

CATALYST

The CRCA at work through workgroups & local churches

A Quarterly Newsletter

Issue No.1 July 2012

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Welcome!

Ever wondered what the CRCA actually does? CRCA Catalyst will help you see some of the valuable things the Lord is doing right here in the churches we know and love.

A new beginning...

With the close of Trowel & Sword at the end of 2009, people have found it harder to stay abreast of what was happening. Churches grow, lives change, difficult things happen, new ministries and mission works are commenced, and there's been no way to hear about it.

Until now.

CRCA Catalyst is a new ePub (i.e. an electronic publication) which will keep you up to date with the latest developments in CRCA ministry and mission.



CRCA Catalyst marks the beginning of a new way for churches to keep up with the latest developments

The reality is that there is an incredible amount of great ministry happening, and we need to know about it. As we hear about these great things, we're hoping a couple of things will happen:

The first will be that **we'll be stimulated to prayer**. You'll be able to take what you read in CRCA Catalyst and use it to fuel your prayer life. You'll be supporting church planters, pastors, and other ministry workers as they work to

make churches more healthy. The information at your fingertips will help you praise God for all he's doing. That has to be a good thing.

The second will be that you and your church **will be moved to generously support what God is doing**.

In reality, you're *already* supporting great ministry through your church's ministry share payments. Ministries like the Reformed Theological College, World Development & Relief, Church Planting, and youth work are already being blessed by you and your church through the contributions they make via 'ministry share'.

CRCA Catalyst will show you how all that works together. Our prayer is that as we share these stories of God's goodness, you will be moved to praise, you'll will support these works generously, and your prayer life will be nurtured.

- Dave Groenenboom

ministry formation

We have all heard about Ministry Formation, but why was this work begun, and what is it seeking to do now?

In 2003, Synod established the Ministry Formation Workgroup. This committee got to work with developing ways that local churches can better engage in the work of developing leaders and engaging in mission in their local communities.

In 2006 this work was expanded as Synod appointed a Mission Training Coordinator (Rev Jack de Vries) to spearhead this work. Jack worked hard with the Ministry Formation Workgroup to promote the Four Fold Task, adopted in 2006. The Four Fold Task had the basic mission statement *"The Christian Reformed Churches of Australia are churches reforming to reach the lost for Christ."* We call this a 'mission statement' because it outlines the core task that we are working toward. This mission was divided into four main tasks:

Pray: To call upon God for such an outpouring of his Spirit that his people will be assured of his love through his Word, seek to please the Saviour in all things, manifest the godly life and be filled with prayerful and sacrificial compassion for the lost in all the world

Multiply: To enable local churches to expand numerically, equip and nurture their members, and become the mother-churches of as many fellowships and congregations as possible; and also to take further initiatives to create fellowships by penetrating structures of society with the gospel.

Train: To multiply the number of well-trained persons (ordained, non-

ordained, full time, part time, voluntary) lovingly dedicated to the creation and development of such fellowships and congregations by proclaiming the gospel

Align: To reform continually the life of the denomination (including our church ethos, customs, church order, use of resources, denominational committees, support staff and agencies) to encourage and enable the fulfilment of the fundamental aim

Synod 2009 affirmed these core tasks, and embarked on some restructuring work that would enable local churches to pursue these tasks more effectively.

Both before and after Synod 2009, however, some thought the Four Fold Task was too narrowly focused around mission work, and that it did not give enough emphasis to important tasks like pastoral care and preaching. For reasons like these, Synod 2012 modified the tasks to include aspects of church health - which obviously includes aspects like preaching and pastoral care. The hope is that these decisions will see local churches with growing emphases on matters of

• **Discipleship:** growing disciples is an all of life process. Whether we are talking about children, youth, young adults, middle aged or young people, we are to encourage them and develop them as disciples of Jesus. The overall goal is to move people toward maturity in Christ (see Col 1:28). We will be working hard to help local churches find effective ways to encourage people of all ages to grow in their faith, to be positively engaged in their local church, and to develop their determination to express the Kingdom in their daily lives.

• **Leader training:** a specific work group has been developed to provide resources to help local churches train and develop elders, deacons, and other leaders. Obviously, a decision at Synod cannot make things happen at the local level. These resources need to be embraced and fully implemented in local churches.

