

**General Synod Council  
Reformed Church in America  
475 Riverside Drive  
New York, New York 10115**

**Minutes**

- Time and Place** The spring (annual) meeting of the General Synod Council (GSC) of the Reformed Church in America was held at the Clarion Hotel & Towers, 2055 Lincoln Highway, Edison, New Jersey and New Brunswick Theological Seminary, 17 Seminary Place, New Brunswick, New Jersey, beginning at 1:25 p.m. on Tuesday, March 25, 2008. Moderator, Bradley Lewis presided at the meeting.
- Devotions** The moderator opened the meeting with scripture and prayer.
- Members Present** The following members of the General Synod Council were present:
- |                    |   |
|--------------------|---|
| Greg Alderman      | Wesley Granberg-Michaelson, <i>ex-officio</i> |
| Fred Algera        | Elisabeth Kersten                             |
| Ned Beadel         | Aaron Klein                                   |
| Mary Bechler       | Marilyn Koops                                 |
| Carol Bechtel      | Bradley Lewis                                 |
| Glen Blumer        | Marianne Lin                                  |
| Mary Bryant        | Richard Morano                                |
| Michelle Chahine   | Lizbeth Moss                                  |
| Thomas De Vries    | Patricia Mouquin                              |
| Stephanie Doeschot | John Ornee                                    |
| Norman Donkersloot | Patricia Vamvas                               |
| Anna Gonzales      | Ronald Vande Bunte                            |
- Cluster Facilitators, Recorder, Communication Observers and RCA Staff** The following persons were present for all or part of the meeting:
- |  |  |
|--|--|
| Paul Boice, <i>RCA Communications</i>        | Earl James, <i>Coordinator of Multicultural Initiatives and Social Justice</i> |
| Barbara Boers, <i>Cluster Facilitator</i>    | Jeffrey Japinga, <i>Executive Coordinator</i>                                  |
| Kenneth Bradsell, <i>Cluster Facilitator</i> | Bruce Menning, <i>Cluster Facilitator</i>                                      |
|  | Mornier Rich, <i>Recorder</i>  |

**Opening**

- Call to Order** The moderator called to order the GSC meeting on Tuesday, March 25th at 1:25 pm.
- Announcements** The moderator informed the GSC that he had appointed the Rev. Dr. George Brown, the Rev. Barbara Fillette, and the Rev. Dr. Thomas De Vries to serve as the Pastoral Care Team for the Rev. Dr. Norman Kansfield. These appointments were made at the instruction of the GSC at its January 2008 meeting.

## Consent Agenda

### Review of the Agenda and Schedule

A change was noted in the schedule regarding worship on Wednesday, March 26th; it will end at 7:20 pm instead of 6:40 pm.

Upon recommendation of its moderator, the GSC:

#### GSC 08-1

VOTED: To approve the agenda and revised schedule.

### Approval of the Minutes

Corrections to the February 12, 2008 GSC minutes are as follows:

- Remove Carol Bechel's name from members present to members absent.
- Remove Glen Blumer's name from members absent to members present.

Upon recommendation of its moderator, the GSC:

#### GSC 08-2

VOTED: To approve the January 24 and 26, 2008 General Synod Council minutes as distributed and the February 12, 2008 General Synod Council minutes as revised.

### Referral of Correspondence

#### ▪ Daubenspeck Letter of Resignation

The GSC reviewed the Daubenspeck letter. A letter of appreciation for his service will be sent from the moderator.

#### ▪ MFCA Letter

Upon recommendation of its moderator, the GSC:

#### GSC 08-3

VOTED: To move the MFCA letter from the Consent Agenda to the Leadership discussion.

#### ▪ Commission on Theology Letter

Upon recommendation of its moderator, the GSC:

#### GSC 08-4

VOTED: To move the Commission on Theology letter from the Consent Agenda to the General Synod Schedule discussion.

