WorldRenew
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Through the Dust

A MAGAZINE FOR WORLD RENEW CHURCH LEADERS

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Dear Friends:

Looking back on 2013, World Renew's work can be grouped into three overall categories—integration, intentionality, and integrity. As you know, **integration** is a hallmark of our community development programs around the world. We routinely ask hard questions about integration starting at the community level—questions about the common good, self-reliance, the gospel, and the appropriate role of the church in the lives of the poor.

As a result, 3,755 communities tracked their own progress out of poverty last year, working collaboratively with 76 Christian partners. In 2013, the lives of nearly 770,000 disaster survivors were touched by our volunteers. Internationally, 265 volunteers gave 23,633 hours of their time in communities of extreme need. And in North America, volunteers did the work of 123 full-time employees, constructing or rebuilding 476 homes and assessing needs in 37 communities.

Dealing with the complexity and rate of change that happen around us each day requires deliberate **intention**. "Working groups" are a key way that World Renew manages change. The groups monitor the changes we implement and the best practices that emerge from them. They focus on peace-building and justice, livelihoods, health and HIV, gender, the environment, agriculture and food security, and anti-racism.

Another level of intentionality is networking within the CRCNA and with its agencies as well as networks connected to our Christian partners around the world. In many countries this means creating teams from CRC agencies and our networks together to leverage our expertise and resources.

Integrity is a core Christian value and at the heart of World Renew's work. Our staff works hard to establish these values, especially in program and financial reporting. A rigorous process of checks, balances, and evaluations are facets of our work appreciated by the partners we serve and those who join us in ministry. The Evangelical Council for Financial Accountability (a standard for Christian organizations in the U.S.) has found our financial system to be a model. We take integrity and trust seriously on behalf of those we serve and among those who support us in ministry. These core values will again guide us into the year ahead.

Let me conclude by expressing my gratitude to you for allowing us to live out these values in ministry together through your love and support.

Andrew Ryskamp
Director
World Renew U.S.

Want Your Own Copy of *Through The Dust*?

If you received this magazine from a friend and would like your own copy mailed to you, or if you would like to adjust the quantities that your church receives, please contact Renate Smits at rsmits@worldrenew.net or 1-800-552-7972 in the U.S., or Maria Oliveira at moliveira@worldrenew.net or 1-800-730-3490 in Canada.

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World Renew 2014 Offering Schedule

While you can give directly to World Renew at any time, the Synod of the Christian Reformed Church has recommended that congregations take at least four offerings for World Renew each year to address global hunger and poverty. World Renew does not receive CRC ministry shares (never has) and relies primarily on donations and offerings to carry out ministry around the world.

Each year World Renew creates a variety of new materials that are free for churches to use to support and learn about its ministry. In all there are four synodically-recommended offering dates, two suggested offering dates, and a "take-action" date each World AIDS Day (December 1). Offering materials are not dated and can be used throughout the year.

March 2
DRS Sunday offering, recommended
CFGB Sunday offering, recommended

April 6
Refugee Sunday

May 11
Embrace AIDS Sunday

October 13
Thanksgiving Day offering, recommended

November 2
World Hunger Sunday offering, recommended

November 28
Thanksgiving Day offering, recommended

December 1
World AIDS Day, take action

December 25
Christmas Day offering, recommended

Need resources for your church? Bulletin inserts and covers, videos or Powerpoints and many more materials are available to help you promote World Renew's offerings. Visit worldrenew.net/order or call 1-800-333-8300.

Coming Soon! **Canada Day 2014** bulletin inserts for you to use on **June 29** or **July 6**. As usual, our resources are FREE. Just call or go online to order at worldrenew.net/order!

Cover photo by Jim Patrico DTN/The Progressive Farmer

A Resource in Times of Need

Established in 1983, the Canadian Foodgrains Bank is a Canadian-based, Christian organization that helps provide food and development assistance to people in need. World Renew is one of 15 Canadian churches and church-based agencies that own CFGB, pooling their human and financial resources in a collaboratively Christian response to hunger.

Each member maintains an account at CFGB in which donations are kept. By pooling funds at CFGB, they can be readily accessed when disasters strike and funds are needed. There is no need to first wait for fundraising appeals to bring in donations. Member organizations who are not responding to a specific disaster also often contribute to those who are, thereby increasing the amount of money available.

