

**Canadian Catalytic Conversation II**  
**Saturday, January 29, 2022 - via Zoom**  
**CONCEPT MINUTES & APPENDICES**

Attendance: 4 Delegates representing all Canadian Classes,  
CRCNA Canada Corporation board members,  
Canadian CRCNA Staff  
Various guests from denominational agencies  
14 silent observers for a total of 95 persons

*Chair: Richard Bodini*  
*Vice-Chair: Erick Schuringa*  
*Clerks: Paul Verhoeef, Wendy de Jong*

*Note: Due to the significance of this event these minutes constitute a comprehensive report, often quoting speakers, and incorporating notes read by some of the speakers which were received later.*

**OPENING**

**Prayer for guidance:** The Chair, Rev. Richard Bodini, began the meeting with prayer using the words of the familiar hymn, “O God, our help in ages past,” and continued with “Guide us. Oh God with your wisdom and discernment, with compassion and gratitude so that together we might frame our conversation today to further the denomination that you've given to us, as she seeks to share and live the gospel, not only throughout the world, but in its various contextual places throughout North America.

Specifically, we pray for your blessing for the ministry we have in Canada. For those who envisioned it so long ago. For those who initiated it. For those who continue to serve in it. We thank you for those that have served and given ministry leadership in Canada over the last number of years. We pray that you will bless those who serve as staff. Bless Terry Veldboom as Interim Executive Director for Canada. We give thanks for those who serve on Canada Corporation. Bless and protect Andy de Ruyter as he chairs the Canada Corporation and Council of Delegates (COD). We pray for our classes and leaders for our local churches and councils, for the ministries and parishioners in every place across this land, especially in this challenging and opportunity fill time amidst a pandemic. God send your Holy Spirit upon us now, open our eyes and our ears, our hearts, our minds, and our hands to receive that we may we be encouraged and equipped. May we go forth to serve together. This we pray to you Heavenly Father, and the power of the Holy Spirit. AMEN.”

**Overview of the purpose of this gathering and clarification of roles:** The purpose of the meeting was clarified as a planning time, an opportunity to put everything on the table. This is an opportunity to come up with ideas for direction. This is only the beginning of a process to wrestle with the options put forward for ministry in Canada, picking up what Canada Corp began with their May 4, 2021, communique asking the COD to pause in approving the Structure and Leadership Taskforce (SALT) report to allow for time to get stakeholder input. It was noted that those gathered are not a decision-making body, but to generate ideas and options that will initiate conversations within local classes and possibly generate overtures to synod 2022. Delegates were asked to give their full support behind Canada Corp for the work they have started and to work alongside Canada Corp, staff, classes and churches for the work they have begun and for the CRCNA. Delegates were encouraged to be grateful, imaginative and spirit filled to navigate what is best for Canada ministries, to be collaborative in our engagement, and to work with each other afterwards in preparing reports or overtures for their classis.

**Roll Call and introduction to non-delegate speaking guests:** All were welcomed to the meeting, mentioning the various groups who were represented. The ad hoc planning team expressed their thankfulness that each classis sent 4 delegates. Most Canada Corp members were in attendance along with senior Canadian staff, persons connected with various denominational agencies, reporters from The Banner, Christian Courier and CRCNA Communications. Additionally, there were 14 persons who requested silent observer status.

**PART 1**  
**Evaluating SALT – hearing concerns and responses**

## **1. Hearing the concerns from stakeholders**

*A. Canada Corps Concerns* – The Chair briefly reviewed that one of the main reasons this gathering has been called is to consider the implications of the SALT report on Canadian ministry. The Canada Corp communique of May 4, 2021 requested a pause so that stakeholders could be consulted. That request was denied resulting in significant portions of the report being implemented even though Synod has not officially adopted it.

Greta Luimes spoke on behalf of Canada Corp, affirming that “we have seen the concerns and communications, we’ve read the Christian Courier and Banner articles, and the emails. We’re pleased to listen and get input. We share the same questions. We’re anticipating what more will come out today and taking notes.”

Terry Veldboom responded pointing out “the difficult situation Canada Corp is in today because they are on the COD which passed SALT. They are feeling the broad implications which we continue to wrestle with in a compromised situation. Systemically they were handcuffed or muted in the context of our current binational situation, an inequitable position that creates some angst. In spite of that we are moving forward as best as we can in terms of decisions made and feeding input back, but recognize the system in and of itself has an inequity built in. The board and staff have worked tirelessly the last two years and were forced to make significant decisions that have come with struggle and pain on their part and extended into the matters at hand and continue to do so. As CRCNA staff and delegates we need to honour and hold up the Canada Corp whose task is not complete. As we look forward to synod 2022 wondering what the reaction and decision of the church will be.

*Delegate Question:* A query was raised concerning the level of participation on the SALT team since there were Canadian delegates, thus saying the Canada Corp board is compromised is misleading.

*Response:* Greta Luimes, on behalf of CC, responded to say that while there was Canadian representation, it was not equal to that of the US representation and was a very difficult committee for those who participated. The Canadian participants saw opportunity in the Salt report, some of which has been carried out, but when they presented it back to the Canadian board they knew it would be difficult for Canada Corp to accept some parts of it.”