### Ad-Interim Appointments

The report was reviewed and the process for filling vacancies was discussed. The GSC did not make any ad-interim appointments

### 2008 Housing Allowances

Upon recommendation of its moderator, the GSC:

#### GSC 08-5

VOTED: To approve the 2008 housing allowances for GSC staff who are ordained ministers of Word and sacrament.

Upon recommendation of its moderator, the GSC

**GSC 08-6** VOTED: To approve the items in the consent agenda by consent.

### **Governance Process**

#### **Report on Attendance at Carver Training**

The written report in the agenda packet was not discussed.

#### **GSC Self-Monitoring, Review, and Evaluation (Including GP and MD Policy Review)**

The GSC moderator will forward to the GSC a response form regarding evaluation of the GSC meeting. The GSC did not conduct a review of its Governance Process or Management Delegation Policies.

The GSC discussed Policy GP-4.5 – “New Policy or Policy Amendment” and made the following revisions (additions are underlined):

5. GSC members wishing consideration of a new policy or a policy amendment will supply a proposed policy in writing to the moderator prior to the meeting. Included in this proposal will be:
  - a. Category of Governance
  - b. Author
  - c. Reason for new policy or amendment
  - d. Proposed policy content.

This will not prevent the board from acting to amend a policy at the meeting without advance notice should the need arise.

Upon recommendation of its moderator, the GSC:

**GSC 08-7** VOTED: To approve the revised GP-4.5 “New Policy or Policy Amendment”.

#### **Investment Advisory Committee Report**

The GSC reviewed the report of the Investment Advisory Committee.

#### **Audit Subcommittee Report**

The GSC reviewed the report of the Audit Subcommittee.

#### **Election of GSC Moderator**

The GSC received a report from its nominations committee. John Ornee, Ned Beadel and Glen Blumer were placed in nomination by the committee.

By confidential written ballot, the GSC:

**GSC 08-8** VOTED: To elect the Rev. John Ornee to serve as GSC moderator for the term July 1, 2008 to June 30, 2009.

#### **MFCA Student**

- Fees Discussion** Moved from Consent Agenda to Leadership discussion.
- Adoption of 2009 General Synod Assessments** The GSC discussed the Proposed GSC Assessment and the attached document (Attachment A) regarding budget areas and functions.
- Upon recommendation of its moderator, the GSC:
- GSC 08-9** VOTED: To recommend for approval by General Synod, the 2009 GSC Assessment of \$6,623,736, and to include the attachment on budget areas and functions as supporting documentation.
- General Synod 2008 Planning** The GSC agreed to assign the report on GS 2007 R-16 to the issue advisory committee format involving all synod delegates. The GSC requested the General Secretary, GS officers and staff provide a more detailed plan for any other synod agenda items that could best be addressed using the issue advisory format. The GSC will make a decision by conference call.
- Upon recommendation of its moderator, the GSC:
- GSC 08-10** VOTED: To approve the proposed schedule and agenda for the 2008 meeting of the General Synod.
- **Reports of Racial Ethnic Councils** The reports were reviewed and will be incorporated into the report of the General Synod Council to General Synod.
  - **Commission on Theology Letter** The GSC reviewed the letter from the Commission on Theology regarding General Synod's agenda and major issues. Conversations about issues and commission reports are taking place with corresponding delegates from commissions and agencies at this time.
- Linking with the Church** The GSC moderator assigned classis meetings to be attended by each GSC member as a means of improving communication between the GSC and the wider church. The GSC members that were able to attend classis meetings this winter discussed their experiences and the feedback they received from classis members. The visits will continue in the spring and fall and will be evaluated again at the October 2008 meeting.
- Racial Ethnic Training for RCA Elected Leaders** Earl James will coordinate a Racial Ethnic Training event on Thursday, October 16, 2008, beginning at 1:00 pm for GSC members and commissioners.
- New Executive Limitation Policy Regarding Financial Reporting** Upon recommendation of its moderator, the GSC:
- GSC 08-11** VOTED: To adopt a new "Financial Reporting" Executive Limitations policy (policy numbering and placement to be determined by staff):

The General Secretary shall not fail to ensure:

1. That the financial activities of the General Synod Council are recorded and reported accurately and in a timely and efficient manner;
2. That the finance functions carried out by the GSC's finance department on behalf of the corporations and agencies of the RCA are able to adequately support the effective financial managements of the RCA's ministries and mission as directed by the General Synod, and as stated in the "Ends" established by the GSC, and in the goals and objectives of the other corporations and agencies supported by the GSC's finance department;
3. That the General Secretary and staff are able to adequately address concerns identified in audit reports and related management letters and avoid undue risk from inadequate finance and/or information technology infrastructure.