• **Growing and developing healthy churches:** in addition to the core tasks of faithful preaching, proper administration of the sacraments, and faithful application of church discipline, there are many resources local churches can use to help them assess how they are going and find ways to become more healthy.

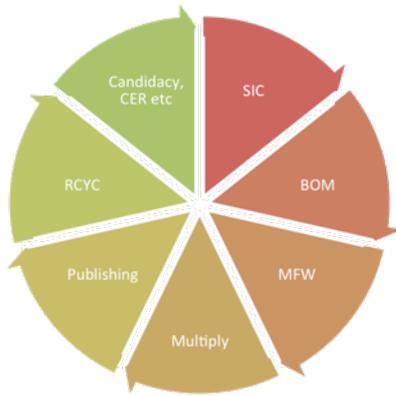
In the same way that no person can ever say that they have 'made it' and that they don't have to grow any more. Local churches, too, can never say 'we've arrived' or 'we're doing everything perfectly. Church health, then, will only ever be relative.

With a view to assist local churches in this work, Synod agreed to establish Church Health Networks in every Classis. Jack de Vries will work with Classes to help local churches do the sort of things that will lead them to greater health.

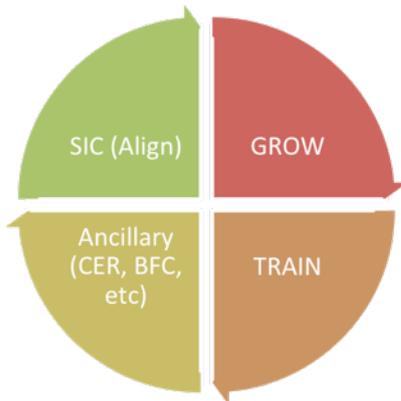
So Synod 2012 has made a good move: the denomination has a more simple structure [see next page] which, Lord willing, will help members move more effectively toward maturity, which will help train elders and other leaders, and which will result in the sort of growth that honours Christ our Saviour.

*"Then Jesus came to them and said, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Therefore go and **make disciples of all nations**, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and **teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you**. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age.""* (Matthew 28:18–20, NIV)

- Dave Groenenboom



CRCA Committees before Synod 2012



CRCA Committees after Synod 2012

train!

When there's a task to do, and we're not sure of the best way to do it, we look around for some good training. If we're planning an overland walk, and we're not used to carrying our gear, we will want to do some training. Following Jesus, being a disciple, also involves training: we learn, we grow, we discover new things, we seek to grow toward maturity in Christ (see Col 1:28).

The TRAIN workgroup has been appointed by Synod 2012 to help local churches by

- developing training resources for elders and leaders
- developing clear discipleship pathways for use in the local church. That is, helping churches understand how they can best help Christians to grow and develop as followers of Jesus, and to do this from a clear scriptural and reformational perspective
- oversee and redevelop the denominational website (www.crca.org.au)
- collaborate with the various training arms of the CRCA (RTC, Candidacy, Leadership Development Workgroup, CRCA Youth, CRCA Children's Ministry, Resource Centre, etc.) so that we are all heading in the same direction, working toward the mission and goals of the CRCA

If you're interested to know how TRAIN can help your church, you can email [Dave Groenenboom](mailto:Dave.Groenenboom@crca.org.au) or visit the [Ministry Formation Website](http://www.ministryformation.com.au) for some ideas.

- Dave Groenenboom
TRAIN Workgroup

grow!

It's an exciting word isn't it? It's what everything organic does. Plants grow, animals grow and people grow. And because the church is the body of Christ, it also is intended to grow. So Paul says in Colossians 1:6, 'All over the world the gospel is bearing fruit and growing'. Who is responsible for this growth? Well, God is - he makes things grow (1 Corinthians 3:6-7; Colossians 2:19). This means that when we see growth in our lives and growth in the church we praise God. We are witnessing the supernatural power of God at work!

But we are also called to grow – grow in faith (2 Corinthians 10:15; 2 Thessalonians 1:3), grow up in our salvation (1 Peter 2:2) and grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ (Colossians 1:10; 2 Peter 3:18). We do that by reading and pondering the Word and constantly praying to our great God.



