

**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 12, 2007 to Sunday, October 14, 2007. Moderator, Bradley Lewis 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.
- Members Present** The following members of the General Synod Council were present:
- | | |
|---|--------------------|
| Greg Alderman | Carolyn Holloway |
| Ned Beadel | Elisabeth Kersten |
| Mary Bechler | Aaron Klein |
| Carol Bechtel | Marilyn Koops |
| Mary Bryant | Bradley G. Lewis |
| Michelle Chahine | Marianne Lin |
| Thomas De Vries | Richard Morano |
| Stephanie Doeschot | Lizbeth Moss |
| Norman Donkersloot | John Ornee |
| Anna Gonzales | Patricia Vamvas |
| Wesley Granberg-Michaelson, <i>ex-officio</i> | Ronald Vande Bunte |
- Member Absent** The following member of the General Synod Council were unable to attend the meeting:
- | | |
|-------------|--------------------|
| Fred Algera | Thomas Daubenspeck |
| Glen Blumer | P.J. Mouquin |
- Cluster Facilitators, Recorder, Communication Observers and Regional Synod Staff Observer** The following staff members were present for all or part of the meeting:
- | | |
|---|--|
| Paul Boice, <i>RCA Communications</i> | Paul Karssen, <i>General Counsel</i> |
| Kenneth Bradsell, <i>Cluster Facilitator</i> | Bruce Menning, <i>Cluster Facilitator</i> |
| Susan Converse, <i>Cluster Facilitator</i> | Luis Perez, <i>Regional Synod Observer</i> |
| Ken Eriks, <i>Cluster Facilitator</i> | Mornier Rich, <i>Recorder</i> |
| Jeffrey Japinga, <i>Executive Coordinator</i> | Richard Welscott, <i>Cluster Facilitator</i> |
- OPENING**
- Call to Order** The moderator called to order the GSC meeting on Friday, October 12th at 10:40 am.

**Review of
the Agenda
and Schedule**

The following items were added to the agenda:

Added to Executive Limitations Monitoring (tab 2) EL-4.3

- Update on Classis of California Line of Credit
- Status on the Finance Transition

Moved from Consent Agenda to the Executive Session

- Election of the Personnel and Evaluation Committee

Added to Incidental Information (tab 3)

- Coordinator for Multi-racial Initiatives
- Status of Development Director

Upon recommendation of its moderator, the GSC

GSC 07-28

VOTED: To approve the revised agenda and schedule.

Consent Agenda

The GSC considered the following items in its consent agenda:

- To approve the March 20-22, 2007 and June 12, 2007 General Synod Council minutes as distributed.
- 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.

- To appoint *ad interim* the Rev. Elizabeth Hardeman to the governing board of Faith Alive Christian Resources.

- To take agenda item GSC 07-25 from the table and not approve the request for assessment relief in the amount of \$3,578.12 submitted by the Classis of Illinois for the 2007 calendar year.
- To appoint the GSC Standing Committees as follows:

**Ministry and
Mission Committee**

Alderman, Greg
Algera, Fred
Beadel, Ned
Bechler, Mary
Bechtel, Carol
Blumer, Glen
Bryant, Mary
Chahine, Michelle
Daubenspeck, Thomas
De Vries, Thomas
Doeschot, Stephanie
Donkersloot, Norman
Gonzales, Anna

**Finance and
Administration Committee**

Holloway, Carolyn
Kersten, Elisabeth
Klein, Aaron
Koops, Marilyn
Lewis, Bradley
Lin, Marianne
Morano, Richard
Moss, Lizbeth
Mouquin, PJ
Ornee, John
Vamvas, Pacia
Vande Bunte, Ronald

- To appoint Greg Alderman, moderator of the Ministry and Mission Committee and Carolyn Holloway, moderator of Finance and Administration Committee.

Upon recommendation of its moderator, the GSC

GSC 07-29

VOTED: To approve the above items in the consent agenda by one consent vote.