CFGB ranks among the largest private food assistance providers in the world. Donations made by Canadians have helped CFGB and its members provide more than 1.1 million tons of food and seed to people who are hungry throughout the world. Last year CFGB programs reached 2.1 million people through 122 projects in 37 countries with distributions totaling 40,677 tons of food and seed.

World Renew's projects through CFGB total $9,560,710. And in addition to our ongoing efforts, World Renew has received approval for twelve new projects this fiscal year. These are projects in Ethiopia, Kenya, Somalia, South Sudan, Uganda, Mozambique, Zambia, Liberia, Haiti, Nicaragua, and Lebanon.

Churches in Canada are encouraged to hold an offering for World Renew's CFGB account on March 2, 2014. Contributions to CFGB are often matched by the Canadian government 4:1, making your donation dollars go even further.

Materials for CFGB Sunday have been mailed to Canadian congregations for 2014. For more information about World Renew's membership in and programming through CFGB, visit **www.worldrenew.net/cfgb**.

Canadian Foodgrains Bank Members

- ADRA Canada (Adventist Development and Relief Agency)
- Canadian Baptist Ministries
- Canadian Catholic Organization for Development and Peace
- Canadian Lutheran World Relief
- Christian and Missionary Alliance in Canada
- Emergency Relief and Development Overseas (Pentecostal Assemblies of Canada)
- Evangelical Missionary Church of Canada
- Mennonite Central Committee
- Nazarene Compassionate Ministries
- Presbyterian World Service and Development
- Primate's World Relief and Development Fund (Anglican Church of Canada)
- The Salvation Army
- United Church of Canada
- World Relief Canada
- World Renew

I AM Home

We all have strong feelings about our home—about coming home, leaving home, and remembering home. When people lose their home to a natural disaster, it's devastating for the owners and the community where they live.

In April 2013, retirees Woody and Theresa Bowers lost their Bracebridge, Ontario, home of 37 years to a record-setting flood. By Thanksgiving, the Bowers were handed the keys to their new home thanks to World Renew Disaster Response Services.

Through World Renew DRS, people in need experience the love of Christ in tangible ways. Your gift on World Renew DRS Sunday helps people like Woody and Theresa Bowers say, "I AM Home." You can celebrate what the Lord is doing through DRS by observing World Renew DRS Sunday at your church on March 2, 2014!

To help you plan and resource your congregation, all-new DRS Sunday materials are available online at worldrenew.net/drs—including a DVD, poster, and bulletin inserts or covers. Your church offering is crucial to World Renew DRS's ability to help families in the U.S. and Canada say, "I am home!" after a disaster.

Here are some great ways to promote DRS Sunday in your congregation:

- Wear a World Renew DRS green shirt to church.
- Order the new 2014 DRS Sunday poster, bulletin insert, cover, and DVD.
- Decorate a bulletin board with photos from a DRS volunteer trip.
- Display DRS brochures (available from the DRS office).
- For those located near the DRS office in Byron Center, Michigan, request a display.
- Ask for a "Moment for Missions" during a worship service or adult education time.
- Request an offering at your church and mark your check "DRS Sunday" when you send your gift to World Renew.

If March 2 does not work for your church, it's no problem—these materials can be used at any time during the year. Thank you for your support!

Find out how you can volunteer with World Renew DRS this summer. See page 11 for details!

Coffee Makes A Difference in Laos

Since Te Cheh and Cheh Cha met and married after being widowed in their thirties, they have overcome many difficulties. But a World Renew coffee-growing project in their rural Laotian community gave them the opportunity to overcome the obstacles that were keeping them poor and start thinking about the future.

Smallholder farmers like the Chehs live on the edge of survival, and it is difficult to try something new when one mistake can mean hunger or worse. Their blended family of ten children was among the poorest in their village. So when World Renew came in 2011 talking about raising coffee and creating a better future, Te was skeptical.

A few months later some prominent villagers who were interested in coffee cultivation participated in an exchange visit in a nearby village. There they saw coffee farmers who were paid in cash for their harvest and a factory where the beans were processed. They talked with the factory owner who assured them that he would buy their product for cash at a fair rate if they grew the crop.

