

Concept of Ministry – All Nations Christian Reformed Church

Last reviewed, November 2014

1. What is a Concept of Ministry?

A “Concept of Ministry” is a statement of the central ministry ideas of a congregation. It expresses a congregation’s vision. As such, it is a statement of faith. It says what a particular congregation believes herself to BE by God’s grace and what God is calling the congregation to DO in his name. It is a central reference document for ministry programs because it states the ministry’s purpose.

This is the Concept of Ministry statement for the All Nations Christian Reformed Church. It is a unique statement. You will not be able to transfer it to some other church and have it fit. Still, All Nations shares many characteristics with other churches in the body of Christ. Because of this, our Concept is a mixture of unique elements and common elements which we share with other Christian communities.

2. Our Name: All Nations Christian Reformed Church

A church’s name sometimes suggests where the church has come from and sometimes where it thinks it is going. Our name does both. The term Christian places us in history as does the word Reformed. The phrase All Nations points to something we celebrate right now and to which we look forward.

We call ourselves Christian because we are part of the body of believers who follow Christ, the Messiah. We follow Christ not because we are good enough for God, but because God has been overwhelmingly good to us through Christ. We need Jesus Christ to make us right with God. Only the power of the Holy Spirit, which raised Christ Jesus from the dead, can make us live for him. We affirm this confession in the Apostles’ Creed and the Nicene Creed which we share with the rest of Christ’s Church.

Calling ourselves Reformed places our church historically and also describes our hope for today. As a congregation we worship and work together within the community of the Christian Reformed Church in North America. The fundamental principles in this church are an acceptance of the Bible, the Word of God, and the way of salvation it proclaims. Our beliefs are based on the Bible. The Word of God is preached every Sunday. We believe God claims every part of our lives, not just a “religious” part, and that we must let God, by the Word and Spirit, reshape our lives according to his will.

The word Church means “that which belongs to the Lord”. In the English Bible, “church” is a translation of a word that means “called out”. The Bible tells us that those who belong to the church are “called to belong to Jesus Christ, loved by God and called to be saints” (Romans 1:6,7). We are a church community united by this faith. We express this unity on the Lord’s Day, when we come together to join in worship. But we also find opportunities for fellowship during the week in one another’s homes, in mid-week meetings, and special projects.

All members of the church are baptized. Baptism is the special sign of incorporation into the fellowship of Christ's death and resurrection. Each month confessing members of the church join in the celebration of the Lord's Supper. This special celebration of God's saving love is also called Holy Communion.

The beginning of our church name, All Nations, is something we chose to describe a special characteristic of the Church. We celebrate and affirm the special blessing God has given us by making us a church of all nations. We proclaim that Jesus Christ is Lord of all nations, ethnic groups, races and ages. We believe that ethnic and cultural differences should not be barriers between people but rather a source of enrichment under the Lordship of Jesus Christ. We are working to affirm this in everyday life and to celebrate our varied gifts in worship of the one true God. The church is one holy catholic or universal church "from every nation, tribe, people and language". (Revelation 7:9)

As Jesus said, "Is it not written, 'My house shall be called a house of prayer for all Nations'?" (Mark 11:17a)

3. Our Ministry: The Biblical Model/Christ's Model

The Church is the Body of Christ and its power is the power of the Word and Spirit of Christ. Christ defines the church's task. He imposes the church's commission, its ministry, in these words:

Go, therefore, 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 that I have commanded you. (Matthew 28:19-20)

The Ministry is not made by humans, but ordained by God. Jesus prayed: "As you sent me into the world, I have sent them into the world." (John 17:18). God's purpose in sending his Son into the world is continuing unchanged in Christ's sending of the church into the world. God's purpose is the salvation of the world as recorded in John 3:17 — "For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through him." Jesus said, "I was sent only to the lost sheep of Israel" (Matthew 15:24), but he himself sent his disciples to "all nations". The personal life and ministry of Jesus is the pattern for the ministry of the Church.

4. All Nations' Areas of Ministry

The life of a church takes many forms and directions. Our discussion has focused on four areas: worship, teaching, outreach, and community. We would be less than a church without anyone of them.

A. All Nations Worships God

Our weekly worship services are a major focus of our church life. In worship we meet God to praise and pray; to confess and find forgiveness; to listen, learn, and dedicate ourselves to God's service. Our experience points to the importance of our worship services as the first introduction to the church for many newcomers. Inquirers might come to Sunday School or a mid-week Bible Study first. But for most, our Sunday worship services have been the starting point.