Governance Process

**GSC Bylaws
Revision Process**

The 2007 General Synod did not adopt the bylaws and referred the document to the Commission on Church Order and to the Commission on Theology for further review. The commissions have not responded with their comments. Paul Karssen will work with the commissions on revisions of the bylaws and they will be ready for the GSC to review at its March 2008 meeting.

**New Policy
Regarding
Financial
Reporting**

The following proposed new executive limitation policy was reviewed by the GSC:

The General Secretary shall not fail to report that:

1. The financial activities of the Reformed Church in America and its affiliates are prepared in an accurate, timely, and efficient manner;
2. The finance function in the RCA is able to adequately support the effective management of RCA programs and the denomination's 10-year goal; and

3. The RCA is able to adequately address comments consistently made in audit reports and related management letters and avoid undue risk from inadequate finance and information technology infrastructure.

The General Secretary shall report to the GSC at least annually as a routine manner and will also keep the GSC apprised in a timely manner of significant developments that may jeopardize the RCA's ability to ensure compliance with these requirements.

The GSC discussed the proposed new policy regarding financial reporting. The GSC requested the moderator, in consultation with the GSC's treasurer, revise the proposed policy for review and decision by the GSC at its March 2008 meeting.

**New Disabilities
Ends Policy**

The following proposed new ends policy wording was reviewed by the GSC:

The Reformed Church in America will seek to include fully in the life and mission of its congregation and assemblies all those who seek to serve Christ. The General Secretary and his staff will seek practical methods to help congregations and assemblies improve their accessibility and will report periodically to the GSC on the success of such efforts.

The GSC discussed the proposed new ends policy regarding disabilities. The GSC requested the moderator, in consultation with the GSC's executive coordinator for the Office of the General Secretary, revise the proposed policy for review and decision by the GSC at its March 2008 meeting.

**GSC Self-Monitoring,
Review, and
Evaluation**

The GSC did not conduct a review and evaluation of the meeting.

**Investment Advisory
Committee Report**

The report was reviewed by the GSC.

**Audit Committee
Report**

The report was reviewed by the GSC.

**Election of
First Moderator**

Upon recommendation of its moderator, the GSC

GSC 07-30

VOTED: To elect as its First Vice Moderator, Carol Bechtel.

**Election of
Second Moderator**

Upon recommendation of its moderator, the GSC

GSC 07-31

VOTED: To elect as its Second Vice Moderator, Carolyn Holloway.

**General Synod
Referrals**

The moderator, General Secretary and staff provided oral updated reports to the GSC on progress in responding to the referrals from the 2007 General Synod to the GSC. The following updates were provided.

MGS 2007, R-12, p.82; MGS 2007, R-13 p.83

The General Secretary is drafting letters regarding the Taiwan situation. A few members from the Presbyterian Church of Taiwan will meet with Bradley Lewis on October 16, 2007.

MGS 2007, R-16, p.101

The GSC agreed to the “Proposed Process” and “Implementation” in appendix A, and requested the officers to discuss the process further, develop the framework and report back to the GSC at its March 2008 meeting.

The GSC agreed to delegate the responsibility to implement R-16 to the General Secretary (option B in appendix A).

The GSC reviewed possible E-1 Sub-End #1 and Possible E-1 Sub-End #2 (appendix A). The GSC agreed to adopt E-1 Sub-End #1 and revised the proposed E-1 Sub-End #2 (GSC 07-33 is the revised text).

Upon recommendation of its moderator, the GSC

GSC 07-32

VOTED: To adopt E-1 Sub-End #1: Congregations and assemblies of the Reformed Church in America and those who provide leadership in them will have broad consensus on the missional purpose and work of the church and how it applies specifically to the missional purpose of the RCA.

GSC 07-33

VOTED: To adopt E-1 Sub-End #2: Congregations and assemblies of the Reformed Church in America will come to an understanding of the skills and resources that are available to them to accomplish the missional purpose of the Reformed Church in America.

MGS 2007, R-21, p.103

Because of the commitment to missional engagement of the RCA and its congregations explicit in Our Call, this broad-ranging instruction of General Synod is already being implemented in a number of ways. Additionally, the formation of the dialogue called for in R-16 must also influence and guide the kind of resources made available to congregations. When that direction is clearer, the General Secretary can assign this mandate to appropriate staff.

