

Report to Classis Huron from the Council of Delegates

Spring 2023

Report submitted by Peter Meerveld, Classis Huron (Delegate to the Council of Delegates for the CRCNA)

This report is divided into three sections:

1. ***Highlights from the Spring 2023 Council of Delegates Meeting (May 2023)***
2. ***Highlights from the Canada Ministry Board (May 2023)***
3. ***Answers to the Questions from our last Classis Meeting***
4. ***Next Classis Meeting***

1. Highlights from the Spring 2023 Council of Delegates Meeting

The Council of Delegates (COD) of the Christian Reformed Church in North America (CRCNA) met in the denominational offices in Grand Rapids, Michigan on May 3-5, 2023. The Council of Delegates exists to govern entities and activities of the denomination acting as an intermediary between Synod and the denomination. The COD consists of 54 members, with senior staff in ex officio positions. Eighteen of the members of the COD is Canadian, with 36 being from the U.S.

During this meeting, the COD spent time in prayer, received reports, held discussions, and made decisions as follows:

- This meeting focused largely on issues requiring approval in preparation for Synod 2023
- Took note of the new name and tagline for congregational ministries – ***Thrive: Equipping and Encouraging Congregations***. Recommended that Synod 2023 also take note of this new name.
- Endorsed several communications from CRCNA staff that will be passed along to Synod 2023 in response to various overtures. These communications follow the “right to comment” procedures outlined in CRCNA polity.
- Elected officers for the CRCNA Canada ministry board, CRCNA U.S ministry board, and Council of Delegates executive committee.
- Adopted a revised church membership and confessional conformity policy for the COD handbook.
- Heard from Zachary King, general secretary, about recent work including preparations for Synod 2023, the members named to serve on the global visioning team, and an update on the “one family” conversation.
- Heard from Shirley DeVries, our new chief administrative officer, noting that ecclesiastical mandate letters from World Renew US and Canada have been received, a review of the office of the general secretary is realigning work for staff efficiency, and good communication and collaboration is happening across agencies.
- Reviewed the revised ***Council of Delegates handbook***, noting updates to several areas and providing feedback. This is a working document, but the COD

recommended that synod ratify the organizational concept and structure in the document and receive the draft as information.

- Dissolved the collaborative church planting team with thanks and noted that this work is now being championed by congregational ministries (***Thrive- Equipping and Encouraging Congregations***) and Resonate Global Mission.
- Honored and gave thanks for COD members who are concluding their terms of service.
- Took note of bylaw changes made by the World Renew U.S. and World Renew Canada boards, and endorsed ecclesiastical mandate letters that clarify the continuing relationship between World Renew and the CRCNA.
- Heard a presentation on ministry shares and took note of the findings from a recent review of the ministry shares reimaged program. The recommendations from this review were forwarded to Synod 2023 for information.
- Took note of the Ministers Pension Fund contribution rates for calendar year 2024 in the U.S. and Canada. In both countries, the per-member assessment remains at \$37.20 and the per-participant assessment remains \$7,704.
- Received audits from World Renew, Calvin University, Calvin Theological Seminary and the Pension Fund and forwarded them to synod for information.
- Endorsed the list of organizations for support and forwarded it to Synod 2023 for approval.
- Heard an update on the work done to provide information to churches regarding short term disability needs. This will be shared with Synod 2023.
- Heard an update on the work done to respond to Synod 2022's directive regarding teaching against white supremacy. This report will be shared with Synod 2023.
- Endorsed (again) the Culture of Civility task force report, reengaged the report and its recommendations, and tasked staff to develop an implementation plan by May 2025.
- Received reports from the director of ReFrame Ministries, the director of Resonate Global Mission, the *Banner* Advisory committee, the president of Calvin Theological Seminary, the president of Calvin University, and the Bible Translations committee. Received updates about the prayer initiatives for Synod 2023, the synodical assignment to facilitate conversations about unity, a report on the 2023 denominational survey, the work being done to address abuses of power
- Spent time in conversation with Jamie McIntosh, the newly appointed Canadian director of World Renew.
- In the interim of synod, appointed people to serve with the Judicial Code Committee, the COD, and to terms as synodical deputies and alternates.
- Next Council Meeting – October 11-13, 2023 in Michigan

2. Highlights from the CRCNA Canada Board (May, 2023)

In addition to the meeting of the COD, the boards of several CRC corporate entities met separately. Two of these entities was the Canada Corporation/Canada Ministry and ReFrame Ministries. They reported the following:

Canada Board

- Reviewed a report from the convener of the joint ministry agreement committee and approved joint ministry approval documents from the Office of the General Secretary, Congregational Ministries (Thrive), Information Technology, and Resonate Global Mission.
- Approved the proposed budget and ministry share allocations for 2023-2024.
- Approved the proposed compensation adjustment program for 2023-2024.
- Met Roshani Morton, the new Advancement director for the CRCNA in Canada.
- Received reports from the transitional executive director, Human Resources, Communications, Congregational Ministries, Finance, Resonate Global Mission, the justice and reconciliation committee, the governance committee, the ad hoc Canada-wide Conversation Organizing committee.

