada as we discern how to move together into the future.
- Challenging Conversations - In the lead up to Synod 2022, Pastor Church Resources put together a new resource called the Challenging Conversations Toolkit. This tool sets the stage for how we can have better conversations, especially around difficult topics on which we might not all agree. I am pleased to report that Canadian churches engaged with this process at a much higher level than US churches. Plans are now in the works to introduce Challenging Conversations 2.0 to help us take our dialogue even deeper during this post-synod season.

A Hope

This role I'm in is new to me, but finding ways for churches, church leaders, and pastors to say we're better off because we are part of this community has been my passion for awhile. My hope is that our (again, imperfect and loved) denomination does help each of us and our churches to thrive. It will continue to take work, but I do believe it's worth it. And I believe it's possible. To quote Paul one last time: love never fails.

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