MGS 2007, R-33, p.112

The general counsel, in consultation with the General Synod’s Commission on Judicial Business, will do the following:

1. Research General Synod minutes (starting with more recent minutes and working back in time) with respect to judicial matters and attempt to develop an indexing system for categorizing judicial matters according to the allegations made.
2. Attempt to index judicial matters that have been appealed to the General Synod in accordance with the indexing system that is developed.

3. Ask each regional synod and classis for copies of (or access to) minutes of meetings (as assembly or judicatory) so they can be reviewed and catalogued in a similar manner.

Many disciplinary matters that have the potential to be dealt with judicially may in fact be resolved pastorally instead (e.g., through admonition or rebuke). To provide as full a picture as possible, the general counsel intends to include such matters in the indexing process as well.

MGS 2007, R-48, p.165

The GSC reviewed a report from its moderator outlining plans underway to hold a conference of elders and deacons representing our diversity, from across the denomination as instructed by the 2007 General Synod (MGS R-48, p.165). The report was for information. The GSC affirmed the direction outlined by the moderator and staff to host a 3-day conference in March or April 2008.

MGS 2007, R-57, p.215

In consultation with the MFCA Minister for Candidate Care and Certification, seminary presidents, and other GSC staff, the moderator proposed and the GSC adopted:

GSC 07-34

VOTED: The membership of the new Committee for Standards, Call and Care be established as follows:

1. The Presidents of New Brunswick Theological Seminary and Western Theological Seminary or their designees
2. The Minister for Candidate Care and Certification
3. The Director of Revitalization and Leadership
4. Four additional members reflecting appropriate gender and racial diversity to be appointed by the officers of the GSC in consultation with the three certification agents of the General
5. At least one of the members of the committee shall be a serving member of the GSC; and further,

that the Director of Revitalization and Leadership convene the first meeting and this committee report to the GSC at its March 2008 meeting.

MGS 2007, R-65, p.253; MGS 2007, R-66, p.165

These will be placed on the RCA website under both "Reports from General Synod" and on the "Social Witness" web page. The Coordinator for Discipleship and the Coordinator for Social Witness will continue to follow up on these.

MGS 2007, R-68, p.255

Links to websites, organizations and publications that monitor religious persecution are available on the RCA website under the Social Witness section.

MGS 2007, R-69, p.255

All worship material, including material for World Communion Sunday, is placed on the RCA website worship page. World Communion Sunday is an annual event which will be highlighted again in 2008.

MGS 2007, R-72, p.258

Salaries paid to full-time, part-time, and contract employees of the GSC (including those employed by the GSC but assigned to support other General Synod corporations (e.g. BOBS, BEF), are all within the salary ranges reported annually to General Synod (*MGS 2007*, p. 51) in the GSC's Executive Committee report. Benefits provided to personnel are in accordance with existing personnel policies and meet or exceed applicable federal and state laws. As reported by the General Secretary in the October 2007 EL-7 monitoring report, a revised salary classification system has been approved for implementation for new employees in the current fiscal year and for all employees starting FY 2009 (October 2008). The new system will replace a classification system first adopted in the 1970's. The new system will address perceived and real inadequacies in the current system identified by management, the Personnel and Evaluation committee, the GSC's personnel consultant, and many staff including inequities resulting from the various geographic placements of personnel.

MGS 2007, R-78, p.265

The Commission on Christian education will meet in October to discuss the means and methods which will foster training, mentoring and support for persons in education, discipleship or youth ministries in RCA Congregations. This will also be discussed at both the denominational youth team meeting and at the discipleship team meeting. It is the intent that through the efforts of the discipleship office and the youth and discipleship team that there will be a creation of professional standards for educators and youth workers and a way to continue to train and equip them for ministry.

