

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

Minutes

- Place and Date** The fall meeting of the General Synod Council (GSC) of the Reformed Church in America was held at the Holiday Inn Select Minneapolis Airport Hotel, Three Appletree Square, Bloomington, Minnesota, beginning on Friday, October 13, 2006 to Sunday, October 15, 2006. Moderator, Steven Vander Molen presided at the meeting.
- Worship** Worship on Friday and Saturday mornings was conducted in the joint plenary meetings of the GSC and the General Synod commissions. Worship leaders were:
- The Rev. Dr. Lynn Japinga (Friday, October 13th)
The Rev. Sebastian Ong (Saturday, October 14th)
Elder Bradley Lewis (Sunday, October 15th)
- Members Present** The following members of the General Synod Council were present:
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|---|---------------------|
| Greg Alderman | Bradley G. Lewis |
| Mary Bechler | Richard Morano |
| Glen Blumer | Lizbeth Moss |
| Mary Bryant | P.J. Mouquin |
| Thomas De Vries | Sebastian Ong |
| Norman Donkersloot | John Ornee |
| Ted Dykstra | Karyn Ratcliffe |
| Anna Gonzales | Irving Rivera |
| Wesley Granberg-Michaelson, <i>ex-officio</i> | Ronald Vande Bunte |
| Carolyn Holloway | Steven Vander Molen |
| Elisabeth Kersten | William Vermilyea |
| Marilyn Koops | Ruth Webb |
- Member Absent** The following member of the General Synod Council was unable to attend the meeting:
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|--------------------|----------------|
| Thomas Daubenspeck | Patricia Vamas |
| Donald Poest | |
- Cluster Facilitators, Recorder, Communication Observers and Regional Synod Staff Observer** The following staff members were present for all or part of the meeting:
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|--|--|
| Paul Boice, <i>RCA Communications</i> | Bruce Menning, <i>Cluster Facilitator</i> |
| Kenneth Bradsell, <i>Cluster Facilitator</i> | Luis Perez, <i>Regional Synod Observer</i> |
| Susan Converse, <i>Cluster Facilitator</i> | Mornier Rich, <i>Recorder</i> |
| Ken Eriks, <i>Cluster Facilitator</i> | Richard Welscott, <i>Cluster Facilitator</i> |
- OPENING**
- Call to Order** The moderator called to order the GSC meeting on Friday, October 13th at 1:38 pm.

**Review of
the Agenda
and Schedule**

Upon recommendation of its moderator, the GSC

GSC 06-34

VOTED: To approve the agenda and schedule

**Approval of
the Minutes**

Upon recommendation of its moderator, the GSC

GSC 06-35

VOTED: To approve the March 21-23, 2006 and June 13, 2006
General Synod Council minutes as distributed.

**Corporate
Resolution**

Upon recommendation of its moderator, the GSC

GSC 06-36

VOTED: Resolved that any two of the following officers and employees of the
Corporation, to wit:

Wesley Granberg-Michaelson, Secretary
Kenneth Bradsell, Assistant Secretary
Susan Converse, Treasurer

be and they are hereby authorized and empowered to sell, assign,
transfer or dispose of any stocks, bonds, or others securities or real
estate now or hereafter owned or held by the General Synod Council of
the Reformed Church in America; and further,

resolved that any individual to whom a copy of these resolutions shall
be delivered may rely upon these resolutions until such time as written
notice of any change, amendment or cancellation thereof shall have
been received by such individual.

GSC Policies

The GSC reviewed the edited text of its Policy Document prepared at its direction by
staff. The GSC made several additional changes in the document.

Upon recommendation of its moderator, the GSC:

GSC 06-37

VOTED: To approve the revised GSC Policies document as amended
(appendix A).

**Investment Ad-
visory Committee**

The GSC requested its Investment Advisory Committee to investigate, as an option,
socially screened mutual funds, and to report its findings to the GSC at the March, 2007
meeting.

**Establishment
of Ends Policies**

The GSC entered into an extended process to develop Ends Policies consistent with its commitment to do its work utilizing the principles of “Policy Governance”.

