RECENT OFFICERS OF GENERAL SYNOD

A list of presidents, from the first in 1794 to 1955, can be found on pages 308-311 of the 1956 Minutes of General Synod.

**PRESIDENTS**

<table>
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<th>Year of Election</th>
<th>From</th>
<th>Place of Election</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1956</td>
<td>The Rev. George H. Mennenga</td>
<td>Michigan</td>
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<td>1957</td>
<td>The Rev. Howard C. Schade</td>
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<td>1958</td>
<td>The Rev. Marion de Velder</td>
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<td>1959</td>
<td>The Rev. Howard G. Hageman</td>
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<td>1960</td>
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<td>1961</td>
<td>The Rev. Marion Edwin Thomas</td>
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<td>1962</td>
<td>The Rev. Bernard R. Brunsting</td>
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<td>1963</td>
<td>The Rev. M. Verne Ogger</td>
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<td>1964</td>
<td>The Rev. Gordon L. Van Oostenburg</td>
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<td>1965</td>
<td>The Rev. Donner B. Atwood</td>
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<td>1966</td>
<td>The Rev. Raymond E. Beckering</td>
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<td>1970</td>
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<td>1971</td>
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<td>1972</td>
<td>Elder Harry E. DeBruyn</td>
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<td>1973</td>
<td>The Rev. Donald De Young</td>
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<td>1974</td>
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<td>The Rev. Albertus G. Bosenbroek</td>
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<td>The Rev. Harry Buis</td>
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<td>1982</td>
<td>The Rev. James I. Cook</td>
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<td>1983</td>
<td>The Rev. Leonard V. Kalkwarf</td>
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<td>1985</td>
<td>The Rev. Kenneth N. Leestma</td>
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<td>1986</td>
<td>The Rev. James A. Neeval</td>
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<td>1987</td>
<td>The Rev. Robert L. Wise</td>
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<td>The Rev. John E. Hiemstra</td>
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<td>1991</td>
<td>The Rev. Louis E. Lotz</td>
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<td>1992</td>
<td>Elder Beth E. Marcus</td>
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<td>1993</td>
<td>The Rev. Warren D. Burgess</td>
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<td>1994</td>
<td>The Rev. Harold J. Korver</td>
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<td>1996</td>
<td>The Rev. Anthony D. Vis</td>
<td>Iowa</td>
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<td>1997</td>
<td>The Rev. Charles Van Engen</td>
<td>California</td>
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<td>1998</td>
<td>The Rev. Frederick Kruthof</td>
<td>Michigan</td>
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<tr>
<td>1999</td>
<td>The Rev. Gregg Mast</td>
<td>New York</td>
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<tr>
<td>2000</td>
<td>Elder Carol L. Mutch</td>
<td>New Jersey</td>
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<tr>
<td>2001</td>
<td>The Rev. Steven R. Brooks</td>
<td>Colorado</td>
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GENERAL SYNOD COUNCIL

2001-2002

MINISTERS

Stephen Allison
Philip Bakelaar
Stephen Breen
Steven Brooks
John Buteyn Jr
Juan Carmona
John Chang
Linden De Bie
E. J. De Waard
William Donkersloot
Barbara Fillette
Daniel Gillett
Wesley Granberg-Michaelson
George Grevenstuk
John Hiemstra
Renee House
Larry Izenbart
Stephanie Kaper-Dale
Hak Kwon Lee
Toni Macon
Murray Moerman
James O’Connell
Okke Postma
Daniel Ramm
Karyn Ratcliffe
Irving Rivera
Calvin Rynbrandt
Steven Sayer
Edward Schreur
Hung Yong Song
Robert Terwilliger
Pacia Vamvas
Robert White
Pedro Windsor

LAYPERSONS

Esa Attocknie
Mary Ann Bahnsen
Harlan Bergman
Irvin Boersen
John Bos
Regina Brannock
Shirley Byers
Paul Darby
Tammy De Ruyter
Ted Dykstra
Kristi Egger-Brown
Barbara Frierson
Arthur Hessinger
Stephen Janssen
Johanna Koning
Eugene Ligtenberg
Johnnie Lovejoy
James Marvel
Carol Mutch
Joan Nienhuis
Annie Lee Phillips
Gladys Rivera
Loretta Rolle
Alice Rowan
Carol Schelin
Rex Schultz
Carol Simon
Clayton Smith
Edward Smith
Deborah Swanson
Margo Taylor
Jilda Te Winkle
Marvin Tinklenberg
Andrea Van Beek
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THE GENERAL SYNOD OF THE REFORMED CHURCH IN AMERICA CONVENED IN ITS ONE HUNDRED NINETY-SIXTH REGULAR SESSION ON THE CAMPUS OF NORTHWESTERN COLLEGE IN ORANGE CITY, IOWA, ON FRIDAY, THE SEVENTH DAY OF JUNE, A.D. TWO THOUSAND TWO, AT 8:20 A.M., CENTRAL TIME.

I. FORMATION OF THE SYNOD

OPENING OF SYNOD

The General Synod opened on Friday morning, June 7, 2002, with a worship service held in Christ Chapel. Participants in the service were the Rev. Jonathan Opgenorth, pastor of Trinity Reformed Church in Orange City, Iowa; the worship leaders from the Trinity congregation; and the Rev. Steven Brooks, president of General Synod.

David Tripold served as music coordinator and the Rev. Trygve Johnson, chaplain at Northwestern College, served as General Synod chaplain.
WORSHIP

Friday Morning
Opening Worship Service—The Rev. Jonathan Opgenorth
The Rev. Steven Brooks
Mr. David Tripold

Closing Prayer—The Rev. Wayne Van Regenmorter

Friday Afternoon
Opening Prayer—The Rev. Phyllis Palsma
Closing Prayer—Elder Fred Algera

Sunday Morning
General Synod participants worshiped with the following RCA congregations:

First Reformed Church (Sioux Center)
First Reformed Church (Maurice)
New Life Reformed Church (Sioux Center)
Rejoice! Community Church (LeMars)
New Hope Community Church (Sioux City)

Sunday Evening
Mission Program Evening

Monday Morning
Worship Service—The Rev. Steven Vander Molen
Closing Prayer—The Rev. Wayne Sneller

Monday Afternoon
Opening Prayer—The Rev. David Schutt
Closing Prayer—The Rev. Eltje Brunemeyer

Monday Evening
Opening Prayer—Elder Sue White
Closing Prayer—The Rev. Harold Vogelaar

Tuesday Morning
Worship Service—The Rev. Mark Schwarz
Closing Prayer—Elder Annie Lee Phillips

Tuesday Afternoon
Opening Prayer—The Rev. Mary Ann Wierks
Closing Prayer—The Rev. Edward Hernandez

Tuesday Evening
Opening Prayer—Elder Mary Brotherton
Closing Prayer—The Rev. Juan Carmona

Wednesday Morning
Opening Prayer—The Rev. Gordon Laman
Installation Service for New Officers
An installation service for the new officers of General Synod and a Communion service were held on Wednesday morning, June 12. Participants in the service included the Rev. Norman Kolenbrander, moderator of the Commission on Christian Worship; the Rev. Steven Brooks, president of General Synod; the Rev. John C. H. Chang, vice president of General Synod; the Rev. David Schutt, vice president-elect of General Synod; and the Rev. Wesley Granberg-Michaelson, general secretary of the Reformed Church in America.
ADVISORY COMMITtees

ADVISORY COMMITTEE ON CHRISTIAN ACTION

Moderator: Christine Dyke (Brooklyn)
Vice Moderator: David Baldauf (Mid-Hudson)

Ministers:
Donald Baker (West Sioux)
Richard Bates (North Grand Rapids)
Kenneth Cumberbatch (Brooklyn)
Henry DeKorte (Ontario)
Harold Delhagen (Rochester)

Carol Faas (North Grand Rapids)
Daniel Herrick (Columbia-Greene)
James Koopman (Central Iowa)
Linda Lachesnez-Norment (Schenectady)
Michael Van Kampen (Zeeland)

Elders:
Robert Adams (Orange)
Elsa Baker (Delaware-Raritan)
Gayle Beltman (Zeeland)
Susan Cable (Albany)
Ellen Howie (Schenectady)
Michael Koets (Southwest Michigan)
Joel Kraai (Rocky Mountains)

Philip Ongna (Wisconsin)
Gerard Van Otteren (South Grand Rapids)
Richard Vander Bilt (Albany)
Rachel VerHoef (Holland)
Marvin Verros (Central Iowa)
Kenneth Vos (Holland)

Corresponding:
Sara Tolsma (Commission on Christian Action)

Maria Wilts (Regional Synod of Canada)

ADVISORY COMMITTEE ON CHRISTIAN EDUCATION AND DISCIPLESHIP

Moderator: Irma Patterson (Queens)
Vice Moderator: Ron Opmeer (Canadian Prairies)

Ministers:
Stuart Clark (Nassau-Suffolk)
Perry De Groot (East Sioux)
Daniel Hagggar (West Sioux)
David Kingma (Wisconsin)
Terry Maassen (Central Plains)

Walter Opmeer (Canadian Prairies)
Norman Swier (Muskegon)
Randy Weener (Zeeland)
David Zomer (Missionary)

Elders:
Daniel De Vries (West Sioux)
Mary Dobrovolc (Montgomery)
Brad Jamieson (Nassau-Suffolk)
Eloise Kalmar (Illiana)
Franklin Knowler (Rockland-Westchester)
Wayne Kooy (Southwest Michigan)

Brian Menoni (Lake Erie)
Rick Nichols (Cascades)
Cynthia Ramsay (New Brunswick)
Loretta Trenerry (Dakota)
Bob Van Der Schaaf (Central California)
Thomas Wu (Queens)

Corresponding:
Fem Algera (Regional Synod of Canada)
James Bultman (Hope College President)
Bruce Murphy (Northwestern College President)
G. Oliver Patterson (Commission on Race and Ethnicity)

David Roe (Central College President)
Jill Schliesman (Regional Synod of Mid-America)
ADVISORY COMMITTEE ON CHRISTIAN HERITAGE AND COMMUNICATIONS

Moderator: Glenda Mc Kinley (Holland)
Vice Moderator: Suzanne Hart (Delaware-Raritan)

Ministers:
David Armstrong (Southwest Michigan)  Jack Ritsema (Pleasant Prairie)
Daniel Carlson (Albany)  Calvin Vande Zande (Wisconsin)
John De Velder (New Brunswick)  Timothy Vander Haar (Muskegon)
Alan Hofland (Southwest Michigan)  Barry Wynveen (Central Iowa)
Gerald Norman (Illiana)

Elders:
Lucy Abbott (Mid-Hudson)  Beverly Mauel (Southwest)
Bruce Alderink (Holland)  W. Ben Mulder (Dakota)
Thomas Boeve (South Grand Rapids)  Kenneth Piersma (Chicago)
John Buntsma (East Sioux)  Gloria Pitts (Illinois)
Richard Burgess (Zeeland)  David Schortinghuis (Illiana)
Terry De Boer (North Grand Rapids)  Wytze Vanderley (Ontario)
Wayne Kuiken (Passaic Valley)

Corresponding:
Melody Meeter (Commission on History)  Christina Van Eyl (Church Herald)
Mariam Merced (Regional Synod of the Mid-Atlantics)  Harlan Van Oort (Church Herald)

ADVISORY COMMITTEE ON CHRISTIAN UNITY

Moderator: Grace Johnson (Delaware-Raritan)
Vice Moderator: Juan Carmona (Rochester)

Ministers:
James Beukelman (Mid-Hudson)  William Sacher (Mid-Hudson)
Timothy Bush (Rochester)  Lewis Scudder (Holland)
Robert Hoffman (Illinois)  Brian Stone (Wisconsin)
Seok Won Kim (Florida)  Lawrence Wilkes (California)

Elders:
Mary Brotherton (New Brunswick)  Aubrey Schuldt (Rochester)
John Durham (Northern Michigan)  Betsy Simpson (Columbia-Greene)
William Hill (Greater Palisades)  Myron Van Horn (Pleasant Prairie)
Arthur May (Central Plains)  Melinda Vender Velden (Central Iowa)
Robert Medd (Minnesota)  Cornelius Vonk (Southwest Michigan)
Ruth Reader (Delaware-Raritan)  Jeffrey Waldron (California)
Germaine Safford (Rockland-Westchester)  Jarvis Wiggers (Muskegon)

Corresponding:
Belen Alicea (Regional Synod of the Far West)  Ruby Tsai (Synod of New York)
David Baak (Commission on Christian Unity)
GENERAL SYNOD/JUNE 2002

ADVISORY COMMITTEE ON CHRISTIAN WORSHIP

Moderator: R. James Van Zetten (Illiana)
Vice Moderator: Joyce Magee (Lake Erie)

Ministers:
Jeanette Beagley-Koolhaas (Nassau-Suffolk) Nickolas Miles (Mid-Hudson)
Thomas Grabill (Zeeland) Albert Potgieter (Queens)
Brice Hoyt (Central Iowa) Samuel Setyawan (California)
Sanjiv Kattekola (Greater Palisades) Paul Wernlund (Wisconsin)
John Koedyker (Muskegon) Siebrand Wilt's (Ontario)
Gordon Laman (Missionary) Leslie Wiseman (Northern Michigan)

Nickolas Miles (Mid-Hudson)  Albert Potgieter (Queens)
Sanjiv Kattekola (Greater Palisades)  Paul Wernlund (Wisconsin)
John Koedyker (Muskegon)  Siebrand Wilts (Ontario)
Gordon Laman (Missionary)  Leslie Wiseman (Northern Michigan)

Elders:
Dorothy Bell (Mid-Hudson) Erma Rolle (Brooklyn)
Jerry Berends (Zeeland) Cornelius Siebersma (East Sioux)
Roger Cristy (Wisconsin) Darwin Ten Haken (Central Iowa)
Richard Follette (New Brunswick) Ronald Venema (Illinois)

Elders:
Su Chang (Regional Synod of New York) Nancy Ruiter (Regional Synod of the Mid-Atlantics)
Norman Kolenbrander (Commission on Christian Worship)
Darlene Mouw (Regional Synod of the Heartland)

ADVISORY COMMITTEE ON CHURCH ORDER

Moderator: Stephen Norden (Lake Erie)
Vice Moderator: Eunice Bollen (Montgomery)

Ministers:
John Bowen (Columbia-Greene) William Hudson (British Columbia)
Eltje Brunemeyer (New Brunswick) David Landegent (Illinois)
Norman Chen (Queens) Howard Moths (South Grand Rapids)
John Coakley (General Synod Professor) David Rissieuw (New Brunswick)
Kevin Hart (Delaware-Raritan) Robert Van Voorst (Holland)
Shirley Heeg (Minnesota) Cynthia Veldheer-De Young (Holland)
Charles Hesselink (Schoharie) Paul Wesselink (South Grand Rapids)

Elders:
Fred Algera (Canadian Prairies) Alipio Rodriguez (Passaic Valley)
Irvin Boersen (Muskegon) Wally Sparks (Southwest)
Kermit Campbell (Northern Michigan) Brian Voss (Pleasant Prairie)
Kevin Clark (Wisconsin) Don Werkhoven (Central California)
Joyce Homberg-Apgar (Delaware-Raritan) Joyce Wyka (Orange)

Corresponding:
Carol Myers (Commission on Church Order) Daniel Vande Zande (Commission on Judicial Business)
ADVISORY COMMITTEES

ADVISORY COMMITTEE ON CHURCH VOCATIONS

Moderator: Cecil Williams (Holland)
Vice Moderator: David Izenbart (Illiana)

Ministers:
Philip Assink (Cascades)  Phyllis Palsma (Montgomery)
James Brownson (General Synod Professor)  David Schutt (Central California)
Allen Buurma (Delaware-Raritan)  Steven Smallegan (Zeeland)
Richard Dykstra (Schoharie)  Dennis TeBeest (Passaic Valley)
Paul Fries (General Synod Professor)  Bruce Van Dusseldorp (Rocky Mountains)
Allen Jager (Schenectady)  Robert Woodyard (Red River)
Michael Molenaar (West Sioux)

Elders:
James Clousing (Northern Michigan)  Gerry Ter Hove (Canadian Prairies)
Rick Husselman (Central Plains)  Donald Van Hoven (South Grand Rapids)
Richard Kingma (South Grand Rapids)  Henry Vander Weide (California)
William Simmons (Greater Palisades)

Corresponding:
Evelyn Diephouse (Commission for Women)  James Marvel (Personnel and Evaluation Committee)
Paul Glover (NBTS)  P. Keith Larson (Holland)
Ronald Hartgerink (WTS Moderator)  Maryteresa Orshonsky (MFCA)
Kerri Haveman (WTS)  Lorri Owseley (Regional Synod of Middle America)
Norman Kansfield (NBTS President)  Troy Van Beek (WTS)
Cornelis Kors (MFCA Director)  Carl Van Voorst (MFCA)
Bradley Langstraat (NBTS Moderator)  Dennis Voskuil (WTS President)
Bradley Lewis (MFCA)

ADVISORY COMMITTEE ON EVANGELISM AND CHURCH DEVELOPMENT

Moderator: Eric Ishimaru (Rocky Mountain)
Vice Moderator: Douglas Tensen (Pleasant Prairie)

Ministers:
Glen Blumer (Central Iowa)  James Goldschmeding (Southwest Michigan)
Jonathan Brownson (Zeeland)  P. Keith Larson (Holland)
Leslie Clark (British Columbia)  Eun Soo Lee (Rockland-Westchester)
Gerald Davelaar (Central California)  Jean LeMahieu (Northern Michigan)
Jack Doorlag (South Grand Rapids)  David Schalekamp (Albany)
Matthew Draffen (West Sioux)  Robert Schuller (California)
Scott Eding (Orange)  Mary Ann Wierks (Holland)
Folkert Faber (South Grand Rapids)

Elders:
Santos Gonzalez (California)  Sharon Roghair (California)
Patricia Haury (Schenectady)  Roger Scheenstra (Missionary)
Ann Meyer (Red River)  Mary Sloan (East Sioux)
Larry Opengenorth (Wisconsin)  James Vink (Minnesota)
Duane Peterson (Lake Erie)  Janet Wallendal (Passaic Valley)
ADVISORY COMMITTEE ON FINANCIAL SUPPORT

Moderator: George Walker (Central California)
Vice Moderator: Calvin Rynbrandt (Illinois)

Ministers:
Carl Balk (Holland)
Jonathan Beyer (Lake Erie)
Joseph Cusack (Passaic Valley)
Rodney Kamrath (North Grand Rapids)
Kenneth Petty (Southwest)

Wayne Sneller (West Sioux)
Wayne Van Regenmorter (Dakota)
Robert Vander Putten (Chicago)
Samuel Vander Schaaf (Montgomery)

Elders:
John Bos (California)
Larry Christian (South Grand Rapids)
Leonard De Braber (North Grand Rapids)
Harry De Bruyn (Chicago)
Randall Fruin (Illinois)
Ivan Heslink (Rochester)
Christine Hibbard (Schoharie)

Fredrick Junker (Pleasant Prairie)
Gordon Klaassen (Ontario)
Benjamin Koerselman (West Sioux)
Richard Kuhlow (Schoharie)
Martha Leggett (Columbia-Greene)
Sue Ann White (New York)

Corresponding:
Harry De Bruyn (Board of Benefits Services)

ADVISORY COMMITTEE ON THEOLOGY

Moderator: Amy Jo Van Es-Hawley (Central Plains)
Vice Moderator: Harold Lay (Passaic Valley)

Ministers:
David Brower (East Sioux)
Timothy Brown (WTS)
John Daniels (Red River)
Harvey Hertz (South Grand Rapids)
Gary Hofmeyer (Florida)
Randall Knoll (Illinois)
Richard Koerselman (Southwest)
William Koster (California)

Michael Otte (Rockland-Westchester)
Adolf Pagliarulo (New York)
David Poppen (Minnesota)
Mark Prestriedge (Illiana)
David Reck (Dakota)
P. Stephan Sickler (Mid-Hudson)
Harold Vogelaar (Chicago)

Elders:
Sibilla Boerigter (North Grand Rapids)
Mark Bultema (South Grand Rapids)
James Hutchings (Cascades)
Phillip Parker (Red River)

Stuart Swenson (Illiana)
Lyle Veldheer (Zeeland)
Marvin Wynia (West Sioux)
Willem Zwiep (Canadian Prairies)

Corresponding:
David Waanders (Commission on Theology)
ADVISORY COMMITTEE ON WORLD MISSION

Moderator: Steven Vander Molen (East Sioux)
Vice Moderator: Irving Rivera (New York)

Ministers:
Richard De Bruyne (California)  Edward Schreur (Dakota)
Harlan De Jong (Pleasant Prairie)  John Sharpe (Greater Palisades)
Harvey Heneveld (South Grand Rapids)  Ronald Van Der Werff (Wisconsin)
Thomas Hoogendoorn (Minnesota)  William Van Herk (Cascades)
Paul Ruter (Orange)  Arthur Wiers (Southwest Michigan)

Elders:
Evan De Boer (West Sioux)  Marvin Tinklenberg (Minnesota)
John Hooper (British Columbia)  Dick Van Dyk (British Columbia)
James Nagel (Dakota)  Howard Veeneman (Muskegon)
Jay Nix (Brooklyn)  James Veld (Illiana)
Ronald Nyhoff (Zeeland)  H. Raymond Vinstra (Southwest Michigan)
Cecelia Ruiz (Rocky Mountains)  David Yang (New York)
Frank Terpstra (Central Iowa)

Corresponding:
Mary Kepp (Regional Synod of the Heartland)  Joan Werkhoven (Regional Synod of the Far West)
MINUTES AND JOURNAL

The Acts and Proceedings of the 195th regular session of the General Synod were read by title.

The General Synod authorized its officers to approve the journal of actions.

RULES OF ORDER

The Rules of Order were read by title, and copies were placed on the secretary’s table.

TELLERS

Annie Lee Phillips and the Revs. Toni Macon, Okke Postma, and Everett Zabriskie were appointed as tellers. The following seminarians were also appointed as tellers:

- André Batt
- Michael Brinks
- Linda Burlow
- Judson Marvel
- Stacey Midge
- Maryteresa Orshonsky

- Ceila Quitsch
- Carolyn Raar
- Salome Ryew
- Meine Veldman
- Dale Vos

SCHEDULE

The General Synod approved a schedule based on the agenda of General Synod prescribed in the Special Rules of Order (BCO 2001, Chapter 3, Part II, Article 1).

The privilege of the floor was granted to Russell Paarlberg, parliamentarian, and RCA staff, as resource persons.

The General Synod approved the list of delegates serving on advisory committees.

In addition to the prescribed agenda, the schedule provided for the following presentations, forums, programs, and activities:

Pre-General Synod Orientation—Thursday evening

The 2002 General Synod provided an orientation that covered a review of the purpose, rules of order, and presentation of business at the General Synod meeting.

Welcome—Friday morning

Dr. Bruce Murphy, president of Northwestern College, welcomed delegates, guests, and staff.

Introduction of Ecumenical Guests and Mission Partners—Monday morning

The president called on Wesley Granberg-Michaelson, general secretary, who welcomed ecumenical guests, corresponding delegates, and mission partners. The Rev. Douglas Fromm, RCA associate for ecumenical relations, introduced the ecumenical guests.
Ecumenical Guests
The Rev. Jason Chen, Christian Reformed Church in North America
The Rev. Terry Kleven, Episcopal Church
The Rev. Paul A. Schreck, Evangelical Lutheran Church in America
The Rev. Dr. Riad Jarjour, Middle East Council of Churches
Diane Patton, Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.)
The Rev. Dr. Seth Pitikoe, Uniting Reformed Church in Southern Africa

Ecumenical Luncheon—Monday noon

An ecumenical luncheon was held on Monday noon in honor of the ecumenical delegates to General Synod.

II. AGENDA OF GENERAL SYNOD

DISPOSITION OF COMMUNICATIONS

The general secretary noted that all communications received by the Office of the General Synod were referred to appropriate committees.

PRESENTATION AND REFERRAL OF NEW BUSINESS

No new business was presented by the delegates.
REPORT OF THE PRESIDENT

The Rev. Steven R. Brooks

First I need to say deep and heartfelt thanks:

To the Lord Jesus who called me to himself through my parents Jim and JoAnne Brooks, through Hope Church in Holland, Michigan, and through the Jesus People Movement when I responded to him with following faith. He called me as “deep calls to deep” when my first wife was killed in a car accident while I was a youth pastor in Omaha, persuading me that though my pain was deep, his love was deeper still.

I thank my wife, Linda, who is also faithfully following Jesus Christ. Linda walks with me as best friend, mother, director of Family Ministries at Springs Community Church, and as the one who prays, “Lord, you keep him anointed, I’ll keep him humble.” Without Linda’s laughter I wouldn’t be here. Linda, I thank you and our three children, Ross, Bree, and Ben, for your sacrificial love and prayers.

I thank others who have co-labored with me in ministry: Rev. Ron Gray, my “friend who sticks closer than a brother.” Twenty-three years of ministry together began in that car accident in which Ron’s wife was also killed. Much of what I’ve accomplished has been with Ron at my side, making me look good. Thanks also to the staff, consistory, and congregation at Springs Community Church, who have more than survived, they’ve excelled this year.

Thanks to Wesley Granberg-Michaelson, who so enthusiastically embraces this office, and to the persons who come and go as General Synod presidents. And thanks to our denominational staff, all of you: you are often under-appreciated and overworked, but I’ve seen your faithfulness and your effectiveness.

Finally, I thank the countless folks who have prayed for me these past two years, from Alberta to Arizona, California to Queens, Western Michigan to West Africa. It is humbling beyond words to know that so many have brought me before the Lord.

Please join me in reading from the RCA’s Mission and Vision Statement:

The Reformed Church in America is a fellowship of congregations called by God and empowered by the Holy Spirit to be the very presence of Jesus Christ in the world.

Our shared task is to equip congregations for ministry—a thousand churches in a million ways doing one thing—following Christ in mission, in a lost and broken world so loved by God.

I want you to hear the story of how the Mission and Vision Statement came to us. In the spring of 1997 eight leaders met together in Snow Mass, Colorado, to pray and discern the RCA’s mission and vision for the coming millennium. The eight were Wesley Granberg-Michaelson, Mary Clark, Tony Vis, Shari Brink, Lou Lotz, Gloria McCanna, Chuck Van Engen, and John Chang. The General Synod Council had studied Scripture and discerned for two years, finally asking Wes to take a team and craft the final wording.

John Chang tells how God met them at Snow Mass. They prayed, they wrestled, and they prayed some more. After the last early morning worship, Wes shared a troubling, sobering dream that he had. He sensed the dream was asking him if he was prepared to follow the statement of Mission and Vision whatever the cost. John Chang asked if he was ready to do so. Wes responded, “Yes.”
I’ve made a point of retelling this story everywhere I go, because our Mission and Vision Statement has the fingerprints of God on it. It came through discernment and prayer, revealing this fresh articulation of God’s mission for the church. Would you speak it out loud with me one more time:

**The Reformed Church in America is a fellowship of congregations called by God and empowered by the Holy Spirit to be the very presence of Jesus Christ in the world.**

**Our shared task is to equip congregations for ministry—a thousand churches in a million ways doing one thing—following Christ in mission, in a lost and broken world so loved by God.**

After I became your vice president in 2000 at Hofstra University, I wondered why God had called me to this office. The answer came slowly, but clearly, partly because of something else that happened at Mission 2000—the Pentecost Letter. I can still hear Jeff and Karen Barker as they gave voice to it the very first time:

> We, your sisters and brothers, called together on the weekend of Pentecost to discern the Spirit and engage the world, have on this Lord’s Day, June 11, 2000, heard the voice of the Spirit—like a trumpet—saying, “Write a letter of what you have seen and heard. And send it to every church, name by name.”

> …I knock at your door looking for a welcoming home, but your door is too often closed. To us, the Spirit said, I invite you to repent, and so this we did: for not making a bold witness for Christ; for failing to meet the needs of people in a purposeful way; for not expressing your unity around the Word of God.

> Today I call you, the Reformed Church in America: To fall on your knees in prayer, as a church made up of “houses of prayer.”

> “A church made up of houses of prayer.” As vice president, I began to wonder if God was asking us to get serious about becoming a thousand houses of prayer.

You may have heard about last year’s vice-presidential election. There was a tie between Kermit Campbell, elder from Traverse City, Michigan, and John Chang, pastor in Staten Island, New York. We’d never had a tie before. What to do?

The officers met on the platform and discerned that we should stop, pray, and wait on the Lord, which the synod did. We took another ballot, and John was elected. (I was recently with Kerm Campbell and this gracious, gifted leader is confident that God’s will was done.) That John will be our first Asian president was and is a great honor for us all. But something else happened on the platform that day.

God spoke to me in the midst of all the excitement and this is what he said: “Steve Brooks, I really mean it. Call my people to prayer.” You see, John Chang is first and foremost a man of prayer. His churches in Staten Island and Flushing, New York, are houses of prayer, and when John was elected, God was connecting the dots for me: A thousand houses of prayer in a million ways doing one thing, following Christ in mission.

Barb Schutt joined John and me and we began to pray for a team of leaders from across the RCA who would commit to equip churches to become Houses of Prayer. Most of the House of Prayer Equipping (H.O.P.E.) Team is with us today, and I’m going to invite them to meet in front of the platform with my wife, Linda, and Tryg Johnson. Let me read all of their names:
H.O.P.E. Team (in deference to our hosts, I should mention that no collegiate sponsorship is implied!):

1. Nola Aalberts, Orange City, Iowa
2. Jhonny Alicea-Baez, Temecula, California
3. Steve Brooks, Colorado Springs, Colorado
5. Chie deForest, Tinton Falls, New Jersey
6. Vern Hoffs, Redlands, California
7. David Muyskens, Grand Rapids, Michigan
8. Barb Schutt, Carmichael, California
9. Brian Smilde, Welland, Ontario
10. Randy Smit, Downers Grove, Illinois
11. Ned Suffern, Clifton, New Jersey
12. Sherwin Weener, Grand Rapids, Michigan
13. Clara Woodson, Brooklyn, New York

The House of Prayer Equipping Team has joined me in a three-year commitment to equip pastors and leaders. If you’d like to know more about becoming a House of Prayer, speak to any one of them. If you’d like someone to pray with you or for you while you’re here this week, they join Northwestern College Chaplain Tryg Johnson (also our General Synod chaplain) in making themselves available. Don’t leave this synod and your RCA family feeling no one cares. You’ll be able to identify the H.O.P.E. Team by their special nametags. Join me in thanking the House of Prayer Equipping Team.

I’ve asked Chie deForest to share her story with you about how she and her husband David are leading their church to become a house of prayer.

It is a great honor to be asked to share what God has done in my life, here before you on this campus. For it was under the wonderful ministry of Northwestern College and of the Reformed Church in America that I first came to hear the gospel of Jesus Christ. Though I was born in Japan in a non-Christian family it was here, in the RCA, that I became his follower. Here on this campus, I came to love Reformed theology. Through the teaching I received here, God laid a firm foundation of faith in me, and I am forever grateful for that.

But I have to confess to you that all the great things I received here were not quite enough to prepare me for a local church ministry on the East Coast. My husband, David, took a call at a small Reformed church in New Jersey, and he, right out of seminary, and I, right out of this great campus, went there ready to conquer the world. We worked hard, starting up every program we thought a church should have. But no matter how hard we tried, it was like hitting our heads against a wall. Nothing really worked. And it took us only three years to be burned out, with very little fruit.

That was about the time I came across a prayer group in our town. They got together every Thursday morning at 6 a.m. and prayed for all the churches in the community. I didn’t even know that God was up that early let alone anybody who would get up that early just to pray! But I was so tired and desperate that I actually got up at 5 a.m. one Thursday morning and went to this prayer group. On that first day, fifteen people from all different denominations and churches from my community were there to pray. They prayed for me and for my church. They prayed that I might be healed and restored from hurts and discouragement and that I would be empowered by the Holy Spirit to do ministry, not by my power, but by his.

Over the next five years, David and I attended that prayer group every Thursday morning. There we learned that the Holy Spirit really does guide our prayers if we let him,
and that he speaks to us about even specific things if we listen. We began to long for and actually experience intimacy with God in our personal prayer life, as well as discovering the power and the effectiveness growing in our ministry through prayer.

Now we have a small morning prayer group in our own church, and we have seen the spiritual and prayer temperature of our congregation rise over the last few years. We are still beginners as praying people, but this has been the most exciting journey we have ever been on.

God invited David and me and my church into a new life of intimacy and of hope. But I know that his invitation is not just for us, but for all, and for every church in the Reformed Church in America. So I pray with Steve that you and I and all the churches represented here today will receive all that God has for us through a wonderful place called prayer.

Thanks Chie, both for your willingness to share your story and for helping launch the House of Prayer Equipping Team.

Somebody’s sitting out here thinking, “Wait a minute. Aren’t all of our churches houses of prayer? I can’t imagine a church that doesn’t pray.” A House of Prayer is more than a program, it’s a value shared by an entire church. A church becomes a House of Prayer by infusing (Bill Hybels calls this institutionalizing), infusing this value into everyone and everything it does. When prayer is a value lived by the leaders and the people...that’s a House of Prayer.

The difference readily becomes apparent:

• Church A is a church where some people pray.
• Church B is a church that has organized a prayer ministry so that a few people pray a lot.
• Church C is a church where people understand that everything they do must flow out of God’s guidance, every leader must be prayed for regularly, every ministry must be prayed for continually. Its mission and its prayer are inseparable.

There’s no one right way to pray. A House of Prayer makes prayer accessible to Christ-followers of all kinds. Prayer is how Jesus did his work and how we must do ours. Psalm 127:1 says, “Unless the Lord builds the house, its builders labor in vain.”

That brings me to my first recommendation:

P-1
To instruct the General Synod Council to convene an “RCA Convocation on Prayer and Mission” in 2004 or as soon as practical, whose purpose will be to equip congregations and their leaders to become Houses of Prayer following Christ in mission.

[Upon recommendation by the Committee of Reference, P-1 was referred to the Advisory Committee on Christian Education and Discipleship. See page 132.]

We will explore again this year the possibility of an every-other-year synod. As we weigh possibilities let me feed your imagination. I wonder if the year between synods could be a year when we are intentional about coming together for our shared task of equipping churches for ministry. Imagine, every other year, a North American leadership convocation where we are equipped to become, in the words of our Mission and Vision Statement:
Congregations focused for ministry—creative, confident, healing, and radically attentive to the world outside their doors.

I love that last phrase. Speak it out loud with me: “radically attentive to the world outside their doors.”

In the letter inviting you to this synod, I challenged you to come prepared to move beyond the trap of “either/or” thinking to courageous “both/and” leadership. What does that mean?

Jesus, Lord of the church, calls us not only to make disciples, but specifies “teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you.” Any attempt to divorce our Christianity from Jesus’ “everything” is ill-conceived and shortsighted. He calls us to both justice and evangelism, not either/or. Both world mission and local mission, not either/or. Two years ago our general secretary called us become a denomination made up of churches that are faithful and healthy and growing, directly challenging our persistent habit of quarreling about being either faithful or growing.

I don’t say this to dampen discussion or to suggest we can’t disagree. I challenge you to not get stuck, trapped in old quagmires when all the while, out there, is still a lost and broken world loved by God, and we have a mission to go! I challenge you to rediscover Jesus’ prayer for unity: “I pray…that all of them may be one, Father, just as you are in me and I am in you. May they also be in us so that the world may believe that you have sent me” (John 17:20-21, NIV).

Wes will share with you General Synod Council’s process of discovering, through discernment, a clear and compelling goal to guide us in the next ten years. It is a prayer-breathed attempt to help the RCA become the church envisioned in the Mission and Vision Statement. GSC is still working on this goal, per synod’s instructions, so you’ll get to see this work in progress. But the challenge is this: can we name our fears and anxieties about becoming both faithful and growing and still press forward to become a denomination full of turned-around, revitalized churches?

While different from GSC’s goal, last year we adopted an evangelism goal, controversial to some, that first prompted me to push that synod beyond either/or thinking. It reads:

By the year 2011 the RCA will be one of the fastest growing denominations in North America as evidenced by the number of those confessing Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord (2001 MGS, R-43, p. 199).

This spring I had the privilege of meeting with the task force charged with shepherding this goal forward and my anxiety disappeared when I heard their deep commitment to Jesus’ “everything”: the whole gospel for the whole person for the whole world.

Question: Does God want his church to grow? Obviously that’s not all he wants his church to do; but at the end of the day, how will we, the synod of 2002, answer that question?

The deeper issue is this: Can we find alignment that moves the whole fleet of ships in one direction instead of a thousand different directions? Will we align ourselves around one clear and compelling goal that propels us to do “one thing”—God’s mission—really well? What we require is more than the wording of a goal; we need the will to achieve denomination-wide alignment!

If that seems a daunting task, you begin to discern why God calls us to fall on our knees in prayer, as a church made up of “houses of prayer.”
Also before us from last year are a number of initiatives addressing the leadership crisis in the RCA. Did I say leadership crisis? If ever there was a time to courageously search for an effective, faithful “both/and,” now is the time.

Last year’s president, Carol Mutch, an elder from Wyckoff, New Jersey, called us to fully embrace the gifts of the laity. Synod approved a Lay Ministry Summit, which Carol co-led last fall with Vern Hoffs (until recently, director of Ministry and Personnel Services). The summit brings a proposal to create the ministry of commissioned pastors. The enthusiasm synod 2001 expressed for Carol’s vision was palpable. I can’t take you back there, but I can invite Carol to share her passion with you. Would you join me in welcoming the past president of General Synod, Carol Mutch.

**THE LAITY IN MINISTRY**

Last year’s General Synod caught a vision—they affirmed the gifts and leadership abilities of the laity, and asked us to return to this synod with a way to put laypeople into ministry.

Many authors have written about the church in the twenty-first century, and they all seem to agree that our future depends on the degree to which we understand the role of laypeople in our ministries and on how well we equip the saints. From the beginning of the church, God has called on common ordinary people to carry on his ministry. He gathered together twelve inexperienced disciples—none of whom were theologically trained—and sent them forth into ministry. He does the same with us today.

God did not call us to be church members—to sit in church on Sunday morning, contribute regularly, and do good. He called us to be disciples. He meant that our lives should matter—that we should take the gifts, passion, and drive he has given us and fulfill a purpose larger than ourselves. And for some that call to serve God requires the courage and vision to be in mission in new and dynamic ways.

We have reached a critical moment in the Reformed Church. Almost 20 percent of our churches are experiencing difficulty finding ordained ministers of Word and sacrament to serve as their pastors. The vision for the establishment of a commissioned pastor track within the Reformed Church in America came not from one person or one area of the country. It came from our synods and classes who are struggling to fill vacancies and meet huge ministry challenges through a variety of patchwork approaches. They are doing this without any clear direction from the denomination regarding universal standards and level of training. But that shortage is just part of the problem. We want to grow in numbers, health, and faithfulness, but that cannot be done without more theologically trained, Spirit-led leaders. The lay pastoral summit identified areas where help is needed:

- Provide leaders for small churches who, because of size, lack of funds, or location, cannot attract full-time ministers of Word and sacrament.
- Make available close-to-home training and theological education for people who are already serving God in a variety of settings but who are eager to be more fully equipped and credentialed for the work they do.
- Help meet the need for more men and women called by God to establish new church starts.
- Prepare people to serve in staff positions in local congregations and judicatories—classes would be able to require specialized training and then designate individuals as fully prepared to be commissioned pastors of youth, commissioned pastors of Christian education, commissioned pastors of congregational care or spiritual formation. The possibilities are limitless.
The problem may not be that there are insufficient people to carry on these ministries, but rather insufficient vision to see, hone, and develop the potential, gifts, and leadership skills of people right in our midst.

We have in the Reformed Church in America a great untapped resource that we have never acknowledged and harnessed for Christ’s kingdom—they are sitting in our pews every Sunday. They love the Lord and have served their local congregations well, but up to this point have seen no place where they fit in the larger church.

We have an army of dedicated, knowledgeable, and talented people for whom we have failed to provide further avenues of ministry.

Jesus said in Matthew 9:37-38, “The harvest is plentiful, but the laborers are few; therefore ask the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into his harvest.”

If you vote to establish the ministry designation of commissioned pastor within the RCA, you will make it possible for our denomination to set universal standards and requirements that everyone must meet. And for the many who have felt God calling them into some form of ministry, but have seen no clear and accessible way to be trained and answer that call, you will be providing a pathway. You have it within your power to provide hope, challenge, and equipping for the church of the twenty-first century.

Helen Keller said, “I will not just live my life. I will not just spend my life. I will invest my life.” You can help legions of people, called out by God, to invest their lives in something that will last into eternity.

George Barna says in his book *The Second Coming of the Church* that “The existing Church has more than enough people to change the world.” Let’s unleash them into ministry. That is my hope and my prayer for our denomination.

Thank you, Carol.

“Imagine…Laity and pastors unleashed, hungry for ministry; congregations mission-minded and inviting, authentic and healing, growing and multiplying, alert to the opportunities around them.”

We need both/and wisdom in another area that’s been painful for many of our congregations, “The Worship Wars.” In the mid-seventies Rich Koerselman was chosen as a pastor to launch one of three simultaneous new RCA church starts in greater Dallas. In the late eighties Rich began another new congregation in Arizona. It was with joy that I anticipated seeing him in December on a visit to the Southwest Classis.

But on this day Rich spoke candidly of the worship wars at New Hope Community Church in Gilbert. For three years this capable, proven pastor has tried everything he knows to help his people think through, get past, pray over their battles over the “right way” to worship. As Rich told me his story he struggled with emotions and very real pain.

If “our shared task is to equip congregations for ministry,” we can no longer sit back passively while New Hope and many other churches are torn apart by this dilemma.

In the next six days you’ll experience five or six different “styles” of worship. John Opgenorth and Trinity Reformed Church have just offered what they called a blended worship style. You’ll also experience liturgical, contemporary, and traditional styles. You’ll be blessed by a gifted student from Western Seminary, Jill Ver Steeg, who has been leading worship at the regularly packed Hope College Chapel. On Sunday you’ll worship with members of a local congregation in their ministry context.
David Tripold, a member of the worship commission and leader of last year’s synod worship, will be coordinating all these worship leaders behind the scenes. David, thank you. David brings considerable experience and great wisdom to the questions we’re wrestling with and will lead the forum on worship this evening.

In every case these leaders have chosen their particular style of Worship because of their understanding of both worship and mission. Here’s my message: context determines style, while our theology determines the content. No longer can the Reformed Church in America pretend there is one “right style” of worship. It’s both/and, friends. Both Reformed theology and the creative flexibility of the Holy Spirit to be the very presence of Jesus in our wide and varying contexts.

Therefore I offer:

P-2
To instruct the General Synod Council to convene a consultation that includes representatives from the Commission on Worship, the racial/ethnic councils, new church development pastors, and persons reflecting our generational diversity, to experience and reflect on the various worship styles in use in RCA churches, and to bring to synod in 2003 strategies and recommendations that will equip churches to lead worship in ways that are consistent with Reformed theology and responsive to the local mission.

[Upon recommendation by the Committee of Reference, P-2 was referred to the Advisory Committee on Christian Worship. See p. 208.]

I was still a youth pastor in Omaha in 1979, when Bill Thompson, pastor of Garden Home Community Church in Denver, stood before the General Synod and said that although he personally opposed the ordination of women, he considered the issue not a matter of salvation, nor the purity of the gospel, but a matter of conscience. He indicated that conscience allows for freedom and a variety of views (citing Romans 14) and that in light of this, he favored upholding the ordinations of the women in question.

That summer I took the youth group from Westwood Community Church on a mission trip to Bill’s inner-city Denver church. He was amazed that God had used his comments regarding conscience to make a way forward on the divisive “either/or” of women’s ordination. A conservative charismatic, his conservative side pushed him to limit women’s roles. His openness to the Holy Spirit pushed him never to quench the Spirit.

We all have our prejudices. I have mine, Bill had his; you have yours. But Bill, at the 1979 Synod, was able to put his prejudices into perspective. If “the Main Thing is to Keep the Main Thing the Main Thing,” Bill understood that the gospel and salvation are the Main Thing and that our differences on matters of conscience are not. It takes a mature servant leader to set aside his or her prejudices in favor of the most important things to which God is calling us.