Our goals for worship are summed up as three:

1. That our worship of God be pleasing to him,
2. That visitors, as well as members, both hear God's word proclaimed and experience the love of Christ, and
3. That our worship be active, enabling individuals to participate in worship.

Toward these ends, we continue to have two services on Sundays, seeing each as an opportunity for evangelism and outreach, as well as worship. Our evening service is informal, encouraging participation in singing; sharing of joys, concerns and needs; and prayer.

B. All Nations Teaches the Word of God

The call to be "reformed according to the Scriptures" requires our church to make a continuous commitment to teaching for all participants in our community. We confess that God's Word gives us the wisdom that leads to salvation through faith in Jesus Christ.

All scripture is inspired by God and is useful for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness. So that everyone who belongs to God may be proficient, equipped for every good work. (2 Timothy 3:16-17)

Teaching in the All Nations community takes place through the preaching of the Word, Sunday School classes for all ages, mid-week Bible Studies, special youth programs, and the provision of resources for individual study.

C. All Nations Reaches Out to Others

Recognizing Christ's radical call to discipleship, the members of All Nations make a commitment, not only to build each other up in faith, but to reach out to others with Christ's love. We encourage our members to introduce us to their friends, in hope that they too may join us in our Christian lives, and we train our members to share their Christian faith in word and deed in their life situation. As a Church, we want to respond to those in need in our often unjust and violent society. We open up our building to groups that enhance the life of the broader community.

D. All Nations is a Community of Believers

All Nations exists as a community. We are not just a collection of individuals. We seek to be a community in which members can meaningfully share the gifts God has given them. We want our community to be a resource for both individual and collective Christian initiatives.

"As each has received a gift, employ it for one another, as good stewards of God's varied grace...." (Peter 4:10).

As a community, we work to share common goals and to accept common challenges. We strive to be good and responsible stewards of the gifts, the time and the material resources God has given us.

5. The Context of Our Ministry

Our church is located in Halifax, Nova Scotia. We also recognize a much wider context for our ministry. We exist as a church locally, regionally and in a Canadian context, and also internationally.

A. Ministry Programs

Locally, we affirm the larger Christian community of which we are a part by cooperation with several other churches in various efforts and initiatives. Historically, we have affirmed this larger Christian community through pulpit exchanges and the use of Council-approved preachers from other churches in the metro area, including preachers from the Roman Catholic, Anglican, United, Brethren, Presbyterian and Baptist communities.

B. Hospitals and Universities

While we do not have formal programs directed at the hospitals and nursing homes in Halifax, we have regular contact through visiting our own members and those from other Christian Reformed Churches in the region who are referred to Halifax Hospitals for medical treatment.

C. Social Services Agencies

We support and encourage the involvement of many of our members in community and social agencies.

D. Regional, National, and International Ministries

We maintain membership in the Council of Christian Reformed Churches in Canada (CCRCC) and value its linkages with other Canadian Christians who are addressing concerns at a regional and national level. On the regional level, we are committed to the support of the Maritime Diaconal Conference (CRC) as a body for collaborative ministry among the Christian Reformed Churches in the Maritimes. Our support of CRC denominational causes allows us to participate in the Christian Reformed Church's national and international ministries (e.g., Home Missions, World Missions, World Renew).

6. Goals and Objectives for Ministry

The Council of All Nations Christian Reformed Church, in reviewing and updating this Concept of Ministry, has established goals and objectives which are structured according to the four areas of ministry described in Section 4 — **worship, teaching, outreach and community**. In contrast to the corporate nature of the goals listed under these four headings (Sections A through D), the “membership goals” in Section E were adopted by Council for implementation by members as individuals.

The **goals** are the long term aims of the congregation and are expressions of the kind of church we believe God is calling us to be. Many of these goals are, by their nature, ongoing — we will never really complete them or attain perfection in them. Others will change as our congregation grows and changes. **Goals are identified numerically.**

The **objectives**, on the other hand, are more concrete statements of action which are intended to contribute to the attainment of larger, broader, or longer term goals. The objectives frequently contain references to time deadlines or quantitative targets. **Objectives relating to particular goals are identified alphabetically.**

A. WORSHIP

1. Maintain the centrality of preaching the Word in the worship and life of the congregation.

2. Present the gospel such that believers are challenged to grow in their faith and inquirers are encouraged toward commitment to Christ and his people. Toward this end we commit ourselves to make our services sensitive to those who are not familiar with Christ or with the practices or worship of the Christian church.

