

**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 Holiday Inn Select – Grand Rapids Airport, 3063 Lake Eastbrook Blvd. SE, Kentwood, Michigan, beginning at 1:00 p.m. on Tuesday, March 24, 2009. Moderator, John Ornee presided at the meeting.

Members Present The following members of the General Synod Council were present:

Fred Algera	Rhonda Johnson
Ned Beadel	Elisabeth Kersten
Mary Bechler	Aaron Klein
Carol Bechtel	Marianne Lin
Glen Blumer	Toni Macon (late arrival)
Randy Bohl	Richard Morano
Mary Bryant	John Ornee
John Busman	David Patterson
Michelle Chahine	Christopher Poest
James Cobb	James Seawood
Thomas De Vries	James Steward
Stephanie Doeschot	Arnold Van Ankum
Anna Gonzales	Ronald Vande Bunte
Wesley Granberg-Michaelson, <i>ex-officio</i>	Evan Vermeer

Member Absent The following member of the General Synod Council was unable to attend the meeting:

Lizbeth Moss

Cluster Facilitators, Recorder, Communication Observers and Regional Synod Staff Observer The following staff members were present for all or part of the meeting:

Jhonny Alicea-Báez, <i>Cluster Facilitator</i>	Earl James, <i>Coordinator of Multicultural Initiatives</i>
Barbara Boers, <i>Cluster Facilitator</i>	Bruce Menning, <i>Retiring Staff</i>
Paul Boice, <i>RCA Communications</i>	Mornier Rich, <i>Recorder</i>
Kenneth Bradsell, <i>Cluster Facilitator</i>	Richard Welscott, <i>Retiring Staff</i>
Jessica Bratt, <i>Executive Coordinator</i>	
Ken Eriks, <i>Cluster Facilitator</i>	

Opening

Devotions The moderator opened the meeting with scripture and prayer.

Call to Order The moderator called to order the GSC meeting on Tuesday, March 25th at 1:03 pm.

Consent Agenda

Upon recommendation of its moderator, the GSC

GSC 09-1 VOTED: To approve recommendations 09-02 – 09-06 by consensus.

Review of the Agenda and Schedule

The GSC removed the CCO letter to the CMT from its consent agenda and will discuss it when the general secretary reviews E-2 Church Multiplication.

Upon recommendation of its moderator, the GSC:

GSC 09-2 CONSENTED: To approve the revised agenda and schedule.

Approval of the Minutes

Upon recommendation of its moderator, the GSC:

GSC 09-3 CONSENTED: To approve the October 17-19, 2008 General Synod Council minutes as distributed.

Referral of Correspondence

▪ Classis of Mid-Hudson Assessment Relief Request

Upon recommendation of its moderator, the GSC:

GSC 09-4 CONSENTED: To approve Assessment Relief in the amount of \$4,042 for 2009 to the Classis of Mid-Hudson.

▪ 2009 Housing Allowance

Upon recommendation of its moderator, the GSC:

GSC 09-5 CONSENTED: To approve the 2009 housing allowances for GSC staff who are ordained ministers of Word and sacrament.

▪ Resolutions

Upon recommendation of its moderator, the GSC:

GSC 09-6 CONSENTED: To approve the resolutions for Mary Clark, Irene Delgado, Bruce Menning and Richard Welscott (Appendix A).

Executive Limitations Monitoring Reports

Executive Limitations Monitoring Reports

The GSC reviewed EL-3 – Financial Planning/Budgeting.

Upon recommendation of its moderator, the GSC:

GCS 09-7 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 Northern Michigan Classis.

Upon recommendation of its moderator, the GSC:

GSC 09-8 VOTED: To approve the General Secretary’s interpretation and actions as recorded in the report.

GSC 09-9 VOTED: To approve Assessment Relief for the Classis of Northern Michigan.

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

- EL-7 Asset Protection
- EL-10 Ends Focus of Grants or Contracts

Upon recommendation of its moderator, the GSC:

GSC 09-10 VOTED: To approve the General Secretary’s interpretation and actions as recorded in the reports.

Governance Process

Governing Style – Role and Responsi- bility of GSC as it Pertains to GS Agencies

The moderator asked Kenneth Bradsell to lead a brief “Policy Governance” review per a request at the previous meeting that this be an agenda item at each GSC meeting. Kenneth Bradsell reviewed with the GSC how it relates to General Synod and General Synod agencies. The GSC currently operates as the General Synod’s Executive Committee (GSEC) and as the General Synod’s Program Agency. As the program agency, the GSC receives direction from the General Synod around “Our Call”. The GSC functions as the executive committee when the General Synod is not in session, as the Board of Trustees of General Synod, and as the Committee of Reference when the General Synod is in session.

