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This ministry focus paper entitled

TOWARD DISCERNING A NEW IMAGINATION: MISSIONAL LEADERSHIP
FOR THE TRANSFORMATION OF A DENOMINATIONAL AGENCY

Written by

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and submitted in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the degree of

Doctor of Ministry

has been accepted by the Faculty of Fuller Theological Seminary
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Date Received: March 28, 2013

TOWARD DISCERNING A NEW IMAGINATION: MISSIONAL LEADERSHIP
FOR THE TRANSFORMATON OF A DENOMINATIONAL AGENCY

A MINISTRY FOCUS PAPER
SUBMITTED TO THE FACULTY OF THE
SCHOOL OF THEOLOGY
FULLER THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY

IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT
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ABSTRACT

Toward Discerning a New Imagination: Missional Leadership for the Transformation of a Denominational Agency

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2013

The purpose of this project is to explore self-leadership issues and adaptive challenges the executive director of Christian Reformed Home Missions (CRHM) must address to provide helpful and transformative leadership within the Christian Reformed Church in North America (CRCNA). An action-learning project is constructed from a missional-change perspective to test, assess, discern, and identify critical issues of executive leadership in leading a denominational mission agency into a journey of missional transformation. It is framed around a question: What are the critical skills, capacities, and habits required for an executive leader to lead an agency from providing denominational programming to enabling missional engagement with churches in their local contexts?

Part One provides the leadership context by naming ministry challenges. The Missional Network Exec Leader 360 Survey tool is used to establish a baseline reflection on the executive director's current leadership and learning. Part Two engages theological reflection by discussing theological themes and theoretical frameworks pertinent in developing missional imagination and organizational culture change. Part Three reports on the design, development, and key learning of a thirteen-month action-learning project. It concludes by proposing an action plan addressing the identified challenges in the areas of cultivating missional imagination, managing adaptive and technical work, forming plurality of leadership within CRHM, and leading "up and across" in the CRCNA.

Six areas of key learning points are significant discoveries that may assist those seeking to initiate and lead missional change processes in church systems: Managing change; Honoring the past and moving beyond the past; Communicating well; Continuing balcony reflections for awareness and understanding; Addressing adaptive and technical challenges; and Cultivating spiritual practices. Possible topics for further research that come out of this project are establishing mission order, forming leadership community as *communitas*, and exploring the possibility of becoming Abbot and Abbesses.

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To Eunaë

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INTRODUCTION

Chris Lowney, in *Heroic Leadership*, writes, “All leadership begins with self-leadership.”¹ Having self-awareness and understanding one’s self-leadership is critical. In order to cultivate missional change in congregations and church systems, it is essential leaders must take stock of what they know about the world and themselves as leaders.²

This Ministry Focus Paper concentrates on self-leadership issues and adaptive challenges that I, as new executive director of Christian Reformed Home Missions (CRHM), must address in order to provide helpful and transformative leadership in this time of massive discontinuity and transition within the Christian Reformed Church in North America (CRCNA or CRC).³ This project constructs an action-learning experiment that identifies critical issues of leadership in this context of redefinition. It is framed around a question: What are the critical leadership skills, capacities, and habits required for an executive leader to lead an agency that is already on the way from providing denominational programming to enabling missional engagement with its churches?⁴

¹ Chris Lowney, *Heroic Leadership: Best Practices from a 450-Year-Old Company that Changed the World* (Chicago: Loyola Press, 2003), 95-111. Lowney asserts self-awareness is the first unique value Jesuits believed to be the foundation of the four pillars of leadership. He writes a convincing leadership story of Jesuits who have been successful for more than 450 years in training every leader they recruit.

² Alan Roxburgh, *The Missional Leader: Equipping Your Church to Reach a Changing World* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2006), 105-107.

³ Ronald Heifetz and Marty Linsky, *Leadership on the Line: Staying Alive through the Dangers of Leading* (Boston: Harvard School of Business, 2002), 13ff. “Adaptive challenge” requires learning new ways—changing attitudes, values, and behaviors—whereas “technical problems” can be solved by applying current know-how.

⁴ I have inherited a denominational agency that has been on the way to enabling missional engagement. Over the past decade, many attempts have been made to bring changes in how CRHM carries out its work. Regionalization in various forms is one such major attempt. What I need to identify are skills, capacities, and habits that keep CRHM moving in that direction with greater effectiveness in the future.

To address this question, the project establishes a baseline assessment of my leadership, using The Missional Network (TMN) Executive Leader 360 Survey. This provides a balcony reflection on my current leadership and learning.⁵ I then name, assess, and address adaptive challenges that need to be faced within CRHM, and the capacities I need to lead it into culture change. The thirteen-month learning project names at least one adaptive challenge that helps to determine the best way to involve staff, board, and constituents in a journey toward missional transformation.

The Christian Reformed Church in North America is at a critical crossroads. The CRCNA has a unique history with rich, Reformed heritage of deep theological tradition and various faithful expressions of Christian faith and witness. There is much to be celebrated in the current life and history of the CRCNA. But, there is also a sense of deep crisis and the reality of massive challenges the CRCNA must face in order to move into a hopeful future. Like many other Christian denominations in North America today, the CRCNA is facing its unknown and uncertain future in this moment of crisis and opportunity in the post-Christian mission context.

This transitional place of crisis and opportunity is nothing new to those familiar with the narratives of God's people in the Bible. Even though there are many obvious differences, the displaced location of North American churches is similar to what Israel experienced in Babylonian captivity and exile after the catastrophic events of 587 B.C. In that place of complete disorientation and chaos, the people of God found themselves in a

⁵ Heifetz and Linsky explain "getting on the balcony" as a skill of active participation and reflective observation in leadership, "Being both in and out of the game (quoting Walt Whitman)" and "'Getting off the dance floor and going to the balcony,' an image that captures the mental activity of stepping back from the midst of action and asking, 'What's really going on here?'" in *Leadership on the Line*, 51. For a fuller explanation, see Ronald Heifetz, *Leadership without Easy Answers* (Cambridge, MA: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1994), 252-263.

radically new and displaced place where they cried out, “How could we sing the LORD’s song in a foreign land?” (Psalms 137:4). This was the cry of anguish, pain, confusion, and grief at their sense of lostness and abandonment. But, this was also a time of discernment for discovering a very different and new future, as Alan Roxburgh notes:

In the biblical accounts, exile was a hopeful moment in Israel’s life . . . Exile is a symbol of God’s gracious preparation, not God’s abandonment! Babylon was the place in which Israelites had to fundamentally rethink their understanding of God and the tradition they had taken for granted. Only out of this long process would a new imagination—a new identity as God’s people—begin to emerge. The Babylonian Exile was Israel’s period of transition.⁶

One of the key factors for any organization at a crossroad of transition is the role and place of leadership. In this time of rapid, discontinuous change and transition in the wider culture, as well as in churches and denominations, the question of how leaders will function remains an essential matter that must be addressed with focused attention. However, many churches and denominations are not prepared to face the challenges of leadership; it is a well-known and documented fact that many churches and denominations are struggling to adapt to changing environments.⁷

Churches and denominations in North America must ask, “What are the most helpful approaches for the future of leadership?” The role of a denominational agency such as Christian Reformed Home Missions (CRHM) and its leaders in this time of change and transition must be examined. This Ministry Focus Paper explores the

⁶ Alan Roxburgh, *The Sky is Falling: Leaders Lost in Transition* (Eagle, ID: ACI Publishing, 2005), 74-75.

⁷ Over the last two decades, much research and writing have been done. For a few examples of studies on the missional context of congregations and denominations in North America, see Darrell Guder, ed., *Missional Church* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1998); Craig Van Gelder, ed., *The Missional Church in Context* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans Publishing Co., 2007); Craig Van Gelder, ed., *The Missional Church and Denominations* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans Publishing Co., 2008); Nancy Ammerman et al, eds., *Studying Congregations* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 1998).

challenges of leadership in the denominational church system from a missional perspective; it seeks to offer a potential way to address issues of leadership by discerning a new imagination that cultivates an environment of a hopeful future.

Part One explores the context of CRHM related to my leadership challenges. Chapter 1 provides background context for the project, exploring current dynamics and aspects associated with challenges that CRCNA and CRHM face as they redefine identity. CRHM's organizational reality is examined from the perspective of its new executive director. Chapter 2 provides a summary of my current personal leadership lessons and challenges. After providing a narrative of my leadership journey and initial leadership work with CRHM, an analysis and reflection on the TMN Executive Leader 360 Survey Report is presented as a way to assess who I am in terms of missional leadership skills, capacities, and habits. Constructing an accurate picture and assessment of my current leadership provides a basis for designing an action-learning project.

Part Two provides theological framework and reflection on missional leadership. Chapter 3 develops theological grounding and frameworks of missional leadership. After identifying the organizational and leadership culture of the CRCNA, several theological themes on the Holy Spirit, the Trinity, God's ordinary people, covenant, and cultivating kingdom practices are examined to develop a basis for understanding leadership issues from the perspective of missional change. Chapter 4 considers the interconnected issues of relevant theoretical frameworks and tools in missional change and organizational culture by discussing two missional change process models—The Three Zone Model and The Missional Change Model. Theoretical frameworks applicable to denominational executive leadership issues also are considered. Theological reflections on how to

understand and change the cultures within which they exist provide further helpful insights in considering future leadership implications of CRHM.

The third major section summarizes learning and proposes a design for moving toward missional transformation of CRHM. Chapter 5 outlines the terms and expectations of the action-learning project and reports on important developments and significant areas of learning. A detailed description of both the design process and outcome of change process with staff, board, and constituents of CRHM are presented. Opportunities for deeper, continual culture change for CRHM and the CRCNA are also identified. Chapter 6 integrates key findings of the project to propose further development for executive leadership of CRHM. Based on the insights gained from the project, a design process for new experiments is presented with a personal action plan that identifies tools, skills, and training the executive director needs for leading the next chapter of CRHM's future. This is put in the context of an overall approach to culture change to identify other processes that CRHM needs to investigate or adopt in order to achieve lasting transformation that is needed for effective missional engagement in its context.

PART ONE
MINISTRY CONTEXT

CHAPTER 1

LEADERSHIP CONTEXT OF CHRISTIAN REFORMED HOME MISSIONS

A Brief Historical Background of the CRCNA

The CRCNA, like most Protestant denominations in North America, experienced decline over the last twenty years. The CRCNA began with five small ethnic immigrant congregations in Western Michigan in 1857, and grew to 316,415 members at its peak in 1992, with 981 congregations established across the US and Canada.¹ But since 1992, CRCNA's total membership has declined almost every year, down to 251,727 in 2012, which is a loss of 20 percent over twenty years. The number of congregations, however, has steadily increased to 1,099 in 2012, an increase of 10 percent during this time.²

¹ Scott Hoezee, *Grace Through Every Generation: The Continuing Story of the Christian Reformed Church* (Grand Rapids, MI: Faith Alive Christian Resources, 2006), 19-28. See also James Bratt, *Dutch Calvinism in America: A History of a Conservative Subculture* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans Publishing Co, 1984). See also Christian Reformed Church, "CRC Membership Statistics," http://www.crcna.org/pages/membership_stats.cfm (accessed November 24, 2012).

² Christian Reformed Church, "CRC Membership Statistics," http://www.crcna.org/pages/membership_stats.cfm (accessed November 24, 2012).

Membership decline can be a concern and reason for anxiety in church systems, both on denominational and local congregational levels.³ But, such a sign may only be the tip of the iceberg on the surface of the ocean, which is only 10 percent of its actual size. In order to see the whole picture, it is necessary “to get under the surface” by going deeper, asking harder questions about the true reality of the church’s condition, and probing further into what is under the water that is out of sight.⁴ For the CRCNA, a more significant and deeper concern than declining membership is a denominational identity crisis, already identified in 1998, as the crucial issue facing the church.⁵ James Schaap identified this crisis in, *Our Family Album*, when he asked these critical questions: “Who are we? . . . What is it that holds us together anyway?”

³ The CRCNA’s concern that its numbers are declining is not new. For example, see *Acts of Synod 1966*, p. 25 for the Synod appointment of a committee to investigate loss in denominational membership, *Acts of Synod 1966*, Article 49, VIII. The Report is found in *Synod Agenda 1971*, 362-379.

⁴ Alan Roxburgh and Fred Romanuk, *Cultivating Missional Life in Local Churches: Workbook* (Unpublished workbook), 38-40. Roxburgh and Romanuk employ the metaphor of iceberg to discuss the need of dialogue in the “Awareness” and “Understanding” stages of the Missional Change Model for congregations, and write: “If we only paid attention to what we saw on the surface we would simply have the wrong perception and reading of the iceberg. As the crew and passengers of the Titanic learned too late it is what is under the surface that is of crucial importance.”

⁵ James Schaap, *Our Family Album: The Unfinished Story of the Christian Reformed Church* (Grand Rapids: CRC Publications, 1998), 16, 410. The question of denominational identity continues to be one of the critical issues the CRC faces today. Schaap asks, “But who are we? What we’re facing today is a denominational identity crisis, a need to define the principle that sets us apart. To replace the family spirit of our former ethnic community, we must discover an alternative—say, doctrinal unity. But are we, as a denomination, unified doctrinally? Have we ever been? What is it that holds us together anyway?”

An Identity Crisis

Several factors held the CRCNA together during its first hundred years.⁶ It was held together in its beginning years by a sense of persecution for orthodox faith and life. The core groups that came from the Netherlands to Michigan and Iowa separated from the Nederlands Hervormde Kerk in 1834. In their view, they had separated, not from the Church, but from errors within the Church and had been ill-treated for doing so.⁷ There was an awareness of being an immigrant minority group with little to no social/cultural influence. John Kromminga states, “Unable to appeal to great numbers or great influence as an argument for separate existence, the Christian Reformed Church has been the more ready to think highly of its system and to defend it with true zeal.”⁸

For its first hundred years, Dutch ethnicity lay at the core of CRC identity.⁹ Although most members of the congregations composing Classis East Friesland (now largely Classis North Central Iowa) were Germans, not Dutch people, with this exception, most CRC congregations were overwhelmingly or exclusively Dutch. The CRC’s non-Dutch or German congregations were not organized until after 1950s: the first African-American church-planting efforts began in 1952. The first Chinese CRC was

⁶ A key book for understanding the issues of identity in the Christian Reformed Church is Henry Zwaanstra’s dissertation, *Reformed Thought and Experience in a New World: A Study of the Christian Reformed Church and Its American Environment 1890-1918*, (Kampen, Netherlands: J. H. Kok, 1973).

⁷ John H. Kromminga, *The Christian Reformed Church: A Study in Orthodoxy* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1949), 20.

⁸ Ibid, 221.

⁹ Mark Lau Branson and Juan Martinez, *Churches, Cultures and Leadership: A Practical Theology of Congregations and Ethnicities* (InterVarsity Press: Downers Grove, IL, 2011), 87. Ethnicity has been defined in various ways. Branson and Martinez define it: “Ethnicity, also a social construct, usually refers to a cultural group with common links such as biology, language, religion, and geography or migration patterns. In the United States the term can refer to groups that have been identifiable for centuries, such as Chinese, or to those that have been named more recently, such as Hispanics.”

organized in Queens, New York in 1960, followed by the first Hispanic CRC in Miami in 1964, and the first Korean CRC in Los Angeles in 1977.¹⁰ Before 1960, besides these few start-up minority congregations, the CRCNA was almost exclusively made up of Dutch immigrants, their descendants, and a few non-Dutch people who joined them.

The other major identity marker for the CRC was its theological roots and tradition in the Reformation of the sixteenth century, especially that of John Calvin.¹¹ This marker is still in place today. “What sets the Christian Reformed Church off from many other denominations,” according to the official CRC website, “is its embrace of key teachings of John Calvin. In a nutshell, these all center on the sovereignty of God.”¹² Calvinist impulses and accents in the CRC are clearly embedded in many areas of its historical developments of institutional and congregational life,¹³ including “herald ecclesiology”¹⁴ that emphasizes the Word of God as central to public worship and church life, the Reformed world-and-life view, the Kuyperian vision that claim Christ’s lordship over all of life, and a strong commitment to Christian education.

¹⁰ Even though the first mission church, Rehoboth CRC, was established in Gallup, New Mexico in 1906, this and other Native American congregations were “missions” churches outside the establishment of the CRC denominational congregational structures. See Christian Reformed Church, “Memorable Events in the History of the Christian Reformed Church,” http://www.crcna.org/pages/memorable_events.cfm (accessed November 24, 2012).

¹¹ It is beyond the scope of this project to differentiate the influence of Huldreich (or Ulrich) Zwingli from that of Calvin, or to address the influence of the German Palatinate on the CRC largely through the Heidelberg Catechism that originated there.

¹² Christian Reformed Church, “Historical Journey of the CRC,” http://www.crcna.org/pages/history_of_crc.cfm (accessed November 24, 2012).

¹³ Ibid.

¹⁴ Avery Dulles, *Models of the Church* (New York: Image Books/Doubleday, 2002), 76. Dulles designates “the church as herald” as a model where the Word of God is prioritized over sacrament, understanding the Church to be “gathered and formed by the Word of God” and its mission to be the proclamation of “that which it has heard, believed, and been commissioned to proclaim.” This is a kerygmatic model, which sees the Church as the herald who receives a message to pass on.

Over the last fifty years, the CRC has become less Dutch and more diverse.¹⁵ In doing so, it has weakened its Dutch ethnic identification. Even though the majority of CRC membership is still from Dutch ethnic background, it is becoming more diverse. The question remains to what extent is shedding its Dutch identity also weakening its second marker, namely, Reformed identity.

Schaap explores “a worst-case scenario” where the CRCNA faces a risk of “disintegration by losing the center, a shared identity.”¹⁶ He writes, “Progressives (the Kuyperians, ‘Outward-looking CRC members’) will join with liberals from all presently existing denominational fellowships; Confessionalists (‘Inward-looking CRC folks’) with other Confessionalists; and Expressives (‘Upward-looking believers’) with others of like minds and souls.”¹⁷ A practical, challenging reality in the CRCNA is the denominational identity crisis; the need for redefinition of identity Schaap wrote about fifteen years ago is

¹⁵ For example, there are over 120 Korean ethnic CRC congregations, which account for over 10 percent of the entire number of CRC congregations. Also, over 17 different language groups are worshipping congregations as member churches of the CRCNA today. The most recent Internal Scan by the CRCNA Strategic Planning Task Group completed in the fall 2012 report on cultural diversity: Alfred Mulder in *Learning to Count One: the Joys and Pain of Becoming a Multiracial Church* (Grand Rapids, MI: Faith Alive Christian Resources, 2006) “provides some historical data on ethnic minorities in the CRC. It reports that the number of new congregations doubled each decade from 1970-2000 and that the majority were ethnic minority or multiethnic. The 1970s saw an average of five new congregations per year; ten in the 1980s; twenty in the 1990s. By 2000, ‘Of the last 300 new church starts in the CRC, more than half were among immigrant communities or racially diverse populations.’ (48)” In *Grace Through Every Generation*, Scott Hoezee narrates the CRC history over the last fifty years in this publication commissioned for the occasion of the sesquicentennial celebration of the CRCNA in 2007. See also Schaap, *Our Family Album*, 395-398.

¹⁶ Schaap, *Our Family Album*, 398.

¹⁷ Ibid.

still a real, ongoing reality.¹⁸ The role that CRHM might play in addressing this identity crisis may be a lens through which to examine the focus and purpose of this paper.

A Brief Overview of Home Missions Agency Leadership Context

Christian Reformed Home Missions exists to serve the CRCNA by giving leadership to local congregations in doing domestic mission work in North America. The CRHM received its mandate from the Synod 1992 of the CRCNA:

Home Missions shall give leadership to the CRC in its task of bringing the gospel to the people of Canada and the United States, and drawing them into fellowship with Christ and his church. This mandate has these aspects: 1) Encourage and assist churches, classes and regions in the work of developing and sustaining missional churches. 2) Initiate, support and guide church planting and development in cooperation with local churches, classes and regions. 3) Initiate, support and guide educational ministries in cooperation with local churches and classes.¹⁹

Historically, CRHM was created to do missions for, and on behalf of the church, initially to groups outside of Dutch-immigrant, Christian Reformed congregations such as Native Americans in New Mexico (begun 1896), Jews in Chicago (begun 1898) and Paterson, New Jersey (begun 1910), university students in American and Canadian secular campuses (begun 1967), and various immigrant and minority ethnic groups in North America.²⁰ Almost all of these ministries continue today in the CRC under

¹⁸ This is one area of the multiple leadership challenge contexts I entered into as the denomination's executive director for its Home Missions agency in May 2011. This theme of contextual leadership challenge will be discussed further in Chapters 1 and 2.

¹⁹ Christian Reformed Home Missions, "Mandate," http://www.crcna.org/pages/crhm_mandate.cfm (accessed November 25, 2012). This mandate was updated in 1998; see "CRHM Strategic Plan (February 2010 – February 2013)," unpublished CRHM document, 4.

²⁰ Scott Hoezee and Christopher Meehen, *Flourishing in the Land: A Hundred-Year History of Christian Reformed Missions in North America* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1996). Also see Christian Reformed Church, "Memorable Events in the History of the Christian Reformed Church," http://www.crcna.org/pages/memorable_events.cfm (accessed November 24, 2012).

CRHM's leadership. In many ways, CRHM's agency history and work not only reflect the change of diversity taking place in broader North American society, but also have contributed significantly in diversifying the CRC beyond Dutch ethnic lines. Scott Hoezee, in *Grace Through Every Generation*, agrees: "Not surprisingly, Christian Reformed Home Missions has led the way in diversifying the CRC in ways that now help the denomination reflect more fully the broad spectrum of God's people around the world."²¹

CRHM's work has brought a significant number of non-Dutch members into the denomination, and Christian Reformed members have supported the work of CRHM through their denominational giving called Ministry Shares.²² But historically, many Christian Reformed congregations have not actively engaged in the work of evangelism themselves in North America; this is true, in part, because CRHM's "home" missionaries were there to do the work of evangelism for, and on behalf of denominational churches, usually in the remote places distanced from the Dutch-dominated communities and regions where most Christian Reformed congregations were located.

CRHM's Shift in Ministry Direction

During the last four decades CRHM's main direction of ministry has made a major shift from doing mission work for and on behalf of the church to doing mission through the church. During this time, CRHM has initiated and provided leadership in many evangelism efforts and programs for CRC congregations. The following two

²¹ Hoezee, *Grace Through Every Generation*, 98.

²² For some historical data on ethnic minorities in the CRC, see the section on "Cultural Diversity," in *The CRCNA Internal Scan*, (CRCNA internal document), 43-56.

historical markers are noteworthy, signifying this shift of Synodical decisions: the 1975 Synodical decision to adopt the Statements on the Growing Church, “A document paving the way for the CRC to become more intentional about local and personal evangelism over the next 30 years,” and the 1987 Synodical decision to adopt the Gathering God’s Growing Family, “A concerted church-growth movement emphasizing local ownership of evangelism,” both headed by CRHM.²³ Craig Van Gelder describes North American denominational churches from the 1970s to the present as churches that have “an organizational self-understanding around a purposive intent . . . in primarily functional or instrumental terms.”²⁴ CRHM has led the CRC denomination to join with many other North American denominations in following the church-growth movement from the mid-1970s by offering evangelism programs and church growth initiatives to Christian Reformed congregations and its members.²⁵

Church Planting Turn

In the last two decades, CRHM’s work of evangelism in the CRC has been done consistently and mainly through new church plants. The CRCNA had planted only five-to-six new churches each year in the 1970s and even fewer churches before then. But, it doubled each decade: ten in the 1980s, twenty in the 1990s, and since the 1990s, CRHM has consistently planted an average of twenty new churches each year, resulting in 385

²³ Christian Reformed Church, “Memorable Events in the History of the Christian Reformed Church,” http://www.crcna.org/pages/memorable_events.cfm (accessed November 24, 2012).

²⁴ Craig Van Gelder, *Missional Church and Denominations: Helping Denominations Develop a Missional Identity* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2008), 41.

²⁵ Beginning in 1990, one of the main ways CRHM served the CRC in evangelism was through program-driven models, bringing many CRC leaders to church-growth conferences held in places like Crystal Cathedral, Saddleback Community Church, and Willow Creek Community Church.

new congregations from 1988 to 2009.²⁶ CRHM has contributed a significant number of new members through evangelism in the CRC, mostly through church planting efforts.

CRHM's strong efforts and work in starting new churches has contributed not only in evangelism growth, but also increasing diversity in the CRCNA that reflects changing demographics of the North American landscape. This is CRHM's significant and timely contribution for a denomination that has not been successful in embracing other ethnic and cultural groups as members in the midst of an increasingly diverse, multicultural reality in North America over the last several decades.²⁷ Much of the growth in diversity in the CRCNA can be credited to CRHM's focused efforts in church planting; the majority of new churches that had started from 1970 to 2000 were ethnic minority or multiethnic congregations.²⁸ There is much to be celebrated in CRHM's church-planting efforts as a strong basis to build its unique ministry into the future.

CRHM's commitment to church planting, however, also presents a challenge if its role is seen limited to the church-planting task. If a critical question for CRHM in its next leadership chapter is: "Will the agency exist to serve the whole denomination or only those who partner in church planting," then a critical leadership issue is cultivating an

²⁶ The most recent *Internal Scan* by the CRCNA Strategic Planning Task Group's Report completed in 2012 reports: "...the number of new congregations doubled each decade from 1970-2000 and that the majority were ethnic minority or multiethnic. The 1970s saw an average of five new congregations per year; ten in the 1980s; twenty in the 1990s (48)."

²⁷ The External Scan by the CRCNA Strategic Planning Task Force (Fall 2012) reports, for example, how the US population is growing in size and becoming increasingly Hispanic, and also increasingly Asian and African in Canada: "US population continues to grow, from 180 million in 1960 to 308.7 million in 2010, to over 438 million by 2050. Currently, 92% of the growth is accounted for by minorities... White population was 67% in 2005 and will become a minority at 47% by 2050 while Hispanic will be 29%, Black 13%, and Asian 9%."

²⁸ The CRCNA Strategic Planning Task Group's Report completed in Fall 2012 reports: "The number of new congregations doubled each decade from 1970-2000 and that the majority were ethnic minority or multiethnic."

environment of change and transition within CRHM to reframe its identity so as to widen its focus to engage both church planting efforts and established congregations in mission together.

Critical Questions about CRHM's Identity and Role

The need to reframe and redefine the CRHM's identity exists not only at the denominational level but also in the agency level within CRHM. In the current cultural climate, new ways to plant churches and help existing ones to grow are needed to reinvigorate the CRCNA as a whole. In a world of continual diminishing loyalty to all kinds of institutions, including denominations, the challenge for both the CRCNA and CRHM is to answer this primary question, "What is the place and role of denominations and denominational agencies today and in the future?" This creates the specific leadership question of direction. Further questions for CRHM are: "What do local congregations need from a denominational agency, like CRHM, to meet congregational challenges in a post-Christian, pluralist North American context? Do their needs require a radical re-orienting and reframing of CRHM's identity and role to serve them well? If so, where and how does an institutionalized denominational agency begin to retool itself for reorientation and reframing?" These questions raise their own set of challenges for leadership.

More generative questions for CRHM than asking, "Why is membership declining," would be: "What is God doing in the world today, in neighborhoods and local communities where Christian Reformed congregations are located?" "What does God

want to do in and among these congregations?²⁹” “How does a denominational agency entrusted with bringing the Gospel to North America become a helpful mission partner in discerning God’s will for and with CRC congregations?” “How might CRHM best partner with new church plants in diverse, urban, global, metropolitan city centers of the world like New York City, Los Angeles, Chicago, Seattle, and Houston, as well as in suburban and rural communities in contemporary North America?” “How might CRHM come alongside and be a mission partner with established congregations who are faced with a shortage of funds and are struggling with declining membership, while trying to maintain buildings and programs that increasingly serve fewer and fewer people?”

In the midst of these questions is the core issue addressed in this paper: “What should a leader do in a situation such as this? What kind of leadership is needed? How does one know what knowledge and actions are required to lead well? Where does one begin?”

New Executive Director’s Beginning Journey: Defining the Reality of CRHM

When I began as executive director of CRHM in May 2011, one of the initial goals I set out to accomplish was defining the reality of CRHM: Where is CRHM today? Where is it headed? My first major plan was to listen well to as many Christian Reformed leaders and members as possible on multiple levels, and then ask questions in order to

²⁹ Alan Roxburgh, *Missional: Joining God in the Neighborhood* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2011), 28. Questions like “What is God up to? What does God want to do?” are radically different questions than questions like “What kind of church do we need to be? What do we want to do as a church?” Roxburgh writes, “The sixteenth-century Reformation bequeathed us a set of questions concerning the Christian life that were largely church questions, and they still shape our imagination. Whether in a traditional denomination or one of the newer, supposedly more culturally sensitive groups—such as seeker or simple or emergent—the same basic question directs conversation and practice, namely, What kind of church do we need and how do we make that kind of church work? By centering on such questions we remain captive to an imagination that is the direct heir or a pre- and post-Eurocentric Reformation culture.”

engage in honest conversations about CRHM's current reality with denominational, regional, classical, and local leaders both within and outside of CRHM. After my initial six months of numerous "listening conversations" in various settings, at least three things became clear that gave me clues to understand my leadership context in CRHM: the importance of the new Strategic Plan, perception issue between the CRCNA and CRHM, and challenges facing leaders in the CRCNA and CRHM.

CRHM's New Strategic Plan

I quickly learned the single most important roadmap guiding and undergirding most, if not all, of CRHM's work was Strategic Plan 2010-2013.³⁰ About a year prior to my arrival, CRHM's staff and board completed a long and substantial process of drafting a new strategic plan. All CRHM staff members were busy implementing the plan when I began my job. The strategic plan was well into implementation, and clearly occupying the front and center place in the minds, imagination, and work of CRHM and its staff.

The plan essentially proposes six priorities. The first three are strategic priorities in the areas of multiplying new churches and campus ministries, cultivating diverse missional leaders, and partnering with established churches in shared mission. The next three are strategies for developing organizational capacities in the areas of cultivating partnership, igniting generosity for mission, and stimulating innovation and spiritual growth.

³⁰ Christian Reformed Home Missions, CRHM's Strategic Plan 2010-2013 (unpublished document). The Strategic Plan was put together in a particular context, at a time when CRHM was faced internally with a number of critical challenges, including senior leadership transitions, financial "crisis," and a need to make choices with regard to organizational priorities. After a season of spiritual discernment, a clear future direction was set in motion by adopting the Strategic Plan.

In listening and learning more about CRHM's commitment to the Strategic Plan, I learned there have been vigorous activities with regard to the Strategic Plan that have received significant attention and execution. These include: church multiplication strategies, partnership in Church Multiplication Initiative (CMI), campus ministry multiplication, formation of mission leadership teams and clusters in the regions, ethnic leader development, Global Coffee Break, and a refocused grant system. I discovered great energy and focus particularly in the areas of forming a new initiative around the formation of Cluster development.³¹

There were three challenges that emerged around the strategic plan. First, the new strategic plan has a clear direction, but needed to have a clear execution strategy developed. Second, as I listened, it became apparent that this plan was not well known to most of the wider constituents and local and national partners outside of CRHM. It seemed to function as an internal document within CRHM; the goals and objectives were not owned by the wider denominational system. Third, within the CRHM senior staff, an interpretation of the Strategic Plan gave priority to church planting.

The leadership challenges rising out of this reality for the new executive director are the following: how to build on momentum that already exists within the system around the strategic plan; how to affirm the current plan, recognizing and celebrating accomplishments and identifying the underdeveloped areas to work on, but at the same time create a safe space to ask honest questions and invite creative voices to challenge assumptions, gaps, or directions of the current plan; how to communicate and lead in a

³¹ The Clusters are gatherings of pastors and church leaders from local churches in any given region that pursue God's mission together. Presently there are about forty Clusters across North America.

wise, constructive way to build the team and advance the common mission of the organization; how to navigate and work through tensions, anxieties, and potential confusion among staff as we wade together through this muddy water.³²

Perceptions of CRHM

Prior to coming to CRHM, I conducted a survey with a group of selected executive level leaders of the CRCNA and asked them to give their input and advice about my leadership transition.³³ Among the five top challenges the survey respondents noted that CRHM had to address, the first one was about perception: “There is a ‘love-hate relationship’ with Home Missions among the people in the CRC. One respondent wrote: HM needs to ‘rebrand [itself] from [being] the agency that has all the answers and quick fix programs to an agency that has resources that can help primarily by walking alongside pastors, teams and churches.’”³⁴

In my conversations with many CRCNA leaders, I quickly learned that the “love-hate relationship” with CRHM among the CRCNA churches and leaders actually exists. The most common perception is around CRHM’s emphasis on church planting. For loyal supporters of CRHM who are active in church-planting work, this is obviously a positive aspect of CRHM’s work. But, for many other who are not involved in the church-planting work, which accounts for roughly 70-80 percent of CRC leaders, their comments were

³² These are the real challenging questions that actually came up during my first year of work, which prepared me well and led me to the next steps discussed in the following sections.

³³ Moses Chung, “Missional Leadership Transition: From Sooyoungro Presbyterian Church in Busan, Korea to Home Missions of the Christian Reformed Church in North America,” (Unpublished doctoral seminar paper, Fuller Theological Seminary, March 1, 2011). Fifteen CRCNA leaders gave feedback: seven CRHM leaders, including the former director and the president-elect of Calvin Theological Seminary, five CRCNA agency directors, two retired CRC pastors and the president of Calvin College.

³⁴ Ibid, 15.

often apathetic, sometimes negative, at times even cynical, or mostly just disinterested. When CRHM emphasizes and invests almost entirely in church-planting efforts, the majority of CRC's established congregations and leaders struggle to face increasing ministry challenges and do not feel CRHM cares about their church.³⁵

Furthermore, with the new Strategic Plan, CRHM made perhaps the strongest turn and commitment towards church planting than at any other time in agency's history. It seems that even though many of CRHM's internal staff became more energized for this bolstered focus and commitment to church planting, those outside the agency might have distanced themselves further from CRHM's refreshed identity and direction, without anyone in CRHM even noticing. Not until some new questions were raised from within the system about its long-held, unchallenged, assumed identity and role did this problem of perception surface.³⁶

Further, the recent consultant report that assessed CRHM suggests that people see CRHM "as being somewhat arrogant in its relationship to the wider denomination. A tension exists here which people feel but are not sure how to address."³⁷ In the memories of some CRC leaders, CRHM's past approaches as "fixing churches' problems with ready-made answers and programs" still linger. They remember the days when CRHM had overflowing financial assets, gathered selected leaders to invite-only events, and led

³⁵ Such comments certainly do not represent all, or most, church leaders from established congregations. This comment may not even be fair for CRHM that has given significant efforts to work and resource many established congregations over the past few decades. However, in my short tenure I have heard enough comments to know this reality exists in the denomination and, therefore, must be acknowledged and dealt with as CRHM examines its identity and role as a denominational mission agency.

³⁶ This is one of the most critical questions for CRHM's current and future identity: Does CRHM exist only to plant new churches or to serve the whole denomination, embracing established congregations?

³⁷ Christian Reformed Home Missions, "The Missional Network Consultants Report to CRHM," (unpublished internal report: August 2012), 4.

the CRC with the “prophetic voice” and the latest “cutting-edge” ministry ideas and programs. Unfortunately, some pastors and leaders have not had positive experiences with CRHM and not forgotten that past. I heard and saw the expressions of disappointments, hurt, and even anger from some leaders about their negative experiences and memories with CRHM in the past. These perceptions are not true for today’s CRHM, but the challenge still remains. For CRHM to move forward and lead into a hope-filled future within the CRCNA, there is a need for restoration of relationships and trust.

Leading in Rapidly Changing Times

Lastly, I learned that CRHM and the CRCNA face massive leadership transition challenges. Some of the cultural shifts are familiar, but many have never been faced before. These cultural shifts are massive in size, multi-layered, disruptive, and discontinuous. These are challenges that the post-denominational, pluralist, and global culture in North America brings to churches. The massive shift happening poses a new set of challenges. It also pushes CRHM to ask hard questions about its own identity, purpose, relevance, and viability as an agency that exists to serve congregations facing the same challenges head-on in the everyday reality of changed neighborhoods of rural, urban, and suburban North America.

Many Christian Reformed churches and leaders deal with deep anxiety, confusion, and fear of an uncertain future due to steady decline and/or slow growth. Younger generations are giving up on traditional faith structures and leaving the Church. Added to these problems are great forces of change, such as globalization, pluralism,

rapid technological change, postmodernism, staggering global need, and a loss of confidence in primary social structures.³⁸ It is a new world where traditional ways of being and doing church with Euro-tribal and mono-ethnic denominational church backgrounds beg some hard questions about identity and mission.

