



Dear Classis Leaders of the Christian Reformed Church:

Greetings in the name of Christ.

Jesus loved seeds. He wove them into his teaching, and especially, into his parables. During this new ministry year, God has laid on our hearts Jesus' parable of the wheat kernel (John 12:24): "Very truly I tell you, unless a kernel of wheat falls to the ground and dies, it remains a single seed. But if it dies, it produces many seeds."

Jesus was talking about his death and resurrection. but he was also talking about discipleship – that God calls his followers to die to themselves, and rise with Christ to a life of abundant fruitfulness. These are challenging words for us as disciples and leaders. We suspect they also challenge you. And yet, we want you to consider what God may be calling you to "surrender and bury," as classes and church leaders, so that your ministries may grow and bear more fruit for the Lord. And, as you think about that for the coming ministry year, we also want to provide you with a few quick updates.

### **Synod 2023**

Last June, Synod 2023 met in the chapel at Calvin University. We are thankful for the fruitful prayer and worship that characterized the advisory committees and the plenary sessions. Synod 2023 had a heavy agenda that resulted in the delegation of many ministry tasks to the classes, the Council of Delegates, and the general secretary. Like Synod 2022, there were also challenging discussions around human sexuality. In order to serve the classes and congregations with the best information, the Office of General Secretary has carefully crafted a Frequently Asked Questions document about Synod 2023 and posted it [here](#). Our aim is to post the *Acts of Synod 2023* electronically on or around September 1 and share summaries with the classes and congregations soon thereafter. Hardcopies of the Acts will take some more time to get to you! Please encourage churches and leaders in your classes to use these resources in their conversations and reflections about synod.

### **Celebrating Our Growing "One Family"**

One important soil that God is calling the classes and congregations to sow into is the engagement of our ethnic minority leaders and churches. Did you know fully one-fifth (and growing) of the CRC's churches are predominantly non-White? Unfortunately, these leaders are greatly underrepresented in most of our classis meetings. The Council of Delegates has instructed the Office of General Secretary to assist classes during the 2023-24 ministry year in holding structured conversations (called "One Family Conversations") during their classis meeting to learn to better celebrate and support their entire family. The conversation plan can be accessed [here](#). If you need assistance in planning and implementing these conversations, please reach out to your [regional catalyzers](#) who would be happy to assist you. We know your

classis agendas are very full, but these conversations could be the most important way your classes join the Spirit in “planting for kingdom growth” in the coming years.

### **Thank You for Your Generous Planting**

Christian Reformed members, churches, and classes sow generously in giving of their time and treasure to serve congregations, neighborhoods, and the world through ministry shares. In 2022-23 you gave \$10,030,000 USD and \$5,609,000 CAN to the agencies and institutions of the Christian Reformed Church. In addition to supporting the governance of CRCNA, we used these funds to form future ministry leaders, share the gospel through media and the work of our international and domestic missionaries, and to support your CRC congregations in their discipleship, education, worship, and mission. This fall we will be sharing more about changes and updates to the ministry shares program with classis treasurers that were approved by Synod 2023. We give thanks to and to God for this generous sowing and the harvest it has produced for the Kingdom!

### **Thrive Pastors Conference**

We are excited to draw your attention to our newest agency, [Thrive](#), which drew together 9 former congregational ministries under one new name. Thrive was officially recognized by Synod 2023 and charged with providing expertise, wisdom, and compassionate support to CRC congregations while remaining attentive to a wide range of opportunities and challenges facing the church today. Thrive is offering a conference for parish pastors, Regional Pastors, and chaplains to rest and grow in Albuquerque, NM on November 14 through 16. This event's goal is to offer active CRC parish pastors and regional pastors a safe place in which to gather for support, encouragement, learning, worship and fellowship. Please sign up as soon as possible as registration is limited.

### **Canadian National Gathering**

Over 150 Christian Reformed people gathered May 25-28, 2023 in Ottawa, Ontario on the campus of Algonquin College for the Canadian National Gathering. Representatives from every classis across Canada participated as we focused on *Hearts Exchanged* and the work of reconciliation with Indigenous brothers and sisters. Those who attended from your classis have been asked to discern next steps that they can take in your region. Please make space for them on your classis agendas to report on their experience and share their ideas for the future.

We do not make the seeds nor do we make them grow. Through the Spirit's power, our calling is to plant and nourish the seeds (1 Cor 3:6). Planting is difficult as it involves the dying of the old and the coming to life of the new. But most of all, planting is an act of faith. May the God of the harvest give you the strength to plant well in this new ministry year.

Your partners in ministry



Rev. Dr. Zachary King  
General Secretary



Rev. Albert Postma  
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