In its capacity as the GSEC, the GSC has certain responsibilities for oversight and coordination on behalf of the General Synod for the other corporate entities of the General Synod and for the synod’s commissions and unincorporated agencies. Ken

reviewed those GSC responsibilities (*BCO* pages 100-101) that pertain to its duties as the GSEC. The GSC discussed its two distinct areas of responsibility.

Ken provided an update on discussions being held by the joint GSC/BOBS task group requested to determine policy revisions that would articulate the relationship of the GSC to BOBS. He reported that these discussions are ongoing and may result in proposed policy revisions by June 2009 or, more likely, October 2009.

**EL-9 – Communi-
cation and Support
to the Board**

The General Secretary reported to the GSC that in accordance with GSC Policy EL-9 he needed to report a deepening concern regarding the Classis of California and its growing assessment delinquency. The General Secretary asked Kenneth Bradsell to provide a report on the current status of assessment non-payment for the classis. Ken provided the GSC with a report reviewing efforts to encourage the classis to pay outstanding assessments for the last half of 2008 and sufficient assessments (the first two quarters) of 2009. Ken also informed the GSC that the Classis of California had not completed paying delinquent assessments for the years 2005 and 2006. He noted that a partial payment had been made in May 2007 that was deemed sufficient by the officers at that time to seat the delegation at the synod meeting in June of that year. However, no further payments had been made and the delinquency would need to be resolved in order for the classis to be seated at synod in 2009. He reported that the total outstanding amount was now in excess of \$400,000.

The GSC requested the General Secretary, Thomas DeVries, and Ned Beadel to offer to meet with the Classis of California executive committee to resolve the matter and of delinquent assessments and to discuss any issues that are keeping the classis from honoring its covenant relationship with the General Synod and the other forty-five classes. Further, the GSC instructed the General Secretary to bring with him to the meeting with the classis a letter expressing the concerns of the entire GSC in this matter. The General Secretary was instructed to inform the classis that unless resolution could be found to address the total delinquency, the classis could not be seated at the 2009 meeting of the General Synod.

The General Secretary informed the GSC that he would provide an update on the situation prior to the start of the synod meeting in June.

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

The GSC instructed the General Secretary to provide a monitoring report on EL-9, “Communication and Support to the Board” at its June 2009 meeting.

The GSC proposed adding the following to GP-2.6 Governing Style:

At its fall meeting, the GSC will review governance process; and at its spring meeting, the GSC will review management delegation. The GSC instructed staff to add this to the policy document.

Upon recommendation of its moderator, the GSC:

GSC 09-11

VOTED: To add to GP-2.6 a fall review of governance process and a spring review of management delegation.

The moderator asked the General Secretary to request staff to revise the policy document to reflect the above request for review at its June meeting.

**Review of
Ends Policies
for Specificity**

The GSC agreed that Policy Governance training should be continuous.

**Investment Advisory
Committee Report**

John Ornee invited Barbara Boers to comment on the printed report of the Investment Advisory Committee.

**Audit Committee
Report**

John Ornee invited Ronald Vande Bunte to comment on the printed report of the Audit Subcommittee.

**Moderator
Election**

The GSC received a report from its nominations committee. Carol Bechtel, Michelle Chahine and Stephanie Doeschot were placed in nomination by the committee to serve the GSC as moderator for a term to begin July 1, 2009.

By confidential written ballot, the GSC:

GSC 09-12

VOTED: To elect the Rev. Dr. Carol Bechtel to serve as GSC moderator for the term July 1, 2009 to June 30, 2010.

**Adoption of
2010 General
Synod Assessments**

Barbara Boers presented the proposed assessment budget for FY 2010 following discussion.

Upon recommendation of its moderator, the GSC:

GSC 09-13

VOTED: To recommend to the General Synod a 2010 assessment of \$33.47 per confessing member for General Synod/General Synod Council; and an assessment of \$6.21 for the Board of Benefits Services (\$1.50) and Theological Education (\$4.71) for a total propose assessment of \$39.68.

**General Synod
2009 Planning –
Schedule**

John Ornee invited Kenneth Bradsell to comment on the General Synod 2009 Planning and Schedule.