Let me tell you about my own prejudice as regards women in ministry. My mother, JoAnne Brooks, was completely engaged in ministry as I grew up. Fortunately for her, no one suggested she shouldn’t do whatever God was calling her to do. She is an elder at Hope Reformed Church in Holland, Michigan.

The Jesus People Movement, when I began following Christ, was, if anything, open to the Spirit working in new ways. In 1973 at Fuller Seminary women in ministry were controversial in the evangelical world, but Fuller was leading the way.
In 1976, when I left seminary, I repeatedly observed the Holy Spirit gifting women, much the way he gifted the gentile Cornelius in Acts chapter 10. Peter’s prejudice was overruled by the Holy Spirit. Peter was wise enough to acquiesce.

_Lord, Jesus, overrule any of my prejudices that stand in the way of your will and your mission._

For me, it doesn’t make any sense to commit my life to furthering Christ’s mission and not use every gift, every servant, every leader God calls to the front lines of ministry. My question is, Why would you say “no” to gifted, called women, when the task before us is so urgent?

It’s not that I disrespect or disregard those who hold that the Bible doesn’t allow women in leadership. I, too, have a high theology of the authority of Scripture. But in the spirit of Bill Thompson, I say the mission is before us and we must make it our main business. Why not open wide the doors of leadership to women elders, women deacons, women commissioned pastors, and women ministers of Word and sacrament? Now is the time to open wide the doors of leadership to all whom the Lord, our God, is calling.

Last fall I had lunch with leaders from Rocky Mountain Classis, male and female, and we discussed the Office of Women fund drive. Many of us acknowledged that the drive wasn’t really on our agenda yet. When we asked why, there were several honest answers, but one grabbed this dad’s heart.

My youngest son, Ben, appears to have a call to become a pastor. The truth is my next oldest, Bree, does not. But I realized that day in Denver that if she did and she wanted to serve in the RCA she’d hit the wall of no-opportunity so fast it would make her head spin. If God called her to use her considerable gifts to someday serve on a consistory, many churches would tell her “no!” I’m wondering how many of our churches can accomplish the mission the Lord calls us to and keep telling our daughters “no.”

I would tell Bree that if she wants to be a pastor she could be called, trained, and ordained, but she’d probably struggle to find a church where her gender didn’t limit her ministry. I spoke with a friend who began in a church, got discouraged constantly battling prejudice, and left parish ministry. Some of our gifted women go into specialized ministry, not because that’s their first calling, but because that’s the place they can get hired.

Let me show you the statistics published in this February’s _Church Herald_:  
- Ordained ministers of Word and sacrament: 1,938
- Ordained ministers of Word and sacrament who are women: 167
- Ordained women who are senior or solo pastors: 35
- Ordained women who are associate pastors: 61
- Ordained women who are missionaries: 2
- Ordained women who are without charge: 15

I have wrestled with how to move us forward. You know now my commitment to the Mission and Vision Statement. My passion is for the Great Commission. It’s in mission, as women and men go make disciples of all nations…it’s in mission, as men and women baptize new Christ followers…it’s in mission, as women and men teach them everything Jesus taught about Life to the full…it will be in mission that we acquiesce to the Spirit and say “yes,” opening wide the doors to women as together we go to a world that so needs Jesus Christ.

My heart is not that we would fixate on this issue, rather we would fix our eyes on Jesus. God is at work, all around us. Where God is moving, that’s heaven’s invitation to adjust our lives and join what the Spirit is blessing.
Lord Jesus, overrule any of my prejudices that stand in the way of your will and your mission.

I bring you:

P-3
To instruct the General Synod Council, in cooperation with the Commission for Women, the Office of Women, and the Policy and Coordination Team (PACT), to facilitate the collecting of stories of churches engaged in mission; and further;

To instruct the GSC to pay particular attention to gathering stories from churches in which women are exercising a leadership role; and further,

That the GSC develop ongoing strategies to communicate these stories in the congregations and assemblies of the RCA; and further,

To instruct the GSC, in cooperation with the Commission for Women and the Office of Women, to gather and report annually statistics on the gender of ordained office holders within the RCA, and, if approved, statistics on the gender of commissioned pastors in the RCA for the purpose of measuring progress in saying “yes” to women in leadership.

[Upon recommendation by the Committee of Reference, P-3 was referred to the Advisory Committee on Christian Heritage and Communications. See p. 153.]

Before I close, let me encourage all in the RCA to support the Office of Women with their prayers and their gifts to reach the goal of raising $800,000 by October 1, 2002, enabling us to hire our first director of the Office of Women.

September 11, 2001, our lives were changed forever. Our understanding of just how lost and broken this world is was forever deepened. Our mission became that much more urgent.

Our courage and generosity surfaced in many ways. The Rev. Dr. Carolyn Holloway and Dewitt Reformed Church, our closest church to ground zero, opened their doors to New York’s finest, feeding, praying, comforting. I was there. The very presence of Jesus Christ is there.

I hold before you a symbol of that courage, a teddy bear. This little guy came from Fennville, Michigan, and made his way, along with 56,000 fellow teddy bears, to the children of New York as a sign of the love and grace of God. On this little guy’s tag it reads: “I’m sending you this bear with love: Valerie M. from Fennville, Michigan. I hope you like This [sic] Bear.”

We’ve helped and are helping in many other courageous ways, as well. At the risk of creating a symbol that is perhaps a bit “too cute” for the gravity of the long road in front of us, I will attach this bear to the presidential bell. May it serve as a reminder, that we are “called…to be the very presence of Jesus Christ in the world.”
The 196th General Synod of the Reformed Church in America is now well under way. I put before you these challenges:

- Will you embrace the Mission and Vision Statement?
- Will you become a thousand Houses of Prayer?
- Will you align yourselves around a clear and compelling goal?
- Will you fully empower the laity for ministry?
- Will you equip congregations to lead worship appropriate to their contexts?
- Will you open wide the doors of ministry to women?
- Will you ask the Holy Spirit for the gift of “both/and” unity?

If we will, we can become, in our lifetimes, while it’s still our watch, the church Paul prayed for in his benediction to the Ephesians, stated so freshly by Eugene Peterson:

My response is to get down on my knees before the Father, this magnificent Father who parcels out all heaven and earth. I ask him to strengthen you by his Spirit—not a brute strength but a glorious inner strength—that Christ will live in you as you open the door and invite him in. And I ask him that with both feet planted firmly on love, you’ll be able to take in with all Christians the extravagant dimensions of Christ’s love. Reach out and experience the breadth! Test its length! Plumb the depths! Rise to the heights! Live full lives, full in the fullness of God.

God can do anything, you know—far more than you could ever imagine or guess or request in your wildest dreams! He does it not by pushing us around but by working within us, his Spirit deeply and gently within us.

—Ephesians 3:14-21, The Message

Please read Paul’s enthusiastic conclusion with me, in unison:

Glory to God in the church!
Glory to God in the Messiah, in Jesus!
Glory down all the generations!
Glory through all millennia!
Oh, yes!
The Rev. Wesley Granberg-Michaelson

“Then the angel showed me the river of the water of life, bright as crystal, flowing from the throne of God and of the Lamb through the middle of the street of the city. On either side of the river is the tree of life with its twelve kinds of fruit, producing its fruit each month; and the leaves of the tree are for the healing of the nations.”

Revelation 22:1-2

This river of life, promised in Scripture, experienced in life, is what carries forth the ministry and mission of the Reformed Church in America. Bubbling up from the wellspring of God’s unfathomable love, flowing amidst our 943 congregations, nourishing acts of faithful ministry and mission that in turn add strength to its current—this river is our living water; water that sustains and directs us; water that produces redeeming fruit; water that holds the promise of healing for the nations.

Those of you who know me know this: rivers sustain me, both spiritually and physically. Flowing waters speak to me of the promises of God’s grace and love in Jesus Christ, the Living Water. These promises have claimed my soul and define my life. And the rivers of God’s creation also provide me with physical renewal. To stand hip-deep in the swirling current of the Yellowstone River with a fly rod in my right hand is to experience God’s creation in all its splendor. The river truly is life.

However, the image of the river has become more than a powerful biblical illustration of God’s working in the world; more than a place to fish and find personal renewal. The image of the river also helps me understand and make meaning of the mission and ministry of the Reformed Church in America—both as the source of our strength and vitality, and as a metaphor for many of the tensions that we face today. I want to share that understanding with you today, in hopes it might also be a helpful image as we deal with pressing issues facing our denomination, and encountered at this General Synod.

This we know: that water cleanses, purifies, refreshes, sustains; that Jesus Christ is living water. Picture in your mind with me all that our 943 RCA congregations are doing, locally and globally, by “following Christ in mission,” as part of this river of living water. Alpha courses. Food pantries. Mission trips. Evangelism workshops. Mission partnerships in Albania and Bahrain. Gift-based training of the laity. A Portuguese-speaking new church start in Toronto. A Spanish-speaking new church start in Corona. Three hundred pastors involved in re-focusing networks. Six hundred churches engaged freshly in Christian education work through Learning for Life. A million acts of mission and ministry, in nearly a thousand churches—all that and much more, through the working of the Holy Spirit.

This strong river is our mission. Now, consider the riverbanks. There can be no river, after all, without its banks. These provide the boundaries that give shape and form to the river. They allow the river to navigate through a variety of terrain, flowing across broad plains and through narrow valleys.

Can we think of our church order and polity as being like the banks of this river? They provide definition, boundary, and direction to its life. They enable the flow of our mission to navigate a variety of cultural terrain. When working well, the riverbanks of our polity and order don’t obstruct the river’s flow, but rather, facilitate and focus it. Further, these banks find their bedrock in our historic theological beliefs. These beliefs provide the core of undergirding convictions that guide our mission.
By order I mean more than simply rules, regulations, and procedures. Rather, central theological convictions and marks of identity that are imbedded in how a denomination is organized, how it governs itself, and how it authorizes its ministry. All this is essential to a church’s existence. The assemblies that organize and govern us—consistory, classis, regional synod, and General Synod—and the offices that together carry out ministry (minister of Word and sacrament, elder, deacon, and professor of theology) provide a foundational structure that supports and carries the fresh-flowing currents of our mission.

The image of a river helps us grasp the creative tension between mission and order. There is a dynamic interaction between the flow of a river’s currents and its banks. Strong currents cause riverbanks to recede, and then reestablish themselves. They change and adjust in response to the flow of the river.

At times, riverbanks cannot hold the pressure and volume of the water’s flow, and the river floods. The water meanders wherever it can, but eventually much of it simply settles in broad places—on farmlands or in the living rooms of houses—and stays there. A river without riverbanks eventually loses its power and ability to flow forward.

At other times, the current will change riverbanks dramatically. In the summer I like to fish on the Lamar River in the northern part of Yellowstone Park. Snow falls heavily there in the winter, creating a powerful run-off each spring. Waters come cascading through that river valley with such power that the banks of the Lamar at certain points will change dramatically. I’ll notice how, the year before, the river at certain points was flowing through a different course. Its banks have shifted, and established themselves in fresh places, creating its new boundaries, and allowing the river to flow forward.

What is true about the river is also true about us as Reformed Christians—that we are “reformed and always reforming.” Like the dynamic interaction of river and bank, our order, polity, and even confessional statements all form a firm identity and are open to change and reformation, as we understand the fresh encounter of the Word and Spirit through mission.

Sometimes we can spend too much energy and effort resisting change in the flow of the river. Think of this analogy. We are all familiar with the work of the Army Corps of Engineers. They have spent billions of taxpayer dollars in attempts to control rivers. They want to keep rivers from doing harm. So the Army Corps has built dams and levees, pouring millions of tons of concrete in this process.

But today, we’re learning that rivers aren’t as easy to control as we supposed. Even the best of human technology can’t demand that a river always flows in a certain direction, within clearly established concrete boundaries. In the end, when enough rain falls, rivers have a way of flowing where they want to go.

Moreover, environmentalists have discovered that when you work too hard to control the course of a river, with too many dams and artificial levees, the river can begin to lose its vitality. Natural patterns of fish, aquatic insects, wildlife, and plants are so thoroughly disrupted that the nature of the river itself is changed. Just fifty miles from here, the Missouri River has become the focal point of a debate on whether and how to restore rivers to more of their natural state.

Likewise, sometimes we’ve tried to pour more polity concrete when we should be figuring out how to dismantle unnecessary obstacles to the flow of our mission. Yet, we need to remember that the relationship between mission and order is never an either/or. The one never cancels out the other. Rather, this is what is called a “polarity”—a creative tension to be managed, in order to enable us to grow and flow forward. It’s true that too much
emphasis on polity and order can destroy the vitality and life of mission. But on the other hand, mission that arrogantly ignores or dismisses the need for polity and order eventually will meander aimlessly, losing its coherence and power.

This dynamic interaction of mission and order is clearly expressed in our *Book of Church Order*. In its Preamble, it describes the offices of the church, and then says this: “The governmental functioning of these offices takes place, not apart from, but in harmony with the understanding of the mission of the church…the purpose of church government is to aid the church in the development of its own life, in order that it may carry out the mission of its Head—to announce the good news of his Saviorhood and extend his Lordship throughout the world.”

Simply put, our order exists to facilitate our mission. It should be changed, or left unaltered, accordingly. “Following Christ in mission” is the strong, unifying current that is guiding us forward. A responsive polity and order, reflecting truths about who we are as God’s gathered community, should facilitate and energize the flow of this mission.

This is the tension framing many of the issues we face this week at General Synod. How do we find the right balance between the fresh and swift flow of our mission, and the guiding riverbanks of our order and polity?

Consider these examples. Do you see the polarity between mission and order at work?

- Should we establish “commissioned pastors” to assist in serving the needs in congregations today, or should we utilize more fully our present offices?
- Should General Synod meet every other year?
- Should Greek and Hebrew be requirements for ordaining ministers of Word and sacrament, or is this an unnecessary burden on the expanding expectations for ministerial training?
- Should we change the size and role of the General Synod Council?
- Are the “conscience clauses” relating to women serving in ordained offices still needed in the *Book of Church Order*?
- What is our responsibility for providing retirement and insurance benefits to our pastors and church workers?
- How do we handle the conflict over styles of worship?
- Can we use methods of “discernment” to change our style of decision-making?
- Do techniques of church growth betray our identity?

In matters like these, aren’t we dealing fundamentally with the tension between the imperatives of our “mission” and the requirements of our “order”? Don’t we need a creative, healthy relationship between a supportive understanding of our polity, order, and traditions as the Reformed Church in America, and the need for every congregation to be freshly engaged in mission in its own local context?

This tension is not new. As long as the church has been the church, as long as the river of God’s Spirit has run, we have faced this stress. The Book of Acts and epistles of Paul describe how fresh expressions of faith in different cultural contexts had to be reconciled with the church’s wisdom and practice. Do you remember how the church’s first missionary effort in the Gentile world created such a huge controversy that church leaders had to come together in a “council”?

If the river is our metaphor for this General Synod, then Acts 15 is our story. Do you recall it? The fledgling church was deeply divided over whether circumcision should be required of new Christians. The issue was this: can we let this swiftly flowing river eat away at what we have always known as the banks of our belief? What’s more important, our order and tradition or this seemingly new work of God?
That first council of the church was by all accounts a contentious one, with deep disagreement. Those who valued the order and tradition and teachings that had guided God’s people for centuries passionately made their case to preserve the dignity and identity of the church; those passionate about the extension of the kingdom pointed to a whole new group of hearers and their need to know Jesus. They argued.

Remarkably, they also listened—to God and to each other. Acts recalls this meeting as a deeply spiritual time, filled with stories of “all the signs and wonders that God had done,” both in the past and the present. Those in attendance recited and honored that which had formed them, and listened to the testimony of those who had just joined them. And in the end they said, we must value our inherited identity as the people of God, and we must follow the forward movement of the Spirit of God. To do that, we must never let the tension of those two realities break us apart. There cannot be one without the other; a church gathered must also be a church sent; a church with a bright future is always illumined by its past. Living water flows best between healthy and sound riverbanks.

What does the Acts experience mean for us?

Like the early church, the tension between mission and order is sharpened by the contemporary situation of the church within the culture. On any given Sunday, only about 37 percent of the population will be in a church, and only one in four believe churches in their own area of residence are relevant. We live in a secularized society. Worshiping communities of Christian faith are in the minority. The Judeo-Christian story is no longer the dominant narrative of our culture.

This places each congregation in a new, missiological relationship to the culture. Mission, simply put, means the intentional crossing of boundaries in Word and deed with the love of God in Jesus Christ. Yesterday oceans formed those boundaries. Today we encounter boundaries of culture, race, ethnicity, and generation in our neighborhoods and towns. So a fresh call to mission, within each congregation, has taken on new urgency.

Like swift currents pushing against the bank of a river, the new questions of mission push against the order that has formed and guided us on this continent for nearly four centuries. How do we know when it is time to shore up that bank against any further erosion—or whether it’s time to let the swiftly flowing water of God’s Spirit carve out a new route?

There’s one helpful example that we should note. In 1998 General Synod requested that a comprehensive review of our church order be undertaken. The report of that process, and proposed changes to the Book of Church Order, are presented to this synod, and found in your workbook on pages 206-215. These changes would allow greater latitude for consistories and classes in determining how best to form various bodies that can facilitate the ministry and mission of the church within their own context. Why? Because of the changed missiological setting of the church today. This report and its proposals are helpful initiatives in assisting the Reformed Church in America as we deal with the creative tension between mission and order.

So let’s remember to pray for the rain (reign) of God’s grace, hope for rivers that flow rapidly, and pay attention to our riverbanks.

Covenantal Connection

Our covenantal connection, with each other and with other Christians, is another important example of how we must attempt to hold our order and mission together in a new day and age.
Every agency, commission, and institution, each of our forty-six classes and eight regional synods, is represented here at General Synod—a living reality of our covenant to one another, and of our connection through time to the church’s historic confessions and its future witness. We are here together because we believe congregations need more for their ministry than they can provide on their own.

We believe this, but we don’t always live that way. American Arminianism, individualism, and congregationalism have been constant temptations to Reformed Christians, but perhaps never more so than in a North American culture that celebrates independence, individual rights, and merit that we earn on our own. The Reformed tradition becomes very counter-cultural at these points: that we belong not to ourselves, but to our faithful Savior. That our only merit comes from grace. And that we depend on a covenantal community whom we have not chosen, but whom God has chosen.

We live in covenant because we believe that God’s Spirit and truth become known more fully to each of us because of our life together. We share resources and experiences between congregations. We offer one another affirmation and uphold structures for accountability. We grow from learning how a common faith is expressed in a wide diversity of cultural contexts. These covenantal connections constantly call us to deepen our faith and expand our vision of following Christ in mission.

That includes the work of our Board of Benefits Services, which administers a program of retirement benefits, assistance grants, pastoral care to our retirees, health insurance, a counseling hotline, and other measures of care. These programs have been in major and necessary transitions. You may say that we’ve been doing a lot of river dredging in the past four years. And like dredging, it’s not always been pretty. But it has been essential.

We’ve completed a major transition in our retirement benefit program. Today our health insurance program is in the middle of a similar transition, implementing reforms that can best care for the needs of all who are enrolled.

The key word here is all. Our health insurance plan, like our retirement program, is a tangible expression of our commitment to “bear one another’s burdens and so fulfill the law of Christ.” It is built on this key premise: that we have made a commitment as a community to these programs because of our responsibility for one another. As members of the program and of the Reformed Church, we agree to look beyond our own immediate self-interest to the greater good and on behalf of those who need it most. In return, the Board of Benefits Services agrees to provide a program that meets the greatest number of needs at the most reasonable cost. No, it won’t be the best price on the block in every region of the church. However, it will be the best way we maintain our care, not just for ourselves, but for one another.

But this commitment needs to be tested, clarified, and reaffirmed. For this reason, the Board of Benefits Services is presenting to General Synod a major document titled “Covenant of Grace/Covenant of Care.” It attempts to articulate those foundational values that bind us together, not just in an insurance or retirement program, but in our life as a denomination. These values test how deeply we belong to one another, in support of all our mission and ministry.

Thus, we need to hear your response, and the response of all our congregations, to this commitment. Further, the Board of Benefits Services can make practical proposals regarding future options for sustaining and strengthening programs like our health insurance only after it hears whether the church reaffirms its “Covenant of Care.”
Our River’s Direction

Our president, Steve Brooks, has told you the story of our Statement of Mission and Vision. Five years ago, General Synod adopted it. The RCA’s Statement of Mission and Vision is our best attempt to name the future we believe that God intends for the Reformed Church in America.

These are more than words contained in a workbook and voted on by delegates. They have become a constant reference point, like a North Star, calling us to align all we are doing toward a common direction.

So we need to ask, as we face crucial questions of our future this week: is the Reformed Church in America more like the denomination envisioned in the Statement of Mission and Vision today than it was five years ago? Are we going where God is sending us, claiming the challenge, accepting the risk, making the sacrifices, and holding fast to our faith in a world that would suggest otherwise? Are we holding the right balance of current and riverbank?

Last year’s General Synod asked the General Synod Council to evaluate the progress made in implementing the Statement of Mission and Vision, and make recommendations for furthering this task. To do so, we sent questionnaires to our congregations as well as to governing board members and staff; 280 of our congregations provided us with helpful and candid responses.

This much seems clear. The Mission and Vision Statement is helping to clarify what it means to be centers of mission. Congregations and classes are acting in fresh and exciting ways in response to opportunities for witness and mission around them.

In Scranton, Pennsylvania, for instance, the Primera Iglesia Reformada Fuente de Salvación applied last month to be part of what we call the “denominational plan” for new church starts. In 1997 an elder, Harrison Sanchez, from our RCA congregation in Paterson, New Jersey, began visiting Scranton twice each week to explore starting a new RCA congregation among that city’s small but growing Hispanic population. Within four months, thirty-five were worshiping each Sunday. Since then, indigenous pastoral leadership has been identified and is receiving instruction in RCA polity and Reformed theology. The Passaic Valley Classis has provided support for a building and its ministry. By God’s grace, this church can become a thriving, self-supporting RCA Hispanic congregation in the future.

Stories like this abound. In April, the regional synod here in the Heartland launched its new vision and structure for equipping congregations for mission, health, and growth. This synod has an expectation of adding 3,500 new members professing their faith, and beginning thirty new church starts, by the year 2005. The Synod of the Great Lakes similarly has raised up a new vision; in New York, the number of languages in which its congregations worship continues to climb toward twenty. Emigrants from Ghana recently organized as a congregation; now the Ghanaian Presbyterian Reformed Church of Brooklyn worships in close fellowship with the Reformed Protestant Dutch Church of Flatbush, which was organized in 1654. I could tell you stories like this all afternoon—of refocusing networks and natural church development and deacon training and spiritual gifts identification giving rise to exciting new ministry and mission all across our church. To experience firsthand these stories of mission is one of the great privileges of being general secretary.

Let me tell you just one more. The Rev. Kent Landhuis is president of the Classis of Pleasant Prairie. This is part of his report to his classis this spring:

I want you to meet one of our elders...He shakes his head at some of the things I do. He can be a pain in the neck in consistory meetings. (And he knows it.) And he is not
too sure about some of the ministry experiments we try. But this particular elder has a grandson who has been in some trouble and sometimes months go by and his family doesn’t know if he is in town or in jail or in the hospital. The scour the paper every day looking for his name and they pray for him every night. And when I meet with this elder he tells me, “There are a lot of new things in our church; I’m not sure about everything.” And then he says, “All the other stuff doesn’t matter—keep preaching the gospel. We have to bring the Good News to as many people as we can. That’s what it is all about.” This tough, old elder gets a tear in his eye because he really cares about people.

Like any of you who have been president of classis, Rev. Landhuis had read all the consistorial reports from the classis. “I flip through the reports to survey data the way an accountant might look at somebody’s taxes,” he says. And he wonders. We are maintaining structures, managing facilities, keeping budgets, directing ministry traffic. But, “are we passionate about people?” He challenged the classis members to think about their ministry and ask these questions:

- Do you anticipate rich worship?
- Do you long for deeper fellowship?
- Do you hunger and thirst for God’s Word?
- Do you live for consistory meetings?
- Do you lie awake at night dreaming about what else could be done?
- Do you have a story to tell about people you know who have been transformed by the gospel?
- Do you love people?

He then made one of the most unusual recommendations I have heard a classis president make in his or her report, namely, that each consistory prepare a written statement describing the congregation’s passions, and that these be discussed at the fall classis meeting. His assumption is that “passion defines mission.”

The Statement of Mission and Vision is an attempt to define the passion of the Reformed Church in America: “a thousand churches in a million ways doing one thing—following Christ in mission.” It’s an attempt to turn the traditional denominational structure upside down. Instead of congregations supporting denominational structures to do various forms of mission and witness on their behalf, the strengths and resources of the denomination are focused on equipping congregations.

This is a difficult transition, requiring persistence, focus, courage, and creativity. Our five-year evaluation shows that we have only begun this process. We need to stay on course, discovering how the currents of this river can grow stronger.

You will see that this report includes several action steps based on the findings of the evaluation. These include clearer communication about our mission and vision, sharing more congregational stories, intentional theological reflection on being a missional church, and focusing efforts on those resources that best equip congregations for their ministry. These action steps outline how we can move forward in continued efforts to implement our mission and vision. I think this needs to happen; I want to make sure it does. Therefore, I offer this proposal:

P-1
That the General Synod affirm the General Synod Council (GSC) report titled “Implementation of the Statement of Mission and Vision: A Five-Year Evaluation” and endorse the action steps for implementation by the GSC; and further,
That the GSC continue to monitor progress made and work still to be achieved, in implementing the Statement of Mission and Vision for report to the General Synod in 2003 and thereafter as needed.

[Upon recommendation by the Committee of Reference, P-1 was referred to the Advisory Committee on Evangelization and Church Growth. See p. 352.]

Let me warn you: approving this will not settle or diffuse the tension I’ve talked about between mission and order. That you must address head-on. And nowhere is it seen more strongly than in the tension between our faithfulness in ministry and our growth in numbers. And, frankly, we’re uncomfortable talking with one another openly and honestly about this subject.

Last year’s General Synod approved a recommendation stating that we “adopt the goal that by the year 2011 the RCA will be one of the fastest-growing denominations in North America as evidenced by the number of those confessing Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord.” Members of the synod’s Advisory Committee on Evangelism and Church Development worked hard and argued their case strongly, and a majority voted in favor.

Since then, some pastors have told me they are “embarrassed” to be part of a denomination that would pass such a statement. They asked, doesn’t this make us competitive with other denominations, and isn’t that an unworthy, and even unbiblical approach? And doesn’t this assume that we can do, in our own power and timeframe, what only God can do?

Others have privately ridiculed the whole proposal cringing at its very words. I’ve heard some leaders decry how we have “an unhealthy obsession with numbers.” And then we drift back into factions—those consumed with an evangelical desire of outreach, and those centered on maintaining faithful integrity in our ministry. Instead of recognizing one another’s gifts, too often we stereotype and judge each other.

Meanwhile, some RCA members have pressed me about implementation, and soon. Last month I preached at the 150th anniversary of an RCA church in upstate New York. At an adult Sunday school class afterward, I was asked this question: “Last’s year’s General Synod said we should become one of the fastest-growing denominations. Can you tell me, as general secretary, how we’re doing in that?”

My answer to you at General Synod, truthfully, is that we’re not doing well at all.

First, we don’t really all agree that this should be the goal.

Second, it’s difficult to discuss our disagreements constructively.

Third, we continue to decline in the number of our members, down 3,790 this year.

All this must change.

Let me offer an approach that might take us forward, and plead for an open and honest dialogue about the future of the Reformed Church in America.

First, let’s be clear about reality. Our neighborhoods and towns are filled with people who are seeking a home for their hearts. They long to belong. We need to invite them home. We need to welcome them into communities of faith who live their life out of gratitude for what God has done for us in Jesus Christ. In fresh ways, we all must learn how to share the grace and love of God that makes life whole and new.
In today’s culture, people are less likely each week to enter an RCA congregation out of social conformity, or generational tradition, or cultural habit.

Remember this nursery rhyme?

Little Bo Peep has lost her sheep,
And doesn’t know where to find them.
Leave them alone, and they’ll come home,
Wagging their tails behind them.

I don’t think so. That may have described the reality of yesterday’s church in a culture of Christendom. But it no longer describes today’s reality. People don’t have an internal compass leading them automatically to the doors of a church.

Instead, today people will come because they seek and find life; because they are given a taste of God; because they discover a community where love is rooted and real; and because they are challenged to give their lives away. They will come because they experience in congregations “the very presence of Jesus Christ in the world.” And they will come, first of all, because they have been invited by someone to come.

So the simple truth is this: God wants the church to grow. Don’t we all want the number of those who come home and find life to increase?

Yet, we also know that techniques of church growth can be filled with danger and temptation. A congregation shouldn’t sacrifice values basic to its identity as a church just to get more people through the door. If we mimic every passing cultural fad, the culture will co-opt us. Part of the gospel’s attraction, in fact, is its call to a community living counter to the values of the culture.

All this is the exciting matrix of mission today. We face the challenge of discovering how the gospel is communicated within the diversity of contemporary cultures—how it takes root in different generations, in different racial groups, in different languages, in different nationalities. In this process, we need to discover how the core of the gospel’s truth is expressed in the form and texture of the rich variety of cultures. This has always been the challenge of mission, and it is ours today, in every congregation. Here the tension between faithfulness and growth is transformed from a stale debate into a lively dialogue about following Christ in mission.

We also know some congregations can grow in the depth of their ministry, but simple demographic circumstances mean they are unlikely to expand the number of their members. We need to learn how to celebrate together all expressions of such faithful ministry in our midst.

Studies consistently show that healthy congregations, with gifted and trustworthy pastoral leadership, will be fruitful and grow. We’re learning to focus on what nurtures health in our congregations, and in the lives of those called to lead them. So let’s put a final end to the old debate between church growth versus steady faithfulness in ministry. Faithfulness requires attention to the health of each congregation, and to the denomination as a whole. And as we grow in health, we will be better equipped for mission. Fruitfulness will be the result. In many cases, increasing numbers of people will find their true home through the ministry of RCA congregations. We expect that the river will grow wider. We yearn for this. We pray for this.

At Mission 2000 General Synod proposed we establish a “clear and compelling ten-year goal for church health and numerical growth as the expected result of our mission and ministry.” The General Synod Council has worked hard over the past year to do this. We talked and listened, for the Spirit and for those voices we usually ignore. We studied Scripture together and prayed; we were frank about our disagreements. And we wrote a goal.
At our April meeting, a proposed draft statement of such a goal was presented. We were not going to approve this by a majority vote—the process of discernment that we were using assumes that there are ways of discovering God’s will in a given situation other than a favorable vote of 51 percent of those present, with the other 49 percent dissenting. And although the proposal had strong affirmation, the GSC didn’t sense we had complete closure. But let me share with you the draft of what the GSC is considering:

**Faithful to the gospel of Jesus Christ,**  
**Living in covenant with one another,**  
**Radically attentive to the world,**

Every RCA congregation commits to a continual practice of:

a) evaluation, repentance, prayer, and revitalization;  
b) initiating new outreach ministries of compassion and justice; and  
c) attempting, individually or in cooperation with other congregations, a new church start;

so that by God’s grace and the power of the Spirit, by 2012, there will be 1,100 Reformed churches—joyful, healthy, winsome, growing communities, following Christ in mission in a lost and broken world so loved by God.

This statement will direct how we align our resources and energies over the next decade. The GSC will bring a final version to next year’s General Synod. But in the meantime, we’re committed to keep listening, to God and to you. This evening, one of the “forums” open to your participation will deal with this proposed goal. You’re invited to come and offer your own wisdom to this process. There are also forums on the Covenant of Care, and commissioned pastors, and some of the other key issues before us. I invite you, and strongly urge you, to attend.

There’s a river of life carrying the mission of the Reformed Church in America—a mission both local and global. We are learning what it means not to have a mission program, but to live out of God’s call to mission, and be transformed in the process. We understand that mission is one. Mutual mission involves us all. These currents are flowing stronger.

There is a river of life that is flowing in our midst. It is fed by a rich tradition, and flowing toward a promising future. This river nourishes 943 congregations, equipping them for ministry to follow Christ in mission. Trees of life grow from the crystal waters of this river, with leaves for the healing of the nations. These waters baptize and bless. They provide a cup of cold water as we see the face of Christ in every face. This river flows over dry and parched land, causing flowers to bloom and harvest to come. And this river brings the Living Water to thousands whose souls thirst for life. For, as Jesus told us, “The water that I will give will become in them a spring of water gushing up to eternal life” (John 4:14).

The following is the Reformed Church in America Statement of Mission and Vision:

**REFORMED CHURCH IN AMERICA**

**OUR MISSION**

The Reformed Church in America is a fellowship of congregations called by God and empowered by the Holy Spirit to be the very presence of Jesus Christ in the world.

Our shared task is to equip congregations for ministry—a thousand churches in a million ways doing one thing—following Christ in mission, in a lost and broken world so loved by God.
The Vision

Imagine...
Laity and pastors unleashed, hungry for ministry; congregations mission-minded and inviting, authentic and healing, growing and multiplying, alert to the opportunities around them.

Imagine...
Classes and synods as communities of nurture and vision—accountable, responsible, sustained by prayer, alive to the Spirit.

Imagine...
A denomination, locally oriented, globally connected, that prays in many languages and beholds the face of Christ in every face; a denomination renewed and renewing, raising up leaders, always directing its resources toward the front lines of ministry.

Imagine...
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.

Imagine...
The Reformed Church in America, engaging the world.

Living Out the Vision

This vision will be lived out...

By congregations focused for ministry—creative, confident, healing, and radically attentive to the world outside their doors.

By consistories selected more for ministry than for management, attuned to the Spirit, eager and equipped to serve.

By ministers of Word and sacrament open to dream, prepared to lead, willing to risk.

By classes that are empowering and proactive, living in communion, each accountable to all, and all to Christ.

By synods and staff that funnel resources to the local church and keep us connected to the larger church.

By all the people of the RCA, a network of relationships, a fellowship that celebrates its gifts and confesses its failures, and where the ministries of all are valued and cherished.

To live out this vision by consistories, classes, synods, and staff, our decision-making will be transformed by a pervasive climate of worship, discernment, and biblical reflection. We will no longer do business as usual, nor our usual business.
IMPLEMENTATION OF THE STATEMENT OF MISSION AND VISION: A FIVE-YEAR EVALUATION

Introduction

Five years ago at its spring meeting the General Synod Council (GSC) adopted a new mission and vision statement. A few months later General Synod ’97 adopted the Statement of Mission and Vision, calling us to “our shared task” of “equipping congregations for ministry—a thousand churches in a million ways doing one thing—following Christ in mission, in a lost and broken world so loved by God.”

From the beginning it has been understood that such a statement is effective only when we go where the words send us, claim the challenge, accept the risk, and sacrifice ourselves and our resources (see MGS 1997, p. 47). Now that five years have passed, it is time to determine whether such is the case.

Accordingly, the General Synod of 2001 asked the GSC to evaluate progress made toward implementing the Statement of Mission and Vision:

That the General Synod Council prepare an overall evaluation of the progress made, and the work still to be achieved, in implementing the Statement of Mission and Vision adopted in 1997; and further,

That this evaluation be given as part of the general secretary’s report to the 2002 General Synod, including any recommendations for further steps to implement the Statement of Mission and Vision; and further,

That this process inform the General Synod Council’s task of formulating and presenting a ten-year goal for the future health and growth of the RCA, as requested by the 2000 General Synod (MGS 2001, R-104, p. 375).

Thus, in order to evaluate progress, at the GSC’s fall meeting the Policy, Planning, and Administration Committee asked that data be gathered from various perspectives—congregational, governance, and staff. Surveys were sent to people representing these three perspectives: to each congregation, to the GSC’s Coordinating Committee, and to denominational staff (both General Synod and regional synod).

Responses were received from 280 of the RCA’s 943 congregations, a 29.7 percent response rate. The rate of response varied on a region-by-region basis, from 14.6 percent in the Regional Synod of Canada to 42.9 percent in the Regional Synod of the Heartland. It should be noted that though the GSC was interested in gathering the perspectives “of congregations,” for practical reasons, the survey was sent to installed ministers of Word and sacrament or, in the case of churches without an installed minister, to the vice president of consistory. Thus, the responses of “congregations” should generally be understood as those of an individual within leadership in the congregation.

The responses were then reviewed by a variety of groups within the RCA, including the GSC’s Policy, Planning, and Administration Committee and a subcommittee that provided more in-depth analysis and reflection. This report reflects that group’s review of all responses, as well as discussion by General Synod and regional synod staff leadership.

The responses to the congregational survey provide a snapshot of where we are as a denomination now, five years after adoption of the Statement of Mission and Vision, and
indicate whether there is a clear understanding of the direction set forth in the statement, whether the statement has had a specific influence on the congregations of the RCA, and whether ministers (or lay leaders) believe their congregations are being equipped for ministry and mission. The questionnaires sent to the GSC’s Coordinating Committee (GSCCC) and to regional synod and General Synod staff flesh out the picture, providing a sense of what has been done to get us to this point and where we might go from here. (See Appendix A for a summary of actions taken over the last five years to align the RCA with its Statement of Mission and Vision.)

The survey of congregations posed four questions, three of which asked respondents to indicate the extent of their agreement or disagreement with a specific statement on a 4-point scale, with one being “strongly disagree” and four being “strongly agree.” Each of the four questions gave opportunity for open-ended comment. A copy of the survey is attached as Appendix B of this report.

**Question #1 - “The RCA’s Statement of Mission and Vision is clear.” Based on your understanding, how would you summarize the RCA’s Statement of Mission and Vision in your own words?**

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<td>8</td>
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If the Statement of Mission and Vision is to be an effective tool for denominational and congregational revitalization, a clear and common understanding of the direction set forth in the statement is necessary. To determine whether such an understanding exists, ministers (or vice presidents of consistory) were asked whether “the RCA’s Statement of Mission and Vision is clear.” The average for all those who were responding on behalf of congregations was 3.09, indicating solid consensus that the Statement of Mission and Vision (SMV) is clear.

When respondents were asked to summarize the statement in their own words, as would be expected, the language of respondents reflected a wide range of emphases: for some “following Christ in mission” means evangelism, for others it is to be found in social or justice ministry, and for still others in global mission. Indeed, the SMV affirms a wide range of perspectives: “a thousand churches in a million ways doing one thing, following Christ in mission.”

While this diversity of missional expressions is a strength, the variety of summaries offered by respondents indicates confusion as to what the central thrust of the SMV really is. It may be helpful to think in terms of two components of this central thrust—one ecclesial, one missional. According to the statement, “Our shared task is to equip congregations for ministry—a thousand churches in a million ways doing one thing—following Christ in mission, in a lost and broken world so loved by God.” Thus, ecclesially, as members together of the denomination known as the Reformed Church in America our shared purpose is to “equip congregations.” We do this because—the missional component—each congregation is a center for mission, i.e., it is one of “a thousand churches” that in a million different ways “follow Christ in mission.” Regardless of the language used, these two components—sharing in the task of equipping congregations and understanding congregations as centers of mission—are foundational components of becoming the denomination envisioned in the SMV.
Action Step #1 – Engage in two-way communication with congregations and their leaders:

- Articulating a clear focus on the central thrust of the mission statement through vehicles such as the communication slogan/logo and a clear and compelling ten-year goal.
- Asking congregations what they need in order to become centers of mission.

Relative to the view of congregations, the GSC’s Coordinating Committee believes the statement to be even clearer (3.50 as compared to 3.09 for congregations), while staff (regional synod and general synod) indicates the same relative agreement (3.02 as compared to 3.09 for congregations). Given that the summaries of the SMV offered by staff reflect a clear understanding of both the ecclesial and missional components of the statement, one might wonder why staff agreement is not higher. One possible interpretation would be that they rate it as less clear because they do not experience it as helpful for making decisions about where to invest human and financial resources. Though the “Twelve Priorities” adopted by GSC in April 1999 have been somewhat helpful, decisions need to be made regarding what the RCA will not do. In the absence of these decisions, the linkage between the SMV and the work of staff will continue to be fuzzy.

Throughout all three groups (congregations, the GSCCC, and staff), though relatively little resistance to the SMV is expressed, a few specific points of tension are identified. A small number of respondents identify one of two phrases as not theologically Reformed: “the very presence of Jesus Christ” and “fellowship of congregations” (which for a few minimizes our polity and our covenant with each other). For some the SMV is too long, a few express resentment that congregations were not involved in creating the statement (thus fueling an “us” and “them” mentality regarding responsibility for implementation), and others, quite simply, express skepticism that mission statements are effective tools.

Action Step #2 - Work toward a deeper shared understanding of the Statement of Mission and Vision:
- By articulating a Reformed missional ecclesiology to provide a broader context within which to understand the aims and intent of the Statement of Mission and Vision.
- By strengthening internal staff communication and continuing staff training and team-building.
- By seeking grassroots input that incorporates the views of congregations into the ten-year goal to be recommended by the GSC to the General Synod for action in 2003.

Questions 2, 3, and 4 of the congregational survey were asked in an effort to find out whether the SMV has been an effective tool for denominational renewal. In Question 2 respondents were asked whether the Statement of Mission and Vision itself “has had a specific influence on [their] church’s ministry” and in Question 3 whether, through General Synod and regional synod staff and the GSC, their congregation has been equipped for ministry. The level of agreement with the statements in these two questions (2.48 and 2.56 respectively) indicates that respondents were divided between those who agree and those who disagree. Questions 2 and 4, taken together, provide a sense of how the RCA’s SMV interacts with a congregation’s understanding of itself as a center of mission.

Question #2 - “The RCA’s Statement of Mission and Vision has had a specific influence on my church’s ministry.” If so, in what way? If not, why not?

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<tr>
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<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
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Question #4 – Does your church have a mission or vision statement of its own? If so, please summarize it in a sentence and comment on whether you believe it is compatible with the RCA’s Statement of Mission and Vision.

Those who agreed that the SMV has had a specific influence on their congregation tended to talk about how the statement and the RCA’s focus on it has encouraged or reinforced an outward focus. Some wrote of efforts to write such a statement for their own church (in some cases as a result of a video made available to all RCA congregations and requested by more than half). These efforts have begun to make a difference and, in some instances, have been extremely fruitful. (In the words of one respondent, “We now have three missionaries and a seeker service!”) In a few cases, respondents have found the statement to be useful for orientation, education, and/or vision-casting with new members or consistories. In these ways, the statement has been a key tool in the RCA’s movement toward fostering missional congregations and a missional denomination.

Two kinds of responses came from those who disagreed that the SMV has had a specific (i.e., positive) influence on their congregation. For one group of people, the SMV and the process by which it was adopted represent all their frustrations with “the denomination.” It was here that comments surfaced about the lack of involvement of congregations in developing the statement. Where these feelings are present, healing will need to occur before we can truly engage in “our shared task” of equipping congregations. Interestingly, another group of respondents whose churches were already models of what the statement was trying to capture in words, or who were moving in the direction set out by the SMV, “disagreed” with Question 2. Thus, the lower average response to this question is partially a reflection of factors besides the content of the statement itself.

When asked whether their church has a mission or vision statement of its own, most who responded indicated that they have or are developing a mission statement that they believe to be consistent with the RCA’s SMV. Based on the summaries (or actual documents) offered by congregations, it is clear that many congregations have engaged in a great deal of intentional planning, ministry, and mission! For these congregations, a written statement has been not an end in itself but a means toward growth as a center of mission. It has stimulated prayerful reflection on what God is calling them to be and do in their particular context.

Action Step #3 – Celebrate missional congregations and stimulate and encourage missional thinking by:
• Telling the stories of congregations that are engaged in mission.
• Encouraging the writing of congregational mission statements through revitalization networks.

Question #3 – “In the past four years, the denomination—through regional synod or General Synod staff or the General Synod Council—has helped equip my congregation for ministry.” If so, how? If not, why not?

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Question 3, because it is most directly tied to whether we are succeeding in our shared task of equipping congregation, is the most important question of the survey. The mediocre response (2.56 on a four-point scale) indicates that there is work to be done to truly become a denomination focused on our core purpose of equipping congregations for mission.

The question is also important for the insight that can be gleaned by noting the specific programs and initiatives named as helpful. Not surprisingly, the response differs by region, but some generalizations can be made on a denomination-wide basis:

1. **Revitalization networks:** Re-Focusing is named more often than any other initiative. Though the frequency varies by regional synod, this intentional process for transforming churches is mentioned by respondents from seven of the eight regional synods. Though it is not named by anyone from the Regional Synod of Albany, a missional understanding of churches had already taken root in that synod before the Re-Focusing network began, and has continued to grow. Similarly, other churches throughout the RCA are utilizing the Natural Church Development approach to revitalization and name it as helpful to their congregation.