Upon recommendation of its moderator, the GSC:

GSC 06-38

VOTED: To adopt the following as its Global Ends Statement:

Empowered by the Holy Spirit 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 denomination where: Congregations are following Christ in mission, equipped and empowered for faithful and fruitful ministry, which requires all we have and all we are to the glory of God.

The GSC continued its work on ends statements. It developed ends policy statements for the five elements of *Our Call*.

Upon recommendation of its moderator, the GSC:

GSC 06-39

VOTED: To adopt the following Sub-Ends Policy Statements and the sub-ends of the GSC are to foster:

- Church Multiplication Policy
The RCA will foster a sustainable movement of church multiplication through starting new congregations.
- Revitalization Policy
The RCA will be a fellowship of externally focused congregations where lives are being transformed and communities are being renewed.
- Discipleship Policy
The RCA will be a fellowship of congregations filled with disciples, nurtured inwardly, focused outwardly, becoming like Jesus in all they think, say and do in order to show the love of God in all circumstances to all people.
- Leadership Policy
The RCA will be a fellowship of congregations that are building a healthy, growing future by renewing existing leadership and identifying, calling forth, and training people with gifts for leadership.
- Mission Policy

The RCA will be a fellowship of congregations intentionally crossing boundaries in word and deed with the love of God known in Jesus Christ resulting in:

- Sending and receiving, both locally and globally with all the partners God provides.
- Engaging the world: hurts being healed, the lost being found, the hungry being fed, peace healing brokenness, hope replacing despair, lives transformed by the love of Jesus Christ.

The GSC agreed that at future meetings it will develop further more specific sub-ends as may be needed and desire in these areas as it oversees and give focus to the work of carrying out *Our Call*.

Monitoring Reports

Monitoring Reports from the General Secretary were received and reviewed by the GSC. The GSC requested that future monitoring reports have headings that read “Completed Monitoring Reports” or “In Progress Monitoring Reports”. By doing this, the GSC will be able to understand what staff has been completed and what is pending.

Upon recommendation of its moderator, the GSC:

GSC 06-40 VOTED: To approve the monitoring reports as received.

GSC Bylaws

The GSC reviewed proposed revised bylaws that will facilitate its operation as a policy governance council. Following discussion and review of the proposed revisions the GSC requested the General Secretary refer the bylaws to appropriate staff for further revision and report to the March, 2007 meeting.

The moderator noted that until the General Synod (2007) approves revised bylaws for the GSC, the council must operate in compliance with its current bylaws. The moderator noted that the GSC at its June meeting had determined how its Personnel and Evaluation Committee would function. At this time, it determined that its standing committees would be retained as reported last year with new members being inserted into the committee rosters alphabetically to replace those members whose terms have expired.

Upon recommendation of its moderator, the GSC:

GSC 06-41 VOTED: To request the General Secretary instruct appropriate personnel to revise the rosters of the GSC to indicate the committee membership for 2006-2007.

Ad Interim Appointments to GSC, Commissions Boards and Agencies

Upon recommendation of its moderator, the GSC:

GSC 06-42 VOTED: To appoint *ad interim* Lori Witt as a member of the Commission on History.

Upon recommendation of its moderator, the GSC:

GSC 06-43 VOTED: To appoint *ad interim* Timothy Rotman as a member of the Editorial Council of the Church Herald, Class of 2008.

Upon recommendation of its moderator, the GSC:

GSC 06-44 VOTED: To appoint *ad interim* David Theonugraha as a member of the board of the Ministerial Formation Coordinating Agency, Class of 2009.

Upon recommendation of its moderator, the GSC:

GSC 06-45 VOTED: To appoint *ad interim* Robert Wei as a member of the board of Northwestern College.

Communications:

- **Beaverdam Reformed Church** Letter was received by the GSC as information.
- **Racial Ethnic Councils** Letter from was received by the GSC as information.
- **Queens Classis** Letters from was received by the GSC as information.
- **Ministerial Formation Coordinating Agency** The GSC received a letter and proposal for reorganization from the Ministerial Formation Coordinating Agency with a request that the GSC review and comment on the proposed direction of change being considered by the MFCA. The GSC discussed the proposal. It requested its moderator communicate general support from the GSC for the overall direction of the proposal. Specifically, the GSC agreed with the separation of the functions of the current MFCA so it could focus on matters of certification, and that it requests the General synod and some other yet to be named entity under the direction of the GSC to focus on the remaining functions currently assigned to the MFCA.
- **Homosexuality Dialogue** The GSC expressed a desire to engage in some appropriate aspects of the dialogue as determined by the moderator and officers in conversation with the General Secretary.

