



# Living the Call

A REPORT FROM THE CHRISTIAN REFORMED CHURCH IN NORTH AMERICA

## FAITH FORMATION

The Christian Reformed Church seeks to express God’s love by living out five callings:

### Faith Formation

As a community of believers, we seek to introduce people to Jesus Christ and to nurture their faith through all ages and stages of life. (Report in August)

### Servant Leadership

Understanding that the lifelong equipping of leaders is essential for churches and ministries to flourish, we identify, recruit and train leaders to be servants in the Kingdom of God. (Report in October)

### Global Mission

Called to be witnesses of Christ’s Kingdom to the ends of the earth, we start and strengthen local churches in North America and around the world. (Report in February)

### Mercy and Justice

Hearing the cries of the oppressed, forsaken and disadvantaged, we seek to act justly and love mercy as we walk humbly with our God. (Report in April)

### Gospel Proclamation and Worship

Believing that faith comes through the hearing of God’s Word, we proclaim the saving message of Jesus Christ and seek to worship him in all that we do. (Report in June)

## From the Executive Director’s Desk

Summer 2021 is almost over. Over the past several weeks, many of us have enjoyed a season of rest, reflection, renewal and rejuvenation. The weeks of summer engender many times of making new memories with family and friends — vacations, camping, hiking, boating, gardening, and the like. And for many of us, by God’s grace, we are now prepared to return to our post summer lives with renewed vigor.

For me, the summer is a season for spending time with family, and reflecting on the direction that God has laid out for each of us. On a personal note, the fact that I was able to spend extended time with my new and only granddaughter was an added blessing.

I am not unmindful, however, of the fact that for many, this summer has been hard. While there were new births for some, many of our number have mourned deaths. While there were enjoyable vacation memories being made, others have battled hardships and difficulties which plague our world and communities.

In the midst of all of this, it is good to remember that we serve a God who is not only able and willing, but eager to bestow his blessings on his people. It is

of this God that we can confidently say, with the psalmist —

Psalm 23

*The LORD is my shepherd, I lack nothing. He makes me lie down in green pastures, he leads me beside quiet waters, he refreshes my soul. He guides me along the right paths for his name’s sake. Psalms 23:1-3*

So even as we continue to experience joys and sorrows, concerns and difficulties, may we remember that we are children of the kingdom. And as children, may we continually praise our God in heaven, even as we pray for and care for all of those in our families and communities who are in need of his healing touch and comforting presence.

As we move into the fall, we recognize there are additional stresses on church leaders as they seek to guide their congregations, and raise up disciples of all ages, in the new normal of our communities. The ministries of the CRCNA strive to come alongside you during this stressful time.

In this issue, you will read about the work of Faith Formation Ministries

## Calvin University



Calvin University's mission is to equip students to think deeply, to act justly, and to live wholeheartedly as Christ's agents of renewal in the world. And the goal of its *Vision 2030* is to allow that mission to be accessible to a greater diversity of learners worldwide through becoming a university, becoming a trusted partner, and through deepening and strengthening the institution's commitment to Reformed Christian faith.

Despite the headwinds of the pandemic, during the 2020-2021 academic year, the university leaned further into that vision, opening new doors to a Calvin education.

Calvin expanded its in-person and online graduate-level options, to now include *offerings* in 10 different disciplines.

It broke ground on the *School of Business*, the first school in the university structure, and announced an *online MBA program* is starting in fall 2021.

Calvin opened *new doors for students with disabilities*. A \$1.2 million grant from the U.S. Department of Education puts Calvin on a path to be the first university

in Michigan to offer a Comprehensive Transition and Post-Secondary program.

The university welcomed its first cohort in the new *Spanish Immersion program*, which allows high school students who are fluent in Spanish to have the opportunity to earn a minor in Spanish before coming to college.

Calvin celebrated the graduations of the first two cohorts in the Calvin Prison Initiative program, marking the first time in the history of Michigan that inmates *earned bachelor's degrees behind bars*.

Calvin's vision is all about welcoming new populations to experience Calvin's mission. The 2020-2021 academic year shows clear evidence of that "invitation" being extended. This expansion in "invitation" comes with the university's *deepened and strengthened commitment* for its faculty to think deeply about the integration of faith and learning from a Reformed perspective and how this effectively shapes their teaching and scholarship.

**DR. MICHAEL LEROY**  
PRESIDENT, CALVIN UNIVERSITY  
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and Calvin University, as well as be introduced to several resources from the Banner and Faith Alive Christian Resources. I pray that you will be blessed by the work of these ministries and institutions.

To God be the glory!

**BY COLIN P. WATSON SR.,**  
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

## Faith Formation Ministries

Faith Formation Ministries (FFM) encourages and equips churches and ministry leaders to walk with kids, teens, and adults on their life-long, life-wide faith journeys. Together we seek for all generations to grow in intentional and resilient faith.

FFM's regional catalyzers provide free coaching, workshops, and other opportunities to CRC church leaders. Other team members focus on supporting children's ministry, youth ministry, and Dwell curriculum users. Our resource team curates and creates practical, accessible resources that churches and families can use.

In the last year, much of our work focused on releasing *Dwell Flex*, a flexible curriculum that responds to changing children's ministry circumstances, and launching the **Faith Practices Project**, a five-year exploration of spiritual disciplines. Our regional catalyzers also continued to support churches' needs during the pandemic. Here are examples of our work in these areas:

### Faith formation support for ministry leaders, churches, and families

- FFM launched the *Faith Practices Project*, providing resources for exploring 12 Christian practices (spiritual disciplines) for use individually, as a group, or at home.
- Our regional catalyzers continued to offer online workshops and webinars for CRC churches and small groups.
- FFM staff participated in and contributed to the combined Children's Spirituality Summit and Intergenerate conference, supporting and learning from ministry leaders and faith formation practitioners.