Within the CRCNA, there is a huge senior leadership transition currently taking place. In the past two years, several key executive leadership positions in denominational institutions and agencies have changed, some of them with enthusiasm and welcome, but some quite unexpectedly and with pain and disappointments. Some of these unexpected changes within the wider system bring new questions and implications for the future direction, priorities, and programs of both CRHM and the CRCNA. Additionally, another handful of senior leaders in the CRHM are expected to retire in the next three years.

CRHM, like all organizations today, faces challenges of leading in the midst of massive change. CRHM has gone through tumultuous changes over the last several decades in its best attempts to respond faithfully to massive shifts both in the external world of North American culture and in the internal church world with deeply challenging needs of change and decline. The most recent, best efforts within CRHM have been the creation and implementation of its new Strategic Plan. It has brought fresh energy and some fruitful outcomes such as cluster development by bringing together mission-minded leaders for grassroots leadership development and mission partnership in new and creative ways. But, even the best efforts, intentions, and directions are now

³⁸ Roxburgh, *Missional Map-Making: Skills for Leading in Times of Transition* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2010), 87-110.

facing new challenges in massively changing environments in churches and broader culture.³⁹

Many pastors, leaders, and members of the CRC are in desperate need of guidance and encouragement in this tumultuous time as churches struggle to minister in this post-Christian era. There is a deep nagging sense and realization that doing business as usual will not accomplish the job. CRHM has operated under the inherited structure that has done its agency work a certain way.⁴⁰ CRHM leadership needs to continue to build bridges that will serve the wider denomination through closer partnership with classes and congregations, while building on the good work that resulted in and from the current Strategic Plan. CRHM's commitment to evaluating what worked well in the plan, what we need to change, and what we need to continue out of the plan will help build those bridges closing the gap between CRHM and the very congregations and leaders CRHM seeks to serve.

In *The Missional Church and Denominations*, Marion Wyvetta Bullock asks, "How might leaders in denominational agencies see themselves less as control centers in a competitive ecclesial environment, and more as stewards with and on behalf of the

³⁹ For example, one of the most visible fruitful accomplishments of the Strategic Plan is the formation of Clusters in the regions. However, even this successful strategy is criticized and faces a challenge because of the "tension [that exists] between a planned CRHM regional strategy" of clusters and "the key polity role of classes in the system remains unresolved," as the external consultants write in their diagnostic report of CRHM.

⁴⁰ For example, CRHM staff identified its adaptive challenge in the area of organization in the following way which describes an aspect of the inherited structure: "We have distributed the hub and spoke structure regionally, giving an illusion of a distributive organization that remains essentially a command and control structure. True interdependence seems elusive, and our attempts at change have not been embraced. We do not know how to enter into partnerships in which we don't have a leading role." See Appendix A.

church?”⁴¹ This is a question of shift in self-identity for many of the denominational agency leadership such as CRHM. This is a time of huge crisis for North American denominational churches. But, it also is be a time of opportunities. God’s invitation is always open to churches and their leaders to learn to discern the time, and follow the Spirit’s leading by participating fully in God’s life and mission. The Spirit of God is continuing to bring the future of Christ’s Church among God’s people. This is the leadership context I have entered into with a deep desire to seek to gain clarity on the direction of calling and mission for the next chapter of CRHM as it navigates through discontinuous changes and significant transitions.

⁴¹ Marion Wyvetta Bullock, “The Challenge of Developing Missional Denominational Agencies,” in *The Missional Church and Denominations* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2008), 126.

CHAPTER 2

PERSONAL CHALLENGES OF EXECUTIVE LEADERSHIP

In order to address critical adaptive issues CRHM and CRCNA face in reframing identity and direction, personal challenges must be addressed to understand executive leadership as a denominational agency director. First, a brief autobiographical leadership narrative provides background for my personal ministry journey and development leading up to my leadership role in CRHM. Second, reflection on my leadership during the first twelve months offers further leadership context and basis for engaging the TMN Exec Leader 360 Survey. Third, an assessment of my current leadership is examined with an analysis and balcony reflections on the TMN Executive Leader 360 Report. Initial discoveries and observations of several organizational leadership challenges are presented and used as a basis for designing an action-learning project.

My Personal Leadership Narrative Leading up to CRHM

I have served in three congregations as an ordained pastor prior to taking a role of executive leadership in CRHM in May 2011. The years spent in these local churches undoubtedly had a significant and formative influence on me as a leader. A reflective narrative focusing on key leadership lessons should provide a helpful background toward

assessing my current leadership, as well as finding clues for developing areas of growth as a leader.

Beginning of My Missional Journey at First CRC (1999-2003)

My primary pastoral responsibility as Minister of Discipleship at First CRC in Bellflower, California was to provide congregational leadership in the areas of discipleship, small groups ministry, evangelism, and prayer, as well as regular preaching and worship leading. First CRC was a mid-size church (around 350 members), traditional, plateaued and struggling to minister in rapidly changing, diverse neighborhoods, with mostly Dutch ethnic members, less than 5 percent ethnic minorities. I was the first non-Anglo, non-Dutch pastor in their seventy-year history. So, it was a cross-cultural experience for the congregation to work with a pastor from a different ethnic background, as well as for me since this was the first non-Korean congregation of which I had ever been a member.

In addition to some obvious on-the-job leadership lessons I learned in this cross-cultural ministry experience at First CRC, the most important and shaping influence was the initiation of a life-long “missional journey.” After serving at First CRC for about a year, I began to wrestle deeply with one central ministry question which has continued to shape my thinking ever since: “What does it mean for us as a congregation to be the presence of Christ to our neighborhood and wider community?”

In that congregation, I learned the challenges of insulated congregational culture that formed an “us-versus-them” mentality and how such thinking is so deeply ingrained that the church is often held in captivity of thinking and practice. For example, church members were friendly to visitors from our neighborhoods, but I rarely observed church

members making real friends with the “other” that came to church who did not share similar socio-economic values and backgrounds. Much missional church literature describes the challenges many North American churches face in their Christendom thinking and practice.¹ I wonder how many congregations in the CRCNA are in similar situations, like many other North American congregation, to that of First CRC of Bellflower. Many congregations are stuck with old paradigms of Christendom-thinking and religious behaviors that have little impact on the wider society and culture in which they find themselves. I need to consider CRHM’s role in coming alongside those congregations. My leadership experiences at First CRC may help me to reflect, inform, and provide contextual understanding for my denominational leadership of CRHM.

Experiencing the Spirit’s Power at Work at New Life Church (2003-2007)

At New Life Church (a Reformed Church in America—RCA—congregation) in Artesia-Cerritos, California, I experienced how a communal life lived out of the Gospel of Christ through ordinary people of God has the power to transform individuals and communities. As pastor I was starting a new, worshiping community primarily for a multiethnic neighborhood in one of the most ethnically diverse pockets in North America. Chrysalis-People on the Way, a small worshiping Christian community, re-imagined what church could be for those who do not go to church.

The small-size, intimate, and relational nature of the community forced everyone, especially leaders, to live out what was preached from Scripture in a real, down-to-earth,

¹ Darrell L. Guder, ed., *Missional Church*. See especially Chapter 3, “Missional Challenge: Understanding the Church in North American” where the US and Canada versions of a “functional Christendom” are described as church culture, 46-76.

transparent way. The core members of this emerging congregation were diverse in ethnic, cultural, spiritual, and social ways. Because of diverse backgrounds, it became clear that unless common faith was grounded in Scripture and solid Christian tradition, it would be difficult to bring and hold such diverse people together on a daily and weekly basis.

In this congregation, I had one of the most powerful, life-changing experiences of my life. Within a year of life together, this small community of faith witnessed a young adult who had struggled with drug addiction over thirteen years transformed through a simple, yet radical commitment to love. As a leader, I watched and was invited into the wondrous working of the Spirit in this community and tasted a glimpse of God's coming kingdom. This deep experience of God's power at work provides integrity, vision, and Gospel conviction for my work as a denominational mission agency leader.

Fast-Track Executive Leadership Lessons at Sooyoungro Church, Korea (2007-2011)

Transitioning from New Life Church to Sooyoungro Presbyterian Church in Busan, Korea was a huge jump. As executive pastor overseeing the daily and weekly operation of a mega-church with 30,000 members and 200 staff members, I had to learn quickly the essential skills of leading and working in a large team ministry setting. Complexity of multi-layers of structures, personnel, programs, communications, systems, and culture was the daily reality and challenge I faced, as I found ways to exercise leadership.

Two key leadership lessons from Sooyoung Church are about the power of plural, collaborative leadership and the spiritual dimension in church leadership. I learned the value of plural leadership and collaboration "by accident" through working on a new

missional initiative called “Love Busan.”² It all started with a simple question, “What does it mean to love our neighbors as members of this church?”

It took about two years before I had a good grasp and comprehensive understanding of the system, people, and culture of this large congregation. Once I earned the trust of senior leaders, one small experiment we tried was simply inviting those who had not been at the planning and decision-making tables for developing and initiating new programs. Up to that point, most church-wide projects were planned and implemented by pastoral staff. But, for this project, not only were lay leaders invited who had not been at that level and stage of decision-making and direction setting, but we as pastors also listened to their ideas and asked them to actually lead large portions of the implementation. As a result, this initiative moved the church into the wider community, beyond the walls of the church as never before in its history. I learned an invaluable lesson on the importance of collaborative leadership and teamwork.

The lesson on spiritual dimension in leadership concerns the daily discipline of communal, spiritual practices born out of deep conviction about the Holy Spirit’s power and God’s grace embodied and lived out by leaders of a faith community. This congregation had an amazingly dynamic culture of prayer and dependence on the Holy Spirit through daily communal spiritual practices. For example, there was a daily rhythm of corporate prayer and listening to God’s Word that brought more than 3,000 members together every day for a sole purpose of praying as a community.

² Busan is the name of the city. It is the second largest city in South Korea with a population of 3.5 million people.

Behind this phenomenal DNA of simple and total reliance on the Spirit, embedded in the daily rhythm of the congregation, was the leader who had lived a life of prayer for more than three decades as pastor of the congregation.³ I saw close up how a community of God's people experiences the Spirit that results in all kinds of Spirit-led transformation stories of God's kingdom. This is the spiritual dimension of leadership in which leaders actually lead by example in cultivating an environment for members to learn to rely totally on the Spirit's power in church communities and organizations that seems to be lacking within the CRCNA and CRHM.

Reflections on My First Twelve Months of CRHM Leadership

Reflecting on my past personal leadership journey provides a background picture from which I can explore further other developmental pieces for my current and future leadership formation. The focus of Chapter 2 is describing challenges faced in my executive leadership of CRHM by doing a balcony reflection on the result of the TMN 360 Executive Leader Survey tool. Before getting to the survey results, the following section provides a description of my leadership during the first year as CRHM's new director. Survey participants gave their scores and comments on my leadership based on observations of and interactions with my leadership during this period. The first twenty-two months (May 2011–February 2013) of my leadership work within CRHM can be divided into three periods: first, "Getting to know and establishing relationship" period

³ Rev. Pildo Peter Joung founded Sooyoungro Church in 1975 and retired in 2011. Sooyoungro Church is one of the most dynamic congregations in Korea, known for their successful prayer ministry.

during the first six months; second, “Getting inside the organization” period during the following eight months; and third, “Leading toward an adaptive change process.”⁴

Initial Leadership Activities: “Getting to Know” Period (May–October 2011)

Acting in a role of executive leadership for a denominational agency involves complex management and systems thinking. As I began my work, I found a document the CRHM Director Search Committee crafted, “An Overview of the Main Leadership Roles for the Director of CRHM,” to be quite helpful.⁵ It outlines the director’s role into three areas: “Leading out” with local partners, churches, and donors of the CRCNA; “Leading in” with board and senior staff leadership of CRHM; and “Leading up and across” with denominational office and partner agencies and institutions. I will reflect on my first year as new director of CRHM using this framework.

During my initial six months, I took significant time in “leading out,” making many trips from coast-to-coast in speaking engagements, as well as meeting with church leaders.⁶ Such an intense schedule upfront was physically challenging to manage, but it helped establish a good beginning in three ways. First, meeting people in person during these initial months helped immensely to establish personal trust and working relationships in ways written communications or phone connections never could accomplish. Given the nature of my work as a denominational agency director of Home Missions that both receive support from, and seek to partner with 1,099 congregations in

⁴ In this section, the first two periods are described to provide leadership context. The third period will be described in Chapter 5 as part of my action-learning project.

⁵ See Appendix B.

⁶ During these short months, I traveled for work to Florida (twice), Chicago, Philadelphia, Boston, California, New Mexico, New York as well as many places in Western Michigan, the home base.

the US and Canada, establishing personal trust is essential and a matter of first priority in executive leadership. Second, having numerous “listening” conversations with stakeholders in the CRCNA system, as well as with CRHM senior staff members greatly helped to provide me with needed information and insights in my personal “defining the reality” project.⁷ Third, getting out to the regions and physical locations where CRHM regional staff leaders work with local partners gave me concrete ideas and understanding of “on-the-ground” realities I would have missed if I had not been there in person.

I used these beginning months also to “lead in” with the staff and board of CRHM, mostly in regular meetings and individual conversations. Being a “brand new” person with no real connection to CRHM’s history meant I had to learn a lot about the organization’s history, structure, people, and inner workings. An advantageous aspect of being a new person, though, is a new perspective I can bring to ask fresh, outside-in perspective questions that otherwise may not be asked.

Before my arrival, CRHM went through some difficult financial times due to the economic downturn in 2009, and experienced difficulty in its relationship with CRCNA denominational senior leadership. Positive momentum emerged with refreshed focus and new energy around the newly adopted Strategic Plan. With my arrival as a new director, after a longer than expected transitional period with interim leadership, there was both good will and healthy anticipation. The interim director and leaders provided good leadership that helped CRHM with focus and stability during this challenging transitional time. They also prepared a good leadership platform for the next executive leader for a smooth transition, for which I am very grateful. These beginning months laid a good,

⁷ See my discussion of defining the reality project in Chapter 1.

solid ground on which to build my leadership. I paid the most significant and intentional attention during this period to “relational” leadership, which included building relationships with CRHM leaders as well as denominational agency and institutional leaders through informal breakfast and lunch meetings.⁸

Inside-out Journey: “Getting Inside of CRHM” (November 2011–June 2012)

“Leading In”

CRHM currently has four organizational leadership groups to carry out the agency’s work. They are the groups of regional leaders, ethnic leaders, goal specialists, and the bi-national central office staff.⁹ Each regional leader works within one of the seven regions covering the US and Canada and leads with a regional team. Each ethnic leader and goal specialist also works in partnership with teams made up of part-time staff or volunteer ministry partners.¹⁰ Each of these senior staff members operate out of his or her own remote offices and regions, throughout US and Canada, which makes it very

⁸ Branson describes relational leadership as one of the three main dimensions of missional leadership that “creates and nourishes all of the human connections in various groups, partnerships, friendships, and families. In effect, these three [relational, interpretive, implantation] spheres are structures in the congregations [and church systems]—structures that give meanings (interpretive), human connections (relational), and organizational practices (implemental).” Mark Lau Branson, “Forming God’s People,” <http://www.alban.org/conversation.aspx?id=2456>, *Congregations*, 2003-01-01, Winter 2003, Number 1. (accessed February 1, 2013). This article is later published in *Leadership in Congregations*, ed. Richard Bass (Herndon, VA: Alban Institute, 2007).

⁹ Currently, the senior leadership team is composed of seven regional leaders (two in Canada and five in US); four ethnic leaders (African American, Korean, Hispanic, Native American); four goal specialists (church planting, campus ministries, discipleship, established congregations); and in the central office, executive director, advancement director, finance manager, and (vacant) director of ministry teams. This senior group makes up the Home Missions Leaders Gathering (HMLG).

¹⁰ Currently, there are thirty-seven Full-Time-Equivalent (FTE) staff, which includes the total number of eighty-seven people on regular paid compensation (full-time, part-time, contracted, stipend) plus many other volunteers working on a voluntary basis.

difficult to have frequent face-to-face interactions and relationship-building opportunities. The distributive nature of the organization makes it necessary to find creative ways to connect staff and teams with a common goal and direction.¹¹

The primary way CRHM structured organizational operations is through many regular and task-based team meetings at different levels and for various tasks. Since I began my work, there have been fifteen different leadership teams or meeting structures I facilitate or participate in on a regular basis.¹² Basically, a good part of my leadership is exercised through these teams and meetings. In a typical team meeting, besides relatively brief “devotional times,” the “business” is conducted through exchanging ideas, communicating relevant information, reporting works, making strategic and administrative decisions, evaluating progress, etc.

In the midst of spending a significant amount of time preparing agendas, running meetings, and following-up with decisions made in those meetings during this period, three things became apparent. First, implementation of the new strategic plan needed my affirmation and attention. Early on I became aware of potential problems of how CRHM is perceived by the broader CRCNA, and how the new strategic plan’s narrowed and heightened focus on the church-planting effort might exacerbate the situation where the

¹¹ This issue of connective leadership continues to be a challenge. This makes the internal communication essential for successful and cohesive working relationship of CRHM.

¹² They are: Executive Team (ET), Home Missions Leadership Team (HMLT), Home Missions Leaders Gathering (HMLG), RL/EL Team, Board of Home Missions, Board Officers Team—these are six executive teams. There are also five task-oriented teams that I had participated: Spiritual Formation Jumpstart Team, Mission-shaped (established) Church Task Force, West Coast Search Team, Design Team (see discussion in Chapter 5), and Operations Team (under initiation). On a broader level, I am part of four other regular meetings: Ministry Leadership Council (MLC) of agency executive directors, Joint Leadership Team (JoLT) with CR World Missions, Church Multiplication Initiative (CMI) Leadership Team with the Reformed Church in America, Prayer Summit Planning Team as part of inter-agency initiative. There are a few additional teams and meetings within the CRHM.

gap already existed between CRHM and many CRC congregations. Questions about the gap naturally came up, and some perceived the questioning as a lack of appreciation for the current plan. Navigating that questioning with staff was challenging especially for those who deeply owned the plan and found it difficult to be questioned. As I detected rising of anxiety among some staff, I pushed myself even further into careful listening as I invited more conversations. At the same time, I assured them by honoring the hard work done in the past with appropriate expressions of appreciation and showing my intention to commit to the current direction and work of the strategic plan. This was very important, because it not only helped me build trust with staff, but also opened their hearts to respond more easily to my invitations for collaborative leadership actions and proposals.

A second major issue that repeatedly surfaced in many meetings was the lack of clarity in working relationships and roles among regional leaders, ethnic leaders and goal specialists.¹³ CRHM made significant changes over the past decade moving from a centralized organization to regionalization, through which each regional leader's role was strengthened but also brought some ambiguity of roles in working relationships.¹⁴ However, often in making those organizational leadership structural changes and processes, you need to go back and clarify. In CRHM's situation, it was not made clear how ethnic leaders and goal specialists fit into the whole picture of regionalization. The external consultants' report submitted in August 2012 confirmed this organizational

¹³ Dealing with the issues related to the questions of organizational effectiveness, synergy, and structure, CRHM formed another work team named Facilitation Integration Team (FIT). See Appendix F.

¹⁴ See Appendix C for a brief description of "Chapters in the Life of CRHM," compiled at the Home Missions Leader Gathering with the TMN consultants on April 18-19, 2012.

challenge when it described the present organizational structure as “confusing with layers of leadership that are not clearly rationalized or integrated.”¹⁵

Third, as executive director, I needed to look beyond the current Strategic Plan, which completes its three-year cycle in 2013, for the next chapter of CRHM. As issues with the strategic plan and confusion of senior leadership roles were explored, I saw the need of “outside” eyes and perspectives to assist CRHM understand and sort out the complex situation. I wondered whether what I saw needed correction or affirmation by someone other than those within the organization.

In the midst of these organizational realities, I felt the tension and level of anxiety slowly rising among some senior staff. I certainly raised tensions among some senior staff when I first brought a proposal to hire an external consultancy to engage in an outside-in assessment and future planning for CRHM. Questions such as “Why now?,” “What’s their focus?,” “Is everything on the table?” were asked. The majority of staff, with the resounding approval of the Board of Home Missions, agreed with the planned assessment when I gave reasons why it would be both timely and a helpful investment. But there were still various degrees of resistance by a few senior staff who were not totally convinced but acquiesced to participate during this initial stage of what I called the “outside-in” journey.

¹⁵ TMN Consultants Report, submitted to CRHM in August 2012, 6-7: “Number of interviewees had difficulty in describing how the various organizational entities were to be inter-related—regional leaders, goal specialists, and ethnic leaders. These layers of leadership diverse roles are not clearly rationalized or integrated. Questions of accountability around many of those roles were present throughout the interviews. The place and role, for example, of ethnic leadership, is not clearly understood within CRHM nor by those outside the agency . . . Similarly, the roles of the Goal Specialists are not clearly understood. For some, they seem to be in competition with various regions, for others they are viewed as a holdover from the older system, and for still others they seem to be unrelated to what is happening within the regions. Regional ministry teams are highly valued but are perceived to be functioning in diverse and uneven ways with a significant lack of clarity around their role and function. For some, this diversity is a value, and for others it raises concerns about organizational coherence.”

In February 2012, after eight months as new director, I proposed a “two-way journey” for CRHM to continue working further on the current strategic plan, as well as begin a new process of imagining and discerning the next chapter. In a report titled, “The Executive Work Plan: Moving toward a Hopeful Future with Discernment and Fresh Energy,” written for CRHM staff and the Board, I proposed the following:

Next Steps: Two-Way Journeys. Imagine two-way journeys as our immediate and distant directions: Inside-out and Outside-in. Inside-Out Journey. Step One: Pause to reflect on the work and progress of First Phase during the last 18 months in the priority areas of the Strategic Plan (SP), and capture the key findings as solid grounds and cues to build on in taking next steps. Step Two: Implement key Task Groups to develop further underdeveloped priorities of the SP in the next three to six months. Outside-In Journey. Step Three: Develop a plan to work with outside consultative input and guidance as we discern CRHM’s focused role and create a roadmap for long-term strategic planning. Proposal: I want to propose that the Director together with the executive officers and Home Missions Leadership Team develop a plan for engaging an external consulting agency during the coming twelve months and provide resources for that in the budget.¹⁶

The Board of Home Missions approved the proposal. Hence, a new journey began “toward a hopeful future” with momentum building because of “fresh energy” the report and subsequent conversations and decision brought. This decision in hindsight has been critical because it continues to provide a road map to guide the process of discerning CRHM’s future direction.

Almost one year later, CRHM is at a very different place in terms of how staff members engage the process and energy behind the potential outlook for change within CRHM and the CRCNA. Even in the face of some resistance, moving forward with the work plan made it possible to tackle some tough adaptive challenges, as well as critical technical problems CRHM faces today. Leading the team on a new path took extra

¹⁶ See the entire document in Appendix D.

energy, but through it all, I learned the importance of listening well to others on your team, but having the courage and commitment to lead others, especially reluctant followers in your team.

“Leading Up and Across”

Before I came on board, CRHM in recent years had challenging relationships with denominational executive leadership within the CRCNA. During 2006–2007, there emerged “a toxic atmosphere within the CRCNA between CRHM and the executive leadership of the denomination as well as some of the other agencies,” and “CRHM largely lost the confidence of the CRCNA.”¹⁷ During this time, the new denominational initiative push for “healthy congregations” resulted in the creation of The Network, which was not well received initially within CRHM because many staff felt CRHM was being marginalized, pushed out, and their work with established congregations taken over by this new denominational initiative.¹⁸ When I came in May 2011, there had been some intentional work and good progress made by CRHM leadership through my predecessor’s persistent efforts toward rebuilding trust and credibility with other agencies and the CRCNA executive leadership.

A few developments during my first twenty-two months of leading “up and across” are noteworthy, and provide a background context for naming my personal leadership challenges. First, the executive director and director of denominational

¹⁷ Internal document, “Chapters in the Life of CRHM.” See Appendix C.

¹⁸ The Network was initiated to resource congregations of the CRCNA through the Regional Resource Network, as well as the online Network. The Network still lives in another form through online services in the Communications Department, essentially by providing a place for people to publish blogs on various subjects and as a vehicle for holding educational webinars for churches and church groups.

ministries of the CRCNA, my two direct supervisors, suddenly resigned in April and May 2011, as I began my work. It was a disquieting experience for me at the time, but such a crisis gave me a window of opportunity to get inside the system with open and honest questions right away. I saw in a relatively short period of time much of what was going on inside the system, and that helped me quickly learn some dysfunctions and challenges of the current reality in the CRCNA headquarters.

Second, the original plan to implement The Network as the regional resource network for local churches and leaders never became a reality, so it was “dismantled” and remaining parts of it folded into the Department of Communications and other departments soon after I came on board. As a result, two pieces—Classical Renewal Ministry Team and Healthy Church Initiative—that functioned under The Network were assigned to CRHM. This move meant, in practical terms and in a symbolic way, that CRHM now was invited back to the table of ministering and providing leadership and service for established congregations, which was taken away from CRHM with the creation of The Network. This was a significant development for CRHM because I was raising the question within CRHM about the need to serve the whole denomination, not just church-planting efforts.

Third, as I observed and participated in the denominational agency directors’ Ministry Leadership Council (MLC) monthly meetings, I quickly discovered there was little denominational leadership venue for strategic conversations. Through informal breakfast and lunch meetings with other agency directors, I have been building good, personal relationships in a relatively short period of time. In that informal relational context, I invited several directors over lunch to talk about the need for strategic

conversations at the agency executive leadership level. There was consensus and affirmation of my suggestion, leading another leader and myself to approach the executive director of the CRCNA to voice our concerns and ideas. This conversation led to two subsequent two-day retreats where more substantive conversations about strategic, deeper, fundamental issues of our denomination were discussed. All of these developments gave me a window of opportunity to build trust and influence strategic direction within the wider denominational ministry context as well as learning to “lead up and across” among my peers and supervisors.

“Leading Out”

One of the most important roles I have is communicating the vision of CRHM as “the voice of Home Missions” to a variety of constituencies and among mission partners and donors in the CRCNA through visits, speaking engagements, and writing.¹⁹ Within my first twenty-two months on the job, I gave public speeches, on average every twelve days, through preaching in congregations, giving presentations in classes and leadership gatherings, and leading seminars on topics such as missional church, leadership, and prayer in a variety of places throughout North America.

I had numerous conversations and meetings with all kinds of CRHM constituents over meals and coffee in homes, restaurants, and offices. These opportunities not only gave me chances to share CRHM’s vision for broader ownership and support, but also provided golden moments to listen to feedback, questions, concerns, and stories from the grassroots and local congregations. I often came away from those opportunities with

¹⁹ This description is from the CRHM’s internal document crafted by the Search Committee, “An Overview of the Main Leadership Roles for the Director of CRHM.” See Appendix B.

hopefulness because I witnessed signs of God’s Spirit at work in local, covenanted communities of faith where God continues to inspire the faithful commitments of ordinary people toward the common, shared kingdom mission.

Perhaps the greatest opportunity to serve and exercise my leadership influence on the CRCNA for “leading out and up/across” during the past twenty-two months came through my involvement in the inaugural, denomination-wide CRC Prayer Summit in April 2012. In many ways, it was a historic event where CRC pastors, leaders, and members gathered with denominational executive leaders with a sole purpose of praying together under the theme “Seeking God’s Face.”²⁰ It was a powerful, unprecedented gathering. Over 1,000 people gathered from 168 cities, twenty-five different states and provinces of the US and Canada. The CRC members came from as far north as Anchorage, AK and as far south as Bradenton, FL to pray together at All Nations Church, a Korean CRC congregation in Los Angeles.²¹

This event was significant for my leadership in several ways. First, I did not realize before this event, and certainly had not experienced, the extent of authority and influence with which I have been entrusted in my role as director of CRHM. I simply had an idea, but I did not know when and how this kind of denominational event could happen. It happened so quickly and almost “by surprise” without a typical planning

²⁰ The first ever CRC Prayer Summit was held April 16-18, 2012 in Lake Terrace, CA. It was an unprecedented and record-breaking to have thirty seven denominational leaders, fifty-two elders/deacons, 176 pastors, fifty nine prayer coordinators, and seven youth pastors all together at the same time, at the same place, and for three days at the Prayer Summit. Arguably, even the annual Synod does not bring together that kind of participation of leadership all at one time. This may well have been the single largest CRC gathering in 2012.

²¹ 2012 Prayer Summit Report, dated August 2012, (CRCNA internal document).

process. From the time of decision to the event took less than four months. Nobody had foreseen that such an event could happen within a relatively short period of time.²²

Second, the event was seen as successful by overwhelming numbers of participants, because there was a high level of partnership and collaboration by all parts of the denomination. Many people were amazed how denominational leaders responded so readily, and willingly supported the idea. The level of willingness and openness to partner together by virtually all agencies, institutions, and ministries of the denomination, as well as local congregations and classes in Southern California was astounding.

One key player that contributed the most energy and behind-the-scenes support was the Korean CRC congregations. The local host Korean congregation, All Nations Church, exemplified a phenomenal servant attitude and sacrificial service with its hundreds of volunteers who inspired and amazed everyone who attended. This was significant because it may have been the first time that the majority culture “joined” the Korean churches in their space where the ethnic minority group’s gifts—in this case, the gift and passion of prayers of the Korean church—were offered and received well by all.

Third, more than actual praying and learning about prayer, what stood out and became obvious in the gathering was reasonably clear picture of unity in diversity represented by all kinds of ethnic and racial groups. It was clear to everyone that the Spirit of God moved powerfully among the people gathered at the Prayer Summit. Through this event, I was personally affirmed about my conviction of prayer and the Holy Spirit’s work. I was struck again by the Spirit’s initiative among God’s ordinary

²² By contrast, I was a member of the planning team of the CRCNA sesquicentennial celebration event in 2007. The committee met over the span of six long years. This may not be the way we always do things in the CRC, but it does make a point of the strong tendency for long, carefully laid-out, and controlled planning and execution process as an aspect of our organizational practice and culture.

people with diverse gifts and willing hearts even though they are broken and imperfect. In sum, these leadership opportunities helped me to get to know the denominational leadership context better by collaborating with so many others in the denomination on multiple levels and also building some bridges toward regaining trust and credibility for CRHM to serve the wider denomination.

Assessment of My Current Leadership: Summary and Analysis of 360 Report

The Missional Network (TMN) Executive Leader 360 Survey is an assessment tool created to help denominational leaders understand the skills and capacities needed in the midst of significant change. The survey is set up to provide a “picture” and assessment of a leader in four main “capability readiness” areas—Shared Future, Build Organizational Capability, Cultivate Individual Commitment, Personal Foundational Attributes—which includes four leadership characteristics in each area.²³ I sent an email invitation to thirty people—CRHM’s senior staff, board officers, supervisors, and peer agency directors—to participate in an online survey on my leadership.²⁴ The following

²³ The description of the four leadership capability readiness is as follows: “(a) Create a Shared Future: Leadership must be able to position their organizations toward the future in ways that energize and create direction for the whole organization. They must develop a vision for change, and be capable of handling the risks associated with change. (b) Build Organizational Capability: Leadership must create an organizational readiness for change and develop the structures, processes, practices and activities that effectively reshape the church toward a new mission within our society. (c) Cultivate Individual Commitment: Leaders turn vision into action by developing commitment in others to putting the vision into action. Leaders must create the conditions that motivate and inspire others to become involved in and committed to the vision. (d) Personal Foundational Attributes: Leadership remains a question of character and authenticity. The kind of leadership engagements needed to move organizations to a new vision requires people with maturity who are acknowledged by others as being well adjusted, integrated, moral and ethical leaders.” Alan Roxburgh and Fred Romanuk, *Christendom Thinking to Missional Imagination: Leading the Cultivation of Missional Congregations*. (Missional Leadership Institute: Unpublished manuscript, no date), 151.

²⁴ See a sample email invitation I sent out to survey participants in Appendix E.

summary, analysis, and reflection are based on the report collected from the responses of twenty-six people, including myself, who completed the survey.

Overall Observations

Generally, there is a fair level of congruence in people's scores on my leadership that speaks to their confidence in the leadership I provide for CRHM. People have a high appreciation for and positive sense about my character and personhood and the ways I entered my role and position inside the CRHM in the first eighteen months. However, people seem to raise some tentative suggestions for and questions about my leadership style and organizational implementation skills.

The average overall score on the Personal Foundational Attributes area that includes the capability readiness factors such as Trust, Integrity, Professional, and Authenticity is marked at the top 97 percentile. The next high score is the Build Organizational Capability area with 89 percentile. The two other areas—Shared Future and Cultivate Individual Commitment—both received scores at 80 percentile.

Out of the sixteen capability readiness factors, the following seven factors received mid-to-high-90 percentile marks: Integrity (99 percent), Professional (98 percent), Conflict (96 percent), Trust (95 percent), Teach Faith (95 percent), Authenticity (94 percent), and Lead Mission (93 percent). Five factors received in the mid-to-high-80 percentile: Decisions (89 percent), Vision (88 percent), Mentoring (86 percent), Facilitate Process (85 percent), and Governance (84 percent). My scores show some dissonance in three factors in the low-70 percentile and one factor in the mid-60 percentile: Teamwork (73 percent), Priority (71 percent), Feedback (71 percent), and Networking (64 percent).

A Closer Look and Analysis of Exec Leader 360 Survey Results

First, I will report on the strengths of my leadership based on the survey results. Second, I will comment on the areas to which I need to pay attention for further growth and development as a leader at this point in time. Lastly, I will offer a balcony view reflection in order to gain deeper awareness and understanding of my current leadership.

The Strengths of My Leadership

The survey results highlight four aspects of strengths in my leadership. They are personal foundational leadership attributes; strong conviction, emphasis, and example on prayer and dependence on Holy Spirit's work; leadership skills in conflict management; and focus on and scriptural understanding of God's mission.

First, the survey results show a clear affirmation in my personhood and character as a leader. The survey participants see me as someone who is "trustworthy, visionary, speaks with integrity, honest, transparent, and straightforward" as the high score marks indicate in leadership readiness factors of Integrity (99 percent), Professional (98 percent), Trust (95 percent), and Authenticity (94 percent).²⁵ Second, survey participants made positive comments about my personal conviction on prayer life and faith. Some commented, "Moses is very well respected for his emphasis on prayer. His walk with God seems to guide his ethical behavior." Many deeply resonate with and see my

²⁵ From the TMN Executive 360 Survey received in computerized report format via email (accessed November 15, 2012), 9-15. The following are the descriptions of each factor. The dimensions of Integrity: "The leader's firm adherence to a biblical and moral code of behavior provides assurance that they are the highest of character." The dimensions of Professional: "The leader conforms to the required standards of behavior of the profession and exhibits a conscientious and responsible manner in the workplace." The dimensions of Trust: "The character and truthfulness of the leaders provides followers with a willingness to place confidence in this person." The dimensions of Authenticity: "The leader is true to his/her own personality, spirituality, and character."

conviction on the Holy Spirit's work as laying a wise foundation and setting a right tone of faith in CRHM. Under Teach Faith section, respondents gave 100 percent score across the board on being "effective in encouraging others to try new ideas for the sake of carrying out our Christian commitments (Question 33)."²⁶

Third, the dimension of Conflict as a leadership skill factor received a high mark (96 percent). According to the TMN survey tool, it is defined as following: "The leader provides an understanding that divisiveness will occur in the church helping to manage stress and tension while working to resolve differences as well as assisting people see conflict as an opportunity for new and creative engagements."²⁷ Two particular questionnaires in this section received 100 percent mark across the board from survey scores: The leader "handles interpersonal conflict with calm and spiritually mature behavior," and "deals with unexpected obstacles with confidence and wisdom (Questions 54 and 55)."²⁸

Some of the written remarks by participants support the scores: One person commented, "Moses is currently leading Home Missions in a major culture change where conflicts and criticism has risen. Moses creates space for those voices and listens while firmly restating the vision without belittling individuals." Another commented, "Moses is very gentle in conflict situations, yet quite firm, and willing to say what needs to be said. Truth in love." Yet, another commented, "[Moses] has a very healthy, even-keeled handle

²⁶ Ibid, 21.

²⁷ Ibid, 30.

²⁸ Ibid.

on emotions, and most often provides sense of calm when strife appears; courageous, wise, not overly confident, steady.”²⁹

Fourth, the dimension of Lead Mission is viewed as another strength of my leadership in “setting a course of direction that is consistent with God’s purposes and which inspires others to participate in carrying out the work.”³⁰ Respondents gave another 100 percent mark on the following leadership aspect: “This leader stays focused on a Scriptural understanding of God’s mission when things are uncertain or ‘up in the air.’”³¹ One person affirmed the score by commenting, “Moses is driven by the mission of God. He also sees this mission extending to the local church—God bringing revival. Lives out his name.”³²

Leadership Areas Needing More Attention

“Clarity. Clarity. Clarity of direction please,” is what I interpreted to be the subtle, yet main, message throughout the respondents’ comments sections and also through the lowest scores in the four leadership readiness factors.³³ The consultants also noted in their report the need for clarity, which staff members expect from their director as part of their internal scan and assessment of CRHM: “After just over a year of being on the job and managing a further transition out of the transitional leadership period, there now appears

²⁹ Ibid, 31.