Synod has appointed a committee called GROW (formerly called ROAD and then Multiply and then Word Mission & Deed Support!), recognising that we can either hinder or support the growth God wants to give by the way we conduct ourselves individually or as churches.

The mandate of GROW is as follows:

To grow healthy churches which nurture and equip their members and, by God's grace expand numerically, become the mother-churches of as many fellowships and congregations as possible, and take further

initiatives to penetrate structures of society with the gospel.

This focuses firstly on **church health**, recognising that the healthier our churches are, the more likely that we will be able to support things like:

- Church planting through the **Church Planting Taskforce** here in Australia and **GOSPEL** overseas,
- Word & Deed Ministries in the Solomon Islands through the **Solomon Islands Workgroup**
- as well as **World Development & Relief**.

Stay tuned for more developments soon from all the GROW workgroups. May God grow us individually and as churches for his glory! It will be encouraging and exciting to see Him continue His work among us.

- Brian Vaatstra
GROW workgroup

Age Appropriate Ministry Ideas...

Planning a ministry to a certain age group of youth or children? Well, finding resources, ideas and tools for that ministry is a whole lot more accessible with the development of the Discipleship Matrix.

The matrix breaks down the many different age groups of youth and children and informs leaders on specific considerations for that age group. These considerations are based on developmental ages and stages. This is then mapped with ministry resources, links and curriculum ideas.

These resource ideas for ministry cover the **head, heart** and **hands** as the main elements of discipleship:

Head: the study of scripture

Heart: the act of adoration, prayer and worship

Hands: our involvement in God's mission

The Matrix also provides links to ideas and resources for the two environments that discipleship takes place, them being Family and Church. In each section you can get resources for empowering families in their ministry towards the specific age group and also for engagement and integration into wider church involvement.

The matrix will help ministry leaders plan programs that cover all three elements in either a youth or children's ministry environments. These programs will be relevant to each respective ministry, thus providing a

holistic discipleship approach. The obvious strength of the Matrix is that it brings many resources together in an easy searchable format.

The Matrix is an ever increasing bank of ideas, articles, training packages that can be explored at www.resourcecentre.crca.org.au

A few booklets and posters have been mailed to each church, if you would like your own personal copy then please email resources@crca.org.au to request one free of charge.

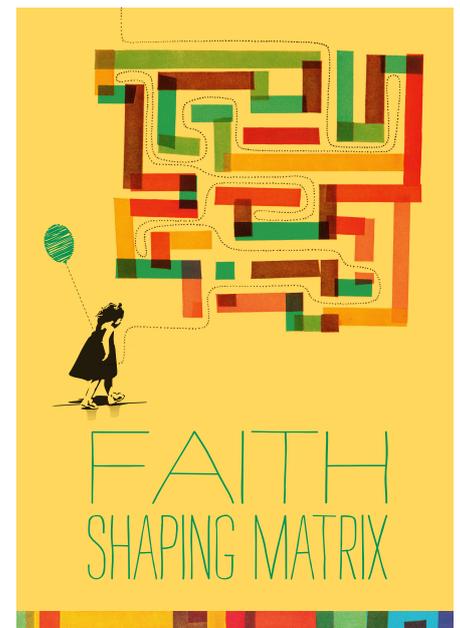
Note: Jonathan and Ray send out regular updates from their blog. You can sign up for their updates at

<http://resourcecentre.crca.org.au/youth/youth-blog/> (Jonathan/Youth)
<http://resourcecentre.crca.org.au/children/children-s-blog/> (Ray/Children)



"Come along quietly, Carl. Your latest birthday puts you with the Middle Ageds."

Jonathan Vandenberg (CRCA Youth Worker)
 Ray Rus (CRCA Childrens Worker)





Progress ... in small steps

The Dee Why CRC is situated on the Northern Beaches of Sydney (some 25 ks) from the city center. The Northern Beaches is one of the most picturesque and expensive areas to live in the whole of Australia.

For some years, the Dee Why church experienced substantial growth, mainly from Dutch migrants. Over the last 25 years or so, however, membership has declined.

One reason for this decline is the high cost of housing. Home purchases can be \$750,000.00 upwards while rental properties range from \$450.00 to \$2000.00 per week depending on size and location. As a result, younger members and families have moved either north (Wamberal) or west or even south to find cheaper accommodation. This has left us with a congregation which is made up of predominantly elderly people.