When these villagers returned from their visit they gave an enthusiastic report, but few people agreed to try it. It takes three years of cultivation for coffee plants to mature and produce a first crop of cherries. Raising opium is a much faster and more lucrative enterprise—although it is illegal. Te was an opium smoker, and he had to weigh his habit and the risk of prosecution against the risk of investing his time and energy in a long-term but legal product like coffee.

The following year a few of the wealthiest families in the village decided to grow coffee and constructed a tree nursery and installed a water system. They received seeds, materials, and other help from World Renew. Te walked by the nurseries regularly to check things out. Eventually, he begged a few leftover coffee plants from some field workers to try out on his own small plot of land.

In early 2013 Te and Cha decided that participating in the World Renew nursery project was worth the risk, and by June they had planted 3,000 little coffee trees. Te is one of six poor families who have joined the project. They expect to process their first coffee harvest by the end of 2014.

Te also says that he has been able to kick his opium habit. "When I was addicted to opium, I had little time to provide for my family," he said. "My concern for the future of my family and an opportunity get ahead was the motivation I needed." Why would Te take such a risk?

"It is precisely because I have a big, blended family that I must start doing something to provide for them, and growing opium is not an option. So I'm going to expand coffee planting every year from now on. This will be a family business and when our kids are old enough, they will have their own plantations and provide a good living for the entire family."

Lucia Sees Herself from God's Perspective

"My life has been great with struggles," said 58-year-old Lucia of her life in rural Guatemala. The atrocities of 36 years of civil war devastated Lucia and many Guatemalans like her. But recently she has found new pride in her own abilities thanks to World Renew.

Subsistence farmers and rural tribal people were often targets for government oppression and violence during the war, Lucia recalls. "Our people were persecuted and our leaders disappeared. My husband was taken prisoner and thought to be dead. I found him months later, very sick and malnourished."

During those years, prime agricultural land that traditionally belonged to indigenous people was seized and given to rich landlords. Families like Lucia's were forced to migrate and resettle in marshlands. There, they struggled to grow food and were cut off from community services like schools and clinics.

With her husband weakened by imprisonment, Lucia walked 15 km (9 mi) to a nearby town to work as a laundress, returning home only on weekends. When a peace treaty was signed in 1996 and the war ended, Lucia and her neighbors hoped for positive change but none of the improvements they were promised materialized.

Then Lucia's life took a turn for the better. She was invited to attend a community meeting through World Renew's partner, the Asociación de Desarrollo Integral Polochic (ADIP). Together Lucia and her neighbors talked with ADIP staff about training in preventative health and sustainable agriculture. Lucia decided to give it a try.

While she admits that her original motivation for joining the trainings was the possibility of getting a hand out, Lucia soon discovered that the training she received was far more valuable. "The skills and techniques I learned were important for me to develop new ways of supporting my family," she said.

> "I now understand that as a child of God, I can achieve great things."
>
> **— Lucia, World Renew Program Participant**

Lucia put her new knowledge to work by cultivating a small plot of land near her house and growing native herbs for cooking and medicine. Now when she makes the long trek into town, it isn't to work for someone else but to sell her own produce at the local market.

But it wasn't agricultural skills alone that Lucia learned from her ADIP classes. "The biblical perspective of the training changed my life," she said. "I now understand that as a child of God, I can achieve great things." This is the heart of what World Renew is all about.

"The poor are often brought up to think that poverty is all they deserve," says World Renew Director Ida Mutoigo. "World Renew is blessed to help more than 460,000 people every year recognize their value as God's image bearers and flourish as they discover their potential and God's gifts to them."

Partnership at its Best

Micah 6:8 tells us that whoever we are, we can extend God's love to our neighbors far and near because of the love he has given us. When River Terrace Church (RTC) in East Lansing, Michigan, began exploring a church-to-church partnership with Beacon of Hope Initiative in Nigeria in 2009, they found a mutual mission with life-changing impact in HIV-and-AIDS ministry.