2. **Empowering the gifts of all people:** Also receiving frequent mention are efforts by both the General Synod and regional synods to train deacons and elders, and efforts to assist all God’s people in identifying and utilizing their spiritual gifts. The recognition of this cluster of initiatives points to the importance of empowering the gifts of all people.

3. **Connecting global and local mission:** It is noteworthy that a key strength and distinctive feature of the RCA, its world mission program, receives little mention when respondents are thinking about those things that help equip their congregation for ministry. This observation points to a need for new models of integrating global and local mission, to a need to reflect on the way mission as traditionally defined (i.e., “global mission”) can be reshaped in a context in which mission is understood as emanating from churches that are centers of local mission.

4. **Transitions in congregational leadership:** There are some who are careful to say that their reason for stating that the denomination has not helped equip their congregation is that their church hasn’t been very in touch with the denomination. These comments tended to come from ministers who are new to a congregation or members of consistory who have special responsibilities during a ministerial vacancy and who express a desire for change. Such statements are a reminder of the opportunity for congregational renewal during times of pastoral transition.

**Action Step #4** – Evaluate the specific programs and initiatives that congregations experience as helpful to their efforts to follow Christ in mission:

- Strengthen and invest resources in programs that are helpful, and re-envision or eliminate those that are not.
- Consider how the various programs complement each other so that “the whole is more than the sum of its parts.”

Reflection on the response to Question 3 also leads to other general observations. First, as respondents write about the ways in which staff has helped equip their congregation for ministry, the distinction between regional synod and General Synod staff is often fuzzy—and so it should be! When congregations are steeped in a missional perspective, the question is not about how the work gets done, but whether it gets done. Thus, if congregations are to be centers of mission, the work done by the two sets of staff (i.e., regional synod and General Synod) must be integrated into a seamless network for equipping congregations.

Secondly, based on the response to the survey, it seems fair to say that those who lead RCA congregations generally experience regional synod and General Synod staff as “responsive,” but rarely proactive around the needs of congregations.
Finally, when we say that “our shared task is to equip congregations,” there is not a clear understanding of who we are trying to equip or of who shares in this task. If we are trying to equip congregations, how does that best happen? Is it by focusing on the congregation as a corporate entity? On leaders of congregations? On members of congregations? (If it is by focusing directly on members of congregations, then that is problematic for some pastors.) Similarly, there is lack of clarity regarding the “our.” Whose task is it? If it is the job of staff, this fosters an “us” and “them” mentality that fails to honor the wisdom and experience of ministers and members of RCA churches.

**Action Step #5** – Clarify how resources are best used to accomplish the “shared task” of equipping congregations:
- Who shares in the task?
- How can the strengths of congregations be shared with others?
- How can General Synod and regional synod staff best coordinate the work?
- How can staff be proactive in building relationships with congregations?

**Action Step #6** – Devise a means of mutual accountability (perhaps via a revised consistorial report) to determine whether we are succeeding:
- In our shared task of equipping congregations (i.e., Are congregations getting what they need?).
- As “a thousand churches...following Christ in mission” (i.e., Are congregations growing as centers of mission?).
APPENDIX A: PROGRESS MADE

Though the body of this report focuses on “the work still to be achieved” and “recommendations for further steps to implement the Statement of Mission and Vision,” General Synod 2001 also asked for a report of “progress made” since 1997 when the Statement of Mission and Vision was adopted (MGS 2001, R-104, p. 375).

This appendix lists programmatic initiatives undertaken in order to implement the Statement of Mission and Vision, as well as ways the infrastructure has been realigned or financial and human resources redirected. Its focus is primarily on the work of the General Synod Council and General Synod agencies and their staff, not on the work of regional synods or their staff.

The following are noteworthy:

- developed the Twelve Priorities and related measurable objectives
- asked congregations whether the SMV is being fulfilled
- focused communication and resource acquisition based on the Twelve Priorities
- began anti-racism training
- combined the staff of Congregational Services and Evangelism and Church Development Services to show that evangelism and discipleship belong together
- developed “Faithful Witnesses” and “Discipling All Nations” to clarify our philosophy of ministry, with “Discipling All Nations” emphasizing mission as both local and global
- set objectives in the four areas of the Faithful Witnesses document, which led to developing discipling and worship resources, the Learning for Life notebook, deacon and elder events, etc.
- began revitalization networks (Re-Focusing and Natural Church Development)
- revised strategy for new church development with the local congregation as the key
- initiated a grassroots “house of prayer” movement
- developed the Ministry cluster to bring ministerial calling and formation together and into the mainstream of denominational priorities
- developed a closer working relationship between regional synod and General Synod staff
- moved toward a cluster and cross-cluster team arrangement that encourages integration of programs into a whole
- GSC has increasingly focused its work on equipping congregations
- reshaped GS and GSC agendas to allow for more focus on mission and ministry and integration of worship and decision-making through consensus and discernment
- planned and experienced Mission 2000
- developed the “Mission Is One” funding plan that makes revenue streams clearer and moneys available for new initiatives
- became more efficient and effective in meeting financial needs, undergirded by new sound financial policies
- initiated a business-planning process that fills the chief operating officer role and frees the general secretary to lead more and manage less
- moved to better methods of evaluating personnel
- developed information technology capacity that is a clear advantage in our ability to carry out the SMV
- starting to ask the right questions
Please mark with an “X” the box that most accurately reflects your response, and briefly answer the additional questions.

1. The RCA’s Statement of Mission and Vision is clear.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Based on your understanding, how would you summarize the RCA’s Statement of Mission and Vision in your own words?

2. The RCA’s Statement of Mission and Vision has had a specific influence on my church’s ministry.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

If so, in what way? If not, why not?

3. In the past four years, the denomination—through regional synod or General Synod staff or the General Synod Council—has helped equip my congregation for ministry.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

If so, how? If not, why not?

4. Does your church have a mission or vision statement of its own? If so, please summarize it in a sentence and comment on whether you believe it is compatible with the RCA’s Statement of Mission and Vision.

Name (optional) ____________________________________________

Church (optional) __________________________________________

Classis ____________________________________________
BOARD OF DIRECTORS

REPORT OF THE GENERAL SYNOD COUNCIL

The General Synod Council (GSC) has served the Reformed Church in America since July 1, 1993. The *Book of Church Order (BCO)* states:

> The General Synod Council is established by and responsible to the General Synod. Its responsibility is to implement decisions, policies, and programs of the General Synod through proper channels and agencies; and to support, strengthen, and correlate the work of the several boards, institutions, and agencies of the Reformed Church in America, thus seeking to increase the effectiveness of the mission and witness of the church (*BCO*, Chapter 1, Part IV, Article 7, Section 1).

The responsibilities assigned to the General Synod Council in the Bylaws of the General Synod can be found in the *Book of Church Order*, Chapter 3, Part 1, Article 3, Section 6.

The GSC report is presented in two ways. First, administrative matters not requiring review by an advisory committee are reported here. Second, program, mission, policy, administration and financial matters within the GSC’s area of responsibility that require review and/or advice by the General Synod are reported through the appropriate advisory committee. Referrals from the General Synod of 2001 are dealt with throughout the report.

Regional Synod Minutes

The GSC received, and found to be in good order, the 2001 minutes of the regional synods of Albany, Canada, the Far West, the Great Lakes, the Heartland, Mid-America, the Mid-Atlantics, and New York.

Ad Interim Appointments

The following persons served for one or more meetings on the body indicated, based on the ad interim approval of the General Synod Council:

To the General Synod Council:

- Rev. Linden De Bie, representing the Classis of Delaware-Raritan
- Rev. Hung Yong Song, representing the Classis of Queens
- Rev. John Buteyn, representing the Classis of Red River
- Rev. James O’Connell, representing the Classis of Red River
- Mr. Tom Colvin, representing the Classis of Florida
- Rev. Clayton Smith, representing the Classis of Florida
- Rev. George Grevenstuk, representing the Classis of Zeeland
- Rev. Hak Kwon Lee, representing the Council for Pacific and Asian American Ministries

To the Ministerial Formation Coordinating Agency:

- Rev. Brígido Cabrera

To the Commission on Race and Ethnicity:

- Steve Robbins
To the Board of Directors of Jackson County Ministries:

George Grevenstuk

If these members are serving on an ongoing basis, their names are submitted for General Synod approval in the report of the Commission on Nominations.

R-1
To approve the ad interim appointments. (ADOPTED)

General Synod Meeting

Referral of Business

The business of General Synod has been assigned to the appropriate committees as presented in the General Synod Workbook.

R-2
To approve the assignment of General Synod’s business as presented in the General Synod Workbook. (ADOPTED)

Communion Offering

Upon recommendation of the president of General Synod, GSC designated the 2002 General Synod offerings to Reformed Church World Service for desks and chairs for schools in Afghanistan.

The Seating of Delegates

The Bylaws of the General Synod require that a classis be current in the payment of its General Synod assessments before its delegates may be seated as members of the General Synod (BCO, Chapter 3, Part I, Article 1, Section 1a).

The general secretary will report on classes payments of 2001 and 2002 General Synod assessments at the General Synod meeting.

General Synod Meeting Invitations

General Synod meetings are hosted by the Reformed Church’s three colleges on a rotation schedule. General Synod also meets periodically in other regions of the church. In order to accomplish this the General Synod Council Policy, Planning, and Administration Services committee maintains a ten-year tentative site schedule. The GSC staff visited representatives of the Classis of Cascades to discuss holding synod in Seattle in 2003. A suitable site is not available at this time. The GSC will continue to work with the classis on a future date. Hope College and Western Theological Seminary offered to advance their previous invitation from 2004 to 2003. The Regional Synod of Mid-America has invited the synod to meet in the Chicago area in 2004.

R-3
To accept the invitation of Hope College and Western Theological Seminary in Holland, Michigan, to host the 2003 meeting of the General Synod beginning on Friday, June 6, 2003, and concluding on Wednesday, June 11, 2003. (ADOPTED)
To accept the invitation of the Synod of Mid-America to host the 2004 meeting of the General Synod in the Chicago area beginning on Friday, June 11, 2004, and concluding on Wednesday, June 16, 2004. (ADOPTED)

Amendments to the Book of Church Order

The General Synod in 2001 adopted and referred to the classes for approval five amendments to the Book of Church Order. The amendments are recorded in the 2001 Minutes of General Synod, pp. 349, 351-353, 357, 363, and 364.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Proposed Amendments</th>
<th>Approved</th>
<th>Disapproved</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Definition of the Office of Elder</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(MGS 2001, R-86, p. 349)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Chapter 1, Part I, Article 1, Sections 8 and 10)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Commissioning Specialized and Contract Ministers</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(MGS 2001, R-87, p. 351-353)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Chapter 1, Part II, Article 2, Section 8;</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter 1, Part II, Article 12, Sections 1, 4, and 10;</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter 1, Part I, Article 2, Section 5)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Installation of Formula of Agreement Ministers</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(MGS 2001, R-88, p. 357)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Chapter 1, Part I, Article 2, Section 3;</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter 1, Part I, Article 1, Section 3;</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter 1, Part II, Article 12, Section 16)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Standardized Examination for All Ministerial Candidates*</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(MGS 2001, R-90, p. 363)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Chapter 1, Part II, Article 9, Sections 1 and 2)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Criteria for Other Candidates for Ministry</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(MGS 2001, R-91, p. 364)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Chapter 1, Part II, Article 9, Section 4b)</td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*The proposed amendment regarding the Standardized Examination for All Ministerial Candidates did not receive the required two-thirds approval of the classes and will therefore not be included in the revision of the 2002 Book of Church Order.

To declare amendments 1-3 and 5 to have been approved by the classes for incorporation into the 2002 edition of the Book of Church Order. (ADOPTED)

Amendments to the Bylaws of the General Synod and Special Rules of Order of the General Synod in the Book of Church Order

The 2001 General Synod approved in first reading for recommendation to the 2002 General Synod the following amendments to the Bylaws of the General Synod and Special Rules of Order of the General Synod:
General Synod Council Membership—BCO Chapter 3, Part I, Article 3, Section 1 (MGS 2001, R-21, p. 73)

Commission on Judicial Business—BCO Chapter 3, Part I, Article 5, Section 6 (MGS 2001, R-95, p. 367)

R-6
To declare the above amendments approved by the 2001 General Synod in first reading to be incorporated into the 2002 edition of the Bylaws of the General Synod. (ADOPTED)

Appointment of General Synod Treasurer and Assistant Secretary

In accordance with its corporate bylaws, the General Synod must annually appoint a treasurer of the General Synod corporation (Corporate Bylaws of the General Synod of the Reformed Church in America, Article V, Section 5.01).

R-7
To appoint Susan Converse treasurer of the General Synod of the Reformed Church in America. (ADOPTED)

In accordance with its corporate bylaws, the General Synod may elect or appoint such other officers as the needs of the corporation may from time to time require (Corporate Bylaws of the General Synod of the Reformed Church in America, Article V, Section 5.01). In order for the Rev. Kenneth Bradsell, director of Policy, Planning, and Administration Services, to have authority to sign legal documents for the corporation of the General Synod, it is necessary to approve the following recommendation:

R-8
To appoint the Rev. Kenneth Bradsell assistant secretary of the General Synod of the Reformed Church in America. (ADOPTED)

RCA 375th Anniversary

In November 2001 the General Synod Council was reminded by the General Synod Commission on History that the Reformed Church in America will be 375 years old in 2003. The GSC invited Ted Dykstra (elder, Classis of Canadian Prairies), Lynn Japinga (minister, Classis of South Grand Rapids), and Russell Gasero (RCA Archivist) to form an anniversary committee. David Dethmers (RCA Mission Services staff) has also been asked to participate on the committee. Initial plans call for an introduction of the 375th anniversary year during the General Synod of 2003 on the campuses of Hope College and Western Theological Seminary.

Reformed Economic Development International Inc. (REDI)

The General Synod Council formed a new 501(c)(3) corporation in April 2002 to obtain and disburse private and public funds to advance the interests of the economically disadvantaged through community development activities. Reformed Economic Development International Inc. (REDI) is a corporation of the General Synod Council created to write grants to support various ministries of the RCA through the General Synod Council and its related ministries.

The new entity will not run programs and will not require any new funding from RCA congregations because its administrative costs will be charged against received grants. The
intent of REDI is to raise new revenue from sources such as foundations, businesses, and government agencies. REDI will be coordinated through the GSC’s Mission Services staff and the RCA Foundation.

The new entity was formed by the GSC on the advice of staff who reported that the existing RCA IRS “group exemption” is not sufficient to obtain community-based funding from many locally-owned businesses, foundations, and corporations that have restrictions that prevent gifts and grants to religious corporations. While members of the General Synod Council and the RCA Foundation, Inc. will make up a majority of the eight-person board of directors of REDI, the new entity is sufficiently separate from the other ministries of the RCA so that it will be able to receive grants and gifts not otherwise available to the church.

Supervision

Personnel and Evaluation Committee

The Personnel and Evaluation Committee is comprised of four members from the General Synod Council. The members are James Marvel, chair; Irvin Boersen; the Rev. Toni Macon; and the Rev. Robert White.

The committee has four principal accountabilities:

1. Oversight and evaluation of the general secretary.
2. Review and recommendation to GSC of personnel policies, including salary ranges and benefits for denominational staff.
3. Review and recommendation to GSC of salary ranges and benefits for missionaries.
4. Review and approval of salaries as provided in V-4.c of the GSC Handbook.

The Personnel and Evaluation Committee functions within the policies approved by GSC. Among these policies are salary classifications that reflect the degree of responsibility carried by staff members filling the respective positions. Information concerning the classification of specific positions is available from the Personnel Office. A broad sketch of the classifications with salary ranges (including housing allowances) in effect in April of the current year appears below

Employee Handbook

In September 2001, the Personnel and Evaluation Committee approved a new Employee Handbook as presented by the Office of Ministry and Personnel Services, with some slight modifications and agreed to forward it to the GSC for its review and adoption. The Employee Handbook was approved by the General Synod Council in November 2001 and introduced to all RCA staff in December. It became effective January 2002. Copies of the handbook are available for reference from the office of the RCA personnel director.

Oversight and Evaluation of the General Secretary

The annual review of the General Secretary, Wesley Granberg-Michaelson, was conducted as required by the Personnel and Evaluation Committee (P&E). The annual review completed in 2001 was a three-year, super review, involving input from ordained ministers, stated clerks, ecumenical leaders, and staff. The 2002 review was less comprehensive, but was completed with excellent input and feedback. The general secretary continues to be challenged and excited by his duties and responsibilities. This report concerns three areas that were part of the review process.
1. The position description for the general secretary was developed at the time the General Synod Council was reorganized and prior to Wesley Granberg-Michaelson assuming his position. The description was updated with the assistance of the general secretary to reflect the evolution of the position due to the reconfiguration of many staff positions, the creation of the Board of Benefits Services, the renewed emphasis on the RCA Foundation, and the revised director of ministry position. The process enabled good interaction with respect to the performance of the general secretary and discussion of future goals.

2. The Staff Performance Appraisal used for staff performance reviews was used as a tool for the evaluation of the general secretary. The general secretary was evaluated with the same methodology used for other staff members. This was completed after materials were assembled for the 2002 General Synod.

3. The general secretary brought a proposal for a sabbatical. The proposal was an outgrowth of prior discussions between P&E and the general secretary and reflects an emphasis on bringing church leadership to the grass roots. P&E enthusiastically endorsed the proposal.

**Position Descriptions and Staff Changes**

From July 2001 to April 2002, the Personnel and Evaluation Committee approved the revision of the following executive position descriptions: General Secretary, Coordinator of Special Gifts, Assistant Controller—Budgets and Reporting, Assistant Controller—Systems and Operations; and Director of the Council of Hispanic Ministries.

The committee also approved four new executive positions descriptions: Benefit Plan Administrator, Director of Strategic Planning, Mutual Mission Coordinator, and Director of Ministry Services.

Within this time frame executive staff changes include four who ended their service as General Synod Council staff: John Grooters, Vernon Hoffs, Stanley Perea, and Luis Pérez; and the hiring of two executives: Jhonny Alicea-Báez and Ruth McWhinney.

**Staff Classification and Salary Ranges**

In 1999 the General Synod requested that the General Synod Council (GSC), through its appropriate committee 1) review the current salary ranges for GSC staff; 2) review the process by which the salary ranges are established among different classifications; and 3) give a rationale for the ranges in each classification (*MGS 1999*, R-96, p. 323). The Personnel and Evaluation and Ministry and Personnel Services Committees reported at the March 2001 General Synod Council meeting and to the General Synod in June 2001 (*MGS 2001*, p. 60) their intentions to complete a comprehensive salary structure and classification report of classifications 1-6B for review by the GSC in the spring of 2002 and for report to General Synod in June 2002. This was to be the second phase of the study, of which the first part adjusted the formula for salary ranges in classification 4-6B. As the work on the study progressed, it became clear that the study will be very costly and time consuming, and that the scope of the work will require external expertise.

During this classification conversation, staff began an organizational transition into clusters and teams, and several supervisory relationships were changed. This flexible model had the immediate effect of reducing the number of personnel reporting directly to the general secretary and realigning other accountabilities. These changes in direct reports raised additional questions about the classification system which the Personnel and Evaluation Committee wants to evaluate over the next year.
The Personnel and Evaluation Committee agreed that external, in-depth work on the classification system is not necessary nor practical at this time because hiring practices have been clarified, new cluster arrangements need to be tried for a year, and the cost of a study at this time cannot be afforded within budget.

The approved staff salary ranges for FY2003 are based on FY2002 ranges with an across-the-board cost-of-living increase of 2.6 percent.

**FY2003 Salary Structure (reflects 2.6 percent increase over FY2002)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Grade</th>
<th>Min</th>
<th>Mid</th>
<th>Max</th>
<th>130%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>93,021</td>
<td>116,277</td>
<td>139,532</td>
<td>151,160</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>74,417</td>
<td>93,021</td>
<td>111,626</td>
<td>120,928</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3A</td>
<td>65,115</td>
<td>81,394</td>
<td>97,672</td>
<td>105,812</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3B</td>
<td>46,511</td>
<td>58,138</td>
<td>69,766</td>
<td>75,580</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>33,488</td>
<td>41,860</td>
<td>50,231</td>
<td>54,417</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>29,767</td>
<td>37,209</td>
<td>44,650</td>
<td>48,371</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6A</td>
<td>22,325</td>
<td>27,906</td>
<td>33,488</td>
<td>36,278</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6B</td>
<td>18,604</td>
<td>23,255</td>
<td>27,906</td>
<td>30,232</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Missionary Salary Ranges**

A revised mission personnel salary scale, recommended by Mission Services, was approved by the Personnel and Evaluation Committee. The new scale retains the RCA’s historic commitment to a classification system, which compensates mission personnel based upon academic credentials, the complexity of assignment, and years of service. However, in order to fairly compensate mission personnel spouses for their work, a “pattern of service” scale (i.e., quarter-, half-, three-quarter-, or full-time) was imposed over the classification system. Thus spouses will be directly compensated for the work they are doing on the field that has been requested by a partner; their compensation will be funded through PIM shares.

**Salary Adjustments**

The RCA salary and fiscal year begins on October 1 and continues to September 30. Annually, each director receives a “merit block grant.” In consultation with supervisors, this grant is divided among personnel based on merit (according to the annual staff performance review). The general secretary receives a merit block grant for distribution as he determines based on the performance reviews among the directors, and a block grant for the staff of the Office of the General Secretary. Percentage of increase for persons employed for less than one year but more than three months is prorated on a monthly basis. Anyone employed less than three months is not entitled to a salary increase until the following year’s evaluation period. In addition, all employees receive an adjustment in salary based on the increase in the cost of living. In late 2001 senior staff requested that the P&E Committee consider merging the cost-of-living adjustment (COLA) monies with the merit block monies and to cease the practice of giving all employees an adjustment in salary based on an increase in the average cost of living. In this way supervisors would have a larger pool of money with which to recognize outstanding work. The P&E Committee requested further study on the issue, with specific concern around the issue of justice, particularly for staff whose salaries are at the lower end of the scale.

The committee recommended and the GSC approved the suspension of the policy of an automatic cost of living adjustment (COLA) for all employees for one year in fiscal year 2003, and approved that the calculated COLA amount be added to the merit block grants. This total amount is available to supervisors for salary adjustments for FY2003. The sus-
pension of the COLA policy will be reviewed by the P&E Committee prior to any decision regarding the FY2004 budget.

Staff Mortgage Loans

The *RCA Employee Handbook*, page 37, states:

It is the policy of the Reformed Church in America to provide all GSC executive staff, (classifications I, II, III), at the time of employment, with the right to obtain mortgages for primary residency from the RCA at a rate which is fully competitive with that prevailing in the normal real estate market and which requires no down payment for a first mortgage...

This policy was initially adopted to assist newly hired executives who, in accepting positions, needed to move, and for some, purchase a home for the first time. The Personnel and Evaluation Committee agreed to discontinue this policy because there does not seem to be a continuing need and because staff can apply for a down payment loan through the Personnel and Evaluation Committee if funds are required to secure a mortgage from an outside lender. The committee recommended and the GSC approved a change in policy to allow current mortgages to continue as per present policy, with no new mortgages to be approved in the future.

Sabbaticals

In recent years the Personnel and Evaluation Committee has been actively encouraging staff to take advantage of the sabbatical provisions for executive personnel. In March 2001 the committee was requested by the GSC to develop a five-year plan for executive staff sabbatical leave for report back to the GSC in fall 2001. The Personnel and Evaluation Committee, in consultation with the personnel director, completed a review of the current sabbatical policy and guidelines and reported to the GSC that the present system is working well. The policy as outlined in the *RCA Employee Handbook* (p. 30) states:

Executive staff, (classifications I-III) may be eligible for a three-month paid sabbatical leave after five years of full-time service or six months after ten years of full-time service in which no previous sabbatical has been taken.

A detailed plan of the proposed sabbatical is to be submitted to the immediate supervisor at least six months prior to the requested effective date. The proposal must include a description of the manner in which the sabbatical could be used, a plan for covering work responsibilities during the absence, and a statement of the relevance of the sabbatical to future responsibilities within the Reformed Church. If approved by the immediate supervisor, the unit director, and the personnel office, the proposal will be submitted to the Personnel and Evaluation Committee for final approval. No more than two members of the RCA staff are to be on sabbatical at any given time.

During sabbatical leave, salary and benefits will be continued. Additional claims for the costs of travel, tuition, and related expenses may be submitted, but their total cost is not to exceed the usual annual allocation per individual for professional development. Upon return from a sabbatical, the staff member is to present a report to his/her supervisor and unit director, with copies provided for all persons involved in approving the sabbatical.

The following staff have completed sabbaticals in the past two years:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Member</th>
<th>Dates</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Kenneth Bradsell</td>
<td>December 1, 2000 - February 28, 2001</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jack Tice</td>
<td>June 18, 2001 - August 5, 2001</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jeffrey Japinga</td>
<td>November 12, 2001 - January 31, 2002</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Sabbaticals have been approved for the following staff for the remainder of 2002:

- Betty Voskuil: June 15, 2002 - September 15, 2002
- William Mason: July 8, 2002 - September 15, 2002
- Kim Baker: September 1, 2002 - December 2, 2002
- Wesley Granberg-Michaelson: September 20, 2002 - December 20, 2002

**Study of Beliefs and Practices of RCA Clergy and Laity**

Beginning in 1976 and continuing through 1999 the RCA has been the subject of a series of sociological studies of the beliefs and practices of its pastors and members. Drs. Roger Nemeth and Donald Luidens, professors of sociology at Hope College, have conducted the studies. New studies, addressing many of the same concerns as the initial project, were conducted in 1986, 1991, and 1999. In the fall of 2001 the final results of the 1999 study were published and distributed to the GSC, the other corporations, agencies, commissions and institutions of the General Synod, and to regional synod offices. The study was printed in two booklets: *Lay Members’ Beliefs and Practices* and *Ministers’ Beliefs and Practices*. Both booklets are available upon request from the office of the director of Policy, Planning, and Administration Services.

In a cover letter to the GSC accompanying the booklets, Wesley Granberg-Michaelson offered a brief summary of the extensive reports and noted a few findings that caught his attention:

- We are growing older. The median age of the RCA membership is 55.
- RCA colleges, seminaries, and publications have strong support from RCA pastors and members.
- Over one-half of RCA families have median incomes above $50,000.
- Nearly one out of ten RCA pastors today is a woman and the acceptance of women in ministry is widespread.
- Forty-seven percent of pastors under the age of 34 say their commitment to the RCA has grown over the past five years; only 18 percent of those over age 50 agree.
- According to pastors, the four most important tasks that the denominational staff can do are new church starts, international missions, domestic missions, and urban ministry. Other priorities include strengthening small congregations, promoting minority ministries, and our benefits programs (retirement and insurance).
- Pastors feel that the three top areas in which the denomination could expand fundraising efforts are congregational revitalization, new church development, and leadership development.
- Compared to the RCA membership, RCA ministers are more “conservative” on issues related to RCA heritage, and more “liberal” on social and political matters.
- The RCA faces a shortage of younger pastors; only 6 percent are under age 34.
- Sixty percent of RCA members today were not raised in the Reformed Church.
- In 1999 63 percent of RCA pastors had visited the RCA website, but only 10 percent of laity had.
- Eight out of ten RCA laity say that church members should be involved in mission assignments.
- In 1991 80 percent of the RCA’s members said that denominational membership was fairly, quite, or extremely important to them. In 2000 that percentage was unchanged.
- Eighty-eight percent of pastors and 82 percent of members say it is fairly, quite, or extremely important for their congregation to grow, and 91 percent of pastors agree that growing congregations must be willing to change.
- Only 50 percent of members have heard of the *Book of Church Order*, and 34 percent know of the Canons of Dort.
- Eighty-three percent of members believe the church should seek new ways to min-
ister to urban areas.

- Seventy-six percent of pastors say that evangelism is the most important task of the church.
- Fourteen percent of members have a gift in their will for their local congregation; only three percent designate any Reformed Church in America institution, agency, or denominational program.

Implementing the RCA Statement of Mission and Vision

It was five years ago at its spring meeting that the General Synod Council adopted a new mission and vision statement. A few months later at General Synod 1997 the Statement of Mission and Vision was adopted, calling the Reformed Church in America to “our shared task” of “equipping congregations for ministry—a thousand churches in a million ways doing one thing—following Christ in mission, in a lost and broken world so loved by God.”

Since such a statement is effective only when the words are lived out, implementation of the Statement of Mission and Vision is central to the work of the GSC. Each year since 1997 the GSC has reported to General Synod on steps taken to fulfill the statement. However, the General Synod of 2001 asked that evaluation of progress toward implementing the Statement of Mission and Vision be a priority:

That the General Synod Council prepare an overall evaluation of the progress made, and the work still to be achieved, in implementing the Statement of Mission and Vision adopted in 1997; and further,

That this evaluation be given as part of the general secretary’s report to the 2002 General Synod, including any recommendations for further steps to implement the Statement of Mission and Vision; and further,

That this process inform the General Synod Council’s task of formulating and presenting a ten-year goal for the future health and growth of the RCA, as requested by the 2000 General Synod (MGS 2001, R-104, p. 375).

As requested, the results of this evaluation will be reported in the general secretary’s report to General Synod.

The Twelve Priorities and Related Objectives

In April 1999 the GSC adopted the Twelve Priorities to guide its work of implementing the Statement of Mission and Vision. Then as staff sought to carry out these twelve priorities, they identified a need for a unified plan that would include specific measurable objectives. By setting objectives, staff made concrete commitments for its work in each of the priority areas. Staff regularly reviews these objectives in order to measure progress. As some objectives are achieved, others are revised and added. The GSC affirmed these objectives in October 2000 and regularly receives reports on the completion of objectives as a means for staff accountability.

A Clear and Compelling Denomination-Wide Goal

The General Synod of 2000 requested that the general secretary facilitate a discernment process “for the purpose of establishing a clear and compelling ten-year goal for church health and numerical growth as the expected result of our mission and ministry together” (MGS 2000, R-68, p. 322).
At both its fall and spring meetings the General Synod Council engaged in a discernment process to answer the question, “To what goal, O God, would you have us commit in order to become the church envisioned in the Statement of Mission and Vision and the 2000 and 2001 General Synod directives?”

As a result, the General Synod Council has developed a tentative overarching goal. Through the coming year, the GSC will continue its work on this goal. It is anticipated that the goal will be sent to the regions, classes, and congregations of the RCA for further refining.

**Dissolution of the Theological Education Agency**

General Synod in June 1998 formed a successor agency to assume the duties and responsibilities (and additional responsibilities) previously assigned by the synod to the Theological Education Agency (TEA), a California nonprofit corporation. The Ministerial Formation Coordinating Agency (MFCA) officially began its work on July 1, 1999. The MFCA is an unincorporated agency of the General Synod that functions with its own board (elected by the General Synod) and bylaws (approved by the General Synod). In forming the new agency, the General Synod neglected to “wind up and dissolve” the TEA corporation, a corporation that now exists on paper only and does not have a functioning board or officers.

On the advice of RCA California legal counsel (Donald DeVries) who is representing the RCA in this matter, the MFCA board and the General Synod Council have approved, and the officers have signed, the resolution of dissolution. The completed and signed resolution is now forwarded to the General Synod for its approval. Once it is approved, Donald DeVries will take the required steps on behalf of the RCA and will file a “Certificate of Election to Dissolve TEA” and complete other necessary documents to be processed through the Franchise Tax Board and attorney general’s office in the state of California.

The following recommendation has been adopted and signed by the officers of the Ministerial Formation Coordinating Agency and the General Synod Council:

> The Ministerial Formation Coordinating Agency (MFCA) and the General Synod Council (GSC) of the Reformed Church in America recommend to the General Synod of the Reformed Church in America that the THEOLOGICAL EDUCATION AGENCY, REFORMED CHURCH IN AMERICA, a California nonprofit religious corporation, be wound up and dissolved and that the assets and liabilities of said corporation be transferred to the General Synod of the Reformed Church in America.

**R-9**

To direct the general secretary and the officers of the General Synod to wind up and dissolve the Theological Education Agency, Reformed Church in America (TEA), a California nonprofit corporation; and further,

To transfer the assets and liabilities of said corporation to the General Synod of the Reformed Church in America. (ADOPTED)

**Issues for General Synod Discussion Concerning the “Report on the Summit to Study the Concept of Lay Pastoral Ministry in the RCA”**

At its spring 2002 meeting the General Synod Council reviewed the report of the “Summit to Study the Concept of Lay Pastoral Ministry in the RCA.” The GSC voted to forward the report and the recommendations of the summit to the General Synod for its review and action along with the following list of issues for consideration by the Church Vocations
Advisory Committee:

- Leadership Opportunities and Need: It is clear to all that the issue of congregation- 
al leadership is paramount, particularly in the local church. There is unanimous 
opinion that the time for faithful and responsible proactive measures is overdue.

- Relationships to others

1. Offices of Elder, Deacon, and Minister of Word and Sacrament: True parity is the 
Reformed guideline. How would a new ministry designation fit? Has sufficient 
thought been given to use the flexibility of the Office of Elder; could we have 
Commissioned Elders?

2. Other Ministries: How does this relate to present ministries? [e.g., Preaching 
Elders, Associates in Ministry, Missionaries, Specialized Ministers]

- Demands for supervision and mentoring to rest with classis or regional synod?

- Seminaries/MFCA: Assessing competencies and different standards for a variety of 
commissionings will need careful study before any implementation can occur. Do 
we need uniformity across the denomination or can the current regionalized practices 
continue as they are?

- Where does this proposed ministry designation fit into the Book of Church Order, if 
at all?

- Other faith traditions/communities: Have we learned enough from others, particu- 
larly within the World Alliance of Reformed Churches and Third World churches? 
Some traditions look toward the Reformed Church because of clear teaching on 
church order and offices [e.g., New Brunswick Seminary].

- Office of Ministry Services: A new Director of Ministry Services has been named. 
Is there adequate staffing and are there financial resources to support this initiative 
and its development?

- Integration: Three other areas in which these issues are currently being discussed are 
the Long-Term Strategy for Recruiting, Training, and Empowering Those Called to 
Ordained Pastoral Leadership report, the GSC’s Congregational Services Committee 
report from the Office of Christian Education, and the forthcoming report on the 
offices by the Commission on Theology.

- Professionalism/standing: Issues of accountability, discipline, decommissioning, and 
even IRS standing need careful review.

General Synod Council Communication to General Synod

At the spring 2002 meeting the GSC received and responded to a letter from Christian 
Educators, Reformed Church in America (CERCA), an autonomous membership organi- 
ization made up of RCA ministers, Christian educators, and youth leaders. The letter 
addressed the continuing frustration of these leaders concerning the place and role of 
Christian education in the church today. In its response, the GSC invited CERCA to work 
in cooperation with its education and mission cluster staff to develop “quantifiable meas- 
urements by which the core values presented in their letter … can be lived out in such a 
way that clear progress can be evaluated and measured” (GSC 02-13).

The GSC also strongly urged this General Synod to “approve the recommendation of the
Commission on Church Order to establish a Commission on Education” (GSC 02-13).

**PRELIMINARY SUMMARY OF THE STATISTICAL REPORT OF THE REFORMED CHURCH IN AMERICA FOR THE YEAR ENDING 12/31/2001**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>1999</th>
<th>2000</th>
<th>2001</th>
<th>Increase or Decrease</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Churches</td>
<td>945</td>
<td>939</td>
<td>942</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Church Households</td>
<td>114,762</td>
<td>111,898</td>
<td>111,484</td>
<td>(414)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Confessing Members*</td>
<td>182,351</td>
<td>181,163</td>
<td>177,293</td>
<td>(3,870)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Inactive Members</td>
<td>40,040</td>
<td>38,976</td>
<td>40,442</td>
<td>1,466</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Baptized Members</td>
<td>77,438</td>
<td>75,527</td>
<td>73,563</td>
<td>(1,964)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total Membership</td>
<td>299,815</td>
<td>295,666</td>
<td>291,298</td>
<td>(4,368)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adherents</td>
<td>45,251</td>
<td>47,288</td>
<td>47,493</td>
<td>205</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Average Worship Attendance</td>
<td>184</td>
<td>180</td>
<td>179</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Received on Confession</td>
<td>8,128</td>
<td>7,996</td>
<td>7,455</td>
<td>(541)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Received on Certificate</td>
<td>4,215</td>
<td>4,225</td>
<td>3,802</td>
<td>(423)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Transferred</td>
<td>3,665</td>
<td>3,699</td>
<td>3,609</td>
<td>(90)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Deceased</td>
<td>2,975</td>
<td>3,033</td>
<td>2,897</td>
<td>(136)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Other Removals from Roll</td>
<td>5,468</td>
<td>5,741</td>
<td>5,852</td>
<td>111</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Infants Baptized</td>
<td>4,423</td>
<td>3,811</td>
<td>3,829</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adults Baptized</td>
<td>1,264</td>
<td>1,192</td>
<td>1,270</td>
<td>78</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sunday Church School</td>
<td>92,546</td>
<td>88,011</td>
<td>85,826</td>
<td>(2,185)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>New Membership Classes</td>
<td>11,787</td>
<td>11,377</td>
<td>10,473</td>
<td>(904)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other Educational Programs</td>
<td>96,151</td>
<td>93,322</td>
<td>92,709</td>
<td>(613)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RCA Assessments</td>
<td>$9,927,068</td>
<td>$10,575,129</td>
<td>$10,836,587</td>
<td>$261,458</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RCA Contributions</td>
<td>$14,336,046</td>
<td>$14,349,730</td>
<td>$14,326,709</td>
<td>($23,021)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other Contributions</td>
<td>$12,628,878</td>
<td>$13,017,931</td>
<td>$14,921,934</td>
<td>$1,904,003</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Congregation Purposes</td>
<td>$210,347,500</td>
<td>$230,495,739</td>
<td>$232,602,295</td>
<td>$2,106,556</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>TOTAL</strong></td>
<td>$247,239,492</td>
<td>$268,438,529</td>
<td>$272,687,525</td>
<td>$4,248,996</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Organized/Received**

- Oak Springs Community, Murrieta, California (1/01), Classis of California
- Celebration Life Ministries, Elk Grove, California (1/01), Classis of Central California
- HanMaUm Reformed, Palisades Park, New Jersey (5/01), Classis of Greater Palisades
- Iglesia Reformada la Senda, Corona, California (6/01), Classis of California
- Haven Shores Community, West Olive, Michigan (10/01), Classis of Holland
- Ghanaian Presbyterian Reformed, Brooklyn, New York (10/01), Classis of Brooklyn

**Disbanded/Released**

- Corona Community, Corona, California (1/01), Classis of California
- Christ Church, Watervliet, New York (10/01), Classis of Albany
- Rancho Capistrano Community, San Juan Capistrano, California (11/01), Classis of California

†The number of confessing members to be reported for the Crystal Cathedral is in agreement with the Classis of California. This matter remains under discussion with the General Synod and Crystal Cathedral due to the unique nature of this congregation’s ministry. The per-member assessment approved by the General Synod of 2002 for calendar year 2003 will not be affected by any future correction in this number.

**New Start Congregations**: In the 43 new church starts (having a denominational plan on file with the RCA) there are approximately 3500 attending worship for an average worship attendance of 81.
JUDICIAL BUSINESS

Report of the Commission on Judicial Business

The Office of the General Synod received one appeal during the past year, which was referred to the Commission on Judicial Business (CJB) for review, recommendation, and report to the 2002 General Synod. That appeal was submitted by the Classis of Greater Palisades, from a decision of the Regional Synod of the Mid-Atlantics. (In the interest of brevity, the appeal shall be referred to as the Classis appeal).


A request for an oral hearing was made by the Regional Synod of the Mid-Atlantics, pursuant to the *Book of Church Order* (*BCO*), Chapter 2, Part III, Article 2, Section 5; the hearing was held on January 31, 2002. The CJB met in conference in Newark, New Jersey, before and after the hearing, on January 30, 2002, and January 31, 2002.

A. The Parties to the Appeal

The appellant in this appeal is the Classis of Greater Palisades (Classis). The respondent is the Regional Synod of the Mid-Atlantics (Regional Synod or RS). The Consistory of the Woodcliff Community Reformed Church (Consistory) was also considered a party respondent in light of *BCO*, Chapter 2, Part III, Article 2, Sections 4 and 5, which provide generally for all parties to be involved. Each of the parties was represented by counsel, found by the CJB to be qualified under *BCO*, Chapter 2, Part I, Article 5, Section 10, who were: for the Classis, Rev. Paul G. Janssen; for the Regional Synod, Elder Michael B. Steib; and for the Consistory, Rev. Everett L. Zabriskie, III.

B. The Nature of the Appeal and Prior Related Case

This 2001 appeal arises out of a conflict which arose between the pastor and Consistory of the Woodcliff Community Reformed Church in North Bergen, New Jersey. The Classis ultimately held a trial of the Consistory in June, 2000, and suspended the Consistory. An appeal to the Regional Synod by the Consistory resulted in the overturning of that decision, and a remand to the Classis. The Classis appealed the decision of the Regional Synod to the General Synod on May 31, 2001. Because there was insufficient time for the Commission on Judicial Business (Commission) to prepare an acceptable report to the General Synod prior to the 2001 General Synod, permission was granted to delay the report until the next session of the General Synod (*MGS 2001*, p. 74).

C. The Factual Background

The facts and history surrounding the basic dispute between the parties are found in the record provided to the CJB, comprising pages 100001-100058, and pages 500001-500452. Pages in the record will be referred to as “R. [page number]”. This record was supplemented by the stipulation of all parties at the hearing on January 31, 2002, with a two-page letter sent from the Classis to the Consistory dated March 23, 1999 (however, this letter is already part of the record, R. 500226-227).
1. The History of This Case

The Woodcliff Community Reformed Church in North Bergen, New Jersey, extended a call to the Rev. Santos Rivera in 1997 to become its part-time pastor. This was for the reason that Rev. Rivera already worked full-time for the New York School System, and the church was not able to offer him a full-time position. By October 1998, tensions and personality conflicts had appeared. Several of these issues are noted in the report of the Regional Synod Judicial Business Committee, and will not be repeated here. R. 500003-500004. The Consistory therefore requested the Classis to meet with it. R. 500293. In anticipation of that, Rev. Stephen Giordano, a representative of the Classis Supervision of Ministers Committee (Classis SMC), sent a letter to the Consistory members, proposing to begin a conflict resolution process. R. 500296.

After two meetings with Rev. Giordano, the Consistory voted on November 10, 1998, to begin a dissolution process, rather than participate in conflict resolution. R. 100020. Rev. Giordano sent a letter to Classis the same date, certifying the Consistory’s request for dissolution. R. 500143. One of the deacons stated in a separate letter that month, that a key factor in the request for dissolution was the pastor’s lack of time to fulfill pastoral duties, which could not be resolved by reconciliation. R. 500144-500146. Nonetheless, Rev. Giordano and Gertrude Schultz, representing the Classis SMC, sent a letter to the Classis on the same date, recommending denial of the request for dissolution. R. 500147.

Without discussing it with the Consistory, on November 25, 1998, Rev. Giordano, as chair of the Classis’ Reconciliation Committee, sent a letter to the congregation of the church, arguably impugning the actions of the Consistory and advising the congregation not to discuss matters with Consistory, but to contact the Classis SMC instead. R. 500208-500209; R. 500392-500393. The Consistory, at its meeting on December 8, 1998, declined to follow Rev. Giordano’s counsel, and again voted to request dissolution of the pastoral relationship. R. 500275. At its meeting on December 15, 1998, the Classis voted to add the dissolution hearing to its agenda for the January 21, 1999, meeting. R. 100023; R. 500148.

In addition to tension and personality conflicts, there was a conflict between the pastor and members of the Consistory over the serving of Communion in January 1999. According to Rev. Rivera, Communion was canceled on January 3 because of a snowstorm, when only six or seven people showed up, and again on January 10, because the Elder responsible for set up was ill. R. 500073-500075. Deacon Lopez, on the other hand, testified that there was no storm on January 3, and that Rev. Rivera, on January 10, simply refused the Consistory’s request to serve Communion. R. 500095-500096.