3. Affirm both variety and tradition in our worship. Our worship should reflect the diversity and richness of our cultural and generational backgrounds as we look for new ways of worshiping God.

a) Use and develop the musical and other artistic gifts that God has given those within our Church, including the gifts of children.

b) Increase participation in worship by children and young people through services each year geared to youth in terms of content, music, and participation.

4. Promote the removal of physical and intellectual barriers to worship.

a) Continue to improve our sound system for hearing and recording our services.

5. Work to ensure that the sanctuary best fits and enhances our style and manner of worship.

B. TEACHING

1. Strive to always have at least one adult Sunday School elective accessible to non-members and to make our Sunday School accessible to children outside our congregation.

a) Follow up with the families of non-church children who attend our youth programs.

2. Offer a variety of adult education options in Sunday School and elsewhere, corresponding to needs in the congregation.

a) Ensure that each year an adult Sunday School course be offered that:

i) Examines church doctrine;

ii) Deals with that application of Christianity in our everyday lives;

iii) Studies basic Christian principles and theology;

iv) Encourages effective stewardship.

b) Create new opportunities for training and equipping for ministry. (Objective set for 2014-15)

3. Encourage members to read and contribute to local, denominational and interdenominational publications.

4. Encourage the use and development of the teaching gifts of our members, both inside and outside the congregation.

a) Offer a teacher training seminar for Sunday school teachers every year.

b) Bi-annually offer a program which assists all members to identify their gifts and to create opportunities for them to implement those gifts.

5. Encourage spiritual growth in the home through:

a) Training in the conduct of devotions and worship at home.

b) Present an organized program of scripture memorization.

c) Establish a resource library.

6. Encourage and promote Christian higher education.

7. Ensure that classrooms are adequately equipped to facilitate teaching.

C. REACHING OUT TO OTHERS

1. Emphasize the centrality of prayer in our efforts to reach out to others and foster a more structured outreach-oriented congregational prayer life.

a) Hold regularly scheduled prayer sessions.

2. Every year, increase the number of people in regular attendance at our worship services, with emphasis on those without previous significant church involvement.

3. Evangelism

a) Every year, offer our members opportunities for training and motivation in evangelism.

4. Promote our church and its services to the community

a) Maintain an up-to-date church website, brochure, visitor information cards and through the regular use of seasonal flyers/advertisements.

5. Reach out to those who live in the few blocks surrounding our church building in the following ways:

a) Increase the use of special services and events as a means of coming into contact with residents of the surrounding community.

b) Encourage members to become involved in existing community service programmes

d) Integrate evangelism with diaconal outreach by including church brochures with grocery call deliveries.

e) Renovate the building to make the outward physical structure less intimidating.

6. Reach out to those with whom individual members work, study, play or share neighborhoods, or to whom they are related, in the following ways:

a) Encourage members to introduce us to their “unchurched” friends

b) While affirming an every-member commitment to outreach in Central Halifax, encourage members to evangelize in the communities where they live and work by developing friendships with neighbors, co-workers and fellow community members.

- c) Offer at least one seminar per year designed to appeal to a perceived demand for information, for example, seminars on parenting, first aid or money management.
- d) Host a discussion or conference on the Christian perspective on a public policy, artistic or similar issue, designed to attract the attendance of members of specific interest groups.
- e) Examine the viability of offering Vacation Bible School. (Objective set for 2014- 2015.)

D. COMMUNITY OF BELIEVERS

General Fellowship.

1. Encourage fellowship opportunities for the congregation both as a whole and in smaller groups.

a) Hold an average of one fellowship activity at least every six weeks combined where appropriate with fund raising activities.

b) Continue to promote our annual picnic, church family camp-out and Welcome Back Brunch (September) etc.

2. Provide an opportunity for sharing the joys and sufferings of the members, in order to support one another in our Christian walk of life.

a) Encourage the growth of Small Groups and provide an opportunity for all members to attend Small Groups.

b) Offer a seeker-sensitive Small Group each year.

c) Learn about and hold Talking Circles. (Objective set for 2014 – 2015).

