

Kids will be kids, especially while they're having fun and learning about Jesus at Tapestry's summer vacation Bible school.



pastors in the summer months. He and his wife, Colleen, are also youth leaders in the Ebenezer church.

Ebenezer pastor Rev. Merle Den Bleyker invited Flores and Sorisso to lead the church's second morning service. They agreed, sometimes bringing the message or helping the worship team.

"I'm more secure in what I know about the Christian Reformed faith. And I certainly feel more confident in taking on the deacon's office or the elder's office," Sorisso says. "The LDN helps you feel more confident about your faith and be able to share it. I'm not intimidated anymore."

Den Bleyker credits LDN with preparing both men for service. "The network provided them with a broad basis for the work they have developed in the church," he says. "They received good training within their local church home and ministry area."

He also notes that the training encouraged him, as pastor, "to think through the practical implications of the material for the local ministry setting."

What Is an LDN?

A Leadership Development Network is a three-year "on-the-job" training course in which trainees receive classroom instruction in biblical/theological knowledge, ministry skills, and spiritual formation.

Trainees also are involved in a local church ministry where they are mentored by an experienced leader to develop ministry skill and spiritual disciplines.

Since 2000, the number of LDNs has grown from five to 15, and the number of trainees has increased from 24 to 156.

LDNs are conducted in English, Spanish, and Korean. LDN graduates enter gospel ministry as pastors, evangelists, church planters, or church staff in the Christian Reformed Church.

—Rev. Jim Osterhouse facilitates Home Missions' Leadership Development Network program. He can be reached at osterhoj@crcna.org or 1-800-266-2175.

FINDING FAITH AND FAMILY AT THE TAPESTRY

When Albert Chu looks around the crowded fellowship hall where his congregation worships on Sunday mornings, he looks into the faces of his community and his city.

There, people of a wide variety of ages, backgrounds, languages, and traditions are united in worship and service. Like threads of colored yarn, they're woven together into a vibrant fabric—a tapestry of faith. Little wonder, then, that this church calls itself The Tapestry (or, affectionately, The Tap).

The Tapestry is a young church. It celebrated its first anniversary last fall with balloons and cupcakes, and it continues to make its mark in the ethnically diverse city of Richmond, British Columbia.

A few years back, Classis British Columbia North-West and Home Missions saw the need for a stronger Christian Reformed presence among the fast-growing Asian population of Richmond. And so they set out to recruit the right church planter—someone who would be accepted by the people they were trying to reach.

"God brought us a gifted church planter in Albert Chu," says Martin Contant, Home Missions' team leader in western Canada. "His vision to plant a multicultural, multiethnic church is taking root."

Chinese pastor Albert Chu and his Dutch wife, Ellen Vander Grift, are typical of the multicultural character of the church, which represents 16 countries and includes many racially mixed couples. They came to Richmond two years ago, called from service in an ethnic Chinese church, to start The Tapestry.

Chu credits Home Missions for helping him get started in Richmond, citing the assessment center, orientation, and boot camp as especially valuable tools.

"In those early months, Home Missions made sure I got the resources I needed to begin," Chu recalls. "Even now I meet with my coach, Martin Contant, every two months just to talk about how things are going. He encourages me and reminds me of things that need to be looked at. It's been very helpful.

"We wouldn't be where we are without the financial support of Home Missions," he adds. "It added up to be quite a substantial amount, and we needed it in the very beginning." »

Diversity— A Core Value

One of Home Missions' core values states that "working for diversity, justice, and unity in Christ is critical to our witness in North America."

That's why Home Missions provides funds for multicultural and ethnic ministries in Canada and the United States.

Home Missions at a Glance

The mission of Christian Reformed Home Missions is to serve the churches, ministries, and members of the Christian Reformed Church in North America through partnerships that work to fulfill Christ's mission.

For well over 100 years, Home Missions has provided leadership assistance for evangelism and discipleship to all classes and congregations of the Christian Reformed Church. Since 1988, more than 40,000 people have been brought into relationship with Jesus Christ in the CRC by way of evangelism.

Home Missions partners with local churches and classes to

- support educational ministries,
- help existing churches become healthy churches,
- encourage new church planting,
- train and equip people to lead churches and ministries,
- promote spiritual formation through small groups and prayer.

Twelve ministry teams, led by regional and ethnic leaders, are the agency's local hands and feet. They provide coordination and encouragement for hundreds of CRC ministries that bring people to Jesus Christ and help them grow spiritually.

You can support the work of Christian Reformed Home Missions with your church offerings on Easter Sunday, April 16. For more information, visit www.crhm.org or call 800-266-2175.



Tapestry members and friends reflect the diversity of their community.

PHOTO COURTESY OF THE TAPESTRY

A Vibrant Daughter

Home Missions encourages mature congregations to plant churches. It's a strategy that usually results in the creation of a vibrant daughter church and a stronger parent church. But for The Tapestry and its host church, First CRC, the road has been rocky. First CRC's decline over a period of years sent church leaders to classis and Home Missions asking for advice and help. Starting a new church seemed like the answer.

While the two congregations share some physical space in First's church building, The Tapestry is not the church First CRC anticipated, Chu admits. "I know that is difficult for them. We look different and do things differently, but we're both Reformed, and we belong in the same denomination."

And no one can question The Tapestry's impact in its community. About 140 people crowd into First CRC's fellowship hall at 10 a.m. on Sunday mornings. Members and friends arrive dressed casually, helping themselves to Starbucks™ coffee before the service begins. The service is relaxed, appealing to a postmodern demographic.

"We're pretty diverse in age, but we have a lot of young kids under age 6, a lot of young families," Chu says. "Our primary group is young families. We encourage fellowship. We also are very focused on community service."

Regional Connections

Albert Chu and Home Missions also intersect at the regional level. Chu is a member of Home Missions' Western Canada Ministry Team, which is led by Contant.

The team serves the classes and congregations in British Columbia, Alberta, and Manitoba by providing guidance for church planting, mission-focused churches, and campus outreach in the region. Chu's role on the 10-member team is to advise on ethnic ministries and new-church planting in the region's four classes.

Through his work on the team, Chu hopes to help the CRC continue to move "from a monocultural Dutch church into something that's more integrated and diverse. That's where I see my role in the bigger picture."

Back at The Tapestry, Chu works with his leadership group to reach unchurched people with the gospel, helping them to find a safe place where they can belong. By all appearances, the strategy is working.

"The biggest compliment we receive is when people come to The Tap and say it feels like family. When someone says that, you know you're doing something right."