*B. CRCNA Canadian Staff Perspective* – Terry Veldboom, Interim Executive Director, spoke to the staff response. He pointed out that staff are implementing the SALT report while aware the actual report hasn’t been formally approved yet by Synod, and it will be difficult and a moot point to undo it. He noted that there are certainly some positive and beneficial aspects of SALT and we are moving forward to the best of our abilities in terms of honouring the decisions that were made. Terry recalled the history of the Canadian & US working relationship and how often the desires for robust Canadian ministries were challenged or never fully realized. He thanked Gayla Postma for her excellent overview. Terry noted that many of the significant differences at the very heart of the challenges go back to the origins and the evolution of the CRC in Canada. The CRC in Canada is also exemplified in its leadership. “The passion, humility and servant leadership is distinct and reflects the Canadian mentality of the church, and at times didn’t fit what is more of a corporate institutional church in the US. We need to recognize the different DNA of the CRC in Canada as the church continues to evolve and change in response to the circumstances it’s in. We need to recognize this and look to the future to see what will serve the church best in Canada and the strengths to build on such as a sense of family. There is a sense of ownership, passion and love for the Christian Reformed Church in Canada and wanting to see it flourish. That doesn’t mean we can’t strive to work beyond our borders in terms of ministry such as with Resonate, World Renew and Reframe and how that can continue.” The binational tension has been a struggle that Terry has dealt with for 35 years of working with the CRC in Canada initially working with Rudy Hulst, and then Ray Elgersma, William Veenstra, Bruce Adema, Ben Vandezande and most recently Darren Roorda. “Each one of them truly exemplified what servant leadership was all about. They worked with such humility and grace in the Canadian context and beyond, and to not honour the sacrifice that they made in serving would be a shame. We need to really significantly deal with the issues at the heart that they invested so much into.”

C. Concerns already expressed by CRCNA members in Canada: The chair pointed delegates to the articles in Christian Courier and The Banner that had been listed on the agenda, along with the documents that were included with the meeting materials, all of which expressed concerns raised about the SALT report or about binational ministry challenges in general.

D. Concerns from the floor:

*Niagara Delegate:* The delegate pointed out that included in the reading material was a further note from the Canada Corp board of October 21, in which the 3<sup>rd</sup> paragraph concludes that the Canadians who participated in the SALT report were satisfied overall that it provided a sound structure for leadership with robust JMA's (Joint Ministry Agreements) that ensure Canadian funds are appropriately directed and supervised by Canada. Further the CRCNA Communications news article of mid January quoted "while we've had this in the past, these JMA's provide clear direction and space for better contextualization." The article also concludes with Andy de Ruyter stating that both US & Canada boards unanimously approved these documents. With that background it looks like there has been endorsement of SALT by these people.

*Canada Corp spokesperson responded with* "Yes, there are parts that the board felt would be very good, and there are parts they have concerns about. One of the best is the JMA's that are much more robust than those of the 2013. To illustrate how significant the changes are, along with Ministry Share changes, the JMAs have great impact for direction and control in Canada and we really applaud that aspect. In terms of the budget, the Canadian office makes decisions of what they can contribute as does the Michigan office and when those figures are put together that constitutes what ministry happens in each country through the CRCNA. The Canada office now says 'here is what we can give to those ministries while we retain support for our own Canada-only ministry that goes on in this country.' A management committee of 3 Canadian staff and 3 US staff will apply those monies to all the ministries and bring budgets back to the boards for their approval and that information is then provided to Synod. That whole process is very different than what has gone on historically and the accountability process is also much stronger. This is a big part of SALT that was put in place and what we're implementing. The other significant piece is the establishment of the Canada Office. Our staff are working with a consultant to discern what that really means. Rather than just be an offshoot of the Michigan office, the Canadian office will be established to have its own contribution to how ministry happens in Canada. What that looks like in detail is going to be grown as the staff work with that consultant. Those are 2 parts of SALT we're celebrating."

*BCNW Delegate:* There is good guidance from the CRA - the CG-002 - which speaks to JMAs. While the delegate sees value in them and supports their use, but with the caveat that they only work in a true partnership. It's a good tool, but if it isn't a real partnership built on consensus, there will be problems.

*Canada Corp spokesperson response:* "We are very aware of as we go into the 2022-23 budget that a lot of those specifics will come forward for the staff to work together and that's where the Management Committee comes in with 3 Canadian and 3 American staff members to work out. We know it's not going to be easy, particularly the first time around, which will be challenging but it's all part of the dialogue as we work out partnership and communication. We have found as a board even recently that sticking to our ground when it relates to things like JMA's or Salt has not been easy, but because of the encouragement of all of you we have been able to do that. We have had to dig in our heels and it's not easy for the US to understand that and to understand that they need to be reminded this is a partnership - that focus and mindset is paramount for us as we go forward."

*Alberta North Delegate:* We hear the word partnership a lot, but also the word subsidiary. How can we be a subsidiary and also partners?

*Canada Corp spokesperson response:* In the establishment of the Canada Office as is recommended in SALT we would not be a subsidiary anymore. We would be our own CRCNA Canada office doing our own ministry. We recognize it will take time for that view to change on both sides.