ReFrame Ministries Canada Board

- Reviewed a report from the convener of the joint ministry agreement committee and approved joint ministry approval documents.
- Approved the proposed budget for 2023-2024.
- Approved the proposed compensation adjustment program for 2023-2024

There are new recruits to various positions on the two national boards and the Council of Delegates:

CRCNA Canada Corporation/CRCNA Canada Ministry

- Board President: Ms. Greta Luimes
- Vice President: Rev. Ralph Wigboldus
- Treasurer: Mr. Henry Eygenraam
- Secretary: Ms. Roberta Vriesema

CRCNA US Corporation/CRCNA US Ministry Board

- President: Rev. Michael L. Ten Haken
- Vice President: Ms. Jill Feikema
- Treasurer: Rev. Drew Sweetman
- Secretary: Rev. John Lee

Council of Delegates and Executive Committee Officers

- President: Rev. Michael L. Ten Haken
- Vice President: Ms. Greta Luimes

- Treasurer: Mr. Henry Eygenraam
- Secretary: Rev. John Lee

3. Answers to the Questions to Peter Meerveld from our last Classis Meeting (Fall 2023)

Question

If we have an independent Canada Corporation serving the needs of Canadian churches, why have a Council of Delegates? How does Canada Corp work with the Council of Delegates to represent Canada's interest in denominational decision-making?

As a denomination, we are committed to working with our partner in North America – the U.S. Corporation. Both countries have their own Board of Directors and a governance structure that allows for decisions relating to the needs of their specific country. For example, we hire our own Executive Director (Canada Office) or recruit directors for the various Ministries (e.g. Director of Congregational Ministries).

Ultimately we are elected by our respective Classis to the Council of Delegates first and then delegated to our respective country boards – CRCNA Canada Corp. and U.S. Corp. This allows us to manage each Ministry within the Canadian context while serving the broader denomination. It is at the Council of Delegates that we as partners share and speak as one voice – finding common ground thereby ensuring the success of each ministry and the denomination. In addition to the delegate sitting on the Board, each delegate is assigned to one or two committees or entities within the denomination. In my case, I sit on both the Congregational Ministries Committee (now called 'Thrive *Equipping and Encouraging Congregations*') and Calvin University Board of Trustees.

Some believe that we should have a separate or totally independent Canadian denomination. We are constantly monitoring the voices of Canadians to determine the sentiment of our congregations through our listening sessions. It's important to note that any separation would negatively impact how we do ministry across the continent and globally. Having a partner allows both of us the critical mass and thought to successfully implement denominational ministries and programs. There is tremendous value in working together – this can't be emphasised enough. From where I sit as delegate, the two sides have been working extremely well together. It's important that we continue to collaborate while we faithfully build His Kingdom together.

Question 2

Ministry Shares

a. *Is there a chart that shows how much each church in North America on average pays towards their shares each year? How do we compare overall with churches in both the United States and Canada in paying towards those shares?*

The denomination does track how each congregation or Classis responds to Ministry shares. It is currently being updated. Once I receive the list, I will be sure to forward it to our Classis for distribution to their congregation.

b. *Some congregations are losing their way around budgeting when it comes to Ministry shares. How does/should a congregation budget around shares? Are there guidelines or direction on how shares fit within the overall church budget during its development?*

Yes, there is some information that gets distributed to all the churches each November. Here's a link to some excellent resources. It's probably a good idea to include the infographic on our classis agenda each fall to give it wider exposure. The link is:

[leadership/crcna-and-synod/ministry-shares-explained](#) OR

[Ministry Shares Explained | CRC Network \(crcna.org\)](#) ...see the infographics files at bottom of the site

Question 3

Is there a progress report on 'Our Journey 2025'?

There have been a number of updates to our denominational plan – Journey 2025. Our hope is to give you a presentation on the Journey at our fall (2023) Classis meeting.

4. Our next Classis Meeting

At one of our next Classis meetings our hope is to give Classis Huron a presentation on:

- a. *What our new governance structure looks like?* (Roberta Vriesema – Member-at-Large - Canada)
- b. *Understanding Ministry Shares* (Peter Meerveld)
- c. *Update on our Denomination's strategic plan Journey 2025*
- d. *How we assist Congregations* (Thrive - Equipping and Encouraging Congregations) Peter Meerveld