Upon recommendation of its moderator, the GSC:

GSC 09-14

VOTED: To approve the proposed schedule and agenda for the 2009 meeting of the General Synod.

**Report to
General Synod
as the Executive
Committee**

- **Diversity –
Corresponding
Delegates
R-11** In 2008, the General Secretary in his report to General Synod noted that “those who are of younger generation, those who are women, and those from non-white racial and ethnic backgrounds are not present in our assemblies in any manner close to their actual presence in our congregations.” (*MGS 2008*, p. 30). A task force was formed to look at these issues and to bring to the 2009 General Synod possible changes in the Government of the Reformed Church in America, and the Bylaws and Special Rules of Order of the General Synod so that General Synod will better reflect the wider church. The GSC reviewed the report. By consensus, it made editorial changes and authorized the edited report for inclusion in its report to the General Synod.
- **Fresh Wind Letter
R-16** The report was reviewed, and by consensus the GSC agreed to incorporate the report into the report of the General Synod Executive Committee to the General Synod.
- **GSC/Church Herald
Editorial Council
R-31/R-32/R-33** The report was reviewed by the GSC. The council instructed the General Secretary, John Ornee and Thomas De Vries to meet with representatives from the Church Herald Editorial Committee to discuss the funding options (below) and a business plan explaining the assumptions that the GSC and the Editorial Council propose sending to General Synod.

Option 1

Based on present costs, and utilizing the \$240,000 in assessment funding already in the budget, the first option would allow for the publication of the Church Herald as an integrated magazine, under the joint agreement. This would require additional funding which would be raised through an assessment of \$5.30 per member.

Option 2

A second option would be similar, but the magazine would be published six times a year. Based on present costs, and utilizing the \$240,000 in assessment funding already in the budget, the second option would allow for the publication of the Church Herald as an integrated magazine, under the joint agreement. This would require additional funding through an assessment of about \$2.85 per member.

Option 3

A third option, if no additional funding is approved, would merge the content of both print magazines and migrate it to an online, electronic format. Based on present costs, and utilizing the \$240,000 in assessment funding already in the budget, the third option would allow for the publication of the Church Herald as an integrated magazine, primarily in an electronic format, under the joint agreement.

(Note: As reported to the GSC in an update, option #3 was modified in discussion with the representatives of the Church Herald. The revised options will be reported to the General Synod.)

- **HOPE Prayer Team R-35** The 2008 recommendation was to look at funding for the HOPE Prayer Team and a part-time Director. The moderator reported that the prayer team is operating with administrative support from the GSC's Discipleship office. Due to insufficient funding additional staffing will not be recommended at this time. By consensus the GSC agreed to incorporate the report into the General Synod Executive Committee report to the General Synod.
 - **R-67 (6th Our Call)** The GSC reviewed the proposed revisions to the "Our Call" logo to incorporate the sixth element of Our Call. The GSC proposed additional revisions which were incorporated into the design. By consensus, the GSC approved the redesign and authorized its use, and will incorporate it into the report of the General Synod Executive Committee to the General Synod.
 - **Recruiting and Training Leaders R-70** The report was reviewed, and by consensus the GSC agreed to incorporate the report into the report of the General Synod Executive Committee to the General Synod.
 - **Report from the Homosexuality Dialogue** The report was reviewed, and by consensus the GSC agreed to incorporate the report into the report of the General Synod Executive Committee to the General Synod.
 - **GS 2010** The report was reviewed, and by consensus the GSC agreed to incorporate the report into the report of the General Synod Executive Committee to the General Synod.
 - **GS 2011/ Leadership Event** The GSC instructed staff to proceed with plans for this event and to give an update at its June 2009 meeting.
 - **Reports of the Racial/Ethnic Councils** The reports were reviewed, and by consensus the GSC agreed to incorporate the reports into the report of the General Synod Executive Committee to the General Synod.

Note: John Ornee will contact Glen Missick, AAC Executive Director, regarding the GSC and AAC having a dialogue about race.
 - **Disabilities Ministries** The General Secretary approved a three-month contract for Marty Bultman to help them move this ministry forward. Marty is working with CRC because they are more advanced with disabilities ministries. The task force will reconvene to assess if they are ready to move forward with a part-time candidate. The General Synod will need to approve a \$0.23 per member assessment again in 2009 to fund the part-time post.