*Delegate from Hamilton:* The ideals of the SALT report of partnership, respect and cooperation are encouraging. The report also speaks to an office of governance which would specifically ensure we're within tax law. Who is looking after the Canadian side of that, given that it seems something happened in

the past that we were in trouble with the CRA and the needed oversight wasn't shown. We need people who are knowledgeable of Canadian law. The delegate also wonders what is meant by "other duties as assigned" when talking about the job description of the Canadian ED.

This comment was not responded to other than the chair pointing out these were good points to ponder.

*Eastern Canada Delegate:* Concerns about the level of confidentiality and executive sessions noted frequently in the minutes causes mistrust and unease about the entire Salt report.

*Canada Corp spokesperson & Terry Veldboom responses:* They spoke to the need for executive sessions because they impact individuals and also partly because some elements focused around legal issues. Having received specific legal advice to maintain attorney client privilege (legal confidentiality) in terms of the documentation and discussion was critical to ongoing work with a legal and regulatory environment with CRA.

*Toronto Delegate:* The speaker addressed an aura of mystery around November & December 2020. Until then both the COD and Canadian leadership review were leading to a structure with 2 EDs and an Ecclesiastical Officer and everyone seemed on board. Then along came a legal opinion in November and a flurry of activity in December with listening sessions that led to a different structure than had been in discussion.

There were no clear answers to this point available and it was left on the table. The delegate was thanked for raising this point.

*Ontario Southwest Delegate:* The delegate who is a dual citizen raised a larger question about why we seem to fetishize binationality, at least in its current form or as the SALT report suggests. We have a different relationship such as with the church in Nigeria. Could we not follow that precedent. It doesn't have to lead to an acrimonious division. Let's bless each other and do ministry together where it's good and possible and necessary.

*Alberta South Saskatchewan Delegate:* The delegate spoke to the issue of confidentiality and the legal requirements for this, pleading that delegates not be overly suspicious in that regard. Regarding what happened in November 2020, a prelude to that were the 2 overtures from Classis ABSS and Toronto requesting Synod to direct Canada Corp to stop what appeared to be the creation of two denominations. He pointed out many of the positive things in the SALT report, such as accountable structures bringing us into CRA compliance. It was also noted that it's not as easy to create two separate denominations and assume we will stay in ecclesiastical fellowship. We will be more vulnerable if we go that route.

*Response from Terry Veldboom:* From his perspective in looking at the sequence of events, history has a way of repeating itself with respect to the conversation about binationality and initiatives where they have come to a head, history shows where there have been attempts at some sense of Canadian autonomy or independence, the larger CRCNA responded in a such a way that those initiatives were in essence shut down. Systemically it's quite capable of doing that via the current structures in place such as Synod.

*Quinte Delegate:* We need to recognize that we are in an era of local options and congregationalism. Going our own separate ways is something to be celebrated rather than grieved. It's time to celebrate the autonomous ministry that could happen. What is missing from the SALT report is a clear case for staying together and laying out why it would be good to stay together.

*Eastern Canada Delegate:* While the focus on unity is worthwhile it ought not to be our primary factor. More important is the need to be focused on ministry in the Canadian context who are the people we serve. A lament was expressed that we haven't heard from the past executive directors who have left over difficulties experienced in the binational context, and a plea to evaluate SALT in the context of comparing it to other structure models, rather than in isolation.

## Part 2

### Exploring Salt or alternative pathways - Presentation

#### **2. Discerning pathways forward for Canadian contextualized ministry:**

**A. Making SALT work for Canadian Ministries using JMAs:** Peter Elgersma spoke on behalf of the staff. They are confident that these new JMA's are very effective and are the best they have ever had. The detailed documents cannot be released because they contain staff names and salary figures but at some point, the basic template and master document will be released. They have been prepared by legal counsel. Both Canada Corp and Michigan Corp have approved them, so we interpret by proxy that they have been approved by Synod at this point. It was clarified that the Joint Ministry Agreements are required regardless of the structure we operate under. Any Canadian charity working with an intermediary or non-qualified donee requires such an agreement by the CRA. At the heart of them are the parties that are signing on and their attitude of partnership, coming together and the ministry they are doing together, that's fundamental in terms of SALT or any circumstance or structure. These would be an effective tool for CRC Canada to use in any situation, for working with any party.

*Eastern Canada Delegate:* It's reassuring that these JMA's are so strong, but are they put together with equal representation?

*Response by Terry Veldboom:* The two parties sign on as equal partners. The Joint Management Committee has equal staff representation rather than proportional representation of contributed dollars or people. Additionally both parties have the option to withdraw if their needs aren't being met.

*BCNW Delegate:* Glad to hear there is a Master Agreement, or Joint Venture Agreement, if that is the direction we are going, that's good. A further question was asked about the reporting of the Canadian ED to the General Secretary's office.

*Response by Canada Corp Chair:* "The term reporting is so misunderstood. The Executive Director reports to the Canada board, but that person will work in partnership with the General Secretary's office. The word reporting is more like sharing what we're doing in Canada and working out the agreement, it's not reporting to and getting approval from the General Secretary office. These are three separate positions and the executive director in Canada needs to work with the chief administrative officer because that's where all the ministries are and we have to decide which ones we're going to use and how we're going to alter those for Canadian context, but please understand that word reporting is not like a hierarchy system that we need that office's approval to do things. It's not set up that way. The Canadian office is independent and is Synod's arm in Canada to do the ministries of the CRCNA in Canada."