Through World Renew's partner Beacon of Hope (BHI), River Terrace started to identify the Universal Reformed Christian Church (NKST) as a ministry partner in Benue State, Nigeria. RTC sent two teams of ambassadors to research and solidify what their ministries might do together. By October 2010, these American and Nigerian churches began to plan how to address the worst HIV and AIDS rate in the country—12.7 percent—three times the national average.

The partners then began working in HIV prevention, testing and counseling, economic empowerment, and care for orphans and vulnerable children.

Through prevention education, pastors, churches, couples, and young people have been trained in self-awareness, healthy relationships, physical development,

Are you interested in exploring a church-to-church partnership for your congregation through World Renew? Contact Wendy Hammond (whammond@worldrenew.net) in the U.S. or Peter Bulthuis (pbulthuis@worldrenew.net) in Canada.

communication, and sexually-transmitted infections. Couples are encouraged to be faithful to their spouses, and unmarried youth learn about abstinence and risky behavior. So far 375 youth have received HIV-prevention training. NKST is also making HIV testing and counseling

Through prevention education, pastors, churches, couples, and young people have been trained in self-awareness, healthy relationships, physical development, communication, and sexually-transmitted infections.

available through local churches. Nearly 1,800 men and women have been tested for HIV after church services and were then referred to a health facility for follow up. The program not only impacts the local community, but NKST churches as well. On World AIDS Day 2013, eight congregations initiated support groups and remembered those who have been affected.

To help people who live with HIV and AIDS to support themselves, eleven cooperatives began revolving loan funds. Today, 60 percent of those who were previously dependent on others to sustain them now not only provide for their own needs, they contribute to their families and communities as well.

Most vulnerable children and those orphaned by AIDS in Nigeria are fostered within their community. While they are cared for, they often do not attend school. Through NKST, 49 children now attend school, and the NKST women's fellowship is donating funds to pay the tuition of four more children.

As a result of this church-to-church partnership, congregations, health facilities, and cooperative groups are providing HIV services in Benue communities where previously there were none. Isn't this the work that Micah 6:8 calls us to—bringing help and hope to our neighbors near and far because of God's great love for us?

Syria: Hope in the Crucible

by Samantha Keddy

"No one is free from depression," Warda* says matter-of-factly as we sit in a small coffee shop outside of Beirut.

While the violence in Syria is a crucible of conflict, the spillover is clearly felt not only by those World Renew serves, but also by our colleagues in ministry. That includes the person sitting across the table from me: Warda is the director of the Fellowship of Middle East Evangelical Churches (FMEEC).

Each story Warda shares makes my heart ache more. I am in awe of her strength in a time of extreme vulnerability. Warda is not Lebanese, but she has been living in Lebanon for a number of years with her husband and family. It is something that she is particularly thankful for, given the destruction and violence in her homeland.

Warda speaks frankly about the atrocities that are happening in Syria and how they have affected her. Her sister lives in a suburb of Damascus and insists on going to work every day despite personal risk. And every day that she ventures out, Warda and her family worry about her safety from snipers, thieves, and terrorists until the moment she arrives home from work in one piece.

Warda, along with her many volunteers and staff, work diligently for FMEEC. They make a tremendous effort to reach the vulnerable and displaced people of Syria. "They flee the violence and arrive at churches in Lebanon. They come to us with agonies, find the support they need, and leave with new hope to continue on."

There is pain in Warda's eyes as she talks. The war's effects on her are visible—yet her strength is not defeated. Her experiences motivate her to serve more.

At World Renew, we are not removed from the effects of the war in Syria. The impact is seen in the pain of the beneficiaries we serve, in the fear on children's faces, and in our staffs' worries as they implement disaster response projects in an insecure and unstable environment.

However, we know that God's power is greater. It is his strength that is evident in the determination of our partners, the dedication of staff and volunteers, the gratitude of the beneficiaries, and the inspiration of directors like Warda. As we end our conversation, Warda's humbling thanks touch me deeply. "My heart opens up when I think of our partners and World Renew. You are a source of hope to our beneficiaries, and to me."

Praise God for his mercy, power, and strength!

*Name changed.

Volunteer this Summer

World Renew DRS has summer openings for short-term volunteers in High River, Alberta, and Ocean County, New Jersey. There was unusually severe flooding in High River last June that devastated the community, and Ocean County was hit hard by Super-storm Sandy in October 2012.