³⁰ Ibid, 23.

³¹ Ibid.

³² Ibid, 24.

³³ They are as follows: Networking (64 percent), Teamwork (73 percent), both in the Build Organizational Capability area; Feedback (71 percent), and Priority (72 percent) in the Shared Future area.

to be a critical need for the new Director to clarify his sense of direction for CRHM and provide requisite leadership.”³⁴ The majority of survey respondents’ comments are about my “implemental” leadership style within CRHM.³⁵ The tone of these comments is not explicit criticisms, but more like requests and suggestions.

The three main aspects of leadership weaknesses highlighted in the survey results for improvement are: improve communicating CRHM’s direction more clearly to internal staff; pay more attention to organizational and operational details through concrete plans and strategies; be more decisive in decision making and in taking action steps, and make the decision making process clear to everyone.

The survey results suggest I improve internal communication to CRHM staff. People want clarity in my communication of direction, articulating my thinking more and being proactive in internal communications. Several commented on their desire to receive information and decisions in a timely manner. One person commented, “More attention is needed to ensure better internal communication takes place across the board with the team regionally and with office staff. [Moses is] too passive on internal communication, which leads to frustration.”³⁶

Second, related to the communication issue is paying better attention to organizational and operational details. One person commented, “Vision is strong; an

³⁴ The Missional Network’s Consultants Report to CRHM, CRHM internal document, dated August 2012, 10.

³⁵ “Implemental” in organizational and operational leadership skills as compared to “relational” or “interpretive” leadership. These are three leadership triad paradigms developed by Mark Lau Branson. See Chapter 4 for explanation of this missional leadership framework.

³⁶ The TMN Exec Leader 360 Survey Report, 27.

implementing strategy is limited.”³⁷ The lowest scored questionnaire I received out of the entire report (48 percent) was on leader’s ability to “set effective schedules and time lines to accomplish tasks/projects that impact our church organization.”³⁸ One person commented, “Moses is comfortable with ambiguity. A downside of this is consistent focus and accomplishing work in a timely manner.” Another commented, “Moses spends more time in ideas and vision and much less time thinking about plans, timelines, priority.” Yet, another commented, “Priorities matter a lot to Moses. Schedules are difficult. Most timelines are down to the wire and last minute. He likes to keep his options open. Monitoring progress is not [his] strength. He needs to rely on others more here and follow their lead.”³⁹

Third, timeliness is also suggested in decision-making actions. In the Decision section, compared to the overall score of 92 percent and the three high scores in each questionnaire—100 percent, 96 percent, 92 percent, respectively—the lowest score (78 percent) received has to do with leader’s ability “to make tough decisions in a timely manner.”⁴⁰ One critical comment from the report suggests the following: “The tension is that the decisions currently being made do not seem to be owned by the wider organization because of the inadequate process that has sometimes been used. It would help for Moses to share his own internal decision making process that includes prayer,

³⁷ Ibid, 36.

³⁸ Ibid, 37.

³⁹ Ibid, 38.

⁴⁰ Ibid, 39.

but also includes others.”⁴¹ Other suggestions are not to hold off decisions, “pull the trigger” when needed, and to stop getting input when needing a decision.

A Balcony View Reflection: Toward Deeper Awareness and Understanding

Upon reflection from a balcony view on my personal leadership narrative prior to coming to CRHM as well as on my current assessment through the Exec Leader 360 Survey report, I have gained several clues for deeper awareness and understanding of my own leadership challenges. One thing that CRHM staff members are asking for is a clear sense of direction from me. I have spent a significant amount of my time and efforts to provide “implemental and organizational” leadership, but what I heard the most from staff is that I need to pay even more attention to this aspect of my leadership. This challenge is related in part to the distributed nature of CRHM with staff members working across North America from their regions. Another key issue could be infrequent and inadequate methods in my internal communications with staff. I will continue to reflect, explore, and learn in order to find effective ways to address this concern.

I am discovering continually how much anxiety is in the system. This is an anxious time for CRHM and the CRCNA as they face massive challenges and major transitions. Some of the anxiety is caused by financial challenges and the change process that CRHM staff are experiencing. However, I wonder whether my leadership and my leadership style are also another source of anxiety and possible confusion in the system. I inherited an organizational structure that has been in transition over a long period of time. In many ways, organizational clarity still has not been accomplished. As I have been busy

⁴¹ Ibid, 40.

in learning the system during my first year, I might have not sufficiently clarified the leadership roles, decision authorities, and process within CRHM for other staff members. This is definitely an area I will need to pay attention and improve upon for my future leadership within CRHM.

I wonder if there is a dynamic at work inside our system that I cannot read and become aware of unless I distance myself constantly by getting up on the balcony to see what is really happening on the dance floor.⁴² In a time of anxiety over survival and financial challenges, and amidst a great flux with many moving parts and with complex layers of multiple meeting structures within CRHM and the CRCNA, it is easy for staff to do what they always have known and done. It may be that what my staff is pushing for is less ambiguity and more clarity in all the layers of organizational structure, which consultants described as “confusion.”⁴³ Especially in going through the change process, stability and security are important and necessary for people to cope with changes. This is another key leadership development area where I need more wisdom, learning, and care as I lead through adaptive change in CRHM.

⁴² The “balcony view” is concept developed by Heifetz and Linsky. They explain “getting on the balcony” as a skill of active participation and reflective observation in leadership, “Being both in and out of the game (quoting Walt Whitman)” and “‘Getting off the dance floor and going to the balcony,’ an image that captures the mental activity of stepping back from the midst of action and asking, ‘What’s really going on here?’” in *Leadership on the Line*, 51. For a fuller explanation, see Ronald Heifetz, *Leadership without Easy Answers* (Cambridge, MA: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1994), 252-263.

⁴³ The outside consultant Report submitted in August 2012 confirmed this organizational issue when it described the present organizational structure as “confusing with layers of leadership that are not clearly rationalized or integrated.” See footnote 64 above for further explanation of organizational “confusion” within CRHM.

One respondent commented that I have “sometimes delayed decisions or it is unclear to others what is the timeframe to be used in terms of decision making.”⁴⁴ It might have been the case that I purposely delayed some decisions because I needed more time. However, perhaps the real concern might not be the fact that I delayed the decision, but that I have not communicated clearly a timeframe of when and how the decisions will be made. Holding off decisions without clear communication by leaders can cause anxiety and frustration among those who need clear directions for doing their work. This is an area of implemental leadership I can improve. Another way to address this challenge is to partner and share responsibility by delegating authority and responsibility to other leaders in the system and by making clear how much authority they have.

As I attempt to improve my leadership performance, I need to remind myself that I need to lead from who I am. It is important to lead out of a grounded sense of identity, from my “being”—who I am in my personhood, character, passion, sense of calling, idiosyncrasies of strengths and weaknesses—instead of my “doing” by trying to meet the various expectations of others. The recent example of my leadership in the CRC Prayer Summit is a timely reminder to lead from who God made and called me to be. As I face the challenging uncharted waters in leading CRHM and the CRCNA through culture change and innovation, and as I continue to work on increasing my leadership capacities in growth areas, I must remember and build on the strengths identified above through the 360 Survey. That is a good place from which I must start and lead.

Even as I learn and improve in these personal leadership areas, I need to pay attentions to aspects of CRHM’s organizational culture that also need inner change. In a

⁴⁴ See TMN Exec 360 Report, 18.

busy corporate culture that values administration, made up of numerous business meetings, strategic plans, schedules, and measuring goals that run organizational life, I must cultivate a culture of waiting, listening, and discernment—creating space for God’s Spirit to work in God’s timeline rather than the set timelines of our own planning documents. It will be also important to examine how the biblical narrative and theological imagination play a role in discerning leadership challenges of CRHM, instead of being characterized by management and strategic planning. For the purpose of this self-focused leadership study, it will be important to examine the capacities the CRHM executive leadership would need in thinking and reflecting theologically in order to lead church systems through adaptive culture change in this anxious times. Those are addressed in Part Two.

PART TWO
THEOLOGICAL REFLECTION

CHAPTER 3

THEOLOGICAL IMAGINATION FOR MISSIONAL LEADERSHIP

For leaders facing ministry challenges of leading adaptive change processes in denominational agencies like CRHM that seek to engage missional transformation of congregations and their leaders, doing theological reflection is essential. CRHM leaders must understand their own leadership frameworks and test them whether they are theologically motivated or driven by an understanding of leadership primarily defined by management and strategic planning. Chapter 3 defines and probes the narratives of corporatist and functionalist imagination that shape current denominational leadership culture in the CRCNA as a contextual background for theological reflection. Several theological themes on the Holy Spirit, the Trinity, God's ordinary people, covenant, and cultivating kingdom practices are examined to develop a basis for understanding leadership issues from the perspective of missional change.

Corporatist and Functionalist Culture of the CRCNA

The organizational leadership culture in the CRCNA, including CRHM, can be described as corporatist and functionalist.¹ The past leadership of the CRCNA has created a corporatist church system within the CRCNA, which in part has been inherited from its past historical development as a Protestant denomination in North America. In his book, *The Missional Church and Denominations*, Van Gelder provides a historical and analytical survey of American denominations where he insightfully unpacks and names their DNAs.²

During 1920–1970, American denominations were heavily influenced by what became known as Scientific Management. During these years, American denominations became “corporate denominations,” a certain type of denominational form, which was a “form” of the church that came into existence in the late 1700s to early 1800s with the formation of denominations in the context of the newly formed United States.³ The American denominations during the early to mid 1900s, including the CRCNA, “took on a corporate character as they turned to modern management and organizational

¹ This section specifically focuses on two organizational, cultural leadership aspects of the CRCNA, namely, corporatist and functionalist. Obviously, there are many other dimensions of culture, structure, and organization within the CRCNA that are worthy topics for research and reflections. However, that is beyond the scope of this writing project.

² Craig Van Gelder, “An Ecclesiastical Geno-Project: Unpacking the DNA of Denominations and Denominationalism,” in *The Missional Church and Denominations: Helping Congregations Develop a Missional Identity* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2008).

³ Ibid, 28-38. Van Gelder describes the development of American denominations of 1790-1870 as the “denominational, organizational church,” and states: “Within the American setting, the denominational, organizational church was a unique creation that was largely the pragmatic result of a variety of circumstances and events that were usually rationalized biblically and theologically after the fact, if at all. (28).”

approaches to govern their internal lives”⁴ by organizing “work activities into functional units, and building command-and-control systems through the establishment of a hierarchical bureaucracy.”⁵

In the current CRCNA organizational culture, three key words describing organizational behaviors are predictability, control, and management, similar to and influenced by the modern, Western corporate culture.⁶ This is a culture influenced by the imagination of modernity more than by a “social imaginary and frameworks” rooted in Scripture and Christian traditions.⁷ Roxburgh uses the image of a pool table and billiard balls to explain the modern way of seeing reality where a person with enough skill and practice can define how and when a ball will strike, bounce, and sink into the predetermined pocket.⁸ He observes, “In a world mapped by modernity, with the right skills, we can have a high level of control, manageability, and certainty.”⁹ In such a world and culture, leadership becomes primarily about control and management, where leaders

⁴ Ibid, 38.

⁵ Ibid, 36.

⁶ Alan Roxburgh, *Missional Map-Making: Skills for Leading in Times of Transition*. (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2010). For Roxburgh’s review of the modern narrative of management, control, and predictability with his philosophical interpretation and practical insights for church leadership on this point, see chapter four titled, “From Playing Pool to Herding Cats,” 59-72.

⁷ Charles Taylor defines “social imaginaries,” as “the ways people imagine their social existence, how they fit together with others, how things go on between them and their fellows, the expectations that are normally met, and the deeper normative notions and images that underlie these expectations” in *Modern Social Imaginaries* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2004), 23. Roxburgh calls them “frameworks” as “powerful conceptual maps—or lenses—that we have developed inside our relational networks and through our training that determine how we see the world and thus shape the decisions about how we act and respond to what is happening around us . . . the underlying structure upon which we build everything else” in *The Sky Is Falling*, 45.

⁸ Roxburgh, *Missional Map-Making*, 64.

⁹ Ibid.

with a “compelling vision” can predict outcomes by choosing a preferable future (mission statement) and managing the parts (the plan) to get to that future.¹⁰

It is an organizational culture heavily driven by strategic planning and detailed implementation plans. The leaders in this kind of system and culture operate mainly out of a modern imagination which can be simplified in the following way: The leader defines the problem, comes up with the solution, and uses the strategic plan to get there. This is a world all about control, management, and predictability. This kind of leadership imagination and behavior is far removed from the Gospel of Jesus, because this form of strategic planning, if not used carefully and reflectively, can objectifies people as a means to achieve certain ends of organizations and their leaders.¹¹ Roxburgh offers the following passionate, compelling reason:

When we universalize a method like strategic planning, a method of achieving present goals and objects, we essentially turn every variable in the process, including human beings, around this. *Strategic planning uses objectification to achieve ends* (Italic original) . . . when applied to the building of airplanes or the development of life-saving drugs, this method of controlling outcomes can be brilliant. At the same time, there can never be a justification for turning any human being into an object of someone else’s goals and vision in the social community formed by the Spirit of God. Once this line is crossed, strategic planning is not a gift but a curse; it is not a means of achieving something for the kingdom of God but a means of denying the kingdom of God because once we turn another person (the “other” or the “stranger” in the biblical narratives) into an object of ends where we want to align people or have them fit into our predetermined plans, we are contradicting some of the most basic ways in which God’s kingdom is to be made tangible on earth. The kingdom of God is, at least in part, about releasing people from this kind of objectification; the idea of human freedom and human thriving are written into our constitutions because the Christian story was such a powerful vision of what God intends for us as human beings.¹²

¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹ Roxburgh, *Missional Map-Making*, 73-85.

¹² Ibid., 76-77.

Patrick Lencioni's *Death by Meeting* is a popular leadership book in which he makes a point that meetings for an average, effective leader should take about 20 percent of work time.¹³ During twenty-two months of working as director of CRHM, the largest portion of energy and time has been spent planning, facilitating, leading, and participating in countless "business" meetings. Many of these are necessary and helpful both for leading the organization and for those who are involved in the ministry. Sharing crucial and timely conversations, processing pertinent information, making all kinds of collaborative decisions, and assessing and evaluating current ministries are elements of these meetings, and are all important parts of being and working together as a team toward a common vision and goal. There is nothing inherently bad and evil about "business meetings" in any organization. They are necessary and helpful in many ways.

However, this way of doing work and ministry is primarily a Western and corporatist default *modus operandi* at work. This is a different cultural way of life than other church cultures and ministry settings. As executive pastor at Sooyoungro Church, the administrative responsibilities and leadership demands were enormous. There was four times the number of staff members than at CRHM, but the church's organizational culture was not built around "business" meetings.¹⁴ If anything, church leaders spent more time praying, sharing meals, worshipping, and working together than having

¹³ Patrick Lencioni, *Death by Meeting: A Leadership Fable . . . About Solving the Most Painful Problem in Business* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2004).

¹⁴ The total paid staff members at Sooyoungro Church consisted of 120 pastoral staff members and another eighty ministry staff members. In comparison, CRHM has thirty-seven FTE staff members.

business meetings, which was also true for most church leaders and members in that congregation.

The CRCNA has created a functionalist organization culture that lacks the practice of communal spiritual discernment. Even though there is a sizable portion of membership with pietistic stream emphasis¹⁵ in the CRCNA, these members tend to emphasize individualistic and private practices of spirituality where people pray in their individual (or family) prayers and devotions.¹⁶ When faced with communal change or challenges within the CRCNA, especially on the denominational level, but also on local and classical levels, the default action steps often go something like the following: form a study committee or a task force, have a number of meetings to discuss the issues until a set time, write a report with recommendations, vote on the recommendations, designate a person (or team) to carry out the task of dealing with the presented issues or challenges, and when a person or a team is formed, the challenge is considered addressed.¹⁷ Spiritual discernment is not central in this organizational culture. Spiritual disciplines, such as prayer, are always part of these processes, but not the primary and central way of conducting communal church life.

¹⁵ The three “streams” within the CRCNA are identified with doctrinalist, pietist, and transformationalist emphases. Christian Reformed Church, *What It Means to be Reformed: An Identity Statement* (Grand Rapids, MI: CRC Publications, October 2002).

¹⁶ John Suk, *Not Sure: A Pastor’s Journey from Faith to Doubt* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans Publishing Co, 2011). Suk offers a helpful reflection and examination on “personal,” private or individualistic tendencies and languages in contemporary evangelical Christianity, and examines the language of faith in Scripture and Christian traditions. See especially “Faith is Not a Personal Relationship with Jesus,” 140-157. See also David Fitch, *The Great Giveaway: Reclaiming the Mission of the Church from Big Business, Parachurch Organizations, Psychotherapy, Consumer Capitalism, and Other Modern Maladies* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2005), especially the section on “Spiritual Formation,” 181-200.

¹⁷ This is a generalization about the CRCNA organizational culture, but it describes how most of the CRCNA organizations from local church council to denominational boards, agencies, and Synod usually operate.

Modern Social Imaginary of Corporatist and Functionalist Culture

Determining the foundation and influences of the culture is imperative. Roxburgh identifies two pervasive modern social approaches that have deeply colonized the church leadership world: functional (instrumental) rationality and ideal type romanticism.¹⁸ Both of these narratives are different, but essentially assume the same thing: the future can be determined in one form or another with control, manageability, and prediction.

Functional (Instrumental) Rationality

Functional rationality is a “belief that with the right amount of counting, organizing, planning, technique and market research we can name the problem and create the right solution for success . . . whether the human genome project, a worship service or making congregations missional, we can manipulate the elements to produce the predefined results and attain success.”¹⁹ Stephen Toulmin, in *Cosmopolis*, traces the origin of this framework of “scientific rationalism” back to Descartes.²⁰ This “scientific” thinking is about control and predictability. In this world, control is not only a high value but also a primary way of functioning.

When this kind of scientific framework is uncritically applied to church leadership, what drives church organization is rational strategic planning with little

¹⁸ Alan Roxburgh, Doctoral seminar classroom lecture (Fuller Seminary, Pasadena, CA, February 14, 2006).

¹⁹ Alan Roxburgh, “Missional Leadership Cohort B Student Handbook” (Unpublished class handbook, Fuller Seminary, Pasadena, CA), 49.

²⁰ Stephen Toulmin, *Cosmopolis: The Hidden Agenda of Modernity* (New York: The Free Press, 1990), 1- 44. This was a period when Europe experienced massive disruptions (much like today as massive disruptive changes occur at all levels of society, especially after World War II), culminating in the Thirty Year’s War (1618-1648), a religious war that left devastating social consequences.

theological reflection or spiritual discernment. In this framework, the church mostly remains linear and deterministic in its approach, and people are programmed into neat alignments through recruitment. It then becomes caught up in functional leadership (as opposed to interpretive and relational leadership), because the church is always in problem-solving mode and mainly interested in asking the functionalist question: “how we can figure out a way to make church work?”

This is an apt description of the implicit, yet pervasive, assumptions of the church organizational culture of the CRCNA. It is helpful to name and be aware of this framework in order to understand better why questions of methodology, techniques, data, statistics, measurement, and marketing become the top priorities for a culture embedded in such a framework. But more than understanding the framework, executive leaders must find a way to engage people in this church system to understand how the application of such a social science principle can misdirect faithful witness of the Gospel to the world as God’s people who bear witness to the kingdom of God for the sake of the world.²¹

Ideal Type Romanticism

Ideal type romanticism, Roxburgh points out, is a reaction against functional rationality, and as such, remains similar to what it opposes.²² Church leaders functioning within this framework ask the idealist question: “What are the ideal types, experiences, or indicators for a successful church or a denomination?” An implicit assumption is that distilling a pure or ideal church and identifying real categories like gospel, culture, and

²¹ See Chapter 6 where I discuss and address this issue with personal implementation action steps for my own leadership.

²² Roxburgh, Doctoral seminar classroom lecture (Fuller Seminary, Pasadena, CA, February 14, 2006).

church can somehow bridge the gap between the real and ideal through appropriate methods and tools. In essence, romanticism does not look much different than functional rationality, because it also assumes a predicted and controlled desired outcome.

This ideal type romanticism has another practical implication for leadership in church ministry: a tendency to be idealistic and romantic in creating attitudes and approaches toward faith. Christian approaches to faith can remain only in the intellectual realm without offering concrete ways to embody and engage faith in actual, lived experiences, which reinforces the idealist and romantic message in a modern, Cartesian “theory-centered” and “rational” way, to borrow Toulmin’s words.²³ Such Christianity has a danger of missing the “materialist” God of Incarnation who became “flesh and blood (John 1:14),” was born of a woman, and chose the manger (Luke 2:16) where smelly and dirty animals lived as his first dwelling on earth rather than in the beautiful sky above the stars.²⁴

Roxburgh critiques one such direction of contemporary church leaders: “There appears to be an overwhelming conviction that if we first get the idea of the church right in terms of descriptions, organizational systems, and definitions, the rest will fall into place.”²⁵ In a changed context of time, he argues, that kind of approach will not address the challenges the churches face but will “take us in all the wrong directions because they

²³ Toulmin, *Cosmopolis*, 11 ff.

²⁴ In *The Message*, Eugene Peterson’s paraphrase John 1:14, “The Word became flesh and blood, and moved into the neighborhood (Italics mine)”

²⁵ Roxburgh, *Missional: Joining God in the Neighborhood*, 43.

are the same old kinds of questions we've been asking since before the Reformation."²⁶ Instead local churches need "to embrace the *missio Dei* in their neighborhoods and communities," where God's incarnating presence is demonstrated by God's people as his signs, foretaste, and witness to the coming Kingdom of God in contextualized, concrete human encounters and experiences with the "other."²⁷

Again, this is an example that shows how deeply Christian leadership frameworks have been colonized by the social imaginaries of the modern world rather than Scripture and Christian traditions. In this ideal-type romanticism, the church world are inheritors of the problem of decontextualization so typical of High Modernity that Toulmin grieves about: "The seduction of High Modernity lay in its abstract neatness and theoretical simplicity: both of these features blinded the successors of Descartes to the unavoidable complexities of concrete human experience."²⁸

Developing a Theology for Missional Leadership

As described above, the modern social imaginary and Western socio-cultural forces influence and shape the organizational culture of the CRCNA more than biblical imaginations and theologies. "High Modernity" and the Americanized version of modernity with its pragmatic impulses are the strong cultural forces that are shaping the CRCNA's organizational and leadership narrative. Another factor behind CRCNA's current leadership culture is a lack of theological imagination in certain areas or aspects of theology that CRCNA has not fully developed or applied appropriately yet.

²⁶ Ibid, 44.

²⁷ Ibid.

²⁸ Toulmin, *Cosmopolis*, 201.

Roxburgh states how discernment and theological imagination are essential in reimagining denominational structures, and stages: “The source of our crisis is not a shortage of programs, strategies and tactics; it is a failure of theological imaginations.”²⁹ Not much has been written that probes into honest self-examination of the CRCNA’s denominational organizational culture from the dimension of spiritual discernment and theological imagination.³⁰ Classical and contemporary theological resources must be identified to guide the change processes within the CRCNA, as well as implications of missional theology for leadership issues of CRHM.

Theology of the Holy Spirit

At the core of the missional understanding of leadership is a deep conviction about the role of the Holy Spirit and the Spirit’s work among God’s people as *ecclesia*. Roxburgh states the missional conviction in the following way: “The Spirit of God is among the people of God, and therefore, the future of God will come forth from the people of God.”³¹ The distinct role of the Spirit is evident throughout Scripture.

²⁹ Alan Roxburgh, *Structures of Mission-shaped Formation* (TMN Publishing: Unpublished manuscript, 2011), 60.

³⁰ John Suk’s *Not Sure* is one recent example of an attempt at honest self-reflective and theological reflections. Exploring more comprehensive, deeper analysis and theological reflections of the CRCNA’s organizational culture would be a worthy project but beyond the scope of this project.

³¹ Roxburgh, *The Missional Leader*, 19-20. Also, see Roxburgh, *Introducing the Missional Church*, 122: “Our rock-bottom conviction is that the Spirit of God is among the people of God. By this we mean that the Spirit is not the province of ordained leaders or super-spiritual people; instead the Spirit is in what we call the ordinary people of a local church . . . Very practically, a missional church is formed by the Spirit of God at work in the ordinary people of God in a local context. A practical implication is that this imagination changes the focus of leadership. Rather than having plans, programs, strategies, and goals, they ask how they can call forth what the Spirit is doing among the people. When this happens, the potential for discovering the wind of the Spirit is exciting.”

Christopher Cocksworth emphasizes the revealing and enabling role of the Spirit in the life of God as fellowship:

The fellowship of the Holy Spirit is given to us by the love of God and the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ (2 Cor. 12.13). The Spirit in whom the Father and Son have fellowship is given to us so that we might share their fellowship . . . Hence the Spirit is the basis of their common life. In the Spirit they are one. And yet although the Spirit binds the Father and Son together as one, he also preserves their distinctiveness. As the Father's Spirit he is the gift of the Father's fellowship to the Son and as the Son's Spirit he is the gift of the Son's fellowship with the Father. All the time the Spirit remains distinct as himself . . . [and] is the giver of his own fellowship to them.³²

The Scriptural teaching on the deity of the Holy Spirit is eloquently summarized in Article 11 of the Belgic Confessions:

We believe and confess also that the Holy Spirit proceeds eternally from the Father and the Son—neither made, nor created, nor begotten, but only proceeding from the two of them. In regard to order, he is the third person of the Trinity—of one and the same essence, and majesty, and glory, with the Father and the Son. He is true and eternal God, as the Holy Scriptures teach us.³³

Colin Gunton notes that without the Spirit “we cannot adequately understand our place in the world.” He refers to St. Basil, who believed that the distinctive role of the Spirit is to perfect creation, “To bring to completion that for which each person or thing is created.”³⁴ A further distinctive role of the Spirit is to enable the development of community; as Gunton puts it, the “Spirit relates to one another beings or realms that are opposed or separate.”³⁵

³² Christopher Cocksworth, *Holy, Holy, Holy - Worshipping the Trinitarian God* (London: Darton, Longman & Todd, 1997), 179-180.

³³ *Belgic Confession* from the CRChurches.net, <http://www.crchurches.net/resources/creeds/BelgicConfession/art11.html> (accessed February 26, 2013).

³⁴ Colin Gunton, *The One, the Three, and the Many* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), 188-9.

³⁵ *Ibid*, 181.

Further development of the following four inter-related theological concepts with regard to the theology of the Holy Spirit may well serve the CRCNA leadership in leading change. They are: the understanding of the Holy Trinity with a particular focus on the concept of *perichoresis* and alterity (i.e. “otherness” or “difference”) in relation to collaboration; the crucial place and value of ordinary Christians as the locus of God’s action; rediscovering the theology of covenant for missional leadership; and the importance of communal practices of the kingdom that emphasize God’s agency rather than human.

Trinitarian Understanding and Implication on Leadership

The doctrine of God as Holy Trinity is foundational to faith and fundamentally distinguishes Christian beliefs and practices from all other religious and secular traditions and practices. Therefore, it ought to inform the Christian understanding and practice of leadership. The concept of *perichoresis* refers to the understanding of mutual indwelling love within the Trinity as Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, as these persons intensely love, care, and attend to one another. This is a kind of love that always invites the participating love of others, even as there is sufficient and complete love within the Trinity. Gunton, in *The One, the Three, and the Many*, explains *perichoresis* as “a dynamic reciprocity, interpenetration and interanimation.”³⁶

Alterity is a helpful concept that relates to the doctrine of the Spirit and the Trinity. The Trinity not only always directs its attention to others, but also opens the space in between to make a hospitable space so that others can contribute to the life

³⁶ Ibid, 163.

shared together by the whole. There is no room for making each one like the other, in other words, to force a homogeneous whole. That is how creation is designed, i.e., to reflect the creator Godhead living in loving community and perfect harmony. Gunton notes:

Spirit is that which, far from abolishing, rather maintains and even strengthens particularity. It is not a spirit of merging or assimilation—of homogenization—but of relation in otherness, relation which does not subvert but establishes the other in its true reality . . . The church is a community, not a collective: that is, a particular community into which particular people are initiated by the leading of the Spirit. It follows that as the liberating Other, the Spirit respects the otherness and so particularity of those whom he elects. That is why Paul’s characterization of the various charismata, in First Corinthians 12, for example, is so seminal for our conception of what it is to be in community, for it implies richness and variety, not homogeneity. It is here that we find the nub of the difference between the gospel and the modern world. God the Spirit is the source of autonomy, not homogeneity, because by his action human beings are constituted in their uniqueness and particular networks of relationality.³⁷

Roxburgh takes this notion of alterity found in the doctrine of the Trinity further to develop missional theology as “living in the space between.”³⁸ He argues that the modern notion of intimacy misses unique space that exists between individuals, because it closes any space between them due to anxiety over differences. Roxburgh contends:

Divine otherness is seen, not only in the Cross, with its cry of utter abandonment, but in the divine community (the prayer of Jesus in John 17, for example) in the expression of the love between and among Father, Son, and Spirit. Love, by its very nature, is about otherness rather than intimacy. Otherness only exists in the space between each other . . . Being human is about encountering the difference of the other as well as oneself. The difference always means discovering the other in the space between. Missional leadership is to be understood primarily in terms of where it is located. This claim is based on the perspective of God’s revelation

³⁷ Gunton, *The One, The Three and The Many*, 181-4.

³⁸ Alan Roxburgh, “Missional Leadership: a Contextual Interpretation,” in *Missional Reader* (Unpublished articles prepared for CRHM by The Missional Network, Fall 2012), 17.

to us in Jesus Christ, in the Cross, in the Incarnation and in Jesus' description of the love that exists in and between the Trinity.³⁹

Then, he asks the following critical questions to invite church leadership into a different imagination and role in developing missional leadership:

What if the dynamic of being God's people in a very different Western, globalized context is only discerned through the risk of entering the space between? What if leadership is, itself, to be located primarily in this space where its vocation is to cultivate those Spirit-shaped spaces where we encounter the other? Current notions of pastoral, clerical, entrepreneurial or therapeutic leadership cannot be made to fit into this understanding of missional leadership.⁴⁰

The theological understanding of *perichreosis* and alterity is helpful and has significant implications for shaping a Christian leadership culture. Understanding and practice of leadership and organizational culture must reflect and be shaped accordingly with open, safe, inviting, even vulnerable spaces for all who make up the whole. Leadership is then about creating such open spaces where the otherness of individuals or groups are recognized and celebrated as who they are, so that many different persons and groups are invited to make unique contributions, without the need to conform to one dominant group or culture, toward mutual sharing of love and collaborative work.

Ordinary People of God as the Locus of God's Action

Missional leadership, Roxburgh and Romanuk state, "Is about cultivating an environment that innovates and releases the missional imagination present among a community of God's people."⁴¹ One of the major defaults of the Modern world is the

³⁹ Ibid, 16-17.

⁴⁰ Ibid.

⁴¹ Roxburgh and Romanuk, *The Missional Leader: Equipping Your Church to Reach a Changing World*, (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2006), 5.

mistrust of, and bias toward, ordinary people in favor of professionals and experts with scientific knowledge and professional degrees. By contrast, biblical narratives consistently reveal a God who chooses an ordinary people group (Israel in the Old Testament and Church in the New Testament) to be his co-partners and co-creators in restoring *shalom* to a broken creation.

God calls a people on earth that are gathered and sent into the world to be the image, sign, witness, and foretaste of God's life of perfect harmony as the Three-in-One. In order to make this calling possible for all God's people, the Holy Spirit has been given so that ordinary people, in local churches can discover the resources and answers available within and among them through the Spirit. By the enabling and empowering Spirit, the Church as God's ordinary people is able to respond to God's calling through bearing their faithful witness to God's kingdom and joining his mission in the world.

Modern and American society is a world of Hollywood celebrities, heroic leaders, pop idols, and super stars. In a culture that elevates the successful individual to a high pedestal, the missional conviction is that God works through ordinary people, but not necessarily the best and brightest of people. Such biblical imaginary is not only a needed timely reminder, but also an absolute essential theology to guide the Church into the future.

When Jesus sent out the seventy in Luke 10, the Gospel writer does not list their names but simply writes that they are sent out as nameless people. Roxburgh contends the reason why Luke tells the narrative with the seventy as nameless is not because they

are unimportant, but because he is making an important point.⁴² By the latter part of the first century, Luke was writing to the second generation of church communities living in the midst of confusion and lostness after their heroes of faith were all gone; he wants to say that God’s future will be shaped among ordinary people, whose names will not be recorded or remembered.⁴³ Roxburgh states, “Contrary to the way we set everything up in the modern West, it will not be from the stars and professionals, the so-called great leaders and gurus, that the direction of God’s future is discovered.”⁴⁴

In *The Missional Leader*, Roxburgh makes a compelling argument about the value of ordinary people that is counter-cultural in the following way:

There is nothing in [biblical narratives] about getting the wrong people off the bus and getting the right ones on to accomplish great ends and become the best organization in the world.⁴⁵ This God who pursues us is always calling the wrong people onto a bus that isn’t expected to arrive. The reason for all of this is that God chooses, within the mystery of God as the Other who cannot be described and confined within the schemes and imagination we develop, to unfold the future of the kingdom among people and places of this kind.⁴⁶

The leadership of the CRCNA must examine how this kind of imagination can be cultivated in local congregations and among leaders living in North American context

⁴² Roxburgh, *Missional*, 129.

⁴³ Ibid.

⁴⁴ Ibid.

⁴⁵ Jim Collins *Good to Great: Why Some Companies Make the Leap . . . and Others Don’t* (New York: Harper Business, 2001), 13. Collins discusses the concept of getting the right people on the bus as the first basis for what he calls Level Five Leadership. He writes: “We found . . . that [good-to-great] leaders first got the right people on the bus, the wrong people off the bus, and the right people in the right seats—and then they figured out where to drive . . . People are not your most important asset. The right people are.” Some church leaders are quoting Collins and applying the same principle unreflectively with needed theological reflection in church leadership. This is quite a different leadership imagination and social science theory compared to the missional (biblical) belief about the value of all of ordinary people, not just “great” people.

⁴⁶ Roxburgh and Romanuk, *The Missional Leader*, 18.

where people still expect and depend heavily on church leaders who are viewed as experts and professional teachers, chaplain-type-caregivers, and recently as managers and CEOs to provide maps and plans for the future of congregations and denominations. The challenge of leadership in such a culture is to resist the temptation to fix the problem, but instead cultivate a different environment where a new imagination can be discerned and born that eventually leads to “giving the work back to the people.”⁴⁷

Covenant Theology for Missional Leadership

Covenant is a rich, Reformed theological concept that needs be recovered in relation to developing missional theology because it relates closely to the work of the Spirit among ordinary people of God. When God enters relationship with people, he binds himself in covenant as his commitment to walk with, care, and provide for his people so the people have the resources they need to fulfill their God-given calling by participating in God’s mission to the world. In covenant theology, the foundational backbone that defines God and people is the relational aspect and commitment that is mutual in nature.

Furthermore, John H. Stek explains that covenant is God’s gracious redemptive tool by which he governs his kingdom to restore broken relationships.⁴⁸ The relationship

⁴⁷ Heitfez and Linsky, *Leadership on the Line*, 123-39. Branson and Martinez describe Heitfez and Linsky’s call for leadership task of giving the work back to people: “Adaptive challenges require that the organization become reconfigured as more participants actively innovate and assume leadership responsibilities. Those leading the process need to give the work back to the people, including the work of observing and interpreting the context and the challenges and the work of reinventing the organization’s structures and practices.” in *Churches, Cultures and Leadership*, 224.

⁴⁸ See John H. Stek’s article, “‘Covenant’ Overload in Reformed Theology,” *Calvin Theological Journal* 29 (1994): 12-41. The unique contribution of this theological perspective of covenant as gracious redemptive act on God’s part is narrated throughout the Bible: Ezekiel 36 is the outpouring of God’s Spirit so that Israel can practice Torah. Joel 2 makes the same emphasis. This also happened on Pentecost Day.

between God and humans is indicated by the concept “image of God.” In this understanding of covenant from a redemptive historical point of view, we, as the New Testament church, are now members of the new covenant.

When a church body—whether at the local, classical, or denominational level—makes a commitment to walk with and care for each other in order to serve God’s calling together, they not only enter into a new covenant with God, but also enter into a covenant relationship of mutual mission and interdependence with each other. God’s primary way of resourcing for the Church is through the gift of the Holy Spirit who enters, dwells, and works among God’s people.