MGS 2007, R-86, p.301

The president of General Synod has interpreted the General Synod's action to mean he is to reconstitute the task force in accordance with R-11, p. 81 (*MGS 2005*) which requested "two persons appointed by the Commission on Church Order, one trustee appointed by each of the RCA seminaries, and one General Synod professor of theology appointed by each of the RCA seminaries." The president did not assume the 2007 action mandated the task force be reconstituted by the same individuals since some of these persons are no longer in the positions. Therefore, the president has corresponded with each of the entities/institutions named and asked them to make the appropriate appointments. The 2005 action also named then General Synod president, "the Rev. Steven Vander Molen or his designee as acting chair." The president interpreted the 2007 action to mean he or his designee would serve as acting chair. The president will make this decision once the other members of the task force have been identified.

MGS 2007, R-97, p.336

This will be explored when the Coordinator for Multiracial Initiatives staff position is filled later this fall. The discipleship office will collaborate with the new coordinator, the youth team, and the Commission on Race and Ethnicity to establish a budget and a plan for a conference.

MGS 2007, R-98, p.336

This is posted on the RCA website under "About us/what we believe." It is also linked through the multiracial ministry pages.

MGS 2007, R-99, p.337

This action will be addressed by the GSC's personnel office in consultation with the General Secretary and the Cluster Facilitators and in cooperation with the GSC's Coordinator of Multiracial Initiatives.

MGS 2007, R-100, p.345

The Presenting Children for Baptism paper is on the RCA website under "Our Beliefs," "Consistory Center," and "Worship."

MGS 2007, R-101, p.346

This action is on the agenda for the Commission on Theology at the current (October 2007) meeting.

One Thing

The GSC will attend this event and gather on Thursday, January 24th from 3:00 pm to 5:30 pm and again on Saturday, January 26th from 9:30 am to 11:00 am.

**General Synod
2008 Planning**

The planning team has been formed and the team members are: Michelle Chahine, Eric Johnson, John Ornee, Dennis TeBeest, Lori Walber, and GSC staff (Kenneth Bradsell, Jeffrey Japinga, and Deborah Morris). The first meeting is October 31, 2007.

**Commissions
Evaluation Process**

Mary Bryant, Thomas De Vries and Ned Beadel will assist Kenneth Bradsell in developing a way for the GSC to evaluate commissions.

**Link with
The Church**

This report was reviewed by the GSC.

Ends Policy Monitoring

**Ends Policy
Monitoring**

The GSC reviewed the E-2 Monitoring Report – Church Multiplication. The GSC proposed revisions to the addendum to the report.

The parenting church (directive partner) connection determines the classis of accountability and support for a new church start the first ten years. This founding relationship will be re-evaluated for continued viability and best fit in the tenth anniversary year of when the New Congregation Plan was approved. ~~Fellowship and ministry partnership with nearby classis gatherings and churches should be encouraged, but~~ It is strongly recommended that a member of the Management Team (or Steering Committee) of the New Congregation be a member of the local Classis, when possible, in order to encourage the development of relationships and partnerships in the geographical area and to bring added value and wisdom to the new congregation.

The directive partner relationship will remain with the parent church and its classis affiliation for the initial ten years, or longer, based on the four-way discernment at that time of the:

- a). church plant itself (now organized as an RCA church)
- b). the parent church consistory
- c). the parent church's affiliated classis

d). the potential new classis relationship by transfer

Exceptions to this policy should be agreed upon in writing as well by the four parties listed above.

GSC 07-35 VOTED: To approve the General Secretary's interpretation and actions as recorded in the report and the revised addendum, and to request the General Secretary forward the revised addendum to the Church Multiplication Team.

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

- E-3 – Revitalization
- E-4 – Discipleship
- E-5 – Leadership

GSC 07-36 VOTED: To approve the General Secretary's interpretation and actions as recorded in the reports.

The GSC reviewed E-6 – Mission, and discussed the proposed revised Mission Ends Policy as follows:

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

- Evangelizing Unreached People
- Empowering Global Partners
- Equipping RCA Churches for Mission
- Embracing Compassion and Justice

Upon recommendation of its moderator, the GSC:

GSC 07-37 VOTED: To approve the proposed revised mission Ends Policy and the General Secretary's Interpretation.