Deacon Lopez further testified that on January 17, 1999, Rev. Rivera had set up for Communion to be served, but when the Elders questioned why they had not been notified, he “lashed out” at them, and they then declined to participate in the service of Communion, citing 1 Cor. 11:27. R. 500096. Rev. Rivera said only that as he was getting ready to start Communion, “they went out the door.” R. 500076.

Meanwhile, the Classis voted on January 21, 1999, to refer the dissolution request back to the Classis SMC for fact-finding. R. 500151. The Classis SMC then sent questionnaires to the Consistory and congregation. R. 100023. The minutes of the church’s March 1999 Consistory meeting reflect that the questionnaires had been received, and it had been agreed to complete them at the next meeting. R. 500282. Rev. Giordano was present at this meeting. However, three days later, when he
reported to the Classis Executive Committee, the minutes show that certain questions were left unanswered, including “Why aren’t the Woodcliff folks responding to the questionnaire?” The Classis Executive Committee voted to recommend sending a letter to the Consistory, clarifying that fact-finding was needed, and directing the Consistory to respond by the April 13, 1999 meeting. R. 500153. On March 18, the Classis voted to approve sending that letter (R. 500154), which was sent March 23, 1999. R. 100020. At its April 27, 1999 meeting, the Classis Executive Committee noted that the questionnaires had been completed. R. 500157.

At the Classis Executive Committee meeting on June 2, 1999, the Classis SMC (Rev. Giordano reporting) recommended 1) denying the request for dissolution; 2) appointing a mentor for Rev. Rivera; 3) directing the Consistory to participate in team building, and allocating $2,500 for this effort; and 4) that the Special Committee [Note: the Classis Reconciliation Committee] continue to monitor the mentoring of Rev. Rivera “and the Consistory’s participation in the team-building workshop.” R. 500158-500159. The Classis affirmed this recommendation by vote on June 17, 1999. R. 500162-500164. Rev. Giordano apparently continued to serve as mentor to Rev. Rivera.

In the meantime, the Consistory voted on June 8, 1999, to bring charges against Rev. Rivera, pertaining to unauthorized baptisms and unauthorized additions to the membership, although Rev. Giordano had previously offered his opinion that he “doubted there was any chargeable offense.” R. 100022. On August 2, 1999, the Classis Judicial Business Commission (Classis JBC) requested more specific charges (R. 500362), to which the Consistory replied on September 20, 1999. R. 500363-500364.

On September 25, 1999, the Classis JBC found the Consistory charges were “of sufficient merit to warrant further consideration.” R. 100040. A Classis letter was therefore sent to Rev. Rivera regarding the Consistory’s pending charges. R. 500194. On March 28, 2000, the Classis JBC issued its report, dismissing one charge (improper exercise of the Sacrament of Baptism) for lack of evidence, and dismissing the second (improper admittance of attendees into church membership) on procedural grounds. R. 100041; R. 500375.

Although the Consistory had voted on June 8, 1999, “not to follow the guidance of the Classis” (to go through team-building), R. 100022, the Classis Executive Committee was still uncertain, as of its July 7, 1999, meeting, as to whether the Consistory would work with the Classis SMC, and decided to send a follow-up letter. R. 500169. The Classis actually sent two letters, on July 12, 1999 (R. 500170), and on September 14, 1999 (R. 500171).

The Classis SMC then voted, on October 4, 1999, to recommend that it initiate the process of Consistory elections for the church. R. 500172-500173. This was apparently approved by the Classis Executive Committee, though at a meeting at which a quorum was lacking, with the missing votes made up by a “telephone poll.” R. 500174. On October 12, the Consistory itself discussed the mechanics of holding an election. R. 500271-500274. There was conflict between the Classis and Consistory over whether the election could be conducted by the Consistory alone. The Consistory blamed the delay on Rev. Rivera. R. 500176.

However, the election issue receded from view as the Classis SMC issued a report on November 23, 1999, recommending that the Classis require either 1) the election of a new Consistory, to be followed by team-building, or 2) that the
Consistory step down for a year, or be deposed. R. 500180-500182. The Classis Executive Committee, on the same date, adopted the second recommendation. R. 500192.

On January 12, 2000, the Classis Executive Committee voted to bring a charge against the Consistory, and set a special meeting on January 19, 2000, to consider the charge. R. 500195-500196. The Consistory replied to the Classis charge (which it titled “Disobedience to the Classis”) on February 4, 2000 (R. 100053-100056; 500384-500387), and on February 8, 2000, the Classis, meeting in special session, voted to bring the charge. R. 500199.

The Classis set the trial date for June 20, 2000. R. 500203. One of the church deacons sent a letter to the Consistory clerk on April 24, 2000, requesting copies of all meeting minutes (R. 500394), and sent a similar request to the Classis on June 9, 2000. R. 500395; R. 500396. This last request was denied by the Classis (it replied that copies were previously provided to Consistory through its Classis delegate). R. 500396.

The trial was held at the First Reformed Church in Ridgewood, New Jersey, on June 20, 2000. The Consistory and Classis were both represented by BCO-qualified counsel. Testimony was given by Rev. Giordano, Rev. Rivera, and by Consistory members Anthony Lopez, Tim Ippolito, and Arturo Parrilla. R. 500012-500142. By voice vote, the Consistory was found guilty of all specifications but one, and suspended from office. R. 500139-500140.

On July 10, 2000, the Consistory filed a letter of appeal to the Regional Synod, alleging bias and prejudice in its decision. R. 100036; R. 500010. The Classis filed its response, and on May 5, 2001, the Regional Synod adopted the report and recommendation of the Judicial Business Committee of the Regional Synod. R. 500003-500008. The Classis then appealed the Regional Synod’s decision to the General Synod. R. 100001.

2. The Appeal to the Regional Synod

On July 3, 2000, five members of the Consistory (a majority of the Consistory members) filed a written notice of their intent to appeal the decision of the Classis (this appeal has been treated as an appeal by the Consistory; whether the appeal was the valid act of the Consistory itself has not been questioned). On July 10, 2000, the Consistory (through the same five members) filed an appeal with the Regional Synod, assigning the following bases of appeal:

One: Bias and prejudice, based upon the letter sent by Rev. Steven T. Giordano to the Congregation of Woodcliff Community Church on November 25, 1998.

Two: Bias and prejudice, based upon Classis’ appointment of Rev. Steven T. Giordano as mentor to Rev. Santos Rivera of the Woodcliff Community Church, when Rev. Giordano was already chair of the Classis Special Committee overseeing Woodcliff Community Church.

Three: Bias and prejudice, based upon the Classis’ failure to assure proper notice and communication to certain involved parties, while knowing that the Consistory Clerk was not circulating all minutes and Classis communications.

“Bias or prejudice in the case” is recognized by the BCO as a valid basis for appeal of a judgment made in a lower judicatory. BCO Chapter 2, Part III, Article
1, Section 2. The filing of notice of intent to appeal suspends the judgment of the lower judicatory until the appeal is finally decided, except when the judgment results in suspension, unless exception is made in the judgment of the lower judicatory. BCO Chapter 2, Part III, Article 1, Section 3. No such exception was made by the Classis.

3. The Action of the Regional Synod

The Consistory’s appeal was heard by the Judicial Business Committee of the Regional Synod. Briefs were requested from the parties in December 2000, and a hearing was held on January 16, 2001. The Committee’s opinion was issued on May 5, 2001, and was adopted in its entirety by the Regional Synod. The Regional Synod, in the course of its six-page report and recommendation, made many findings of fact. Some of those specifically relevant to the charges against the Consistory are as follows:

Charge One, Specification One (Consistory expressed unwillingness to engage in conflict resolution on January 26 and March 11, 1999.):

“Clearly the majority of Consistory members resisted the process, but they nevertheless participated in it. Although charged with refusing to engage in conflict resolution and refusing to fill out conflict resolution questionnaires, there is no evidence in the record to support such a conclusion. The Consistory response demonstrates that they did participate. The only statements to the contrary come in the repeated reports of Giordano, who states the conclusion of resistance without citation to any specific facts to support it.” R. 500006.

“It is apparent that the Consistory was resistant throughout the proceedings to engage in conflict resolution. However, in each instance that the Classis directed them to act, they did so. Reluctantly and against their will certainly, but they did comply.” R. 500007.

Charge One, Specification Two (Consistory’s resistance to completing questionnaires that would be helpful in conflict resolution.):

“It is clear from the record that the Consistory did complete the questionnaire. The Consistory defiantly demonstrated its resistance to the process through editorial comments on the questionnaire, but it did follow the Classis directive and completed the form.” R. 500007.

Charge One, Specification Three (Consistory failed to act upon the direction of Classis to participate in a team-building workshop.):

“During this same period, commencing with the September 14, 1999, letter of Stated Clerk Paul Janssen, Classis continued to push for conflict resolution through team-building and directed the Consistory to cooperate in the process. On October 4, 1999, the Supervision of Ministers Committee reported that, ‘The Consistory has accepted to engage in the team-building process.’” R. 500007.

“The record is clear from the October 4, 1999, Supervision of Ministers Committee report that the Consistory agreed to engage in the team-building process. Once again, this may have been a reluctant agreement, but an agreement nonetheless.” R. 500007.

Charge One, Specification Four (Refusal to submit to authority of Classis to supervise election of elders and deacons in November 1999.):
“That [Consistory assent to engaging in team-building] having been accomplished, Giordano’s committee insisted that elections take place under the supervision of the Classis. This recommendation was presented to the Executive Committee of Classis on October 5, 1999 (see meeting minutes). By a ‘phone call’ vote, the Executive Committee authorized Giordano to proceed with and supervise the elections. The record contains no factual basis upon which the Committee decided that supervision of this process was necessary.” R. 500007.

“The record has continuous references by the Consistory to its readiness to hold elections and demonstrates that these were counter allegations, each one blaming the other for not holding elections. There is no substantive evidence in the record to support the allegation that at any time the Consistory refused to conduct this process. Consistory’s only resistance was to the process of being supervised by Classis, as they resented such supervision.” R. 500008.

Charge Two. Specification One (Members of Consistory refused to serve the Lord’s Supper from the hand of the pastor, in January 1999.): The Synod did not make findings of fact on this charge, and did not specifically rule upon it.

Charge Three (The Consistory attempted to use the disciplinary procedures of the RCA to force Classis to remove pastor Rivera from office.): “The record indicates that the Consistory was repeatedly thwarted from bringing charges against their pastor. Furthermore the Consistory was ignorant of the process of complaint and was acting out of frustration. However, the Judicial Business Committee of Classis deemed the charges of sufficient merit to be heard. Had the charges been brought in a timely manner, they were serious enough that if they were proven, they would constitute a serious breach of the BCO.” R. 500008.

D. Grounds of Appeal and Discussion

1. Manifest Injustice Regarding Standard of Review

The Classis argues that the Regional Synod failed to apply the proper standard of review, which required upholding the Classis decision if it was “supported by substantial evidence in the record when the record is viewed as a whole.” BCO Chapter 2, Part III, Article 2, Section 10.

We find that the Classis failed to sustain its burden of proof that the Regional Synod decision was in error. Further, the Classis failed to sustain its burden of proof that the Regional Synod decision was not supported by substantial evidence when viewing the record as a whole. We therefore find that there was no manifest injustice regarding the standard of review applied by the Regional Synod.

Without retrying the case presented by the Classis against the Consistory, we find that there was not substantial evidence to support the findings of the Classis. The Classis made very few findings of fact at the trial of June 20, 2000, leaving the Regional Synod to review the record to determine what facts were in the record to support the Classis decision. We do not believe the Regional Synod erred in its findings of fact.
2. Manifest Injustice Regarding the Nature of Bias

The Classis argues that the Regional Synod failed to limit its consideration of alleged bias and prejudice to the acts of Classis sitting as a judicatory, and improperly evaluated Classis’ alleged bias and prejudice when it acted as an assembly.

Although this determination is not necessary to our decision in this case, it is a sufficiently significant issue in the present case to justify discussion. The Classis, by allowing Rev. Giordano to serve as both mentor to Rev. Rivera, and as chairperson of the “Reconciliation Committee” or “Special Committee” of the Classis, created a potential conflict of interest, in spite of the best of intentions. Rev. Giordano was called to be an impartial finder of fact on behalf of the Classis, as well as a mentor (Webster’s: “a wise and trusted counselor or teacher”) to Rev. Rivera. This dual role would inevitably create the appearance of bias and prejudice to one party or the other. As might be expected, the Consistory clearly had the perception that the Classis committee was biased against it. There is no doubt that Consistories are under the care of the Classis and are subject to its government and discipline. BCO, Chapter 2, Part I, Article 3, Section 5. Therefore, although Classis’ actions may have been appropriate and in accordance with the BCO in another context, Classis here created an appearance of bias and prejudice by allowing the same individual to represent the Classis and serve in more than one conflicting role.

Although we are concerned with an appearance of bias in the service by Rev. Giordano in multiple roles, we do not mean to imply that an appearance of bias reflects any evidence of bad faith. As appears to be the case here, an appearance of bias may result from the best of intentions. Rather than being motivated by bias and prejudice in favor of Rev. Rivera, the Classis may well have pursued conflict resolution as a means of harmonizing a Church in danger of becoming even further divided. The Book of Church Order gives Classis this authority. BCO, Chapter 2, Part I, Article 4, Section 4 (c). It is not for this Commission to “second guess” the Classis in the use of this authority to seek a resolution short of trial, but only to suggest that care must be taken to assure impartiality.

3. Irregularity in the Proceedings: Consideration of the Record

The Classis argues that the Regional Synod failed to consider or decide the charge against the Consistory arising out of its alleged refusal to serve the Lord’s Supper from the hands of Rev. Rivera.

The Regional Synod failed to discuss Charge Two, Specification One, but this error was harmless. The charge related to disputed allegations that members of the Consistory refused to receive Communion from Rev. Rivera, but this was a charge against individuals, not against the Consistory. There was no evidence presented that this charge, if true (the Classis made no specific findings of fact), constituted an act of the Consistory, as opposed to separate acts of specific individuals. Charges of this nature can be brought against individuals, but were not.

4. Irregularity in the Proceedings: Consideration of the Record

The Classis argues that the Regional Synod improperly reversed the Classis determination (Charge Three) that the Consistory had attempted to use the disciplinary procedures of the RCA to force Classis to dismiss its minister.
There were no facts in the record to support a finding that the Consistory made improper accusations against Rev. Rivera. Although the Classis JBC apparently found sufficient merit in the Consistory’s charges for a hearing to be held, the charges were actually dismissed in committee (one of them on procedural grounds). No evidentiary hearing was held on such charges, and no finding was made that they were unsupportable or frivolous. The evidence cited by Classis to support this charge was a single sentence in a Consistory member’s letter accompanying the charges (R. 500316). However, the quoted language could more easily have been interpreted as a lay understanding of procedure (as well as an inferred belief in the sufficiency of the accusations), than an indication of improper intent.

5. Irregularity in the Proceedings: Submitting Essential Documents to Counsel

The Classis argues that the Regional Synod failed to forward to Classis a copy of the Consistory’s two-page brief filed January 3, 2001, and improperly considered a four-page response by the Consistory to the Classis charges (undated, but submitted in response to a January 20, 2000, Classis communication), which was in the possession of the Classis, but which Classis was not aware had not been submitted to the Regional Synod before the January 16, 2001, hearing.

The Commission finds that any error in the failure to forward documents on a timely basis was harmless. No actual harm or prejudice was shown, and none was found in the record.

6. Irregularity in the Proceedings: Promptness of the Meetings

The Classis argues that the Regional Synod failed to timely consider the Consistory’s appeal, rendering it “exceedingly difficult” to comply with the Regional Synod’s remand instructions.

The Commission finds that any error in the lapse of time between the filing of the Consistory’s appeal, and the decision by the Regional Synod, was harmless. No actual harm or prejudice was shown, and none was found in the record.

7. Irregularity in the Case: Quorum

The Classis argued that the Regional Synod did not have a quorum at the time it adopted the report and recommendation of the Commission on Judicial Business on May 5, 2001.

The Classis’ claim of error pertaining to the alleged lack of a quorum at the Regional Synod was withdrawn at hearing by stipulation of the parties.

Based upon the foregoing findings, the Commission on Judicial Business makes the following recommendation:

R-10
That the General Synod affirm the decision of the Regional Synod of the Mid-Atlantics to reverse the Classis of Greater Palisides’ deposition of the consistory of Woodcliff Community Reformed Church, and affirm the instruction that an election of elders and deacons of Woodcliff Community Reformed Church be conducted forthwith, with all confessing members eligible to stand for election. (ADOPTED)
(During her service on the Commission on Judicial Business the Rev. Janet Johnston, representing the Regional Synod of the Mid-Atlantics, recused herself and did not participate in this appeal. In addition, the moderator of the Commission on Judicial Business, Mark Schouten, was unable to attend the oral hearing on January 31, 2002, due to an emergency, and therefore did not participate in the decision of the commission.)
REPORTS OF THE RACIAL/ETHNIC COUNCILS

Report of the General Synod Council’s African-American Council

“But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, in Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth” (Acts 1:8).

The African-American Council (AAC) continues to be a “witness” for the Lord as it is guided by the Holy Spirit in the ministry it has been called to in the Reformed Church in America. The council is also seeking to be faithful to the prophetic history of its founders, as it seeks to be a witness of the liberating gospel of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ.

The AAC meets twice yearly, with the executive committee meeting more often to coordinate the work of the council. The council is broken down into regions to allow council members to better monitor the work of local churches. The annual caucus affords the opportunity for members of the churches to come together and celebrate what God is doing with and through them. The church is of vital importance to the life of the Black community, where many are ravaged by poverty, systemic racism, under-employment and unemployment, drugs, and diseases, such as AIDS. Consequently, the approach to ministry has to be holistic.

This past year has been one of challenges and triumphs. As this country experienced the tragedy of the terrorist attack on our nation, the AAC was there. Dewitt Reformed Church, the closest Reformed church to the World Trade Center, demonstrated the kind of Christian witnessing that is characteristic of AAC churches. Under the leadership of their pastor, the Rev. Dr. Carolyn Holloway (who is also the AAC’s Eastern Region Convener), these sisters and brothers opened their hearts and doors and began to minister to the firefighters and police involved with the WTC disaster. They opened their church doors for prayer services and counseling, and prepared and served food to these great American heroes. The AAC salutes Pastor Holloway and the members of Dewitt Reformed Church for their faithfulness to the Lord’s directive in Acts 1:8.

The council is also pleased that First Reformed Church of Jamaica, New York, and Grace Reformed Church of Brooklyn received a grant from Reformed Church World Service (RCWS) to develop a counseling/teaching ministry for children who have undergone the trauma of September 11 and other personal traumas in their lives. Special thanks is extended to Betty Voskuil, coordinator of RCWS, for her outreach to these churches in the midst of this great tragedy.

Once again, the AAC’s Annual Caucus was one of the highlights of the year. The meeting took place a few weeks after the September 11 tragedy. Operating under the theme “Celebrating Who We Are,” with the Scripture 1 Peter 2:9 as a guide, the caucus had another record attendance of delegates from across America. Here, members and delegates talked about their rich Christian and African-American and Caribbean heritage. In addition to being challenged by the Colloquium speaker, the Rev. Reginald Tuggle, attendees were also blessed to have General Synod’s president, the Rev. Steve Brooks, and its vice president, the Rev. John Chang, address this gathering. They left this conference, in the midst of the tragedy, with confidence and a renewed hope in the power of the gospel of Jesus Christ.

The AAC executive director, the Rev. Dr. Glen C. Missick, continues his recruitment efforts of pastors for vacant pulpits. As of this writing, the council is proud to announce
that nearly all of its member council churches that can afford full-time pastoral leadership now have pastors. The Rev. Missick also serves as a “pastor” to these new pastors. In addition to meeting with them on a one-to-one basis, he provides opportunities for them to be involved in training such as church growth and evangelism, community organizing, and RCA polity. His goal is to help these new pastors transition into the RCA and move forward with the work of our Lord.

The executive director was also instrumental, along with the Rev. Paul Nulton, in organizing an RCA work group to Kingston, Jamaica, this past fall. Special thanks goes out to the group of volunteers from Ottawa Reformed Church in West Olive, Michigan, for the fantastic job they performed in the renovation of a school for impoverished students in a riot-torn area of Kingston. The council looks forward to this kind of partnering in ministry in the RCA.

The AAC continues to monitor representation of African Americans on RCA boards, committees, and commissions. Chairperson Annie Lee Phillips has taken leadership in this effort. The council is finally beginning to experience African Americans serving in places where they had not served before.

The council was quite disappointed in the fact that not one African-American church received an urban ministry grant last year. Opinions have been voiced concerning this issue with the Urban Ministries Team; the council looks forward to the Urban Ministries Team paying more attention to its member churches, since most are located in urban areas.

The AAC is currently in conversation with Dick Welscott and EVCD/CSU concerning revitalization of Black churches in the RCA, as well as new church starts. The AAC recognizes that the RCA is in a crisis concerning pastoral leadership. They are aware of the Lay Pastoral Ministry Summit report being presented to General Synod. While this category may not necessarily affect AAC churches, they are sensitive to the needs of others, especially new immigrant groups. However, the council trusts that this or other designations will not lead to a “second-class track” for ordination. The council will continue to monitor this process.

The council is aware of the many recommendations to General Synod from General Secretary Wesley Granberg-Michaelson. They applaud his efforts to include the racial/ethnic councils in this conversation and process, and look forward to working with him in the recruitment of pastoral or other leadership for the RCA.

The General Synod Council (GSC) is to be commended for its support of anti-racism training for the staff of GS, regional synods, classes, and local congregations. Also, under the leadership of our AAC past chairperson, Dr. Oliver Patterson, the Commission on Race and Ethnicity continues to challenge the denomination in the area of systemic racism. The GSC is urged to continue this work with all deliberate speed so this denomination can move forward into the twenty-first century as a healthy and united church.

Understanding that numerous recommendations will be presented to the General Synod this year, especially those on leadership from the general secretary, the AAC again offers no recommendations. But the council urges the General Synod Council and General Synod to continue to implement past recommendations from the council, especially the “Decade Freed from Racism” (MGS 1998, R-9, p.131).

[The Report of the African-American Council was considered by the Evangelization and Church Growth Advisory Committee.]

Changes at “475”

Since the beginning in 1974, the Council for Hispanic Ministries has been under the leadership of servants very committed to the work of the Lord. Each one of these servants has brought a new vision that has led to the growth of the ministry. This in turn has enabled the ministry to achieve higher levels of success throughout the various areas.

During the last ten years of running the ministry many changes have occurred for the good of our council. We were an agency of the General Synod, and now with the new structure we are part of the General Synod Council, a place where we have our representative advocating for all the Hispanics within the RCA. A new change is coming now at “475”; after six years of hard work with the Hispanic Council, Luis Pérez went to work in another position for the Synod of the Mid-Atlantics, where he is the synod executive minister. We thank God for the ministry of Luis Pérez and pray for his new position. We hope to bring a new director for the Hispanic Council who could project the same vision that all the executives and former director have planted in our hearts, and focus on the growing of our denomination.

R-11
That the General Synod recognize and express gratitude to the Rev. Luis Pérez for his service in the life and work of the General Synod Council. (ADOPTED)

Evangelism and Church Growth

Jesus said: “Go therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit” (Matt. 28:19).

The Council for Hispanic Ministries pays especial attention to the proclamation of the gospel. The council presents the good news and invites our communities to become members of the church of Jesus Christ where they can start enjoying the presence of the Holy Spirit in their lives. That is why the council is very pleased to announce its work to our existing churches. This is accomplished through the motivation and special emphasis given to evangelism and overall church growth in our congregations. This is achieved by teaching and speaking to them during sermons and classes about the need to open new Hispanic ministries within their region, especially those functioning in areas where the Hispanic population is growing rapidly.

Glorious good news is coming from the West that says La Senda from Corona, California, is ready to open a new ministry with the approval of the Classis of California. In El Monte, broadcasting is done from Mondays to Saturdays from 6:00 a.m. to 12:00 noon on a local radio station and through the internet around the clock. La Senda proclaims the gospel of the Lord through Radio Impacto and on the internet through www.radioimpacto.org. Bethel Reformed Church’s Bellflower Ministry will start as a mission in the Classis of California. The Rev. Dr. Felipe Gonzalez from Toronto has passed the assessment clinic for planting churches and he will be called by the Classis of California to work in a bicultural community.

The Midwest is thanking the Lord for the new facility in Milwaukee—Iglesia de la Trinidad, under the care of the Rev. Madeline Fuentez. The churches in New York and New Jersey are growing healthy and Iglesia Reformada Hispana of Guttenberg is organizing a study group with the vision of becoming a teaching church; the classis is working shoulder-to-shoulder with this church and the awakening is starting.
The Hispanic population is growing more and more in all U.S., and the RCA is forecasting a great harvest for the glory of God.

Reformed Pastor from Argentina Visits RCA

In the year 2000 our executive director went to visit Argentina in a missionary trip. He made great contacts with a group of more than a hundred Reformed churches in that country which have a Reformed theology like ours. We are getting closer in our relationship, and in 2001 one of the pastors from Buenos Aires, Lic. Ricardo G. Parera, came to visit us. The RCA's Mission Services is supporting one of the programs of the Reformed Church in Argentina. The Argentinean economy is going through a crisis, and the Hispanic Council will continue stretching the arms of brotherhood and Christian relationship to our brothers and sisters in order to show them our appreciation and solidarity in this time of crisis.

Nicaragua

In a community with no running water, no electricity, no cemetery, and no school for the children, this is the place where the Reformed Church La Senda del Amor from Toronto, Canada, is working on the construction of a building for a church with solid Reformed theology and willing to share the gospel of Jesus Christ. Two years ago the church started with the vision of Maria Auxiliadora Bonilla, elder from Toronto, and today the community has a place for worship and fellowship. The executive committee of the Hispanic Council approved $2,000 in order to send two teachers to facilitate two courses—one in theology and the other in diaconal services. Andres Serrano will join the two teachers, and he will be teaching theology. It is great what the Lord is doing among the people in the community. This new church is being persecuted by churches in the city of Diariamba because the people from the church said that they are Reformed and the region does not know the Reformed church. Nonetheless, members from the newly established church are happy for the opportunity of suffering for the Lord. Your prayers are needed for this mission project. In last year’s report we told the story of the church in Nicaragua.

Cuba

The year 2001 marked the fiftieth anniversary of the Christian Reformed Church in Cuba. Some groups with the company of two Hispanic pastors were planning to join the fiftieth anniversary of the Reformed Church in Cuba, but the incident of September 11 postponed the celebration for the year 2002.

The relationship between the Hispanic Council and the Christian Reformed Church in Cuba continues to grow. As is done yearly with the Reformed Church in Cuba, we are planning to send this year two or three pastors, which will help create stronger bonds between the Hispanic Council of the RCA and the Christian Reformed Church in Cuba. One petition, which the Christian people in Cuba have in common, is the prayer that the President of the United States will take away the embargo, which is compromising the economic growth of the Cuban country.

Even though the political struggle in Cuba still exists, the Christian Reformed Church continues to grow. As well, new innovative ministries continue to arise.

Advocacy and Concerns

Advocacy issues are always a concern of the council. There are segments within the denomination that do not understand Hispanics. The RCA will be left behind in a timely harvest if those in leadership overlook the promising growth that Hispanics can bring to the denomination. The council welcomes invitations for discussion with various assem-
blies of the RCA to foster better evangelization and understanding of Hispanics in the RCA.

Our Assembly

It was not easy for us to celebrate our assembly due to the consternation of the whole world based on the events of September 11. At the time of this event, everything had been set up for September 20; if canceled it would have caused a great deficit in the budget. The executive committee of the council quickly agreed to have the assembly on the date that it was originally planned. It would have to be done under the risk of having fewer delegates attend—especially those traveling via air from far away.

Above all, the entire body thanks the Lord, since on the day of the assembly only four delegates were absent. Everyone, including pastors and their spouses, deacons, and elder delegates, was present. It was a time of sorrow, yet at the same, a time of storytelling of the great things the Lord has done for our churches, and how the doors opened up for prayer and unity inside the church. The assembly all believes that after “911” a new era for the church started.

Translations

Once again, thanks to the people involved for understanding the need to translate materials into Spanish. Important documents and useful resources of the Reformed Church need to be translated in order for the Hispanic-speaking community to understand issues and important facts that are particular to the RCA. Due to a limited budget it is impossible to translate all the existing English documents produced by the church. For this reason, it is important to choose only important items which will be beneficial. It was very good news to hear that the RCA’s Commission on History wants to translate some important documents related to the history of the RCA. After the translation is completed, it will be available to our Hispanic readers. One of the efforts of our denomination is to provide reading material available in different languages, according to the need of the different cultural groups which exist in the RCA. Documents such as “The Section on Infant Baptism” from the book *The Church Speaks* have been translated with the permission of the publisher and made available for all the churches through TRAVARCA.

Through the work of the Hispanic Council, the *Book of Church Order* continues to be translated, and now is available through the RCA website, as is *RCA Today* (Hoy).

[The Report of the Council for Hispanic Ministries was considered by the Evangelization and Church Growth Advisory Committee.]

Report of the General Synod Council’s Council for Pacific and Asian American Ministries

In 2001 and 2002 the RCA’s Statement of Mission and Vision guided the work of the Council for Pacific and Asian American Ministries (CPAAM). The acronym RENEWAL outlines the priorities for CPAAM:
Revitalize congregations.
Establish new churches.
Nurture the gifts of the laity.
Engage the city.
Welcome all people.
Announce the good news.
Learn to call forth leaders.

Revitalize Congregations

Many congregations within the Council for Pacific and Asian American Ministries begin the weekday with early morning prayer services. Prayer undergirds their ministry and sustains their efforts for revitalization and growth.

During this past year, New Hope Church of New Hyde Park, New York, experienced revitalization by opening its facility to various language groups. As they share the building, they believe God is calling them to a new vision of multicultural ministry for the church.

Congregations supported several weekend revival services in order to revitalize the people to a new spiritual awareness and a call to discipleship.

Establish New Churches

During 2001 and 2002, new ministry efforts were initiated among Asian Indians in Jersey City, New Jersey, and Downers Grove, Illinois. In the Los Angeles area, several Korean churches are seeking affiliation with the Reformed Church.

New Life Community Church of Artesia, California, established a Chinese ministry on April 15, 2001. Later in 2001 it sponsored an Indo-Pakistani ministry.

In October 2001 CPAAM pastors from the Classis of California again met with the Rev. Thomas DeVries for a leadership seminar. The pastors continue to participate in the Compass program and meet separately for support and encouragement.

Nurture the Gifts of the Laity

“Equipping the Saints” was the theme of the 2002 Consultation of Pacific and Asian Americans in the RCA. Gathering on April 5-6, in Staten Island, New York, the council was addressed by the Rev. Hak Kwon Lee of New Church of Greater New York in Roslyn, New York. Participants met with workshop leaders who focused on various subjects to enable congregations to equip lay leaders for ministry.

Using the newly printed Chinese/Taiwanese Book of Church Order, seminars were held for the Taiwanese churches in the New York metropolitan area.

Discipleship training is a primary focus for many Korean churches. The pastors find that with so many church members, small group leadership is critical to the growth and support of the membership.

Engage the City

The new ministry among Asian Indians in Jersey City is located in the midst of an old urban center. The Heights section of Jersey City has long been home to Asian Indians and is an ideal place for a Reformed Church ministry.
The Korean ministries in the Greater Los Angeles area represent a continuing urban ministry effort. Los Angeles is home to the largest number of Koreans outside of Korea.

From Vancouver, British Columbia, to Miami, Florida, and from Los Angeles to New York City, RCA Asian American congregations cover the map, but are primarily in the urban areas. Immigrant peoples usually go to areas where there are jobs available, and where there is a cultural community that is similar to their own. For Asian Americans, that means the larger cities of North America.

Welcome All People

How can a church communicate welcome to a community? The Taiwanese Reformed Church in Fair Lawn, New Jersey, determined that their name might inhibit people from coming to their church. They voted to change their name to Fair Lawn Community Church, which they felt was a welcoming name to all in their community.

Another way to demonstrate welcome is to create space where people can come for conversation and beverages. Signs of that welcome are the newly created “coffee houses” in Jersey City, New Jersey (for Asian Indians), and at Fair Lawn Community Church (for its community’s youth).

In addition, English as a Second Language (ESL) classes that help people learn English and acculturate to their country of residence show signs of hospitality and welcome. Several Asian American churches host ESL classes.

The Indonesian, Korean, Chinese, and Indo-Pakistani ministries of New Life Community Church in Artesia, California, sponsored a Thanksgiving Outreach Dinner in November 2001 that was attended by 430 people. A Christmas Outreach Celebration Dinner was attended by 470 people. These events are one of the ways this church is welcoming people in their community as well as sharing the good news.

Announce the Good News

Eight college and career young adults from a Taiwanese Reformed Church went to Taiwan on a short-term mission trip to work with Christians there to proclaim the gospel.

Christ Church of the Bay Area in San Mateo, California, sent some of their members to Saipan, a U.S. territory in the Pacific. They worked among Chinese mainlanders, many of whom are employed as garment factory workers.

Deacon Po Min Wang, a young adult from Christ Church of the Bay Area, accompanied other members of the Classis of Central California to Honduras on a mission trip. The group helped construct facilities for a Bible college.

The Rev. Dr. David Hartono of New Life Community Church in Artesia, California, was invited to the China National Philarchesophia Society to attend the first International Seminary on culture and philosophy on September 10-13, 2001, in the city of Lanzhou in China. He met with Chinese scholars and had the opportunity to share the gospel.

Learn to Call Forth Leaders

At its 2002 consultation, CPAAM sponsored a forum with representatives of the RCA seminaries on the future leadership of Asian American churches. A primary concern for CPAAM is the recruitment of second-generation young adults for pastoral leadership.
The Rev. Chris Theodore from the Church of South India joined the Classis of Greater Palisades in December 2001 and will develop the ministry among Asian Indians in Jersey City, New Jersey.

Presently there are several other Korean ministers in California who have presented themselves for membership. The leadership pool is slowly growing.

Conclusion

As the Council for Pacific and Asian American Ministries enters its twenty-third year of ministry, it is faced with new challenges. While pastoral leadership is still an important component to effective ministry, calling forth the gifts of the laity and equipping them for ministry is imperative. CPAAM commits itself to being in partnership with the Reformed Church as it lives out its vision of equipping the saints for the work of ministry, for the building up of the body of Christ. For the harvest is plentiful, but the laborers are few.

[The Report of the Council for Pacific and Asian American Ministries was considered by the Evangelization and Church Growth Advisory Committee.]

Report of the Native American Indian Ministries Council

The vision of the Native American Indian Ministries Council (NAIMC) is to embrace and live in the spirit of our Lord, utilizing all our gifts for one another. The Native American Indian Ministries Council seeks to work with other cultures in North America and the world, giving testimony to God’s grace and God’s activity among us, and the making, teaching and sustaining of disciples throughout the earth.

In acceptance of and in response to God’s call and teaching through Jesus Christ, the Native American Indian Ministries Council proclaims the gospel of Christ and seeks to empower RCA Native American Indian ministries. The Native American Indian Ministries Council seeks to strengthen the discipleship, fellowship, leadership, and stewardship of Native American Indian congregations, ministries, and members of the Reformed Church in America. The Native American Indian Ministries Council seeks to create opportunities for RCA Native American Indian ministries to gather together; to design resources through RCA mission and program offices for Christian nurture and leadership development; to sponsor an annual leadership conference; to encourage faithful stewardship practices of finances, time, and talents with a view toward self-sufficiency of member congregations; and to pray for RCA ministries among Native American people. The council seeks to work ecumenically.

—Statement of Vision and Purpose, NAIMC Constitution and Bylaws

Consultant

The Rev. Stanley Jim of the Christian Reformed Church was hired by NAIMC as a consultant to help with the restructuring efforts within the council. The Rev. Jim will visit the six RCA Native American churches to determine their strengths and weaknesses. He will report his findings back to the NAIMC task force. Rev. Jim has so far visited Jicarilla
Apache Reformed Church in Dulce, New Mexico, and Apache Reformed Church in Apache, Oklahoma. Due to his own church work, scheduling problems occurred, but hopefully these problems shouldn’t be of any more concern.

**Leadership Conference**

Due to lack of funding, the conference wasn’t held this year.

**Youth Camp**

The summer youth camp of the six RCA Native American churches has been placed on a hold status until NAIMC can develop a strong mission and vision statement for these camps. Also, rules and regulations for campers and counselors need to be defined. NAIMC is looking for a centrally located campground. Training for counselors and volunteers will be needed.

[The Report of the Native American Indian Ministries Council was considered by the World Mission Advisory Committee.]

THE CREATION AND USE OF EMBRYONIC STEM CELLS

In December 1999 the journal *Science* declared stem cells the “breakthrough of the year.” Promising what appear to be miraculous cures but surrounded with ethical controversy, the creation and use of embryonic stem cells presents an area where Christians find themselves divided. However, even in the absence of complete consensus, the members of the church must engage each other and society, exploring the complex new issues presented by science within the framework of our Christian faith.

Background


Continuing to address issues raised by new genetic technologies, the commission presents this paper on the creation and use of human embryonic stem cells. Such a paper is timely in light of the recent public debate over the use of stem cells and the recent decision by U.S. President George W. Bush to allow government funding for limited research using human embryonic stem cells. The purpose of the paper is largely educational, since it is vital that Christians be well-informed in order to contribute meaningfully to the debate on any issue of genetic engineering. The paper will first explain what stem cells and stem cell lines are and how they are created. Then it will describe the potential uses for stem cells, including descriptions of experiments that support the belief that stem cells will be useful to human medicine. Penultimately, the ethical questions surrounding the creation and use of stem cells will be outlined, and some biblical principles that may guide decisions about the creation and use of stem cells will be presented. Finally, recommendations about the creation and use of stem cells will be suggested.

The Creation of Human Embryonic Stem Cells

Human embryonic stem cells are continuous cell lines that are derived directly from the inner cell mass of a human pre-implantation embryo. Embryonic stem cells can be derived from several sources.
1) One source of embryonic stem (ES) cells is from embryos created in fertility clinics for couples seeking to use in vitro fertilization techniques to overcome infertility problems. Because harvesting eggs is an unpleasant, difficult procedure and the percentage of successful fertilization and implantation events is unpredictable, often more embryos are created than will be used for implantation. Embryos not used for implantation are frozen away in fertility clinics and used if implantation is unsuccessful or if another pregnancy is desired. These “extra” embryos are frozen at the 32- through 64-cell stage (day 5-6, before normal implantation would occur) and can remain frozen almost indefinitely. Currently, depending on the fertility clinic and on arrangements made with the couple, these embryos are frozen indefinitely, discarded, donated to other couples, or donated to research.

2) Embryonic stem cells can also be obtained by using a technique called somatic cell nuclear transfer (SCNT). In this method the nucleus (the cell structure that contains the chromosomes) from normal unfertilized eggs is removed and the enucleated egg is fused with a nucleus-containing cell derived from an adult. This procedure is more commonly known as the first step in cloning. It has not yet been carried out successfully with human cells. However, given the right conditions, the resulting cell is essentially the same as a fertilized egg in terms of its potential to develop into an organism.

3) ES cells can also be obtained from embryos created in the laboratory for the express purpose of creating stem cell lines. The procedures and techniques for creating the embryos and isolating stem cells, in this case, are identical to the process used by fertility clinics (#1 above) but the intent is different. These embryos are not created for reproduction.

In each of these cases, embryonic stem cell lines are created by removing from the embryos a small group of internal cells, the inner cell mass that would eventually give rise to a developing embryo. With these cells removed the embryo is no longer viable. The extracted cells are then put in culture, given the right mixture of nutrients, vitamins, and hormones and a support for attachment. Under these conditions the cells will continue to grow and divide—thus an embryonic stem cell line is established. The cells can be maintained indefinitely in culture or can be frozen cryogenically for future use.

The cells of the inner cell mass of an embryo are unique compared to cells of an adult organism in that they are totipotent and they retain their totipotency as long they are propagated in culture, if they are given the right mixture of chemicals. Totipotent cells are special and quite rare. They have only been found in these early embryos and in fetuses as the cells that form sperm or egg cells. Totipotent cells are unique in that they have the ability to develop into or specialize to become any one of the 220 cell types that exist in an adult organism; their potential is total (all fates). Adult organisms contain billions of cells that have become specialized to perform unique sets of functions necessary for the body to function. For example, osteocytes of bone tissue maintain the hard, strong matrix of bones. Skeletal muscle cells are specialized for contraction, while most other cells of the body cannot contract. Neurons of nervous tissue are specialized for conducting nerve impulses so there is communication between the different parts of our body. Once specialized, these cells lose their totipotency. They cannot reverse their specialized nature. For example, bone cells cannot become nerve cells. Cells do exist in adult organisms that are multipotent (many fates) or pluripotent (most fates). For example, bone marrow contains pluripotent blood progenitor cells. These cells can develop or specialize to become all types of blood cells—red blood cells, white blood cells, and platelets—but they are limited to becoming blood cells. Only totipotent cells can specialize to become any of the cell types found in an adult organism.
Furthermore, if given the right molecules or mixture of molecules, similar to those they would be exposed to as they develop in the embryo, totipotent cells can respond to these molecules by specializing and becoming a particular type of cell. This ability is exemplified by mouse embryonic stem cells exposed to the molecule retinoic acid. Upon retinoic acid treatment, mouse embryonic stem cells specialize to become neural progenitor cells. Neural progenitor cells are multipotent cells that can produce neurons, the mature, signaling cells of the nervous system. Scientists and medical personnel believe, with good reason, that this unique property renders embryonic stem cells unique in their ability to treat or even cure diseases and disease states for which we now have no treatment.

Embryos are not the only source of totipotent stem cells. There are three other sources/potential sources of totipotent stem cells.

1) Stem cells can be isolated from fetuses that are miscarried. In a developing fetus, some cells differentiate to form sperm and egg cells. These cells are only present in developing fetuses. At birth these cells have specialized. The cells that give rise to sperm or egg cells are totipotent and are therefore a possible source for stem cells. The cells are surgically removed from a fetus in a process that is technically much more difficult than isolation of embryonic stem cells. After isolation the cells are placed in culture and seem to be very similar to embryonic stem cells. Another problem with isolation of stem cells from miscarried fetuses is that the fetal tissue is usually not suitable for stem cell isolation. Miscarried fetuses often have chromosomal abnormalities or die too long before expulsion so that the cells cannot be isolated or used. Sometimes the fetal tissue is even partially reabsorbed by the maternal mucous membranes. So, although in some cases miscarried fetuses may be used for stem cell isolation, in the vast majority of cases this is not a viable source for stem cells.

2) Stem cells can also be isolated from fetuses derived from elective abortions. The problems of tissue death and chromosomal abnormalities associated with miscarriages are avoided, but the moral and ethical problems that arise in this case are significantly greater.

3) It may be possible to isolate stem cells from adult tissue. In adults there are groups of committed stem cells (progenitor cells). These cells are different from embryonic stem cells in that they are not totipotent but rather multipotent (many fates) or pluripotent (most fates). It may be possible that scientists will find a way to “trick” multipotent or pluripotent cells into returning to a totipotent state. These experiments are ongoing but have not yet been successful. Currently, using multipotent or pluripotent cells will not suffice if totipotent cells are required. But if adult cells are chemically “tricked” into returning to a totipotent state, these cells would presumably have the same potential for developing into an embryo as do cells created by SCNT.

Unless human embryonic stem cells offer benefits or uses that other sources of cells do not, the debate over their creation and use seems rather pointless. But, scientists and medical personnel do believe that human embryonic stem cells offer possible uses/benefits that other cells do not.

The Therapeutic Uses of Human Embryonic Stem Cells

At the level of basic research, totipotent embryonic stem cells could help scientists understand the complex events that occur during human development in ways other cells cannot. Specifically, stem cells could provide an understanding of the molecular process of specialization or differentiation that makes cells change from totipotency at fertilization to the specialized forms of an adult. Understanding the process of specialization also has practical implications for human health. Medical conditions such as cancer and birth
defects are often defects in cell specialization. If the normal processes are understood more completely, we may understand why and how failure of the normal processes leads to disease, and the possibility of correcting or preventing the disease is greater.