The Spirit of God is the one who empowers, counsels, guides, and leads God’s people to be the sign, witness, and foretaste of God’s kingdom on earth for the sake of the world. It follows that in order for the Church, including the denominational organizations, to fully participate in bearing witness to God’s kingdom, it is essential to depend on the Spirit and his leading as well as on each other in mutual, interdependent covenant relationships.

Cultivating Communal Practices of the Kingdom

One of the most insightful critiques of CRHM from the consultant report noted CRHM’s “inadequate attention to God’s agency, especially in terms of discernment and journey.”⁴⁹ This assessment was made under the section, “Current Strategic Plan,” which points to the default pattern of CRHM’s corporatist and functionalist culture. In the

On Pentecost Day, the restored Israel was empowered to practice Torah. In Acts 4, after prayer, the church received the Spirit and was able to practice Jubilee. Because the new covenant is characterized by the Holy Spirit, the gifts of the Spirit are very important.

⁴⁹ The TMN Consultant Report.

months following this report, CRHM staff members have worked together to name the tendency to rely on human agency:

We have not been able to reconcile God the sender with God the agent⁵⁰ and tend to default into efforts of trying to build the kingdom of God, but the reality is that the kingdom is being built through the dynamic, unfolding reign of God through the leading of the Spirit. We have tended to think in terms of being on a mission for God, with the result of overly relying on our own efforts and leaving God out of the mission.⁵¹

Several points on missional perspective for an organizational culture like the CRCNA and CRHM can be considered, like: how the Holy Spirit concretely dwells among God's people; understanding the future as that which springs forth from God's work among God's people; what missional transformation looks like in congregational life and denominational cultures like the CRCNA and CRHM; and what clues CRHM leaders need to pay attention to as they lead deep culture change toward missional formation.

Paying a focused attention on cultivating communal practices and habits could help teach CRHM what it means to totally depend on God's agency rather than human's. A culture will not be changed simply because people in it have good intentions to change. What is required is for the people of God living in the shifting, turbulent cultures of the North American context to acquire a new imagination for being God's people shaped by disciplines and practices of the kingdom.

⁵⁰ By God's agency, it is meant it is God's mission and God is the primary agent. Human agents, the Church, participate in what God is doing, rather than seeing human agency as primary.

⁵¹ See "Joining God's Mission," Appendix A.

New Imagination

There is a close inter-relatedness between practices and imagination. Walter Brueggeman, in *Prophetic Imagination*, writes that if God's people are going to think and live in alternative ways of God's kingdom, "We need to ask not whether it is realistic or practical or viable but whether it is imaginable."⁵² He also notes, "If there is any point at which most of us are manifestly co-opted, it is in this way. We do not believe that there will be newness but only that there will be merely a moving of the pieces into new patterns."⁵³ The CRCNA and CRHM, as agencies and leaders of God's people, must re-imagine the newness of Christ, not "merely a moving of the pieces into new patterns," and let the Spirit make all things new daily in organizational culture, structure, ministry, and life together.

Within the CRCNA's corporatist culture, many organizational practices exist that are captive to modern, Western imagination. There is a certain level of North American niceness, welcome, acceptance, and belonging, as well as appropriate practices of personal and professional hospitality. However, the core work practices embodied and driving the organizations are in the form of plans, strategies, check-lists, vision statements, evaluations, assessments, measurements, and agendas. In other words, most work activities have to do with doing "business as usual" through meetings, paper work, and administration. CRHM is not an exception to this way of organizational life. This is an example of a culture and people captive to a modernist corporatist and functionalist imagination. A different imagination that leads to a different set of practices is needed.

⁵² Walter Brueggeman, *Prophetic Imagination* (Augsburg Fortress: Minneapolis, 2001), 39.

⁵³ *Ibid*, 23.

Clues for Missional Practices from Luke 10

Luke 10:1-12 provides good biblical examples and timely guidance for mission agencies like CRHM to re-imagine theologically new practices to engage in as it seeks to experience inner organizational change. The practices and “rules” for the seventy disciples in Luke 10 are radically different kinds of activities than the practices and “rules” CRHM staff members do daily as workers of a mission agency. Most daily and weekly work activities of CRHM staff involve executive and administrative work for the mission work, but the ultimate goals of CRHM staff workers are not much different than the goals of the seventy disciples in their mission work—announcing God’s kingdom for harvest (Luke 10:2, 9).

One way to engage in theological reflection is to think together about the implications for CRHM of Roxburgh’s suggestions in *Missional*. In a chapter entitled “Rules for Radicals: The Contours of a Method,” Roxburgh discusses an application of Luke 10 practices⁵⁴ for local churches and proposes ten “rules” that “any leader and local church can follow if they want to enter the way of Luke 10:1-12.”⁵⁵ They are:⁵⁶ “Go local; Leave your baggage at home; Don’t move from house to house; Eat what is set before you; Become poets of the ordinary; Move the static into the unpredictable; Listen

⁵⁴ Alan Roxburgh “Practices of Christian Life: Forming and Performing a Culture,” *Journey of Missional Practice* 1, (Fall 2012), <http://themissionalnetwork.com/index.php/practices-of-christian-life-forming-and-performing-a-culture> (accessed January 24, 2013). Roxburgh summarizes and describes the practices of Luke 10 in the following way: “In pairs (social construction rather than individual heroes); Dependent on the hospitality of the neighbor (no bag); Speaking the *shalom* of God (this was not a polite, formal greeting; they went where empire proposed Pax, if loyalty were given the Pax Romana then the good things in life would come to people. These disciples announced a counter-narrative.); Entering the socio-economic life of the people (“eat what is set before you,” “the laborer deserves to be paid,” “stay in the same place”); Healing the sick; Announce the kingdom of God.”

⁵⁵ Roxburgh, *Missional*, 167.

⁵⁶ *Ibid*, 167-178.

people into speech; Experiment around the edges; Cultivate experiments, not BEHAGS;⁵⁷
Repeat rules one through nine over and over again.”⁵⁸

The seventy received instructions, a set of practices, that shaped their journey and core activities. Each of CRHM staff receives a job description with specific roles and responsibilities to perform. Implementing these or a similar set of “radical rules” that develop from the biblical imagination might cause cultural change for CRHM, individually and collectively. There are no easy answers, but such experiments and attempts might send CRHM on a different pathway and give clues to forming a mission community that orders activities and ministries to pay adequate attention to God’s agency, especially in terms of discernment and journey.

Leadership as Cultivation

Leadership as cultivation is different than leadership as having answers and plans for people. In an organizational culture like CRHM and the CRCNA, where strategic plans have been the essential and central guiding map for ministry for a long time, this shift in understanding and practice of leadership requires learning new skills and capacities to fundamentally change people’s understanding of the nature of leadership. A foundational premise and deep conviction of missional leadership is the role of leadership as cultivating an environment that innovates and releases missional imagination of God’s people so they can discover God’s future and put it into action in their local contexts.⁵⁹ If

⁵⁷ A BEHAG is a Big Hairy Audacious Goal.

⁵⁸ See Chapter 6 for a proposed action step that attempts to explore applying this idea to CRHM.

⁵⁹ Roxburgh, *The Missional Leader*, 19-20. Also, see Roxburgh, *Introducing the Missional Church*, 122

CRHM seeks to give leadership for missional transformation of the denomination, it is essential not only to grasp, but also to live out this kind of leadership understanding and practice. But this idea of leadership is unfamiliar and counter-intuitive for many leaders of North American churches. Roxburgh and Romanuk offer the following reason:

This idea of leadership as cultivating an environment is difficult to grasp because of our ingrained conviction that leadership is about providing solutions and strategies with predefined ends. Rather than the leader having plans and strategies that the congregation [and denomination] will affirm and follow, cultivation describes the leader as the one who works the soil of the congregation [and denominational systems] so as to invite and constitute the environment for the people of God to discern what the Spirit is doing in, with, and among them as a community.⁶⁰

They go on to offer four important elements of leadership as a process of cultivation in church systems.⁶¹ First, leadership as cultivation involves learning new skills to cultivate awareness and understanding on three aspects: “Awareness of what God is doing among the people of the congregation; awareness of how a congregation can imagine itself as being the center of God’s activities; and awareness of what God is already up to in the congregation’s context.”⁶² Such cultivation requires leaders to learn the skills to create a context for dialogue among people, rather than telling people specific things they should do with their time and energy, as well as a context “for listening to and engaging the images, narratives, and stories of people” of where they live.⁶³

⁶⁰ Roxburgh and Romanuk, *The Missional Leader*, 28.

⁶¹ Ibid, 31-35.

⁶² Ibid., 31-32.

⁶³ Ibid., 32.

Second, leadership as cultivation is about cultivating co-learning networks where leaders create space for people to experiment and test actions with one another so they can discover together new habits for missional life. Third, it involves learning “to indwell and engage Scripture in a new way,” letting the narratives of God’s Word read and shape people’s life.⁶⁴ Lastly, leadership as cultivation is about forming a people with new habits, practices, and norms of Christian life such as “regular fasting, silent retreat, and hospitality to strangers.”⁶⁵ This new approach of leadership as cultivation is a process through which environments can be created that release missional imagination of the people of God. Chapter 4 presents frameworks of leadership and a change model how this kind of leadership can be applied to cultivate an environment for missional transformation.

⁶⁴ Ibid., 33.

⁶⁵ Ibid., 34.

CHAPTER 4

FRAMEWORKS FOR LEADERSHIP AND CULTURE CHANGE

In leading a change process of a complex denominational organization like CRHM that seeks to engage congregations in missional transformation, it is essential to understand the process of change and how change works. Furthermore, having clear understanding of change dynamics and processes assists leaders in discerning how to best work alongside the Spirit of God, who always moves mysteriously in bringing transformation of individuals and communities.

Chapter 4 first explores a theoretical framework applicable to denominational executive leadership issues—the triad of interpretive, relational, and implemental leadership dimensions. Then, two theoretical change frameworks and processes most applicable to leading CRHM and congregations in missional transformation will be introduced and discussed: the Three Zone Model and the Missional Change Model.¹

These models are very helpful leadership tools that church leaders can learn and use for

¹ The author has chosen to discuss these two particular theoretical frameworks for this project. There are many other theories, frameworks, and literatures that deal with organizational change in both Christian organizations and non-religious institutions. Rather than engaging in broad, social scientific research on change theories and models, which is beyond the scope of this focused project, this chapter narrows its study and focus on two change models that have been developed specifically out of the missional conversation of the last two decades for their concrete applications to congregations and church systems in contemporary North American context.

their understanding of different types of organizational culture and change processes in order to effectively provide leadership in innovating missional systems.

Leadership Frameworks and Theological Imagination

When looking for resources to guide the study and practice of leadership, there is a smorgasbord of information and types. In a quick Google web search, one can find about 461,000,000 results in 0.18 seconds on “leadership;” 44,300,000 results in 0.27 seconds on “Christian leadership;” and about 680,000 results in 0.13 seconds on “missional leadership.” There is no lack of information on the topic of leadership in this information age.

The answer to questions on whether it matters to have a distinctively Christian framework of leadership must be a resounding yes. In the rapid, massive, disruptive, disorienting, discontinuously changing global and pluralist culture in which the Church and Christian denominations find themselves, it is critical that Christian leaders draw their resources, first and foremost, from theological traditions and biblical imaginations rooted in Scripture and guided by the Holy Spirit. Otherwise they will be swept away by high waves of information flood, or be influenced by societal and cultural norms that have nothing to do with God’s mission. The CRCNA, its agencies, and churches must create an organizational leadership culture shaped not by the modern, Western imagination of predictability, control, and management, but by biblical imagination of the unpredictable, boundary-breaking Spirit, covenantal community, and releasing the Spirit’s power and gifts to all God’s people.

Interpretive, Relational, Implemental Leadership Triad

Mark Lau Branson developed a helpful leadership framework for the thinking and practice of church leadership in the missional church conversation. His idea of a leadership triad first appeared in *Congregations* in 2003, with the appropriate title, “Forming God’s People.”² Branson contends that congregational leadership “needs to be plural, and it needs to be skilled in the work of interpretive, relational, and implemental perceptions and practices.”³ He defines each sphere of leadership in the following way:

Interpretive leadership creates and provides resources for a community of interpreters who pay attention to God, texts, context, and congregation. *Relational* leadership creates and nourishes all of the human connections in various groups, partnerships, friendships, and families. *Implemental* leadership develops strategies and structures so that a congregation embodies gospel reconciliation and justice in a local context and in the larger world. In effect, these three spheres are structures in the congregations—structures that give meanings (interpretive), human connections (relational), and organizational practices (implemental). It is critical that a congregation’s primary leaders nurture capacities and skills in all three spheres, and that they are attentive to cohesive and coherent practices in the context of constant change.⁴

These three spheres of leadership activities of meaning, relationships, and administration need to be well-integrated and must work in conjunction with each other to be effective. “If they lose their cohesion,” Branson cautions, “then organizational dysfunction results.”⁵ Typically, an average leader would have strengths in one or two areas, but rarely possess all three aspects as strength. That is one reason why plurality of

² Mark Lau Branson, “Forming God’s People,” <http://www.alban.org/conversation.aspx?id=2456>, *Congregations*, 2003-01-01, Winter 2003, Number 1. (accessed February 1, 2013). This article is published in *Leadership in Congregations*, ed. Richard Bass (Herndon, VA: Alban Institute, 2007).

³ Mark Lau Branson, “Ecclesiology and Leadership for the Missional Church,” in *The Missional Church in Context*, ed. Craig Van Gelder (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2007), 118.

⁴ Branson, “Forming God’s People,” 3.

⁵ Mark Lau Branson, *Churches, Cultures and Leadership: A Practical Theology of Congregations and Ethnicities* (Down Grove, IL: Inter Varsity Press, 2011), 55.

leadership is key in any organization, which is also congruent with the biblical call for God's people to lead accordingly to their various spiritual gifts, and live out their calling and mission as an interdependent covenant community locally and cross-nationally. The fact that not every leader possesses all three dimensions of leadership equally points to the need for resourcing in leadership development in church organizations.

Branson's leadership triad framework offers a leadership paradigm that opens spaces for developing a conducive church leadership approach that encourages theological reflection. It is particularly helpful for Christian leadership practices in the following ways: first, it promotes plurality of leadership instead of top-down, singular leadership, which is much closer to the theological understanding of the *perichoresis*, alterity, collaboration drawn from the doctrine of the Trinity, and biblical commands for plurality of leadership. Second, it encourages cultivating communities of interpreters to "learn how to deal with texts"⁶ in such a way that members are invited to discern together and participate more fully in "God's initiatives."⁷ This crucial interpretive dimension of leadership is often missed in secular and other Christian leadership paradigms and practices.

Third, it pays attention to the essential glue of human relationships that need to be valued and nurtured with intentionality. The doctrine of the Trinity and covenant are based on the relational aspect of God, which Christian leadership also must embody in

⁶ Branson "Ecclesiology and Leadership for the Missional Church," 119. He uses the term "'text' in its broader meaning, which includes inscribed materials but also experiences and perceptions and oral events—anything that can be interpreted . . . biblical, historical, contextual realities, with the Holy Spirit's ongoing initiatives serving as a fourth 'text' to be interpreted."

⁷ Ibid, 118-9.

mutual love.⁸ Fourth, it does not ignore or downplay the importance of administration and management by encouraging church leaders to pay necessary attention to “structures, activities, resources, and responsibilities in order to give meanings and relationships the necessary avenues for embodiment, equipping, expression, organization, and endurance.”⁹

The Three Zone Model of Organizational Cultures

This model describes three zones that congregations and denominations form in their organizational culture at various times. The zones are called Emergent, Performative, and Reactive, each with two sections—upper and lower—that describe various stages of an organization’s culture and leadership requirements. They are also called green, blue, and red zones. The characteristics and associated leadership requirements of each zone are summarized here for consideration of their application to CRHM and engaging congregations.¹⁰

The Green Emergent Zone

The Emergent Zone, like the color green, represents an organizational culture where there is the birthing of new forms of mission and ministry because of maximum innovation, energy, and creativity in relation to its changing context. The upper section is called “pioneering or emergent organization,” describing an organization that is being

⁸ Ibid, 121. Branson writes about the basis of the Trinity for relational leadership, “Love, reconciliation, and missional partnering are all based on the Son’s relationship with the Father, which is then promoted in the church by the Spirit.”

⁹ Ibid., 122.

¹⁰ This model is described in detail in Roxburgh and Romanuk’s book *The Missional Leader*. The following section on this model is a summary taken from their book. See especially pages 40-60.

formed or is creating sufficient change in its culture with new learning and applying emergent habits to all parts of its life. In this zone, the organization is adaptive; members learn to experiment and interact with one another rather than wait on top-down, pre-planned strategy. Members learn as they go essentially because they are in a situation where they have never been before. The lower section is called “experiment¹¹ or new actions” to describe a stage where organizations gradually move past an initial phase of learn-as-you-go, in a fluid and dynamic environment toward development of new forms, orders, structures, habits, and practices to regulate its internal environment with its external context.

Some characteristics of Emergent Zone leadership are: being comfortable with ambiguity and not bringing quick closure of a solution or a large plan; focus on a shared vision, forming imagination that may still be “unclear because people are learning to understand and adapt to the changing environment”¹²; cultivating a high level of social interaction, usually informal, with no handbook or set of rules; cultivating an environment of trial, error, and experimenting where failure is permitted and risk is valued; focus on the cultural rather than organizational aspect of the community; seeing challenges not as crises but as opportunities to be embraced; excelling with ambiguity, multiple challenges, no clear answers or predetermined plan; and learning to experiment as strategies emerge, as they take the next step forward. This emergent zone of leadership forms an adaptive, learning, pioneering, and experimenting organizational culture.

¹¹ See Appendix I for a working definition of an “experiment.”

¹² Roxburgh and Romanuk, *The Missional Leader*, 44.

The Blue Performative Zone

The next zone is called the Performative or Blue Zone. This zone represents an organizational culture that has structures, capacities, actions, and skills required to perform well in a stable environment. In this zone, focus is on developing and transferring learned skills and capacities that made it successful to a new generation of leaders. Instead of developing adaptive skills, as in the emergent zone, the emphasis is on performing already learned skills; thus, called a performative leadership zone.

The upper section is “performative organization,” describing an organization culture that has “succeeded in developing the systems, *ethos*, and predictable patterns of skills and actions that enable it to successfully embed its life in the culture and guarantee growth.”¹³ The primary values are no longer innovation, creativity, experimentation, and adaptive learning, but rather skilled performance in regular patterns of predictable habits and actions. The Blue Zone lives off the foundations built in the Green Zone.

Some notable leadership and organizational characteristics of this performative zone are: leadership operating out of large-scale planning which displaces “just-in-time” emergent zone planning, and moves from center to periphery. In this zone, leaders devise plans and solutions for the organization and believe in top-down planning rather than a bottom-up process. There is a loss of overall, shared vision because people focus on programs and meeting the needs of people. Informal social interactions are replaced by formal groups, committees, and meetings; communication also becomes a formalized, top-down approach. Planning is based on the predictability of the past results,

¹³ Roxburgh and Romanuk, *From Christendom Thinking to Missional Imagination*, 31.

rationalized, replaces emergent planning, and becomes a center-periphery process in which people either agree or disagree by vote or financial support.

The lower section of the performative zone is called “transition organization” because it is a stage when organizations go through a difficult period leading into the Red Reactive Zone that is described as a state of “confusion and crisis.” In this zone, organizations are either declining toward death or headed toward cultivating the emergent culture of experimenting and learning to re-imagine and discover a new way to a new future. Importantly, this is a fragile period in the organizational life that requires wise transitional leadership to cultivate stability and a level of confidence as a prelude to moving the organization back toward cultivating a culture of creativity, innovative experimenting, and risk. In this transition period, it is critical that leaders take time to prepare people to cultivate an environment of listening, dialogue, and new imagination by paying attention to the difference between change and transition.¹⁴

The Red Reactive Zone

The Red Zone is when an upper Performative Blue Zone organization suddenly encounters discontinuous change.¹⁵ There is massive cultural and social change in context, so leaders in this stage find skills and habits that worked well in the upper

¹⁴ Roxburgh and Romanuk, *The Missional Leader*, 57-58. They state, “Change is what happens to us from forces outside ourselves over which we have no control . . . Transition . . . is our inner response to change coming from outside ourselves [these responses can be deep inner emotions like anger, denial, grief, apathy, loss of hope, confusion, etc.] . . . Unless an organization learns to address its transition issues, it will never create an effective change process.”

¹⁵ Ibid, 7. “Discontinuous change is disruptive and unanticipated . . . In discontinuous change: (a) Working harder with one’s habitual skills and ways of working does not address the challenges being faced; (b) an unpredictably environment means new skills are needed; and (c) there is no getting back to normal.” By contrast, “continuous change develops out of what has gone before and therefore can be expected, anticipated, and managed.”

performative Blue zone insufficient to navigate their new environment. The result is confusion, anxiety, conflict, and crisis where trying harder and working longer make no difference in a deteriorating situation. The upper reactive zone is called “regulatory agency” and “crisis” because leaders react by reasserting performative zone values and skills and using regulation to get the organization back to stability and in control. The lower reactive zone is called “confusion” to describe the state of this period in maximum confusion and discouragement as an organization.

Two key leadership challenges in the reactive zone are noteworthy. First, leaders need to pay close attention to raising awareness and understanding in this period that performative strategies, skills, values, and approaches will no longer work in this zone of discontinuous change. Second, it is critical that instability and crisis are managed, but not fixed; quick fixes and easy solutions diminish an opportunity for discovering more creative, long-term, lasting changes. At the same time, leaders need to cultivate stability through listening and dialogue among people in the organization, so people begin to discern and imagine a different future for themselves from bottom-up. Leaders in the reactive zone usually address their own anxiety by coming up with some form of bold plan, but such action “actually stops the process of listening to and engaging people who are in crisis.”¹⁶ The leadership challenge in the Red zone is resisting the temptation to fix the problem from top-down, but instead cultivating an environment for a bottom-up process toward awareness and shared understanding of needed organizational culture change.

¹⁶ Roxburgh and Romanuk, *The Missional Leader*, 55. They continue, “As a methodology it is leader-driven, from the top, and does not engage the people themselves in forming a new imagination. In most cases, the bold new future soon beings to look a whole lot like the same old present, and the main result is that leaders spend down hope among the people.”

The Five Basic Principles of Missional Transformation

The Three Zone Model of missional leadership offers a helpful framework for understanding the organizational culture change process and provides keen insight into understanding the current organizational culture of CRHM and the CRCNA. CRHM and the CRCNA experienced the Blue performative leadership zone of stability until the 1990s,¹⁷ but the current situation is similar to the description of Red reactive leadership zone with instability, crisis, and confusion.¹⁸ The current leadership challenge of CRHM is to gain clear awareness and understanding of its place in this organizational culture map, and also find ways to discern and imagine a different future that moves toward the Blue transitioning leadership zone, and eventually to the Green emergent zone culture.

As CRHM leadership moves through the adaptive change process, the five basic principles for leading missional transformation will not only be useful, but also critical to remember and apply every step of the process:

(1) No performative zone performance organization lasts forever. (2) We can't see all the steps along the way . . . Discontinuous change is the norm; we need new images and paradigms for leading where we cannot predict outcomes. (3) Any performative or reactive zone congregation [and denomination] can adapt. . . The key to missional change is innovating an adaptive culture. (4) Adaptive change happens by cultivating the emergent zone culture. This involves the ability to create multiple experiments around the edge and then connect them with one another to form a co-learning environment that is a bottom-up rather than top-down process. And (5) Cultivating a missional congregation [and denomination] requires new leadership skills and capacities.¹⁹

¹⁷ Steady membership growth in the CRCNA from the 1970s to the early-1990s reached its peak in 1992. Membership has declined since. Roxburgh and Romanuk give examples of pastors and congregations that moved from the Performative Zone to the Reactive Zone, and write, “[They were] caught in the reactive zone, without understanding the nature of the shift from performative zone to reactive zone leadership. Many leaders find themselves in the in-between situation illustrated by Figure 3.2. [which indicates the Blue zone leadership of stability up to 1990s].”

¹⁸ See my description of the issue of identity crisis of the CRCNA and CRHM in Chapter 1.

¹⁹ Roxburgh and Romanuk, *The Missional Leader*, 59-60.

The leadership challenge and task for CRHM will be innovating an adaptive culture by cultivating an emergent zone culture within the organization, which takes time and requires new leadership skills and capacities.²⁰

The Missional Change Model

Another helpful and essential theoretical framework for understanding deep culture change process of church systems is the Missional Change Model (MCM). It was introduced and developed by Roxburgh and Romanuk in the early-2000s.²¹ It is a product of over a decade of research and field tests in hundreds of churches around the world, and “created to help churches learn a bottom-up process of innovation that takes seriously the conviction that the Spirit is among the people.”²²

Three Reasons for Using the Missional Change Model

The MCM is a change-framework tool particularly designed for leading missional transformation in local congregations, but also applicable for leading missional change in denominational church systems like CRHM for several important reasons. First, the MCM takes theology seriously, especially the theological conviction about the primary role of the Holy Spirit and place of ordinary people of God in the missional transformation process. This is significant because theological foundations must be the

²⁰ See Chapter 6 for a description of identified adaptive challenges for CRHM leadership as well as a proposal of an action plan to move CRHM toward cultivating an emergent zone culture.

²¹ My introduction to and knowledge of the MCM is through a doctoral seminar taught by Roxburgh and Branson at Fuller Seminary in 2004. The first publication introducing the MCM was in *The Missional Leader*, 79-108. See also *Introducing the Missional Church*, by Roxburgh and Boren, 133-196.

²² Roxburgh, *Missional*, 134.

essential backbone that drives any substantive change process both in denominational agency and at local congregational levels. Without strong biblical and theological foundations, Christian organizations can fall into a trap of behaving in a “command-and-control” manner that, if not careful, can objectify human beings to predetermined ends of leaders. That kind of leadership and organizational culture, as described in Chapter 3 of corporatist and functionalist culture, denies the core Christian beliefs and convictions about the Trinity, Holy Spirit, ordinary people of God, and Christian community. In the MCM process, creating space for people to dialogue, evaluate, and experiment within a field of rich biblical and theological dialogue is crucial. Thus, this model provides a method to cultivate an environment for theological missional imagination to thrive.

Second, the MCM offers leaders the opportunity to approach deep culture change as a bottom-up process of innovation, not as a top-down approach with quick answers and easy solutions made by experts and professional from the outside. The MCM framework appropriately emphasizes the importance of Awareness and Understanding. These two first steps are foundational stages where the main role of leaders is to create safe spaces to cultivate listening and dialogue so that people take time to go through a process of awareness and understanding before they take ownership of the change process. The MCM takes a different approach to change than a traditional strategic planning process in that the outcome is not predetermined, but discovered and discerned as a community even if it means working through some ambiguity and uncertainty. In

that way, the process does not use force, manipulation, or unrealistic expectation for change, but takes a posture of invitation, self-discovery, and discernment.²³

Third, the MCM offers a framework that helps leaders of organizations move beyond “just talking” to taking real, concrete action through experiments. This change process approaches systems with understanding and respect that real human beings make up organizations like CRHM. Thus, it pays adequate care and attention to creating spaces for expressions of the deep need of potential human emotions and reactions; the MCM process encourages leaders to deal with the difficulty people experience in deep, substantive change processes by not bringing disruptive, large-scale reorganization or restructuring at the outset. Rather, through using experiments, it helps leaders guide people within organizations to take small steps, while keeping routine work steady and untouched until there is enough desire and commitment to a new way of being church or organization.

Paying appropriate care and attention to provide people with a sense of safety, security, and stability not only helps leaders manage the level of anxiety and fear people might experience associated with change, but also prepares people to be ready to take on new experiments and risks toward change. The key leadership role to missional innovation is empowering the people of the organization so they will be able to “discern

²³ Peter Block, *Community: The Structure of Belonging* (San Francisco: Berrett-Koehler Publishers, 2009), 113. Block speaks of invitation as the first act of leadership conversation that contributes to transformation of community. He states, “Once the invitation conversation takes place, we follow with the conversations of possibility, ownership, dissent, commitment, and gifts. Invitation is the means through which hospitality is created. Invitation counters the conventional belief that change requires mandate or persuasion. Invitation honors the importance of choice, the necessary condition for accountability.”

and develop actions that come from among themselves rather than strategies and programs proposed by leadership.”²⁴

An Overview of The Missional Change Model²⁵

In order to help a church system move from the reactive or performative zone to the emergent zone in missional transformation process, the leader’s understanding of the framework and each stage of the MCM is critical. The five elements are Awareness, Understanding, Evaluate, Experiment, and Commitment. These five steps are meant as a framework to understand and guide the missional transformation process more like a series of spirals that move back and forth, but not expected to work in a straight line.

The Awareness Stage

Awareness is the crucial first step, seeking to include people in the lived experience and reality of organizational life especially in the reactive zone stage. In this first stage, a leader’s key role is to create safe spaces where people are able to give voice to their experiences of confusion, anxiety, loss, and disorientation. As leaders create a listening space to allow people to become aware of what is happening within and among them, people will discover the language to describe their feelings and lived reality.

Roxburgh writes, “When [people] don’t have adequate language to apply to an

²⁴ Roxburgh, *Missional*, 137-8.

²⁵ See Roxburgh and Romanuk, *The Missional Leader*, 79-108; and also Roxburgh and Boren, *Introducing the Missional Church*, 133-196. The following section is a brief summary of the five elements of the MCM as described in the two books mentioned here.

experience, [people] are literally stuck; it is impossible to move forward.”²⁶ New language and concepts enable people to develop a new imagination.

It is important for leaders to remember three things in this first stage of raising awareness: beginning where people are is essential; be willing to suspend quick-fix answers and plans; and focus on creating a space of listening and dialogue for awareness. Some ways that help create spaces for awareness are through asking deeper questions in pastoral-care settings, using Appreciative Inquiry questions,²⁷ using workshops where new languages are introduced to help people articulate their experiences, and forming listening teams.²⁸ This first stage generally can take four to eight months to initiate.²⁹

The Understanding Stage

Understanding is the stage where dialogue is used to move people’s awareness to a new level of deepened understanding. In the MCM process, understanding occurs when new levels of awareness enable people to ask new questions about what is happening relative to what they have been feeling and thinking. As new kinds of questions stimulate new forms of thinking, the organization develops the capacity to go beneath the surface to deeper understanding of what is actually being said in conversations and experienced within the system.

²⁶ Roxburgh, *Missional*, 141. He continues, “We must not underestimate the power of language; it is one of the most powerful ways we have to make or create reality. A culture is formed when a group of people develop a common language that shapes and defines how they see and make sense of the world.”

²⁷ Mark Lau Branson’s explanation and use of Appreciative Inquiry questions in congregational settings in, *Memories, Hopes, and Conversations: Appreciative Inquiry and Congregational Change* (Herndon, VA: Alban Institutie, 2004).

²⁸ Roxburgh, *Missional*, 150-54.

²⁹ Roxburgh and Boren, *Introducing the Missional Church*, 155.

The key leadership role in this stage is to continue shaping a safe space and taking time where attentive listening and dialogue can happen among people. Leaders need to resist the temptation to develop premature solutions through a strategy or plan at this stage. Roxburgh and Romanuk write, “Awareness and Understanding are like gestation and birth. There must be a long time period for life to be formed, and in most instances the birth requires its own process.”³⁰ So, the leader, in this case, is “like a midwife assisting a birth process that must follow its own mysterious ways.”³¹ The process of Awareness and Understanding are foundational steps to build a sense of safety and trust among people, without which it will be almost impossible to invite people to risk further into the rest of the change process.

The Evaluation Stage

Evaluation is the third stage that applies new awareness and understanding into further dialogue where people are invited to examine current practices, attitudes, values, programs, and overall life of the organization. It is important to note that the MCM does not start with conversation about problems or issues of the current reality, but delays discussion of problems until after the stages of awareness and understanding in order to create a safe environment for people to have real, reflective conversations about what is beneath the surface. At this stage, people begin to ask evaluation questions such as:

Which elements of our tradition are of great service to us, and which do we need to rethink? What new information do we need to make good decisions about some of our current programs? Are current budgeting processes helping or hindering our new understanding? What new skills must we develop to effectively engage

³⁰ Roxburgh and Romanuk, *The Missional Leader*, 94.

³¹ Ibid.

this context? Which are the areas we must focus on, and which must we set aside in terms of priority?³²

As people feel their ideas have importance throughout the process of deep listening and engaging dialogue, it helps them see the value and intentionality of discerning the work of the Spirit. In this phase people begin to express their readiness to risk dreaming and make decisions for future actions. The key role of leaders in this stage is to “create a holding-tank environment” where people are both assured of no wholesale changes in their regular roles, structure or organization, and at the same time, invited to take small, significant steps of experiments which are discerned by themselves. Again, it is critical to take the time to stay long enough in this stage for evaluation, and not shorten the process by rushing into the time of action plans and strategies. Only then, leaders can prepare people well to move to experimentation.

The Experiment³³ Stage

Experimenting is a stage where people can test new ideas, try out new skills, and discover new ways of working and shaping the organization’s life. It is a phase in which the organization in the Red Reactive zone can actually move toward becoming an Emergent Green zone culture. “Experimenting around the edges” is critically important in this stage.³⁴ Because the anxiety level is high in the Red zone culture, leaders do not try to overwhelm or force change on people who are not ready. Instead, leaders initiate experiments with those who are ready and create a safe place to test and discover God’s

³² Ibid., 95-96.

³³ See Appendix I for a definition and components of what makes a good adaptive change experiments.

³⁴ Roxburgh and Romanuk, *The Missional Leader*, 101.

future among people. This approach is different than being told what to do from a leader because they are given resources and tools to make a difference and participate voluntarily. Roxburgh and Romanuk believe that missional transformation is impossible without this stage of action through experiments by the people:

[And] as the initial experiments bear fruit, others in the congregation [and organization] begin to see that it is possible to imagine and practice new habits and actions without destroying what they know and love. This encourages increasing confidence in the change process and starts to change the culture of the congregation [and organization], gently shifting it from a reactive or performative zone toward an emergent zone culture. The process takes time, but it embeds new habits and values in the congregation [and organization] from the bottom up rather than the top down...it also makes long-term cultural change possible. Without the time for experimentation, there can be no missional transformation.³⁵

The Commitment Stage

Commitment is the last stage of the MCM. The organization has a sufficient number of people in the system who have experienced a new way of being together and actually begin to believe that, first, they can become an emergent zone culture, and second, the new of being is the way in which the organization needs to function in the future. By this stage, people will have internalized the framework of missional change process; they are actively involved in innovating changes at all levels of the organization's life, and also get others involved. This happens when initial experiments around the edges start to bear fruit and people begin to grow confidence and commitment into new ways of working and being as an organization.

As described above, the MCM is a long process that may take not just a few months, but a few years. The five stages of the MCM require tremendous energy,

³⁵ Ibid., 101-2.

willingness to risk, courage, patience, trust, and commitment by both leadership and people within the system. Roxburgh, Romanuk, and Boren warn and encourage those who have the heart and courage to embark on a journey of missional transformation of churches and denominational systems:

Until a congregation [or a denomination] reaches [the Commitment] phase, no lasting change occurs. The sad commentary is that too often leaders start at the end—they want to begin with this phase rather than recognizing that it is the goal, not the starting life. Too many change strategies are initiated at the level of this final stage. This is why most either fail or don't outlive the leaders who introduced them.³⁶

The journey toward commitment is not one of a leap across the great gulf but of a series of circling rounds. In the first round, the early adopters (maybe ten percent) will venture out, but this does not mean the entire church is committed to the missional journey at this point. Instead, this first group is learning to catch the spirit of what is happening. They are learning to build a bridge across this vast gulf between what the church has been and the missional call. The Missional Change Model is, then, like a process for “building a bridge as we walk on it.” It is not a predetermined bridge that we have sought to give you, a one-size-fits-all template that looks the same in all situations. It's a process that teaches us to build on our own bridges in our own local contexts.³⁷

³⁶ Roxburgh and Romanuk, *From Christendom Thinking to Missional Imagination*, 103.

³⁷ Roxburgh and Boren, *Introducing the Missional Church*, 194.

PART THREE
MINISTRY STRATEGY

CHAPTER 5

A REPORT AND REFLECTION ON ACTION-LEARNING PROJECT

The previous sections discussed my ministry context of leadership in CRHM, theological reflections, and theoretical frameworks; Part Three moves into discussion of the action-learning project and ministry strategy. After a description of the action-learning tool, with definition and an outline of terms and expectations, Chapter 5 provides a report on significant developments, action steps, observations, reflections, and learning derived from the three key leadership actions that I, as executive director of CRHM, have taken during the last thirteen months, leading CRHM toward missional change.