### Dwell curriculum support

- We developed and released *Dwell Flex*, 36 stand-alone *Dwell* sessions for use in a variety of situations—whether virtual, in-person, or at home—and across multiple age groups.



- Our resource team created several new *Dwell at Home resources* for family faith formation, including *God's Big Pentecost Story* to assist families in exploring the story of Pentecost at home, as well as a series of *5 Ways family faith formation tip sheets* for parents that correspond to practices in the Faith Practices Project.

The FFM team is thankful for the opportunity to serve and support CRC churches and ministry leaders as together we live out our calling of growing to be more like Jesus!

DR. CHRIS SCHOON  
DIRECTOR, FAITH FORMATION MINISTRIES  
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## Tools You Can Use

### **Dear Parent: A Guide for Family Faith Formation**

by Laura Keeley and Robert J. Keeley

This booklet helps parents lay the groundwork for faith formation in their family by exploring four “Building Blocks of Faith.” Each chapter ends with discussion or thought questions, ideas for living the chapter topic out in the family, and a short resource list. Visit [FaithAliveResources.org](http://FaithAliveResources.org) to order. Bulk pricing is available.

### **Dwell (graded) Sunday School Curriculum**

Dwell can help God’s big story come alive for the kids (pre-K to 8) in your church. Visit [DwellCurriculum.org](http://DwellCurriculum.org) for more information including free sample sessions, scope and sequence, and a video tour. Plus teachers can have full online access to all leader resources in the entire curriculum with a subscription to Dwell Digital — free to CRCs.

### **Dwell Flex (multi-age) Curriculum**

This new multi-age curriculum was created to work with a wide range of ages and in a variety of settings, including by video, at church, or at home. Every Flex session stands alone so leaders can move through them in whatever order works best for their situation. Flex sessions are included as part of a Dwell Digital subscription — free to CRCs.

### **Everyday Family Faith: Simple Practices and Activities for Building Faith at Home**

by Sandy Swartzentruber

Looking for ways to strengthen family faith formation in your church? This pocket guide for parents provides simple, do-able ideas that help families build natural faith habits at home. For each day of the week, Everyday Family Faith includes ideas for prayer, Scripture engagement, faith talk, and family fun. Bulk pricing is available. Visit [FaithAliveResources.org](http://FaithAliveResources.org) to order.

### **Faith Alive: Adult/Small Group Resources**

Bible study guides, topical studies, and other resources.

### **Faith Alive: Church Leadership Resources**

Books and materials for church leadership and development, congregational care and growth.

### **The Faith Practices Project**

The Faith Practices Project is a five-year exploration of spiritual disciplines. Year 1 explores 12 Christian practices, offering creative ideas for individual and communal practices, Scripture passages to read, a helpful intro article, thought or discussion questions, and suggested resources for going deeper.

### **Free Family Resources**

Tip sheets and activities designed to encourage and equip families as they nurture faith at home.

### **God’s Big Story Cards**

A small boxed set of 165 cards that provides families with easy-to-do, interactive (and fun!) ways to form faith as they learn about God’s story together.

### **The Dwelling eNews**

A quarterly e-newsletter created specifically for Children’s ministry coordinators and leaders, includes helpful articles, creative tips, and more.

### **The Banner**

Articles on Faith Formation: [thebanner.org/column/faith-formation](http://thebanner.org/column/faith-formation) or contact *The Banner* to share a faith formation Big Question for us to answer in an upcoming edition: [info@thebanner.org](mailto:info@thebanner.org)



## People You Should Know

### Children's Ministry Catalyzer

Mimi Larson ([childrensministry@crcna.org](mailto:childrensministry@crcna.org)) is available to assist CRC children's ministry leaders with questions and challenges and provide helpful resources and tools.

### Dwell Curriculum Coordinator

Jill Benson ([dwell@crcna.org](mailto:dwell@crcna.org)) plans and manages the ongoing refreshing of the CRC's Dwell children's ministry curriculum, assists with building a vibrant Dwell user community, and provides helpful resources and training tools.

### Faith Formation Ministries Regional Catalyzers

Regional catalyzers (RCs) have one goal: to help you strengthen the faith formation efforts of your congregation. Our regional catalyzers are experienced ministry leaders who are here to encourage and equip your church's faith formation leaders, lead workshops, and connect you with helpful ministry resources. Find your church's RC at [crcna.org/FaithFormation/coaching](http://crcna.org/FaithFormation/coaching).

### Youth Ministry Catalyzer

Ron DeVries ([youthministry@crcna.org](mailto:youthministry@crcna.org)) is available to help CRC youth ministry leaders with youth ministry issues and provide helpful resources and tools. Ron also coordinates the CRC's network of Youth Ministry Champions.

### Youth Ministry Champions

Faith Formation Ministries oversees a growing network of Youth Ministry Champions. Each champion connects to a classis to empower and encourage youth ministry workers and to serve as a voice on behalf of youth leaders at classis. Visit [crcna.org/youth](http://crcna.org/youth) to find the Youth Ministry Champion for your classis.

## Want to Learn More?

Stay up-to-date on what the CRCNA is doing in Faith Formation through:

- **CRC News** — Subscribe at [crcna.org](http://crcna.org) for a weekly digest of stories in your inbox
- **The Network** — Visit [crcna.org/Network](http://crcna.org/Network) to post your questions, participate in discussions around

the topic of "Faith Formation", or review available resources

- **Find Resources** — Search thousands of resources available at [crcna.org/resources](http://crcna.org/resources)

**Or call 1-877-272-5125 with any of your ministry questions.**