**Appointment of  
Treasurer and CFO**

The General Secretary announced the appointment of Barbara Boers as Treasurer and Chief Financial Officer of the General Synod Council.

**Proposed  
Disabilities  
Ends Policy  
Adoption**

Upon recommendation of its moderator, the GSC:

**GSC 08-12**

VOTED: To instruct the General Secretary to incorporate the proposed Disabilities Ends Policy into the GSC's E-4 Discipleship Policy; and further,

to assign to the General Secretary the interpretation of the policy, and the formation of a measurable goal, strategies and outcomes.

**Proposed New  
Ends Policy:  
Multiracial Future**

Earl James addressed the GSC regarding the multiracial future of the RCA. He distributed a handout (Attachment B) asking GSC members to create small groups of about six to eight persons to discuss and record their thoughts regarding the church's multiracial future using the exercise on the handout. The GSC discussed the results as a whole with Earl James.

The GSC agreed that building a multiracial future is a core value and formed the following sub-end #1 to be added to E-1 – Global Ends Policy:

Congregations and assemblies of the Reformed Church in America will reflect God's vision of the kingdom, embracing complete unity—every race, tribe, people and language, every disability and special need, including those living on the margins—in reaching all people for Jesus Christ with grace and justice for all, actively engaging in love, acceptance, and forgiveness (John 17:23; Revelation 7:9).

Upon recommendation of its moderator, the GSC:

**GSC 08-13**

VOTED: To approve Sub-End #1 and include it in E-1 Global Ends Policy and renumber the current Sub-Ends #1 and #2 to Sub-Ends #2 and #3.

Upon recommendation of its moderator, the GSC:

**GSC 08-14** VOTED: To add the following Sub-Sub End to Sub-End #1 to E-1 Global Ends Policy:

Guided by God’s kingdom vision, congregations and assemblies of the Reformed Church in America will resist the sin of racism, commit to a multi-racial future engaging all God’s people in mission and ministry, and equally sharing the resources and responsibilities of Our Call.

**GSC Bylaws Revision** The GSC reviewed the revisions to its bylaws to be forwarded to General Synod as part of the report of the General Synod Council.

Upon recommendation of its moderator, the GSC

**GSC 08-15** VOTED: To forward the revised bylaws to General Synod for review and adoption.

#### **Ends Policy Monitoring**

**Ends Policy Monitoring** The GSC reviewed E-1 – Global Ends Policy Monitoring Report.

Upon recommendation of its moderator, the GSC:

**GSC 08-16** VOTED: To approve the General Secretary’s interpretation and actions as recorded in the report.

#### **▪ R-16 Update Report**

The GSC reviewed the update report from the MGS 2007 R-16 team.

#### **▪ “One Thing” Event Review**

Following its review and evaluation of the January 2008 conference and upon recommendation of its moderator, the GSC:

**GSC 08-17** VOTED: To encourage the General Secretary to initiate plans for an all church leadership event modeled after the January 2008 “One Thing” event.

The following Ends Policy Monitoring Reports from the General Secretary were reviewed and received by the GSC:

- E-2 – Church Multiplication Policy
- E-3 – Revitalization Policy
- E-4 – Discipleship Policy
- E-6 – Mission

**GSC 08-18** VOTED: To approve the General Secretary’s interpretation and actions as recorded in the reports.

The GSC reviewed E-5 – Leadership Policy Ends Monitoring Report. As part of its discussion, the GSC addressed the MFCA letter.