3. Encourage and promote the development of groups for youth in our church.

a) Establish a regularly meeting high school age youth group.

b) Establish a regularly meeting junior high school age youth group.

4. Maintain and affirm existing relationships with congregations of other denominations in the Halifax area.

Individual nurture.

5 Enthusiastically welcome all new members into our fellowship and inform them of the character of our ministry.

a) Establish a “sponsorship program” to provide Christian discipleship on a one-on-one basis to newcomers and members who would benefit from such contact.

b) Appoint a Sunday Hospitality Co-Ordinator to ensure regular visitors and newcomers are invited to someone’s home.

c) Provide newcomers with this “Concept of Ministry” statement.

d) Encourage newcomers to attend a Church Basics Class.

8. Spiritual Growth

a) Elders visit every household in the congregation each year.

Stewardship of resources

9. Help members identify their gifts and use them in the life of the church

a) Hold regularly scheduled workshops.

10. Encourage and support members in their involvement with ministries and community volunteer organizations outside the congregation.

11. Keep the congregation well informed regarding its own activities and our work through the agencies with which we have direct links (e.g. Home missions, World Missions, World Renew (formerly CRWRC), and the Council of Christian Reformed Churches in Canada (CCRCC).

a) insert regular Council meeting reports in weekly announcements.

12. Improve the utilization of our church building by working toward:

a) An appropriately configured space for fellowship dinners and multi-purpose use.

b) A clean and inviting physical appearance in the building.

13. Ministry Shares

14. Encourage “proportional giving” as a stewardship goal for all members; that is, giving as a reflection of God’s blessings and encourage members to participate in fund raising activities.

15. Ensure that All Nations’ budget planning reflects our congregation’s vision for ministry, as outlined in the Concept of Ministry.

16. Debt Reduction

E. MEMBERSHIP

As followers of Jesus, we seek to love God with all our hearts, souls and minds, and to love our neighbours as ourselves. To these ends and as his disciple, I will strive to:

- a) Give my whole life to Jesus Christ, my Saviour and Lord;*
- b) Seek God's will for my life and his world through daily Bible reading and prayer;*
- c) Worship God in church each Sunday;*
- d) Love, encourage and pray for the people of this church, especially when I am informed of their needs;*
- e) Participate in at least one nurturing activity of this church such as a Bible Study, adult education, Sunday School, youth group or a prayer group;*
- f) Use the gifts God has given me to help the ministry of this church in its efforts to glorify God and to be "salt" and "light" in the world;*
- g) Set aside, on a regular basis, a certain portion of my income to support the work of God through this church;*
- h) Pray for the children of this congregation and be an example of Christian discipleship for them; instruct my children (if God has given them to me) in the Christian faith and bring them weekly to church education.*
- i) Witness by speech and action to God's love in Jesus Christ to those God puts in my path; those of all ages, sexes, classes, abilities, financial situations, races and nations*
- j) Express in my life Christ's love, humility, obedience and compassion.*

7. Addendum - November, 2000

In the years following the 1996 revision of this Concept of Ministry, many of our goals and objectives have been met, and some remain unfulfilled. Other initiatives have occurred which were not even contemplated by the Concept of Ministry. This period has seen the congregation plant deep roots in the neighbourhood and develop a desire to become more outreach oriented, both as a congregation and as individual members. With the assistance of Diaconal Ministries of Eastern Canada, we have developed a model for a mentoring ministry, whereby individual members will develop long-term relationships with people in physical or spiritual need. Recently, a part time mentoring ministry coordinator has been hired to lead the congregation in this venture.

Growth in membership and attendance has witnessed a corresponding recognition of the value of small groups in nurturing spiritual growth, enfolding new members and fostering Christian community.

An increase in the number of young children in the congregation and the need to nurture their faith from an early age has resulted in two initiatives. One is the implementation of a Children & Worship program, which involves children in experiencing and responding to biblical stories through a multi-sensory approach to worship. The other is the development of a GEMS program for young girls and planning for a similar program for young boys in the congregation.

All Nations' already close connections with local universities has now been enhanced through the appointment of a Christian Reformed Chaplain at Dalhousie University. The purpose of this ministry is to provide a Christian intellectual witness which will declare, explore and celebrate the good news of Christ within the entire university community.

In worship, we continue to affirm both variety and tradition, using the varied gifts within our congregation to achieve a blend of traditional and contemporary styles.

First produced: November, 1991

Revised: January 1996

Addendum: November 2000