Upon recommendation of its moderator, the GSC:
- GSC 09-15** VOTED: To recommend to the General Synod a 2010 special assessment of \$0.23 per confessing member for disability ministries.
- **Recommendations Coming to GS** The GSC reviewed for information the recommendations that are going to General Synod.

**Agenda Planning/
Future Meetings**

See “Concluding Business” on page 11.

**Linking with the
Church – Classis
Visits**

The moderator and General Secretary reported that information requested by GSC members in the fall to assist with winter classis meetings was not distributed. GSC members reported on their visits to the various classes. The moderator requested that information be provided by the General Synod office in advance of fall meetings.

**Adoption of
Revised Policies**

▪ **Management
Delegation 5.5**

Upon recommendation of its moderator, the GSC:

GSC 09-15

VOTED: To insert the following revised schedule into the Management Delegations Policy 5.5:

EL-1 – Fall	Global Executive Constraint
EL-2 – Fall	Treatment of Staff
EL-3 – <u>Spring</u>	Financial Planning/Budgeting
EL-4 – <u>Spring</u>	Financial Condition and Activities
EL-5 – Fall	Financial Recording and Reporting
EL-6 – Spring	Emergency CEO Succession
EL-7 – Spring	Asset Protection
EL-8 – <u>Fall</u>	Compensation and Benefits
EL-9 – Spring	Communication and Support to the Board
EL-10 – Spring	Ends Focus of Grants or Contracts
EL-11 – Spring	Maintenance of Confidentiality

▪ **Ends – Global
Ends Policy (E-1)**

Upon recommendation of its moderator, the GSC:

GSC 09-16

VOTED: To approve the following revisions to E-1 – Global Ends Policy:

Empowered by the Holy Spirit, grounded in Scripture, and in covenant with the General Secretary and staff, the General Synod Council will carry out its responsibilities in order to ensure that the Reformed Church in America will be a faithful and fruitful denomination ~~where~~: Congregations ~~are~~ following Christ in mission, equipped and empowered to embrace unity, reconciliation and justice ~~for faithful and fruitful ministry~~, which requires all we have and all we are to the glory of God.

Sub-End 1: 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 (every race, tribe, people and language, every disability and special need, including those living on the margins) ~~for~~ with the love and grace of Jesus Christ; with grace and justice for all, actively

engaging in love, acceptance, ~~and~~ forgiveness and justice. (John 17:23; Revelation 7:9).

Sub-Sub End: Deleted in its entirety.

▪ **Ends – Multiracial
Future Policy (E-7)**

Upon recommendation of its moderator, the GSC:

GSC 09-17 VOTED: To approve the following revisions to E-7 – Multiracial Future Policy:

The RCA will be a fellowship of congregations resisting the sin of racism and committing to a multi-racial future engaging all of God’s people in mission and ministry.

▪ **EL-7 – Asset
Protection
Proposed Changes**

Upon recommendation of its moderator, the GSC:

GSC 09-18 VOTED: To approve the following revision to EL-7 – Asset Protection:

POLICY TYPE: EXECUTIVE LIMITATIONS

EL-7

POLICY TITLE: *ASSET PROTECTION*

The General Secretary will not cause or allow corporate assets to be unprotected, inadequately maintained, or unnecessarily risked.

The General Secretary will not:

1. Fail to insure adequately against theft and casualty losses of GSC property and against liability losses to the GSC and its members, officers, staff, and volunteers ~~the organization itself~~.
2. Unnecessarily expose property of the GSC to risks of theft or casualty losses, or the GSC or its members, officers, staff, or volunteers ~~the organization, its GSC, or staff~~ to claims of liability.
3. Manage the financial affairs of the GSC in a manner that would result in a qualified audit opinion.
4. Fail to implement audit management letter items without justification.
5. Invest or hold operating cash and all other investments in ways that are not in compliance with the GSC pre-approved investment policies including in any of the following:
 - Uninsured checking accounts;