*Contribution by Frederic Koning, Reporter of the Salt Team:* "As SALT reporter who answered the mandate of the Council of Delegates and put the deliberations of the Task Force into text, I believe the following is true: the executive director of the U.S., the development of a U.S. office, the separation of the synodical structure from the ministry corporations is the next step; that the present model allows the Canada Board to opt out of ministry activity and that it can develop its ministry plan and agreed upon ministries on behalf of the Canadian churches, equals SALT 's model was seen as a template for multiple partnerships." (Note this was submitted upon request via email for inclusion into the minutes by Frederic Koning who attended as an observer.)

**B. Ask for General Secretary and Chief Administrative Officer positions to be Interim positions:** The chair pointed out that the next few options being considered can only be brought forward by way of overtures to Classis and Synod. Option B asks that we use the next two years to reimagine the structure with more stakeholder input, such as Canada Corp has already begun by going with a Transitional Executive Director for the next two years.

**C. Revert to Original Plan of COD with an ED-USA and an ED-Canada and an Ecclesiastical Officer:** This is the model originally envisioned that was changed in October 2020. This was also raised in some of the material that has been shared. It is questionable if the denomination would revert to that option at this point however.

*Alberta North Delegate:* The question, related to the previous option asked, if the former ED's hands were tied, why would we revert to a model that hasn't worked in the past?

*Response from Canada Corp spokesperson & Planning Team member:* The new Executive Director is now reporting only to the Canada Board and not to Grand Rapids so that's a big change. Additionally, part of the difference is that the original plan would include an ED US, so the two executive directors are looked at as partners. What's distinct about this model isn't that there is an ED Canada, but there would be an ED-US. That changed with SALT and is one of those questions that we don't know what happened or why.

*Response by Ray Elgersma:* Ray spoke at this point and later submitted his written notes, "Case for a Co-Director Leadership Model for the CRCNA" which are included as Appendix A at the end of this report.

D. Have CRC-USA and CRC-Canada shift to a strong Ecclesiastical Fellowship model: Bruce Adema, who was the Director of Canadian Ministries from 2006 to 2012, spoke to this, beginning by sharing that "when he served as the Executive Director, the US mentality he encountered indicated they thought it was a small job since the oversight of all agencies and denominational ministries was in the hands of Grand Rapids and the Canadian Executive Director only looked after a handful of Indigenous ministries and the Committee for Contact with the Government. It was very clear that this wasn't meeting CRA compliance. He gave an example of a better partnership model he experienced when he was a missionary in the Philippines. Even though there were more members and dollars on the CRCNA side, they were invited to write their own ministry plan, honoured and allowed to set their own ministry goals. When back in Canada we were doing joint ministries with the RCA, such as Faith Alive and Disability Concerns, and they joined us in both CCG and Indigenous ministries, where we worked together and interacted as equals and joint partners. As the Director of Canadian Ministries, he saw that those same values were not being communicated or shared. When we attempted to address Canadian issues, we were seen as irritants, not as a full partner. There was the subsidiary branch office mentality and as we tried to fulfil CRA obligations we ran into roadblocks. In the SALT report, those positions are there but the titles have changed. Canada is still seen as the small, specialized ministry and the big program of the church is under the oversight of the US. Here in Canada, we are not small. We are recognized ecumenically as a very significant partner. We are a bigger fish than we believe and have a bigger impact. If we could have our own leadership that was truly reflective of our context, we could partner beautifully with the church in the US through JMAs, but the structure we have and that is being proposed doesn't advance ministry in Canada and doesn't let us be the kind of church we should be."

*Hamilton delegate:* As we consider the options that are before us, SALT could work perhaps if we have that central office headquartered in Canada with two Canadian officers responsible for the direction of the entire CRCNA. And then we have a US executive director in Grand Rapids, we'll just flip the script and then we'll have a better understanding of how our American siblings understand the structure. In its present form SALT is not workable as we've heard from Ray, Bruce, and staff. If we are going in the wrong direction we should turn around, not keep going. I would endorse a return to the structure that the COD proposed at one point that provides a partnership with the US and Canadian directors and I have not heard any grounds for moving away from that approach. As for clear separation, as is sometimes batted around, I think, first of all, our binational staff are in the best position to share stories of what we would lose by going out on our own. And quite frankly, I see that as kind of a nuclear option, once we do that, we cannot go back. Unlike the original COD proposal with two directors, if we take that road and it doesn't work, then we can continue on towards greater autonomy."

*Toronto delegate:* The SALT report changed the original director proposal. If we send an overture and Synod turns it down, what can we do to prepare for that? So much work has gone into the proposals and they are already recruiting for the positions.

*JVS delegate:* It's impressive to see all the work and the diligence that has gone into figuring out how to be a united church in two countries. On the other side as Terry Veldboom said, at heart we're a US church with a history of Canadian directors who have left in frustration. That leaves the nagging question that doesn't get addressed by the SALT report and still needs to be addressed: "WHY be a binational

organization?" We understand how we got here, but it doesn't seem like it's working for us now. There are also concerns about evangelicalism in North America and our affiliation with a US dominated denomination does not serve the mission and the culture of the Canadian CRC. I think we need a step that says, Let's study. Let's look. Let's gather input for why we should be binational and how does that service our mission in the places where God has called us.