What can you expect when you volunteer at a DRS reconstruction site? You will join a team of like-minded Christians from across the United States and Canada who serve, pray, and eat together. Your food and lodging are provided, and the work is coordinated and managed for you. In addition, if you volunteer for two weeks during the summer at a DRS-managed reconstruction site, most of your travel expenses are reimbursed as well!

World Renew DRS helps disaster survivors who are unable to fix their homes themselves for a variety of reasons. Many of the people we serve are elderly, physically disabled, uninsured, or cannot afford to make repairs or rebuild. By investing in relationships, working shoulder-to-shoulder with others, and serving those in need with compassion and respect, volunteer service with World Renew DRS changes lives—yours and those we serve. Jesus' command to reach out to others in love includes fixing a leaky roof, putting in new flooring, painting, drywalling, or building a house from the ground up.

With World Renew, you can volunteer individually or with friends, as a couple, or with your church or school group. Contact us to talk about these and other opportunities, or visit worldrenew.net/drs to find out more.

Summer Volunteer Opportunities

Where: High River, Alberta, or Ocean County, New Jersey

When: One or two weeks during the summer of 2014

How: Fill out an application at worldrenew.net/drs and contact Becky (800-848-5818 or bpurdom@worldrenew.net)

Who: Anyone who is interested can volunteer. Reconstruction experience not required!

Teams are assigned by DRS's volunteer manager who ensures a balance of skill levels.

Esperanza Steps Up

Across the United States, World Renew works with Communities First Association (CFA) to come alongside Christian churches as they minister in poor communities. CFA member Al Santino works with a coalition called Triboro Community Transformation (TCT) to help low income families in Prospect Park and North Haldon, New Jersey, improve their lives and neighborhoods.

TCT has offered English classes to local residents for four years, helping immigrant families adjust to American culture and language as well as empower them to support each other and work together to address the issues that concern them.

Esperanza is a Colombian immigrant who has lived in Prospect Park for eight years. She has taken three semesters of English classes with TCT. Esperanza says that the classes have helped her communicate better with her family and coworkers, fill out applications, and use the internet. Through TCT's mid-week English practice sessions, Esperanza has made connections and built relationships with a diverse group of people from different cultures who live in her community.

Liz Rodriquez, a TCT community coordinator, recognized Esperanza's English competency and noted her passion for building community. She challenged Esperanza to lead a mid-week practice session.

"I was afraid," Esperanza said. "How can I help when I know so little?"

With Rodriguez's encouragement, Esperanza realized that, "What little I have learned, I can give." Since that first practice session, Esperanza has done an excellent job of teaching and encouraging participants. Her genuine concern for them is evident in each interaction.

When Santino took a moment to thank Esperanza for stepping up to the task, she said, "I have no choice. I have to give back to the community. We are all interrelated, like a body—when one part hurts, we all hurt." In an additional step toward growth, Esperanza agreed to work with CFA and TCT to create a neighborhood association in Prospect Park.

"We bless the Lord for allowing us to participate in this work of *shalom*," Santino says. "His mercy and justice are becoming visible in Prospect Park through people who are sharing the blessings they have received with their neighbors."

By God's grace, may each of us come to the conclusion that Esperanza has: "I have no choice; I have to give back to the community."

Communities First Association is the expression of World Renew's work in the United States. CFA was begun by World Renew to include ecumenical Christian leaders, as well as Christian Reformed leaders, in Asset-Based Community Development (ABCD) in low-income American communities.

Note: If your U.S. church or organization would like to learn more about community transformation, contact the CFA member nearest you, or order your copy of the *Communities First* curriculum from www.communitiesfirstassociation.org.

Finding a Home away from Home

Eyob Teklay Ogbandrias is an Eritrean refugee who started a new life in Canada thanks to World Renew. Read his story in World Renew's *2013 Ministry Report*.

There are more than 45-million people living as refugees in the world today. These are men, women, and children who have been forced from their homes in fear for their lives. Perhaps they are fleeing civil war or a country in turmoil. Others flee persecution because of their race, religion, nationality, social group, or political opinion. Whatever the reason, they all have something in common—they are living in exile and unable to go home.