- Money market funds that are rated lower than AAAM by Standard & Poor's or Class A by the NAIC;
 - A fixed income portfolio that:
 1. Is not within a 25% range versus the average duration of the Merrill Lynch US Corporate & Government 1 to 5, A Rated and above Index;
 2. Has a single issuer that represents more than 5% of the overall value of the portfolio at the time of purchase;
 3. Contains individual investments that exceed 5 years in maturity from the date of purchase;
 4. Has a single issuer that is rated lower than A by either Standard and Poor's or Moody's at the time of purchase;
 5. Has an aggregate S&P rating of AA- or lower on a weighted average basis;
 6. Is structured so that less than 50% of the assets can be easily liquidated; or
 7. Is invested in instruments known as "structured notes" or instruments commonly considered "derivative" instruments (e.g., inverse floaters, leveraged floaters, equity-linked securities, options, futures, swaps, caps, floors, or collars).
 - Investments in alcoholic beverages, tobacco products, gambling devices, or other products or services which may be deemed unethical or in violation of Biblical principles which will be determined by the General Synod or the General Synod Council upon investigation and recommendation;
6. Endanger the General Synod Council's ~~organization's~~ public image and credibility.
 7. Permit the sale, exchange, or other transfer of any asset of the GSC with a value of \$1,000,000 or more without obtaining the prior consent of the GSC.
 8. Permit the sale, exchange or other transfer of any asset of the GSC with a value that is less than \$1,000,000 unless the asset sold, exchanged, or transferred is of lesser or comparable value to the asset being received for it, or unless GSC gives its prior consent.

Notwithstanding the forgoing, the General Secretary will not fail to make available up to 10% of the appropriated and unappropriated operating reserve of the GSC for mission investment purposes (for purposes of this section the term "mission investment" shall mean Section IV-12 of the *GSC Handbook* (10/02 edition)).

Management Delegation

Monitoring General Secretary Performance – Relationship Review Committee

The Relationship Review Committee consists of Mary Bechler, Thomas De Vries, Stephanie Doeschot and Christopher Poest. They reviewed with the GSC the General Secretary's performance. Michelle Chahine will replace Mary Bechler after the expiration of Mary's term on June 30th.

Ends Policy Monitoring

Global Ends Policy (E-1) – Reformed and Missional Update Report

John Ornee invited Carol Bechtel to comment on the printed report of the Reformed and Missional Implementation Team.

Church Multi- plication (E-2)

The general secretary withdrew this monitoring report after reviewing it with the GSC. He will revise his interpretation and submit the revisions to the GSC at its October 2009 meeting.

▪ CCO Letter Regarding CMT

The General Secretary reviewed with the GSC the memo from the Church Multiplication Team (CMT) to the Commission on Church Order (CCO) and the commission's response. The CMT requested that the CCO consider how best to address conflicts regarding classis boundaries. If a parent church plants a new church start outside of its classis boundary, does the new church start congregation become accountable to the classis that oversees the area it has been planted in or is the new church start congregation accountable to the classis that oversees the parent church congregation? There is not a written policy addressing this conflict or defining classis boundaries. The General Secretary advised the GSC that this will be an ongoing dialogue.

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

- E-3 – Revitalization Policy
- E-4 – Discipleship Policy
- E-6 – Mission

GSC 09-19

VOTED: To approve the General Secretary's interpretation and actions as recorded in the reports.

Leadership Policy (E-5)

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

Upon recommendation of its moderator, the GSC:

GSC 09-20

VOTED: To approve the General Secretary's interpretation and actions as recorded in the report.

Executive Session The GSC moderator declared the GSC in Executive Session

Incidental Information

The GSC reviewed and discussed the following Incidental Information reports:

- Fulfillment of Recommendations from General Synod.
- Macy Church Update (oral)
- Belhar Implementation Update (oral)
- Rev. Dr. Norman Kansfield Call and Oversight (oral)
- Reports from GSC Racial/Ethnic Representatives (oral)
- Report from GS President, Carol Bechtel (oral)
- Report from GS Vice President, James Seawood (oral)
- Report from General Secretary (oral)
- Report from GSC Moderator, John Ornee (oral)
- Overtures To Date

CONCLUDING BUSINESS

Next Meeting (**Note:** The GSC will meet as the General Synod Committee of Reference at 6:45 am for breakfast on Friday, June 5th and again at 6:45 am for breakfast on Tuesday, June 9th.)

June 10, 2009 (Wednesday 8:30 am to 12 noon)

Hope College, Holland, Michigan

(**Note:** GSC members should not book flights prior to 2:00 pm on June 10th)

Future Meetings October 16-18, 2009 – GSC/Commissions – Crowne Plaza Hotel, Grand Rapids, MI
March 23-25, 2010 – GSC Meeting, location to be determined
June 10-15, 2010 – General Synod

Adjournment The spring meeting of the General Synod Council of the Reformed Church in America adjourned with prayer at 12:00 p.m. on Thursday, March 26, 2009.

Prepared by:

Mornier Rich, Recorder

Kenneth Bradsell, Assistant Secretary