*Response from Bruce Adema:* Bruce referred to an overture that Bloomfield CRC has brought to Classis Quinte and spoke to what a strong ecclesiastical fellowship model might look like. "There can be real collaboration where you don't have to worry about being out voted or overlooked when you are true partners. With the ecclesiastical fellowship model we have the ability to be a full partner and make decisions that are appropriate for us. The model we have with the RCA could be the model we could have with the US. Pastors can move smoothly from one to the other and with the JMA's marked by great respect and collaboration that can be a model for the way we interact with our American brothers and sisters in the US. This could enhance and advance our relationship and make our ministry all that more effective."

*Toronto delegate:* What are the legal implications of going to a structure like this? Would we lose something?

*Response from Terry Veldboom:* There are no legal implications per se. The legal corporations are in place already and that would continue under any structure. The structure would help in clarifying the role of those organizations in the context of a binational or national version of it so the lines might be redrawn but there is no peril in terms of the legal corporations that exist in Canada under any of the scenarios that have just been discussed.

*ABSS Delegate:* Two legal concerns were shared, one of which has been brought up with the COD for 2 years that has not been acknowledged: Walls will go up with immigration for clergy movement. An immigration lawyer's opinion should be sought to find out if ministers can move across the border when the immigration departments realize they are separate denominations. Secondly is the matter of membership. There is an assumption that by overture that the denomination can be split, but for instance some people might not want to separate. Can classis legally change a person's membership in the CRCNA? That's a hurdle that has to be addressed quite directly.

*Eastern Canada Delegate:* Isn't it true that we are a member of a local church and not a member of the CRCNA – that's not a reality. We covenant together, but it's consensual by the local churches and classes.

*Response by Ray Elgersma:* There will be lots of challenges with moving into ecclesiastical fellowship and there are tensions with each model. The co-director model has worked for World Renew for over 30 years and there's been a sense of balance between World Renew US and World Renew Canada. We have wonderful ministries within the CRCNA and it will be difficult to work together under an ecclesiastical fellowship model. It is a pity that there isn't movement on both sides of the border to make the co-director model work.

E. More flexible structures, drawing on other church experiences: Kathy VanderGrift expressed her appreciation for the discussion. "The societal context in which our churches work is one of rapid and significant change, and within our churches, there are also many layers of that mean less certainty: generational tensions, changes to technology that affect church life, migrations of people, and less common ground. That's our reality, not just for the CRC but also for other branches of the Christian church. Kathy was asked to reflect on her time as vice president of the Canadian Council of Churches and earlier work on the CRC Task Force on structure and culture, and a common theme emerges. It is movement toward more network thinking about how we organize ourselves for ministry. Some of those features include networks add a lot of value to local churches from training and governance over to missions, while they allow high levels of flexibility to deal with change and diversity between parts of that. They are more purpose driven than identity driven in multiple nodes, instead of one center. Organizational charts look like connected webs rather than boxes lined up in linear hierarchical squares. There's no one recipe or formula, certainly the path being pursued by the Presbyterian Church in Canada varies from that of the Reformed Church in America, and they both differ a lot from what I see of

interesting networks within what appears as the monolithic Roman Catholic Church. I would just make one more note. Already during the Task Force on structure and culture there was discussion about the CRC becoming multinational, rather than binational to better welcome groups of churches in other countries. Some of those are connected through our agencies, but might they join the main table? Haiti, the Honduras come to mind. The past lacks coherence on this regard as Bruce mentioned. The Philippines CRC was pushed to becoming dependent, like Nigeria, while Canada with more resources was denied that opportunity. When barriers rose in the US for Cuban churches, some Canadian churches stepped in to support them. Is there a more multinational network in our future and how might Canada fit into that? These thoughts are just offered to expand our scan of what the options are. We don't need to be trapped by our past. I hope we will and can think together about what will best empower the vision of robust Canadian ministry that we share."

## Part 2

### Exploring Salt or alternative pathways - Discussion

*Delegates were sent into breakout rooms of 6-8 persons each. Canada Corp, Staff and the silent observers had their own breakout session. After the delegates returned each group shared which models they discussed or favoured. See Appendix C for the reports.*

*The chair thanked the reporters and observed there was a lot of diversity among the groups. There's obviously a strong love for the shared ministry that we have and we realize all of this won't be easy.*

### **3. Next Steps:**

**A. Reflections:** Andy de Ruyter, on behalf of Canada Corp, shared some summary comments expressing appreciation for the meeting today. This was an incredibly good listening session for us to hear. A lot of the stuff that came across we deeply agree with. What our future is going to hold and what I really hope and pray what this meeting does, and as I've thought about it over the last week, I really hope that this ignites a fire in the Canadian church. We need to decide for ourselves what we want to be. It's not a matter of what the Americans want us to be. I've heard over and over again in conversations with senior leaders in the last weeks that they want us to decide what we want. They're not going to stand in our way. They want Canada to decide what it wants to look like, and to bring that forward. So how do we do that? We do that by conversations like this but we need more structured conversations like this. We need each Classis to endorse this kind of conversation, meetings for classes to elect delegates almost like having a mini Canadian Synod that would have some authority to make decisions. These are the kinds of things that we need to do in the weeks ahead and we also need to look at alternatives such as have been discussed.