There are three outcomes for refugees. The ideal outcome is repatriation—resettling back to their country of origin once the threat has changed. For those who cannot return home, a second solution is to create a new life in their country of asylum, usually a country that borders their home.

If neither of these solutions is possible, refugees may be resettled to a third country like Canada or the United States. This is the last possible action, and only about 1% of the world's refugees are eligible. That is because there are a limited number of countries that will take refugees and a limited number of refugees that each country will take per year.

Refugees who resettle in a new country make a broad range of transitions. They adjust to their new culture, language, and climate. They also find that their education and work experience is less valued in their new country. World Renew has a long history of helping refugees adjust to life in North America. In the late 1970s, a primary outreach of World Renew was to help Vietnamese refugees resettle in the United States.

Today, this ministry continues through a unique partnership between World Renew and Canadian churches. World Renew is one of about 80 Canadian organizations granted a sponsorship agreement by Citizenship and Immigration Canada to work with congregations to sponsor refugees.

Sponsoring churches agree to welcome a refugee family, provide housing and supplies, connect them with schools and language training, and support them as they find jobs and learn to navigate life in Canada. Last year 31 families (69 people) were welcomed to Canada through World Renew's refugee resettlement program.

Refugee Sunday 2014

In 2014, April 6 is Refugee Sunday for churches in Canada. Make use of the resources available at worldrenew.net/refugeeresettlement to remind your congregation about this important ministry and support it with your prayers and offerings. We encourage you to prayerfully consider sponsoring a refugee as a congregation. For more information, go to worldrenew.net/refugeeresettlement.

A Community at Heart

Diaconia Honduras and Olympia CRC

When Arturo Colindres visited a World Renew partner congregation in Olympia, Washington, last November, he said, "The church blew me away! They are welcoming, loving, and involved with each other and the community."

Colindres and two more representatives from Los Charcos, Honduras, traveled to Washington on a reciprocal partnership visit with Olympia Christian Reformed Church (CRC), which had visited Los Charcos twice before. The return visit from Honduras was "a great experience for everyone and a long time in coming," says Karyl Groeneveld, Olympia mission team coordinator.

"In 2009 our congregation reached out to the Los Charcos community through World Renew's Global Partnership Program," Karyl said. "We saw our partnership as a way to expand our understanding of God and His church. We wanted to deepen our global interdependence as Christians so that we and our counterparts in Honduras could teach each other about our countries and cultures."

What the congregations in Washington and Honduras discovered was that building mutual respect in relationships is a key to a successful partnership. This meant that not only did Olympia CRC need to send teams to Honduras, but the Honduran community needed to experience Olympia CRC in Washington as well.

The traveling representatives were Irene Zepeda, the World Renew coordinator in Honduras; Dilia Aquiriano, director of World Renew partner Diaconia Nacional; and Arturo Colindres, a diaconia staff in Olancho. Groeneveld and the mission team at Olympia organized a variety of experiences for them, including Bible studies, GEMS and Cadets events, young people's meetings, and a church school event where the children welcomed their new friends in Spanish.

The team also visited local and regional sites around Olympia, including the state capital building, a county recycling center, and businesses, as well as trying out local products such as coffee and salmon. "I think our best sightseeing trip was to Mount Rainier," Groeneveld said. "When we were high enough, everyone got out of the car and twirled around in the falling snow for the first time!"

"We prayed together, and shared our lives and the challenges we each face," Groeneveld said. "What a joy."

Arturo Colindres agrees. "My experience at Olympia was a blessing. I learned so much about my brothers and sisters who have visited Honduras. I understand their culture better and met the families of mission team members who have visited Los Charcos. It is very important for me to explain what I learned at Olympia to the Los Charcos community.

"Life in North America is very busy and quick, but even here there is time for God and family—two basic elements of life in any community that loves God and has passion to serve him and others."

Find out more about volunteering with World Renew's Global Volunteer Program! In the U.S., contact Mary Dykstra at mdykstra@worldrenew.net or call 800-552-7972. In Canada, contact Iona Buisman at ibuisman@worldrenew.net or call 800-730-3490.