Action Learning Defined

Action learning is “a powerful problem-solving tool and a process that involves a small group working on real problems, taking action, and learning as individuals, as a team, and as an organization while doing so.”¹ Action learning uses six components: a

¹ Michael J. Marquardt, *Optimizing the Power of Action Learning: Real-Time Strategies for Developing Leaders, Building Teams and Transforming Organizations* (Boston: Nicholas Brealey Publishing, 2011), 2.

problem; an action learning group or team; a working process of insightful questioning and reflective listening; action taken on the problem; a commitment to learning; and an action learning coach.² It has four cycles: Diagnose (addressing adaptive challenge); Design (potential ways of addressing this); Act/Test (experimentation); and Reflect (learning and taking the next steps).³ There are many forms of action learning, but the following stages and procedures are common: formation of group; presentation of problem or task to group; reframing the problem; determining goals; developing action strategies; taking action; and capturing learning.⁴

Defining a “Problem” in Action Learning

A “problem” in the action-learning process can be a “problem, project, challenge, opportunity, issue, or task” an individual or an organization focuses on that is both significant and urgent, and thus needs resolution.⁵ The action-learning process provides “an opportunity for the group [or an individual] to generate learning opportunities, to build knowledge, and to develop individual, team, and organizational skills.”⁶ The problem for this action-learning project is both a challenge and an opportunity, framed by the question: What are the critical leadership skills, capacities, and habits required for an executive leader to lead an agency from providing denominational programming to enabling missional engagement with its churches? Based on my initial leadership work

² Ibid., 2-4. Out of the six components, the team or group is not applicable for this project.

³ “Action-Learning: Biblical-Theological Frameworks,” in a compilation of articles prepared for CRHM as *Missional Reader* by The Missional Network (Fall 2011), 64.

⁴ Marquardt, *Optimizing the Power of Action Learning*, 13.

⁵ Ibid., 2.

⁶ Ibid.

from May-December 2011, I designed three main action steps: making a strategic decision to begin the outside-in journey from January-June 2012; involving the entire staff to engage the consultant report; and, moving toward owning the change process through naming adaptive and technical challenges.

Action Step One: Making a Strategic Decision to Begin the Outside-in Journey

In Chapter 2, the need to do an assessment of CRHM from an outside perspective was addressed. It was called an “Outside-In Journey” for CRHM to receive consultative input and guidance in navigating massive changes and to develop a future plan by creating a road map for long-term strategic thinking.⁷ More specifically, CRHM needed to articulate clearly refreshed identity in relation to the denomination, clarifying the focused role, and exploring and identifying ways to accomplish organization integration internally and externally. This was my initial leadership action response to address the negative perception problem CRHM has in the wider denomination and the widening gap that exists between denominational agencies and CRC congregations.

Preparation

The idea of hiring outside consultants was proposed to CRHM senior leaders at a HMLG staff conference call in January 2012.⁸ This proposal raised anxiety levels for some staff. Many questions were raised around clarification, purpose, and timing of the

⁷ The background to the proposal to hire outside consultants is described in an internal document titled “Overview of Agenda and Introducing the Step Three” that was written for an internal staff leadership meeting on March 19, 2012. See Appendix F.

⁸ HMLG is the Home Missions Leaders Gathering where all eighteen senior leaders meet, usually two times per year in person, and regularly through conference calls.

proposal. Though some level of questioning was expected, what was not were strong reactions by a few staff. Not everyone reacted strongly, but there were relatively few affirmations and much silence among others who did not speak up. This initial reaction was due partly to the outside consulting process that helped CRHM put together the current strategic plan. In the middle of an implementing stage, some did not feel it was the right time to engage in another consulting process, even though a parallel process needed to start in 2012 before the current strategic plan's cycle ended in 2013.

Comparatively, it was interesting to see a different, almost an exact opposite, response when the idea was presented to Board officers. They welcomed, agreed with, and supported the assessment and proposal wholeheartedly. With the approval of board officers and their strong support, despite some resistance by staff, the plan was brought to the full board meeting in February, where the proposal to hire the outside consultants was approved.⁹

Actions Taken

From January-July 2012, there were monthly meetings with CRHM senior staff in different settings, with various configurations of leaders, and numerous individual conversations between meetings. The consultant's work of the outside-in journey was discussed by intentionally putting it on agendas. It was the most impassioned discussion topic during these months. I took four action steps in my leadership role during this time.

First, I tried to open a safe space for staff to ask questions, share opinions, voice concerns, and bring out the best input contributing to the process, so everyone would pay

⁹ CRHM made a contract and hired The Missional Network (TMN) from March 2012-January 2013 for the work of Phase One and Two.

adequate attention and stay the course together. Second, being aware of some doubts and resistance among some leaders, I tried to answer people's questions as best and honestly as I could, and at the same time, continued to keep the process moving steadily forward. During this time, I paid significant attention to the relational dimension by building initial personal relationships with colleagues who worked closely with me.

Third, I affirmed, whenever appropriate, the current strategic plan and good efforts and progress staff made in it. This gave stability and continuity in executive leadership for the ongoing work with CRHM. As the assessment process began, CRHM staff needed to receive assurance and affirmation of their current work. Fourth, I convened the HMLG meeting in April, in Los Angeles to begin the process of naming adaptive challenges and technical problems through the facilitation of the consultants.

Observations

During this period, there were consistent, and understandable, expressions of anxiety among staff about the whole process. Most people's natural reaction to potential change is fear of an unknown and uncertain future: "What will the consultants actually do [to bring change]?" Raising the identity issue also caused concern. Questioning identity feels uncomfortable, like probing a sore spot. The level of anxiety rose after the first two-day meeting with the consultants in April. After the meeting, it was clear this project was on everyone's mind.

Some staff became more vocal and aggressive in voicing questions, concerns, thoughts, and feelings. More time was spent in meetings on the process, which produced documents that had a long list of "suggestions" for the consultants. There was particular

concern that leaders were clear what the consultants were supposed to do. Some strongly argued that the Facilitation Integration Team (FIT),¹⁰ internal staff team, “should look at internal matters; Consultants [should focus only on] the external matters such as classes and denominational connections.”¹¹

At a March staff meeting, staff suggested assigning a sub-team to address “what we are asking the consultants to do” and communicate to the consultants what posture, focus areas, and work CRHM wished them to do. One senior staff voiced concerns, questioning the assumptions of the consultants, and wrote, “There seems to be an assumption that progress can only be made by dealing with issues that are adaptive.”¹² But, there were also leadership voices that supported the process. One person wrote, “Don’t stop looking at our identity. Keep going with what God is calling us to do as an agency.”¹³ During this time, the first stage of Awareness of the Missional Change Model began to take root in CRHM.¹⁴

Reflections

I did not realize how much disequilibrium I was bringing to the system and how dangerous this action could be. Only when I got on the balcony, where I could see the dance floor, and reflect on the movement below, did I realize, and appreciate people’s

¹⁰ See Appendix F.

¹¹ From the meeting minutes of Executive Team held on April 25, 1.

¹² Email correspondence to me on April 25, 2012.

¹³ From the minutes of Home Missions Leadership Team meeting held on March 19-20, 2012, 10.

¹⁴ See Chapter 4 for definition and description of Awareness stage of Missional Change Model. For a description and explanation of the Missional Change Model, see Roxburgh, *Introducing the Missional Church*, 133-196. For the Awareness and Understanding stages, see pages 140-143 and 147-161.

emotional reactions and level of anxiety.¹⁵ If I had anticipated this anxiety and prepared myself better, I wonder if I would have reacted and responded with more grace and ease.

Another possible action I could have taken is to invite other leaders to get up onto the balcony with me to see the larger picture from the balcony, and engage in a group conversation and reflection together. That might have helped to lower the anxiety in the system. I shared my balcony views and engaged the leadership group in conversation at times, but in hindsight, intentional design and action could have served the group better.

The powerful default of control-and-command influences most organizations that have been formed during the modern era; CRHM is not without an exception from that modern influence. Without people realizing it, that was behind and beneath the seemingly safe suggestions a few staff members offered, which actually demanded the consultants conduct their work in a certain way, which they preferred. Underneath a desire for clarity may have been a desire to keep control of the process and a sense of fear at losing that control.

One of the highlights of my work at CRHM happened during this period, by surprise, not by planned work. At the February board meeting where I was to present a proposal for hiring consultants, CRHM had on its agenda a huge financial deficit for that fiscal year. Unbeknownst to anyone in CRHM, just two days before the board meeting several donations were received for twice the amount of the deficit. It would have been a difficult decision for board members, knowing about such financial constraints, to invest in consultants which had not budgeted. But the timing, and details surrounding this

¹⁵ For an explanation of “balcony view reflection,” see Introduction (footnote 5 on page 2) and Chapter 2.

surprise, made clear something of God's faithfulness and encouragement to all of us. This is something for which I will always be grateful. It was a good reminder and a sign, early in my leadership at CRHM, that pointed us in the right direction of placing our full trust in God and his wondrous ways of working among God's people.

Learning and Insights

I learned to be aware and pay attention to the level of anxiety and stress people experience in a change process, which were definitely much higher than I anticipated. I had to be more aware and helpful as a leader to those who go through change processes. I needed to learn leadership and communications skills in order to manage anxiety and stress in the system. These are thoughts I take with me to the next action-learning steps.

I learned that when people ask seemingly safe questions such as "Do the consultants fit for our need right now? How about the denominational process that is not in place while we are doing our own process? What can we advise the consultants about our own need and what they can focus on to help us?" these are not objective and naïve questions. Underneath those questions are deeper questions and issues. I did not hear them, because I probably was not listening deep enough. I need to learn to read feedback and questions better as a leader, not only to become better aware of what is actually going on, but also come to care more deeply and respond better to underlying issues. I learned that, in team settings, rather than responding only to those who speak up that lead to having individual conversations, I need to facilitate the entire team to engage in fierce conversations so that all can learn together.

I learned that we needed to be proactive about inviting others to speak into our being, and that they could help us with fresh eyes and perspectives. Deeper issues and problems that were hidden underneath surface problems became revealed by simple questions from consultants that we could not ask for ourselves. The way the organization reacted and responded to the outside-in consulting process also gave me some clues about our own defaults and inner organizational dynamics. These learnings will be critical pieces to remember and apply as I make adjustments in my next steps throughout this action-learning project.

Action Step Two: Taking the Entire Staff to Face the Challenges We Must Address

CRHM marked another significant organization milestone at the end of June, saying farewell to the retiring interim director who stayed on and worked with me during my first year as new director. The subsequent months of July-August 2012 were quite intense. On July 7, the consultants sent their preliminary diagnostic report draft on CRHM based on fourteen interviews they conducted, as well as their readings of various CRHM documents, meetings with various staff of CRHM, and conversations between March-June.

Preparation

In my meeting with the consultants to discuss the draft report on July 9, it was advised I should write a framing document to share with staff in an August meeting where I would present a vision and direction for the future of CRHM. I wrote a brief document entitled, “Next Chapter Leadership of CRHM: Reimagining Our Identity, Role

and Direction” and sent it to the consultants on July 26.¹⁶ The consultants sent their final report on August 7, which I forwarded to CRHM staff and asked them to review before a HMLG meeting the next week in Chicago.

Actions Taken

There are five key leadership actions I took during this time to lead CRHM into facing real, critical challenges. First, I convened the staff to engage the consultant report initially at the Chicago HMLG, and in a subsequent follow up HMLG conference call meeting in September.¹⁷ The consultants read each section with the staff and engaged questions and conversations over a few hours. I convened two informational town hall meetings with central office administrative staff in the Grand Rapids headquarters (and in Burlington, Canada, via conference call) August 21 and 28 to inform them about the process, share the content of the consultant’s report, answer questions, and continue to cultivate an environment of prayer and teamwork for the process. I continued to manage and lead the process with the executive team at regular monthly meetings.

As part of my response to the consultant’s preliminary report, I reframed the future direction of CRHM in my “Next Chapter Leadership” document and shared it with senior staff at HMLG, the central office staff August 21, and board members September 26. My invitation was to re-imagine identity, role, and posture as we discern God’s future among us as an agency. I proposed to widen focus from a church-planting organization to a mission agency serving congregations of the denomination with a posture of humility

¹⁶ See Appendix G.

¹⁷ Block, *Community*, 85. Block states, “In communal transformation, leadership is about intention, convening, valuing relatedness, and presenting choices. It is not a personality characteristic or a matter of style, and therefore requires nothing more than what all of us already have.”

and learning. In these meetings, I invited responses from the floor and engaged in robust conversations to tease out further questions, concerns, and implications.

In the September board meeting, I set the stage of sharing my “Next Chapter Leadership” and discussion by framing the conversation in the following way:

The issue is: Unless we re-imagine and make a real shift in our direction as an agency, we do not have a bright future; it is significant because: our denomination and the majority of our congregations are hurting and slowing dying. We cannot continue to do business as usual. Without significant change, we will not make it to the future; my ideal outcome is: that, by God’s grace, we, CRHM, would make a turn and assist the CRCNA also make a turn to discover and live into God’s future by joining God’s mission in the twenty-first century North America; this is an important moment, perhaps a turning point, in our agency’s history because we are here to make a “root decision” that could make a significant turn in our direction; and, my document and presentation are the relevant background information as we discern and engage in our conversations together.”¹⁸

From there, I shared my vision and direction for the future of CRHM, invited input, and encouraged everyone to journey together in following the Spirit’s leading.

Soon after the HMLG meeting in Chicago, I requested a written response and feedback from each senior staff, because the meeting did not give them time to process the implications of both the consultant report and my reframed vision document. In my follow-up email communications sent out August 20, I asked each senior staff to write and send an honest and reflective feedback with the following invitation and questions:

I was very pleased with how the meeting went in Chicago. The conversations were honest, deep and helpful on many levels . . . Just to follow up our conversations and continue the discernment together from our time together last week, I want to ask you to write your personal response and send back to me...Feel free to choose to write whatever you consider would be most helpful for moving forward in CRHM’s next chapter. I offer the following questions as suggestions for you to consider as you reflect and write your piece:

¹⁸ Susan Scott, *Fierce Conversation: Achieving Success at Work and in Life, One Conversation at a Time* (New York: A Berkley Book, 2004), 252. Scott introduces four kinds of decisions in organization leadership. “Root decisions” is described as follows: “Make the decision jointly, with input from many people.” Other three decisions are: “Leaf decisions, Branch decisions, and Trunk decisions.”

In light of our conversations around the TMN report and my vision for the future of CRHM (attached), (1) What are you discerning in terms of where God is calling CRHM in the future? (2) What are you discerning in terms of where God is calling you individually based on your answer to #1 above? (3) What are the adaptive and technical challenges we as CRHM need to face and address immediately and for the next 1 - 3 year(s)?...I wonder what kinds of conversations we can have if we are brutally honest with ourselves and also if we are given permission to think big and outside the box . . . I plan to follow up with you individually based on your response. Thanks in advance for your responses, and I am looking forward to continuing engagement with you.

I spent much time reading, reflecting, wrestling, and interacting with responses that senior staff provided. Some responses were very honest. A few were quite open, sharing tentative thoughts, even expressing raw emotions of confusion, disappointment, and anger in their writing. Dealing with and processing the staff's feedback, especially the ones with major substantive input and emotional reactions, took much time and energy, but proved to be necessary and contributed to the good of overall process.

I kept board members engaged in the process by inviting the consultants to the September board meeting to share and facilitate a discussion of their report. Given the substantive evaluation and huge potential implications of report findings, I determined the board would not only need time to process the content, but also to own the decision of a possible different direction of CRHM. There was high energy and deep engagement around the discussion of the report. One of the most insightful moments was when the board engaged in an exercise of naming the "defaults" as the CRCNA and CRHM, which has been used as a reference point throughout the subsequent meetings and conversations to chart the pathway for the next chapter of CRHM.¹⁹

¹⁹ For the list of defaults the Board identified, see Appendix A.

Observations

The most obvious and important observation was seeing the impact of the HMLG meeting on staff and how they reacted to the consultant report. I observed a wide range of reactions. Some were shocked that certain criticisms of CRHM were named and made public on paper, not without some reasoned and substantive rationale and grounds. Some denied and did not agree with certain aspects of the report. Some reacted strongly with emotions and feelings of being under-appreciated and under-valued for their past work. Some were not sure what to think and were trying to absorb as best as they could. Still many others wondered about the implications of the report. It was as if we were looking at a clear mirror together for the first time, and seeing parts that were not so pretty, but were clearly broken and in need of change. The overall response of the staff, however, was agreement with and acknowledgment of the report's diagnosis of the challenges which CRHM now faces, with a view towards identifying a possible reframing of the identity and role for the organization in the life of the CRC.

The following is a brief summary of the content of the report.²⁰ The title clearly signaled the main theme: “change and transition.”²¹ In essence, this report was an invitation to prepare for a significant shift in order to face the challenges in the future.

The report is divided into ten main sections. The introduction section provides a context where CRHM “require[s] some re-orientation of its current focus and energies . . . [w]ithout this shift in focus there is a possibility that CRHM will become more

²⁰ The following section is a summary of the full consultant report from The Missional Network. The quotations in the following three paragraphs are taken from the report and only refer to the sections.

²¹ The full title of the Report is “CRHM – Change & Transition within a National Denomination in the midst of Change and Transition.”

disconnected from the majority of member congregations as well as other denominational institutions and agencies.” The section on “CRHM and CRCNA: ‘Prophetic-Conscience Missional Movement’” names tension that exists between CRHM and the denomination, and how CRHM’s self-understanding as a “prophetic missional movement” creates different narratives that dichotomizes between “we/they and winner/loser categories” between congregations, but without “any real attention” given in this critical area.

The next six sections report on the current strategic plan (“qualified appreciation” by interviewees and noting its limits to address future challenges); partnering with other agencies within CRCNA (“lack of imagination in terms of how to relate to or partner with” other denominational agencies); CRHM organizational culture (“confusing to people within and without the agency”); church planting (“defines the other two foci” of leadership development and congregational renewal, but is not “being both valued by the system as well as meaningfully relating to that larger system”); congregations (CRHM is not “asking the bigger question” but is stuck with ideas that cannot “transcend the tensions of New Church Development and existing congregations”); classes and CRHM’s perspective (“tension between a planned CRHM regional strategy” of clusters and “the key polity role of classes in the system remains unresolved”).

The report concludes with a section title posing a question about my leadership of CRHM, “Moses Chung: Direction? Narrative? What Does He Want?” This section names “a critical need for the new Director to clarify his sense of direction for CRHM,” because “within and without CRHM there is a hunger for a leader to give clear direction, to take the lead and point the way in determining the ethos of leadership and culture of CRHM.” The final section suggests there is “a lot for grabs” for the “role and place of CRHM” in a

denomination that has “undercurrents of frustration . . . anxieties and ambiguities.” The following statement sums up the report: “Behind many of the issues raised in 1-9 above lie significant questions about the relationship and role of CRHM relative to congregations, Classes, agencies/institutions, and leadership, as well as the challenge of clarifying the identity, nature and purpose of CRHM within a denomination which is also struggling to reframe the identity, nature, and purpose of the CRCNA.”

Each section from the report was read aloud by the consultant, who then paused and invited feedback from staff; many questions and difficult conversation followed. Listening carefully to the conversation and watching the senior staff’s reactions, I saw the struggles and stresses people had simply in hearing someone outside their system name substantive problems aloud, one after another. However, in the midst of these challenging moments, there was also a sense of relief and freedom in the room I believe came from acknowledging and naming these issues. I saw a significant turn made in this meeting.

During a debriefing session without the consultants, people expressed gratitude for our collective acknowledgement saying, “Our [past] scope was too narrow . . . when we wrote the Strategic Plan” by falling back on default mode without being aware of our actions.²² Another person highlighted the understanding that, “We had a cultural lens [the default of demanding control and outcome even in our ‘journey of discernment’] in writing of the Strategic Plan.”²³ This was the first time since I started to work in CRHM that we publically verbalized and acknowledged problems associated with the strategic plan in this way. There was a general group consensus that the problems we faced were

²² CRHM internal document of HMLG Meeting Notes (August 15-16, 2012), 11.

²³ Ibid.

much more serious than we thought. As the consultants consistently framed challenges, the nature and scope of the challenges we faced were clearly “adaptive,” i.e., the kinds of challenges which we do not currently have answers or capacities to address. That much was clear to every senior leader in CRHM. By the end of our meetings, it seemed clear everyone was beginning to own the fact that we have some adaptive challenges we must address as an organization.

Another notable observation was the contrast between the senior staff and board members in their engagement with and reaction to the same consultant report. When the board members engaged in conversation about the report with the consultants, there were affirmations and support but not much shock, denial, or resistance. Most board members welcomed the idea of broadening CRHM’s focus to embrace established congregations. Subsequent discussions led to constructive questions around implications, a concrete picture of how a different future of experimentation might look, and whether this kind of approach and direction should be also embraced by the whole denomination.

Reflections

In hindsight, the consultant report and staff engagement with it was the tool that revealed deep issues for CRHM. It is true many of the issues and problems described were not totally new to staff; there were numerous individual and group conversations about issues in the past. But the reframed problems were presented in public as a public document, which helped bring consensus of issues by the whole group. Naming and giving language for deep issues, un-challenged assumptions, and old perspectives continue to be a powerful and life-changing experience as an organization.

I was surprised by divergent responses from staff about my vision presentation. Everyone had a different view and assessment. Following-up with a few staff who had strong reactions certainly helped each understand better my intent and their perceptions. I see how creating a safe and open space for people to express disagreements and disappointment is an important part of leading a change process. It is important to protect personhood, team spirit, and the group process, by creating appropriate spaces for conversation, usually in one-on-one individual settings.

Another reflective insight I gained from this meeting is about setting an appropriate expectation for gathering such as the Chicago HMLG meeting. Because of the way the agenda was set by the consultants, many of the staff came to this meeting expecting to hear my plan for the future. I learned later that many staff felt that is how the consultants had essentially set them up to expect that. It was not my nor the consultants' intent for me to provide a future plan, but point out the direction of the future. Some of the tension and divergent reactions, in part, resulted from that expectation.

I did not realize the vulnerable state of our system when this disequilibrium was introduced, and how much personal care was needed for individuals and the corporate community. Sense of togetherness, stability, and security are most needed when people feel most vulnerable, which occurred from July-September; I did not recognize the need because I, too, was in the middle of it all. I now see and understand better why people were asking questions about who was "landing the plane" and how.

Insights

Through these intense conversations and direction setting meetings, I learned that I need to articulate more clearly where I am going as a leader. My personal tendency and intuitive impulse is to find connecting points to support, encourage, and build on other's ideas. I have learned that I need to be more alert about how I make statements and share my own opinions, because as head of the organization my actions are observed, weighted more heavily, and constantly interpreted by others. I must lead and behave in such a way that I am not overly self-conscious of my own actions and words, but acting with more care and responsibility to steward better the positional authority and leadership with which I am entrusted.

I learned that one of the most important leadership roles I have as executive director is creating spaces for honest input and reflective dialogue as a group. Especially when leading change, it is critical to pay attention to feelings of insecurity, vulnerability, and stress as people who are being affected by real, or potential, change. By staying close to those who express those feelings, and through careful and deep listening, a leader can turn vulnerable moments and relationships into opportunities for better awareness and understanding that lead into good of the whole. I learned that by creating a safe space where people are invited to ask good questions and encouraged to do deep, reflective listening with each other, much can be accomplished and transformative learning can emerge. There were several of those opportunities during this period.

This was a solid stage of deeper Awareness and beginning of Understanding in the Missional Change Model.²⁴ I was cultivating and creating spaces by convening tables of conversations in meetings and one-on-one interactions to work through people's feelings to a place of new awareness. Through the work of consultants and their report, some new language around concepts such as adaptive challenge, technical problem, and defaults gave a new awareness that helped name our deeper issues buried underneath the surface.

The staff as well as the board began to recognize clearly that there was something wrong that need to be addressed. The process began where people were and helped each one increase the level of his or her awareness and understanding. As people began to listen better to each other, a new kind of dialogue emerged, and in the midst of this difficult process, we continually dwelt in the Word and cultivated an environment of prayer and discerning together the Spirit and his leading. We were moving slowly but surely into a stage of Understanding for missional transformation of CRHM and practicing into shaping a different future.

Action Step Three: Moving toward Owning Adaptive and Technical Challenges

Immediately following the September board meeting, a new phase began to engage in designing a comprehensive Phase II process to address the challenges and issues raised in the report. This next phase was designed to move the process with some key action steps from October 2012-January 2013. The detailed dates and meetings during this period were: *ad hoc* design team meeting (October 10-11), HMLG conference

²⁴ See Chapter 4 for a description of these stages. See also Roxburgh's *Introducing the Missional Church*, 133-196.

call (October 19), HMLG in Muskegon, MI (November 5-8), *ad hoc* design team meeting (December 11-12), Writing a comprehensive “Next Chapter Journey” document (December 12- January 14), HMLG conference call seeking input of “Next Chapter Journey” (January 27), Sending “Next Chapter Journey” to board and key partners (January 23), and board meeting to approve “Next Chapter Journey” (February 6-8).

Actions Taken

I appointed five senior members to an *ad hoc* design team, working with the consultants and myself during Phase II. I convened meetings in October and December and frequent conference calls and conversations with the team. The team’s task was to review the consultant report in detail; prioritize key issues which need to be addressed; identify key technical challenges in order to design a set proposal for action; identify key adaptive challenges, building upon data gathered over the past six months; focus on designing process steps and possible experiments to engage; create a comprehensive report to present to the board for approval, engaging adaptive and technical challenges over the following eighteen-month period; and involve the entire staff for review, input, and contribution in shaping of the report.

I convened HMLG in Muskegon, where the entire senior staff worked with a few outside partners reframing problems and naming adaptive and technical challenges that must be addressed. In designing HMLG with a team, I applied four learning points from the previous two action-learning steps in the following way: we created intentional spaces for more listening to questions, thoughts, and feelings of unease people still might have with the report and the process as a way to pay better attention to high stress and anxiety;

we intentionally designed spiritual exercises around Scripture-dwelling, prayer, silence, and rest to infuse the agenda with a different posture for discernment and reliance on the Spirit and his leading; we invited those outside CRHM to speak into the process of naming challenges with fresh eyes and perspectives; and, invited a team to design the agenda and facilitate the meetings with me.²⁵

Before beginning Phase II, I wrote another framing document, “CRHM Leadership Next Steps: Where Do We Go from Here?”²⁶ One key reflection and learning from previous action steps was to better articulate where I am going as a leader. In this document, I first recognized the difficult and vulnerable process of the previous months:

We are in the midst of critical conversations about the past history, present reality, and future direction of Home Missions. I am grateful for the ways we have been able to listen to each other as staff and Board as we have also sought to listen to God. It has not always been an easy road because it has sometimes felt like we have been re-visiting some all-too familiar places in the last few years. Hearing and going through the Missional Network [consultant] report was also not all that easy: it was almost like holding up a mirror to CRHM, which included seeing the not-so-positive aspects of our organizational past and present realities.

During the past six months or so, we have journeyed together to take a hard look at ourselves. With what I believe is a humble posture, we’ve begun to think about the possibility that we might have to change internally first if we are going to engage in any real change externally within our denomination. Now, with the completion of Phase One of the Next Steps to Re-imagine Our Identity, Role and Direction, we are entering into Phase Two.

Let me offer what I see on the horizon for our journey ahead of us in two parts: 1) a brief review of where we have been, and 2) laying out future tasks and a timeline for the next 3, 6, 9 months.

This document proved to be effective and timely. It was a crucial moment providing clarity for the entire staff of the big picture and clear next steps in the midst of many conversations about challenges and potential change. Providing a clear timeline served

²⁵ We invited four partners: one executive agency leader from Christian Reformed World Missions, one church planter, and two area church pastors.

²⁶ See Appendix H.

the staff and the organization well, which was a result of listening carefully to staff and to what I had observed from my balcony reflections.

An outcome of this entire process was writing with the *ad hoc* design team a directional vision document titled, “Joining God’s Mission: The Ongoing Journey of CRHM.”²⁷ This document addresses adaptive and technical challenges that CRHM identified the past nine months. It has four main parts: the introduction and background provides the context of challenges and opportunities in which CRHM finds itself, its intent to widen focus to “embrace all congregations in mission together,” and desire to move forward in humility; articulation of reframed core identity statements around the focal themes of God’s mission, local church, interdependent covenant community, collaboration, and learning organization; naming and description of six technical problems—“key strategic focus points which are congregations, growing as a learning organization, growing in discernment and spiritual formation, strengthening relationships with other agencies and ministries, internal alignment, and resources”—to be addressed; and five ministry adaptive challenge statements of context, organization, leadership, mission, and culture, as well as a description of “new ways of tackling the adaptive ministry challenges we face” through an evolving loop of experiments, reflection, adjustment, learning, and reporting.²⁸ The proposed timeline (Three Phase Project:

²⁷ See Appendix A.

²⁸ Ibid. The following is a description of how “congregations” will be the lead strategic focal point: “The leading focal point in our strategic direction moving forward will be congregations. Therefore, CRHM’s main focus in this new day is collaborating with the local church—new and established, urban and suburban, traditional and experimental—to discover God’s local expression of transforming lives and communities in their neighborhoods, cities, and the world. We commit ourselves to seeing these local expressions of the gospel flourish in their unique settings by discerning together what is needed, and by resourcing congregations and leaders to participate more fully in God’s mission. This primary and leading

Discerning a New Future of CRHM) and an appendix (Self-Identified Defaults of CRCNA and CRHM) are also included. This document was written with input from every senior staff and sent to board members for approval as well as to many key ministry partners of CRHM for their input.

As I led the internal process with CRHM staff and board, I kept ongoing conversations with the denominational ministry leadership, particularly the office of executive director of the CRCNA. It has been important to keep denominational leadership informed of the CRHM process for the purpose of accountability and insuring their support. An equally important aspect in CRHM's process has been the reviewing and reframing process of the broader denominational identity and ministry direction.²⁹ I have paid close attention to both processes with the hope for convergence and a complementary future.

Observations

It has been an arduous, sometime tedious, always intense, and mostly difficult process to arrive at naming the adaptive and technical challenges we face as CRHM. From the initial group exercise of identifying ministry challenges in April 2012, through the shock of receiving the consultant report, with multiple levels of substantive problems described and named at the August HMLG meetings, to the November HMLG staff

focus will be accomplished with the support of the rest of the five key strategic focus points and by how we address the adaptive challenges we now face.”

²⁹ At the September 2012 Board of Trustees meetings, a decision was made to “fundamentally reframe” the ministry plan of the CRCNA. The minutes record: “A discussion is held regarding the Board’s desire for the type of review needed of the Ministry Plan—do they prefer to review and revise, reframe and revise, or fundamentally reframe? A motion carries to ask the ED [Executive Director] to communicate with the consultants of The Missional Network to move in the direction of a fundamental reframing.”

workshop in Muskegon to reframe and name the adaptive and technical challenges, I am impressed by the ongoing, sustained energy within the organization. It is gratifying to see how the entire staff has stayed close to the process in this distributed system where staff members are spread across North America.

The most notable and important observation about this period concerns real shifts that occurred at crucial junctures in the process. When the *ad hoc* design team was first formed and began to meet in conference calls, then with consultants in early October, there was a definite movement from reaction to the consultant report to a phase of tackling the challenge with a specific task at hand. Working together with a new, smaller team brought fresh energy and anticipation to the process, not only among team members but also the entire staff, as they heard of the team's formation and mandate.

The most significant turn was made during the November HMLG meetings. On the third day, there was a moment after putting potential adaptive challenges on the wall with post-it notes and newsprint sheets, and hearing each one read aloud, that everyone in the room felt overwhelmed. Every adaptive challenge started with an acknowledgement of inability and incapacity to fix the problem and need for new learning. In the midst of reading adaptive challenges, one well-respected, veteran, senior staff member with a half-red face blurted out something along the lines of, "You mean to say that over the last two decades I have been doing all this work, and I did not have a skippy clue about what I was doing?" He was not mad or angry. In a way, he voiced for the rest an honest acknowledgment of a serious situation, of the massive change challenges this new day brings, and the inability of an inherited old structure and paradigm to fix the problem. The silence in the room was palpable.

As facilitator of that session, I invited everyone to pause, kneel both in body and heart before God as a sign of humble and total dependence, and be still for a few minutes. In silence, I felt the Spirit of God blowing fresh wind among God's people desperately looking to God for help. Then, uninvited and spontaneously, people began to blurt out short phrases of prayers, almost like groaning cries to God.

We ended the evening by inviting everyone to practice silence before being sent out with this Celtic prayer: "Calm me, O Lord, as you stilled the storm. Still me, O Lord, keep me from harm. Let all the tumult within me cease. Enfold me, Lord, in your peace." As we quietly listened to this prayer prayed and sung over us through a beautiful *capella* recording, we felt a divine peace falling and embracing us with the calming, comforting presence that only God is able to give, despite an overwhelming sense of helplessness in naming the massive adaptive challenges we faced.

The next morning, the final day together, we read and dwelt in the Word together on Exodus 2:23-3:12. The focus of conversation repeatedly centered on Exodus 2:23, "The Israelites groaned in their slavery and cried out, and their cry for help because of their slavery went up to God." One person reflected that we "need to understand groaning better as church leaders instead of always running to try to fix things for God." In that morning, I felt God showing up again among us in a powerful and mysterious way. One participant's reflection in a written response summarizes well the atmosphere and the experience of the group at the HMLG:

Tone: Spiritual awareness and reflection was terrific. I thought the times in the Word, in silence, and reflection . . . group sharing . . . set a great tone for all of the meetings to be peace-filled and engaging even when we spoke about challenging things. It seemed to me that the Holy Spirit was very much present throughout our

time together. The space given to hear the voice of the Lord was much appreciated. No one seemed anxious or uptight to me.³⁰

By the end of our time together in that HMLG, I felt we had turned the corner toward owning our issues and seeking God and his leading to a future among us. In a written response I requested from the participants about their new insights and take-away thoughts from this HMLG, one staff person wrote the following: “Hope: I think future Hope surfaced a lot even in the midst of challenges and some confusion at present. There was enough clarity and a way forward enough for hope. Hope was probably my biggest take-away even though the specifics of challenge are still unclear.”

The last highlight observation is a moment when specifics of challenges suddenly became clearer. When the *ad hoc* design team met for the second time in December, our challenging task was to bring the entire gathered data from all previous discussions over the past nine months and synthesize them into a coherent whole that would be used as the basis and substance of our comprehensive future journey document. During the course of the first day, a question was asked that helped frame the rest of our conversation and work. The question was: “What if we see the congregations as the starting point in our delivery system rather than the end point?” This question, in my judgment, was a radical shift in thinking from the previous paradigm of how CRHM and all the denominational ministries have been structured and operated.

For many years, denominational headquarters and agencies, including CRHM, have created programs and ministry opportunities from the center, which were passed down to local congregations through denominational promotions, classes, and agency

³⁰ CRHM, “New Insights and Take-Away Thoughts: Post HMLG” (November 2012), 1.

staff members on the ground as a way of delivery system. Thus, it was a “hub to spoke” approach. In recent years, CRHM made significant, intentional efforts to turn the center-periphery approach toward a grassroots approach by moving toward a “regionalization” model. But as one of our identified adaptive challenges states, in reality, CRHM still operated out of a center-periphery imagination and delivery model.³¹ This obvious question helped our process tremendously; to asking different questions and eventually helping us prioritize the key strategic focus points that resulted in our final Journey document, which states: “The leading focal point in our strategic direction moving forward will be congregations . . . This primary and leading focus will be accomplished with the support of the rest of the five key strategic focus points and by how we address the adaptive challenges we now face.”³²

Reflections

First, the team approach has been strong within CRHM in the past. I found such approaches continue to work well during this period of the process. The decision to form an *ad hoc* team has proven to be an excellent move. Most members were “junior” staff members who joined CRHM in relatively recent years. Among team members, there was a fresh energy and willingness to serve and work together to face the challenge.³³ Other

³¹ CRHM identified one of our adaptive challenges in the areas of Organization and stated it as following: “We have distributed the hub and spoke structure regionally, giving an illusion of a distributive organization that remains essentially a command and control structure. True interdependence seems elusive, and our attempts at change have not been embraced. We don’t know how to enter into partnerships in which we don’t have a leading role.” See Appendix A.

³² Ibid.

³³ Forming and operating this team was not without its tensions. The “junior” nature of the staff on the team, along with the fact that three Goal Specialists were on and only one Regional Leader has led to some anxiety and distrust.

teams, including the executive team and the spiritual formation jumpstart team, have contributed much to help provide valuable input and leadership at various junctures.³⁴

I felt extremely grateful for the progress we made, including a sense of unity, genuine anticipation of hope, and new energy to engage further the next chapter of CRHM. I sensed a genuine openness among staff to share feelings of lacked clarity for the future, but also appreciated courage and willingness to face whatever may come with deep trust and togetherness. This is a different spot than when introducing hiring an outside consultant to assess our organization was presented. From where the staff were in August 2012, when anxiety and resistance were very high, to the end of January 2013, exactly a year after the first discussion about the idea of hiring the consultants, CRHM has moved to a different space with freshly named challenges and, more importantly, an emerging ownership and readiness to engage and embrace the future God is bringing among and through us.

