

Press Release

Cloud of Witnesses to Gather at CRC Synod 2007

This summer Christian Reformed Church delegates from across the U.S. and Canada will meet, as they do every year, for a week's worth of discussion on a wide range of theological and church policy issues.

One discussion sure to draw significant attention will be a 2006 proposal from the CRC that would allow churches to more fully use the gifts of women in ministry (the proposal would delete the word male from the official CRC church order in a section that talks about leadership roles in the church).

A group headed by local residents plans to bear testimony to the wonderful ways the Christian Reformed denomination is being blessed by the service of its women members with what they call the Cloud of Witnesses initiative. The group takes its name from the New Testament book of Hebrews, the first verse of the 12th chapter where Christians are surrounded by a cloud of witnesses who bear testimony to God's faithfulness.

Shirley Roels, former president of the council of Boston Square CRC in Grand Rapids, says the movement is critical in this new century for the CRC.

"To meet the needs of our world, the Christian Reformed Church needs every member, whether female or male, engaged in ministry," she says. "We must use all our resources to reclaim this world for Christ and allow each person to respond to the Spirit's claim on their calling."

The Reverend George VanderWeit, pastor of Fuller CRC in Grand Rapids, adds that Cloud of Witnesses loves the Christian Reformed Church and wants it to be a model of gracious life together, while still affirming the role of women in ministry. He says the denomination will need to replace about 500 retiring ministers, while adding 25 new churches each year. One of the ways the denomination can address that need, he believes, is by calling women to the Gospel ministry.

Helen Sterk, a member of Woodlawn CRC, notes that this is the 150th year of the Christian Reformed Church and thus an appropriate time for this initiative.

"What an excellent time to celebrate the ministry we do together," she says, "and to call the church to greater levels of witness, and rededicate ourselves to serving God through this denomination circle. We can move forward best when women and men are full partners."

For further information, call 616-241-1679.