- **MFCFA Letter**            The GSC agreed that a committee should be formed to review and discuss assessments and report to the GSC with a final resolution not later than the October 2009 GSC meeting. The core committee members are Norman Donkersloot, Lizbeth Moss and Elisabeth Kersten. Bradley Lewis and the core group will determine any additional members and steps to accomplishing the task.

### **Executive Limitations Monitoring Reports**

#### **Executive Limitations Monitoring Reports**

The GSC reviewed EL-3 – Financial Planning/Budgeting and asked the General Secretary to include in the Executive Committee’s Report to General Synod a paragraph regarding the Finance transition.

Upon recommendation of its moderator, the GSC:

- GCS 08-19**            VOTED:            To approve the General Secretary’s interpretation and actions as recorded in the report.

The GSC reviewed EL-4 Financial Condition and Activities and the request for Assessment Relief from Classis of Zeeland.

Upon recommendation of its moderator, the GSC:

- GSC 08-20**            VOTED:            To approve the General Secretary’s interpretation and actions as recorded in the report.

- GSC 08-21**            VOTED:            To deny Assessment Relief to the Classis of Zeeland.

The following Executive Limitations Monitoring Reports from the General Secretary were received and reviewed by the GSC:

- EL-5 Emergency CEO Succession
- EL-6 Asset Protection
- EL-8 Communications and Support to the Board
- EL-9 Ends Focus of Grants or Contracts
- EL-10 Maintenance of Confidentiality

Upon recommendation of its moderator, the GSC:

- GSC 08-22**            VOTED:            To approve the General Secretary’s interpretation and actions as recorded in the reports.

### **GSC Management Delegation**

The GSC reviewed the following Management Delegation Policies:

- MD-5.2.C – The GSC members conducted a direct inspection of the RCA Archives and interviewed the Director.
- MD-5.5 – Policy Completion

#### **Executive Session**

The GSC moderator declared an Executive Session to conduct the three-year “360° super review” of the General Secretary’s performance. The moderator approved a summary report of the session (Attachment C) for insertion into the GSC’s report to General Synod.

#### **Incidental Information**

The GSC reviewed and discussed the following Incidental Information reports:

- Fulfillment of Recommendations from General Synod.
- Report from GS President, John Ornee (oral)
- Report from GS Vice President, Carol Bechtel (oral)
- Report from General Secretary (oral)
- Report from GSC Moderator, Bradley Lewis (oral)
- Overtures To Date

#### **NBTS Update**

The Rev. Dr. Gregg Mast addressed the GSC and responded to questions about the ministry and mission of New Brunswick Theological Seminary. He noted that the seminary student body is larger than at any time in its history. Most of the students are commuters and are part-time.

He also noted that in the past decade NBTS has awarded M. Div. degrees to more non-white candidates for ordained ministry than any other theological seminary in the New York/New Jersey metropolitan region. He noted that the mission of NBTS is to be a seminary of the RCA equipping ministers and leaders for the ecumenical church. The GSC dined with students, faculty and members of the seminary administration, and worshipped with the seminary community.

#### **CONCLUDING BUSINESS**

#### **Next Meeting**

(**Note:** The GSC will meet as the General Synod Committee of Reference at 6:30 am for breakfast on Friday, June 6th and again at 6:30 am for breakfast on Tuesday, June 10th.)

June 11, 2007 (Wednesday 8:30 am to 12 noon)

Hope College, Holland, Michigan

(**Note:** GSC members should not book flights prior to 2:00 pm)

#### **Future Meetings**

October 16, 17-19, 2008 – GSC/Commissions, Sheraton Gateway O’Hare Airport (Chicago)

March 24-26, 2009 – GSC Meeting, location to be determined

June 4-10, 2009 – General Synod, Hope College, Holland, Michigan

#### **Adjournment**

The spring meeting of the General Synod Council of the Reformed Church in America adjourned with prayer at 11:37 a.m. on Thursday, March 27, 2008.

Prepared by:

Mornier Rich, Recorder  
Kenneth Bradsell, Assistant Secretary