Upon recommendation of its moderator, the GSC:

GSC 06-46 VOTED: To include on the agenda for the spring meeting, time to experience appropriate aspects of RCA Dialogue on Homosexuality as time will permit.

General Synod Referrals The General Secretary and staff provided oral updated reports to the GSC on progress in responding to the referrals from the 2006 General Synod to the GSC. The following updates were provided.

MGS 2006, R-9, p.53

A previously appointed GSC task group and GSC staff are working on 2008 event focused on *Our Call*, a church-wide conference. Staff is proposing that the report to

General Synod 2007 in response to the synod's request to consider moving the General Synod meeting to January be developed with a recommendation to accomplish this change in 2010 rather than the suggested 2009. This will facilitate planning, allow the current winter events to remain on the current time sequence and give adequate time to consider possible governance and administrative changes in church calendars.

MGS 2006, R-11, p.59

GSC staff received a letter from the Classis of Orange asking for finance assistance in regards to Norman Kansfield as offered in the action of the 2006 General Synod. The General Secretary reported that the General Synod office has reviewed the request with the clerk of the classis and will arrange for the provision of support.

MGS 2006, R-14, p.68

Bradley Lewis and John Ornee will appoint three members from the GSC to the ad hoc "Committee of 19" and will correspond with the regional synods to ascertain whom they have appointed to serve on the committee to explore the nature and extent of the relationship among the classes, regional synods, and General Synod. John Ornee will chair the committee.

MGS 2006, R-39, p.143; MGS 2006, R-40, R-41, R-42, and R-43, p.144; MGS 2006, R-44, p.145; MGS 2006, R-48, p. 176

Wesley Granberg-Michaelson will form a team of 35 persons to meet in January to develop a plan regarding the referrals noted above addressing the RCA's multiracial future, staffing matters, and the development of specific programs on anti-racism.

**Evaluation of the
2006 General Synod**

The information was reviewed by the GSC as information. The moderator and the president of General Synod reported on current planning for the 2007 General Synod. The GSC's synod planning team will meet in mid-November to continue planning steps to transform the way the General Synod does its business. The committee is facilitated by Kenneth Bradsell and includes: Jeffrey Japinga, Helen Monsees, Peg Luidens, Nolan Palsma, Steven Vander Molen, and Rodger Price.

**Reformed Church
Press**

The GSC reviewed the plan to provide revised and up-to-date for Reformed Church Press, the publishing arm of the Reformed Church in America that has assumed new responsibilities since the dissolution by the GSC of the RCA Distribution Center. It asked the proposed board members to review the draft bylaws for the Reformed Church Press and if satisfactory, to prepare them for review and adoption by the General Synod in June, 2007.

Upon recommendation of its moderator, the GSC:

GSC 06-47

VOTED: To appoint *ad interim* Lizbeth Moss, Thomas De Vries, Kenneth Bradsell, and Paul Boice to the board of the Reformed Church Press.

**Communication
Vision and
Evaluation
Group Report
(CVEG)**

The GSC reviewed and discussed an extensive report from the Communication, Vision and Evaluation Group (CVEG).

Upon recommendation of its moderator, the GSC:

GSC 06-48

VOTED: To receive the following recommendations from the CVEG report and to refer them to the General Secretary for implementation:

1. Establish as the RCA Communication Staffs primary objective: *To provide all church leadership with the tools and information they need to support the five areas (multiplication, revitalization, discipleship, leadership and mission) of the "Our Call" vision.*

Rationale (not part of recommendation): Each congregation is unique in the way it communicates information and the affinity it feels for the RCA. That's why our objective is to empower the church leaders (using the term "leader" in the broadest sense possible) with tools and information that allow them to carry the message to the pews.

2. Define the target audience as specifically as possible. We recommend the majority of efforts should be targeted to church leaders, defined as paid and volunteer staff, deacons and elders. A more limited effort should be directed to people in the pews, defined as RCA members and visitors to RCA churches.