A very important potential use for human embryonic stem cells is in treatment of disorders and diseases of the nervous system. Scientists believe, with good reason, that embryonic stem cells might be used to cure people with spinal cord injuries. When mice that had their spinal cords severed experimentally were given embryonic stem cells that had been treated with retinoic acid to form neural progenitor cells, the neural progenitor cells migrated along the old, severed pathways, and the mice began walking again. This presents great hope that the same results are possible for humans with spinal cord injuries. Other experiments show that embryonic stem cells can specialize into the type of neurons that are lacking in Parkinson’s disease. This suggests that embryonic stem cells might be able to replace these deficient cells and cure this devastating disease.

Uses of human embryonic stem cells are not limited to diseases of the nervous system. Scientists are working on techniques to grow the pancreatic cells that fail to function in some types of diabetes. Other groups are trying to use blood progenitor cells derived from embryonic stem cells to produce blood cells that could replace diseased cells in people with leukemia or lymphoma.

Another important benefit to embryonic stem cell therapy involves the cells’ potential ability to avoid the problem of tissue rejection. If stem cells were derived from a human embryo and placed into an adult, the immune system of the adult would recognize those cells as foreign and destroy them. This is like tissue rejection, a problem faced in skin grafting and organ donation. If stem cells were created using somatic cell nuclear transfer (SCNT) or cloning, anyone could use his or her own cells as the source of the nucleus. When that nucleus fused with the enucleated egg and divided, the cells of the resulting embryo would be genetically identical to the donor. If these cells were isolated, a stem cell line created from them, and they were placed back into the adult donor, the adult donor’s immune system would recognize them as “self” and would not destroy or reject them.

Clearly embryonic stem cells raise “hopes of dazzling medical applications” (News and editorial staff, Science, 286:2238, 1999) but scientists and non-scientists alike also recognize the highly charged, theologically and ethically complex issues that surround embryonic stem cells. It is vital that Christians carefully, faithfully, and compassionately listen to, learn from, and engage themselves in the debates and discussions that will surely continue to surround this important issue.

Ethical Issues

The issues surrounding stem cell research specifically, and genetics more generally, are so new, complex, and ever-changing that Christians should not expect nor offer any simple, definitive conclusions at this time. Christians hold differing—and often opposing—perspectives on such issues. Conversation, education, debate, and continued engagement with the scientific and political questions are all concerns. At the same time, it is also important to begin to frame the issue within some of the pertinent Christian themes and to advance tentative proposals and responses.

It is true that Christians need to be engaged with the scientific community and conversant about the cutting edge of genetic research. Yet it is at least equally important that we as Christians be grounded in our faith, steeped in the Scriptures, imaginative yet embedded, constantly conversing among ourselves and involved in a robust theological give-and-take. Christians correctly desire to be part of the public dialogue about genetics, but we also need to take care not to be intimidated or to abandon our unique perspectives and resources in these broader conversations.
The issue of embryonic stem cell research is frequently portrayed as pitting interests of human life, in the form of embryos, against the interests of those who suffer from various diseases and injuries. On this view, one perspective holds that embryonic life trumps the alleviation of suffering; the other perspective suggests the contrary. Neither one of these perspectives is sufficiently holistic, complex, or rooted in the full wisdom of Scripture and the Christian faith to address adequately the challenges and possibilities of stem cell technology. Protecting human life and alleviating suffering are both of great importance to Christians, yet each is also too narrow, too private, and too individualistic to address adequately the vast social and theological implications of stem cell technology.

Christians should strive to look at stem cell technology in particular, and genetics in general, against a much broader horizon. They hold the possibility of greatly changing the way we look at children, marriage, sexuality, health, suffering, wholeness, and perfection, along with other implications as yet not even contemplated. No one can foresee the full ramifications for our world or our faith. As Christians we must enrich our theological imaginations with images from Eden, Babel, and the New Jerusalem. We must ponder questions such as: How do we understand suffering? How do we view our bodies? What is salvation? How do we understand our human role as humble creatures, wise stewards, and gifted co-creators?

This introduction cannot begin to imagine all the theological conversations that may develop around stem cell technology. While discussions about embryonic stem cells that revolve only around the themes of protecting life and alleviating suffering are not comprehensive nor satisfactory, those themes do form the common and dominant framework. That framework of discussion will be utilized in this paper.

Valuing and Protecting Human Life

Life is a gift from God. Valuing and protecting life, especially human life, is of vital concern to the Christian faith. Christians have especially sought to protect and value the lives of the weakest and most vulnerable members of society.

Christians opposed to the use of embryonic stem cells frequently point to the destruction of human embryos necessary to culture embryonic stem cells. The most common sources of stem cells are human embryos “left over” from fertility treatments. (Deriving stem cells from aborted fetuses is also possible, although less common. For many Christians this opens the door to providing an incentive or encouragement for abortion. In order to keep this discussion more focused, it will concentrate on stem cells derived from embryos.) From this perspective, our Christian responsibility to safeguard life extends to human embryos. Accordingly, the destruction of human embryos is viewed as equivalent to the taking of human life.

Inevitably, this leads to that enigmatic question, When does life begin? or other questions that are similar: Is an embryo fully equivalent to a person? When do human beings receive a soul? This sort of question is simply not adequate to address the multifaceted issues involved with the beginning of life and the status of human embryos. Neither the Christian nor the scientific communities have been able to reach any consensus about this. Just as “When does life begin?” has been unable to bring any resolution to the issue of abortion, so too it is unlikely to bring clarity or understanding to the issue of stem cells. Of course to call this question inadequate is not in any way to deny the earlier statements that life is always of extreme importance to Christians. However, focusing on the question, “When does life begin?” will ultimately detract from genuine exploration of stem cell issues.

If all Christians shared a clear-cut agreement about the status, value, and protection due to even the earliest of human embryos, and if science was able to pin down all that is elusive
about the beginning of life, even this would not end the dilemmas surrounding the use of human embryos for stem cells. While human life holds an extremely high value for the Christian community, life itself has never been viewed as the highest or ultimate value before which all other concerns must yield. In other words, the protection of human life is not a rigid, absolute practice. Martyrdom, self-sacrificial love, and the acceptance of just war, capital punishment, and abortion by some Christians are all instances where Christians have put other concerns and values ahead of human life. This is not to say the use of human embryos for the production of stem cells is such a case, it is only to point out that to try to address stem cell technology on the basis that “life has begun” is flawed.

Even if it were agreed that an embryo is fully equivalent to a human being, this would not necessarily preclude the use of embryos to develop stem cells. First, it may be asked whether maintaining frozen embryos indefinitely, with almost no prospect for gestation and birth, displays any more value or protection for these embryos than using them for research. Secondly, drawing an analogy between the development of embryonic stem cells and organ donation can be instructive. Just as parents whose child is dying might consent to their child becoming an organ donor, might parents give consent for their frozen embryos or embryos slated for disposal to be used in the development of stem cells? It is the parents’ responsibility to protect and care for their child’s best interests. Yet Christians do not believe our children are our “private property.” Because children are entrusted to us by God, we raise our children to help others and assist God’s purposes in the world. Christian parents want their children to be a blessing and gift to the world. Parents who consent to the use of their embryos for stem cell development might view their consent in this manner. Parents would be graciously offering a gift to those whose suffering might be relieved. To allow an embryo to be used for stem cell development could be seen as honoring and valuing that embryo in a manner greater than keeping it permanently frozen or disposing of it.

By the same token, because “When does life begin?” is so murky and ambiguous, the attempts to “draw some line” before which human embryos are less valued is equally imprecise and suspect. The developmental process of the human embryo makes it extremely difficult to find any obvious point at which to say that the embryo’s status has plainly or significantly changed. The argument that embryos less than fourteen days old (the time when the possibility of twinning is past and implantation in the uterine wall has occurred) are “pre-embryos” seems strangely artificial and arbitrary. Deciding on a time when embryos merit more protection or respect is just as problematic as deciding when life begins.

Relieving Human Suffering

“Cure the sick, raise the dead, cleanse lepers, cast out demons.” So Jesus commands his disciples in Matthew 10:8. Christians have always been at the forefront of the medical arts, seeking to cure diseases and to alleviate suffering. Similarly, the Christian faith has been an impetus to increase human knowledge and to explore God’s creation. In a discussion of genetics, the church does not want to do as it did during the time of Galileo, providing a theological defense for a false, outdated point of view.

This desire to cure the sick, lessen suffering, increase knowledge, and encourage exploration holds an important place in many Christians’ rationale for supporting stem cell technology. These Christians believe that the ministry of healing and wholeness is continued through stem cell research. They point to the incredible potential, the amazing benefits that could come from it. Accordingly, these Christians believe that although human embryos merit deep respect, the possible medical breakthroughs from stem cells warrant the use and destruction of these embryos. The possibility of using stem cell technology to cure diabetes, Parkinson’s or Alzheimer’s disease, or reverse paralysis due to spinal injuries makes
this technology an extremely meaningful and attractive pursuit. The opportunity is greater than simply relieving suffering. It could so profoundly change the quality of life of some individuals that it brings to mind Jesus’ proclamation that he has come so that “that they might have life, and have it abundantly” (John 10:10).

God has entrusted humanity with incredible resources, creativity, and knowledge. Christians seek to pursue good with these gifts. Expressing creativity and participating in God’s creating work is one of the great gifts God has entrusted to humankind. Developing stem cell technology can be understood as part of the human task to be creative. Of course, this role as God’s creative agents in the world is to be done carefully and humbly. Yet warnings against “playing God” are often wrongly used to stifle human creativity and exploration. Vaccines and organ transplants, now accepted and received with thankfulness, were once criticized as “playing God.”

Other Christians appreciate the potential benefits from stem cell technology yet wonder where the Christian mandate to heal ends, and where a dangerous sort of outcome-based utilitarianism begins. To know ahead of time the desirable result, and then do almost anything to achieve that outcome, produces a precarious “end justifies the means” mindset. Christians must be wary of making ethical decisions on the basis of “cost-benefit analysis.” None of us can be indifferent to suffering caused by various diseases and injuries; still a good result—even an amazing result—cannot be justification for wrongful actions. Christians do not endorse the view that simply because science can do something, it should be done. There is an important difference between doing all the good one morally can do, and doing all the good one possibly can do. Genetic engineering pushes humankind into areas where over-reaching our creativity and knowledge becomes a genuine concern. The Christian claim that salvation is in Jesus Christ may humbly remind our world of the risk of seeking too much from medicine and technology, and can work against the illusion that human beings bear ultimate responsibility for overcoming suffering and conquering disease.

The exact moral status of human embryos may remain undecided, but Christians should be hesitant to view them as raw materials necessary to manufacture a product, or a supplier of parts for medical technology. The issue here is much more than a concern for embryos. Instead, there is a concern for a far-reaching, yet subtle form of dehumanization. There is a concern to maintain an understanding of people as more than parts and flesh, and the human body as more than a “thing.” It may sound very insensitive to those who suffer, but overcoming disease may be a too limited and narrow perspective, if overcoming that disease distinctly alters the way we view and value the body, human life, and what it means to be human. There is no need for sensationalistic science-fiction scenarios of what the future could hold. Yet the possibility of broad, still unforeseeable, long-term detriment to our social fabric causes some Christians to believe that reluctance and caution toward embryonic stems is the prudent path.

Moreover, while the curing of disease and lessening of human suffering are laudable pursuits, there should be no naiveté about the fact that mingled with these noble pursuits are desires for huge monetary profits and great corporate fortunes. Similarly, those who will potentially benefit from stem cells are certainly the wealthy and privileged. That most of the current stem cell lines were developed from embryos from more affluent societies reveals this connection between wealth and potential stem cell benefits. Such criticism of stem cell technology becomes even more piercing against a backdrop where millions in the U.S. have no health insurance, millions in Africa with AIDS go untreated, and common diarrhea remains a deadly killer in much of the world.

Those Christians who are reluctant or oppose the development of embryonic stem cells must be attentive not to exhibit a blithe or cavalier attitude toward suffering. Those persons whose suffering might potentially be alleviated through the stem cell technology can right-
ly ask hard questions about this reticence toward stem cell technology. We must be prepared to discuss their questions and hear their cries. At the same time, Christians can express and embody a sort of compassion that may not be willing to relieve another’s suffering at an ethically dubious cost, but is willing to suffer with and support those who suffer. The questions surrounding stem cells powerfully and pointedly remind us that suffering is often alleviated only through sacrifice. Too often we look to others, especially the weak and poor, to make those sacrifices, or we grasp for distant, faceless, apparently cost-free technologies that promise to relieve suffering. As followers of Christ, let us first look to ourselves to make the sacrifices that might relieve the suffering of others.

Provisional Proposals

The questions surrounding stem cell technology are complex and clouded. There are a variety of views within the Christian community. This variety and disagreement is evident among the members of the Commission on Christian Action, which is unable to find consensus on some topics. The various sources of embryonic stem cells warrant different moral evaluations.

From Miscarriages: There is some possibility of developing stem cells from miscarried fetuses. With parental consent, this source for stem cells seems the least ethically ambiguous. However, miscarriages often occur because of genetic abnormalities in the fetus, making it unsuitable for stem cell development.

Existing Lines of Stem Cells: In August 2001, President Bush restricted United States federal funding to research done on the roughly sixty stem cell lines said to exist. His intention was to discourage the destruction of additional embryos necessary for establishment of more cell lines, while still allowing research on the existing lines. (The aim of this paper is primarily to inform and instigate greater discussion within the church. Public policy recommendations are a very limited, secondary aim.) Continuing to use the existing stem cell lines for research is generally supported by the commission. Wishing something had not been done will not undo it. Now that these stem cell lines exist, research should continue on those lines. There are Christians, however, who assert that experimentation with the existing lines still shares complicity with the wrongful use of the embryos that established those lines. Additionally, continuing funding and research may erode attempts to place some limits or restrictions on genetic research. Conversely, others argue that public involvement and funding is one way to restrain the control of stem cell technology by private corporations. Government funding may help ensure that whatever benefits come from stem cell technology are more justly distributed.

Disposal and Freezing of Surplus Embryos: The commission is divided on the development of stem cells from surplus frozen embryos or embryos facing disposal. Parental consent potentially helps to address concerns about embryos becoming a commodity, managed by scientists and owned for monetary profit. Would parents who give consent for the use of their surplus embryos be sharing and giving a gift to the world, especially those who suffer from various diseases? Or would they be using the sort of “end justifies the means” utilitarian thinking criticized earlier? Is parental consent a self-sacrificial act of generosity, or is refraining from parental consent a sign of patient trust in God’s providence?

If parental consent is given, and especially if embryos are scheduled for disposal, then the use of these embryos could bring great benefit to humankind and can be understood as an honorable end for the embryos. Others believe that letting the embryos die naturally would be the more honorable end. (The creation of these surplus embryos in routine infertility treatments may itself be an ethical dilemma for Christians—one that the commission hopes to address in the near future.) Declining to view embryos, even those that are to be discarded, as a source for stem cells may inhibit the development of an outlook that views
human beings as things and spare parts. By turning down this most reachable path toward an undeniable good, one could hope to force our society to greater scientific creativity and Christians to a renewed devotion to care for the suffering. Although it is not yet possible, research is ongoing to develop totipotent stem cells from less ethically dubious sources such as the pluripotent cells in adult bone marrow. Resisting the use of embryonic stem cells could greatly encourage research to focus on developing stem cells from alternate sources.

Production of Embryos for Stem Cells: The commission is most averse and opposed to the production of embryos for the explicit purpose of obtaining more stem cells. Creating embryos solely for scientific purposes, such as cloning and developing stem cells, seems an especially hasty and ill-advised step toward a perspective that views embryos and potentially all life as a commodity or resource.

Finally, the commission is aware that we live in a “post-Christian” context, where it can be difficult to convey Christian ethical convictions. When partisan politics and government funding enter the equation, determining and articulating a Christian perspective becomes extremely perplexing. Both science and government appear willing to hear from the various religious communities; still Christian perspectives may or may not gain wide acceptance. Success or lack of success in influencing public policy is not the measure of the church’s witness. We should continue to try to articulate a Christian perspective and engage the scientific community, government, and others in dialogue. That there is still much debate and disagreement within the church further reveals the need for continued discussion, study, creativity, and prayer. Meanwhile, scientific research continues. Likely this will mean that on some issues of genetics, at some point the question for Christians may no longer be whether some research is ethical, or whether to move ahead, but rather how to respond to new breakthroughs and developments—even if some Christians had been uncertain about the development.

R-12
To direct the RCA Distribution Center to make this paper, “The Creation and Use of Embryonic Stem Cells,” available to congregations for study and discussion.

The advisory committee recommended:

R-12 (amended):
To direct RCA Communication and Production Services to make the paper, “The Creation and Use of Embryonic Stem Cells,” available to congregations for study and discussion; and further,

to encourage the use of the website to make available visual aids, additional scientific information, and a process for discussing these issues. (ADOPTED AS AMENDED)

Reasons:

1. Continuing updates are needed as scientific technology advances.

2. The website allows wider and more economical distribution.
R-13
To encourage congregations to discuss among their membership the scientific background and the ethical questions pertaining to embryonic stem cells, using “The Creation and Use of Embryonic Stem Cells” as a resource. (ADOPTED)

R-14
To direct the RCA Office of Social Witness, in conjunction with other appropriate denominational offices and staff, to plan and convene several gatherings across the denomination during the next two years, for the purpose of discussing “The Creation and Use of Embryonic Stem Cells,” and further;

to invite scientists, physicians, theologians, and those whose lives may be directly affected by stem cell technology, to be part of these discussions, but also to make a strong effort for these discussions to include and be accessible to typical church members. (ADOPTED)

R-15
To direct the RCA Commission on Christian Action to listen to and reflect upon these gatherings, and to report back to the General Synod of 2004. (ADOPTED)

CHRISTIAN STEWARDSHIP AND SOCIALLY RESPONSIBLE INVESTING

In the past ten to fifteen years there has been a significant change in the financial world of North America. It has been described as the shift from “Wall Street” to “Main Street.” Average persons are active market investors and the Dow Jones average is as available as the most recent sport scores. Although the financial markets have slipped recently, this does not alter the major changes that have taken place in the financial world. Obviously members of the Reformed Church in America are among those individuals who have become more aware of and involved in the financial world. As Christians, this involvement brings new opportunities and responsibilities.

This paper aims to introduce individuals, as well as congregations that increasingly hold endowments and other investments, to ways their investments can be expressions and tools of the good news of Jesus Christ. With so many options for investments, so many people dispensing advice, and all sorts of legal ramifications in both Canada and the United States, this introduction can only be in the most general of terms. Individuals will have to do their own research and make their own decisions. This paper does not endorse any specific investments or investing strategies. Rather it holds up four important aspects of socially responsible investing—socially or ethically “screened” investing, mission investing, shareholder activism, and estate planning.

Biblical and Theological Background

“From everyone to whom much has been given, much will be required” (Luke 12:48). Certainly, Jesus’ words could describe those Christians fortunate enough to hold various financial investments. We have been given much. What is required of us?

Socially responsible investing is one aspect of Christian stewardship. God entrusts to our care all that we have, not simply our financial investments. Stewardship entails using our gifts to bring glory to God and advance God’s work in the world. Socially responsible
investing tries to use our financial investments to assist and be in harmony with the aims of God’s kingdom. Our investments and management of our finances can become ways for us to share the good news of Christ, to love our neighbor, to be light and salt in the world, to be honest and truthful, to care for the poor and vulnerable, to seek justice, to tend creation, to be peacemakers, and much more.

We are invested in the world because God invests in the world. In the beginning, God declares creation to be “very good.” In Jesus Christ, God takes our human flesh and lives among us. Through the Holy Spirit, God gathers the church and nurtures it with the Word, water, bread, and wine. In all of this, we see that God is never just concerned with “spiritual matters.” God is invested in the tangible creation and calls us to be likewise. As Christians, we are invested in the world, not only financially, but invested, engaged, and concerned about all of God’s creation. We are part of the complex economic activity of the world. We earn and spend, borrow and invest, risk and participate in the economy.

Like all of life, economic activity is full of shades of gray, not black and white. There are no “perfect” financial investments. Socially responsible investing is not an attempt to “remain pure” or escape from the gray ambiguities of economic activity. Just the opposite is true. Socially responsible investing continues the traditional emphasis of Reformed theology to bring Christ to every dimension of life. Reformed Christians have never sought to withdraw from society or avoid the complexity, uncertainty, and brokenness of our world. Instead, Reformed Christians have sought to witness in, engage in, invest in, and possibly even transform society. “When participating in the affairs of the world and engaging with secular powers in commerce and dialogue, the church resists the temptation to seek an Eden free from sin and moral ambiguity. Such flight would act counter to the Lord of the church, whose love was incarnate, not only in a human body, but also in a human self immersed in a particular human society to accomplish God’s redemptive purpose” (“The Church’s Peace Witness in the U.S. Corporate Economy,” MGS 1985, p. 58).

Socially responsible investing is a witness to Christ in the marketplace. It seeks to invest in those companies and institutions that do good, create jobs, make useful products, increase knowledge, or alleviate suffering. It also believes that investing can be one way to challenge companies and products we question or oppose. At the same time, socially responsible investing recognizes that one aspect of being a good steward is to seek a good return on one’s investment. Socially responsible investing is not a dreamy fantasyland where one is completely unconcerned about a good return on investments. It understands the realities of economics, yet believes that doing good can be compatible with good business and good investing.

Socially Screened Investments

Socially screened investments seek to avoid those investments that do not meet an investor’s social and ethical criteria. Socially screened investing can also attempt to fill a portfolio with investments that conform to the investor’s social goals and values. For individual investors, one of the simplest and most common ways of screening investments is through socially screened mutual funds. These mutual funds apply various social and ethical criteria to investments before including them within that fund.

Socially responsible funds might seek to invest in companies that have an outstanding record of community involvement, generosity, or employee relations. A “positive” screen could also seek companies that produce innovative, beneficial, and commendable products. The most common “negative” screens eliminate investments in companies involved in the alcohol, tobacco, and gambling industries.
These three screens—alcohol, tobacco and gambling (as well as minimal investment in companies involved in the manufacture of nuclear weapons)—have been part of the investment policies of Reformed Church in America. The recent decision to place the pension investments in mutual funds managed by Fidelity Investments now has made such screens impossible. Fidelity applies no social screens when making investment decisions. At the time of this report, approximately $2 million, or less than one percent, of the RCA funds with Fidelity are invested in companies that fail to pass these three traditional screens.

Today all sorts of other screens convey different investors’ social concerns. Screens found in various mutual funds include those related to unfair labor practices, involvement in nations with records of injustice, nuclear power, abortion, pornography, animal testing, the entertainment industry, and environmental destruction. Some mutual funds have more stringent screens, while others only restrict the more blatant conditions. For example, one fund may avoid investing in any companies that are military contractors, while another fund may only restrict investments in companies involved in the production of weapons of mass destruction. In addition, most mutual funds’ “negative” screens do not screen out a company unless a significant share of its income is derived from unacceptable sources. So, for example, a company that derives one or two percent of its income from the production of cigarettes and the rest of its income from the production of food could still be included in some screened funds.

Many investors have the false impression that screening investments results in lower returns on the investment. This is not necessarily the case. The broad availability of diverse socially screened mutual funds has demonstrated that they can compete with more typical mutual funds and portfolios. Socially screened mutual funds have frequently been among the highest returning investments.

The popularity of screened mutual funds also means that there are funds aimed at almost every investment objective and strategy, from growth to fixed income, balanced, indexed, bonds, global, small cap, large cap, etc. The variety of options available is amazing and inviting.

It is not the intent of this report to suggest specific screens individual investors should apply to their own portfolios. Our intention is only to introduce and commend socially screened investments, urging individuals to do their own careful and prayerful investigation and decision-making.

Mission Investing

Mission investing is the practice of placing a portion of one’s investments in especially worthy causes even if it may mean a less-than-competitive rate of return or higher risk. In an effort to make some of their financial investments available for the economic development of the poor, investors place positive social benefits ahead of higher returns.

Examples of mission investments include community credit unions that finance low-income housing; child care centers; inner-city and rural redevelopment; development banks, both domestically and overseas, that make very small loans to small businesses and even street entrepreneurs; and banks that specialize in lower interest loans for non-profit organizations. Investments in the Reformed Church’s Building and Extension Fund, which makes loans for church buildings and renovation, and typically pays investors a return comparable with Certificates of Deposit, can also be viewed as mission investing.

Very small loans can make a huge difference in mission investing. Sometimes as little as a $25 or $50 loan by a development bank to a new business owner in the developing world is enough to put that entrepreneur on the path to success. A $10,000 no-interest loan can
make the otherwise impossible possible for a nursery school or halfway house seeking to buy a building. Lending money below market rate can mean only a small decrease in an investor’s return, but it can make a large amount of money available to a needy borrower.

Investors will have to decide what portion of their portfolio to put into such lower return—higher risk mission investment. Ten percent of a total portfolio, based on the Old Testament tithe, could be a goal for mission investing.

Since 1970 the Reformed Church has had a policy of making up to 10 percent of its operating reserves available for alternative investments. One such agency in which the Reformed Church has invested is the Nicaragua Community Development Loan Fund (NCDLF). NCDLF is both a social investment fund in the United States and an alternative form of credit for the poor in Nicaragua run through the Nicaraguan Council of Protestant Churches (CEPAD). When foreign donations to Nicaragua started to dry up at the end of 1991, CEPAD formed an innovative lending partnership with the Wisconsin Coordinating Council on Nicaragua, by which U.S. investors could loan money to Nicaraguan farmers and merchants. Estela Lopez lives in Acahualinca, a Managua barrio near the garbage dump where she finds parts out of which she creates new appliances. Estela, who had never received formal credit, has borrowed four times from the NCDLF to buy new appliance parts for her business. Women like Estela are becoming a major focus of community development programs in Nicaragua, especially in the alternative credit sector. Typically women are less prone to spend income on luxury items, rum, or cigarettes and are more likely to invest in schooling, medicine, and food for their families. Group lending promoted by the NCDLF—including loans to solidarity groups, village banks, cooperatives, and worker-owned businesses—is helping to place the poor themselves in the center of their financial systems, and enables the poor to build sustainable access to resources.

Another such agency is Oikocredit, formerly the Ecumenical Development Cooperative Society. Oikocredit provides loans to enterprises owned and operated by monetarily poor people. By investing in Oikocredit churches, church organizations, non-profit organizations, institutions, and individuals create opportunities for the marginalized to attain self-reliance and build self-esteem. Oikocredit was created to build bridges between rich and poor by making credit accessible to the disadvantaged of this world.

At the heart of the Oikocredit mission lies the conviction that loans for productive business enterprises provide a stronger incentive for self-development than grants alone. The Reformed Church in America has made $100,000 available in loans through Oikocredit. Congregations and individuals can invest in Oikocredit for as little as $1,000. Information regarding the issuing of Oikocredit shares can be found in the Oikocredit prospectus, which is available at the Oikocredit International Support Office and through the website (http://www.oikocredit.org).

**Shareholder Activism**

As partial owners of a company, shareholders have power, a voice, and access within that company. Company management feels obliged to listen to shareholders because they have a clear interest in the best performance of that company. Shareholders can use this power and access to express concerns about detrimental company policies and practices. Sometimes, investors deliberately choose to hold a small investment in a company, rather than divest completely, so that as investors they can use this small investment as leverage with the company, and sponsor shareholder resolutions.

The desire of companies to please shareholders and avoid negative publicity often means that a small group of shareholders can achieve significant results. For example, a shareholder resolution that receives even 10 percent support among all shareholders still sends
a powerful message to the company and can alter company policy. Many experts believe that shareholder activism in the 1980s was a large factor in the decisions of many companies to alter their business practices in South Africa, which in turn contributed to the end of the apartheid regime there.

Shareholder activism includes letter writing to express concerns about company behavior, seeking to meet and speak with management, sponsoring and supporting shareholder resolutions, proxy voting in support of resolutions, and attending stockholder meetings to vote and speak on issues.

The complexity of the issues and procedures, along with the need to join with other shareholders, makes shareholder activism difficult for an isolated individual. For thirty years the Interfaith Center on Corporate Responsibility (ICCR) has been a leader of the corporate social responsibility movement. ICCR’s membership is an association of 275 Protestant, Roman Catholic, and Jewish institutional investors, including national denominations, religious communities, pension funds, endowments, hospital corporations, economic development funds, and publishing companies. The Reformed Church in America is one of the charter members of ICCR. Each year ICCR-member religious institutional investors sponsor over one hundred shareholder resolutions on major social and environmental issues. The combined portfolio value of ICCR’s member organizations is estimated to be $110 billion.

From time to time, through its cooperation with the Interfaith Center on Corporate Responsibility, the Reformed Church in America will file a shareholder resolution with a major corporation in which the RCA holds stock. Such shareholder resolutions often afford the occasion for church representatives and corporate management to come together to discuss significant ethical issues involved in participating in today’s global economy. As stated in a 1985 General Synod report, “Through its economic involvement the church may offer a significant witness in and to its society...The Reformed tradition has emphasized that the essential role of the church in society is not to enhance it own resources but to glorify God, witness to the lordship of Christ, and transform this present social order to the vision and values of Christ’s kingdom” (“The Church’s Peace Witness in the U.S. Corporate Economy,” MGS 1985, p. 57).

For several years during the 1990s, the RCA filed shareholder resolutions with Texaco Corporation concerning the company’s involvement with the government of Myanmar (Burma), a military regime accused of serious human rights abuses. The minister for social witness and other RCA representatives spoke at annual stockholders’ meetings and met with corporate management to discuss the company’s role in advocating for human rights in Myanmar. In the fall of 1997 Texaco announced its decision to sell its assets in an offshore natural gas project off the coast of Burma. Such actions can be a sign of the international community’s strong support for human rights and democracy and a force for change in oppressive regimes in Burma and elsewhere.

Estate Planning

When most Christians think about financial stewardship, they think about giving some of their wages and day-to-day cash flow to the church, usually through the offering plate on Sunday morning. Yet for many people, their largest growth in wealth comes not through wages, but through real estate investment, growth in a financial portfolio, and assets received through inheritance. Very few Christians ever consider financial stewardship on these aspects of their wealth, even though it is often where they experience the largest increase over the years.
Part of good stewardship and social responsibility is to consider how to share and distribute this accumulated wealth through estate planning. Of course, and rightfully so, most people consider their heirs in estate planning. The church needs to help them to realize that, as Christian stewards, they also should consider a gift to the church in their estate planning.

In the next few years, the largest-ever transfer of wealth will take place in North America. This wealth will transfer from one generation to another and to our governments in the form of taxes. Part of this transfer of wealth could include support for churches, along with other charities. Today many churches (and almost every charity) have trained persons who can assist with estate planning and provide information on all sorts of instruments to include gifts to the church during one’s lifetime or in wills. The RCA Foundation offers such planning to members of the RCA at no cost. It also provides a charitable gift annuity program along with assistance in establishing charitable remainder trusts and other methods of giving. Charitable estate planning is one more way that Christians can invest themselves and their money in the work of God’s kingdom in our world.

The commission recommended:

**R-16**
To direct the RCA Distribution Center to make this paper, “Christian Stewardship and Socially Responsible Investing,” available to individuals and congregations for study and discussion.

The advisory committee recommended:

**R-16 (amended):**
To direct RCA Communication and Production Services to make the paper, “Christian Stewardship and Socially Responsible Investing,” available on the RCA website to individuals and congregations for study and discussion. (ADOPTED AS AMENDED)

Reason: The website allows wider and more economical distribution.

**R-17**
To instruct the RCA Office of Social Witness to raise greater awareness of socially responsible investing among RCA members and churches. (ADOPTED)

**R-18**
To instruct RCA Communication and Production Services to develop a small, simple brochure about socially responsible investing for distribution to churches and individuals. (ADOPTED)

**R-19**
To urge the congregations and members of the RCA to avail themselves of the services of the RCA Foundation in promoting and facilitating giving to the church through estate planning. (ADOPTED)
THE DECADE TO OVERCOME VIOLENCE

The 2001 General Synod directed the Commission on Christian Action “to study ways by which the initiative for the (World Council of Churches’) Decade to Overcome Violence can be incorporated into the mission and ministry of the RCA and to report to the General Synod 2002” (MGS 2001, R-24, p. 87).

When the General Synod gave that directive no one could have foreseen that violence would so directly and so powerfully affect our lives. The events of September 11 and their aftermath have brought home the urgent need for the church to minister to the victims of violence and to witness to the Christ who is our peace (Ephesians 2:14) in a broken and often terribly violent world.

The Decade to Overcome Violence has its origins in the Eighth Assembly of the World Council of Churches meeting in Harare, Zimbabwe, in 1998. Delegates called on the World Council of Churches to work strategically with the churches on the issues of non-violence and reconciliation. The aim is to help foster a culture of nonviolence, working with other international partners and organizations and examining and developing approaches to conflict transformation and just peace-making in the new globalized context.

The church is called to address not only overt acts of violence but also the more covert forms of violence—poverty, psychological abuse, political and economic oppression, and systemic injustice. The peace to which the church is called to bear witness is not merely the absence of violence but the presence of shalom—restored and reconciled relationships among humanity and with God so that all of God’s creation might flourish.

In order to move peacemaking more toward the center of the life and witness of the church and to build stronger connections among churches, the goals of the Decade to Overcome Violence are:

Resources

Interfaith Center on Corporate Responsibility
475 Riverside Drive
New York, NY 10115
http://www.iccr.org/index.htm

The Social Investment Forum offers comprehensive information, contacts, and resources on socially responsible investing.

Social Investment Forum
1612 K Street NW, Suite 650
Washington, DC 20006
Phone: (202) 872-5319; fax: (202)822-8471
http://www.socialinvest.org/

Oikocredit USA
Terry Provance, Executive Director
PO Box 11000
Washington, D.C.
Phone: (202) 265-0607
http://www.oikocredit.org/
Email: office.us@oikocredit.org
- Addressing holistically the wide varieties of violence, both direct and structural, in homes, communities, and international arenas; and learning from local and regional analyses of violence and of ways to overcome violence.
- Challenging the churches to overcome the spirit, logic, and practice of violence; to relinquish any theological justification of violence; and to affirm anew the spirituality of reconciliation and active nonviolence.
- Creating a new understanding of security in terms of cooperation and community, instead of in terms of domination and competition.
- Learning from the spirituality and resources for peace-building of other faiths; working with communities of other faiths in the pursuit of peace; and challenging the churches to reflect on the misuse of religious and ethnic identities in pluralistic societies.
- Challenging the growing militarization of our world, especially the proliferation of small arms and light weapons.

The Decade to Overcome Violence is not a program developed and orchestrated by the World Council of Churches; its heart and soul are in the member churches and their peace and reconciliation ministries that inspire and encourage other churches to seek the same goals. The aim of the World Council is to help encourage and link churches in their ministries of peacemaking.

The Reformed Church in America is already involved in a variety of peacemaking ministries:

- Each week in hundreds of congregations God’s people gather for worship where the Word is faithfully preached, the sacraments are celebrated, and the needs of the world are brought to God in prayer. In worship God’s people witness to and participate in God’s mission to the world. “In Christ, God was reconciling the world to himself...and entrusting the message of reconciliation to us” (2 Cor. 5:19).
- RCA congregations responded (and continue to respond) to the attacks of September 11 by ministering to the victims of violence, caring for the caregivers, giving generously to help refugees and the victims of war, and opening their sanctuaries for ecumenical and interfaith services of prayer for peace.
- Congregations are carrying on ministries of reconciliation and peace-building in their own contexts and neighborhoods—addressing domestic violence, racial tensions, economic injustice, and violence against creation; facilitating police-community dialogue; working at inter-faith dialogue; ministering to people in prison; and participating in conflict-resolution training.
- Print and audiovisual resources for peacemaking have been developed and made available through the RCA Distribution Center, www.rca.org/material/peace.html.
- Additional study and action suggestions have been sent to congregations in an annual “Peace with Justice” resource packet and posted on the RCA website.
- A variety of denominational networks for information-sharing and coordinated action are helping to provide resources, training, and opportunities for various peacemaking ministries. These include Middle East Peacemakers, Caring for Creation Coordinators, and the Office of Social Witness “Action Alert” mailing list.
- Through Reformed Church World Service the RCA has actively supported the “People-to-People” peace process in Sudan.
- The General Synod has called on the church to make racial justice and reconciliation a priority (MGS 1998, pp. 119-134), encouraging congregations to develop model ministries for breaking down barriers between people of different racial and ethnic backgrounds.
- Peacemaking is an integral part of the RCA’s understanding of mission. “Discipling All Nations,” the guiding document for the denomination’s mission programs, affirms:
We advocate for peace and work for justice and mercy. We dialogue with others to call upon rulers and civil authorities to heed the prophetic standards of the gospel. We advocate for peace in places of war and violence and seek justice and mercy for the poor, the oppressed, and those afflicted by natural disasters (Isaiah 58 and Micah 6:8).

Discipling the Forces of Poverty. We believe the heart of God is grieved by the injustice of humanity. God brings down the powerful from their thrones and lifts up the lowly; God fills the hungry with good things and sends the rich away empty (adapted from Luke 1:52-53). We believe the abject poverty of a quarter of the world’s people, most of whom are women and children, demands the advocacy of the church for mercy and justice. We are committed to challenging the injustice and racism of our systems, to being peacemakers, to working for the preservation and restoration of creation, to alleviating hunger, to providing disaster relief, to empowering communities.

The commission recommended:

R-20
To encourage RCA congregations and institutions to teach, practice, and model nonviolence both for their own members and in service to their communities; to encourage congregations to include in their peace and justice ministries efforts that address structural, institutional violence and economic injustice; and further,

to encourage congregations to participate in the Decade to Overcome Violence by sharing their ideas and experiences with member churches of the World Council of Churches (WCC-U.S. Office, 475 Riverside Drive, New York, NY 10115; email: worldcoun@aol.com).

The advisory committee recommended:

R-20 (amended):
To encourage RCA congregations and institutions to teach, practice, and model nonviolence both for their own members and in service to their communities; and further,

to encourage congregations to include in their peace and justice ministries efforts that address structural, institutional violence and economic injustice; and further,

to encourage congregations to participate in the Decade to Overcome Violence by sharing their ideas and experiences with the RCA Office of Social Witness; and further,

to instruct the Office of Social Witness to share this information with RCA congregations and the World Council of Churches. (ADOPTED AS AMENDED)

Reason: It is valuable to make this information available to RCA congregations as well as to the World Council of Churches.
R-21
To encourage congregations to receive an annual “peacemaking” offering in conjunction with Peace with Justice Sunday, designating half of the offering for peacemaking ministries in the local congregation or community and half for a denominational peacemaking program to be named each year by the General Synod Council; and further,

to direct the Office of Social Witness and Communication and Production Services to develop educational and promotional materials for the annual peacemaking offering. (ADOPTED)

R-22
To request that the minister for social witness and other appropriate staff explore the sharing of peacemaking resources and programs with other World Council of Churches member churches, especially the Formula of Agreement churches.

A motion was made to amend the recommendation:

R-22 (amended):
To request that the minister for social witness and other appropriate staff explore the sharing of peacemaking resources and programs with other World Council of Churches and National Council of Churches member churches, especially the Formula of Agreement churches. (ADOPTED AS AMENDED)

R-23
To request the Office of Social Witness and Reformed Church World Service to cooperate in identifying and developing resources and models for congregational workshops on the church’s response to the attacks of September 11, 2001.

The advisory committee recommended:

To request the Office of Social Witness and Reformed Church World Service to cooperate in identifying and developing resources and models for congregational workshops on the church’s response to the attacks of September 11, 2001, and other acts of terrorism.

A motion was made to amend the amendment:

R-23 (amended):
To request the Office of Social Witness and Reformed Church World Service to cooperate in identifying and developing resources and models for congregational workshops on the church’s response to the attacks of September 11, 2001, and other acts of terrorism both individual and institutional. (ADOPTED AS AMENDED)

Reason: Providing resources may help the church respond to events of September 11, 2001, as well as to other acts of terrorism.
Future Work

The commission plans to continue to address ethical issues raised by new genetic technologies. The commission will also be considering issues of energy conservation and energy policy.

The commission expresses the gratitude of the church to Terry Troia and Eddie Aleman, who are completing their terms of service on the commission. Their gifts of energy, insight, and compassion have enriched the work of the commission, and we trust, will continue to enrich the ministry of the wider church.

Report of the General Synod Council’s Congregational Services Committee

REPORT OF THE OFFICE OF SOCIAL WITNESS

Obeying the command and trusting the promise, the people of the Reformed Church in America seek to be Faithful Witnesses to Christ’s resurrection, ministering to the total life of all people by preaching, teaching, and proclamation of the gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God, and by all Christian good works.

The work of the Office of Social Witness is one part of a common effort in Reformed Church to live out ministries of worship, discipleship, equipping leaders, and outreach in a wholistic way, as faithful witnesses to the gospel message of Jesus Christ. Our joint summary report, Faithful Witnesses, is found in this book in the section titled Evangelization and Church Growth; this is the detailed report of the Office of Social Witness.

MAKING DISCIPLES

Under the guidance of the Word and Holy Spirit the church is called to form people whose lives are shaped after the life and teachings of Jesus. They will follow Jesus in ministering to those in need, standing with those who are oppressed, and comforting those who sorrow. They will follow Jesus in being a people who are called to do justice, to love kindness, and to walk humbly with God (Micah 6:8). The making of Jesus-followers and cross-carriers is a lifelong process and belongs to the entire community of faith. Through worship and teaching, through prayer and in ministry to those in need, in our witness in the world and in our life together, we are called to help each other grow up in every way into Christ (Ephesians 4:15).

Equipping Disciples to Witness for Justice, Peace, and the Care of Creation

With the assistance of Robin Hoy, associate for social witness, the Office of Social Witness continues to enlist and equip additional “Caring for Creation Coordinators.” Nearly fifty coordinators are now serving as resource persons for congregations by providing resources and opportunities to learn about environmental issues and the biblical theology of creation; helping churches and families with ideas for more creation-friendly lifestyles; and providing information about important legislation on environmental issues.
Several RCA Caring for Creation Coordinators participated in an ecumenical conference, “On Earth As It Is in Heaven: Witnessing to the Healing of God’s Creation,” held in May 2001 in Washington, D.C.; a newsletter by and for coordinators is published periodically; and Earth Day Sunday resources on the theme, “Caring for God’s Creation: Making the World Safe for Children,” were developed in cooperation with the National Council of Churches Eco-Justice Working Group and posted early this year.

The General Synod has several times encouraged Reformed Church congregations to participate in Bread for the World, a Christian citizens’ movement that helps hungry people by writing, calling, and visiting U.S. decision-makers regarding legislation that addresses hunger and its causes. The Office of Social Witness continues to encourage congregation-al participation in Bread for the World’s annual Offering of Letters and in the Covenant Church program. The office helped to sponsor regional Offering of Letters workshops and facilitates RCA participation in the Bread for the World national gathering in June.

Resources for worship, study, and action were sent to each congregation following the September 11 attacks on the World Trade Center and the Pentagon. Additional resources for equipping the church’s peace-with-justice witness were posted on the RCA website.

The Office of Social Witness also maintains a mailing list of RCA members who receive periodic “action alerts” on various issues, and it responds to numerous requests for information on social issues and for resources to equip congregations for their witness in society.

General Synod Referrals

The General Synod requested that the Office of Social Witness compile a summary of previous statements on genetics and related issues and make this available to the church (MGS 2001, R-110, p. 384). The synod also directed the Office of Social Witness to explore with the larger Christian community the ethical and theological issues raised by new genetic technologies (MGS 2001, R-111, p. 385).

A brochure listing the previous General Synod statements on genetics as well as suggested study resources available from the RCA Distribution Center was sent to each congregation. Congregations were also invited to identify people (such as genetic counselors, scientists, health professionals, and ethicists) who could serve as resource people or represent the denomination in ecumenical forums and dialogues.
REPORTS ON CHRISTIAN EDUCATION AND DISCIPLESHIP

Report of the Commission on Race and Ethnicity

The General Synod of 1998 charged the Commission on Race and Ethnicity (CORE) to “coordinate planning for the Decade Freed from Racism” and to establish steps that would enable the denomination to work toward this goal (MGS 1998, R-10, p. 131). Now, nearly two and one-half years into the Decade Free from Racism, there is concern among commission members that the denomination as a whole is not as urgent and intentional as it should be in dismantling racism. The events of September 11 and the United Nations World Conference Against Racism (August 8 - September 7, 2001) have made it even clearer that the abomination and sin of racism must be actively, prayerfully, and intentionally eradicated.