Insights

I have learned the importance of the spiritual dimension in leading organizational change processes in a mission agency like CRHM. In almost every meeting and gathering during this process, we have consistently practiced a corporate spiritual discipline of dwelling in the Word in Scripture passages like Luke 10, Ephesians 6, and recently Exodus 3. As noted in the Observations section above, we experienced the Spirit's promptings at many different moments through this process. In many fierce conversations

³⁴ One staff's written feedback about the team's work during the November HMLG affirms the point: "There were multiple leaders and teams involved but the meetings did not seem disjointed or fragmented. It flowed well." Internal CRHM document, "New Insights and Take-Away Thoughts: Post HMLG" (November 2012), 1.

over “business issues” and making decisions, our activities were instructed, colored, and shaped by the Word. The November HMLG was the most visible illustration and highlight of our meetings, probably because we intentionally designated and planned to spend a significant amount of time in the Word, prayer, silence, and hearing and listening to each other and to the Spirit among us. This is something our denominational culture can learn to do more readily as it changes from a perfunctory, routine “devotions and prayer” at the beginning of business meetings to infusing the agenda with Word, prayers, and listening to the Spirit through discernment questions and reflective listening as we encourage each other to pay attention to the speech of the “other” among us.³⁵

Second, I am learning that leading indeed is a risky and dangerous business. Through an intentional process of introducing disequilibrium to the system, and inviting feedback, critique, and input, I have seen how different everyone’s expectation and perspective is toward my leadership actions and style. I continue to be surprised by, and learn from the varied reactions people give. I am learning to reflect more about my leadership style and actions and to listen carefully to people who seem to be impatient or do not agree with my leadership directions or approaches.

At times, I feel vulnerable as a leader. Harvard Business School’s leadership experts, Heifetz and Linsky, in *Leadership on the Line*, point to the danger and risk that any leader faces when trying to bring about change: “However gentle your style, however careful your strategy, however sure you may be that you are on the right track, leading is

³⁵ This affirms my leadership lessons and experience in the Korean church, especially at Sooyoungro Church described in Chapter 2. This spiritual dimension of leadership is what I personally can develop further to contribute in the CRCNA. Prayer Summit as a new prayer initiative is a good example of such potential contribution.

risky business.”³⁶ Deeper reflection on this reality of leadership helps me be more grounded in personhood and character rather than performance: I am learning to act and live more out of being, as imperfect and inadequate I may be, rather than out of doing things to satisfy and please others’ expectations.

I have learned the importance of persistence and staying the course in leading change. This whole change process has now lasted almost a year. I feel we are just beginning to see some fruits of the hard work of engaging in adaptive change processes. There are still defaults within our system that could derail the process of identifying and articulating adaptive challenges, and instead force us to “get to the work” of fixing the problems. I have learned also that, at the same time, there are technical issues that we do need to get to work on and fix as soon as we can, admittedly within an adaptive framework. Our defaults may help us in doing that.

The five stages of culture change approach, like the Missional Change Model, has been a helpful tool and theoretical perspective for organizational change process. Having such valuable understanding and information reminds me not to skip over the important change process aspects of awareness and understanding. I am learning that we as the organization would need to repeat these two stages of awareness and understanding because there are late-adopters to the change process. Some of leaders are slowly moving to the stage of evaluation and are fully ready to start some experiments that would give us more clues for taking action steps toward culture change within CRHM and the CRCNA. This is an exciting place to be. The next chapter will focus on how I take these learnings into designing an action plan for moving CRHM toward missional transformation.

³⁶ Heifetz and Linsky, *Leadership on the Line*, 2.

CHAPTER 6

A SUMMARY OF KEY LEARNING AND AN ACTION PLAN

In this chapter, a ministry strategy for executive leadership of CRHM that will engage in further development toward missional transformation is presented. Chapter 6 first integrates the key learning and outcomes of the project that led to ownership of adaptive issues and readiness of CRHM to enter into the experiment stage of the Missional Change Model process. Second, my own learning, regarding my primary leadership challenges, is summarized in six areas. The main adaptive challenge with four areas for the executive director of CRHM is identified. Third, an outline process for addressing leadership challenges within the realities of CRCNA is presented including concrete action steps to implement during the next twelve months in order to move CRHM further into a journey of missional transformation.

Integrated Learning and Outcome: A Summary of Outcomes

Taking concrete leadership actions during the action-learning project over the past thirteen months has resulted in important information and fruitful outcomes both for

myself as director and for CRHM as an organization. There are three significant outcomes that demonstrate a changed reality within CRHM.

Shared Ownership

First, there is an emerging new ownership of the adaptive change process, which CRHM staff did not have in January 2012. Roxburgh and Romanuk write, “Change cannot happen because a church leader dictates or wants it. Change will only happen when the leaders and members agree on the direction that the change will take.”¹ I am learning through leading this change process within CRHM how that is very true.

As reported and described in Chapter 5, the November 2012 HMLG meeting was potentially a turning point as shared ownership of the process was most visibly demonstrated. One of the most important contributing factors for leading to a broader ownership has been the ongoing invitation to and active participation of the entire senior staff in the change process. Ownership by staff members is being achieved, but there remain significant places of wrestling among some staff, as they seek to integrate new learning and habits within their existing frameworks, habits, and basic ways of operating as leaders. While much remains to be done, the shifts that have occurred are largely due to staff involvement in both conversations and the design of the work. What is clear, however, is that even this focused attention to conversation and design is not, in itself, sufficient, and other kinds of engagements will be required.

This affirms the key theoretical assertion of the Missional Change Model that emphasizes the importance of the bottom-up approach of culture change: “Start from

¹ Alan Roxburgh and Fred Romanuk, *Missional Imagination*, 152.

where people are” to build awareness and understanding rather than asking or demanding people to take an action for change. The bottom up approach, however, is not just handing off the change process or gathering people to hear what they think. Rather, the Missional Change Model process is an adaptive, active process working from where people are, but also involving skilled leadership to direct and further cultural change. It has taken nine months to get to the point where staff recognize the process and understand themselves to be on a spectrum from understanding and engaged to not understanding and resistant.

When the first draft of the Journey Document, which included identified adaptive and technical challenges of CRHM, was shared with senior staff, initial overall feedback seemed affirming and supportive. However, not all staff now seem fully supportive; more work needs to be done to continue broadening ownership as the process moves forward. All five adaptive challenges CRHM staff named in the final draft of the Journey Document contain sharp and substantive critique of CRHM’s long-held assumptions and culture. For example, CRHM staff members named organizational culture as an adaptive challenge issue: “In our quest to become a well-defined and stable people of God, we have become proficient at defining, establishing, and controlling. We don’t know how to form community that is as much verb as noun, as much confessing as confessional, as much dynamic as static. We are comfortable welcoming others into our community, but we don’t know how to form community with others.”²

This kind of self-critical statement is not something that can be easily articulated, acknowledged, and owned by any group of people. But, the fact that there has been broad

² See Appendix A.

agreement and consensus among CRHM staff is significant and demonstrates ownership of the process by the organization. This is an encouraging and healthy sign to move forward into deep culture change toward missional transformation, even though the challenge still remains to work with those who may be at the end of spectrum of resistance and not fully understanding this change process.

Shared Readiness

Another outcome is a growing shared readiness throughout the organization to engage in the adaptive change processes. Moving from hesitancy and resistance of staff members to eager readiness to engage in this change process took many action steps, learnings, adjustments, and teamwork that involved a great amount of time and hard work. It is clear this work is not finished. Because resistance remains, there is a need to continue to develop a learning space where people's understanding and receptivity can be deepened. All of this means we are still in the early stages of discovering how a new missional plan and direction fit together.

By introducing disequilibrium in January 2012 and raising questions about some of CRHM's long-held assumptions and the ways its priorities have come to be shaped, my leadership has created resistance and confusion. These responses also relate to my leadership style. CRHM and the CRCNA have generally been led by people who shared a common Dutch-American ethnic cultural background and a shared sense of how executive decisions should be made. The decision to hire an Asian-American has implications for leadership of CRHM as I work out appropriate leadership styles and

people wrestle with what this means in a system that is accustomed to certain established patterns and ways of working.

A critical point of “unfreezing” happened when consultants were hired to assess CRHM’s identity and role, and staff received their report.³ Both the organization and its director had to wade through some muddy waters. But by staying the course and experiencing a few key “a-ha” moments as a group, such as the November HMLG gathering, CRHM now finds itself becoming more and more open to new learning with a growing readiness to embrace a future it had not imagined. All of this is taking place amid significant change and transition with an uncertain future for both CRHM and wider CRCNA denominational leadership. Levels of anxiety and disorientation are high even as CRHM wrestles with articulating its role and direction.

The Vision Journey Document

The most obvious outcome of the process is the document “Joining God’s Mission: The Ongoing Journey of CRHM” that brings together the entire, collaborative work of the “outside-in” journey CRHM has engaged over a period of one year since March 2012. A general overview of “Joining God’s Mission” is described in Chapter 5.

³ Edgar Schein, *Organizational Culture and Leadership* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1992), 298-299. This term “unfreezing” is used to explain the dynamics of change. He writes, “If any part of the core structure is to change in more than minor incremental ways, the system must first experience enough disequilibrium to force a coping process that goes beyond just reinforcing the assumptions that are already in place. The creation of such disequilibrium Lewin called unfreezing, or creating a motivation to change.” Schein offers a model for introducing change that first requires “unfreezing,” followed by “cognitive restructuring” and finally “refreezing.” Unfreezing cannot happen until there is sufficient motivation to change. He claims this requires three processes to be in place: “Enough disconfirming data to cause serious discomfort and disequilibrium . . . connection of [the] disconfirming data to important goals and ideals causing anxiety and/or guilt . . . [and] enough psychological safety: having enough sense of identity and integrity to go ahead with change.”

In the preface of this document, the purpose and hope behind CRHM’s vision and direction is described in the following way:

This document represents CRHM’s refreshed commitment to live out a new day for a hope-filled future. It is a road map for a new journey to serve congregations and people of North America. We are discerning a new imagination as mission partners. I hope you will hear our strong desire to be partners with all kinds of congregations and ministries on a whole new level to face the massive challenges of the day—as we named them honestly in the following pages—by living into fuller participation in God’s mission for the sake of the world.

We want to do our agency work in the following new ways: (1) Start from the local grassroots places with our local churches, not from denominational headquarters. (2) Work with a new posture of “coming alongside” congregations and ministry leaders. (3) Cultivate collaboration and networks between agencies and congregations. And (4) become a better learning organization.⁴

It is yet to be seen how various levels of CRHM and the denomination will receive this framing vision document. Initial feedback from CRHM’s partners and denominational leadership show both appreciation and concern. Generally, the appreciation is for the tone and posture of the document, that is, it is humble and hopeful; it honestly names adaptive challenges; it desires to collaborate with and embrace established congregations; it expresses a humble yet confident conviction that the Spirit is already at work in the world and our call is to participate in God’s mission; it emphasizes learning and discernment; and it articulates defaults. Some of the concerns are the lack of strategies for church planting (which has been the key priority of CRHM); and lack of concrete implementation strategies and accountability for results.⁵

⁴ See Appendix A.

⁵ This document was created for framing the future direction of CRHM. The church-planting piece was assumed by CRHM staff members, but in hindsight, it needed to be made more explicit. The implementation actions steps were not included as these were seen to constitute the next steps. The concerns for lack of implementation steps are largely from those who understood this document as another strategic plan.

This document went to the board for approval in February 2013. The response of the Board has been mixed. Generally, the Board affirmed the direction of the document. Everyone affirmed the direction to continue the grassroots approach and become a learning organization. However, some board members raised questions about how the document ties in to the Synod mandate for CRHM and the current strategic plan. Others asked about what is missing in the document, namely, church planting and campus ministry. A few others expressed their desire to see an emphasis on diversity.

The result of this Board meeting and subsequent conversations is that I am discovering the journey forward is not as clear or easy as I had originally imagined. I have learned much in recent weeks, in terms of the system and my own awareness of leadership and management issues. There is more anxiety in the system than what I initially understood. I need to pay more attention to designing an appropriate process for the Board's engagement with the framing document. I overlooked that they did not have sufficient time to engage in the process, unlike the staff.

I learned the importance of paying attention to the current core values of CRHM. I underestimated those who are deeply embedded in the core DNA of CRHM, such as church planting and ethnic ministries. The document assumed those values. This process taught me that those current core values needed to be stated explicitly; failing to give that explicit expression raised people's anxiety, which distracted them from focusing on and appreciating the good part of the document. In all of this, I am learning that I need to learn to "read" the system better.

Following the Board meeting, CRHM staff worked with consultants in order to understand and assess the Board response and design critical next steps.⁶ While these next steps are not the primary focus of this chapter, my own adaptive learning is critical. My proposals in this chapter interact with these realities and present key adaptive actions I need to address in the coming months. The most critical piece for the future of CRHM will be determined by whether I provide the kind of leadership that enables CRHM to understand and become a team that successfully reinvents itself over the next three years.

A Summary of Key Learning

Over twenty-two months of working as CRHM's new executive director, I have learned a great deal about leadership, initiating and leading change in denominational church systems, and the challenges I must address as a leader within the realities of the CRCNA. The following section provides a summary of six key learning points that resulted from this action-learning project. An outline of the action plan will be presented at the end of this chapter that addresses the challenges identified below.

Change Management

I learned about the importance of change management on a new level. Change is difficult for any individual person or organization. But, leading change in a complex organization like CRHM brings challenges and complexities that require high levels of leadership skills and capacities to manage the anxieties people experience when going through change. The other level of complexity is that I am leading change within change;

⁶ One of the first leadership action steps identified was for me to write a written communication to the Board and stakeholders who gave feedback. See Appendix J for a memorandum that has been sent out.

that is, CRHM is changing, but it is trying to do so within the changing environment of the CRCNA.

It is a learning experience to see how much anxiety exists in CRHM and in the CRCNA. In order to read the system and navigate difficult situations in the midst of a change process, leaders need to learn the skills of change management. The sources of anxieties, concerns, reactions, and responses people have in a change process are not always obvious.

Some tools and frameworks of change models, such as the Three Zone Model and the Missional Change Model, are helpful to understand the dynamics and process of change. But, receiving further training to learn the skills of managing change situations, especially the skill of “reading” systems and interpreting various responses of people will be helpful and necessary for my leadership. Lessons on change management brought a heightened awareness and need to learn and develop new skills and capacities in order to lead CRHM effectively into its hopeful future.

Reflecting upon recent developments with the Board and subsequent staff conversations provided for me further insight into my leadership challenges and leadership style in terms of change management. I am discovering some adaptive elements that need to be addressed. First, managing anxiety and resistance in the system among Board members as well as staff is a critical aspect in the next few months as CRHM continues to articulate its future directions and role within the denomination. Investing in and receiving assistance for “reading” the system, leadership dynamics, and change process is another adaptive element. I need to seek out others who are able to assist with insight and wisdom on this aspect of interpretive leadership. Keeping the

denominational processes of transition close to CRHM's process is also a crucial adaptive element. CRHM needs to engage in the broader, key denomination-wide conversation in order to bring the needed missional voice and make contributions from its unique position as a domestic mission agency.

Honoring the Past and Moving Beyond the Past

I have learned the importance of both honoring the past and, at the same time, leading people to move beyond the past. It was a surprise to receive a few harsh reactions from some of CRHM's stakeholders in their written feedback to the Journey Document, because the writing team had attempted to adequately honor the past work of CRHM and to articulate its desire to build on the strength of the past. However, upon further reflection and conversations, the major emphasis on discoveries and lessons might have been viewed as neglecting and disrespecting the past work of CRHM. Using words like "new day" or "new approach" without deeper care and thoughtfulness appeared arrogant.

These critiques helped CRHM leadership reflect further on the strength of CRHM's past and imagine ways to incorporate its best part of the past into its future. Organizational development methods and assessment tools such as appreciative inquiry might have been good to use in CRHM's assessment process. That approach would have made clear the intention to build on strengths of the past.⁷ Another reflection and learning related to this is the challenge of helping people move beyond the past by seeing changed realities and defaults of which they may not be aware. Conducting a group exercise with

⁷ Branson, *Memories, Hopes, and Conversations*, 24. Two of the ten assumptions of appreciative inquiry are: "In every organization, some things work well . . . If we carry parts of the past into the future, they should be what is best about the past."

the Board and staff of naming CRHM's own defaults not only opened people's eyes in insightful ways, but also continues to help CRHM staff and Board members guard from falling into old ways that do not address its current challenges.⁸

Ongoing Balcony Reflection for Awareness and Understanding

I learned to become more aware and understand about my own leadership and leadership style from this action-learning project, which involved balcony reflections, personal journaling, leadership actions, engaging in listening conversations, receiving honest feedback, and repeating those activities in iterative loops. Engaging in this activity loop of action and engagement on the one hand and reflection and study on the other gave lots of insights and discoveries about my own leadership strengths and weaknesses, as described in Chapter 2.⁹ As a leader, having an understanding of people's leadership style is important. But, it is equally important to be aware of my own leadership style. My own leadership should not hinder, but rather enhance the work of the organization to accomplish the greater good and common purpose of the whole. Establishing a regular discipline of action and reflection will be a critical part of my leadership development. Furthermore, it will be beneficial to find ways to ensure this kind of action and reflection opportunity for all of CRHM staff members.

⁸ The results of identified defaults of CRHM and the CRCNA are listed in Appendix A.

⁹ Branson, *Churches, Cultures and Leadership*, 40. Branson calls it "praxis" and gives the following description: "This approach to practical theology, a continual movement from experience to reflection and study, and then on to new actions and experiences, is what we call *praxis*. This term is often misunderstood as 'practice,' referring to how a concept or theory is first understood mentally then applied in a real-life situation. But praxis is actually the whole cycle of reflection and study on one hand and engagement and action on the other."

Role of Communication

I learned the absolutely critical role of communication in leadership.

Communication becomes much more vital when a leader takes an organization through change. For CRHM's organizational structure, with its complexities and distributed nature where senior staff members are spread out across North America, communication is a major leadership challenge. There are other critical levels of communication management to which I must pay attention; it is not just leading "in" among staff and Board, but communicating "up and across" to the denominational leadership as well as "out" to congregations and classes.

I learned that I need to be much more proactive and invest greater time and energy in communicating than I have so far. Some anxiety in the system may have been caused by my inattention to internal communication. In CRHM's distributed system, I am learning that consistent, frequent communication from the executive director is essential to provide connective leadership that cultivates an environment of security and stability. The need for timely and nuanced communications from the director to staff and Board members is even more critical in times of transition and change process, like that which CRHM is going through now. Besides written communications, relational leadership with key senior staff and Board officers becomes a paramount leadership task. I have built a good base so far; however, I need to manage an even closer communication line, more regular checking in time with senior leaders and Board officers, both to share my direction and to listen to their questions and sense of understanding. These lessons teach me how communication needs to be a top priority and focus for my future leadership in CRHM.

Naming Adaptive Challenges and Keeping the Ongoing, Technical Operation

I learned that identifying adaptive challenges is difficult and hard work. But, at the same time, it can be invigorating and energizing work. Naming CRHM's adaptive issues gave some sense of relief and freedom to staff members, although it also brought some anxiety and a few strong emotional reactions. Like climbing a high mountain, it takes a great amount of energy, a set of skills, concentrated focus and time investment, courage, persistence, and even patience, to name honestly and accurately our own challenges with no current answer. The external consultants proved extremely helpful and necessary because they were able to ask hard, fresh questions that only they could, simply because they were not insiders. They also brought skills and capacities CRHM did not have in order to guide the process that required sensitivity, new knowledge, and skills.

One critical adaptive challenge is the crucial importance of paying adequate attention to ongoing routine work and technical issues of the organization while working on adaptive issues. People need assurance, familiarity, and security for doing their daily operational work. The leader needs to make sure adequate attention is paid to people carrying out regular, routine work. The whole adaptive process can be jeopardized if a leader misses this crucial aspect of technical and ongoing work. This is an important lesson for me. As I continue to lead a change process in CRHM, I must pay focused attention and energy to day-to-day operations and internal emotional state of the organization's staff while I work on adaptive challenges.

Spiritual Dimension of Leadership

Theological reflection is essential and a foundational aspect of leadership in leading missional change of church systems. As described in Chapter 3, a modern corporatist and functionalist social imaginary is strong and pervasive in today's organizations; it also influences and impacts Christian organizations and church systems like CRHM. It is important to be aware and on guard of how these defaults impact leaders as they conduct their leadership in Christian organizations. Finding ways to invite and cultivate an environment of exercising spiritual practices and disciplines such as dwelling in Scripture, prayer, silence, rest, hospitality to strangers, deep listening, and dialogue in community will be crucial to form a different imagination. Cultivating new norms and practices of regular rhythms of corporate life together will be an important step toward becoming a missional community for CRHM as a mission agency.

The November HMLG event provided a window of possibility and a glimpse of what CRHM gatherings can be in the future. Intentional design and extra care to plan for communal spiritual practices should be reflected further to give shape in designing future CRHM meetings and gatherings. Practicing and modeling total dependence on the Spirit and consistently entering meetings with a posture of humble discerning and obedience to the Spirit's leading by leadership can set the tone for further development of creating environments of rich cultivation of missional imagination and practices. Board meetings and other CRHM gatherings can be structured along this kind of approach and be centered more around the Holy Spirit and discernment.

My Adaptive Challenge

A primary adaptive challenge I must address is this: within an organization going through redefinition of its identity, nature, and purpose, as well as adaptive change process, what leadership skills, capacities, and habits do I need to learn to lead CRHM within a changing, anxiety driven CRCNA? There are four issues that must be considered in designing a strategy to address this adaptive challenge. They are the challenges of shift in imagination, managing adaptive and technical work, forming plurality of leadership, and leading up and across.

The Adaptive Issue of Imagination

The most fundamental challenge is the issue of imagination. A major part of my adaptive challenge is how I cultivate an environment of missional imagination. Leading missional transformation requires a shift in people's imagination in several substantive areas such as church, leadership, context, and gospel. This is a huge challenge. It is now clear to me that numbers of my staff, a proportion of my Board, and some in the field are not yet in that space. I need to return to this basic issue of imagination in order to name the action-steps needed in leading CRHM toward missional transformation.

As described in Chapter 3, CRHM's organizational culture can be compared with a corporatist and functionalist imagination. I must find ways to learn about the leadership skills and capacities I now need to develop, and the people, resources, and space I need to find in order to lead the transformation of imagination within CRHM into a biblical and missional imagination.

The Adaptive Issue of Managing Adaptive and Technical Work

In addressing my adaptive challenge, I must maintain a delicate balance of paying attention to ongoing cultivation of a robust work plan of day-to-day operations and technical challenges, while cultivating a new imagination and building experimental change into the system. Although difficult, I need to keep the focus and emphasis of practicing our way into new thinking and new habits in the next twelve months, as new experiments are designed and implemented.¹⁰ The key to adaptive change is to focus on cultivating new behaviors, the ways we implement the various experiments that are designed. Related to this, it is essential not to go too far too soon in seeking a system-wide or even a major sub-system change until there are growing examples of new ways of living into the future that are emerging from the experiments.¹¹ I need to be careful not to centralize change management but allow time and space for it to occur throughout the organization and not just in a trickle down fashion.

The Adaptive Issue of Forming Plurality of Leadership

An absolutely crucial key for the success of adaptive change process of CRHM is forming a strong, integrated, plural leadership community. CRHM has leaders and Board members with leadership styles that may or may not be helpful for its future journey. There certainly are leadership defaults at play within CRHM.

¹⁰ See Appendix I for a definition and components of what makes a good adaptive change experiments.

¹¹ See Everett Rogers's *Diffusion of Innovations: Fourth Edition* (New York: The Free Press, 1995), 161-203. Also see Roxburgh's discussion on culture change process in *The Missional Leader and Introducing the Missional Church*.

The CRHM Board named the following three leadership defaults of the CRCNA. First, we generally do not like change, so we revert to what we know best. We have a hard time allowing holy imagination to arise. We rely on institutional memory and revert to established patterns, instead of trying new experiments of where we see God at work. As churches we often deal with symptoms, and fail to discern root causes. This default is also at work within CRHM leadership.

Second, we rely on our knowledge and past strengths to move us forward. We want all the details of a plan we create to move us ahead—there is little sense of God revealing his way as we move ahead. We like to structure our way into renewal, instead of letting structure flow and develop after we start living into a new direction.

Third, CRCNA agencies tend to work in silos, rather than collaboratively. Churches often operate in total isolation of each other, even sister churches in the same city or those in close proximity to each other. Within CRHM, there is a tendency also to work in silos between regional leaders, ethnic leaders, and goal specialists.

The adaptive challenge is to cultivate, guide, and direct a process of forming a plural leadership community. There needs to be a process to examine the defaults named above to appropriate and acknowledge which ones are true of current leaders. Then, I will need to help the leadership group move CRHM beyond defaults to become an adaptive leadership community.

Branson's triad model of interpretive, relational, and implemental leadership dimensions provides a helpful missional leadership framework CRHM leaders can study together in order to design and build an environment of plural leadership. During the internal audit process, consultants pointed out the confusing layers of roles and

organizational structure within CRHM. This may be a good time to examine and design experiments around the idea of building a leadership community, exploring concepts such as *communitas*, missional order, and Abbots and Abbesses.¹² Investing energy and focus in learning new ways to build a plural leadership community in this new direction may bring a breath of fresh wind and energy into CRHM's ongoing journey toward a hopeful future.

The Adaptive Issue of Leading “Up and Across”

Besides internally “leading in” with CRHM staff, I must pay close attention to “leading up and across” with denominational leadership transition processes as well as “leading out” with congregations and wider constituents within the CRCNA. It is an adaptive issue because CRHM needs to learn and develop capacities for new ways of organizational behaviors in new, bold, humble ways that will regain trust, credibility, and leadership authority. CRHM's executive leadership will need others to assist us to discover and learn those new ways of behaving and practicing.

Many critical pieces in denominational leadership are in flux today. Some critical decisions to be made in the next year have huge implications for CRHM's future. Establishing leadership trust and confidence with denominational leaders in order to build a complementary future together between CRHM and other agencies and ministries is

¹² Roxburgh, *The Sky is Falling*, 143-189. Roxburgh discusses and proposes ways churches and denominations can explore and experiment with these ideas of *communitas*, missional order, Abbots and Abbesses. Also see Colin Green and Martin Robinson, *Metavista: Bible, Church, and Mission in an Age of Imagination* (Colorado Springs, CO: Authentic Media, 2008), 192-205, where they also discuss an idea of *communitas* in missional matrix and leadership formation.

important. Finding new ways to partner and collaborate with other denominational agencies and ministries is critical in addressing future challenges.¹³

A Proposed Outline of an Action Plan

In order to apply key learnings and address the identified adaptive challenges, there are critical leadership skills, capacities, and habits I need to learn. The following section describes a design of eight action-learning steps and why they are important to implement during the next twelve months in order to lead CRHM toward missional transformation. The following eight action steps correspond to the six key learning points and the adaptive challenges described in this chapter.

Change Management

In order to address the challenge of change management, I will do the following: invite CRHM staff to learn more about change process by reading about the Three Zone Model and the Missional Change Model from *The Missional Leader* and *Introducing the Missional Church*; create space for dialogue and discussion to learn from each other at least twice within the next six months; identify a resource for myself to learn more about change management by the end of May; invest time (one-to-two hours per week reading and reflecting on my own leadership) to learn more about change management and “reading” the CRCNA systems in next three months; and, discuss my reflections and learning with a personal coach or colleagues six times within the next year. These action

¹³ “Strengthening Relationships with other Agencies and Ministries” is the fourth Key Strategic Focus Point CRHM identified as a technical problem in the Journey Document. See Appendix A.

steps will help staff members understand the change process better and help lower anxiety. It will also help me to manage the change process with learning and reflection.

Honoring the Past and Moving Beyond the Past

To address the challenge of “honoring the past and moving beyond the past,” I will invest four hours each week for the next three months giving personal attention to finishing the current strategic plan and evaluating it with questions around successes, accomplishment, failures, gaps, lessons learned, adjustment, etc., possibly using appreciative inquiry as appropriate; guide and create space for the CRHM leadership team to engage in assessment and evaluation of the strategic plan; write a brief report to summarize findings. The report will celebrate successes, but also will articulate why the strategic plan is limiting and insufficient for this time in our journey. This action will help CRHM affirm and celebrate the success of the past, earn support from those who have invested much on the strategic plan’s work, build on the best of the past, and invite broader consensus of the direction into the future.

Ongoing Balcony Reflections for Awareness and Understanding

To address the challenge of engaging in ongoing balcony reflections, I will identify a leadership assessment tool, such as the 4D-I online inventory,¹⁴ and learn more about different kinds of thinking and leadership styles; discuss and reflect on my learning

¹⁴ OneSmartWorld, “The 4D-i Thinking Preference Tool,” <http://www.onesmartworld.com/content/4d-i-youre-smart-we-can-prove-it-0> (accessed Feb 18, 2013). “The 4D-i is OneSmartWorld’s . . . online questionnaire, this thinking preference tool can give you a thorough understanding of the specific thinking strategies that you prefer to use and rely on every day. Designed as an assessment for learning . . . The purpose of the instrument is to give you insights both into the particular thinking and emotional strategies you like to use and provide ways for you to expand your skills and capabilities to meet the demands of the 21st Century.”

with a coach or colleagues; invite 360 leadership feedback on my leadership and compare the results with previous feedback; continue keeping a personal journal on significant leadership actions and engage in balcony reflection with a coach or a colleague; and, develop a system of learning to invite staff to engage in reflective self-assessment of their own leadership styles. This kind of action and reflection model can cultivate a basis for forming a learning organization within CRHM.

Communication

In order to address the challenge of communication I will invest four hours each week on communication matters with special attention given to internal communication needs through both written and verbal channels, which will lead into actual, clear communication each week to CRHM staff. I will work on a communication strategy and plan for the current change process to be completed. Also, I will set up a bi-monthly check-in time with all senior staff members, especially during the next eighteen months. CRHM staff members commented in the 360 Exec Survey that this area of communication is what they would like to see improved in my leadership. Focused attention and giving priority to communication will be necessary and important.

Addressing Adaptive and Technical Challenges

To address CRHM's adaptive and technical challenges, a transitional leadership team, which will combine and integrate various sub-team structures and guide the adaptive and technical change processes under one integrated team, will be proposed. I will give concentrated leadership with focused time and attention (at least two days each week) on adaptive and technical change processes, monitoring the process by keeping a

journal during the next six-to-eighteen months. I will continue working with the TMN consultants to receive counsel and coaching during this adaptive change process. This will be the most critical area that requires focused attention and leadership during the next three years, because it is the most significant undertaking to strengthen and reinvent CRHM.

Cultivating Missional Imagination and *Communitas*

To help cultivate missional imagination, spiritual dimensions, and plurality of leadership, I will introduce small experiments to transform imagination, identity, and role of CRHM senior staff members from being executive and administrative agency leaders to being Abbots and Abbesses of a mission order and leadership *communitas*. CRHM will also experiment in the adaptive challenge area of organization by forming a team to develop a design process helping senior staff learn and dialogue about formation of leadership *communitas*, establishing a mission order within CRHM, potentially with existing teams of cluster leaders and team members.¹⁵ Also we will introduce and lead one simple, significant spiritual discipline in every meeting, creating space for reflective conversation to capture learning. These kinds of experiments introduce a different way of living out work as a spiritual and learning organization that can lead to a formation of missional imagination within CRHM.

¹⁵ CRHM's identified adaptive challenge statement on organization is: "We have distributed the hub and spoke structure regionally giving an illusion of a distributive organization that remains essentially a command and control structure. True interdependence seems elusive and our attempts at change have not been embraced. We don't know how to enter into partnerships in which we don't have a leading role." From the Journey Document, see Appendix A.

Simple Rule of Life in CRHM

To address the challenge of corporatist and functionalist organizational culture, I will experiment around developing a set of simple “rule of order” within CRHM similar to the “rules for radicals,” based on Scripture like Luke 10, and researching similar rules in other communities like the Northumbria Community.¹⁶ I will test the idea with the leadership team, with input from the spiritual formation jumpstart team, invite and establish rules of mission within CRHM. Again, this idea is an extension of experiments toward transformation of imagination within CRHM.

Personal Soul Care

Lastly, in order to address the challenge of the tyranny of busyness, I will spend a day each month, and three days each quarter in a retreat setting for prayer, silence, rest, and recharging. I will form a small council to receive support, counsel, feedback, and guidance. Finally, I will observe Sabbath each week, and practice “turning off” electronic devices at home after work hours.

¹⁶ Roxburgh, *Missional*, 165-178.

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

A Brief Project Summary

Today's North American missional context presents new ministry challenges for church leaders. There are no easy answers. A major adaptive response to leadership is required. Leading change in this time of massive transition requires transformation of church leaders in their imagination, identity, and roles.

The challenges churches face in this post-Christian, pluralist, and global North American mission context are enormous and require leaders with new skills, capacities, and habits to lead people. A key to gaining these new skills is helping leaders learn and cultivate missional imagination and experiment among God's people in their contexts. Experiments suggest starting small. It is not grand plans churches need at moments of adaptive change. What churches need are leaders skilled in guiding people through massive transition.

This Ministry Focus Project explored and discussed the challenges the executive director of CRHM faces for providing denominational agency leadership in the midst of massive change and transition within the CRCNA. An action-learning project was constructed in leading CRHM through an adaptive-change process from a missional-change perspective. Reflecting and learning from the project enabled the executive director of CRHM to assess his current leadership capacities and discern a leadership pathway toward a hopeful future of CRHM and the CRCNA. The action-learning engagement and reflection process provided helpful insights that assisted the director to

identify his key adaptive leadership challenge and an action plan to implement over the next twelve months.

The project first explored the context of leadership by reviewing the historical background of the CRCNA and CRHM from the perspective of missional challenges. The CRCNA as a denomination experienced some stability and homogeneity as it faithfully provided a spiritual refuge for its ethnic immigrant community during its first hundred years. At the same time, it flourished by developing various faithful expressions of faith and mission.

However, during the past half-century, the CRCNA has struggled in doing its domestic mission work, especially in its attempts to embrace the increasing diversity of North American cultures. CRHM has been a denominational agency mandated to do domestic mission work on behalf of CRC congregations in places where local CRC congregations could not reach. With the shift of CRHM's approach to do domestic mission work through local congregations over the past several decades, many attempts have been made, including the most recent emphasis on church planting. Chapter 1 concluded with naming the reality and challenges of CRHM in three areas: gap in the current strategic plan, perception, and leading in changing times.

Chapter 2 discussed my personal challenges of executive leadership. A brief autobiographical sketch of my pastoral ministry journey offered a basis for further reflection on my personal leadership development and missional journey. My initial leadership activities and reflections within CRHM are described to provide a context to interpreting the TMN 360 Leader survey results. Analyzing and reflecting on the survey results taught me the value of inviting and receiving feedback. The areas of strengths and

weaknesses of my leadership, as well as areas for further development, were identified. Applying these findings in the action-learning process and final action plan writing was instructive and helpful.

The next section explored key theological themes and theoretical frameworks on missional leadership and change process. It asserted that theological themes such as the Holy Spirit, Trinity, God's ordinary people, covenant, and cultivating kingdom practices should guide the CRCNA to develop theology for missional imagination. The challenge remains within CRCNA leadership to engage in self-critical assessment and reflection about the forces that shape its organizational culture. The hope is that CRCNA's leadership will cultivate an environment of learning and dialogue to shape its culture and structure with missional imagination and theological reflection instead of corporatist and functionalist frameworks. A leadership framework of interpretive, relational, and implementation dimensions and two missional change process models were discussed as theoretical tools to assist CRHM leaders and churches move toward cultivating missional church systems.

The final section reported on key learnings from the action-learning project, and identified an adaptive challenge for the director of CRHM. A further action-learning design is presented in the form of an action plan with concrete action steps and specific deadlines for the CRHM director to implement over the next twelve months. It will be important to continue monitoring the change process within CRHM with further reflections and adjustments by its director and team members. Further research and experiments that build on the findings of this project, in light of the proposed action-learning plan, can bring greater insight and learning for CRHM and other Christian

leadership and denominational groups. The possible topics for further research that come out of this project are establishing mission order, forming leadership community as *communitas*, and exploring the possibility of becoming Abbot and Abbesses.

Closing Thoughts

As in the days of disruption and disorientation for God's people in Babylon, God's people in North America live in a dislocated place with deep anxiety and uncertainty. Certainly, it is a time of crisis for churches. However, more importantly, it is also a time of great opportunity to fundamentally rethink and re-imagine church's understanding of God and the future the Spirit is calling forth among the people of God in many local places across North America. In this season of uncertainty and new possibilities for North American churches and denominations, the role of denominational leaders must be re-examined and rediscovered.

