

Peter Borgdorff, who brought global Reformed churches together, dies at age 78

**Borgdorff was also the first executive director of the Christian Reformed Church in North America.**

by [Christian Century staff](#) in the [June 20, 2018](#) issue



Peter Borgdorff. Photo courtesy of [crcna.org](http://crcna.org).

Peter Borgdorff, who was [instrumental in forming the World Communion of Reformed Churches](#), died on May 21 at age 78, in Grand Rapids, Michigan. He had cancer, one of his daughters wrote.

The organization, which held its inaugural meeting in 2010 in Grand Rapids, now includes 223 member denominations connected to Presbyterian, Congregational,

and other Reformed traditions around the globe.

“Coming together like this is an example of where the ecumenical movement is going,” Borgdorff said in 2008 when the initial merger of two global Reformed groups took place. “We are seeing that diversity is good. We don’t all have to be the same—as long as we realize that certain things bind us together.”

Borgdorff was the first executive director of the Christian Reformed Church in North America, serving from 1992 to 2006.

“Borgdorff devoted much of his ministry to trying to break down barriers that separate God’s people from one another,” the CRC wrote in a tribute. “One friend said Borgdorff was the type of church executive who respected everyone. . . . At the same time, he could be tough and forceful, especially in church meetings, defending those who needed defending and rebuking those who needed to be rebuked.”

Borgdorff was born in Overschie, Netherlands, and his family immigrated to Ontario. He lived in Canada until he went to Calvin Theological Seminary. He graduated in 1969 and served as a pastor in Salt Lake City, Utah, and Holland, Michigan. He held a doctor of ministry degree from Western Theological Seminary.

*A version of this article appears in the print edition under the title “People: Peter Borgdorff.”*