So over the last few years we have started to see ourselves as a 'church plant' - without moving to another area or receiving denominational funding. To that end we have changed our worship format as well as our internal layout to give our services a more welcoming feel. We

now use several musical instruments in the morning service and constantly use the data projector for both services.

Also, instead of people entering from the street up some stairs we now enter in using the double doors on the south side which are on level ground. This has also allowed us to use the rear of the worship center for coffee and tea after both services. This has improved the fellowship amongst members and with visitors. This has proved to be a great blessing!

But change is not always easy! When we started out on this journey reactions varied:

- *some elders could see the value in it, whilst others thought it wouldn't make any difference*
- *some of the more skeptical actually said that this wouldn't change things and that it was only the gospel that would change people*
- *others quipped "turn the church around and we will be going backwards forever!"*
- *many of the elderly have just loved the change - especially the new coffee area at the back of the church. It's great for fellowship in general and connecting with visitors*

Thankfully, the Lord has blessed us with a steady reversal of the decline in our membership.

- We now have approximately 60 communicant members and some 18 baptized members as well as some regular visitors.
- We had the joy of young couples joining us and over recent months had several baptisms and public professions of faith.
- We have recently welcomed two young couples and a single guy from a prominent charismatic church in the area into our fellowship. They love the reformed doctrines of grace and are very appreciative of faithful Bible teaching.

Worship services are being attended faithfully by most of our members. The morning service is regularly attended by 50 to 60 people and the evening service has also seen an increase from 12 to 30 and sometimes as many as 40 attending. This has been a real encouragement for us!

Sunday school, although small, is run every Sunday and we are looking forward to an increased Sunday School attendance in the coming years.

Bible studies (Cell groups) are well attended with approximately 90% of the congregation attending.

A men's breakfast is also held every month and gives opportunity for further fellowship amongst our men folk.

We support various mission projects including the Solomon Island work, and also the Chaplaincy work of Mrs. Debbie Peters at the local Cromer High School campus.

One of the challenges we face as a congregation is to raise up competent new leaders. At the moment we are thankful for the leadership we have but to a large part it is a revolving door. We are working with new members, exploring ways to involve them more in Dee Why's future leadership.

We thank the Lord for the growth we have seen and look to Him for his ongoing blessing in our various ministries.

- John Zuidema

Five Confessions of a Failed Church Planter



John Thomas lives in Birmingham, Alabama. He is Marketing and Sales Manager with New Hope Books. He writes about some important lessons he learned in the process of planting a church...

Of course, I had heard the stats about church planting failures. Regardless, I went for it knowing the Lord was leading me to start a new church for His glory. I read all the books, attended the conferences, took church planting classes in college and seminary, planned, prayed, pleaded with and persuaded others to join the team, raised money, developed a killer logo; even my wife was onboard! How could I fail?

But failure did not come easily. I have never worked harder in my life. Hundreds of hours, thousands of dollars, a myriad of spent dreams, and 18 short months later: she was gone!

That took place just over 6 years ago. Sure, there were tons of things that happened along the way which could be blamed for my failure...yada, yada, yada. Yet, after much reflection, evaluation--and

ultimately repentance--I realized that I am to blame. I confess: I am responsible.

There are five major--and painful--confessions that I am ready to own up to:

1. Prayerlessness-- I failed to pray as I ought. Self-reliance and fierce independence marked the day. Strategy and proven methods were my fail-safe, not sweet communion with the One who held the answers to my unasked questions, let alone the immediate needs of the day. Bootstrap theology and iron-will methodology only carried me as far as my boots (metaphorically speaking) and wherewithal would take me. And that was not far enough. I was, after all, wrestling with the eternal and weighty matters of gathering the bride of Christ.

The lesson I learned: Prayer as the foundation for church planting is not just a spiritual slogan. It is a necessity and must be part of the planter's DNA long before it becomes a core value for the church.

2. Lack of Personal Focus-- I was too spread out...not laser-focused on the mission. Add together being a husband, father, Ph.D. student, Bible college professor, church planter, and what do you get? A demented dabbler! Dabbling in many things

may have made me a great dabbler. Being a lead planter requires grit, determination, and surrender: complete surrender. I failed to take into account the immensity of the burden to lead a church plant and the personal focus it required.