Roxburgh passionately argues that this may be an extraordinary moment in which the Spirit of God is calling leaders in denominational agencies like CRHM to listen and follow the movement of the Spirit:

I'm convinced the Spirit is gestating an incredible movement of transformation that is completely under the radar of most denominational systems (Italics original). This gestating is discernible in the local; something is forming in ordinary, unspectacular congregations and among pretty average pastors who'll never get written up in the 'church of what's happening now.' Like music beneath words that can only be heard when we stop and attend, beneath new program proposals, the latest 'models' from some other country, the newest restructuring proposals is this other narrative churning, testing, worrying and struggling to be born. *This 'music' calls for a re-orientation of the role and identity of regional and national leadership (Italics original).* This will involve a major change in imagination and a lot of courage from these leaders . . . This is asking for a fundamental re-orientation of our understanding and practices as national and regional leaders. This reorientation won't happen all at once. But it isn't an impossible dream . . . *We believe mid-level judicatories and national structures*

*are crucial for the missional transformation of the church. In fact, we believe this is one of those given ‘God-moments’ in which to be in a leadership role beyond the congregation (Italics mine).*¹

I could not agree more about the powerful movement of the Spirit in our time, and also, how most denominational systems are missing it because they are captive to their own default imaginations and inherited structures. But the Spirit of God is in the business of breaking boundaries and birthing new life by transforming individuals and communities; that includes denominations and denominational agencies like CRHM.

This is where ultimate hope is—the Spirit at work in transforming and making all things new, including declining North American denominations. However, it will require leaders and God’s people in local churches who will listen and follow the call of the Spirit with courage and humble obedience. The most essential future task of leadership for CRHM’s director is cultivating an environment in CRHM and the CRCNA where transformation of imagination can take place for full missioinal engagement of God’s people in their local contexts.

In closing, the following words of contemporary sages are sincere prayers of trust and hope as CRHM and churches in North America continue the journey of leading God’s missionary people in this ever changing, in-between world:

Finally as soon as the community of disciples is born, Jesus sends them: “Go. Go and announce the good news to the poor, but go with nothing—not even two pairs of sandals. Don’t take two tunics, don’t take money, don’t take any food. *Go with nothing*. Go poorly and do the impossible.” But in order to do that, you must go in poverty and experience the life of God flowing within your own flesh (Italics mine).²

¹ Alan Roxburgh, “Transformation and Church Systems,” <http://www.themissionalnetwork.com/index.php/our-blog/92-leadership/234-transformation-church-systems> (accessed February 13, 2013).

² Jean Vanier, *From Brokenness to Community*, (New York: Paulist Press, 1992), 30.

Prayer Two is offered by Parker Palmer:

In the gathered life of the spiritual community, I am brought out of the solitude of study and prayer into the discipline of communion and relatedness. The community is a check against my personal distortions; it helps interpret the meaning of texts and gives guidance in my experience of prayer. But life in community is also a continual testing and refining of the fruits of love in my life. Here, in relation to others, I can live out (or discover I am lacking) the peace and joy, the humility and servanthood by which spiritual growth is measured. The community is a discipline of mutual encouragement and mutual testing, *keeping me both hopeful and honest about the love that seeks me, the love I seek to be* (Italics mine).³

Prayer Three is from Roxburgh and Romanuk:

Leadership is about cultivating the kind of environment that *frees God's people* to feel again the winds of the Spirit and to sail the holy gusts of the Spirit's directions in waters where we no longer have good, clear, definitive maps. The freedom and energy that came from those discoveries was immense for each of us and changed almost everything we had come to believe about leadership in the church (Italics mine).⁴

³ Parker Palmer, *To Know as We are Known* (San Francisco: Harper, 1993), 18.

⁴ Roxburgh and Romanuk, *The Missional Leader*, 124.

APPENDIX A

CRHM Journey Framing Document

Joining God's Mission: The Ongoing Journey of CRHM

Opening words from the Director

This document represents CRHM's refreshed commitment to live out a new day for a hope-filled future. It is a road map for a new journey to serve congregations and people of North America. We are discerning a new imagination as mission partners. I hope you will hear our strong desire to be partners with all kinds of congregations and ministries on a whole new level to face the massive challenges of the day—as we named them honestly in the following pages—by living into fuller participation in God's mission for the sake of the world.

In our exercise of articulating our reframed identity, we were repeatedly reminded that, whatever new future we live into, we ought to live out of rich theological rootedness of seeing ourselves as a covenant community that bears witness to God's Kingdom in the world. Out of that clear sense of identity, we want to do our agency work in the following new ways: (1) Start from the local grass root places with our local churches, not from denominational headquarters. (2) Work with a new posture of “coming alongside” congregations and ministry leaders. (3) Cultivate collaboration and networks between agencies and congregations. And (4) become a better learning organization.

We don't want to assume we know what each congregation needs, but we want to discover together what the Spirit is doing already in the midst of all our congregations, neighborhoods, and the world in which we find ourselves. We hope you will enjoy reading and find the Spirit of God stir your heart also, as all of us as staff have experienced during this meaningful and intense process of working together on this new journey document. We invite your honest input, critique and suggestions to help us better navigate this journey of joining in God's mission.

– Moses Chung and CRHM staff

INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

Open Invitation with Opportunities and Challenges

God is on the move all around us: in our rapidly changing world, in the disruptions among our congregations and our denomination. It is as if the ground underneath is shaking. As CRHM sees and experiences this change, we believe the Spirit is at work in the Church, calling us to join in what God is doing in this new day. God is present, moving, at times mysteriously, to bring all things toward newness in the midst of pervasive sin and brokenness. We are humbled by God's persistent involvement with us in our participation in God's mission and grateful that we do not stand on our own. We stand on the shoulders of so many faithful people in the rich heritage of this Christian

Reformed family. As we move forward, we act as stewards, drawing on this heritage and discerning the future God is inviting us to participate in together. Moving forward also means facing the challenges from our mission context that this new day brings. Some of the challenges are familiar, but many of them we have never had to face before. They are massive in size, multi-layered, disruptive, and discontinuous. In the face of challenges such as globalization, rapid technological change, shifting social structures, and staggering global need, the entire Western church is at the same time dealing with internal issues of rapid and massive decline and atrophy.

In this new reality, the CRCNA and CRHM now face a deep need to redefine their identity and purpose. The CRC's reformed theology and identity markers that gave us a clear sense of unity are losing their ability to hold us together. There also exists a growing perception that denominational agencies like CRHM and others have little to contribute to the much-needed vitality of the local church.¹ This perception needs to be faced honestly and difficult, but necessary, adjustments made in the way we minister to and with the local church.

We believe it is necessary to come to a refreshed understanding of our collective place in God's mission. As we seek to pursue the CRCNA's vision of transforming lives and communities together, a renewed posture of humble discernment is needed.

Shift to Embrace all Congregations and Classes in God's Mission Together

In this challenging environment, CRHM developed the Strategic Plan that took effect in 2010. Responding to denominational changes, especially the emergence of The Network, we narrowed our focus. While continuing to mention three foci (Church Planting, Leadership Development, Church Renewal), the Strategic Plan increasingly saw leadership development and church renewal as supporting church planting. The ongoing work in areas such as disciple-making, diversity issues, leadership development and mission-shaped churches continued with a goal of creating healthy, multiplying churches. In doing so, CRHM made a strong commitment to church planting in this plan, perhaps more so than at any other time in the agency's history. It helped us to focus on one of the things we do best—the development of new churches and campus ministries.

We celebrate the fruits that came from the Strategic Plan's strong focus on church planting efforts. At the same time, we need to recognize that we continue to face new realities. Our congregations are facing increasing change, challenges and struggles in their neighborhoods and cities. There is a perception that CRHM has little to contribute to the vitality of the local church. While most of our congregations have been struggling to cope and find their place in their changed contexts, CRHM followed our strategic plan with its emphasis on planting churches.

¹ Here, and throughout the document, the term "local church" is used to signify not only the local congregations that form the main identity, but also local ministries, such as campus ministry, and organizations that work together with these congregations.

In facing new realities we recognize that our current strategic plan is insufficient. In the midst of all that our denomination and congregations are facing, we need to collaborate much more directly with congregations as they seek their place in God’s mission. We need to do this with humility, and a renewed practice of covenanting together to listen and follow God in this world. We recognize that this requires new learning and practices. We are committing ourselves to learn and relearn how we can best partner with our CRC congregations—both new *and established*—as well as with classical leaders, other denominational agencies and related institutions in new ways.

Missional Imagination and Theological Grounding – How We Can Move Forward

In order to get at the issue of our identity and ministry direction as a denominational agency as well as a denomination as a whole, it is crucial to ground our work first in our Reformed theological identity. Theological reflections and conversations on Reformed themes like covenant, kingdom, and God’s reigning grace in ordinary life and on “every square inch” from a missiological perspective are necessary for our future work. We anticipate further collaborative discussion about this critical grounding from other parts of the CRC denominational family.

In a recent denominational leadership gathering, agency directors engaged in an exercise to craft a statement of ministry challenges we all face together as denominational ministries. We agreed on the following description:

In a rapidly changing and changed world of diminished denominational loyalty and commitment, we as denominational agencies are stuck with old paradigms (or defaults) of ministry. We do not know how to approach and engage with CRC congregations in ways that break from our current hub and spoke model. We need a model of mutual ownership.

This kind of challenge is not something we can fix easily by trying harder. Addressing it requires new learning and a change in our priorities, habits, postures, and long-held assumptions. It also requires denominational agencies working collaboratively to discover our communal place in serving our local congregations. Doing business as usual will not accomplish the job.

This is a moment of both crisis and opportunity for North American churches and denominations. CRHM is taking on a new identity and posture and learning new ways to approach our work. In pursuing our key strategic focus points² and addressing the ministry challenges³ described in the following pages, we look forward to collaborating

² Key strategic focus points refers to those challenges we face for that we are able to fully understand and/or have the technical resources to address. That is, we can see what the solution to the challenge is and know how to address it.

³ Ministry challenges refer to those challenges that are complex and not easily understood. At the moment, we lack the resources to fully understand them or begin to address them. For this reason, they are

with congregations, classes, and partners on this new journey. We commit ourselves to relying on God's leading in tackling these challenges, believing that the Spirit of God will help us discover and discern our way forward to help the local church participate in God's mission for North America and the world. Only in this way do we expect to see the transformation of our lives and communities.

What follows is an outline of what we see to be the core identity for CRHM. It is out of this identity that we will be able to pursue the key strategic focus points and address the ministry challenges we face.

CRHM – OUR CORE IDENTITY

Joining God's mission to transform lives and communities, CRHM collaborates with congregations, classes and other partners to participate fully in living out God's mission in our neighborhoods, our cities and the world.

In pursuing this work, the Spirit of God is leading CRHM to:

... join in ***God's mission*** in the world.

The mission is never only ours, or the church's. It is first of all God's mission and we are sent into the world to participate more fully in this mission by bearing witness to the kingdom of God in our midst. To be part of God's amazing mission of transforming lives and communities humbles us, amazes us, and deeply motivates us. To prepare for this we recognize the need to practice our way into a lifestyle of discernment, using scripture, prayer, and an engagement with what God is up to around us in His world.

... focus on the ***local church***.

CRHM is committed to the understanding that the local church is the primary location of God's redemptive work in bringing a life of flourishing to their neighborhoods, cities, and the world. Because of this belief, CRHM seeks to fully join with local congregations to discover together how God's Spirit is calling and equipping them to be sent into mission within the world.

... live as an ***interdependent covenant community***.

We can only imagine ourselves going forward by being part of a community of congregations, classes, and other partners who participate in God's mission together. Deep in our roots as God's people is our identity as a covenant community. Living as this covenant community means serving and being served, loving and being loved, caring and being cared for, and carrying out both local and global mission together.

also referred to as adaptive challenges, as they require both experimentation and adaptation to be both understood and addressed.

... work in *collaboration with* others.

To collaborate means that we are deeply involved with others around God's mission. CRHM is deeply committed to sharing with others in shaping new things for the gospel. We understand that we are being invited into places where we can work together in seeking to participate more fully in God's mission, bringing our experiences and practices together in more effective and faithful ministry.

... practice being a *learning organization*.

A learning community seeks to openly engage the changes that are happening in the world, intentionally learning from these experiences through focusing on God's redemptive work in the midst of a fallen world. Being a learning community means that we are continually on a journey of discovery, learning from and with many partners, while sharing with them what we are learning.

FACING OUR CHALLENGES

Strategic Direction and Focus – Living out of our core identity

The leading focal point in our strategic direction moving forward will be congregations. Therefore, CRHM's main focus in this new day is collaborating with the local church – new and established, urban and suburban, traditional and experimental – to discover God's local expression of transforming lives and communities in their neighborhoods, cities and the world. We commit ourselves to seeing these local expressions of the gospel flourish in their unique settings by discerning together what is needed, and by resourcing congregations and leaders to participate more fully in God's mission. This primary and leading focus will be accomplished with the support of the rest of 5 key strategic focus points and by how we address the adaptive challenges we now face.

Our primary means of working in this new day is building and sustaining relationships with others and learning together. Practices including spiritual formation, prayerful discernment, and a humility that recognizes we are participating in God's mission rather than our own, are necessary to form the core of our identity to face new realities. This new posture, and these practices, will enable us to work collaboratively with congregations and other partners. They will enable us to properly address the massive challenges we face together with local congregations in this post-Christian mission field called North America. It is our prayer and hope to discern more clearly as we tackle the challenges we name in this document and as we become a better learning community with others.

Key Strategic Focus Points

1 Congregations

- a We need to determine how regional teams, classes, and clusters engage with the local church's mission, and how the local church's mission informs or shapes classes, regional teams, and clusters.

- b We need to determine how CRHM can best engage with or comes alongside the local church's mission, and how the local church's mission informs or shapes CRHM as an organization.
- c We need to determine how CRHM, classis, regional teams, clusters and congregations can engage in holistic, communal mission together.
- d Implementation example
 - i Begin conversations with local congregations and ministries to understand their current contexts and challenges as well as to assess their own awareness of both context and mission.
 - ii Discuss with congregations, classes, clusters, etc. ways we might address the presenting issues – how might we work together to move forward missionally?

2 Growing as a Learning Organization

- a We need to practice being a learning organization, engage consistently in self-reflection processes, harness knowledge and communicate within our organization and pass on what we learn to each other and to others.
- b We need to find a variety of ways to develop networks regionally and cross-regionally to discover places of innovation and new learning and discover new ways to incorporate this learning into the way we function together as an organization.
- c We need to identify a variety of different ways of cooperating and collaborating, and provide ways to support each other as to when and how to use them effectively.
- d Implementation example
 - i Utilize different 'web based' tools that help connect a web of staff and ministries across N.A. and bypass our natural tendency to do learning in a center-out approach and build a culture of ongoing, participatory learning.
 - ii Find ways to develop smaller, self-sustaining networks. Begin to host regularly meeting to share and discuss what is being learned. As much as possible, center these in local expressions.

3 Growing in Discernment and Spiritual Formation

- a We need to find ways to practice our way into a lifestyle of discernment; using scripture, prayer, and an engagement with what God is up to around us in His world as our basis.
- b We need to explore and learn from our heritage of reformed discernment.
- c We need to uncover how our current polity expects or informs discernment.
- d We need to understand how our culture shapes our experience of discernment.
- e We need to learn from other traditions their processes of discernment.
- f We need to become aware of the dangers that can enter a discernment process and guard against them.

- g We need to invite others into the discernment process.
- h Implementation example
 - i Work with congregations to learn discernment practices and develop tools to support this.
 - ii Survey other Christian communities to see how they are practicing discernment in ways that help them move forward in God's mission and as missional communities.

4 **Strengthen Relationships with other Agencies and Ministries**

- a We need to draw on our core identity so we can partner with others without being absorbed into who they are.
- b We need to draw on our core identity so we know what we have to give to others and what we can receive from them.
- c We need to draw on our core identity so we know what level we need to cooperate or collaborate to carry out our mutual mission.
- d We need to discern common languages and practices with other agencies.
- e Implementation example
 - i Invite other agencies into an intentional conversation that helps shape our shared denominational ownership in our place in God's Mission. Develop common language and practices with other agencies, as well as a clear understanding of the ways in which we can work together. Work to align the work we all do into the larger mission.
 - ii Develop a clear set of statements that describe who we are, what we bring and what we need from others.

5 **Internal Alignment**

- a We need to cultivate a broad ownership within CRHM of our core identity and strategic direction.
- b We need to cultivate a sense of urgency for the mission that causes us to work together across our organization because we can't do it on our own.
- c We need to have a flexible structure that allows internal alignment that is adaptive and responsive to carrying out our mandate and stewards our people and financial resources well.
- d Implementation example
 - i Work with congregations, classes and other agencies to learn what sort of structure might support the work that needs to be done. Look for ways of structuring that ensure tight coupling of staff to the mission and that move away from hub and spoke thinking.
 - ii Intentionally cultivate and encourage diverse and younger leadership through the creation of structures and practices that make sense to them.

6 **Resources**

- a We need to find examples of other organizations that have moved into the world of "less is more."

- b We need to find ways to encourage deferred giving by CRC constituents and ensure that our advancement strategy makes the most of this growing opportunity.
- c We need to find new ways to tell the unique, vital story of the role of Home Missions as we come alongside of local partners in God’s mission, including the stories of other donors who are making a difference to our work.
- d We need to find creative ways to work towards sustainability, while also making the hard decisions that are needed to face fiscal realities.
- e We need to discover how to collaborate with other agencies and partners (classis etc.) in using resources so we don’t have to double spend.
- f Implementation example
 - i Develop strategies with other agencies to ensure the best use of resources along with new advancement strategies that are realistic and that capture the imagination of missional people. At the same time, work with congregations to ensure we are funding the right things.
 - ii Develop new budgets that reflect changed structures and realities that take into account the changed realities rather than being based on older assumptions.

New Ways of Tackling the Adaptive Ministry Challenges We Face

The adaptive challenge question is: “What ministry issues are we presently facing, for which we currently do not have an answer, but which we must address, if we are to live into God’s future?” A new day calls for new ways of being and working. If we are not careful, we will default to our old and comfortable ways, ways that may keep us from facing the challenges of this new day and collaborating with the local church in God’s mission. The new ways of being and working flow from a dynamic loop of practice and reflection.

In addressing the challenges below, it will be necessary to identify our default ways of being and working⁴ that we may need to guard against or make use of, and then to design and implement learning experiments to conduct in the coming months. These experiments will help us learn and test new ways of working, understand the challenges more deeply and through reflecting on them, design a new set of experiments to help us move forward.

⁴ When facing daily challenges and opportunities, each of us have adopted and/or inherited ways of responding to these challenges and/or opportunities that comes to us almost ‘naturally.’ At times these responses are intuitive, at other times they are conscious choices. Some of these adopted defaults serve us well while holding on to others can have more negative consequences. Because life is complicated, at times our defaults can do both at the same time. The important realization is that both individuals and groups have ‘defaults’ that they tend to return to when facing challenges and opportunities. See Appendix A: Self-Identified Defaults for CRCNA and CRHM, page 11.

Given the nature of these adaptive ministry challenges, no implementation examples have been given. To do so at this point would imply a greater understanding of them than we currently have and move us too quickly toward technical solutions. Ways of identifying, implementing, evaluating and learning from adaptive ministry experiments follow the list of challenges.

Adaptive Ministry Challenges

1 Context:

We have insufficiently participated in the world around us in ways that would allow us to more fully participate in God's mission. We do not have a shared story or language with those around us. Our efforts have tended to result in parallel contexts, or sub-contexts rather than being transformative agents within broader context of God's mission in the world.

- Identify defaults to guard against or draw upon
- Short-term experiments (6 months or less)
- Mid-term experiments (6-18 months)
- Long-term experiments (1.5 to 3 years)

2 Organization:

We have distributed the hub and spoke structure regionally giving an illusion of a distributive organization that remains essentially a command and control structure. True interdependence seems elusive and our attempts at change have not been embraced. We don't know how to enter into partnerships in which we don't have a leading role.

- Identify defaults to guard against or draw upon
- Short-term experiments (6 months or less)
- Mid-term experiments (6-18 months)
- Long-term experiments (1.5 to 3 years)

3 Leadership:

Our ways of defining leadership and developing leaders tend to point to a destination that no longer exists. Although we feel the tension of disappearing destinations we have not yet developed adaptive leadership for the new journeys we are on.

- Identify defaults to guard against or draw upon
- Short-term experiments (6 months or less)
- Mid-term experiments (6-18 months)
- Long-term experiments (1.5 to 3 years)

4 Mission:

We have not been able to reconcile God the sender with God the agent⁵ and tend

⁵ By God's agency, we mean that it is God's mission and that God is the primary agent. As human agents, and as the Church, we participate in what God is doing, rather than seeing our agency as primary.

to default into efforts of trying to build the Kingdom of God, but the reality is that the Kingdom is being built through the dynamic unfolding reign of God through the leading of the Spirit. We have tended to think in terms of being on a mission for God with the result of overly relying on our own efforts and leaving God out of the mission.

- Identify defaults to guard against or draw upon
- Short-term experiments (6 months or less)
- Mid-term experiments (6-18 months)
- Long-term experiments (1.5 to 3 years)

5 Culture:

In our quest to become a well-defined and stable people of God, we have become proficient at defining, establishing and controlling. We don't know how to form community that is as much verb as noun, as much confessing as confessional, as much dynamic as static. We are comfortable welcoming others into our community, but we don't know how to form community with others.

- Identify defaults to guard against or draw upon
- Short-term experiments (6 months or less)
- Mid-term experiments (6-18 months)
- Long-term experiments (1.5 to 3 years)

Adaptive Experiments

Our starting point of working with these adaptive challenges is to engage in a series of on-going experiments that allow us to gain greater understanding of the challenges being faced, to form and test hypotheses and to use the results of the experiments to learn and adapt with respect to the challenges. This is a cyclical process rather than a linear one.

The first step in implementing a strategy is to identify the experiments. These may be existing situations either within the CRCNA or beyond. We may also need to design some new experiments to help move us forward in our understanding of, and response to, our adaptive challenges. A key feature of these experiments is that they help us develop and participate in practices that result in both understanding and changed behavior as people on God's mission.

The identification and implementation of these adaptive challenge experiments is anticipated to begin in February 2013. As noted above, these experiments include short-term (6 months or less), mid-term (6-18 months) and long-term experiments (1.5 to 3 years). This is meant to be a flexible and dynamic framework and the exact length and sequencing of the experiments will depend on what is being learned through reflection and the subsequent adjustments that are identified and used to reshape the experiments.

Reflection and Adjustment

A key piece of learning from the adaptive challenge experiments is the ongoing reflection and adjustment in light of God's (or our shared) mission. Home Missions staff and

partners will develop a set of reflection tools designed to test the hypotheses that were set out. As much as possible, these tools will be used at the grass-roots level so that the evaluation is done directly by those involved in the experiments. It is important that the ongoing reflection encourages adjusting the experiments in response to what we are learning and to develop new hypotheses and experiments.

Learning and Reporting

The goal of these adaptive experiments is not new knowledge per se, but new ways of pursuing and participating more fully in God’s mission. These new ways need to include shared learning, reporting as widely as possible, and inviting feedback at each step. The learning and reporting will bring a constant dialogue among all partners or stakeholders in the experiments. Using Craig Van Gelder’s phrase, we constantly need to ask, “Are we learning what we need to be learning from what we are learning?”

In order to share the learning, communities of practice will be formed. To learn from what we are learning, a variety of tools will be used. These include on-line tools for sharing and discussing as well as both face-to-face meetings and on-line conferencing. The goal is to be able to get feedback on what we are learning that helps us both test the hypotheses as well as design further experiments and adaptive approaches.

TIMELINE

Three Phase Project: Discerning a New Future of CRHM

Phase 1: April – August 2012

A “stand-alone” intervention by the consultants (The Missional Network) that gathered and assessed information in order to present a Report to CRHM. This diagnostic Report provided the framework and basis for a phase 2 design.

Phase 2: September 2012 – April 2013

The identification of key adaptive and technical challenges enabling CRHM to reframe its identity and role. Create a comprehensive Report to the February Board meetings and an Operational Implementation Plan for engaging the adaptive and technical challenges in the light of CRCNA BOT actions.

- 1 Initial Design Work (Sept - October 2012)
- 2 HMLG Senior Staff Work on Design (Nov. 5-8)
- 3 Work on a Report for Next Leadership Journey of CRHM (Nov-Jan 22)
- 4 Share our Report for Input and the Board Approval (Jan. 23–Feb.6-8, 2013)
Present a comprehensive Report to the Board and share it with our partners and seek their best input. Bring a formal motion to the Board for their approval and endorsement for the direction.
- 5 Finalize Operational Plan and Gear up for the Next Chapter Journey (Feb. – Aug. 2013) Finalize the Operational Plan with gathered input during the three months immediately following the Board meetings (Feb – April). The following four months (May – August) will give us a window to gear up and prepare ourselves to

begin a new journey in September 2013 as well as wrapping up the current Strategic Plan.

Phase 3: September 2013 – August 2016

Next Leadership Journey of CRHM begins (18-36 months from Sept. 2013)

Appendix A - Self- Identified Defaults for CRCNA and CRHM

From compiled notes from CRHM Board and from a CRCNA MLC Retreat

1 Don't like change, so revert to what we know best

- Past was successful, stay with old ways
- High institutional loyalty
- Hard to stop doing some things
- Specific definition of church
- Reliance on tradition and old boys' network
- Programs have no terminus – they get started and it is assumed they will continue.
- We insist on sameness, while the goal may allow for alternative paths.
- We rely on institutional memory and revert to established patterns.
- Our model is a North American model; we do not, for instance, know how to work or live out of poverty.

2 Rely on our efforts and knowledge to move us forward

- Hard work/look for technical solutions
- Bound by planning, time schedules
- Rules of Order instead of prayer
- MDiv and ordained leadership; reliance on education
- Create a plan to solve a problem.
- We can come up with the answers collectively.
- We define the boat that we need before going on the journey, or even deciding which journey to go on.
- We *do* rather than *pray*.
- We don't give time to the critical thinking or energy that is needed.

3 Work in isolation rather than collaboratively

- Talk at, not with
- Decentralized but not tied to learning
- Board passivity
- Our silo mentality is a default
- Self preservation
- Not involving the stakeholder at the church level effectively.

- 4 **Prefer decision making that keep the peace to making hard choices**
- Prefer technical solutions
 - Peace at all cost
 - Most of our responses to adaptive change are programmatic.
 - Incrementalism is our approach, while dramatic shifts are needed.
 - Sea change is not our norm.
 - Creating a plan everyone will salute.
 - We can come up with the answers collectively.
 - We just need a bigger boat.
 - We look for leadership while we value egalitarianism.

APPENDIX B

An Overview of the Main Leadership Roles for the Director of CRHM

The Director is the visionary leader for Home Missions in three main areas:

- Serve as the voice of Home Missions as we give leadership to the CRCNA in its task of bringing the gospel to the people of North America
- Discern and articulate vision and strategy for Home Missions together with the board and senior staff leadership
- Develop strategic partnerships to advance God's global mission through collaboration with the agencies, ministries and educational institutions of the CRCNA.

Leading out: with local partners, churches and donors:

1. Speaks as Home Missions' voice for the domestic mission of the CRCNA among mission partners and donors through speaking, visits and writing
2. Communicates an expansive reformed kingdom vision of God's Mission to a variety of constituencies.
3. Leads Home Missions' communications and fundraising effort in the public arena, especially with major donors.

Leading in: with board and senior staff leadership:

4. Leads supports and serves the board in its tasks of discerning and articulating vision, approving the strategic plan, assuring resources for the mission, and approving budgets. Carries forward the policies and decisions of the Home Missions board.
5. Leads the staff in discerning and articulating a missional vision and strategic plan which translates into innovative strategies, programs and sustainable budgets.
6. Advocates for the biblical vision for a diverse denomination through support for intercultural church and ministry development, for diversity in Home Missions staff, and for reconciliation and anti-racism plans and actions.

Leading up / across: with Denominational office and partner agencies and institutions

7. Advocates for the domestic mission in the context of a vision for a global mission.
8. Leads Home Missions in collaborating with denominational partners to develop strategic partnerships to more effectively carry out the mission of the CRCNA.
9. Provides leadership direction for CRC ministries through the Ministry Leadership Team and ensures the integration of Home Missions in that direction. Leads Home Missions in joint-agency, integrated efforts to support the Denominational Ministry Plan and goals.

APPENDIX C

Feedback and Notes from April 18-19, 2012 CRHM Staff Work Session

Excerpts from the Summary of Notes from Work Session: Chapters in the Life of CRHM

We invited the team to share with us their framing of “Chapters” in the life of CRHM over the past several decades. This was a very informative process for the consultants and seemed to assist various members of the staff team to locate some of the key presenting issues at this time.

1990s

- More focus on classes with inter-agency classical renewal work
- 1997 proposal for a “Unified and Distributed” strategy—not fully implemented

2003/2005

- Began conversation that eventually led to regional teams
- Ministry moved out into a “regionalization” approach with changing roles of staff in the central office
- There was some tension between the “regions” and the “center” regarding roles
- The backdrop of the conversation was the NCD/ECD categories and earlier staff structure
- Role of ethnic leaders was strengthened in the organization
- Efforts were made to redistribute central office staff into the regions—encountered some problems with this

2006/2007

- There had become an increased sense that Grand Rapids provided the leadership to the rest of the system—and was not utilizing a “listening posture” to the rest
- Then, central office was diminished with staff transitions, and some resignations of central office staff—question emerged of, What is CRHM in Grand Rapids?
- The transition process was not very healthy for the organization

- There was a larger restructuring effort within the CRCNA management and agencies with a proposal to create regional inter-agency distribution of services
- There emerged at this time a toxic atmosphere within CRCNA between CRHM and the executive leadership as well as some of the other agencies—CRHM largely lost the confidence of the CRCNA (note exec search candidate that was turned down by BOT)
- The Goal Specialists Team was formed, but there were not clear lines of communication and authority—positions there but not embedded

2008/2009

- CRCHA engaged in some reorganization work, which eventually contributed to major transition of leadership in the CRCNA
- Major transition within CRHM with interim exec appointed
- Regions and regional teams continued to take up the slack and fill in the space
- The status of ethnic team and goal specialists continued to grow within an emphasis on anti-racism in the denomination and a power audit

2009/2010

- The budget crises now fully impacted the CRCNA and CRHM—revenues down dramatically with significant budget reductions (loss of 3.5 m. out of budget)
- The NETWORK created out of earlier reorganization efforts was put into place
- CRHM under interim director made significant efforts to work with the NETWORK
- Regional support of the regionalization strategy of reorganization varied
- The Regional Resource Network was then dropped

2010/2011

- CRHM engaged in significant work to rebuild trust and credibility with other agencies and CRCNA exec leadership
- Initial efforts to meet with and work with ED and DDM, and then they both resigned their positions
- Branding work under taken

- Strategic plan developed
- Continued efforts to try and work with NETWORK
- Development of plans to work cooperatively with RCA in church planting—grant funding available

2011-2012

- Continued transition in CRCNA—interim ED and return of a prior ED as assistant
- New Exec Dir selected for CRHM
- The NETWORK was reviewed and decision made to dis-assemble
- Some regions develop approaches for working with established churches
- Shift from regional teams that dealt with NEC/ECD mission leadership teams and clusters—largely tied to loss of budget to fund staff and ministries
- Classes now more interactive in some places with regional mission leadership teams
- Mission leadership teams now searching for “apostolic” leaders who can empower others
- EMC began meeting regularly and worked beyond CRHM in the system
- Campus ministry more closely tied to new church development

APPENDIX D

The Execution Work Plan:

Moving toward a Hopeful Future with Discernment and Fresh Energy

Moses Chung - February 2012

Introduction: Framing the Conversation for the Next Chapter of CRHM

What time is it for CRHM, the CRC and North American churches? It is a time of huge crisis and abundant opportunity. Much is in flux all around us. There are many changes and challenges on multiple levels. But we are also in a place of real opportunity with a lot of solid groundwork already laid. This is a critical moment for North American churches to discern the time and Spirit's movements. The Spirit of God is shaping the future of Christ's church, and we seek to gain clarity on the direction of our calling and mission for the next chapter of CRHM as we navigate through discontinuous changes and significant transitions.

The Strategic Plan

We are at a mid-point in implementing the Strategic Plan (SP). The SP was put together in a particular context, at a time when CRHM was faced internally with a number of critical challenges. Just to name a few, senior leadership transitions, financial "crisis," and a need to make choices with regard to organizational priorities. After a season of spiritual discernment, through extensive corporate prayer and reflection, a clear future direction was set in motion by adopting the SP. The original design of the first implementation cycle was set for three years from September 2010 to September 2013. We are now entering the second half of the implementation phase.

I. Changes in Our Internal and External Environments

In CRHM Leadership

It is important to recognize the changes in key leadership positions, both in CRHM and the CRC, that happened within the last year. In my work as new executive director of CRHM, I have engaged in robust conversations on multiple levels in order to "define the reality" of our agency. I have asked many honest self-examining questions about CRHM. I have learned a great deal about our reality, which has enabled me to ask more questions. In the process, I have come to appreciate a great deal about the SP. The SP helped CRHM to set a clear direction; the three priorities in particular are very wise and strategic choices. But, the plan does not include the execution and integration strategy, which was not a part of the original design. I believe now is the time to engage and develop further in execution with both past learning and fresh energy.

In CRC Senior Leadership

There is a huge leadership transition currently taking place at the denominational level. No one had anticipated such change when the SP was put together. This unexpected change brings new questions and implications for the future direction, priorities and programs of both CRHM and the CRCNA. The outcome and decisions that will result from the current review of The Network and the CRC Structure and Culture Task Force will be important for CRHM's future direction and ministry development.

In North American Culture and Society

We are living in a time of post-Christian, pluralist and global culture in North America. The massive shift happening all around us poses a new set of challenges. It also pushes us to ask hard questions about our own identity, purpose, relevance and viability as an agency that exists to serve congregations facing the same challenges head-on in the everyday reality of changed neighborhoods. Many churches and congregational leaders are dealing with deep anxiety, confusion, and fear of an uncertain future due to steady decline and slow growth. Younger generations are giving up on traditional faith structures and leaving the church. Added to that are great forces of change such as globalization, pluralism, rapid technological change, postmodernism, staggering global need, and a loss of confidence in primary social structures, to name just a few. We are in a new world where our traditional ways of being and doing church with a European, mono-ethnic denominational church background beg some hard questions about our identity (who we are) and agency (what we are here to do).

Opportunity and Hope

The liminal space where we find ourselves brings not only crisis but also opportunity. People in our culture are still looking for authentic, personal, spiritual encounters, both human and divine. But many are looking in all the wrong places. The critical question is: How is the church of Jesus Christ being a faithful witness of peace, love and justice to the hurting and broken people in our world today?

The CRC has been blessed richly with so many **“buried treasures”** that could be offered as gifts of Christ to both the wider body of Christ and the hurting world. Our reformed worldview and perspective can be a fresh breath of air for many. Our Christian Reformed congregations are filled with people deeply dedicated and devoted to the causes of Christ's kingdom. The resources of people, finance, talents, knowledge, and practices through institutions, mission agencies, and ministries abound, from helping the homeless and educating inner-city children and recent immigrants, to providing disaster relief and planting new kinds of churches in the most secular North American cities like Seattle, Los Angeles, New York, and Montreal. CRHM can play a key role by catalyzing and cultivating grassroots gospel movements.

II. Asking the Right Questions

Spiritual leadership is all about gaining wisdom and discernment in order to serve those who follow into mutual, joyful commitments in following Spirit's leading. How can

we as CRHM move toward a new future with integrity, care and boldness that builds hope, trust and confidence among God's people in our denomination? *What are some critical, key questions we need to ask ourselves as we seek to move forward into CRHM's next chapter?*

God-Questions

What is God up to in the neighborhoods where God has placed our 1,084 congregations? These are the places God has sent us by his sovereign and providential will. Each congregation must ask who they are and what they are uniquely called by God to do in those local communities. As congregations of Christ – his body for the sake of the world – we have a reason to exist in those corners of God's world.

But many congregations are asking the wrong, self-centered questions, such as “What do *we* want to be/do?” instead of “What does *God* want us to be/do?”, or “What are *we* about as a congregation?” instead of “What is *God* up to in our neighborhoods?” As long as we remain within our own four walls of church buildings and ask inward, selfish kinds of questions, we will never become the church God wants us to be for the sake of his world. CRHM has the potential to become an encouraging voice and presence, to speak the truth in love by catalyzing and cultivating an environment where people hear and follow the Spirit of Christ; who is always moving into the broken world of the lost, the least and the last.

