

### Healing Hearts, Transforming Nations

Next week, I'll be traveling for a few weeks to serve our partners in Estonia and Russia. Your prayers are really needed for this trip's central event — a very challenging but timely ministry experience. The "Healing Hearts, Transforming Nations" (HHTN) 3-day seminar is being held from Nov. 7-9, with Russians, Ukrainians and Estonians present. Pastors and believers all over eastern Europe are at a loss for how to engage and reconcile the pain caused by ethnic and racial differences, political disagreements, generational divides, and so much more in our families, churches, and communities. How do we heal from pain, reconcile with one another, and walk a path forward together? Leading this seminar, my long-time Resonate colleague, missionary to Ukraine, Rev. George deVuyst. embraced this ministry for the Ukrainian context since 2014, and now serves globally.

### Slavic Safe Haven Care Opportunities

As hinted in the last newsletter, we have the timely opportunity to help Canadian Slavic churches to support



Ukrainians and other Slavic people who are fleeing Russia's illegal invasion of Ukraine. Hundreds of them who land in Ontario find a welcoming safe haven at Carr Street

Gospel Church in downtown Toronto, a congregation that has grown multiple times larger due to unfortunate circumstances with the war in Ukraine since February 2022. It is the church's earnest desire to be vessels of God's love and glory in a broken world by serving people escaping war who have been forced to leave their homes to look for safety in Canada.

Two ways you can help, depending where you're located:  
 1) **Nov. 18-24 Winter Clothes collection.** *Your church can gather gently used winter clothing up to this date, and we will arrange the final drop-off to Carr Street's 3 giveaway events. Connect with me at [gimmerman@crcna.org](mailto:gimmerman@crcna.org) to coordinate your participation.*

2) Donations to Resonate's **Slavic Safe Haven Care Fund**

*First and last months' rent, furniture and household supplies, food vouchers and health needs will be prioritized.*

*Visit WEBSITE [resonateglobalmission.org](http://resonateglobalmission.org) , see **DONATE** top right button, choose **East Canada** and project **Slavic Safe Haven Care Fund***

### 2nd Diaspora Leaders Retreat

Resonate Global Mission and the Christian Reformed Church's Toronto/Hamilton regional bodies of congregations hosted its 2nd annual Diaspora Leaders Retreat from Sept. 7-9. Designed to better equip our churches for multi-

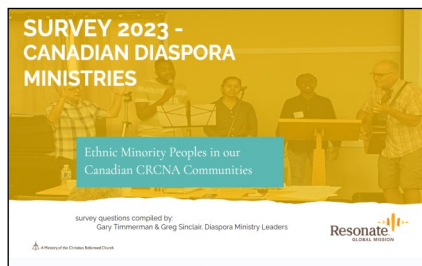


ethnic ministry, over 40 church leaders representing 17 ethnicities came together and heard presentations from seven dedicated practitioners among us. Themes included challenges of newcomers to Canada, deepening hospitality (from common to widening to mutual), walking with and building friendship toward discipleship, and bridging the generational gap of immigrant believers. Deep small-group discussions that followed gave us the confidence

that we have lots of momentum growing for this denominational priority. It's our vision that in 10 years, the majority of healthy CRC churches will be multicultural, and the lessons learned from such gatherings across every classis will ripple through our churches. Two "Next Steps" surfaced by the end of this retreat: 1) one participant announced plans for once-a-month Zoom gatherings to share stories and pray together about the intercultural ministries that are moving forward by people in our group; 2) all participants now have Intercultural Witness Ministry resource binders where we will continue to add resources and readings to help us promote expansion of our intercultural ministries and learn how to build our own cultural competencies.

### **Survey Results**

The role of being one of Resonate's diaspora ministry leaders in Canada brought about the idea to get a baseline of understanding how involved our churches are in embracing a multicultural posture and practice.



Detailed responses from 114 CRC churches across Canada (48% of all CRCs) shows how mobilized we are among immigrants, refugees,

migrant workers, and international students in ways that welcome and enfold everyone - new Canadians and those who've been newcomers decades ago. A few tidbits here:

- ✿ 12% support an ethnic minority church-plant based in the church's building (in addition to another 26% who simply rent or offer their building's use)
- ✿ 78% have sponsored refugees at some point in the past 50 years;
- ✿ 50% of those are currently sponsoring refugees
- ✿ 60% of our locales have universities or colleges
- ✿ 28% of our churches have members regularly inviting students to their dinner tables

This report is making its way to ministry leaders across Canada and will be very helpful in the coming years to pitch equipping opportunities like the above-mentioned regional diaspora leader retreats or on-line cross-cultural competency trainings. Thank you to all who gave input and wrote to me with additional commentary about your local situation. It's been a very pleasurable learning time! Every context is different where God has placed us!

### **And What About Us and Russia?**

*It would not be overstated to say that the Russian portion of my current assignment is the toughest to navigate. The joy I had two and a half years ago when we celebrated the passing over of the care of the church planter training program ('Multiplication Network') to national leaders I trained myself still gives me reason to praise God for His*

*marvelous provision. This meant more than half of my work load was taken over by gifted and passionate friends and brothers who I lived and worked with for 12 years.*

*Now I know how much these friends suffer in their hearts and souls and in their material lives because of the rising of a new Cold War and the pain inflicted by their nation on their Ukrainian neighbours. These are not matters we can talk about except in the most general of terms; in fact each call from a westerner is a risk for them in the ramped up surveillance regime that seeks out 'foreign agents'. Border restrictions keep almost all Russians from physically entering Europe, though I always have one close friend to meet when I travel there who has status in Estonia.*

*Weekly I engage a couple hours with Alexei, our staff worker who carries on the Faith & Work website and builds its network of users, equipping them to be agents of ministry in the marketplace, whether in their church, business, workplace, or not-for-profit organizations. He's been invited as a delegate to the next global Lausanne Congress in Seoul, Korea next September and is fundraising for it. This recognition of influential ministry is gratifying. So is the challenging work of sending some help to a few young faith communities, and hearing back from them.*

*After a half-year following the war, I found that I lost heart to continually follow the news of all the suffering and injustice going on in this global conflict. Historic tensions and ambitions have broken to the surface. I know what's at stake, and neither country's leader is close to ready to lose anything. Evangelical believers, holding firm to their traditional stance to stay out of politics, keep their sights and comments only to the essential work of spreading the Gospel and being the Light of Christ in a broken world. This is offensive to believers in Ukraine that Russian Christians do not stand in solidarity with them for justice. That silence keeps Russian Christians from being targeted by the repressive State.*

*This is one response. Another is the exodus of scores of believers who oppose the war, and this is where much of our family finds itself. Liudmila, Galina's mom made it to Canada to live with us, but her sister's family awaits a decision from the Turkish government if they can stay there or else find asylum in Europe or attempt to pass through an ever-tightening border at the Mexico-US line where Presbyterian ministry partners wish to greet them. Meanwhile we miss our closest ones—daughter Anastasia and husband Mark choose to keep growing their business in St. Petersburg and hope to dodge the conflict's pressures on the Russian population.*

*Reading the Psalms has never been more dear and relevant as in this season of our lives ("I will rescue him; I will protect him, for he acknowledges my Name". Psalm 91:14).*

*Gary and Galina Timmerman*

**THANK YOU for your faithful support!**