We'll see what that looks like because it's not only churches in Mexico or Cuba or, Nigeria, it's also groups within our own North America context, the Navajo Nation, the Korean church, the Hispanic church, the indigenous people in Canada. All these people need to have a place at the table as well. We need to include all these kind of things as we move forward and we need to keep this conversation going in one form or other. Canada Corp is very open. I sit in two chairs and often it's a very fine line that I have to walk. But there's a deep love and a deep desire for what this denomination stands for and there's a great call for unity. We don't need to split apart. We don't need to be part of those 1400 reformed churches that always run away and form another denomination. We have something good here that we've built over 100 years. We have strong missions, strong ministries, great educational colleges and we can't throw that all out. We need to come up with some kind of idea that works and that keeps the key ministry context in place.

It's been a really difficult time for the Canada board, the last two years when we started having discussions with the Canadian Council of Christian Charities and realizing the difficulties we were in with CRA. We went to lawyers like Terence Carter, David VanderWoerd and David Stevens, and getting really indepth legal advice on what it means for direction and control and how far off things could be and how things were. We had to do a lot of things behind closed doors because of legalities and liabilities and that that doesn't feel good when you're in a position like we are as the Board, because I just absolutely hate the line like 'just trust us, we know what we're doing and don't ask questions.'



We tried our best to do what we thought was the proper way to go about putting things right. SALT may not be the perfect ending but it does give us a good solid base for moving forward but if that's not the way the Canadian church wants to go, then we need to keep talking and find alternatives. But we need to decide as a Canadian church what we want and then I keep reiterating that we've also got to get rid of this kind of east-west mentality. We need to put the thinkers that we have in this country together and come up with proposals that we all need to be very willing to have very open discussions about and leave our own emotions and opinions at the door and do what's best so that the Canadian church can move forward and get back to doing the missions that it needs to do; the great work with social issues, the great work with indigenous people; the great work of spreading the gospel in our own churches and in our own neighborhoods. That's who we are. that's what we need to be. So I encourage you all to go back to your classes meetings now and give a very full report of what we did today, and ignite there as well the kind of discussions we had today and how important this is moving forward so we can start making some real decisions about what the future will look like." Andy concluded by thanking everyone who was part of getting these conversations started and ended with "Let's just move forward together as one body in Christ, one body of the Christian Reformed Church in Canada. To honour our heavenly Father."

B. Invitation for collaboration around Classical Communications and Overtures: The chair wrapped up the meeting by inviting everyone to email their notes that can be added to the shared google drive. There will likely be another such conversation in the future to tease apart Salt more and consider future directions. An invitation was extended for anyone skilled in broad perspective thinking who might want to participate in more of a broader conversation to support Canada Corp and start teasing out overtures to come please consider this an open invitation to join in the ongoing discussions and organization. Delegates were encouraged to go back to their classes, to share, dialogue and dig into this. All classes were urged to make time at their next Classis meeting to talk about this. SALT is going to Synod in 5 months so the timing is tight. The opportunity to speak is now and mid-March when the material is due, although late overtures can be submitted yet by mid-May.

#### **Closing Prayer**

Thanks were expressed to the planning team, Andy de Ruyter and Canada Corp and to the Staff. Vice-Chair Erick Schuringa closed the gathering with prayer.

**Case for a Co-Director Leadership Model for the CRCNA, by Ray Elgersma**

- It satisfies the requirements of charitable law on both sides of the border.
- The Co-Director Leadership Model dictates the sharing of leadership and ongoing decision-making responsibilities between Canada and the US at an administrative level in addition to JMAs developed at a governance level. This is important as the CRCNA tends to be a staff-driven organization.
- It is a proven management model which has greater prominence in volunteer organizations. Examples are World Renew which has had this leadership model since 1989. Big Brothers Big Sisters Calgary has had this leadership model in the past. In the private sector, Research in Motion (Blackberry) was led by this management model during its first decades of operation.
- While Joint Ministry Agreements (JMAs) may meet Canadian Charitable Law requirements, fulsome direction, monitoring, control, and accountability for programming, resources and funding is not possible with JMAs only. JMA's are a tool that predominantly rely on the governing bodies to manage, which happens only 3X/year and by board volunteers. Thus, it is removed from the key ongoing management of critical matters.
- Day to day accountability requires a Co-Director, particularly when there are anomalies in programming and administration not covered by JMAs or when things go sideways.  
i.e.

Christian Stewardship Services an agency doing planned giving to benefit CRCNA agencies invested in condos in Saskatoon and Edmonton in the mid 90's and the market at that time tanked. (it eventually fully recovered and there were no losses). There was concern by CRCNA management (both sides of the border) about CSS investments and a small task force that included US staff did an assessment. Most appropriate.

However, About the same time a Ponzi Real estate scheme in Sacramento collapsed and several agencies of the CRCNA were defrauded of about \$5 million in reserve funds invested in that company. Denominational investment policy had not been followed. While there was panic at the CRCNA management table, a US leadership prescribed decision resulted in no task force, one dismissal at a middle management level, and no accountability to Canada for potentially 1 million charitable Canadian dollars. Business simply continued as usual because of a lack of a shared partnership model that necessitated equal and shared day to day oversight.