In June 2001, the commission presented its action plan to the General Synod (MGS 2001, pp. 388-394). In its report this year it seeks to report the status of the components of the recommendations approved by the 2001 General Synod and to offer additional recommendations in pursuing the goal of freeing the denomination from racism.

1. Affirming the theological foundations that inform our life and witness as a denomination.

The 2001 General Synod adopted recommendations “to endorse and use the theological foundation of the Belhar Confession to inform the RCA’s commitment to be a church freed from racism” (MGS 2001, R-115, p. 389) and “to invite members of congregations and classes to carefully study the Belhar Confession and the implications of its adoption for life and ministry in the Reformed Church in America, using materials made available by the Commission on Christian Unity, and further, to respond to the Commission on Race and Ethnicity by January 2003” (MGS 2001, R-116, p. 389).

There is little evidence that the Belhar Confession has been used to inform the RCA’s commitment to be a church freed from racism. Communication with the Commission on Christian Unity (CCU) has been established, and the CCU is implementing steps toward engaging congregations to study the Belhar Confession and its implications for the RCA. Delegates are encouraged to read the report of the Commission on Christian Unity.

2. Educating ourselves as members of the Reformed Church in America about the history and meaning of racism, our complicity in it, our reasons to oppose it, and the strategies by which we can participate in its elimination.

Last year the commission commended to the church “Bringing Racism to Light for a Decade Freed from Racism,” written by the Commission on Christian Action (MGS 1998, pp. 119-130), for study and discussion. It has become clear over the year, however, that individual and institutional anti-racism efforts need a great deal more attention. While there is some activity throughout the denomination around issues of race, ethnicity, cross-cultural activities, and inclusion, much of it seems to lack the coordination, urgency, and passion necessary to effectively address racism within the denomination. Communication often seems poor. People who have related portfolios seem to have limited knowledge of each other’s work. The levels of commitment and passion vary widely.

R-24
To instruct the director of Policy, Planning, and Administration Services, in consultation with racial/ethnic council staff, to identify RCA staff with significant portfolios concerned with race, ethnicity, inclusion, and cross-cultural activities to attend a consultation on racism.
The advisory committee recommended the following amendment:

**R-24 (amended):**
To instruct the General Synod Council, in consultation with racial/ethnic council staff, to identify RCA staff with significant portfolios concerned with race, ethnicity, inclusion, and cross-cultural activities, and to invite them, along with other RCA-interested parties, to attend a consultation on racism. (ADOPTED AS AMENDED)

**Reasons:**

1. It is more appropriate for the General Synod to instruct the General Synod Council, rather than an individual staff member.

2. Inviting parties that are interested in the RCA will increase representation and the impact of the work.

**Budget implications:** Those attending will cover their own travel and lodging.

**R-25**
To instruct the director of Policy, Planning, and Administration Services, in consultation with members of the Commission on Race and Ethnicity, to develop a process to survey the church on attitudes, perceptions, and beliefs about the commitment of the RCA toward freeing the denomination from racism and those barriers that inhibit its achievement.

The advisory committee recommended the amendment:

To instruct the General Synod Council, in consultation with members of the Commission on Race and Ethnicity, to survey the church on attitudes, perceptions, and beliefs about the commitment of the RCA toward freeing the denomination from any forms of racism and those barriers that inhibit the achievement of this goal.

A motion was made to amend the amendment:

**R-25 (amended):**
To instruct the General Synod Council, in consultation with members of the Commission on Race and Ethnicity and the racial/ethnic councils, to survey the church on attitudes, perceptions, and beliefs about the commitment of the RCA toward freeing the denomination from any forms of racism and those barriers that inhibit the achievement of this goal. (ADOPTED AS AMENDED)

**Reasons:**

1. It is more appropriate for the General Synod to instruct the General Synod Council, rather than an individual staff member.

2. The changes add clarity about the work called for.

**Budget implications:** $4,830.
With respect to education resources the 2001 General Synod adopted the following recommendation:

To urge the Office of Christian Education, in its partnership with publishers of educational materials, to advocate for the involvement of racial/ethnic people in the design, development, and editorial review processes, in an effort to make educational resources appropriate for use in all of the congregations that make up the diversity that is the RCA (MGS 2001, R-117, p. 390).

The commission looks forward to reading the report of the Office of Christian Education to learn of progress in this area, and to encourage continued efforts that will make all resources racially and culturally sensitive. Noteworthy is the funding for a multicultural writing team, headed by Dr. Colleen Weissner, which will develop the ability of racial/ethnic people to prepare curriculum materials.

The 2001 General Synod also voted:

To instruct the Office of Christian Education, in consultation with the racial/ethnic councils, to seek Christian education materials appropriate for nurturing the faith of children, youth, and adults in churches whose members are racial/ethnic persons, to recommend these materials through denominational channels, and to distribute them through the RCA Distribution Center (MGS 2001, R-118, p. 390).

In conversation with education staff, the CORE has learned of significant progress made in seeking Christian education materials appropriate for nurturing the faith of racial/ethnic persons. Also of note are the publication of the Learning for Life notebook, which involved racial/ethnic writers and contributors, and the addition of Aventuras, a bilingual (Spanish and English) church school resource, to the resources available from the RCA Distribution Center.

There is a continuing problem regarding getting the materials to the churches. CORE urges the director of Policy, Planning, and Administration Services to include those involved in distribution of resources in the consultation on racism.

There is a continuing need for churches to address the literacy needs of adults and children in their communities, as well as the need to have age-appropriate racial/ethnic cultural curriculum written from a Christian perspective.

The advisory committee recommended to adopt the recommendation:

**R-26**
To instruct the Office of Christian Education, working in cooperation with the staff of the racial/ethnic councils, to convene education consultations in connection with the annual meetings of the councils, for the express purpose of exploring the unique educational needs of racial/ethnic communities and the types of culturally specific curriculum that could meet those needs; and further,

to instruct the Office of Christian Education and the RCA Distribution Center to explore the most cost-effective means for making the multicultural resources identified through these consultations available to all RCA congregations.
A motion was made to amend the recommendation:

**R-26 (amended):**
To instruct the Office of Christian Education, working in cooperation with the staff of the racial/ethnic councils and the Commission on Race and Ethnicity, to convene education consultations in connection with the annual meetings of the councils, for the express purpose of exploring the unique educational needs of racial/ethnic communities and the types of culturally specific curriculum that could meet those needs; and further,

to instruct the Office of Christian Education and the RCA Distribution Center to explore the most cost-effective means for making the multicultural resources identified through these consultations available to all RCA congregations. (ADOPTED AS AMENDED)

3. Participating in transformative experiences to reshape our thinking, feeling, and actions, such as anti-racism workshops, cross-cultural dialogues, and celebrations of diversity.

Anti-racism training for staff has begun, though it was slowed by September 11. Increased urgency should be placed on getting more staff through anti-racism training as quickly as possible, and developing teams capable of facilitating and leading anti-racism training.

The cross-cultural dialogues and celebrations of diversity have been uneven, though the commission notes that there has been an increase in these events. A highlight was the “Youth for Understanding” week between Trinity Reformed Church in Grand Rapids, Michigan, and First Reformed Church in Jamaica, New York.

4. Developing lay and pastoral leadership from among the membership of racial/ethnic congregations for ministry within the whole church.

No specific recommendations were made in this area last year, though specific possibilities were stated. Two areas of need clearly stand out: Christian education leadership and pastoral leadership. As the RCA wrestles with these issues, CORE urges that the needs of racial/ethnic communities be included.

5. Reshaping institutional structures that perpetuate racism within the RCA in order to include and affirm the gifts and ministries of the diverse people who are and will be members of this denomination.

The 2001 General Synod affirmed “the ethnic diversity priority objectives of the General Synod Council” (*MGS 2001*, R-123, p. 394). CORE encourages all staff and members of the RCA to work unceasingly to address racism in all its forms so that the Reformed Church can be hospitable to people of all races and cultures.

The Commission on Race and Ethnicity has observed during this year that it faces a multitude of challenges as it engages in its work to assist the RCA in becoming a fully multiracial, fully multicultural church that reflects the image of the kingdom to come. While it is difficult for God’s people to openly and honestly address racism, God requires that justice be done with respect to this powerful evil, both in our church and in society at large.

As the Commission on Race and Ethnicity continues to move forward, it will begin to more fully examine the successful strategies being used by our ecumenical partners as they address racism. Our partners have achieved a level of success that might be instructive to the commission and denominational leaders.
As the Commission on Race and Ethnicity and denominational leaders continue to implement elements of the Decade Freed from Racism, they will seek the active support and involvement of all members of the RCA. The reality of the RCA freed from racism will only be achieved when God’s people come together in prayer, with full commitment, and led by the Holy Spirit.

Report of Central College

Introduction

As Central College lived out its 149th year of existence in 2001-2002, it once again became clear that the mission it shares with the Reformed Church in America, to wholly educate young men and women in mind, body, and spirit, remains a calling of the highest order.

No one accurately predicted the tragic events of September 11, and certainly no one could fully comprehend how those events might impact the lives of college students on campuses across our land. Following the attacks, the days at Central were filled with many questions, the release of untested emotions, and community heartache at the loss of one of its own on the plane that crashed into the Pentagon. However, it can also be said that the students, faculty, and staff responded to the crisis as a gathered community of faith, fully aware of its spiritual roots and seeking the comfort, grace, and wisdom of almighty God.

It is strong confirmation for Central College to know that the historic Christian ties it shares with the RCA continue to matter in this place today, and it is with gratitude that this annual report is submitted to the General Synod of the Reformed Church in America.

Enrollment

A year ago it was reported that Central’s total fall enrollment (1,495 students) was the highest it had been in nearly a decade. It is a pleasure to report that Central began this year with a total enrollment of 1,623 students, which was an 8 percent increase over last year’s ten-year high. Since the beginning of 1997 enrollment has grown by over 350 students, roughly equivalent to one new class of students.

Student persistence data also continues to show signs of real strength. Of the 412 new freshmen who started in the fall of 2001, 389 (94 percent) were enrolled in the spring semester. This percentage for the first time exceeded the strategic plan persistence goal and strongly indicates that Central is well on its way to fully delivering on its promises to students and their families.

The most recent enrollment predictors for the fall 2002 freshmen class are very encouraging. As of February 15, total applications and acceptances had surpassed by 8 percent the numbers reported from a year ago. Five hundred three accepted high school students were invited to participate in the distinguished/outstanding student scholarship competitions early in the year. The average ACT composite for those students was 26.

Academic Affairs

At the core of the Central College experience is the academic program. Central continues to enjoy a strong academic reputation with national implications. Led by the newest mem-
ber of the college administrative team, Vice President of Academic Affairs Dr. Paul Naour, faculty members bring distinction to Central College by way of teaching, scholarship, and research. A few notable achievements among the faculty in 2001-2002 deserve special mention.

- Dr. Terence Kleven, associate professor of religion, was named 2001 Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching Iowa Professor of the Year. The award, co-sponsored by the Council for the Advancement and Support of Education, recognizes outstanding educators in forty-five states and the District of Columbia.
- Dr. Patricia Westfall, associate professor of French, was one of fifteen teachers in the United States selected by the American Association of Teachers of French to participate in a Quebec research seminar funded by the government of Quebec. She spent a week in Quebec City and Montreal learning about the province from a wide variety of lecturers.
- Dr. Chia Ning, associate professor of history, was awarded a 2002 ASIANetwork Freeman Fellowship Award for student-faculty research in China. Ning and five Central students will spend three weeks in China this summer doing individual research projects. The group will be based at Zhejiang University in Hangzhou, which is also the site of Central’s China study abroad program.

Student Life

The student life program at Central provides opportunities for students to participate in the life of the college beyond the classroom. Considering that students actually spend a very small portion of their time in class, it is important that they have other means available to them to develop community, to learn about relationships, to grow as people, and to simply set aside time for fun. At Central this is accomplished through a multitude of activities and events that include student government, clubs, special concerts, theater, intercollegiate and intramural sports, musical groups, and service projects. Below are listed just a few of the student life highlights from 2001-2002.

- Central won a record twenty-fifth Iowa Conference football championship and made its sixteenth NCAA playoff appearance, the most of any Division III college. Central’s regular season record was 9-1, before losing in a second-round overtime game to traditional power Pacific Lutheran.
- The Central women’s softball team finished second in the NCAA Division III championship, making its sixteenth NCAA tournament appearance.
- The Central Mock Trial team took home more awards than any other school from the Topeka Regional Qualifier Mock Trial tournament. Central fielded two teams with the varsity team taking second place overall, qualifying them for the American Mock Trial Association National Intercollegiate Championship tournament. With the awards received in Topeka, senior and team captain Abbe Brunink from McBain, Michigan’s Rehoboth Reformed Church holds the all-time Central record for most Outstanding Attorney Awards.

Life in the Spirit

The spiritual climate at Central is very exciting. Approximately half of the student body is actively engaged in various Christian ministries on campus, in the community, and across the state and nation. The ministries include opportunities for students to engage in social witness, in various Bible studies, in work trips, in large group gatherings, and in weekly campus worship.

According to Chaplain Joe Brummel, leaders from the various campus ministries are working together, perhaps like they never have before, and have come together as a real team dedicated to the cause of Christ at Central. A good example of this cooperation is the Wednesday night Intervarsity-sponsored praise and worship time called “9” that weekly fills Douwstra Auditorium.
A new ministry at Central this year is the Student Retreat Team. Approximately thirty students, many of whom are interested in pursuing youth ministry as a career, have come together to offer weekend retreats both on and off campus for area high school- and middle school-age youth groups. Under the direction of Brummel and campus worship and drama leader Matt Hugg, the students have hosted groups from several RCA churches in Iowa and also have taken retreats on-site to Third Reformed Church in Pella and Meredith Drive Reformed Church in Des Moines.

Student interest in service opportunities continues to run high. Nearly sixty students traveled to Reynosa, Mexico, over Christmas break to work in an orphanage, to build a home, and to distribute food and quilts to needy families. Another mission trip took place over spring break, when students worked with Mary House Ministries, a shelter for homeless people in Washington, D.C.

The Campaign for Central

In October 1999 the Central College Board of Trustees approved the start of the largest campaign in Central College history. The Campaign for Central is seeking at least $50 million over the next few years to strengthen the college’s program in a number of critical ways. Among the areas to emerge near the top of the list of priorities are endowed scholarships and student support, technology, faculty development, facility enhancement, and campus-life programs. Still in its “silent phase,” campaign giving as of December 31, 2001, approached $31 million in outright gifts, short-term pledges, and deferred commitments. Recent notable contributions include:

- Gifts of farmland from the estates of John Poole and Janet Fovargue totaling more than $1.1 million, which will be used to create endowed scholarships and the Poole Chair in the Humanities.
- A gift of $200,000 from the Starr Foundation to augment the C.V. Starr Endowed Scholarship Fund.
- A $270,000 bequest from 1940 Central graduate Lillian Waalkes’s estate to create an endowed scholarship for music students.

The Changing Campus Landscape

President David Roe has said that during his tenure at Central it is his intention to “keep mud on the campus”—to match the college’s steep growth curve with updates and additions to the campus physical plant. Since Roe’s arrival early in 1998, new campus construction has included the Weller Center for Business and International Studies, the Ron Schipper Fitness Center, and Firth House, a student residence townhouse. Also, major renovations to Graham Hall, the Cox-Snow Music Building recital hall, and the college’s heating and cooling plant have added credence to Roe’s stated designs.

In 2001-2002 the $20-million expansion and renovation of the Vermeer Science Center (VSC) was begun. When the project is completed in the fall of 2003 the VSC, which was originally built in 1978, will include over 75,000 square feet of classroom, laboratory, and office space, nearly tripling the size of the existing facility. The VSC is the second environmental “green building” construction project on campus and the first designed to voluntarily meet the United States Green Building Council standards. Central is pursuing what is believed to be the first LEED (Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design) building certification in the state of Iowa from the council.

Conclusion

Central College next year will celebrate its sesquicentennial. It will mark 150 years of distinguished service as an institution founded upon the high ideals of the Christian faith. Throughout its long history—including the eighty-six years it has enjoyed a partnership with the RCA—the vision, the prayers, the sacrifice, and the gifts of literally thousands of people have blessed Central. It is in this spirit of service to others that Central has indeed received and now counts it a marvelous privilege to gratefully give to others in return.
Report of Hope College

Introduction

It is a pleasure to submit this report to the General Synod of the Reformed Church in America. As a college Hope treasures its covenantal relationship with the denomination and pledges itself anew to fulfilling with distinction the mission of the college and its affiliation with the RCA.

Hope interprets the Covenant of Mutual Responsibilities to include the delivery of an excellent liberal arts education with a distinctly Christian dimension. In turn the denomination covenants to uplift the college regularly in its prayers, encourage its young women and men to attend one of the three RCA colleges, and support these institutions financially. Obviously there are short-term and long-term benefits that accrue from a dynamic relationship between the colleges and the denomination. Unlike most denominations, which have several affiliated colleges, the RCA has only three. It is our collective judgment at Hope that we have not yet learned fully how to maximize the benefits of this relationship to the mutual advantage of the colleges and the denomination. We hereby indicate our genuine interest in doing so.

The core values of Hope College can be identified as follows:

1. An exceptional academic program
2. An ability to contribute to the body of knowledge in most academic disciplines
3. A vibrant Christian community
4. A development of the whole person: mind, body, and spirit
5. A stewardship of resources
6. A caring community

These core values drive the college’s decision-making on a daily basis as well as in the long-term. Hope’s overarching goal is to provide an exceptional academic experience in a vibrantly Christian atmosphere, in a disarmingly hospitable way.

Admissions

Hope began its 2001-2002 academic year with 2,999 students enrolled. This represented the second highest enrollment ever. An outstanding retention from first to second semester helped to ensure the largest spring semester enrollment in the history of the college. Twenty-three percent of Hope students this year indicated affiliation with the RCA, up from 17 percent just a few years ago. For this the college is grateful.

There is a concern, however, for the fall of 2002-2003. Applications to date are down from last year, and much of this decrease is attributed to fewer applications from RCA students. With several million dollars of endowed scholarships targeted specifically for RCA students, the college is hopeful of making it financially feasible for every student from the denomination to attend Hope.

Academic Life

The college continues to be very proud of the quality of the educational experience at Hope. There is a highly qualified faculty dedicated to teaching and learning in the context of the historic Christian faith. A low faculty/student ratio enables individual attention and collaborative research between faculty and students. Hope’s faculty has the ability to teach well and to engage in meaningful scholarship that adds to the body of knowledge in virtually every discipline represented on the campus. Oftentimes this scholarship includes students and faculty working closely together. During this past year alone, Hope faculty members published twenty-six books. In addition, 254 articles (several jointly with Hope students) were published in refereed journals.
Dr. James N. Boelkins was elected provost on January 24, 2002, by official action of the board of trustees.

James Boelkins is a 1966 Hope graduate who is currently vice provost of Grand Valley State University’s Pew Campus in Grand Rapids, Michigan. His career has been spent in higher education, including faculty positions at the University of North Dakota School of Medicine and the Southern Illinois University School of Medicine. He has been with Grand Valley since July of 2000 and served as chief academic officer at Geneva College in Beaver Falls, Pennsylvania, from 1985 to 2000.

While at Hope, Boelkins majored in biology. He completed a master of science degree at the University of North Dakota, Grand Forks, in 1968, received a doctorate in pharmacology at the University of Missouri at Columbia in 1971, and has done postdoctoral work at Pennsylvania State University. He and his wife, Barbara, who also attended Hope, have three children.

Dr. Boelkins’ official appointment begins July 1, 2002. Until then, the college remains enthusiastically committed to the 2001-2002 year transition team of deans led so capably by Dr. Nancy Miller, who is serving as interim provost. There is considerable confidence that Boelkins will lead Hope to new levels of academic distinction.

Student Activities

For the sixteenth time in twenty-two years, Hope has captured the MIAA All-Sports Award. This is a significant achievement that demonstrates superiority in both women’s and men’s sports across the board. For the first time in its history, Hope had a student-athlete secure Academic All-American status in two sports. Kim Grotenhuis, from Hamilton, Michigan, achieved these high honors in volleyball and softball.

In men’s swimming, junior Josh Boss, from Jenison, Michigan, was named the Division III swimmer of the year. Boss has been an NCAA All-American thirteen times, including being a national champion five times.

Spiritual Life

The chapel program at Hope continues to flourish. Four times each week the Chapel is filled to overflowing by students who voluntarily come to Monday/Wednesday/Friday chapel and the Sunday evening Gathering. The chaplain staff, under the very capable leadership of Hinga-Boersma Dean of the Chapel Timothy Brown, is very effective in sharing the biblical message in both word and deed.

We are deeply grateful to Western Theological Seminary for allowing Dr. Brown to serve Hope in this capacity during the present academic year while also fulfilling his duties as Henry Bast Professor of Preaching at the Seminary.

Each year during spring break, approximately three hundred Hope students volunteer for mission trips at over twenty sites across the country and abroad.

Capital Campaign

Hope is very engaged in a capital campaign recently increased to $105 million. This goal is nearly double that of Hope’s previously largest capital campaign.

The campaign has four major initiatives: 1) an expansion and renovation of the current Peale Science Center; 2) an enhanced endowment for student scholarships, endowed positions, and building maintenance; 3) the construction of the DeVos Fieldhouse; and 4) other campus development, including the construction of the Martha Miller Center for the
departments of communication and modern/classical languages, renovations of the Dow Center and Lubbers Hall, renovating Dimnent Chapel (already completed), the purchase of available property in the eastern gateway to the college campus, and the restoration of historic Graves Hall. Current commitments to the campaign total $83 million. The college is deeply grateful for the generosity of alumni and friends.

The board of trustees has made the courageous decision to move ahead with construction of the Peale Science Center addition. This $25 million project will nearly double the space for Hope’s nationally reputable science program, which is marked by collaborative faculty/student research both during the academic year and in the summer. This model, which has been pioneered by Hope, requires special laboratory space. Upon completion of the addition immediately west of the present Peale Science Center, the college is hopeful of renovating the current building at an additional cost of $11 million.

Financial Affairs

In the midst of such a large capital campaign, the college remains mindful of the necessity of balancing the operational budget ($64 million)—something Hope has done for thirty-four consecutive years. With a capped enrollment of 3,000 students and a difficult economy, it is understandable that this is no small challenge.

Last year’s gift income of $13,531,698 was the third largest in Hope’s history. As the college strives diligently to more fully achieve its mission, the generous support of alumni, friends, churches, and foundations remains deeply cherished.

Report of Northwestern College

Introduction

Just before his death at the hands of the Nazis, Dietrich Bonhoeffer wrote that the great human need is to recognize “the significant in the midst of the factual.” Daily we are bombarded in every area of our lives with more information than we know what to do with. We are also, very much like Bonhoeffer, confronted with tragic and confusing realities that cry out for meaning. What we deeply desire is “education for wisdom.”

It is education for wisdom to which Northwestern College is committed as she enters her 120th year of service.

Admissions

God continues to bless Northwestern, and the 2001-2002 school year has been an especially impressive one. The fall 2001 enrollment of 1,294 students set an all-time record. The student body represents thirty-three states, fifteen countries, and twenty-six denominational groups. Due to housing and classroom constraints, fall 2002 enrollment will be limited to thirteen hundred as a task force of faculty and staff examine the ramifications of growth across campus.

Last fall Northwestern welcomed 456 students from RCA congregations across the denomination. This was the largest RCA representation in Northwestern’s student body since 1982.
The quality of Northwestern’s students remains strong. The Norman Vincent Peale Scholarship Competition is hosted on campus each February. Eighty students compete for eight Peale Scholarships as faculty and staff evaluate their academic ability, Christian commitment, and leadership potential. These Peale finalists form the nucleus of each incoming class. The current freshmen recorded the second highest ACT average on record, 24.2.

A major challenge and commitment for Northwestern is the recruiting of international and ethnic minority students from the United States. Northwestern will be one of twelve schools selected by the Gates Foundation this spring to participate in a conference on “Ensuring the Success of Minority Students and Faculty.” This experience will undoubtedly enhance Northwestern’s ability to enrich the composition of campus.

Academic Affairs

A new level of science education was made possible this past fall by a four-year, $400,000 National Institute of Health grant to establish a research laboratory, under the leadership of Dr. Ralph Davis. Dr. Davis is testing drugs that will be effective at blocking parasitic worms that contribute to malnutrition throughout the world. Six to ten students a year have the opportunity to do primary research in this new state-of-the-art physiological recording laboratory.

Nine of Northwestern’s academic departments are listed in the 2002 edition of Rugg’s Recommendation on the Colleges, a national guidebook that recommends specific college academic departments to prospective students. Recommended are biology, chemistry, education, history, music, physics, religion, theater, and athletic training. U.S. News and World Report once again named Northwestern as a “top tier” midwestern comprehensive liberal arts college and for the second consecutive year selected Northwestern as the number one best buy in the Midwest region.

Northwestern continues to expand off-campus learning opportunities. Five cross-cultural travel courses will be offered in summer 2002, with on-campus study and travel to London, Mexico, Taiwan, Granada, and the Czech Republic. Last August Vice President for Academic Affairs Karen Cianci was selected to participate in a Kellogg-funded study tour to South Africa to explore collaborative potential between South African and American colleges.

The department of Modern Foreign Languages has added a one-year certificate program in English as a Second Language (ESL) beginning in fall 2002. This program is aimed to help high school graduates hoping to enroll in U.S. colleges, business people who need to improve their English, or professionals who already have an undergraduate degree but need to improve their English skills for entrance into an English-speaking graduate program.

The business and mathematics departments have implemented a new actuarial science major to enhance interest in actuarial science. The Casualty Actuarial Society and the Society of Actuaries have officially recognized the new program, which opens a new employment opportunity for math and business students.

Spiritual Life

The theme in chapel this last year has been “Restoration.” Northwestern tries to take seriously the calling to be a people restored in the reign of God by following Christ. One preaching series entitled “Restoration Rhythms” explored how forming a life in rhythm with Sabbath keeping, Scripture study, prayer, and worship help form a life of restoration with God, creation, and all humankind. In another series, Chaplain Trygve Johnson worked with a select group of students exploring the themes of restoration as Jesus addressed them in his famous sermon in Matthew, chapters 5 through 7. Guest speakers during the year
included Jerry Sittser, Mary Stewart Van Leeuwen, Keith Anderson, Gregory Wolfe, Roger Nelson, Michael Sider-Rose, and Leanne Van Dyk. Faculty and staff also provided leadership, often by sharing their testimonies of faith in segments called “House Stories.” Greg Scheer, the new director of church music, has led music for chapel.

Global and community service opportunities continue to attract more and more students. This last spring two hundred forty-five students participated in twelve projects (nine in the United States and three overseas), and this summer twenty-two students will serve six to ten weeks in seventeen countries. Throughout the year student groups regularly work in local soup kitchens and assist in regional Habitat for Humanity projects. Many also visit McCrossens’ Boys Ranch and the South Dakota State Penitentiary. During the Christmas season the campus community participated in the Angel Tree gift program for children of prisoners.

This past year also saw a renewed emphasis on spiritual formation and discipleship. Forty students served as facilitators for weekly small group Bible studies, and in addition to a weekly campus-wide prayer meeting, many small groups met regularly to pray. Last winter President Murphy and his wife led a weekend retreat for all students.

**Student Affairs**

In June of 2001, at approximately the same time as General Synod, Northwestern served as host for the national conference for the Association of Christians in Student Development (ACSD). More than five hundred members attended this conference, which was highlighted by keynote speakers William Bennett and Calvin Miller and included a Dutch cultural festival in downtown Orange City.

During this last year Northwestern has begun a reexamination of the Student Life mission and the values that drive it. Northwestern has not done this in over twelve years. In the three years of preparation for hosting the national ACSD conference, the Student Life staff was in many ways consumed by that event. During the last year Northwestern also lost two stalwarts from the Student Life staff. Dave Nonnemacher and Connie Julius together served for almost twenty-five years at Northwestern. Though the Student Life program has long been highly respected on and off campus, it seemed to be a good time to stand back and take a fresh look at what student development is at Northwestern College.

The Student Life staff has been involved in a weekly series of discussions based on the book by Roger Van Oech, *A Whack on the Side of the Head*. This weekly exploration was kicked off by a series of activities and exercises designed to stir the creative energies necessary for a better self-examination in the process of reinventing the Student Life area. In addition to examination of the department as a whole, the staff has also looked at themselves individually. Staff members are in the process of completing and interpreting Myers-Briggs Type Indicator profiles. Taking the Gallup StrengthsFinder is also on the schedule for the staff. Kim Case, newly promoted to associate dean of students, is preparing some culminating exercises and activities for the end of the year staff retreat. Student Life looks forward to seeing how God’s plan for the staff team and individuals within it unfolds during the coming year.

Leadership Development remains one of the strengths of Northwestern’s student life program. The twelfth annual Northwestern Leadership Conference featured Max De Pree as the keynote speaker. Approximately 250 students from ten schools attended this weekend event. Northwestern continues to expand the leadership opportunities for students. The outdoor adventure program now includes trips to the Boundary Waters, winter camping in northern Wisconsin, and a bike trip to the Black Hills. The newly developed Urban Plunge leadership training experience had a solid beginning with two successful trips to Minneapolis.

One of the most important areas of student life is the residence hall program. Record
enrollments fueled by the highest retention in over twenty years have triggered a need for additional housing. Construction was completed on a new apartment unit that houses forty-eight students. Two companion units, similar in design and construction, are to be completed by January 2003. Cottages once designated for general student housing are now scheduled for special theme-oriented occupancy (e.g., a Spanish language house, a house for men with a focus on integrity, and a Tamar house for women).

Northwestern College had another banner year in athletics, achieving its highest finish ever in the Sears Cup all-sports competition. The fifth-place finish nationally among all small schools was highlighted by the final-four appearance of the football team and national championships in men’s and women’s basketball. Only one other school has ever accomplished the feat of twin basketball championships in the same year. Northwestern’s accomplishment received national media attention and space in the Naismith Memorial Basketball Hall of Fame.

Finance

Even as things are changing in Financial Affairs, they also remain the same. After sixteen years of faithful service to the college, Wayne Kooiker has embarked upon a new career with Iowa State Bank in Orange City. While Wayne is not physically on campus anymore, he continues to be a strong advocate for the college. While on vacation in Japan after leaving the college, Wayne visited Northwestern’s sister institutions and alumni. Before leaving, Wayne made sure the stage was set for another record year at Northwestern.

Again this year, Northwestern had a record enrollment resulting in record revenue. The budget has grown to $17.5 million. Northwestern continues to be very thankful that individual and church supporters have continued their endorsement of the college mission by funding both operational and capital needs. No choices had to be made on expanding in one area at the expense of another. While there are always needs and uses for funds, the implementation of a five-year planning process has helped Northwestern focus on goals and priorities.

One of the key events of the fall semester was the deterioration of Northwestern’s endowment portfolio. The portfolio decreased about $2.7 million (8 percent) from June 30 to September 30, 2001, but was back up to $33.5 million as of December 31, 2001. This was accomplished through both market growth and a benevolent donor base. Growth of the endowment continues to be a goal for Northwestern. This will be necessary as the college strives to provide affordable excellence. About 35 percent of students’ costs are underwritten by institutional dollars on an annual basis.

As Northwestern hosts the RCA General Synod this summer, a prevalent theme on campus will be “Pardon Our Dust As We Progress.” Last spring the board of trustees approved the construction of the Theatre Arts Center. This project will involve the renovation and renewal of the old auditorium and provide a new appearance to the campus marquee corner. Northwestern is also spearheading the planning process for a new art department building. This will be a fast-track project so the facility can be used for this coming school year. In addition, the athletic track renovation will soon be complete.

Development

New records were established with the receipt of gifts exceeding $5.2 million in fiscal year 2001. During this last year Northwestern received the largest gift in school history, $2,145,323 from the estate of Margaret Surbeck. The funds will be used to endow the Norman Vincent Peale Scholarship, which Surbeck and her husband, Homer, established in 1984.

Strategic Funding Plan efforts have resulted in raising over $6 million in the silent phase of a $9 million campaign to build the Northwestern College Theatre Arts Center. Currently,
the primary objective of the development staff is to conduct campaign events and meet with individuals to encourage pledges and gifts to ensure the successful completion of this project. Efforts will also continue to provide continued growth for the endowment and raise support for the Northwestern Fund that provides for the ongoing daily operation of the college.

Long-time vice president for development at Northwestern College and a dear friend of many in the RCA, John Greller, underwent surgery for a kidney and pancreas transplant in November 2001. God’s blessings are evident as he continues to restore John’s health.

Conclusion

All Northwestern faculty, staff, and students are deeply grateful for the generous and loyal support of the Reformed Church in America. In these very challenging times, may God continue to strengthen the partnership of the RCA with Northwestern College as the college seeks to discern his will and follow his way of love.

From the Report of the General Synod Council’s Congregational Services Committee

OFFICE OF CHRISTIAN EDUCATION

Obeying the command and trusting the promise, the people of the Reformed Church in America seek to be Faithful Witnesses to Christ’s resurrection, ministering to the total life of all people by preaching, teaching, and proclamation of the gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God, and by all Christian good works.

The work of the Office of Christian Education and Faith Development is one part of a common effort in the Reformed Church to live out ministries of worship, discipleship, equipping leaders, and outreach in a wholistic way, as faithful witnesses to the gospel message of Jesus Christ. Our joint summary report, Faithful Witnesses, is found in the section of this book titled Evangelization and Church Growth; this is the detailed report of the Office of Christian Education.

Learning for Life

We have been given a remarkable gift, the gift of faith. In using this gift and in sharing it with others, we energize all of our members to share the good news of Jesus Christ and to live out their callings. We do this in part through a lifelong ministry of Christian education and discipleship: learning the faith, growing in faith, and sharing the faith.

In October 1998, the General Synod Council (GSC) approved the designation of the program year 2001-2002 as a Year for Education in the RCA, based on evidence that a vital and active ministry of Christian education is a key element in the health and growth of a congregation. The Council for Christian Education (CCE)—a cooperative programmatic team made up of representatives from each regional synod, the GSC Office of Christian Education, and the RCA’s racial-ethnic councils have produced a set of resources focused not simply on one year but on the long-term support and equipping of Christian education ministries in congregations. These are its key components:

A comprehensive educational notebook for equipping the education programs and the edu-
cators of local churches. This 250-page, loose-leaf notebook is designed to help congregations build a strong foundation for their Christian education ministries in a style that is consistent with a Reformed understanding of the importance of Christian education. The notebook includes Bible studies for leadership groups and adults on discipleship; workshops for teachers and others educators; evaluation tools; teaching aids; outcome guides; and other teacher- and leader-support material. The notebook has been described by some in the educational community (and outside the RCA) as “one of the best educational leadership resources in the last ten years.” Because of the generous contribution from an RCA member, the Office of Christian Education was able to offer the notebook free of charge to each RCA congregation who returned a request card mailed to them in April 2001. Since the late spring of 2001, 550 congregations have requested the notebook.

Regionally-based training for Christian educators. The Office of Christian Education and the eight regional synods jointly planned and carried out regionally-based equipping events for Christian educators during the 2001-2002 program year. More than five hundred educators from two hundred RCA congregations directly benefited from this training.

A monthly Learning for Life newsletter. Still Learning for Life offers concise learnings and resource suggestions to aid educators in congregational settings. About 60 percent of the almost six hundred monthly recipients receive their copy electronically via email; the other 40 percent are delivered by regular mail.

Church Herald advertising. At the core of the Learning for Life philosophy is the belief that, in today’s postmodern culture, lifelong learning—especially around issues of faith and faith practice—becomes not simply a hoped-for part of a Christian’s life, but a necessary part. The Learning for Life campaign has used the testimonies of RCA laypersons from a variety backgrounds to promote the ongoing learning and practicing of faith.

A denominational conference. The Council for Christian Education, with the Denominational Youth Team, will sponsor a by-invitation conference for eighty RCA educators and youth workers in October 2002 as a culmination of the first year of a “Year for Education.”

Children’s Ministry

When children are baptized in the RCA, parents, guardians, and the congregation promise to nurture children’s faith. The work of the children’s ministry office focuses on helping parents and congregations keep their promises by providing the best resources available and equipping and supporting the church’s ministry with children.

Children and Worship provides one way of being in worship with children four to seven years of age. Each week thousands of children experience, rather than merely learn about, worship through this program in over three hundred RCA churches.

Children and Worship training is a cooperative ministry of the Reformed Church in America (RCA), the Christian Reformed Church in North America (CRC), and The Presbyterian Church in Canada (PCC), with a network of twenty-three trainers throughout the U.S. and Canada. Newly commissioned trainers in the RCA are Carol Jones of Hope Community Church in Los Angeles, California, and Jeanne Van Hassel of Faith Reformed Church in Slate Hill, New York. Using the books Young Children and Worship, by Sonja Stewart and Jerome Berryman; I Wonder...More Bible Stories for Children and Worship, by Janet Schreuder; and Following Jesus: More About Young Children and Worship, by Sonja Stewart, worship leaders are trained through basic training events, enrichment events, and specialized events.

A trainers gathering for enriching and retooling the RCA, CRC, and PCC trainers occurs every eighteen months or two years. On June 22-24, 2001, trainers and supervisors gathered in Grand Rapids, Michigan, for this enrichment event, with Sonja Stewart as the keynote speaker.
**Children and Worship International.** The 1999 General Synod adopted the recommendation to explore the feasibility and need for establishing a world outreach training team for the Children and Worship ministry (MGS 1999, p. 142). The staffs of Congregational Services and Mission Services, 1999 General Synod President Frederick Kruithof, and Children and Worship trainers developed a proposal to bring the training program to The Gambia, Hungary, Kenya, and South Africa. Raising the funds for this “if-raised” project is an ongoing process.

**The Gambia.** Ruth De Haan and Jane Van Es, RCA missionaries in The Gambia, were trained by RCA Children and Worship trainers Ellen Vellenga and Marcia Floding; materials for one Children and Worship center were provided by the RCA.

**Hungary.** Working with missionaries David and Joy Zomer and Sarolta Nagy Fodorne, plans are underway for training events in Budapest and Nagykoros in spring 2003. Materials for Children and Worship centers will be provided.

**Kenya.** Working with Debbie Braaksma and the Presbyterian Church of East Africa, plans for this training event are dependent on raising the needed funds.

**South Africa.** Edna Pick from the Uniting Reformed Church in Southern Africa was trained by Sonja Stewart at Western Seminary and by Marcia Floding, an RCA trainer. The training event, led by RCA trainer Ellen Vellenga and Edna Pick, will take place the first week of September 2002. Materials for one Children and Worship center were shipped to Edna, and additional materials will be shipped for workshop participants.

**Curriculum**

**LiFE (Living in Faith Everyday).** This Bible-based curriculum for children in preschool through sixth grade jointly developed by Christian Reformed Church in North America and the Reformed Church in America, emphasizes faith nurture, faith knowledge, and faith modeling. LiFE continues to be the core curriculum used by the largest number of RCA congregations.

**Whole People of God.** This ecumenical, lectionary-based curriculum allows every age group in the congregation to study the same topic or biblical text on the same day. A Reformed Church in America denominational handbook helps teachers connect the themes from *Whole People of God* with RCA celebrations, history, sacraments, traditions, and missions. For the fall 2002 church school year, *Whole People of God* will be replaced by *Seasons of the Spirit*, a new lectionary-based curriculum.

**Walk with Me.** Developed by Faith Alive Christian Resources (formerly CRC Publications) in cooperation with the RCA, it will be available for fall 2004 as a replacement for *Bible Way*. RCA ethnic writers, led by Colleen Aalsburg Wiessner, will develop and write the two summer units for Walk with Me. RCA ethnic mentors and writers gathered in Grand Rapids, Michigan, on August 2-4, 2001, to participate in a writers conference. Participants included Pedro Agudelo, Willa Brown, Ella Campbell, Nancy Gillis, Sophia Overdiep, Alex Pak, George Patterson, Oliver Patterson, Steve Robbins, Darlene Serrano, Colleen Aalsburg Wiessner, and Nellie Rodriguez Windsor. Three RCA congregations also field-tested the first unit of materials.

**Living in Mission Everywhere (LIME).** This thirteen-session mission study designed for children in kindergarten through sixth grade helps children understand their role in reaching out to all people with God’s good news. Coordinated with the mission of the month focuses, the following sessions are now available: “Central and South America,” “Eastern Europe and Russia,” “Evangelism and Church Development,” “Japan,” “Mexico,” “Native American Indian Ministries,” “Reformed Church World Service,” and “United States.”
Resources: The children’s ministry office, with input from the Council for Christian Education partners, works with the RCA Distribution Center and TRAVARCA to make available the best and most effective resources for children’s ministry.

**Youth Ministry**

The youth and young people of the RCA are not the future of our churches; they are the church today. The work of youth ministry, in the words of Rodger Nishioka’s *Roots of Who We Are*, seeks to help young people know that they are created by God and belong to God forever; that they belong to a community of faith and must claim their place in it; that faith itself is a gift from God; that the Holy Spirit gives us what we need; that we can know God through the Scripture.

The Denominational Youth Team (DYT) coordinates the RCA response to the needs of youth workers and youth ministry at the congregational level, gathering together key youth staff and representatives from the denomination, including its racial-ethnic councils, and regional synods. Indeed, it is the councils and synods who provide the most programming and direct support for youth ministry; DYT serves as a coordinating and cooperative body. In addition, however, the office for youth ministry for the RCA sponsors these programs:

- **Project Timothy.** At sites around the world, RCA young people explore their own faith through service to others and commitment to God and to each other. Project Timothy is an annual summer event for high-school-aged youth.

- **Compass 21.** This evaluation tool helps congregations pinpoint key areas of youth ministry in which they have strength and areas in which they might seek improvement.

- **Regional events.** In gatherings like Genesis and Exodus (Regional Synod of the Great Lakes); Spectrum (Regional Synods of Albany, New York, and the Mid-Atlantics); Rocky Mountain High (Regional Synod of the Heartland); Winterfest (Regional Synod of Mid-America); and several smaller events, thousands of young people hear the gospel and find community.

Resources. The Denominational Youth Team and the Office of Christian Education partner with the RCA Distribution Center to offer a wide variety of resources for Christian education, youth group ministry, and other relational ministries with youth.

**Adult Christian Education**

It is not that knowledge of faith is no longer relevant in today’s society; knowledge is simply no longer enough. Adults today face increasingly difficult circumstances and settings in which their faith engages their life and work. That’s what makes the need so urgent for a multifaceted approach to the ministry of adult Christian education and faith formation. We do this in the following ways:

- **By encouraging Biblical engagement.** Through the Year of the Bible and other resources, a strong (and increasing) number of RCA congregations are participating in intentional, ongoing, congregationally-based studies of Scripture.

- **Through the identification and use of spiritual gifts.** In 2001 the General Synod voted “to direct the General Synod Council, through its Congregational Services Committee, to send the spiritual gifts packet ‘Every Christian—Called by God, Gifted for Ministry’ to the board of elders of every RCA congregation” (*MGS 2001*, R-53, p. 229). Every RCA congregation received this quality, usable resource that promotes a central tenet of the Reformed faith.
Through an intentional pursuit of possible programs or ministries with and for older adults. The Office of Christian Education intends to submit a full report, with recommendations, to the General Synod Council at its fall 2002 meeting.

Through resources for study and growth in faith. In partnerships with other denominations and Christian ministry organizations, and with the RCA Distribution Center, the Office of Christian Education has identified helpful and sound resources for adult study and spiritual growth.

In the establishment of Wind and Fire, the RCA Prayer Network newsletter. Inspired by Mission 2000 and led by the Rev. David Muyskens, the prayer network is enlisting a growing number of RCA members as committed partners in the work of the church through regular prayer and study.

Leadership Development

In addition to the resources provided through the Learning for Life initiative, the Office of Christian Education remains intentional in recommending ongoing opportunities for consistories, education committees, and other leadership groups to grow in both knowledge and action. We do this primarily through the recommendation of resources or through resourcing networks or teams and, when necessary, through the creation and publication of RCA-specific materials.

Discernment training. Following the remarkable experience of Mission 2000, the RCA committed to train a network of people in the art and ministry of discernment. Those trained discernment leaders led the 2001 General Synod through a process of discernment around the issue of leadership in the church, and will again guide the 2002 synod through a discernment process. In addition, the discernment model has been utilized in General Synod Council.

