



Dear friends,

In Spring 2023, the Christian Reformed Church in North America will be holding its next Canadian National Gathering. You may recall that previous gatherings were held in 2016 and 2019 and were galvanizing and formative times for our Canadian churches. We believe that tradition will continue in 2023 and we are sending you this letter to provide you with information and ask for your participation and support.

As you may be aware, *Hearts Exchanged* cohorts have been running in the CRC for the last couple of years. This 8-month learning journey focuses on Christ's call to justice and reconciliation in Canada and is a key expression of our denomination's response to the Calls to Action of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission.

The term *Hearts Exchanged* comes out of a call to the Churches from a CRC cross-cultural ministry forum in 2000, an event that included profound tensions and moments of reconciliation. The participants experienced *both* as an exchange of hearts and agreed that regular intercultural conversation was critical for the ministry of the CRC in Canada. The *Hearts Exchanged* initiative has taken up that call with a specific focus on the call to reconciliation and right relationships with Indigenous peoples. At the next Canadian National Gathering, we anticipate continuing this journey of listening to what the Spirit is saying to the church as a larger community.

The Canadian National Gathering will be held at Algonquin College (unceded Algonquin territory, Ottawa, Ontario) May 25-28, 2023. Approximately 150 participants will gather for worship, prayer, teaching, and circle-discernment on exchanging hearts and seeking faithfulness in Creator's call to reconciliation – all of this will be done under Indigenous leadership.

In total, we aim to invite approximately 10 people from each Canadian classis. Some participants from your classis will be drawn from *Hearts Exchanged* cohorts, some will be nominated by the Canadian Indigenous Ministry Committee and the National Advisory Committee on Antiracism, and some, we hope, will be nominated directly by your classis.

With all of this in mind, we have three specific requests of you:

1. Please appoint 4 people from your classis to attend the gathering and email canada@crcna.org with those names. Participants will have an opportunity to engage in a deep listening exercise under Indigenous leadership. They should be prepared to listen and participate with respect and humility in an intercultural

1700 28th Street SE
Grand Rapids MI 49508-1407
616-241-1691
616-224-5895 fax

3475 Mainway
PO Box 5070 STN LCD I
Burlington ON L7R 3Y8
905-336-2920
905-336-8344 fax



context and carry what they have learned back to their congregation and classis. We encourage classes to choose delegates with diversity of clergy and lay leaders, age, gender, and ethnicity in mind.

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2- Please contribute \$3,950, as a classis, towards this event. The CRCNA will support travel, lodging, food, and other expenses for all participants. Like previous gatherings, your contribution will cover a portion of the cost for 10 people from your region to attend – the four you appoint, as well as others that are invited from Hearts Exchanged cohorts and by advisory teams. Our desire is for each individual participant to experience a sense of being *sent*, and so we desire to minimize any personal financial cost as much as possible (especially for those for whom cost would prohibit their participation).

3- Please join us in prayer for the National Gathering. In the *Hearts Exchanged* journey there have been many experiences of transformation and blessing. Pray with us that the Spirit will be active in preparing the church to exchange hearts across cultures and to discern a faithful path of reconciliation and right relationship. Pray with us that this gathering can be transformative not just for the individual participants but for the Christian Reformed Church across Canada.

Information about the Canadian National Gathering will be shared at crcna.org/canadian-national-gathering as it becomes available. We will also share with you the full list of participants from your region once it has been created. In the meantime, if you have any questions or we can assist in any way, please don't hesitate to reach out. You can reach us at canada@crcna.org.

Sincerely,

Rev. Al Postma, transitional executive director
Adrian Jacobs, senior leader for Indigenous justice & reconciliation
On behalf of the Advisory Circle and the Canadian Indigenous Ministries Committee

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