Executive Limitations Monitoring

Executive Limitations Monitoring Reports The GSC reviewed EL-6.8 Asset Protection. The GSC discussed the General Secretary's interpretation of the policy and agreed that the request from the Classis of Schenectady must be denied for the reasons provided.

Upon recommendation of its moderator, the GSC:

GSC 07-38 VOTED: To deny the request by the Classis of Schenectady to contribute to Camp Fowler funds (approximately \$191,623) presently owed to the Sarah Hamilton Trust (see appendix B).

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

- EL-1 Global Executive Constraint
- EL-2 Treatment of Staff
- EL-3 Financial Planning/Budgeting
- EL-4.3 Financial Condition and Activities (the General Secretary reported on the line of credit granted to the California Classis and the Finance unit transition.)
- EL-7 Compensation and Benefits

Upon recommendation of its moderator, the GSC:

GSC 07-39 VOTED: To approve the General Secretary's interpretation and actions as recorded in the reports.

Management Delegation

Executive Session The GSC went into Executive Session to discuss the General Secretary's performance review. Staff and guests were dismissed. The General Secretary was asked to remain. Following discussion, the GSC affirmed the report's conclusions:

“Commendation is given to the Rev. Wes Granberg-Michaelson for his efforts and achievements over the past year. Amidst the significant challenges that have been faced, Wes has navigated with perseverance, a servant's heart, and a gentle spirit. His non-anxious presence has helped the RCA move closer to living out the vision of Our Call together, rather than as separate individuals or entities. The movement toward the realization of the ends policies developed by the GSC and within the executive limitations given is praiseworthy and appreciated. He has been given and entrusted with much and he has done all that has been asked and demanded – by God and by the church he has been called to serve and lead.”

GSC gathered around Wes to lay hands on him and pray for him, his ministry and his family.

(Note: Full minutes of the executive session are on file in the General Synod office.)

Incidental Information

Communication Strategy/Plan The GSC reviewed the Communication Strategy/Plan and noted that the GSC needs an end statement concerning communication. A communication print publication will be developed and presented to the GSC at its March 2008 meeting.

Upon recommendation of its moderator, the GSC:

GSC 07-40 VOTED: To request the General Secretary to provide a draft ends statement for communication at the March 2008 meeting.

Affinity Classis

The GSC received an oral report for information concerning plans underway in the Regional Synod of the Far West to form an affinity classis of congregations committed to city ministry. The general secretary reviewed the plan and explained to the GSC how it is being addressed:

- “Center City Network” is intended to be a classis with geographic bounds overlapping the existing classes of the regional synod.
- The PACT staff group (the General Secretary, GSC ministry, mission and administrative executives, and the executives of the eight regional synods) have discussed the proposal noting the *BCO* does not seem to clearly define “boundaries” as being geographic.
- The Commission on Church Order is reviewing the proposed affinity classis and will consider offering advice to the Regional Synod of Far West, and more broadly if necessary.

The GSC discussed the proposal and asked to be kept informed of developments.

**Update on the
*Church Herald***

Information about the *Church Herald*, including subscriptions, are on the RCA’s website. By the end of the year, the *Church Herald* will have a better projection of the success of the subscription plan and its impact on the *Church Herald* financial condition.

**Coordinator for
Multi-racial
Initiatives**

The GSC reviewed and discussed the expectations of this position.

**Status on the
Director of
Development**

The General Secretary announced that The Rev. Richard Welscott has been appointed Director of Development.

Concluding Business

Future Meetings

- January 24-26, 2008 (One Thing Event – San Antonio, Texas).
- March 25-27, 2008 (beginning at 1:00 pm and ending at 11:00 am – Location to be determined).
- June 5-11, 2008 (General Synod – Hope College)
- October 2008 (Dates and Location TBD)

Adjournment

The fall meeting of the General Synod Council of the Reformed Church in America adjourned with prayer at 11:10 a.m. on Sunday, October 14, 2007.

Mornier Rich, Recorder
Kenneth Bradsell, Assistant Secretary