Consistory training. In 2000 a General Synod task force presented a report and an additional paper, “Faithful Consistories,” in which the concept of the pastorate—minister of Word and sacrament, elder, and deacon working together—was held up before the church as both a model and a goal. The Office of Christian Education has intentionally partnered with the diaconal ministry office and with Ministry Services to provide a more wholistic set of resources for consistories. These include: “Faithful Consistories,” produced out of the General Synod Task Force on Consistories (MGS 2000, p. 279), with a complete study guide; Called to Serve: Deacons and Elders Together, a twice-yearly newsletter specifically targeted for elders and deacons; Branches on the Vine, a consistory training workshop that can be self-led in congregations; The Ministry of the Elder and The Ministry of the Deacon guidebooks; and What’s an Elder to Be?, a new training video for elders that was in production during spring 2002 and slated to be available in time for General Synod.

Certification

The Office of Christian Education continues to seek means for the care and nurture of those persons providing leadership in Christian education and youth ministry across the denomination. A large majority of these persons serve in a non-ordained capacity. The process of certifying these persons by the classis as associates in ministry has been one way by which the whole church has recognized the importance of both Christian education and youth ministry and recognized those persons who are gifted for and called to these areas of ministry. The Office of Christian Education will continue to advocate for these persons and for their involvement in the life of the whole church.

General Synod Referrals

The 2001 General Synod, upon recommendation of its Commission on Race and Ethnicity, voted:
To urge the Office of Christian Education, in its partnership with publishers of educational materials, to advocate for the involvement of racial/ethnic people in the design, development, and editorial review processes, in an effort to make educational resources appropriate for use in all of the congregations that make up the diversity that is the RCA (*MGS 2001*, R-117, p. 390).

To instruct the Office of Christian Education, in consultation with the racial/ethnic councils, to seek Christian education materials appropriate for nurturing the faith of children, youth, and adults in churches whose members are racial/ethnic persons, to recommended these materials through denominational channels, and to distribute them through the RCA Distribution Center (*MGS 2001*, p. 390, R-118).

In response to these actions, the Office of Christian Education, through its working partnership with CRC Publications and with the assistance of the RCA’s racial-ethnic councils, proposed, funded, and implemented a racial-ethnic writer’s group, for the purpose of providing trained writers for a new curriculum resource being developed by FaithAlive Resources. (See the children’s ministry section of this report for additional details.) In addition, staff of the office met with the Commission on Race and Ethnicity in the spring of 2002 to further explore possible avenues for carrying out these two actions of General Synod.

**REPORT ON THE OFFICE OF WOMEN FUND DRIVE**

*Obeying the command and trusting the promise, the people of the Reformed Church in America seek to be Faithful Witnesses to Christ’s resurrection, ministering to the total life of all people by preaching, teaching, and proclamation of the gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God, and by all Christian good works.*

The work of the Office of Women Fund Drive is one part of a common effort in the Reformed Church to live out ministries of worship, discipleship, equipping leaders, and outreach in a wholistic way, as faithful witnesses to the gospel message of Jesus Christ.

**Office of Women Fund Drive Report to the General Synod Council, April 2002**

It is no coincidence that a fundraising office is called a “development” office. The development of organizations, people, facilities, projects, and visions requires both financial and personal investment. We invest and commit in order to earn a return—sometimes for the good of others, sometimes for the good of ourselves, and often for both.

For the Reformed Church in America, the ministries of women and their personal and financial investments in the RCA have helped to develop a denomination, focus its missions, and reap glorious returns.

Now the women of the church are asking the RCA to make an investment in their development, knowing that such a commitment will earn a return. It will help women develop into courageous disciples, mutual partners, nurturers, and global caregivers. The relational style and perspective of women, their passions for the well-being of others, and their spiritual gifts are important treasures for the church and the world.

That is why the leaders of the Office of Women Fund Drive see their efforts as a gift to the church. That is why the Office of Women Fund Drive gives the people of the RCA a great opportunity to reap a generous return on their financial and personal investments.

The groundwork for the Office of Women Fund Drive began in January 2001 with the
appointment of Arlene Waldorf as the fund drive director and Mary Clark as its coordina-
tor. Larryl Humme, director of the RCA Foundation, serves as a consultant for the fund
drive, and Richard Welscott, director of Congregational Services and Evangelism and
Church Development Services, oversees the fund drive as General Synod staff.

The first order of business in the launching of the fund drive was the recruitment of lead-
ers. Beth Marcus, Ruth Stafford Peale, and Arvella Schuller agreed to serve as the honorary
chairwomen of the fund drive. Job descriptions for the steering committee and regional
leadership team were created and the members recruited.

In addition to our three honorary chairwomen and fund drive staff, members of the steer-
ing committee are Christine Dyke, Judith Dalenberg, Joyce Fieldhouse, Arloa Hymans,
Diane Maodish-Pitzer, Ellen Mers, Carol Mutch, Sandy Prestifilippo, Marilyn Rensink,
Jane Richardson, Sherry Vander Eyk, Gerry Wakeland, Carole Walker, and Yolanda
Walker.

Regional leadership team members are Kathleen Barker, Chris Barthel, Betty Beemer,
Dainie Clymer, Carol Cox, Harriet Debbink, Thedis DeWitt, Jane Konitz, Joanne
Ligtenberg, Darlene Mouw, Barbara Nauta, Peggy Pierson, Carol Steffens, Beth Westra,
Helen Wierenga, and Martha Wing.

Since mid-2001, after the printing and distribution of the fund drive brochure that outlined
the vision and purpose for the Office of Women, many letters and information pieces have
been sent to every RCA church. These included Walk-a-thon forms, ideas for local church
fund drive efforts, pledge cards, brochures, news, timelines, and updates.

The first major fund drive event was a Sunday afternoon celebration at Triennial on July
29, 2001, in Sioux Falls, South Dakota. Arvella Schuller was the keynote speaker, Beth
Marcus was present, and Ruth Peale appeared on video. An auction of donated gifts
brought in $10,000 for the fund drive.

The second major event (denomination-wide) was the first annual Walk-a-thon, held the
Saturday of September 15. In light of the tragic events of September 11, some walks were
postponed, but fourteen Walk-a-thons took place across the country, and over $35,000 was
raised. Then in January two additional walks took place in California and Arizona, with a
net of $15,000. The total income from the first-ever Walk-a-thon was $50,000.

In the year 2002, fund drive leaders are meeting with groups of pastors, making presenta-
tions at classis and synod meetings, and visiting potential large-gift donors. We have
requested time with every classis and synod for these presentations. We have also prepared
ideas for a local church fundraising, “Springtime Auction.”

On Saturday, September 28, 2002, the second annual Walk-a-thon will be held. Fund drive
leaders realize that if 100,000 people participated in a walk and each person raised $50, we
would exceed our goal of $4.5 million. So we are asking EVERY church to hold a Walk-
a-thon and encourage full participation of their members. Walkers can raise support inside
or outside of their church through relatives, friends, colleagues, and neighbors. It is a fun
way to raise money—and good for your health and relationships.

Fundraising is not easy in challenging times such as we’ve been facing, particularly since
September 11, 2001. But we have seen how the “collective group” can make miraculous
things happen. We need people of vision who can help others understand what they cannot
yet see. There are people who will not give because they are waiting until “it happens.”
There are people who without hesitation invest strictly on their belief in a vision or person.
We know it is our job to increase understanding and answer as many questions as possible.
But we need your help.
We are grateful to the many people and churches who have chosen to “get on board” and advocate on behalf of this fund drive and its purposes. We are grateful for the people who to-date have given over $300,000 toward this purpose. We are grateful to Arvella Schuller, to Ruth Stafford Peale, and to Beth Marcus, who continue to be visionaries and models for women who love Christ and want to serve the church and bring wholeness, light, and Christ’s love into our lives and the lives of the people of the world.

Endnotes

1 See William Willimon, Commentary on the Acts of the Apostles, Interpretation Series
2 Hebrews 10:23
3 Preamble to the Book of Church Order

The advisory committee recommended:

R-27
To encourage all RCA congregations to support the fund drive for the RCA Office of Women and to participate in the “walk-athons.” (ADOPTED)

Reason: The work of the Office of Women is important to the future fo the RCA and deserves support.

From the Report of the President

In response to P-1 from the report of the president (p. 33) the advisory committee recommended:

R-28
To instruct the General Synod Council to utilize the House of Prayer Equipping (H.O.P.E.) Team to develop a plan to train similar teams throughout the RCA and to assist in convening an RCA convocation on prayer and mission in 2004, or as soon as practical, whose purpose will be to equip congregations and their leaders to become Houses of Prayer, following Christ in mission. (ADOPTED)

Reasons:

1. The H.O.P.E. Team is already functioning with a three-year commitment.

2. Time is needed to develop a clearer plan, including sources of funding, for further training and for a convocation.

Budget implications: The H.O.P.E. Team is self-funded; any funding for the convocation will be considered by future General Synods.
**Report of the Commission on History**

The Commission on History was established in 1966. The commission is responsible for advising the General Synod on the collection and preservation of official denominational records. Through oversight of the esteemed Historical Series of the Reformed Church in America, review of historical resources, and creation of a “virtual history center” for the denomination, the commission promotes research and reflection on the history and traditions of the RCA. Within the past year the commission met twice: on October 22, 2001, by means of teleconference connecting members in New York City; Holland, Michigan; and Norwalk, California; and on January 31 to February 1, 2002, in New Brunswick, New Jersey, and Holland, Michigan.

**New Publications in 2002**

Under the guidance of the commission the Rev. Dr. Donald Bruggink continues to serve as the tireless and superb general editor of the Historical Series of the RCA. Thirty-eight volumes have appeared since the inception of the series in 1968. The commission is pleased to announce the publication of three additional volumes that are available for sale at this General Synod meeting: *The Church Speaks, II*, edited by the Rev. Dr. James I. Cook, *The Chicago Dutch: Hollanders in the Windy City*, by Dr. Robert P. Swierenga, and *Concord Makes Strength*, edited by the Rev. Dr. John W. Coakley.

The commission continues to review manuscripts for future publication in the Historical Series. The commission encourages persons who are contemplating RCA research projects to contact the commission for guidance and possible collaboration.

**Recommendations**

With profound regret the commission reports the death of one of the finest historians of the Reformed Church in America. Dr. Gerald F. De Jong of Orange City, Iowa, died on Tuesday, October 30, 2001. Dr. De Jong was a longstanding and distinguished member of the Commission on History, an enthusiastic supporter of denominational research, and the author of three volumes in the Historical Series: *The Dutch Reformed Church in the American Colonies, From Strength to Strength*, *The Reformed Church in China, 1842-1991*. Thus far three students from Northwestern College have received archival training in the denominational archives in New Brunswick, New Jersey, through the generosity of the Gerald and Jeanne De Jong Internship Program. In addition to Gerald De Jong’s scholarship, his gracious demeanor, commitment to family, and abiding faith were always encouraging to commission members.

**R-29**

WHEREAS the Reformed Church in America recognizes that it has been instructed and stimulated by the historical research of Dr. Gerald F. De Jong through his publications in the RCA Historical Series and in numerous journals and periodicals; and

WHEREAS, the church has benefited from his wisdom for many years as a member of the Commission on History;

THEREFORE, be it resolved that the Reformed Church in America expresses its thanksgiving for the life and labor of love
provided by Gerald De Jong as a historian of the Reformed Church in America and expresses its condolences to his family on his death. (ADOPTED)

From the Report of the General Synod Council’s Policy, Planning, and Administration Services Committee

REPORT OF THE RCA ARCHIVES AND OFFICE OF HISTORICAL SERVICES

The “Three R’s” of Christian Heritage

The RCA Archives exists for the future of the church. While archives are often thought of as nostalgic repositories of crumbling old paper, in reality the RCA Archives are climate-controlled, clean storage areas for the vital memory of the Reformed Church in America. The archival task in the Reformed Church in America is to preserve the essential documentation of the life and ministry of the church. The archives is assigned the responsibility for the stewardship of our heritage so that tomorrow has a yesterday.

Remembrance

This ministry of remembrance seeks to provide a collective memory for the denomination so that the RCA remembers its response to God’s call over the span of centuries. Such memory is preserved in the documentation preserved from congregations, classes, regional synods, and General Synod staff and agencies. These materials represent the daily life and work of the whole church as witnessed to in letters, reports, minutes, agenda documents, video and audio tapes, printed resources, and other materials.

The most important task of the archives is to preserve those materials that are the most important part of our memory and dispose of those routine documents that do not significantly offer evidence about the daily life and ministry of the RCA. Not everything is saved, nor is everything worthy of permanent preservation. The archivist must select those documents that adequately serve as our long-term memory and that the church needs for its administrative, financial, legal, and historical purposes. Among the major records added to the archives this year are the following:

Boards, Agencies, and Missions

Commission on Judicial Business. Records of the commission from 1985 to 1993 regarding the appeals made to General Synod.

Council for Hispanic Ministries. Records of the council from 1977 to 1989 include minutes of council assemblies and meetings of the executive committee, newsletters, and correspondence, memoranda, and subject files relating to installation and organization of Elmendorf Reformed Church, Boro Park Church, Melrose Church, and Nuestra Iglesia Reformada.

Task Force on Standards for the Preparation for Professional Ministry. Records of the task
force from 1994 to 1997 include minutes of the task force; correspondence, resources, and
documents of the task force; draft reports; responses to the report; and a video on the report
from Reformed Church Productions.

**Denominational Offices/Staff**

Board of Pensions. Cash books and financial records from 1951 to 1957.


Office of Finance. Records of the treasurer of the Reformed Church in America from 1910
to 1974 include general ledgers, stocks, bonds, savings and loans, trust funds, investments,
mortgages, payroll book, benevolence accounts, classis assessments, audit reports, staff
conference journal, closed loan files from the RCA fund executive’s office, and photos of
Bronx, New York, properties.

Putting People in Mission. Records of the associate director for the campaign from 1988
to 1992 include particular synod files, general intensive campaign design and correspon-
dence, and follow-up phase records.

Secretary for Africa and Middle East Missions. Records from 1967 to 1996 include corre-
spondence and subject files for the Middle East mission fields of Bahrain, Kuwait, and
Oman.

Secretary for the Americas. Records from 1986 to 1990 include correspondence with the
mission fields, agencies, churches, and missionaries.

Secretary for Church Life and Mission, 1960-1971. Records from 1960 to 1971 for the
division of youth education of the Board of Mission, the office of church life and mission,
and the secretary for lay ministries relating to caravanning.

Supervisor for Mission Programs in Asia and the Pacific. Personnel correspondence with
field missionaries from 1989 to 1997.

**Regional Synod Records**

Regional Synod of the Mid-Atlantics. Minutes of the executive committee from 1993 to

**Classical Records**

Classis of Rochester. Records from 1979 to 1996 include minute books from 1991 to 1996
and student care files for students ordained from 1979 to 1991.

Passaic Valley Classical Women’s Union, 1980-2000. Records from 1980 to 2000 include
minutes, newsletters, registration and attendance for workshops, and lists of officers.

**Local Church Records**

Farmington Hills, Michigan. Christ Community. The congregation was organized in 1978
and disbanded in 1994. Records from 1977 to 1994 include planning committee records,
consistory minutes, bylaws, correspondence, financial reports, and membership records.

Hackensack, New Jersey. First Reformed. *The Church on the Green, Hackensack, New

Personal Papers/Other Records

Personal papers were received from Beth Marcus, Marjorie Kapenga, Jeanette Boersma, Stanley Vander Aarde, and J. Samuel Hofman.

Reflection

The Office of Historical Services is responsible for the ministry of memory and the corresponding management of the Archives of the Reformed Church in America. It is staffed solely by the RCA Archivist and is a part of Policy, Planning, and Administration Services. The RCA Archives obtains space in the Gardner A. Sage Library at New Brunswick Theological Seminary in New Brunswick, New Jersey. This location provides a rich resource for the seminary and easy access to books and other research material both for the archivist and for researchers who use the archives. As a staff function of the General Synod Council, the office provides many historical services to staff, agencies, and congregations throughout the denomination. In 2001 the archivist answered 320 research requests that included assistance to 96 genealogists and family historians and 224 other researchers. Also in 2001, 105 visitors used the archives on 93 days. Visitors this year came from across the United States and Canada as well as from India, Norway, Oman, Pakistan, the Philippines, and Scotland.

The major responsibilities of the office include:

1. Collecting, arranging, preserving, and making available the records of the denomination, which includes:
   a. Appraising and transporting records from congregations and denominational offices.
   b. Arranging, describing, and making available those records that are open for public research.
   c. Working with and assisting a wide range of international researchers engaged in historical study of either the RCA or our mission efforts.
   d. Assisting RCA staff and agencies in regard to the preservation of their records.
2. Updating, researching, and publishing the *Historical Directory of the Reformed Church in America*.
3. Updating, researching, and publishing the *Digest and Index of Synodical Legislation*.
4. Providing historical background studies for staff, agencies, and congregations as needed.
5. Managing the RCA Historical Society and producing *Historical Highlights* and other resources.
6. Providing assistance and workshops for congregations in writing congregational histories, celebrating anniversaries, and preserving congregational records.

The Gerald and Jeanne De Jong Internship in the RCA Archives has awarded a third internship for the 2002 spring semester at Northwestern College to Melissa Slaton, a junior. She will serve her spring semester full-time in the archives. The archives has also participated in an internship experience for a student at Rutgers University’s Graduate School of Communication, Information, and Library Science and provided guidance for research students in a Middle East studies senior seminar at Rutgers.

The Regional Synod of Canada continues to develop its records center at Camp Shalom in
Ontario, Canada, as a center of the RCA Archives. A storage space has been provided and the Rev. John Drost and his wife work on gathering the records that document the history of the Reformed Church in Canada.

The RCA archivist continues to provide assistance, resources, and training to congregations in the storage, retention, and use of their historical records by offering workshops and visiting congregations to provide resources. This year, the archivist has produced a retention schedule for assisting with the disposition of classis and congregational records. Similar schedules will be produced for denominational offices.

Recommitment

History, in service to the ministry of the church, enables us to look back in order to see ahead more clearly. In this way, the remembrance based upon an informed reflection of what has led us to where we are today enables us to recommit ourselves to a more vital ministry in the future. The RCA Archives seeks to stimulate research in RCA history and to make materials more readily available to all researchers. The archives continues to increase the historical resources available on CD as well as on the RCA website.

The archivist has completed the next edition of the *Historical Directory of the Reformed Church in America, 1628-2000*, which was published in time for the 2001 General Synod. He has also conducted interviews with RCA ministers to add to our oral history collection, conducted a course on laity in the Reformed Church, and was an active participant in the formation of the Center for Reformed Church Studies. He also represented the RCA as he participated in leading workshops and presenting papers at the meetings of Archivists of Religious Institutions, the Mid-Atlantic Regional Archival Conference, and the Society of American Archivists.

Preserving our memory is an important task so that we can assure tomorrow that it has a yesterday. It is also a process of thanksgiving as we grow out of yesterday into tomorrow. The Reformed Church gives thanks for all those who have worked tirelessly for the kingdom throughout the 374 years of our history, especially those who have departed this life in the past year.

NECROLOGY REPORT

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Date of Death</th>
<th>Age</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Donald Adrian Brevet</td>
<td>March 12, 2001</td>
<td>58</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>James Addison McIntosh</td>
<td>March 13, 2001</td>
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<td>Gerrit Jan ten Zythoff</td>
<td>March 20, 2001</td>
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<td>Lawrence Marvin Brosseit</td>
<td>March 27, 2001</td>
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<td>John Walter Beardslee, III</td>
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<td>Guyron J. Philbert</td>
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Donald Adrian Brevet

Donald Adrian Brevet was born on October 2, 1942, at Paterson, New Jersey. He received his undergraduate education at Rutgers University, from which he graduated in 1964. His theological education was completed at New Brunswick Theological Seminary, from which he graduated in 1967.

Mr. Brevet was licensed by the Classis of Paramus in 1967 and ordained by the Classis of New Brunswick the same year. He began his ministry as associate pastor in Metuchen, New Jersey, from 1967 to 1973. He then pastored the following congregations: Metuchen, New Jersey, from 1973 to 1976; Syracuse, New York, from 1976 to 1988; and Upper Saddle River, Saddle River, New Jersey, from 1988 to 1998.

Mr. Brevet died at Lake Ariel, Pennsylvania, on March 12, 2001. He was fifty-eight years old.

James Addison McIntosh

James Addison McIntosh was born on October 23, 1935, at Englewood, New Jersey. He began his undergraduate studies at Central College and graduated from Fairleigh Dickinson University in 1957. His theological education began at New Brunswick Theological Seminary and was completed at Harvard University, from which he graduated in 1961.


Mr. McIntosh died at Pennington, New Jersey, on March 13, 2001. He was sixty-five years old.

Gerrit Jan ten Zythoff

Gerrit Jan ten Zythoff was born on February 17, 1922, at Gramsbergen, the Netherlands. He studied at the Gymnasium Doetinchem, from which he graduated in 1941. His undergraduate education was completed at the University of Utrecht, from which he graduated in 1942. His theological education was completed at the same school in 1950. Mr. ten
Zythoff also received an STM from Union College in British Columbia in 1957, an M.A. from the University of Chicago in 1961, and a Ph.D. from the same school in 1967.

Mr. ten Zythoff was licensed by the Particular Synod of Groningen in 1951 and ordained by the Classis of Montgomery in 1952. He served as a chaplain in the Dutch Government Camps from 1945 to 1946 and then as secretary for the Society of Students at the Theological Faculty at the University of Utrecht in the Netherlands from 1946 to 1948. He pastored the United Church of Canada in Plainfield, Ontario, from 1951 to 1952, Brockville Reformed Church in Brockville, Ontario, from 1952 to 1954, and Hope Reformed Church in Vancouver, British Columbia from 1954 to 1959. Mr. ten Zythoff began his teaching career as a lecturer at Western Theological Seminary from 1961 to 1962 and 1963 to 1964. He taught at Ohio State University from 1966 to 1969 and as a professor in the department of religious studies at Southwestern Missouri State University from 1969 to 1993.

Mr. ten Zythoff died at Springfield, Missouri, on March 20, 2001. He was seventy-nine years old.

**Lawrence Marvin Brosseit**

Lawrence Marvin Brosseit was born on February 6, 1945, at Grand Haven, Michigan. His undergraduate education was received at Hope College, from which he graduated in 1967. He began his theological education at Westminster Theological Seminary from 1967 to 1968 and completed it at Western Theological Seminary from which he graduated in 1971.

Mr. Brosseit was licensed by the Classis of Zeeland in 1971 and ordained by the same classis in 1972. He pastored the Atwood Reformed Church in Ellsworth, Michigan, from 1972 to 1977. He went to pastor First United Church of Christ in Muskegon, Michigan, in 1977 and was dismissed to that denomination in 1978.

Mr. Brosseit died at Union, Michigan, on March 27, 2001. He was fifty-six years old.

**John Walter Beardslee III**

John Walter Beardslee III was born on March 9, 1914, at Holland, Michigan. He completed his undergraduate studies at Yale University, from which he graduated in 1935. His theological education was completed at Princeton Theological Seminary, from which he graduated in 1941. He earned his Ph.D. at Yale University in 1957.

Mr. Beardslee was licensed by the Classis of New Brunswick in 1941 and ordained by the Classis of Newark the same year. Mr. Beardslee began his ministry as a short-term missionary teacher in Basrah, Iraq, where he served from 1935 to 1938. He began his pastoral ministry at First, Tarrytown, New York, where he served from 1941 to 1943. He served as a short-term missionary at Annville Institute in Annville, Kentucky, from 1943 to 1944. Mr. Beardslee began his ministry in education at George Washington University in Washington, D.C., where he taught from 1948 to 1951. He then taught at Central College in Pella, Iowa, from 1951 to 1964 and as a General Synod professor of theology at New Brunswick Theological Seminary in New Brunswick, New Jersey, from 1964 to 1984.

Mr. Beardslee died at New Brunswick, New Jersey, on April 1, 2001. He was eighty-seven years old.

**J. Wilbur De Young**
J. Wilbur De Young was born on January 14, 1917, at Kalamazoo, Michigan. His undergraduate education was received at Calvin College, from which he graduated in 1949. His theological education was completed at Western Theological Seminary, from which he graduated in 1953.

Mr. De Young was licensed by the Classis of South Grand Rapids in 1953 and ordained by the Classis of Dakota the same year. He pastored the following congregations: Hamlin, Castlewood, South Dakota, from 1953 to 1956; First, Colton, SD, from 1956 to 1959; First, Spencer, Iowa, from 1959 to 1960, and Bethel, Lester, Iowa, from 1960 to 1966. Mr. De Young left ministry due to disability in 1966.

Mr. De Young died at Bryan, Texas, on April 13, 2001. He was eighty-four years old.

Ann (Sieplinga) Jefferson

Ann Sieplinga Jefferson was born on July 15, 1921, at Muskegon, Michigan. She and her first husband, Art Sieplinga, served as houseparents at the Winnebago Children’s Home in Winnebago, Nebraska, from 1966 to 1971 and at Annville Institute in Annville, Kentucky, from 1972 to 1976. Ms. Jefferson also served the Winnebago Reformed Church, Winnebago, Nebraska, as the church’s day care director from 1979 to 1985.

Ms. Jefferson died at Muskegon, Michigan, on May 23, 2001. She was seventy-nine years old.

Bernadine (Siebers) de Valois

Bernadine Siebers de Valois was born on December 29, 1908, at Grand Rapids, Michigan. She attended Grand Rapids Junior College from 1926 to 1927 and graduated from Hope College in 1930. She attended Rush Medical College and received her M.D. in 1934. She also studied at McGill University, the University of Toronto, and the University of Michigan and was made a fellow of the Royal College of Surgeons of Canada in 1945.

Ms. de Valois served as a medical missionary in India from 1946 to 1960.

Ms. de Valois died at Colorado Springs on June 19, 2001. She was ninety-three years old.

Bernice (Ebbers) Ten Haken

Bernice Ebbers Ten Haken was born on April 19, 1914, in Sheboygan County, Wisconsin. She studied at Sheboygan Normal School from 1932 to 1933, Oshkosh State Teachers College from 1968 to 1972, and the University of Wisconsin from 1970 to 1973.

Ms. Ten Haken served as a missionary in Mescalero, New Mexico, from 1945 to 1954. She was involved in ministry to migrant workers in New York State in 1960 and worked in mission at Macy, Nebraska, from 1960 to 1966.

Ms. Ten Haken died at Sheboygan Falls, Wisconsin, on July 4, 2001. She was eighty-seven years old.

Wilbur Lowell De Revere

Wilbur Lowell De Revere was born on June 25, 1911, at Peekskill, New York. His undergraduate education was received at Rutgers University, from which he graduated in 1932. His theological education was received at New Brunswick Theological Seminary, from which he graduated in 1935.

Mr. De Revere was licensed by the Classis of Westchester in 1935 and ordained by the
Classis of Bergen the same year. He pastored the following congregations: Closter, New Jersey, from 1935 to 1942; First, East Orange, New Jersey, from 1942 to 1953; and Wyckoff, New Jersey, from 1953 to 1976. He also served as the president of the Particular Synod of New Jersey in 1966.

Mr. De Revere died at Fort Walton, Florida, on July 11, 2001. He was ninety years old.

**Hugh F. Gambaro**

Hugh F. Gambaro served on the RCA staff as production coordinator from 1975 to 1983. He died at Nutley, New Jersey, on July 12, 2001.

**Robert Walter Henninges**

Robert Walter Henninges was born on November 10, 1930, at Weehawken, New Jersey. His undergraduate education was received at Hope College, from which he graduated in 1952. His theological education was received at Western Theological Seminary, from which he graduated in 1955. He studied at Princeton Theological Seminary, from which he received his Th.M. in 1965.

Mr. Henninges was licensed by the Classis of Bergen in 1955 and ordained by the Classis of Raritan the same year. He served as the pastor of the Reformed Church in North Branch, New Jersey, from 1955 to 1981, and at First, Hasbrouck Heights, New Jersey, from 1981 to 1983. He then served as coordinator for Chaplaincy Services in Trenton, New Jersey, from 1983 until his retirement in 1997.

Mr. Henninges died on July 26, 2001. He was seventy years old.

**Eunice Post Begg**

Eunice Post Begg studied at Hope College, from which she graduated in 1948. She served as a short-term missionary at the Winnebago Children's Home in Winnebago, Nebraska, from 1946 to 1947. She took language study in Kuwait from 1949 to 1952 and served as principal of Al Raja School in Bahrain from 1952 to 1957.

Ms. Begg died on August 17, 2001. She was seventy-nine years old.

**Harry Buis**

Harry Buis was born on November 17, 1924, at Fair Lawn, New Jersey. He studied at Cooper Union College from 1942 to 1944. He completed his undergraduate education at Hope College, from which he graduated in 1949. His theological education was received at Western Theological Seminary, from which he graduated in 1949. Harry also studied at Oberlin School of Theology from 1951 to 1953 and received his Th.M. from Western Theological Seminary in 1962.

Mr. Buis was licensed by the Classis of Passaic in 1949 and ordained by the Classis of Kalamazoo the same year. He pastored the following congregations: Brooklyn Community, Brooklyn Village, Ohio, from 1949 to 1957; Vriesland, Michigan, from 1957 to 1963; Greenwood, Kalamazoo, Michigan, from 1963 to 1969; Ebenezer, Morrison, Illinois, from 1969 to 1974; Hudsonville, Michigan, from 1974 to 1984; and, First, De Motte, Indiana, from 1984 to 1990. He also served as minister of calling at Hudsonville, Michigan, beginning in 1991. Harry served for twenty-five years as the editor of Words of Hope and was vice president of the Particular Synod of Michigan in 1977, and president
from 1978 to 1979 and from 1987 to 1988. He was also the president of General Synod from 1980 to 1981.

Mr. Buis died at Hudsonville, Michigan, on August 21, 2001. He was seventy-six years old.

Maurice Tysen

Maurice Tysen was born on September 13, 1911, at Thayer, Indiana. His undergraduate education was received at Central College, from which he graduated in 1934. His theological education was received at Western Theological Seminary, from which he graduated in 1938.

Mr. Tysen was licensed by the Classis of Chicago in 1938 and ordained by the Classis of Rochester the same year. He pastored the following congregations: Clymer Hill, New York, from 1938 to 1945; First, Sodus, New York, from 1945 to 1951; Florida, Minaville, New York, from 1951 to 1956; Nardin Park, Detroit, Michigan, from 1956 to 1964; First, Hopsers, Iowa, from 1964 to 1970; First, Colton, South Dakota, from 1970 to 1977. He then served as chaplain at the Mayo Clinic in Rochester, Minnesota, in 1977, and as minister of calling at American, De Motte, Indiana, from 1982 to 1989.

Mr. Tysen died at Seminole, Florida, on August 21, 2001. He was seventy-nine years old.

Garold Van Engen

Garold Van Engen was born on October 30, 1913, at Prairie City, Iowa. His undergraduate education was received at Central College, from which he graduated in 1940. His theological education was received at Western Theological Seminary, from which he graduated in 1943.

Mr. Van Engen was licensed by the Classis of East Sioux in 1943, and ordained by the same classis in 1947. He served as a missionary in Mexico from 1943 to 1978.

Mr. Van Engen died at Orange City, Iowa, on September 3, 2001. He was eighty-eight years old.

Bernard Robert Brunsting

Bernard Robert Brunsting was born on May 31, 1922, at Grundy Center, Iowa. He began his undergraduate studies at Northwestern Junior College and continued at Winona School of Theology. He completed his studies at Central College, from which he graduated in 1942. His theological education was received at Western Theological Seminary, from which he graduated in 1949. He continued his studies at Western Seminary and received an M.Th. in 1971. He was awarded a Doctor of Divinity degree by Central College in 1963.

Mr. Brunsting was licensed by the Classis of West Sioux in 1949 and ordained by the Classis of Muskegon the same year. He pastored the following congregations: First, Grand Haven, Michigan, from 1949 to 1951; Bethel, Bellflower, California, from 1951 to 1956; Family, Canoga Park, California, from 1956 to 1962; First, Holland, Michigan, from 1962 to 1968; Greenville, Scarsdale, New York, from 1968 to 1981; and Christ, Pawling, New York, from 1981 to 1987. He served as the president of the Particular Synod of Iowa from 1959 to 1960 and as president of the General Synod from 1962 to 1963.

Mr. Brunsting died on September 10, 2001. He was seventy-nine years old.
Russell Erastus Horton

Russell Erastus Horton was born on October 25, 1924, at Warwick, New York. His undergraduate education was received at Hope College, from which he graduated in 1949. His theological education was received at Western Theological Seminary, from which he graduated in 1951. He also studied at United Lutheran Seminary in Chicago, Illinois, from 1953 to 1957.

Mr. Horton was licensed by the Classis of Paramus in 1951 and ordained by the Classis of Germania the same year. He pastored the following congregations: First, Clay County, Everly, Iowa, from 1951 to 1953; West Side, Cicero, Illinois, from 1953 to 1957; Miraloma, San Francisco, California, from 1957 to 1959; Fourth, Grand Rapids, Michigan, from 1959 to 1968; First, Lansing, Illinois, from 1968 to 1968. He was also an officer in the National Presbyterian Reformed Fellowship from 1969 to 1980 and a speaker on the Power for Living Broadcast from 1973 to 1988.

Mr. Horton died on October 15, 2001. He was seventy-six years old.

Guyron J. Philbert

Guyron J. Philbert was born on July 16, 1936, at Grenada, West Indies. His theological education was received at Caribbean Nazarene Theological Seminary, from which he graduated in 1959.

Mr. Philbert was licensed and ordained by the Nazarene Church in 1961. He pastored the following congregations: Nazarene Church, Trinidad, from 1959 to 1969; Brethren-in-Christ Church in New York City from 1969 to 1971; Gospel Peace Christian Missionary Alliance, Chicago, Illinois, from 1971 to 1973; and North Community Reformed Church, Kalamazoo, Michigan, from 1976 to 1979. He also served as the director of the Douglas-Tubman Center in Chicago, Illinois, from 1973 to 1976. He served in specialized ministry in Southwest Michigan Classis where he was director of the Kalamazoo North Side Non-Profit Housing Corporation and the Douglas Community Center in Kalamazoo.

Mr. Philbert died on November 11, 2001. He was sixty-five years old.

Daniel Thomas Stiel

Daniel Thomas Stiel was born on September 5, 1919, at Helmond, the Netherlands. His undergraduate education was received at Rutgers University, from which he graduated in 1964. His theological education was received at New Brunswick Theological Seminary, from which he graduated in 1966.

Mr. Stiel was licensed by the Classis of Ontario in 1966 and ordained by the Classis of Cascades the same year. He served as pastor of the Reformed Church in Calgary, Alberta, Canada, from 1966 to 1971, and the church in Slochteren, the Netherlands, from 1971 to 1975. He was dismissed to the Presbyterian Church of Canada in 1975.

Mr. Stiel died on November 24, 2001. He was eighty-two years old.

Howard Glenn Maatman

Howard Glenn Maatman was born on March 8, 1918, at Holland, Michigan. His undergraduate education was received at Hope College, from which he graduated in 1942. His theological education was received at Western Theological Seminary, from which he graduated in 1945.
Mr. Maatman was licensed by the Classis of Grand Rapids in 1945 and ordained by the Classis of Kalamazoo the same year. He pastored the following congregations: Hope, South Haven, Michigan, from 1945 to 1951; First, Sioux Falls, South Dakota, from 1951 to 1953; Sunset Presbyterian, Dallas, Texas, from 1952 to 1964; Calvary, Holland, Michigan, from 1964 to 1974; Grace, Sonoma, California, from 1974 to 1983. He also helped start the hospital chaplaincy program in Sonoma, California, and served as chaplain at Hackley Hospital in Muskegon, Michigan, from 1986 to 1996.

Mr. Maatman died at Grand Haven, Michigan, on November 28, 2001. He was eighty-three years old.

Harold Kane

Harold Kane was born on June 13, 1930, at Newburgh, New York. Harold was a professional nurse and served in the U.S. Marine Corps in Korea and Vietnam. He served as a lay pastor at North Marbletown Church in Stone Ridge, New York, from 1982 to 1995. He was granted a dispensation from the requirements for the Certificate of Fitness for Ministry by the General Synod in 1993 and ordained by the Classis of Mid-Hudson. He served as pastor of the Shokan, New York, church from 1995 to 2001.

Mr. Kane died at Poughkeepsie, New York, on December 10, 2001. He was seventy-one years old.

Hugh Allen Koops

Hugh Allen Koops was born on February 7, 1932, at Allegan County, Michigan. His undergraduate education was received at Calvin College, from which he graduated in 1953. His theological education was received at Calvin Theological Seminary, from which he graduated in 1956. Hugh also studied at the University of Illinois from 1957 to 1959, and at Rutgers University from 1972 to 1973. He received his Ph.D. from the University of Chicago in 1972.

Mr. Koops was licensed in the Christian Reformed Church in 1954 and ordained by the Classis of Chicago South (CRC) in 1956. He began his ministry as pastor of the Hessel Park Christian Reformed Church in Champaign, Illinois, where he served from 1956 to 1960. His life was spent in theological education. He served as a lecturer at Western Theological Seminary from 1964 to 1965 and as a professor from 1966 to 1970. He moved to New Brunswick Theological Seminary in 1970, where he served as a professor (and for a period as dean of the seminary) until 1991. Mr. Koops was elected a General Synod professor of theology in 1974.

Mr. Koops died at New Brunswick, New Jersey, on December 18, 2001. He was sixty-nine years old.

Richard Alan Hogarth

Richard Alan Hogarth was born at Staten Island, New York, on May 9, 1936. He studied at Wagner College, from which he graduated in 1958. His theological education was received at New Brunswick Theological Seminary, from which he graduated in 1967.

Mr. Hogarth was licensed by the Classis of New York in 1967 and ordained by the Classis of Saratoga the same year. He served as a student pastor at Greenville, Jersey City, New Jersey, from 1964 to 1967. He then served as pastor at The Boght, Cohoes, New York, from 1967 to 1969 and at Williamsbridge Road, the Bronx, New York, from 1968 to 1975. He was the stated supply of this congregation from 1975 to 1981.
Mr. Hogarth died at Boston, Massachusetts, on December 22, 2001. He was sixty-five years old.

**Henry W. Kolenbrander**

Henry W. Kolenbrander was born at Pella, Iowa, on December 17, 1907. He studied at Central College, from which he graduated in 1933. His theological education was received at Western Theological Seminary, from which he graduated in 1936.

Mr. Kolenbrander was licensed by the Classis of Pella in 1936 and ordained by the Classis of Dakota the same year. He pastored the following congregations: Grace, Corsica, South Dakota, from 1936 to 1940; Free Grace (Middleburg), Orange City, Iowa, from 1940 to 1948; Firth, Nebraska, from 1948 to 1958; Guelph, Ontario, from 1958 to 1964; First, Inwood, Iowa, from 1954 to 1970; and Chandler, Minnesota, from 1970 to 1974. He also served as the stated clerk of the Particular Synod of the West.

Mr. Kolenbrander died at Pella, Iowa, on December 23, 2001. He was ninety-four years old.

**Jeanette Harriet Boersma**

Jeanette Harriet Boersma was born on January 6, 1918, at Chicago, Illinois. She studied nursing and received her R.N. from Roseland Community Hospital in 1939. She also studied at Reformed Bible Institute from 1941 to 1944 and at Biblical Seminary in New York City in 1957. She was certified in midwifery by the Frontier Nursing Service in 1951 and received a B.S. from Barrington College in Rhode Island in 1965.

Ms. Boersma began her career as a nurse in Chicago, Illinois, where she worked from 1939 to 1941. She followed the call to missionary service in medical work in the Middle East, where she served from 1944 to 1985.

Ms. Boersma died at Crestwood, Illinois, on January 14, 2002. She was eighty-three years old.

**Gertrude Van Roekel**

Gertrude Van Roekel was born on April 7, 1909, at Monroe, Iowa. She received her undergraduate education at Central College, from which she graduated in 1937. Ms. Van Roekel served as a teacher in rural schools in Iowa from 1928 to 1931 and 1933 to 1935. Upon her graduation from Central College she served as an RCA missionary to the Jicarilla Apache in Dulce, New Mexico, from 1937 to 1957.

Ms. Van Roekel died at Denver, Colorado, in February 2002. She was ninety-two years old.

**John Egy**

John Egy was born at Parker, Kansas, on March 13, 1911. He studied at New York University, from which he graduated in 1946. He received his M.A. from that school in 1948 and received his theological education from New Brunswick Theological Seminary, from which he graduated in 1950.

Mr. Egy was ordained by the New Jersey Baptist Church in 1946 and served as pastor at First Baptist Church in Bergenfield, New Jersey, from 1944 to 1946 and at First Baptist Church in Ridgefield Park, New Jersey, from 1946 to 1948. He then served as stated supply at the Mile Square Reformed Church in Yonkers, New York, from 1948 to 1950. He was licensed by the Classis of New Brunswick in 1950. He pastored the following Reformed Church congregations: Third, Raritan, New Jersey, from 1950 to 1955; Greenville, Jersey City, New Jersey, from 1955 to 1957; Fonda, New York, from 1957 to
Mr. Egy died at Goldsboro, North Carolina, on February 15, 2002. He was ninety years old.

**Herman Dale De Jong**

Herman Dale De Jong was born on April 21, 1938, at New Sharon, Iowa. His undergraduate education was received at Central College, from which he graduated in 1960. His theological education was received at New Brunswick Theological Seminary, from which he graduated in 1964.

Mr. De Jong was licensed by the Classis of Pella in 1963 and ordained by the Classis of Queens in 1964. He served as pastor of Steinway Reformed Church in Astoria, New York, from 1964 until his death in 2002. He had also served as stated supply of Second Reformed Church in Astoria, New York, from 1970 to 1982. Mr. De Jong was the president of the Particular Synod of New York from 1968 to 1969. He also served as stated clerk of the Classis of Queens and stated clerk of the Particular Synod of New York.

Mr. De Jong died at Pella, Iowa, on February 21, 2002. He was sixty-three years old.

**Cornelius G. Reynen**

Cornelius G. Reynen was born on July 8, 1916, at Otley, Iowa. His undergraduate education was received at Central College, from which he graduated in 1939. His theological education was received at Western Theological Seminary, from which he graduated in 1942.

Mr. Reynen was licensed and ordained by the Classis of East Sioux in 1942. He pastored the following congregations: American, Archer, Iowa, from 1942 to 1944; Newton Zion, Erie, Illinois, from 1944 to 1949; Bethel, Holland, Michigan, from 1949 to 1954; Grace, Lansing, Illinois, from 1954 to 1958; First, Grand Haven, Michigan, from 1958 to 1964; Hope, Kalamazoo, Michigan, 1964 to 1969; First, Sheboygan Falls, Wisconsin, from 1969 to 1976; and, Bethany, Des Moines, Iowa, from 1976 to 1982. He also served as minister of pastoral care at First, Pella, Iowa, from 1982 to 1988.

Mr. Reynen died at Pella, Iowa, on February 21, 2002. He was eighty-five years old.

**Vernon H. Kooy**

Vernon H. Kooy was born on June 9, 1916, at Muster, Indiana. His undergraduate education was received at Central College, from which he graduated in 1939. His theological education was received at Western Theological Seminary, from which he graduated in 1942. He received his Th.M. from Princeton Theological Seminary in 1944, and his Th.D. from Union Theological Seminary in 1953.

Mr. Kooy was licensed by the Classis of Chicago in 1942 and ordained by the Classis of Philadelphia the same year. He pastored the following congregations: Clover Hill, Flemington, New Jersey, from 1942 to 1946; First, Far Rockaway, New York, from 1946 to 1948; and First, Lodi, New Jersey, from 1948 to 1953. He also served as interim minister at the Reformed Church in High Bridge, New Jersey, from 1985 to 1986. He spent the major part of his life (from 1953 to 1985) as a General Synod professor of theology at New Brunswick Theological Seminary.

Mr. Kooy died in North Carolina on February 22, 2002. He was eighty-five years old.
Communication and Production Services (CAPS) includes the RCA Distribution Center, the TRAVARCA video library, and the departments of information technology, communication, and production. Each area strives to be responsive to the diverse needs of RCA congregations, classes, and regional synods and to be supportive of General Synod Council (GSC) committees and staff.

CAPS identifies three main objectives, each of which arises out of the RCA Statement of Mission and Vision’s primary focus of equipping congregations to follow Christ in mission:

1. To effectively equip RCA congregations, classes, and regional synods for ministry in their own contexts by providing high-quality resources that reflect Reformed theology.

