Dear friends in Christ,

This is the first of several updates from the GROW committee and its work for the churches of our denomination. The Committee is diverse, united and committed to the mandate Synod has given us, and has met twice since Synod, once via Skype to save on administration costs. We are constantly looking for synergies between the workgroups, which lead to greater effectiveness in the work. Here are some highlights of our work so far.

GROW Mandate

*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.*

***Church Health***

The Church Health Committee (Dawie van Vuuren, Jack De Vries and Brian Vaatstra) has organised a meeting in Sydney in June of CRCA ministers who have experience with South African migrants to discuss the challenges associated with the arrival of South African migrants into our churches:

1. The needs and ministry to South African migrants
2. How we can better support South African pastors
3. How we can better support new church plants of South African migrants

We pray that this will help churches to be able to warmly assimilate South African migrants in a way that leads to healthy churches and church plants.

***World Development Relief***

The World Development and Relief Committee is working out the implications of the synodical decisions on its finances. It has struggled to come to terms with the fact that, after Synod, less of the CRCA’s funds are reaching the poor. However, it is working hard to adjust to the new approach of absorbing administration costs within its own budget, and continues to look at ways to reduce these costs in order to be as effective as possible. The GROW Committee has allocated a portion of their administration budget as once off assistance to cover some WDRW costs, which will enable the continuing support for important projects as the adjustments to WDRW operations are made.

***G.O.S.P.E.L.***

The opportunities for church planting work in India are great. For comparatively few dollars GOSPEL is able to support trained church planters to reach more people for Christ. In 2012 alone there were 327 new believers added to the churches and 28 new communities were established. GOSPEL is working on improving the biblical literacy of these new communities by establishing ‘tuition centres.’ They are also exploring ways existing churches can eventually become self-sufficient and not rely on long-term funding.

***Solomon Islands***

There is much to be thankful for as this work has transitioned from the capable and pioneering work of Kevin and Machi Rietveld to a new mission team lead by Simon and Ana Burgraaf. Eric Maefonea continues his good work in Word ministries across the Solomon Islands training pastors and ministry leaders, while Jair and Lauretta Duinkerke continue managing Deed ministry projects. In addition, the Bethesda disability support centre has been boosted by the appointment of new staff leaving Susan Larsen free to do the key teaching role as the occupational therapist. Jack De Vries and the team have recently completed a Mission Action Plan setting short and long term goals for the mission. The Lord continues to protect and use our mission there for the growth of his Kingdom. What a privilege we have to be able to support this work as churches.

***Church Planting Taskforce***

The Church Planting Taskforce has been able to partially support four churches that have requested funds this calendar year; Baldivis, Wilson and Kalgoorlie in WA and Vine in Tas. By the end of the year the funds available will have been depleted so Synod has allowed CPT to conduct a fundraising drive. The CPT will launch the ‘Buy a Brick’ campaign to be run in June encouraging every member of our denomination to give as they are able to support the gospel outreach into new communities through church planting.

***Finally …***

We are excited to see what the Lord is doing through our churches in both Word and Deed. We covet the prayers of the churches for all this work, and pray that God will use us to assist the churches to grow in the grace, knowledge and work of the Lord. We have unique opportunities to serve the Lord through our churches as we work together in this way.

With love in Christ

Brian Vaatstra

On behalf of the GROW committee