2. More recently, the Inspire conference in Detroit (2017) was under subscribed and accommodation was paid for 1000 people who never came to that conference. The budget was about \$US400,000. Potentially over \$CAN100,000 Charitable dollars was part of that budget.(25% of budget) Canadian staff and board members could not get an accounting from CRCNA administration for that money.

My point is that appearances are that the CRCNA is binational until things go wrong at an agency level. Then it tends to revert to CRC-USA, and Canadian leadership is then seen as ruffling feathers if they are doing too much prying, even to the point of being seen as obnoxious or intolerable. This by the way is not malicious, it is merely the mindset of an organizational culture that is used to working from one central location of power. It doesn't grasp what it means to work as 2 charitable bi-national organizations and doesn't want or see the need to make a paradigm shift. Your JMAs will not take care of such scenarios.

- Joint Ministry Agreements tend to give an intermediary or international organization license to carry out Canadian organizations' charitable activities, based on agreed to guidelines set out in the Joint Ministry Agreement. i.e., Global Affairs Canada and the International Red Cross have such an agreement to provide global vaccine services as part of primary health care. While a partnership, Red Cross has responsibility for programming. Our Canadian church is looking to be a full and equal participant rather than delegate/relinquish its ministry opportunities.
- Unless you have a structure that gives a Canadian Executive Director the right to account for **any/all** Canadian charitable dollars and CRCNA staff recognizing the requirement to be transparent about Canadian expenditures to the Canadian ED, there **will** be the continued frustration of senior Canadian leadership by the US church administration.
- Your structure with a General Secretary, Chief Executive Officer and Chief Financial Officer on US side and an Executive Director on the Canadian side makes absolutely no sense in a binational organizational structure.
- International Staff had a different perspective of myself as Co-Director re accountability at World Renew. I was an integral part of the leadership team when asking difficult questions or giving direction.
- The World Renew Canada board was very strong in insisting that the structure was going to be what it was when I was hired to a position where I was not reporting to the World Renew US Director. No compromises.

## APPENDIX B: Networks: A More Flexible Option, by Kathy VanderGrift

### Context

The societal context in which our churches work is one of rapid and significant change.

Within our churches there are many layers of “churn” that mean less certainty.

Generational transitions and tensions. Changes to technology that affect church life. Migrations of people. Less common ground. That’s our reality. Not just for the CRC, but also for other branches of the Christian church.

### Network Thinking

When I reflect on my time as Vice-President of the Canadian Council of Churches and earlier work on the CRC Taskforce on Structure and Culture, one common theme emerges. It is movement toward more network thinking about how we organize ourselves for ministry. Features include:

- Networks add value to the local church from training and governance to missions, while, at the same time, allowing a high degree of flexibility to deal with change and diversity among the parts.
- More purpose-driven than identity-driven.
- Multiple nodes instead of one center.
- Organization charts are connected webs rather than boxes lined up in linear, hierarchical squares.
- No one recipe or formula. The path being pursued by the Presbyterian Church of Canada varies from that of the Reformed Church of America. Both differ from the interesting networks within what appears to be a monolithic Roman Catholic Church in Canada.

### Multi-national/Binational

One more note: Already during the earlier Taskforce on Structure and Culture, there was discussion about the CRC becoming multinational rather than binational – to better welcome small groups of churches in other countries. Some of these are connected through our agencies - might they join the main table? E.g. Honduras, Haiti.

The past lacks coherence. The Philippines CRC was pushed to become independent, like Nigeria, while Canada, with more resources, was denied that option. When barriers arose for the Cuban church in the US, Canadian churches stepped up and provided support. Is a more multinational network part of our future? How might Canada fit into that?

### **Summary**

These thoughts are offered to expand our scan of options. We don’t need to be trapped by our past. I hope we can think together about what will best empower the robust vision of Canadian ministry that we share.

APPENDIX C: Break Out room reports

BREAK OUT GROUP REPORTS – January 29, 2022 Canadian Catalytic Conversation II

The second part of the gathering was devoted to articulating and responding to various options for the Canada US relationship. Below are the options given and the feedback from the breakout groups.

**Exploring Salt or alternative pathways - Presentation**

Discerning pathways forward for Canadian contextualized ministry:

- a. Making SALT work for Canadian Ministries using JMAs
- b. Ask for General Secretary and Chief Administrative Officer positions to be Interim positions (like Executive Director-Canada); use 2 years to reimagine structure with more stakeholder input
- c. Revert to Original Plan of COD with an ED-USA and an ED-Canada and an Ecclesiastical Officer
- d. Have CRC-USA and CRC-Canada shift to a strong Ecclesiastical Fellowship model
- e. More flexible structures, drawing on other church experiences
- f. Others that arise spontaneously from the discussions in Part 1

GROUP 5 – Aaron Helleman-Eastern Canada (reporter), John Vegt-BCNW; Ellen Vlieg-Paquette Alberta-South Saskatchewan, Ed Janssens-Lake Superior; George Sportel-Niagara; Harry Fernhout-Toronto

SUMMARY - Consensus that options D and E are preferred.