Rationale (not part of recommendation): We must be realistic in the financial and people resources at our disposal. We do not have the resources to communicate directly with the larger audience. We must be good stewards of the resources we have and focus our efforts to church leaders where we can have the most impact.

3. Use all communications to drive more people to the RCA website by consistently listing complementary web sources in each and every communication.

Rationale (not part of recommendation): Granted, there are many people who have yet to adopt this technology. But most experts agree it is the medium of the future. There are so many benefits with using the web: Dramatically reduced production costs, increased ease and timeliness of distribution world wide, ability to post information in several languages without the problem of clear distribution channels, increased customer focus allowing readers/visitors to click on that which is of interest to them.

4. Be more intentional in communicating and reinforcing that the Director of Communications is responsible for coordinating all communication efforts to further the mission of both the Reformed Church in America and of *Our Call*.

Rationale (not part of recommendation): Successful organizations (whether for-profit or non-profit, business or education or health

care, etc.) are ones who identify their target audiences, create key messages and consistently communicate in a clear, concise manner. Efforts of the denomination are minimized by the inconsistent use of messages, identities and distribution channels.

5. Limit all translations to non-English speaking audiences to postings on the Website rather than printing for mass distribution. Exceptions may be made for churches that cannot afford to print their own materials.

Rationale (not part of recommendation): Once items are translated into other languages, the problems of distribution still exist. Our data bases do not contain information about what language the person speaks. By posting these options on the web, we save printing costs, mailing costs and wasted distribution costs. Additionally, we can target the message and draw in the visitor who wishes to drill down on a particular topic.

6. Continue to embrace emerging technologies.

Rationale (not part of recommendation): Continue to explore offering electronic files to congregations to print on their own or in their newsletters. We affirm what's taken place to date (DVD recaps, electronic press kits, integration with our website, etc.).

The GSC had an extensive discussion of the CVEG suggested recommendations regarding *The Church Herald*. The GSC also reviewed a letter received from the president of the Editorial Council at the start of the GSC meeting. At the conclusion of the discussion, a motion was received and seconded, and the GSC:

GSC 06-49

VOTED: To forward to the 2007 General Synod the recommendation to allow *The Church Herald* to move to a subscription based publication which retains editorial integrity, reporting to the Editorial Council; and further

that the assessment funding to *The Church Herald* be discontinued; and further,

that the General Secretary develop a plan for use of the assessment savings for the GSC to review at the March, 2007 meeting.

2008 Assessment

The General Synod Council discussed with the General Secretary several ideas for how best to develop the 2008 assessment for General Synod consideration. The General Secretary noted that a plan for assessments will be part of the agenda for the March 2007 meeting. He reminded the GSC that only the GSC can bring forward to the General Synod a recommendation regarding assessments.

Evaluation of Commissions

The process for evaluating commissions needs to be modified. The GSC will review a revised process at the March, 2007 meeting.

**Appointment of
Ad Hoc Audit
Committee**

Upon recommendation of its moderator, the GSC:

GSC 06-50

VOTED: To appoint Norman Donkersloot, Richard Morano and Karyn Ratcliffe to the Ad Hoc Audit Committee.

**Ad Hoc Moderator
Nominations
Committee**

Upon request of the moderator, the GSC agreed to form this committee in order to propose to the GSC one or more nominees to serve the council as moderator in 2007-2008. The committee will report at the March, 2007 GSC meeting.

Upon recommendation of its moderator, the GSC:

GSC 06-51

VOTED: To appoint Mary Bechler, chair, Ronald Vande Bunte and John Ornee to the Ad Hoc Nominations Committee.

CONCLUDING BUSINESS

**Dates of Future
GSC Meetings**

Next Meeting

March 20-22, 2007 (beginning at 1:00 pm and ending at 11:00 am – Prince Conference Center in Grand Rapids, Michigan).

Fall 2007 Meeting

October 12-14, 2007 (beginning at 8:00 am and ending at 11:00 am – location to be determined).

Adjournment

The fall meeting of the General Synod Council of the Reformed Church in America adjourned with prayer at 11:12 a.m. on Sunday, October 15, 2006.