The lesson I learned: This calling requires everything. It cannot be dabbled with. A church planter must count the costs of intense and extended focus and then be willing to pay them.

3. Lack of Gospel Centeredness-- Yes, I preached the gospel and lives were changed. But, the fact is that I did not center the work on the gospel. When I met with potential partners, the gospel was not central, money was. When I met with my leadership and core group, the gospel was not central, the launch was. Sure, the gospel was mentioned but only as a means to an end. We were after all planting a church! Missing the mark here was to the detriment of building genuine and lasting community.

The lesson I learned: The gospel must permeate all things. For this to happen, the church planter must purposefully look through the lens of the gospel as he casts vision, develops strategy, raises money, teaches the core group, loves and cares for his family, hauls equipment

in and out of the venue, ad infinitum.

4. Lack of Honest Critique-- I neither invited nor wanted critique from the outside by folks who I was convinced "didn't get it." This was a huge mistake. My lack of confidence in the Holy Spirit's leadership in this area astounds me. I often sensed the need to open up to colleagues and friends; I opted instead to operate from a conceited and sinful mindset of, "I got this!" I knew if someone leaned in too far they would quickly see my faults.

The lesson I learned: There are no Lone Rangers in ministry...for long. The lead planter must associate himself with a person, group or organization that will not only coach him but critique him as he honestly shares his journey--warts and all. The pain of transparency is greatly diminished when you realize you

are not the first to struggle, fail, and question.

5. Lack of Partnership-- I almost want to give myself a pass here, but it just won't work. In 2006, church planting networks and partnerships did not abound as they do today. Yet, there were some. I chose to go it alone instead of partnering with those who did not cross every theological "t" nor dot every methodological "i" as I did. Those distinctions, while very important, should not have been as great a barrier as I made them out to be.

The lesson I learned: Camaraderie is priceless. The church planter needs to walk with others that are a little farther ahead on the journey. Church planting networks are popping up all over. Some are regional. Some are national. There is a network for every church planter's ilk. Find a network and belong. Use

its resources and wisdom. You are going to need them.

Looking back, any one of these errors was enough to sink the ship. There are dozens of other failures that I could note. These seem to be the most egregious; the ones that had they been dealt with at the time would likely have made the difference between failure and viability.

It is my hope and prayer that these confessions will help those who are in the throes of leading a plant or those who will lead a plant in the future, not to make the same mistakes I made along the way. It is also my hope that the Lord will continue to raise up an army of men who will, in spite of the odds, take up the banner of church planting for the glory of God!

- John Thomas (used with permission)
Twitter: @JohnLThomas



Just over six years ago, in line with the four-fold task, the CRCA established the Church Planting Taskforce (CPT) with the mandate of encouraging and resourcing the work of Church Planting throughout the denomination. At the most recent CRCA Synod it was reported that, under God's grace, four new churches have been instituted in

the last three years and many more church plants are underway or in the planning stages.

One of the churches is Summerleas Christian Church, in southern Tasmania. Summerleas was planted in 2008, and since that time has been blessed greatly, growing from just over 50, to nearly 100.

It has been exciting to see the Lord at work in the lives of people. Pastor David Lynch says "It has also been exciting to see our vision begin to take shape and to actually work as we seek to disciple one another and reach out to others. It has taken a good 3 years or so (and we're still working at it) to get our heads around what it means for us to live as a Gospel centred

organic community (our vision) and so to see this finally start to happen is such a joy."

While some of that growth has been transfers from other churches, there have been conversions and reconnections to church and Christ that had been dormant for some time. While we don't want to get hung up on numbers, it's worth remembering that every number is a person who has come to life in Christ. Here are some comments by those who have come to faith in Summerleas:

- *I realise that God knew exactly what I needed - to be overwhelmed and surrounded with Christians, not just on a Sunday but every day, all the time, so that I didn't have a chance to not think about it, or let it slip into the background.*
- *When [my son] was in grade 1 [a friend from S'leas] talked to me about her church (now ours) ... and how kid -*

friendly it was. [my son] had been to church a few times with my mother but not with me. I took the chance and came along to church. I guess that's when I started being more aware of my sinful nature and I am different from the person I was.