Reasons

- Sense that SALT cannot work.
  - Conflicted current role of ED - wording in reports NOT CLEAR and responsibilities NOT CLEAR
  - Favor more Canadian responsibility for future
  - Global even makes MORE sense as to Kathy's presentation
  - Each country understands its contexts best and needs full freedom to do ministry without international limits
  - Joint relationships can always be formed to continue shared work between countries
  - Members with experience in Christian Reformed Higher Education reflected strong negative experiences which replicated the former Canadian Directors experiences of being undermined, ignored and an afterthought.
  - The Canadian Church has matured to where it needs to stand on its own feet and shape our own future.
  - More work needs to be shared on the differences in Canadian Culture vs US culture. Report weakest on specific cultural differences and implications.
- Suggest " <https://peterschuurman.ca/2020/06/01/a-letter-to-my-american-friends-and-partners-canada-is-a-foreign-country/> " as a helpful resource.
- World view of Canadians and Americans now so diverged to make working as equal partners almost impossible

GROUP 6 – Jake VanDorp-Huron (reporter); Marg Hoogland-ABSS; Liz Tolkamp-BCSE; Dan Zylstra-Eastern Canada; Elizabeth Guillaume-Koene-Quinte; Ed Sikkema-Toronto

- w/o knowing why task force changed from(c) its hard to make any informed Rx on resuming that model
- acknowledge value of JMA work completed. forgive and move on, look for opportunities to improve structure going forward
- appreciate the wisdom of Bruce Adema and Ray Elgersma.

Summary: B C and E collectively:

-interim recruitment, noting preference to establish 2 sep EDs sets us up for future international ecumenism, may be more of a 'get along' or less disruptive approach than (d) - which could preserve bandwidth to deal with other issues facing the body of Christ in Canada.

-a clear ecclesiastical role and national direction of ministries lays a groundwork for inclusion of churches in other nations within the denomination.

express - we are in a low trust environment with the broader denomination, boards etc. We want to be gracious. We don't want to be ignored or taken advantage of.

GROUP 7 – Len Batterink-BCSE (Reporter); Neil DeKoning-Alberta North; Heyden Regeling-Hamilton;

Marg Rekman-Lake Superior; Mike Wagenman-SW Ontario; Jake Veenstra-Toronto

Our group settled on option "c." It would maintain our denominational unity while giving Canada Corp direction and control over ministries here

Group 8 - Henry Kranenburg-Alberta North (Reporter); Ken DeBoer-Quinte; Bill Kort-Niagara; Alan VanderWoerd-BCNW; John Vanderstoep-Huron

- Henry - concerned about **c might be a mute point**; that nationally imbalanced board will not consider
- Alan - options are not mutually exclusive
- **Alan – ecclesiastical fellowship** is a good value
- John - study the WHY of Ecclesiastical Fellowship – regardless
- Bill - Salt approved by both CDN board and COD, **why change**
- Bill - in a sense all of these positions are interim
- Bill defines ecclesiastical fellowship as a separate denomination relationship
- Bill suggested that the SALT being passed means it is working
- Ken - **we are linked to the US** evangelical structure and its culture; we are an American denomination in Canada
- Henry - lean more in the direction of more Canadian meetings; **note huge cultural difference in Eastern and Western Canada**

GROUP 9 –Everett Vander Horst-Hamilton; Nelly Eyk-ABSS; John Zuidhof-BCSE;

John Vaags-Lake Superior; Bruce Adema-Quinte; Tim Luimes-SW Ontario

*No reporter assigned – Everett spoke to say “ I think we would all agree that it's become painfully obvious that the time has come for us to stand our ground and insist upon a fair and equal partnership in a global context.”*

GROUP 10 – Rita Klein-Geltink-Quinte (Reporter); Steven deBoer-Niagara; Raymond Elgersma-Eastern Canada; Ron Middel-SW Ontario; Paul Droogers-ABSS

We all saw d and e as being the best options. We see that we are at a place where the CRC in Canada can grow into its own ministry. This is a time of opportunity.

a, b, and c all seemed to be much of the same - history repeating itself, moving the deck chairs around.

Our other concern is that we are too far down the road and that we might be too late to put the brakes on SALT. A name for Gen Sec will be presented to the COD in a couple of weeks.

GROUP 11 – Phyllis Alberts-Meijers-Toronto (Reporter); Willem Delleman-BCNW; Mark Vandervliet-Hamilton; Tim DeWeerd-Huron; Terence Schilstra-Niagara

We had one for Ecclesiastical Fellowship because he has seen it work in other corporations.

One for SALT because there is significant change to management and we want to give that a chance.

One for SALT because this seems to be more about secular politics and less about a heart for ministry. And BC will be left out if there is a separation and Ontario takes over.

One for ED model--wants there to be equal voices at the table and SALT doesn't look like equal voices

One who wouldn't say--just want there to be unity irrespective of structure.

All agreed asking us to commit was premature and not the within the stated purpose of this meeting.

GROUP 12 – Jolene Veenstra-Hamilton (Reporter); Kevin VanderVeen-BCNW; Winston Visser-Eastern Canada; Dirk Kroon-Huron; Mike Borgert-SW Ontario

There wasn't any real consensus in the group. There was a strong push for a D & E hybrid because of an assertion that the current structure does not work, or does not allow us to work as equal partners, and then one who wanted to maintain the binational structure, as long as it facilitated ministry, and someone who didn't get to speak because of four other long-winded people.