Rethinking Short-Term Missions

Excellence and Justice in Short Term Missions Think Tank

In the mid-2000s, *Christianity Today* magazine took notice of research by Calvin College Professor Kurt Ver Beek about the lower-than-expected benefits of sending North American volunteers on international mission trips. Ver Beek has lived in Honduras for 30 years, including the devastation of Hurricane Mitch which took 14,000 lives in 1998. The North Americans who flew south to serve in the storm's aftermath were his case study. The results showed little long-term change in Honduran communities or in the lives of the people who invested so heavily to go.

These facts can cause some dissonance for sending churches because in some sense, they know Ver Beek is right. Church counsels may even carefully broach the issue, asking that uncomfortable question: "What if, instead of spending $830 per volunteer on plane tickets for 12 people, we just send $10,000 straight to partners who need relief?"

Despite the research, people who read the Bible feel compelled to go. If they cannot go themselves, they support and send. God says "Go!" a lot in the Bible. It is a theme. Jonah would likely have been happy to simply send $830 to Nineveh, but God said "Go." God is a sender. He sent Jesus.

What do Christians do about this? If sending Jonah was actually about God giving a heart-challenge to Jonah, and later all of us, then what kind of personal transformation should we expect from a mission trip? And if the church in North America is spending millions of dollars on short-term missions, what assurance is there that the effort will actually help end poverty?

For members of the newly-formed Justice and Excellence in Short Term Missions Think Tank, these are familiar questions without quick fixes. The think tank is made up of short-term mission staff from the Christian Reformed (CRC) and Reformed (RCA) denominations that have more than 100 years of combined experience. The agencies and churches they serve value the call to "go," to do justice, to improve equity, and to create sustainable change in impoverished communities.

The think tank is taking a long view toward increasing the effectiveness of short-term missions in the CRC and its agencies. They have a two-pronged approach. First, to evaluate and expand their own effectiveness in transforming communities and participants by the summer of 2014 with the help of a peer-review organization called the Standards of Excellence. The second approach is to invite interested congregations to join them in doing the same. Is your congregation interested in giving and getting the most out of short-term missions? See the box on this page for information about getting involved.

Think Tank Agencies and Themes

Think Tank Participating Agencies and Themes for Peer Evaluation appear below. For more information about the Excellence and Justice in Short Term Missions Think Tank contact Carol Sybenga at csybenga@crcna.org or Kris Van Engen kvanengen@crcna.org.

Participating Agencies

- World Renew Disaster Response Services
- World Renew Global Volunteer Program
- CRC Office of Social Justice
- CRC World Missions
- RCA CARE Network
- Service Link
- Association for a More Just Society
- Linked Engagement Action Program

Themes for Peer Evaluation: in partnership with the Standards of Excellence in Short-Term Mission

- God-centeredness
- Empowering Partnerships
- Mutual Design
- Comprehensive Administration
- Qualified Leadership
- Appropriate Training
- Thorough Follow-through

STANDARDS of EXCELLENCE SOE IN SHORT-TERM MISSION

I AM | The Future

Whether she becomes a tennis superstar, the next Picasso, or a farmer like her parents, Evelyn knows that God loves her and has great things in mind for her future. Unfortunately, poverty can sometimes get in the way of children achieving their dreams. Poor health, hunger, and lack of access to schools or job opportunities can keep a child like Evelyn stuck in a life of poverty.

You can help. Give the gift of freedom from poverty to a child and her family today. Give your first $22 monthly Free A Family® gift at worldrenew.net or call World Renew at 800-552-7972 in the U.S. or 800-730-7490 in Canada.

Photo by Sean Hawkey

Featured Resource

When God Shows Up: A Pastor's Journey
by Pastor Henry Wildeboer

When God Shows Up is an engaging book for anyone who is keen to see their church become spiritually vibrant while also connecting meaningfully with their community. The book explores the life and ministry journey of Pastor Henry Wildeboer, and is filled with faith-building stories and experiences—some miraculous and others utterly painful. *When God Shows Up: A Pastor's Journey* is a book about what it means to walk with God. It is valuable to any audience but especially encouraging for pastors and leaders. You can purchase this book through Faith Alive Christian Resources at faithaliveresources.org. Proceeds from the sale are donated to World Renew's ministry to combat global hunger!