- *I also believe that God used people here to show me that he's real. I have met so many genuine, generous, kind people since I've been here, and every one of them has been a Christian, and it got me thinking that if these people are Christians, and this is how good they are, there must be something to it!*
- *Joining in ... on rhythms and family meals was a great way to get to know the members of the church better. I have met lots of Christians who have an active relationship with God – it is not a once a week event...it is their life.*

The impact has not just been felt by those who have come the church in

that time. There has been great benefit for those who were involved in the original core team. David Lynch says

"(this impact has been) huge, everyone has grown immensely and I would say that almost all of them are more active in making disciples than before. Many have grown into wonderful church leaders, and others have stepped up in ways that they would not have done had they not been part of a church plant."

As a denomination we have much to give thanks for, including the ministry of church planting, as seen in places like Summerleas. We ought to continue to pray that God would continue to raise up leaders, church planters and church planting teams as he continue to draw the lost to himself through his people.

*Clinton Berends
Church Planting Taskforce*



CRCA Ministry Share

...and why it is actually a very good thing

Ever wondered what your church's 'ministry share' actually achieves? Is it really just a 'church tax'? It may be time to think again. Tony Deenick tells us why...

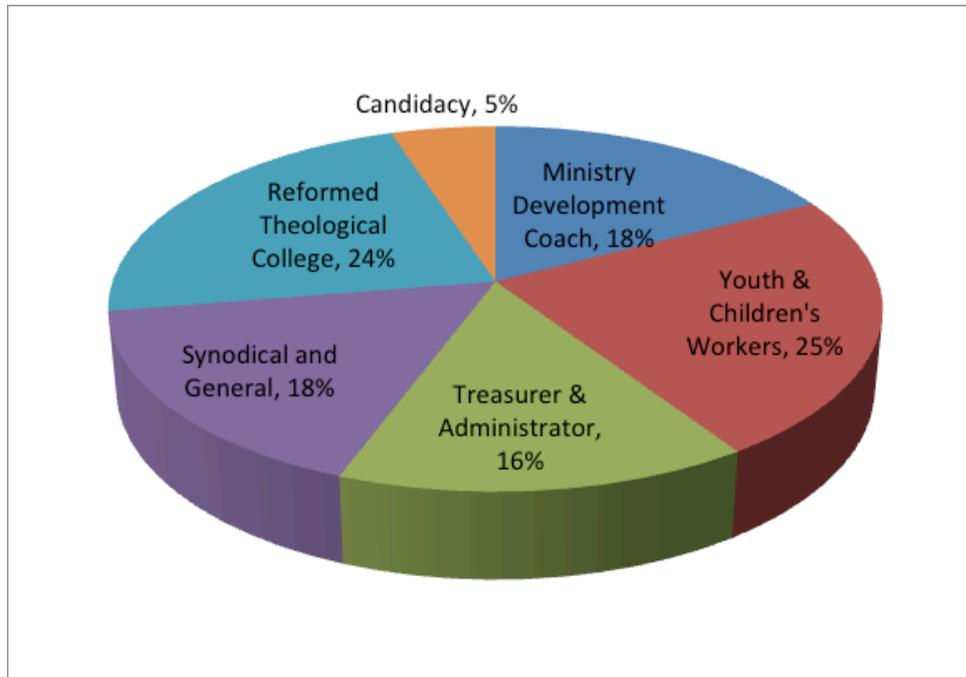
As individual churches there are often things we would like to do which we can't afford or can't easily do on our own. Alternatively, we may simply want to do some things less expensively or do them better by being part of a group. So

every three years at a meeting of representatives of all our churches, called the Synod, we decide what things we can best do together as a denomination. To pay for these ministries churches agree to pay a "ministry share" based on membership. In practice the ministry share represents around 6% (±3%) of a church's budget, depending on size and levels of giving.

So what does your church's Ministry Share payment accomplish?