Discernment-Questions

The core issues for CRHM for the next chapter of our journey are questions such as, *"How can we be a mission agency, led by godly leaders, that helps churches discern God's will for their communities?"* The issue of discernment is of priority because at the end of the day it is not about what *we* want, but what *God* wants and wills; to discern together as a corporate body for the service of the whole of God's people is of fundamental importance.

Adaptive Challenge-Questions

Another question is, *"How can we become the best learning organization?"* What are our adaptive challenges as well as technical and tactical problems? What are the most important trends we need to discover and discern given who we are as a Reformed/evangelical denomination? We need to be a learning organization because things are changing and shifting fast. We need to learn for each other and from everyone; again, in order to rightly discern together.

Leadership-Questions

Another critical question is *"How can leadership authority, credibility, and trust be regained in the CRC?"* We must acknowledge our past failures appropriately and refresh our commitment to come alongside pastors, leaders and members of the CRC who are in desperate need of guidance and encouragement in this tumultuous time as churches struggle to minister in our post-Christian secular era.

Identity-Questions

I believe God has provided the CRC and CRHM with many gifted leaders and resources. In this wonderful family of God, with a rich heritage of Orthodox, Reformed, Kuyperian, pietistic traditions, increasingly becoming multiethnic, we have an incredible opportunity to be Christ's light and 'dying seed' for the sake of the glorious gospel and for the sake of the hurting world. If CRHM can learn and relearn how to become a prophetic voice for God's mission in the world (**mission conscience**), how to serve with a humble servant attitude ("coming alongside" **coaching posture**), and how to lead with bold confidence (**mission catalysts**), we might become useful (**mission resources**) for what God might want to accomplish in and through the CRC in such a time as this.

III. How Do We Move Forward from Here?

Reformed Missional Vision: Cultivate mission-shaped imagination for grassroots gospel movements

What are the key components in CRHM's integrated execution strategy for Phase Two? We must keep our mission front and center: "CRHM exists to transform individuals and communities by catalyzing and cultivating gospel movements." For the next 18 months, CRHM should focus and invest our energy into desirous pastoral leaders of congregations, for the purpose of cultivating an environment where missional imagination can be released so that they can discover for themselves the pathway to participate in God's mission for North America, right within their own neighborhoods. This phase will set the tone and cultivate groundwork for the subsequent phase which will then involve lay leaders of local congregations.

Perhaps now is the time for a whole new way of reaching God's world; a way borne out of our own theological traditions. If God's Spirit is already at work in the neighborhoods, cultures, and economies that surround our CR churches, what would it look like for a pastor/leader to be coached in additional ways of discerning God's movements in all of those places? More precisely, given our reformed beliefs in common grace, general revelation, and a Spirit that authors all truth, what would it look like for church leaders to grow in hearing God's voice *through* their communities? If God really does speak through the book of creation (local neighborhoods, cultures and economies included) what would it look like for CR churches to grow in the skill and confidence they need in order to listen to and then translate back to their communities what God is *already saying* in their midst; through the goodness of science or nature, the truth they encounter in their jobs or leisure pursuits, or the wisdom they engage at school? What if CR churches more intentionally move toward becoming the kind of hospitable spaces who came alongside local neighbors and showed them where God was already moving in their lives, speaking to and through them everywhere?

Three Core Values: Missional Focus, Expectant Prayer, Collaborative Leadership

I have chosen three out of six core values identified in the SP for the next phase of the execution strategy: missional focus, expectant prayer, and collaborative leadership (See first 3 inner circles in SP Chart Version 2.0 below). We desire to keep our agency focus

as mission conscious, catalyst and resource. We also want to acknowledge and rely completely on the Spirit's leading and power in all our activities by practicing daily personal and communal rhythms of expectant prayer, Word and spiritual discernment. By assuming a humble posture of walking alongside partners, we want to coach, encourage and develop pastors and leaders in both our new and old churches.

Next Steps: Two-Way Journeys

Practically speaking, what are some key next steps we can take with such vision and conviction shaped by our reformed identity and missional vision for the sake of God's mission in North America? Imagine two-way journeys as our immediate and distant directions: Inside-out and Outside-in.

Inside-Out Journey

Step One: Pause to reflect on the work and progress of First Phase during the last 18 months in the priority areas of the SP, and capture the key learnings as solid grounds and cues to build on in taking next steps.

There have been vigorous activities with regard to the SP that have received significant attention and execution. These include: Church multiplication strategies, Partnership in Church Multiplication Initiative (CMI), Campus ministry multiplication, Formation of mission leadership teams (MLT) and clusters in the regions, Ethnic Leader development, Global Coffee Break, and Refocused grant system. It will be important for us to draw the learnings from the progress we have made so far and apply these learnings to the next phase of our implementation of the Strategic Plan. The detailed account of the activities and learnings of the First Phase are found in the CRHM staff reports below (Attachment 3, pages 1-10).

Step Two: Implement key Task Groups to develop further underdeveloped priorities of the SP in the next 3 – 6 months. (5 reports)

These are the key priority areas that needed more clarity, further development, and an execution plan. Specific areas of the SP that have received attention in this way during the last 4-5 months include:

*Priority #6: Stimulate Spiritual Formation and Innovation (See **Spiritual Formation Jumpstart Team Report** in Attachment 4, pages 1-6).*

- The denominational Prayer Summit
- The report of the Jump Start Team recommending a Mission Order
- The Research and Development Proposal (See **R & D Learning Trip Report** in Attachment 4, pages 7-8).

*Priority #3: Partner with Churches in a Shared Mission (See **Mission-Shaped Leader and Church Report** in Attachment 4, pages 9-13).* The desire was to develop a clearer description of Home Missions' role with existing churches as part of Home Missions' mandate and overall leadership effort in the denomination. Specific activities include:

- Developing of a unique and focused role for Home Missions' document.
- Initial thoughts with regard to a **discipleship strategy** and how that will integrate with the new and focused role of Home Missions with mission-shaped churches. (See **Report** in Attachment 4 on pages 14-15).
- Conversations in light of the transition of the Network and what Home Missions' role will be on the ground for servicing congregations.

*Priority #5: Ignite Generosity (See **Advancement Report** in Attachment 4 on pages 19-22).* This area was placed in maintenance mode for the past year and a half awaiting a new director and new staff and further strategy. Several initiatives have been developed including:

- Regional Advancement Strategy: Beginning to take root
- Donor Relation Strategy: People are in place for increased donor contacts
- Communication Strategy: Brand identity is more focused and the shared story is being told

Outside-In Journey

Step Three: Develop a plan to work with outside consultative input and guidance as we discern CRHM's focused role and create a roadmap for long-term strategic planning.

Timing: Progress in Phase One and Two

We are in a good stage in our organization to assess the first phase of the implementation of the Strategic Plan, and continue to build on the growth in the next chapter as the robust mission agency for the denomination. This is the work of Phase 1 and 2 of the Strategic Plan. This will give us good progress with regard to the execution of the Strategic Plan and working on some lead strategies for further and deeper development.

We also expect an upcoming leadership transition of CRHM senior leadership positions (Director of Ministry Teams and West Coast Regional Leader) in the next few months. Another handful of senior leaders are expected to retire within the next 2-5 years. It would be of great benefit to have outside consultants' input and guidance for our staff as we review and assess effectiveness of leadership structure for organizational synergy and integration within CRHM and in relations to our partners in the regions and in the denomination. We will need to find creative pathways to invite outside voices to help facilitate and engage the Facilitation Integration Team (See **Mandate of F.I.T. Report** in Attachment 4 on page 23). With all the present and future changes and shifts happening within the denomination, we want to find fresh and strategic ways to position ourselves to

serve our denomination as a robust mission agency with refreshed identity and vision. We desire to think ahead and beyond short-ranged goals and prepare ourselves for the future.

In the coming year it will be helpful to work with outside consultants to provide broad perspective and fresh questions and perspectives that can shape future leadership thinking and conversation. Having an outside perspective helps you to see things from a different angle, but also helps you to engage in questions that sometimes we don't see from an internal perspective. It gives us a bigger view of our reality. Here are two key ways they can assist us.

Navigating and Dealing with Changes in CRHM, CRCNA, and North American Culture
CRHM as a denominational agency, probably more so than any other mission agencies and institutions in the CRC, has gone through tumultuous changes as we have tried to respond faithfully to massive shifts both in the external world of North American culture and in the internal church world with deeply challenging needs of change and decline. We have changed our identity from an agency “characterized by mission, acted out as an agent *for* the whole church, to mission *through* the whole church.”

In the last couple of years we have had to make strategic choices due to budget constraints and also due to the creation of entities such as The Network. We are now at a different denominational juncture with major leadership transitions as well as potential in the future of The Network and other congregational ministries. We need to gain more clarity on issues of integration of the work of Home Missions as we seek to serve the wider denomination.

Develop a plan for strategic partnerships with classis, agencies, denominations and beyond

In the past 18 months we've learned a lot about what it means to be engaged in ministry and work on the priorities of the strategic plan. During the next 18 months our Phase Two strategies will build on that learning and provide the clarity of focus and also good progress of execution of the Strategic Plan. Here are a number of areas that we will be acting on with special focus in the next phase of execution of the Strategic plan, to be developed in the next 3 – 18 months.

- a. Organizational Integration and Synergy within CRHM: Integrate and increase synergy within CRHM so that we are a significant learning community and are interdependent.
- b. Cluster Development: Develop vibrant clusters for multiplication and revitalization.
- c. Primary Partnership with Classes: Partner with classes and develop a pilot strategy in each region to work with a classis through clusters and coaching in order to grow churches and launch new missional communities.
- d. Coaching Posture: our work with congregations and leaders will come up out of a coaching posture that we do in partnership with the denomination. (See **Coaching Network Proposal** in Attachment 4 on pages 16-18.)

- e. Partnership with Agencies and Denominations: we will increasingly work in partnership with agencies and ministries of the denomination, local partners as well as denominations such as the RCA.
- f. Telling Home Missions' Story: developing Home Missions' story and a clear identity within the denomination is essential. Coupled with the regional advancement strategy we can provide local expressions and manifestations of the story.

We could benefit from an outside perspective to help us strategize about creative approaches for partnering with classes, through clusters in a coaching posture for the purpose of stimulating church multiplication, cultivating of diverse leaders and revitalizing churches to become more mission shaped.

In summary there are two areas that outside consultants can assist us.

1. Refreshed Identity: Think through how Home Missions can be a robust mission agency of the denomination and provide a servant leader role in North America.
2. Focused Role: Do deeper strategizing about creative approaches for partnering with classes, through clusters in a coaching posture for the purpose of stimulating church multiplication, cultivating of diverse leaders , and revitalizing churches to become more mission shaped.
3. Organizational Integration: Explore more deeply issues of integration of the work of Home Missions as we seek to serve the wider denomination.

I want to propose that the Director together with the executive officers and Home Missions Leadership Team (HMLT) develop a plan for engaging an external consulting agency during the coming 12 months and provide resources for that in the budget.

APPENDIX E

Invitation Email Letter Sample to Participate in 360 Exec Survey

Dear Colleagues:

I am requesting your participation in completing an important 360 survey about my leadership. This 360 is part of a larger learning experience I am involved in with a number of other clergy. We are looking at the skills and capacities we need as denominational leaders in the midst of significant change. You will be participating with approximately 25 -30 others in completing this instrument. The 360 will produce a comprehensive Report I will use to assess some of my next steps in leadership development.

I appreciate your willingness to take the time to participate. The 360 questionnaire is confidential. No one's name is identified in the report. In fact, we ask that you don't indicate your name in any of the written response sections. It will take approximately 35 minutes for you to complete. It is very important to complete the survey in one sitting. This provides the best results.

You will find some questions repetitive and you may wonder about the meanings of some words. Please make your own assumptions about meanings and answer the questions from that perspective.

The 360 is completed on-line and results are forwarded anonymously to a server when you are finished.

I would really appreciate it if you could complete the questionnaire as soon as possible, or within a week of receiving it, so that our report can be created in good time. Thanks in advance for your consideration, and hopefully, your willingness to invest in this process.

Please do not hesitate to call or check in if you have any questions.

The Link for Exec360 Survey is: <http://msurvey.org/e/2012/08/mc/>

Thank you so much,
Moses

APPENDIX F

Overview of Agenda and Introducing the Step Three

March 19, 2012

Here is an attempt to organize my thoughts on the *Next Steps: Two-way Journeys* based on pages 5-7 of my director's report:

I. Timing is critical.

What time is it for CRHM, the CRC and North American churches? It is a time of huge crisis and abundant opportunity. Much is in flux all around us. There are many changes and challenges on multiple levels. But we are also in a place of real opportunity with a lot of solid groundwork already laid. This is a critical moment to discern the time and the Spirit's movements. The Spirit of God is shaping the future of Christ's church, and we seek to gain clarity on the direction of our calling and mission for the next chapter of CRHM as we navigate through discontinuous changes and significant transitions.

So, ask ourselves: What is the need of the hour right now at Home Missions? In the light of significant changes in local churches, middle judicatories, and the denomination, what critical leadership role is Home Missions being asked to play? Furthermore, how can we together help CRHM thrive in the midst of what are increasingly challenging and uncertain times for denominational systems?

II. Internal Changes within CRHM and their impact

A. Strategic Plan (SP): Phase 1 and 2

CRHM as an agency needs to give focused attention and energy to the phases 1 and 2 of the SP at this point in time. First, we need to build on the good ground work and progress of the past 18 months (Phase One). They are: the work of CPDLT, CM, MLT, Cluster and EMC. These priorities must continue strong in Phase Two. Second, we need to develop and implement the underdeveloped priorities of the SP. The task groups have been formed and provided the execution plans to be implemented in the Phase Two. We are in the beginning stage of implementing the recommendations in areas such as MSC, Spiritual Formation and Innovation, Igniting Generosity, and the Coaching Initiative.

What's the best way to build on the momentum so far and execute the six focused priorities identified in the SP in the next 18 months?

B. Senior leadership transitions in the next few years

The Director of Ministry Teams and West Coast Regional Leader positions are currently in transition. Several other senior leaders will retire in the next few years. This will have a great impact on our system. The executive Director,

Advancement Director and CPD Team Leader have joined within the past year. These major leadership transitions naturally open up an opportunity to consider their impact on our organization and the shaping of our future.

III. External Changes and their Impact

- A. The change of CRHM's identity and role within the CRC in the last 50 years CRHM has changed *from* doing mission "for" the church *to* doing mission "through" the church. CRHM has had a unique challenge in relations to NA congregations because of massive changes both in broader culture and inside the church world. All historic denominations in NA have experienced a huge decline in membership, including the CRC. We continue to struggle with the changes all around us. The sense of confusion, anxiety and fear exists in multiple levels of denominational and congregational systems, but it is often not named and given expression in public arenas.

- B. The change in CRHM's position within the CRC during the last 5 years The creation of The Network within the denominational "healthy church initiative," the financial crisis, and now the dismantling of The Network continue to impact the identity and role of CRHM and our future directions.

IV. Outside-in process with consultative input

I believe now is a good time to take stock of our past and present so that we can be better prepared to imagine our future. I have outlined in my February Board report (The Execution Work Plan) a framework for moving forward as Steps One, Two and Three. The first two next steps are mentioned above (II. A). The Step Three involves seeking an outside-in consultative input.

With the help of the outside consultants, we might gain perspectives and insights about our structure and ourselves we could be blind to otherwise. We could receive help 1) in navigating and dealing with changes in CRHM, the CRCNA, and North American Culture; and 2) in developing a plan for strategic partnerships with classes, agencies, denomination and beyond. I hope that their input will help us to strategize more deeply about creative approaches for partnering with classes, as we continue to invest in developing clusters and implementing coaching strategies for the purpose of stimulating church multiplication, cultivating diverse leaders, and revitalizing churches to become more mission-shaped.

In this consulting process, consultants will be asked to enter our system in a small, limited and well-defined way that is focused on assessing the whole set of pieces I outlined in the Execution Work Plan document. I expect that this would be a limited consultative process that would involve a fair bit of interviewing and listening across the CRHM systems in order to give us a clear set of next step recommendations.

I can then take these recommendations to the CRHM Board. This gives the director, CRHM staff and the Board the opportunity to reflect with time and wisdom on the

recommendations they make. It means that no one, neither our Board/staff nor the outside consulting agency, is committed to any long terms or expensive contracts but does provide a way of developing clarity around the issues and potential next step recommendations before any other significant undertakings or contracts are engaged.

In summary, there are three areas that outside consultants can assist us:

A. Refreshed *Identity*

Think through how Home Missions can be a robust mission agency of the denomination and provide a servant leader role in North America.

B. Focused *Role*

Do deeper strategizing about creative approaches for partnering with classes, through greater emphasis in developing clusters and coaching system for the purpose of stimulating church multiplication, cultivating of diverse leaders , and revitalizing churches to become more mission shaped.

C. Organizational *Integration*

Explore more deeply issues of integration of the work of Home Missions as we seek to serve the wider denomination.

V. The Facilitation Integration Team (FIT)

The purpose of the FIT is to review and propose focused and more precise roles of internal CRHM leadership (senior leadership structure, DMT, RL, EL, GS) for integration and synergy. In the light of current reality and a proposed consultative process, it makes a good sense to engage in this work in conjunction with the outside-in process. The outside-in consultative input and the inside-out internal discussions can be a mutually beneficial process. I do see a need and benefit to engage in the FIT process with our internal staff. But, again, the timing of both activities is important.

I want us to consider taking a half-step back for implementing the FIT process before we give a full start. We will determine the start date as well as its focused mandate as we learn more about the development of other pieces (both the consulting and the CRCNA/Network process). At this point, we don't have those pieces yet. I expect to have the needed information within the next two to four weeks. [Note: The FIT process has begun in April with a team being.]

APPENDIX G

Next Chapter Leadership of CRHM: Reimagining Our Identity, Role and Direction

July 26, 2012

I. CRHM and the CRCNA

Who are we in relationship to the denomination? What is our unique role as CRHM?

CRHM has served the CRCNA for more than one hundred years, faithfully pursuing our mandate* to give leadership for doing mission work in North America. Historically, CRHM was created to do mission “for” and “on behalf of” the church, initially to groups outside of Dutch immigrant Christian Reformed communities, such as Native Americans, racial and ethnic minorities, and college students.

At some point in our history, the main direction of ministry shifted to doing mission “through” the church. In the early 1970s, as the first regional home missionaries were appointed and as CRHM led the church in the Key ’73 evangelism initiative, a new emphasis on doing mission with and through the local congregation emerged. And CRHM has faithfully done this, by resourcing and supporting congregations through programs and conferences in evangelism, prayer, discipleship, small groups, leadership development, church planting, and congregation revitalization ministries.

Between 2003-2006, we made a significant organizational shift into a “regionalization” (“unified and distributed”) approach, with changing roles of staff in the central office, and a shift of additional resources to the regions. Again in 2010, we made another organizational change. This time, we enhanced our regional work by creating Mission Leadership Teams that gather ‘apostolic/missional’ leaders, with a hope to turn CRHM into a robust mission agency that catalyzes and cultivates a grassroots church planting movement across the CRCNA.

It is true that CRHM has been through many different identity shifts. And, at every turn, God has used CRHM to be a leading mission agency in the CRC to promote domestic mission work among our congregations in North America.

One area has stayed consistent for us, though, throughout our history and especially since the 1990s: our emphasis on and investment in church planting. There is much to celebrate in CRHM’s church planting initiatives, and we desire to continue and boost our church

planting efforts with even deeper commitment and greater openness to fresh and diverse ways.

But even though we have gained credibility and loyal support from planters and those who have joined the church planting movement, this emphasis has also sent a clear message to others about our priority of church planting. This is our known identity.

So, who are we in relationship to the denomination? What is our unique role for the CRC today? In the minds of many people, the answer is: We lead church planting and campus ministry in the CRC. That's all we do.

One proof of this perception was the creation of The Network in 2009 to fill in the gap of denominational ministry for established and all other churches besides new churches. In many ways, CRHM's decision toward even stronger commitment to church planting was an externally forced decision as much as it was an internal decision to do what we do best. But with the recent demise of The Network, the question is back on the table: who will give denominational leadership for established churches, which make up more than 70 % of all CRC congregations?

II. The critical question and my proposal

Do we exist to serve the whole denomination, meaning, all the congregations and its members, or only those who would partner in church planting and campus ministry?

I want to propose that we broaden our horizons and reimagine our future identity and role in the CRC. I see that CRHM is poised to serve the wider denomination with a bigger picture and vision as a robust mission agency. While we're not yet at the point where we can share this strategy in full detail, it's clear that the time has come.

I believe that this is a moment in which our whole denomination can be served well by bold leaders who offer creative, innovative thinking and fresh approaches. And I happen to believe that CRHM has a unique contribution to offer.

Here are four reasons why I believe this is an opportune moment and why this vision should be our future direction:

First, CRC congregations are in deeper crisis than ever before in our history, and we are not getting any better by doing "business as usual." In almost every region across North America, the majority of our congregations are struggling and diminishing through atrophy. We are slowly, but surely, dying. We lack strong leaders, both clergy and lay,

who are providing needed, courageous, wise leadership. We must do something about this situation as a denomination.

Second, no other organization in the CRC is looking at the big picture and asking critical local church questions like CRHM is doing right now, at least in all of my experience and interactions so far. In part, this is so because each agency is mandated to promote a specific cause, like world mission and relief (directed toward the foreign field), or educating seminarians and young people for the future.

Denominational programs and ministries such as SCE, PCR, CRMT, ORR, OSJ, ODC, and OSC also address a very specific programming need for congregations. However, all of these programs are not functioning in a coordinated fashion to address the deep and desperate challenges that all of our churches are facing on a regular basis throughout the year.

Third, all of our financial as well as any other kinds of support we receive to do our work come mostly from these established churches that are desperately struggling. Their support is declining and will continue along that trajectory. Also, there is a widening gap between these established churches and new church plants. In fact, structurally, there is no unity at all between church plants and established congregations in the current CRHM mission. Most of these established congregations are increasingly, if not entirely yet, giving up hope regarding denominational services, particularly from CRHM, because they view denomination as irrelevant, or, in our case, primarily concerned about new church plants and campus ministries.

Fourth, I believe that we identified the right priorities and strategies in our Strategic Plan. Namely, three strategic priorities (Multiply New Churches and Campus Ministries, Cultivate Diverse Missional Leaders, Partner with Established Churches in a Shared Mission) and three strategies for developing organizational capacity (Cultivate Partnerships, Ignite Generosity for the Mission, Stimulate Innovation and Spiritual Growth).

It is my observation that church planting is viewed by many within CRHM as the primary strategy that defines the other two priorities. **But I want to propose that we see all three strategic priorities as equally important because we will need all three areas to be strong.** Without a strong connection between them, none of them will be sustainable and have a long term future.

I believe this moment of crisis is also a moment of opportunity for CRHM to serve our denomination with a fresh, compelling and bold vision, a refreshed identity and a broadened, yet more focused, role. It has been decided that the CRMT and HCI pieces be transferred from The Network to CRHM, and that the new Coaching Network initiative

for the whole denomination also be housed under CRHM. This strategic decision also brings a timely opportunity for us to make a step toward a greater partnership and leadership for wider denominational service than in the past.

III. Next Steps

How do we move away from our history to embody a new day?

First, we need to acknowledge our problems facing CRHM, as well as the CRC, honestly. Second, we need to reestablish our relationships with established churches and start behaving in new ways in order to regain credibility and trust. Third, we need to be united as people called by God to serve our congregations with our own renewed sense of identity and calling.

IV. Invitation to a Journey Together

So here is my invitation to you:

First, let us humble ourselves before God, and continue to do deeper and honest self-examination.

Second, let us be willing to stop and take time to listen together what the Spirit of God might say to us.

Third, let us discern together the will of God for us.

Fourth, let us be ready to journey wherever God might want to take us, even if it means dying to ourselves personally and professionally.

I personally do not have the answers to how to solve our problems, nor do I know exactly what course we will need to take in order to live into the future as a community. But, I am ready and willing to go on a journey, even if it means going with uncertainty and lack of answers. There is nothing else that I would want to be doing now in my life other than to follow where God is leading me.

I want to simply invite you on this journey with me, and more importantly with God.

***CRHM Mandate**

Home Missions shall give leadership to the CRC in its task of bringing the gospel to the people of Canada and the United States, and drawing them into fellowship with Christ and his church. This **mandate** has these aspects:

1. Encourage and assist churches, classes and regions in the work of developing and sustaining missional churches.
2. Initiate, support and guide church planting and development in cooperation with local churches, classes and regions.
3. Initiate, support and guide educational ministries in cooperation with local churches and classes.

Home Missions Order; Article 2; 06/02/08

APPENDIX H

CRHM Leadership Next Steps: Where do we go from here?

10/8/2012

We are in the midst of critical conversations about the past history, present reality, and future direction of Home Missions. I am grateful for the ways we have been able to listen to each other as staff and board as we have also sought to listen to God. It has not always been an easy road because it has sometimes felt like we have been re-visiting some all-too familiar places in the last few years. Hearing and going through the Missional Network (TMN) report was also not all that easy: it was almost like holding up a mirror to CRHM, which included seeing the not-so-positive aspects of our organizational past and present realities.

During the past six months or so, we have journeyed together to take a hard look at ourselves. With what I believe is a humble posture, we've begun to think about the possibility that we might have to change internally first if we are going to engage in any real change externally within our denomination. Now, with the completion of Phase One of the Next Steps to Re-imagine Our Identity, Role and Direction, we are entering into Phase Two.

Let me offer what I see on the horizon for our journey ahead of us in two parts: 1) a brief review of where we have been, and 2) laying out future tasks and a timeline for the next 3, 6, 9 months.

I. A Brief Review: Inside-out and Outside-in, a Two-way Journey

In February of 2012, I presented to all Home Missions staff and board *The Execution Work Plan: Moving toward a Hopeful Future with Discernment and Fresh Energy*, where I discussed my assessment of our work together in three sections: 1) Changes in our internal and external environments, 2) Asking the right questions, and 3) How do we move forward from here? In the third section, I proposed to take the next steps in "Two-Way Journeys": "Imagine two-way journeys as our immediate and distant directions-- Inside-out and Outside-in."

For the *Inside-Out Journey* step, we paused to reflect on the work and progress of the first 18 months of our work in the priority areas of the Strategic Plan (SP), and we captured the key learnings as solid grounds and cues to build on in taking next steps. "There have been vigorous activities with regard to the SP that have received significant attention and execution. These include: Church multiplication strategies, Partnership in Church Multiplication Initiative (CMI), Campus ministry multiplication, Formation of mission leadership teams (MLT) and clusters in the regions, Ethnic Leader development, Global Coffee Break, and a Refocused grant system."

As part of the ongoing implementation of the SP, we have initiated and implemented key Task Groups to develop further those underdeveloped priorities of the SP. These are the key priority areas that needed more clarity, further development, and an execution plan. Specific areas of the SP that have received attention in this way during the last nine months include: 1) *Stimulate Spiritual Formation and Innovation with the Spiritual Formation Jumpstart Team and the R & D Learning Trip Report*; 2) *Partner with Churches in a Shared Mission (Mission-Shaped Leader and Church Report).*; and 3) *Ignite Generosity*. This area was placed in maintenance mode for the past two years and awaited a new director and new staff and further strategy. Several initiatives have been developed including Regional Advancement Strategy, Donor Relation Strategy, and a refreshed Communication Strategy.

For the *Outside-In Journey*, we took a step forward to develop a plan to work with outside consultative input and guidance as we discern CRHM's focused role and create a roadmap for long-term strategic planning. In order to do an effective process of navigating and dealing with changes not only in CRHM and in the CRCNA, but also in the North American missionary context, I believed that we as an organization would benefit from an outside perspective to help us to move us forward. With the consultative input from Alan Roxburgh and Craig Van Gelder of The Missional Network, I believe we have gained much-needed insights of where we are and where we need to go.

One huge gift from their report was the naming of the "God-agency vs. human-agency" problem as our default way of working as an organization. This gave all of us a real pause and led us to humility to ask, and embrace, the tough question before us: "What issue(s) are we facing, for which we presently do not have an answer, but which we must address, if we are to live into God's future?"

Since the Chicago meeting on Aug 10-11 where we reviewed the TMN report, and engaged in conversations about what this means for us going forward, I have spent many hours and days praying, asking questions, reading staff feedback, engaging in a number of robust, sometimes difficult, conversations, and mostly, pondering one question: What is God up to in and among us?

I also have invited both staff and board to engage with me by asking questions, offering feedback and ideas and, again, most importantly, praying together because it is about discerning God-reality, God-initiatives, and God-agenda. Everyone has been gracious and helpful throughout the process so far, for which I am extremely grateful. After we had some difficult moments together to sift through a few challenging issues that seemed unclear and confusing, we are certainly gaining some clarity and common consensus around the issues of adaptive and technical challenges we must address to discover and live into God's future together.

II. Next Steps: Where do we go from here?

1. Initial Design Work (October 2012) :

I have appointed a small staff workgroup to work with me and the TMN consultants as an ad hoc team to work on the *initial* designing process of Phase Two. This group will assist me in bringing the work to the rest of HM's senior staff in our November HMLG for wider discussion and work sessions. On October 10-11, the team will be meeting in GR with the following task description:

This team is being asked to take the Phase I report provided by the TMN consultants and, working with the Executive Director and consultants, engage in designing a comprehensive Phase II process to address the challenges and issues raised in the report. The team will be expected to 1) review the report in detail and 2) to prioritize the key issues which need to be addressed. This will include attending to 3) planning for those aspects that are more technical in nature, but 4) the primary focus will be on designed process steps and possible experiments to engage the critical adaptive challenges facing CRHM at this time. This design work 5) will be reviewed by the entire staff at its next meeting in early November.

2. HMLG Senior Staff Work on Design and Assignments (Nov. 5-8):

At the November HMLG, scheduled for Nov. 5-8, all of the HM senior staff will be invited to speak into and shape the work of Phase Two. My intent is to provide an ample time and opportunity for all the staff members to engage, participate and influence the shape of CRHM's future as we participate in God's mission. I hope that we will leave from HMLG with a real sense of unity about our mission and even a clearer sense of how each one of us fits in accomplishing the larger vision and common calling of CRHM.

3. Putting a Work Plan in Place for Next Steps of CRHM (Nov-Dec):

During November and December of 2012, we as a staff will continue to focus our work on putting together a comprehensive work plan that we intend to engage beyond our current Strategic Plan, which ends its cycle in August 2013. The outcome of the November HMLG, I hope, will provide a clear direction of where we need to take CRHM for the next two to three years. Everyone will be asked to contribute in shaping and putting together our Work Plan for Next Steps.

4. Continual Discernment and Sharing our Draft Work Plan (Jan. – Feb.6-8, 2013):

Share our Work Plan with the Board and our partners during the month of January 2013. We seek to learn and discern continually how we can best partner with others to participate in God's mission. I will present to the February board meeting and have another chance to engage them with our future direction. I hope to get their endorsement for the direction at the board meeting.

5. Finalize CRHM Work Plan and Prepare for the Next Chapter Journey (Feb. – Aug.):

The staff will bring all of these information and learnings, and finalize our Work Plan during the next three months (Feb – April). The following four months (May

– August) will give us a window to gear up and prepare ourselves for a new journey that begins in September 2013.

6. The Role of Consultants in Phase II: The role of the consultants will be: (a) to assist us to enter into and implement an adaptive change process, and (b) to also work with us, as needed, in implementing our work plan.

Appendix I

What Makes a Good Adaptive Change Experiment?

Action-Learning Team Training

Note: This document is produced by The MISSIONAL Network (TMN), and shared with CRHM as a process tool. It is developed initially by TMN consulting project working with some PCUSA presbyteries. (Printed here with permission)

A good adaptive change experiment is not just trying things until we hit upon a strategy or program that might solve our church problems. A good adaptive challenge experiment moves us to rethink our understanding of God and the gospel and the relationship of the church and its context.

1. A good experiment does not require, necessarily, any funding from local, regional, or national agencies.
2. A good experiment focus on engaging in new behaviors and practices.
3. A good experiment creates the possibility for easy wins for those involved.
4. A good experiment is designed in such ways that people who have not yet participated in the adaptive change process may be invited and welcomed to participate.
5. A good experiment engages in and utilizes the action-learning cycle.
6. A good experiment does not necessarily lead to complete solutions, and even may fail, but what is critical is reflecting on what happened and learning from it.
7. A good experiment may make participants uncomfortable and encourage a certain amount of risk.
8. A good experiment focuses on the local and inspires boundary breaking.
9. A good experiment shifts attention to God's agency. The goal is to listen to what the Spirit of God might be saying.
10. A good experiment unites people in a process with the potential of changing the culture of a congregation or the participating organization.

APPENDIX J
Communication to Board and Stakeholders

February 22, 2013

Dear Board members and Partners,

We want to take this opportunity to express our deep thanks for your prayerful and thoughtful feedback to our “Joining God’s Mission” document. In your feedback we heard your love, concerns and encouragement for CRHM as it faces its current challenges and future. So, thank you!

We realize now that our assumption that we would be continuing the emphasis on church planting and campus ministry while strengthening work with established congregations was more implicit than explicit. We also acknowledge the document minimized the good work of the past and apologize to anyone who felt dishonored or disrespected. We do see “Joining God’s Mission” as building on the good work that resulted in and from the current strategic plan.

More specifically, here are three areas you helped us to sharpen our document and future communications:

1. **Synod’s Mandate to CRHM:** Your feedback reminded us of our need to be explicit about the three streams of our mandate from synod. We are called to give leadership to the CRCNA in domestic mission paying attention to the streams of sustaining missional churches, planting new churches, and initiating and supporting educational ministries—all in cooperation with churches, classes, and other partners.
2. **CRHM’s Deep Commitment to Diversity:** Another important sharpening piece was the reminder of the rich history that CRHM has in helping the CRCNA become a multi-ethnic denomination. This work has been so close to the heart of CRHM and we were thankful for those who raised it as part of the heart of who we are as an agency.
3. **Our Current Strategic Plan (2010-2013):** Looking forward as an agency also means looking back. While we acknowledged the importance of the Strategic Plan in the Journey document, we want to again give thanks for the three year Strategic Plan (2010-2013). Those who prayerfully developed the plan deeply honored God in that work and showed us a path forward during a very difficult time in our life as an agency. We want to assure everyone that we are using the lessons learned from that plan to inform our forward movement. We are also continuing to evaluate what worked well in the plan, what we need to change, and what we need to continue out of the plan.

Your comments not only sharpened us, they also encouraged and affirmed us, at least in two areas:

1. **Continual Commitment to Learning and Grassroots Approach:** We are pleased that many heard our desire to be a humble presence in our work. In swiftly changing times we recognize that we are learning together how to bring the gospel to North America. You discerned that CRHM humbly acknowledges that it does not have ready-made answers for this time. For this reason CRHM sees that we are journeying together, learning together, and sharing what we learn together with all, so together we can fully participate in the Spirit's work of transforming lives and communities in Canada and the U.S. You also heard CRHM's desire to focus on the grassroots, to begin with God's people in their local setting. We heard strong affirmation of CRHM's desire to invest at this level.
2. **The Ongoing Call to Joining God's Mission:** At the same time, we were thankful for your call to CRHM to take seriously our call to lead in mission and to keep its prophetic voice. We assure you that CRHM takes this part of its mandate seriously. We know that we are not only collaborating with God's people, but also catalyzing them for ministry and calling them to own the words of the *Contemporary Testimony* "Joining the mission of God, the church is sent with the gospel of the kingdom to call everyone to know and follow Christ and to proclaim to all the assurance that in the name of Jesus there is forgiveness of sin and new life for all who repent and believe. The Spirit calls all members to embrace God's mission in their neighborhoods and in the world: to feed the hungry, bring water to the thirsty, welcome the stranger, clothe the naked, care for the sick, and free the prisoner. We repent of leaving this work to a few, for this mission is central to our being." (Contemporary Testimony Article 41).

Moving toward a Hopeful Future, Together with You

The last line of Article 41 reflects the heart of CRHM, and we do indeed believe that God's mission is central to our being. We greatly appreciate your part in making this mission sharper as we move forward in "Joining God's Mission: The Ongoing Journey of CRHM."

The writer of Proverbs tells us, "As iron sharpens iron, so one person sharpens another." (Proverbs 27.17) We give thanks for so many partners, such as you, who entered into the sharpening process with Home Missions. The feedback you gave to "Joining God's Mission: The Ongoing Journey of CRHM" has sharpened our focus and our direction as we collaborate with and catalyze God's people who are seeking to live out His mission in their local settings.

The appointed team is working on re-writing our document, and will share it with you as soon as it is ready for your further review and input. The revised document will demonstrate how the direction ties into the mandate of Home Missions as well as how it continues the work of the current strategic plan.

We appreciate your continued prayers and support in this ongoing journey together.

Gratefully,

Moses Chung and CRHM Staff

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