Well, it is used to cover administration and denominational legal obligations, such things as setting minister's salary levels, providing for long service leave, collecting and disbursing superannuation payments, paying copyright fees and providing financial advice. Some of the money goes towards maintaining the denominational website and web addresses and publishing the annual church yearbook. Other funds are used to provide for the cost of Synods and the work of synodical committees which provide oversight over the joint activities and denominational workers. Some committees undertake research on behalf of the churches in areas of common interest. For example, the last Synod set up a committee to look into the salaries of ministers and ministry workers and another to investigate the best alternative to replace the 1984 version of the NIV for church use. All these activities are provided or supported by the denominational Treasurer and Administrator.

A significant proportion of the money goes towards supporting the work of the Reformed Theological College in Geelong and the Candidacy Committee as they prepare people for ministry in our churches, monitor their progress and provide them with a vicariate (a year of "on the job" training in a local church under the



guidance of a senior pastor). In addition some funds are used to help cover the costs of leadership training in churches and in-service training and support at *ReCharge* (Ministers & Wives) conferences. A small part of ministry share also goes towards supporting the denomination's mission in the Solomons.

The largest proportion of ministry share funds goes towards providing leadership, mentoring, training and support to local churches through our denominational workers: the Ministry Development Coach and the Youth and Children's Coordinators. They also help promote the vision of the CRCA and coordinate joint activities by the churches.

In particular, the Ministry Development Coach is responsible for resourcing churches for growth, health and development, promoting collaborative approaches in this and other training initiatives, promoting the CRCA vision including producing newsletters and overseeing the denominational website, and generally assisting and coaching ministers, church planters and other church workers.

The Youth Coordinator is responsible for assisting with training in youth leadership, development of youth evangelism and nurture in the local church,

oversight of regional and national youth programs such as the ministry internship program and convention planning, management of the Resource Centre, and general coaching, support and encouragement of youth workers in our churches.

The Children's Coordinator is responsible for promoting effective children's ministries in the local churches, providing resources for these ministries, overseeing and providing training in the ChildSafe program, maintaining a healthy network of children's workers and providing them with advice and support.

By working together through a relatively small 'ministry share', contribution, each local church helps to provide substantial services and support to all the churches corporately. Your generous support through ministry share helps the CRCA continue to deliver good leadership and helpful resources to local churches.

- Tony Deenick
Building & Finance Committee



"About my loaves and fishes . . . could I get a receipt for tax purposes?"

CRCA Special Appeal Collection

On August 19 the CRCA is asking churches to hold a special appeal collection. The goal is to move us out of a tough financial position. We're hoping to raise \$145,000 - is this realistic?

When Synod met just a few months ago, the delegates resoundingly supported the move for this special appeal.

They did this because they believed the CRCA is engaged in good work and great ministry.

If we all pull together, with a deep sense of gratitude to God, we can lessen our dependence on borrowings, and build resources for future work.

True, \$145,000 is a huge sum, but if we keep in mind that the CRCA has about 6200 communicant members, the figure that first looked huge seems a lot more attainable.

Did you know it would take just \$24 from every communicant member to raise this sum on one Sunday?

\$24.00 That is all. With God's help, friends, we can do this!

Think of what \$24 might represent:

- *A couple of Big Mac Meals*
- *A kilo of coffee beans*
- *6 lattes*
- *A new release DVD purchase*

Of course for some, \$24.00 is not that easy to part with. For others, though, it's hardly a wrinkle in the wallet.

Many of us left Synod with a renewed belief that our gracious God has plans for the CRCA.

We have seen how he is blessing churches, growing Christians, building disciples, and extending his Kingdom!

He is doing this through local churches, through CRCA workgroups, Classes, and CRCA workers.

So, let's all do our bit on Aug 19. Let's pitch in with \$24 each, and make our gift a prayer that Christ will be increasingly honored through the CRCA's ministry and mission.

- Dave Groenenboom

Catalyst Logo



Start at the apex, and work around the logo in a counter clockwise direction

- God reveals himself to fallen people through his Word, in his acts of creation and providence
- Jesus comes to reconcile people to God and restore all things to God through his cross and resurrection
- As people come under Christ's rule and proclaim his kingdom, praise and honour is directed to God

Catalyst seeks to

- **highlight** God's work through CRCA local churches, classes, and workgroups
- **honour** God by showing God's transforming grace at work in people through CRCA ministries and mission
- **encourage** local churches toward increasing health and witness

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