2. To develop and maintain a communication network that fosters an understanding of, commitment to, and participation in the mission and vision of the Reformed Church in America.

3. To assist GSC committees and staff in reaching their objectives by providing superior technical support and computer technologies, along with high-quality editorial, design, production, and distribution services.

These three objectives align themselves well with GSC’s twelve priorities, particularly to five of them:

- build a church that reflects the diversity around us.
- provide for regular communicating between General Synod and congregations.
- provide training and education for consistories.
- make resources accessible to/for consistories.
- provide connection to the wider church through the General Synod.

These five priorities inform CAPS as it develops and selects new resources for the RCA Distribution Center and TRAVARCA and as it develops communication strategies for the organization. Communication and Production Services employs twenty-four full-time individuals.

2001 Financial Results

Communication and Production Services receives most of its income from the sale of products and services. It receives approximately $340,000 from assessments for denominational communication and the RCA’s website. It also receives a $35,000 program grant for TRAVARCA to supplement income from membership fees and non-member usage.

Communication and Production Services ended the fiscal year with a shortfall of $98,288, due to operational losses in the video department of $63,803 and in the RCA Distribution Center/TRAVARCA of $45,488.

The video department had struggled financially for several years. This, coupled with the fact that the operation was experiencing a sharp decline in the number of new RCA and non-RCA video projects it was commissioned to produce, led staff to close the operation on August 31, 2001. Since then John Grooters, who managed RCA Video Productions, has started his own video production house and continues to work with Communication and Production Services staff as the RCA begins to outsource its needs in video production.
In 2001 income from RCA Distribution Center sales ($767,496) and TRAVARCA memberships ($146,263) remained relatively flat compared to the previous year while overhead expenses increased. The operation experienced the same decline in its curriculum sales as others in the business. Competition from other publishers has cut into our primary market. Declining denominational membership and lower church school attendance have also impacted sales, along with new models for church school education (like the workshop rotation model) and new formats for materials (like downloadable resources from the Internet). Nevertheless, the RCA Distribution Center ended the year with only a loss of $20,817 (a 1.8 percent loss) while TRAVARCA incurred a loss of $24,671 (a 12 percent loss).

The production department ended the year with a surplus of $1,019 and the communication department ended the year with a surplus of $9,984.

Information Technology (although not part of the Communication and Production Services department in fiscal year 2001) ended the year break-even.

The advisory committee recommended:

R-30

WHEREAS the Reformed Church in America recognizes the significant contribution John Grooters has made through video production to the life of the Reformed Church in America; and

WHEREAS John Grooters creatively and faithfully brought to sight and sound the ministry and mission of the RCA, thereby increasing the church's understanding and passion for Christ's reign;

THEREFORE be it resolved that the Reformed Church in America expresses its appreciation to John Grooters for his years of service to the Reformed Church in America and prays that the gifts God has given him will continue to be used to God’s glory.

The RCA Distribution Center and TRAVARCA

The RCA Distribution Center shipped over 12,000 orders in 2001. The RCA Distribution Center cooperates with CRC Publications in publishing LiFE curriculum. The RCA Distribution Center also offers Bible Way, One Room Sunday School, and the Seasons of the Spirit curricula, along with Children and Worship materials. In response to the popularity of the workshop rotation model the RCA Distribution Center added the PowerXpress curriculum and additional workshop rotation resources. The RCA Distribution Center also distributes resources produced by Reformed Church Press, CRC Publications, Presbyterian Publishing Corporation, Westminster John Knox, Augsburg Fortress, Abingdon, Friendship Press, Logos, Group, Zondervan, and other Christian publishers.

TRAVARCA continues to be recognized as one of the best ecumenical video and DVD lending libraries in North America. The operation currently serves 560 members, consisting of 311 RCA congregations, 127 CRC congregations, 114 non-RCA/CRC congregations, and 8 institutions. It houses 2,555 titles (7,111 total resources) and shipped 7,899 orders in 2001. Each TRAVARCA resource contains a study guide for use in educational settings. TRAVARCA is supported through annual membership fees.

Both the RCA Distribution Center and TRAVARCA produce catalogs and updates containing detailed descriptions of each resource. Work is in progress for an online catalog with online ordering capabilities. Currently, orders are received by email (orders@rca.org),
toll-free phone (1-800-968-7221), fax (1-616-698-6606), and mail. A resource specialist is available on the RCA Helpline during business hours to answer questions about any resource or to suggest print, video, and electronic resources to support any Christian program being used in the local congregation.

Communication

The purpose of denominational communication is to foster an understanding of, commitment to, and participation in the mission and vision of the Reformed Church in America.

To assist the director of Communication and Production Services in these efforts a Communication Strategy Group was named to help develop a coordinated communication strategy. Staff participants were appointed to this group not only as representatives of their units/offices, but because they had skills in communication and unique abilities to think for the whole organization. Among its responsibilities, this group coordinates communication efforts; develops an overall marketing strategy to promote denominational programs, personnel, and products; identifies ways to assist congregations in their own marketing and communication efforts; and regularly evaluates the effectiveness of denominational communication. While this group develops an overall communication strategy, Communication and Production Services is responsible for implementing the strategy with integrity and honesty, good stewardship, and adherence to copyright regulations.

The Reformed Church in America is a diverse denomination. Spread across North America with missionaries and mission partners throughout the world, the denomination recognizes theological, social, cultural, national, political, gender, and age differences within its family of churches, organizations, agencies, and institutions. Through market research Communication and Production Services seeks to understand these various constituencies and to identify their unique needs. With these insights, the Communication Strategy Group develops ways to effectively communicate with and serve specific target audiences, including congregations, members, visitors and inquirers, donors, leaders, ecumenical and mission partners, the general public, religious and secular news media, and others.

Communication and Production Services assists the RCA Foundation in building and maintaining strong donor relationships. The key to building such relationships is regular contact. While personal contact is best, newsletters (print or email) and other forms of communication are developed to tell the stories of how donor contributions have changed the lives of people and to grow the giver’s heart in generosity, compassion, and faithfulness. Communication and Production Services, in coordination with the RCA Foundation and GSC staff, also offers opportunities for individuals and congregations to financially participate in the ministry of the Reformed Church in America through direct appeals.

“Following Christ in Mission,” a phrase lifted from the RCA Statement of Mission and Vision, is the key message around which denominational communication will focus for the coming years. Responding to a 2001 General Synod recommendation to develop a logo for the RCA that “clearly communicates our Christian identity as we look to grow in membership, expand our mission, and minister in the twenty-first century.” Communication and Production Services presented a logo to GSC’s Policy, Planning, and Administration Services Committee that corresponds with the phrase “Following Christ in Mission” and enables RCA congregations and staff to communicate effectively within their own contexts of ministry.

The Church Herald and the RCA’s website will continue to be the denomination’s primary communication vehicles. Other initiatives will include a new publication that will combine the RCA Today and Mission Today bulletin inserts, a consolidated ministry report that will include information about the work of the GSC and other RCA agencies and institutions,
and Servant Leaders, which will highlight practical ideas for mission and ministry and point readers to the RCA’s website for expanded articles, links to archived information, and related products.

Website

The purpose of the RCA website is to provide a primary point of access to an online communication network that connects individual members to other members, elders, deacons, pastors, missionaries, and delegates and staff of assemblies, agencies, and institutions—building community, enhancing mutual understanding, and providing timely information and a variety of resources for ministry. The website also serves members of the global community, individuals looking for a Reformed church in their neighborhood, people seeking information about the Reformed Church in America, ecumenical partners, denominations, and others wishing to contact RCA congregations, clergy, missionaries, and staff.

The RCA website was given a major overhaul this past winter and spring, keeping its most popular areas while refocusing other areas to provide even more resources to church leaders and members. New sections on discipleship, evangelism, and leadership are designed to assist in the missions and ministries of congregations, as well as members’ own spiritual journeys.

The average number of visitors to the site has jumped 45 percent in the last year and now averages over 1,200 visits per day. Among the most-visited areas of the site are mission, about us, churches, General Synod (Minutes), and seasonal resources. The single most popular day (with 2,890 visitors) was December 3, 2001, with most visitors attracted to the online Advent resources. The website also played a key communication role in the aftermath of September 11, providing information and resources in a timely manner.

Production Services

Nearly all printed materials produced by the Reformed Church in America are processed through the editorial and design work of Communication and Production Services. These services include writing, editing, proofreading, graphic design, printing (in-house and contract), and distribution. Printed materials include ads, annual reports, brochures, General Synod workbook and minutes, leader’s guides, missionary letters, mission packets, newsletters (Word on the Street, Called to Serve, City Gate, etc.) news releases, educational materials, and study books.

Communication and Production Services has primary writing responsibility for a variety of educational and promotional materials produced by Mission Services. These include profiles in mission, mission brochures, The Reformed Church in Mission, and the components of the Mission of the Month program. Mission of the Month materials include Mission Today, a resource sheet, poster, children’s bulletin, and offering envelopes.

Communication and Production Services writes and produces several publications for the entire denomination. These include RCA Today, Prayerline, and the RCA Plan Calendar. Additional responsibilities include coordinating, designing, and producing displays and providing writing and editorial services and news coverage for General Synod.

Communication and Production Services coordinates the production of video resources that help tell the story of RCA mission and ministry and that teach, inspire, and motivate people in their own faith journeys. During this past year three new RCA videos were released: What’s a Deacon to Do?, Battling AIDS in Africa and America, and Walk Humbly: An Orientation for Christian Servants.
Information Technology

Information Technology (IT) was brought into CAPS during the recent staff realignment. The office has four and three-quarters employees (including half-time management), whose main responsibilities include technical support for staff computers, maintenance of databases, upgrades of current systems, and the deployment of new technologies.

Three specific areas of responsibilities include:

- Establishing Raiser’s Edge as the primary database for the denomination. This is used by the Church Herald for its subscribers, by Operations and Support to maintain church and clergy address information, and by Mission Services to track donations to missionaries, among others.

- Planned, periodic upgrades of computer systems throughout the organization, ensuring that staff have adequate systems to meet the demands of their jobs.

- Support for the Internet needs of the staff, including the email server, web server, and Internet connections to the various offices (as well as for staff who travel).

Information Technology is funded through a portion of the assessment income. It receives guidance from the Information Technology Strategy Group, a cross-section of staff members, which also sets technology policies for the denomination.

Report of the Editorial Council of the Church Herald

In the year 2001 the Church Herald continued its mission to serve members of the Reformed Church, offering a broad range of articles, from news reports to daily devotionals, in order to keep members informed and help them on their spiritual journeys. Through Platform and Flak and Flattery, the magazine provided a forum for RCA members to express their thoughts on all manner of topics, and by employing a variety of authors from all of the denomination’s regions, the magazine reflects some of the denomination’s diversity.

The Magazine

In 2001 the Church Herald offered in-depth features on grief and loss, evangelism and church growth, and the events of September 11. The magazine also reported on the ongoing impact of Mission 2000 and provided insight into the life of the denomination through reports on General Synod and Triennial as well as other meetings and gatherings. The year concluded, as it has for several years, with daily readings for the season of Advent, authored in 2001 by RCA missionaries in service worldwide. In conjunction with the RCA’s website administrator, daily readings through Epiphany were available online, a practice begun in 2000 that will continue in 2002.

In January 2000 the Church Herald presented a portrait of the RCA, a comprehensive summary of the Reformed Church geared toward those less familiar with the denomination. Because of the popularity and relatively long life of this issue, it has been translated into Spanish as a resource for RCA congregations with Spanish-speaking members. The
Council for Hispanic Ministries assisted in the production of this product, which was printed in the spring of 2001. A Korean translation of the same issue was begun in 2001, and members of the Council for Pacific and Asian American Ministries offered crucial assistance in fine-tuning the translation to insure that the nuances and the theology are written in a helpful and accurate way.

The magazine reflects a more diverse authorship than at any other time in its history. Writers include more laypeople and more women than ever before, most of them submitting their writing unsolicited, and the goal is to continue to expand the pool of contributors to the *Church Herald*. More churches are sending news items, and letters continue to come from across the denomination, many of them from first-time writers. Clearly the *Church Herald* speaks to its audience.

In 2001 the *Church Herald* was presented with awards by both the Associated Church Press and the Evangelical Press Association for work done in 2000, including awards for best personal experience article, humor, letters to the editor, and the “Nothing but Net” feature. The number and range of the awards are an indication of the number of ways the magazine seeks to reach and serve all the members of the Reformed Church.

**The Staff**

The *Church Herald* has been blessed with another year of relative consistency in terms of staffing. Cheryl Boose, who had served as bookkeeper for two years, left mid-year. Brenda Addie, for two years the Herald’s administrative assistant, moved into the position of bookkeeper, and Kathy Dykhuis joined the team as administrative assistant. This was the only staff change in 2001. Shannon Bolkema continues to work half-time for the magazine and half-time for the RCA’s Office of Communication and Production Services. Subscription manager Sue Stevens, who took a leave of absence during the summer to serve as a cook at Camp Fowler, began her third year at the *Church Herald*, and editor Christina Van Eyl has served in that capacity for more than five years. Terry DeYoung is in his eighth year as managing editor, while proofreader Linda Vanderhyde has completed over nine years of service, and typist Nancy Graham has been on staff for almost nineteen years. The staff’s experience helps them to work efficiently, while the need to create a new product each month helps to keep the staff fresh in their focus.

**Endowment Fund**

In 2000 the *Church Herald* began the process for establishing an endowment that will allow the *Church Herald*:

- to fund workshops on writing, photography, and art.
- to fund the art for major projects (e.g., seasonal devotions).
- to commission pieces from established writers and artists.
- to develop and support an internship program.

This fund, which is being raised with the support and assistance of the RCA Foundation, will allow the *Herald* to implement new programs and incorporate new energy into existing projects.

**Finances**

Although advertising was not as strong in 2001 as in 2000, revenue did exceed budget projections. This, coupled with level paper prices, allowed the magazine to end the year solidly in the black, and to return just over $17,000 to the denomination’s Office of Finance Services to offset other assessment-related costs.
When the *Church Herald* was introduced into the assessment budget in 1993, it accounted for nearly 25 percent of the General Synod assessment. In the face of increasing costs in other areas of the denomination, the *Church Herald* has consistently reduced its assessment income, and now assessment dollars allocated for distribution of the magazine to every member represent about 19 percent of the assessment budget. The *Church Herald* controls costs and uses its resources prudently.

**Communications Strategy**

The Communication Strategy Group, a team of communicators from the denominational staff, continued its work in 2001. The *Church Herald*, as one of the denomination’s primary communication vehicles, has participated in the meetings and will play a role in the coordinated strategy developed by this group. By being consistent and calculating in the way communication vehicles work together, the denomination’s communication can improve without a dramatic increase in dollars.

The *Church Herald* seeks in every way to be a magazine serving members of the Reformed Church in America.

**From the Report of the President**

In response to P-3 from the report of the president (p. 39) the advisory committee recommended:

**R-31**

To instruct the General Synod Council to facilitate the collecting of stories of RCA congregations engaged in crossing barriers with the gospel of Christ; and further,

to encourage the General Synod Council, in cooperation with the Commission for Women and the Office of Women, to pay particular attention to gathering stories of women exercising leadership roles in Christ’s mission; and further,

to instruct the General Synod Council to develop ongoing strategies to communicate these stories throughout the church, and to preserve these stories in the RCA Archives. (ADOPTED)

Reasons:

1. These stories will encourage RCA congregations to discover new ways to follow Christ in mission.

2. These stories will encourage RCA congregations to lift up the ministry of women.
In response to P-3 from the report of the president (p. 39) the advisory committee recommended:

**R-32**  
To instruct the General Synod Council to report annually statistics on the gender of ordained office holders in the RCA; and, if approved, statistics on the gender of commissioned pastors in the RCA. (ADOPTED)

Reasons:

1. These statistics will provide information that is not readily available and help reflect the diversity of ministry within our denomination.

2. These statistics will encourage the leadership of women in our denomination.
REPORTS ON CHRISTIAN UNITY

Report of the Commission on Christian Unity

INTRODUCTION

The Commission on Christian Unity (CCU) met once since the last session of General Synod, on December 10-11, 2001, at the RCA Synod of Mid-America office in Chicago. The Commission’s regular schedule was disrupted by the September 11 attacks, which gave rise to serious reflection by the commission on its role in relationship to the new realities. It also prompted the commission to explore meeting just once a year, for a day longer than usual, and to do more of its work by email. Such a style and schedule would facilitate the continued involvement of two commission members who are outside the United States—David Alexander in Taiwan and Willis Jones in Oman. As indicated in this report, much of the commission’s work has focused on the World Alliance of Reformed Churches, whose executive committee was hosted by the RCA in Holland, Michigan, last summer, and the process for the Church’s study of the Belhar Confession.

The Constitution of the RCA gives responsibility for ecumenical relations to the General Synod (Book of Church Order, Chapter 1, Part IV, Article 2, Section 5). To be faithful to the ecumenical calling, General Synod needs a consultative body to oversee ecumenical commitments, to present an ecumenical agenda to the church, and to carry out ecumenical directives as given by the church through General Synod.

Since its creation in 1974 (MGS 1974, R-6, pp. 201-202) and adoption in 1975 (MGS 1975, R-4, pp. 101-102) by action of General Synod, CCU has served General Synod by coordinating the whole range of ecumenical involvements at all levels throughout the RCA. CCU advises General Synod on matters of ecumenical import; it communicates with other denominations, ecumenical councils, and interdenominational agencies; it educates the whole denomination on ecumenical matters; and it advocates for actions and positions consistent with the RCA’s confessions and practice.

“An Ecumenical Mandate for the Reformed Church in America,” adopted by General Synod in 1996 (MGS 1996, R-1, p. 197) guides the work of CCU. By means of its ongoing ecumenical commitments both at home and abroad, CCU keeps before the RCA the essential questions regarding the nature of Christian unity and suggests ways of giving visible expression to the unity all believers have in Jesus Christ. Conversely, through referrals, General Synod presents Christian unity matters to CCU for study, implementation, and possible recommendations to General Synod.

To help summarize the scope of the ecumenical practice of the RCA, three groupings give visible expression to the RCA’s ecumenism. These are general groupings and by no means exhaust the scope of the ecumenical life of the RCA.

Programmatic Ecumenism

Programmatic ecumenism refers to cooperative endeavors with other communions to create programs of ministry and mission. It may happen formally on the denominational level or more informally at the local level. It is usually prompted by a mutual desire to accomplish a specific ministry or mission goal. A few examples of this visible expression of ecumenical activity are: cooperative curricula development, disaster relief response, vacation church schools, food distribution programs, youth events, and joint services of worship. On the denominational level, the RCA continues to be involved in several cooperative world mission partnerships and many ecumenical involvements.
Conciliar Ecumenism

The various councils of churches (world, national, regional, state, or local) are expressions of this form of ecumenism. As communities of communions, the councils facilitate the collaboration of denominations in various programs of service and witness, recognizing and accepting the distinctive contributions of each corporate expression of the church catholic.

The RCA holds memberships in the World Council of Churches (WCC), the World Alliance of Reformed Churches (WARC), the National Council of Churches of Christ in the USA (NCCC), the Canadian Council of Churches (CCC), and the Evangelical Fellowship of Canada (EFC). In addition, one regional synod and several congregations hold membership in the National Association of Evangelicals (NAE).

Through conciliar fellowship, Christian traditions meet and work together with the purpose of representing the unity of the body of Christ as primary. In and through the practice of ecumenism, unity is demonstrated to a fragmented society while a greater understanding is gained for each other’s unique contribution to the whole body of Christ. Lively and passionate discussions demonstrate the depth of conviction that the various communion members bring to the table, yet members remain committed to unity and the principle of acting together in all matters except those in which differences of conviction compel members to act separately.

Conversational/Dialogue Ecumenism

Conversations and dialogue are expressions of ecumenical practice that take place between churches at the denominational level. These may be either bilateral (one-to-one), such as takes place between the Reformed Church in America and the Christian Reformed Church, or multilateral (more than two), such as took place between the *Formula of Agreement* partners. Through WARC the RCA is represented in bilateral dialogues with the Roman Catholic Church. Dialogues seek to give faithful expression to what churches believe, identifying areas where there is commonality as well as areas that need further exploration because of historic differences of theology and practice. The goal is always to recognize and not to homogenize. The desired outcome is to discover whether parties can reach a level of consensus that recognizes sufficient agreement as a basis for substantial fellowship while admitting that continuing differences exist as a basis for ongoing mutual theological work.

ECUMENICAL OFFICER AND ASSOCIATE FOR ECUMENICAL RELATIONS

The general secretary of the RCA is its chief ecumenical officer. As such, the general secretary serves the denomination through various degrees of engagement with the leadership of other church bodies. Because of the vast scope of this engagement (both national and worldwide), the general secretary is enlisted as an ex-officio member of CCU. CCU is grateful for the wealth of experience—ecumenically, practically, and theologically—that the Rev. Wesley Granberg-Michaelson continues to bring to CCU.

CCU is indebted to the Rev. Douglas Fromm, the RCA associate for ecumenical relations who serves as the staff resource person for CCU. As a part-time associate, he assists the General Secretary in the development, coordination, and interpretation of the ecumenical policies and relationship of the denomination and represents the RCA in ecumenical meetings and assemblies. The Rev. Fromm also serves as pastor of Upper Ridgewood Community Church, an RCA congregation in Ridgewood, New Jersey.
ECUMENICAL NETWORK WITH CLASSES

In 1993 CCU initiated an effort to establish an RCA network of ecumenism throughout the denomination. The network’s purpose was to help CCU disseminate information to the classes and to receive information concerning ecumenism at the local level from the classes and congregations. The network is composed of one individual from each classis who serves as an ecumenical liaison between CCU and the classis. A member of CCU contacts each classis’ ecumenical liaison following each meeting of CCU and each mailing from the office of the associate for ecumenical relations. CCU has requested that each classis provide regular agenda time at stated meetings for a report from the liaison concerning updates on ecumenical matters and for receiving the information from the member churches of the classes for referral to CCU.

RCA ECUMENICAL APPOINTEES

In 1989 CCU established a means of reporting and accountability for all ecumenical appointees who represent the RCA in the ecumenical arena. A reporting form was developed (and is still in use) that affords a uniform reporting system to CCU. The reports are reviewed by CCU at each of its meetings, which allows CCU to keep abreast of events in ecumenism and changes in programs, activities, and personnel. Every effort is made to have CCU members be the ecumenical appointees to other denominations’ synods, conferences, and ecumenical relations boards.

ECUMENICAL COUNCILS

World Council of Churches

The RCA is a charter member of the World Council of Churches (WCC) and participates in its programs. RCA General Secretary Wesley Granberg-Michaelson is a member of the Central Committee of the WCC. The Rev. Douglas Fromm is a member of the U.S. Conference Board representing the RCA.

National Council of Churches

The RCA is a charter member of the National Council of Churches of Christ in the USA (NCCCUSA). RCA General Secretary Wesley Granberg-Michaelson has been active in the reformation and restructuring of the NCCCUSA. RCA delegates to the General Assembly of the NCCCUSA are: the Rev. Taylor Holbrook, Dr. Lynn Japinga, the Rev. Mark Nieusma, and the Rev. Wesley Granberg-Michaelson. The Rev. Douglas Fromm is a member of the Executive Board.

The advisory committee recommended:

R-33
To commend the general secretary for his work with other church leaders in the development of an expanding ecumenical table known as Christian Churches Together in the USA; and further,

...to instruct the Commission on Christian Unity to explore this initiative and report to the 2003 General Synod. (ADOPTED)

Reasons:

1. Christian Churches Together in the USA is an emerging response to the reformation and restructuring of the National Council of Churches of Christ in the USA.
2. This effort celebrates a common confession of our faith in the triune God and attempts to bring additional partners to the ecumenical table (Roman Catholic, Orthodox, Evangelical, and Pentecostal) for a new level of relationship and action that offers a common witness for Christ to the world.

World Alliance of Reformed Churches

The World Alliance of Reformed Churches (WARC) Executive Committee met in Holland, Michigan, on July 22–August 5, 2001. The Rev. Anna Melissa Jackson, the RCA’s delegate to the Executive Committee of WARC, is a member of CCU. The RCA hosted the nearly eighty people from twenty-seven countries associated with the Executive Committee. The Rev. Douglas Fromm, associate for ecumenical relations, coordinated the event. The Commission on Christian Unity is very grateful to the many people in western Michigan, as well as RCA staff, who assisted in the arrangements for this visit and is thankful that so many members of congregations were enthusiastic and willing to help. Many gave hours of time during preparation and even more during the two weeks of the meetings. CCU thanks those people at Hope College, where the delegates stayed, and at Western Theological Seminary, where the meetings were held.

The WARC Executive Committee officers met beginning on Thursday, July 26. That evening a welcoming banquet was held at Third Reformed Church in Holland. Following the dinner, an opening service of worship was held in which the Rev. Dr. C. S. Song, president of WARC, preached. The formal sessions began on July 27 and continued until Saturday, August 4, when the meeting was concluded with a luncheon hosted by Hope Reformed Church of Holland, and a service of Holy Communion.

Along with attending many hours of work sessions during the two weeks, delegates were hosted by area RCA churches for worship and mid-day meal hospitality. They attended a block party, a picnic, and a presentation of the Life and Ministry of the Reformed Church in America, at which RCA General Secretary Wesley Granberg-Michaelson presided and fielded questions. Western Seminary, Hope College, and others hosted dinners; and officials, including the mayor of Holland, welcomed the delegates to an afternoon of community visits followed by an evening boat ride on Lake Michigan.

Several members of the Executive Committee also made pre- and post-meeting visits to area families, RCA congregations, and staff and volunteers of ministry agencies. Members participated in worship, meals, and discussions regarding many issues. They discussed women’s issues, racial justice, teenage pregnancy, domestic and sexual abuse, and youth gangs. Internal issues were also discussed, such as how to retain young people in the church, various kinds of liturgy and music, and the role of women in leadership in the church. The observation most often repeated was the realization that the issues addressed were common to everyone, in all parts of the world, and differed only slightly in the details.

The commonality of faith empowers everyone in such an experience. Faith provided the context that quickly accepted the others’ statements, expectations, and even biases. It provided a common language and a safe place to have conversations on a whole range of subjects. And, common faith provided worship in social settings as well as understanding of urban life in West Michigan, through mutual theological reflection.

The goal for hosting this visit was simple: to do all possible to facilitate a good, productive meeting for WARC and an opportunity for the delegates to learn about the RCA and its varied ministries while nurturing friendships and working relationships so that everyone—guests, staff and volunteers—would leave for home with good memories and new friends and acquaintances. The commission is very thankful and celebrates that the goal was met to the satisfaction of so many people.
ROMAN CATHOLIC – REFORMED DIALOGUE: ROUND VI

Since 1965 in the United States a series of dialogues has been held between official representatives of Reformed Churches and the Catholic Church. Participating Reformed churches have been the Reformed Church in America, the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), and the United Church of Christ. Six dialogues have been completed to date, resulting in several publications.

The latest round focused on the possibilities and challenges of ecumenical families, that is to say, families where the marital union is between members of the Roman Catholic and Reformed Churches. The results of the dialogue are published in a work titled: “Interchurch Families: Resources for Ecumenical Hope,” published by Westminster John Knox Press, Louisville, Kentucky, and the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, Washington, D.C.

The publication is a practical resource for pastors and members of both the Reformed and Catholic churches entering into, or already in, an interchurch marriage. It is written in a friendly style that deals with “Our Common Baptism,” “The Church,” “The Covenant of Marriage,” and “The Eucharist.” Included is a section that covers such practical issues as counseling resources and marriage preparation, family planning, promises of the Catholic partner, canon law and the Catholic Church, and marriage annulment. The appendix includes a glossary of terms unique to each church as well as language held in common with distinctive understanding by each tradition.

Members of the RCA dialogue team were the Rev. Gregg Mast and the Rev. Carol Bechtel. The Rev. Douglas Fromm, associate for ecumenical relations, served as staff to the dialogue.

MORAVIAN-REFORMED DIALOGUE

The intention of the RCA through the General Synod action (MGS 2000, R-15 substitute, p. 105) to enter a Moravian-Reformed dialogue has been made known to the Moravian Church. The other Reformed bodies participating are the Presbyterian Church (USA) and the United Church of Christ.

The first meeting of representatives from the participating churches was held on April 12-13, 2002, at Winston-Salem, North Carolina. The focus and configuration of the dialogue was reviewed and a schedule prepared. The Rev. Douglas Fromm, associate for ecumenical relations, was the RCA representative. An additional RCA dialogue participant is to be named.

CHRISTIAN REFORMED CHURCH RELATIONS

In 1995 an overture from the Classis of North Grand Rapids to effect full programmatic and organizational union with the Christian Reformed Church (CRC) and the RCA by June 2000 (MGS 1995, p. 187), resulted in the following recommendation from the 1995 General Synod:

To encourage agencies of the General Synod of the Reformed Church in America as well as the Commission on Christian Unity to maintain regular correspondence with the Christian Reformed Church in North America and its Inter-Church Relations Committee and further, to explore avenues of reconciliation between the Reformed Church in America and the Christian Reformed Church in North America for additional programmatic cooperation (MGS 1995, R-5, p. 189).
In its continuing response to R-5, CCU met with the Inter-Church Relations Committee (ICRC) of the CRC at its February 28-29, 2000, meeting. The two groups were also scheduled to meet in late September 2001, but that meeting was canceled because of the September 11 attacks. There continues to be mutual agreement and intention that the CCU and the ICRC meet as often as once a year in concurrent sessions that would allow for continuing joint discussions and mutual projects. There is also agreement regarding the advantages of joint theological study in several areas, including the Uniting Reformed Church of South Africa’s Belhar Confession and the Roman Catholic/Lutheran Joint Declaration of Justification. A concurrent meeting of CCU and ICRC is scheduled for December 10-12, 2002, in Chicago.

**EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN CHURCH IN AMERICA**

The Rev. Richard L. Brihn, past moderator of the CCU, was appointed as the RCA’s ecumenical delegate to the biennial Evangelical Lutheran Church in America’s (ELCA) Churchwide Assembly in Indianapolis, Indiana, August 9-14, 2001. A condensation of the report follows.

There were 1,040 delegates including bishops; the majority of the delegates were not clergy. The welcome extended to me by Eileen Heffner of the ELCA’s Department for Ecumenical Affairs and her staff was most gracious and helpful. A heartfelt “thank you” was extended to Bishop Stanley Olson, who had been a member of the CCU for six years. His presence at our meetings during the time of our preparing to have the *Formula of Agreement* ratified was invaluable. I spoke briefly with the Presiding Bishop H. George Anderson and brought him greetings from the RCA as well as our best wishes for his retirement years.

I was disappointed in not being able to be present for the complete meeting, because the plenary discussions and presentations were excellent. The system used for delegates to speak to an issue was most interesting in that the microphones were designated as “pros” and “cons,” allowing the presiding bishop to alternate the views being presented.

The process for electing the presiding bishop was most interesting and instructive. I share this information as “food for thought” for the RCA’s presidential election process. The nominating ballot was taken on the first day of the assembly. The delegates had an opportunity to submit written questions for the final ten, then the final three, nominees. The nominating commission selected the questions to be asked. Prior to the casting of each ballot, there was a prayer hymn for the Holy Spirit’s direction followed by a prayer. From an outsider’s point of view, this made the process more spiritual and less political.

**2001 GENERAL SYNOD REFERRALS TO THE COMMISSION ON CHRISTIAN UNITY**

**Ecumenical delegates at General Synod (MGS 2001, R-23, p. 86)**

The 2001 General Synod voted:

To direct the Commission on Christian Unity to recommend to 2002 General Synod ways by which ecumenical delegates to RCA General Synod can have more of a participatory role.
Background

This recommendation was prompted by the Rev. Timothy Boeve, past moderator of CCU, who represented the RCA as an official ecumenical advisory delegate to the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church, USA (PCUSA) in 2000. At that assembly, Rev. Boeve was accorded both voice and vote in the advisory committee just as every other delegate, and he participated fully in the work of the committee. The 2001 recommendation was approved for these reasons:

1. Doing so would be in keeping with the Ecumenical Mandate for the Reformed Church in America, which states (Part III, C):

   Finally when we become involved in ecumenical activities, whether as denominational representatives or as individuals in local congregations, the way we approach those efforts is as critical to the success of the tasks as the work itself...These are not situations of compromise or manipulation, but rather opportunities for learning about and from one another, even as we engage in the particular tasks at hand.

2. Extending to ecumenical delegates to our General Synod the same rights and privileges extended to our delegates is fitting and proper.

Accordingly, the Commission on Christian Unity discussed this issue at length at its meeting in December 2001 and presents the following report and recommendations:

At the bidding of the General Synod, the Commission on Christian Unity seeks:

• To heighten the visibility of ecumenical delegates.
• To deepen the contribution of ecumenical delegates.
• To broaden the participation of ecumenical delegates.

We appreciate that much has already been achieved to assure our ecumenical delegates that they are honored guests among us and that we value the contribution they make to our worship, koinonia, and deliberations. Thus, we seek to build upon solid practice and procedure. To further the objectives above, we therefore recommend:

R-34
That ecumenical delegates be seated in designated places at tables in the front row of the delegates to General Synod; and further,

that ecumenical delegates be invited to conduct devotions of morning/evening prayer at appropriate times throughout the proceedings of the General Synod; and further,

that Monday of General Synod be designated as World Church Day (or Ecumenical Day) and the theme for the proceedings of the entire day center upon the world church/ecumenical issues;

The day would begin with the traditional ecumenical breakfast; continue with the presentation of the report of the Commission on Christian Unity; and conclude with Celebration Oikoumene, or Worship of the World Church.

The Celebration Oikoumene would include ecumenical delegates who might process with banners from their communions, vested in the appropriate robes of their
traditions alongside RCA participants; and contribute to the liturgy from the richness of their spirituality. The music and singing would reflect the lyrics and melodies of the world church. The preacher might be designated from among the ecumenical delegates or be some other person with a known ecumenical perspective;

and further,

that ecumenical delegates be invited to participate in the deliberations of the Advisory Committee on Christian Unity,

that ecumenical delegates bring greetings to General Synod from their communions,

that ecumenical delegates who are signatories to the Formula of Agreement be given the status of delegate to General Synod, allowing them not only the privileges of the floor, but also allowing them the right to vote, and finally,

that the Commission on Church Order revise the Bylaws and Special Rules of Order of the General Synod governing the practice and procedure of the General Synod in order to allow for these.

Motions were made to amend the recommendation:

R-34 (amended):
That ecumenical delegates be seated in designated places with corresponding delegates to General Synod; and further,

that ecumenical delegates be invited to conduct devotions of morning/evening prayer at appropriate times throughout the proceedings of the General Synod; and further,

that Monday of General Synod be designated as World Church Day (or Ecumenical Day) and the theme for the proceedings of the entire day center upon the world church/ecumenical issues;

The day would begin with the traditional ecumenical breakfast; continue with the presentation of the report of the Commission on Christian Unity; and conclude with Celebration Oikoumene, or Worship of the World Church.

The Celebration Oikoumene would include ecumenical delegates who might process with banners from their communions, vested in the appropriate robes of their traditions alongside RCA participants; and contribute to the liturgy from the richness of their spirituality. The music and singing would reflect the lyrics and melodies of the world church. The preacher might be designated from among the ecumenical delegates or be some other person with a known ecumenical perspective;

and further,
that ecumenical delegates be invited to participate in the deliberations of the Advisory Committee on Christian Unity,

that ecumenical delegates bring greetings to General Synod from their communions, and finally,

that the Commission on Church Order revise the Bylaws and Special Rules of Order of the General Synod governing the practice and procedure of the General Synod in order to allow for these. (ADOPTED AS AMENDED)

Reason: This fulfills the mandate, with its reasons, to the Commission on Christian Unity from General Synod 2001.

Petition to study the *Joint Declaration on the Doctrine of Justification* (MGS 2001, R-25, p. 89)

The 2001 General Synod voted:

To direct the Commission on Christian Unity to report the progress of the petition to the Executive Committee of WARC to General Synod 2002.

Background (MGS 2000, pp. 93-95)

The 2000 General Synod voted:

To instruct the general secretary to petition the Executive Committee of the World Alliance of Reformed Churches to initiate a study on the *Joint Declaration on the Doctrine of Justification* from a Reformed perspective; and further,

to direct the Commission on Christian Unity to seek out ways by which bilateral or multilateral dialogue(s) could take place with the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, the Lutheran World Federation, and the Secretary of (the Vatican’s) Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity for the purpose of studying the *Joint Declaration on the Doctrine of Justification* and to report the progress to General Synod 2001. (MGS 2000, R-12 substitute, p. 95)

The 2001 recommendation was adopted because:

1. The general secretary had yet to receive a response from the Executive Committee of the World Alliance of Reformed Churches.

2. Conversations were currently taking place between the Lutheran World Federation and the Secretary of the (Vatican’s) Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity to determine if or how such a dialogue could take place.

In 1999 the Lutheran World Federation and the Roman Catholic Church signed the *Joint Declaration on the Doctrine of Justification*:

The present Joint Declaration has this intention: namely, to show that on the basis of their dialogue the subscribing Lutheran churches and the Roman Catholic Church are now able to articulate a common understanding of our justification by God’s grace through faith in Christ. It does not cover all that either church teaches about justification; it does encompass a consensus on basic truths of the doctrine of justification and
shows that the remaining differences in its explication are no longer the occasion for doctrinal condemnations. The word “church” is used in this declaration to reflect the self-understandings of the participating churches, without intending to resolve all the ecclesiological issues related to this term (Joint Declaration on the Doctrine of Justification, Preamble, #5).

The Official Common Statement by the Lutheran World Federation and the Catholic Church states:

On the basis of the agreements reached in the Joint Declaration on the Doctrine of Justification (JD), the Lutheran World Federation and the Catholic Church declare together: “The understanding of the doctrine of justification set forth in this Declaration shows that a consensus in basic truths of the doctrine of justification exists between Lutherans and Catholics” (JD 40). On the basis of this consensus the Lutheran World Federation and the Catholic Church declare together, “The teaching of the Lutheran churches presented in this Declaration does not fall under the condemnations from the Council of Trent. The condemnations in the Lutheran Confession do not apply to the teaching of the Roman Catholic Church presented in this Declaration” (JD 41).

In a World Council of Churches press release of February 2, 2000, it was stated:

Bishop Walter Kasper, the Secretary of the Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity, visited the WCC’s Geneva headquarters on February 1-2, 2000. Bishop Kasper said of his visit, “The ecumenical movement is one of the bright spots of the past century.” Kasper mentioned justification as (one of the) ecumenical challenge(s) for the future. This was a fundamental question not only for Lutherans, but also for the Reformation churches. It would now be a case of examining how far the differentiated consensus worked out with the Lutherans could be extended to other Reformation churches and so broaden the basis of consensus.

In March of 2001, an eighteen-member delegation of the Presbyterian Church (USA) met with Cardinal Walter Kasper and representatives of the Pontifical Council for the Promoting of Christian Unity, at the Vatican, Rome, Italy. The Rev. Douglas Fromm, RCA associate for ecumenical relations, was invited to be a member of the delegation along with the Rev. Lowell Almen, Secretary of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America.

At that meeting Cardinal Kasper, Secretary of the Pontifical Council, gave strong, clear indication that the Roman Catholic Church encouraged and welcomed a Reformed-Roman Catholic conversation on the Doctrine of Justification. It was suggested that this conversation be jointly sponsored by the Vatican and the World Alliance of Reformed Churches.

At a meeting in Geneva, Switzerland, in January 2002, the Rev. Douglas Fromm discussed this proposal with Dr. Setri Nyomi, Executive Secretary of the World Alliance of Reformed Churches. In addition, the Rev. Fromm reiterated the RCA request that the World Alliance of Reformed Churches initiates a joint Roman Catholic-Reformed study on the Joint Declaration on the Doctrine of Justification (MGS 2000, R-12 substitute, p. 95).

This item will be on the agenda of the next meeting of the Executive Committee of WARC, to be held in the summer of 2002.

Study guide on Belhar Confession (MGS 2001, R-26, p. 93)

The 2001 General Synod voted:

To instruct the Commission on Christian Unity to report its progress on the study guide on the Belhar Confession to General Synod 2002.
Background *(MGS 2000, R-13 amended, p.100)*

The 2000 General Synod voted:

To instruct the Commission on Christian Unity to commend the Belhar Confession to the church over the next decade for reflection, study, and response, as a means of deepening the RCA's commitment to dealing with racism and strengthening its ecumenical commitment to the Uniting Reformed Church of Southern Africa (URCSA) and other Reformed bodies.

The Belhar Confession, drafted in 1982, later became one of the standards of unity (along with the Belgic Confession, the Canons of Dordt, and the Heidelberg Catechism) for the Uniting Reformed Church of Southern Africa (URCSA). In light of the Belhar Confession's emphasis on Christian unity, CCU placed on its agenda a study of the Belhar Confession, which has come to have significance far beyond the church in South Africa *(MGS 1998*, p. 248).

Historically, CCU has been a participant in the long-term relationship the RCA has enjoyed with the members of URCSA. The 1995 General Synod voted *(MGS 1995, R-1, p. 405)*:

To request the Commission on Christian Unity to consult with the appropriate offices of the Uniting Reformed Church of Southern Africa (URCSA), with the input of the African-American Council, to develop a plan for correspondence and continuing relationships between the respective assemblies and congregations of the RCA and the URCSA.

The 1996 General Synod stated:

In light of R-1 and in concurrence with similar actions and recommendations adopted in Mission Services, a delegation of RCA representatives traveled to South Africa from February 26, 1996, to March 6, 1996, to meet with URCSA representatives *(MGS 1996, p. 180)*.

...If one were to ask each member of the RCA delegation to give a summary of its task there would be concurrence on the following:

...The relationship of the RCA and the URCSA must be in parity. There must be a posture of equality and openness to sharing and learning from each other, both in support of each other when in agreement and in support of each other through critical dialogue *(MGS 1996, p. 182)*.

In the spring of 1997 Dr. Oliver Patterson and the Rev. Kenneth Bradsell represented the RCA at the General Synod meeting of the Uniting Reformed Church in Southern Africa. The RCA representatives, with other ecumenical partners of the URCSA in attendance at that meeting, helped draft a document titled “URCSA Partnership Guidelines for Parish, Presbytery, and Synod.” The guidelines provide policies and procedures for mission and program partnerships with the various assemblies and congregations of the URCSA. They were adopted by the URCSA General Synod and forwarded to the URCSA’s ecumenical partners. The RCA has utilized the guidelines since 1997 in the development of its mission and program relationships with the Uniting Reformed Church.

On March 7, 1998, an URCSA delegation arrived in the United States for meetings with various RCA groups, including the faculty of New Brunswick and Western Theological Seminaries, RCA program staff, unit directors, and the general secretary. The delegation worshiped with RCA African-American congregations and had conversations with representatives from the Christian Reformed Church.
As a result of the conversations, the following points of agreement were reached:

1. Co-drafting of a basic document establishing the principles of the joint relationship between the URCSA and the RCA.

2. The mutual sharing of information about the government and programmatic structures of the URCSA and the RCA, along with areas of staff responsibilities for each denomination.

3. Connections between the component parts of the RCA and the URCSA will be explored, especially in the following areas: urban ministries, theological exchange, stewardship, Christian education, the Children and Worship program, and youth exchange programs.

4. The RCA will continue to monitor the decision of the World Alliance of Reformed Churches (WARC) regarding the “Proposed Joint Resolution” between WARC and the Nederduitse Gereformeerde Kerk (NGK—the white Dutch Reformed Church), in light of the failed attempt toward church union between the URCSA and the NGK.

5. Discussion and possible cooperation focusing on the issues of religion in public life, a major initiative of the URCSA.

6. Continued cooperation in the development and implementation of the partnership on diaconal work initiated by Mission Services; Christ Memorial Reformed Church in Holland, Michigan; and offices within the Christian Reformed Church (MGS 1998, p. 247).

Ecumenical Address from the Rev. Dr. Pitikoe

The Rev. Dr. Molefi Seth Pitikoe, ecumenical representative from the Uniting Reformed Church in Southern Africa (URCSA), addressed remarks to the synod in response to the 2000 General Synod instruction to the RCA to reflect on and study the Belhar Confession to deepen the church’s commitment to deal with racism and strengthen its commitment to URCSA and other Reformed bodies (MGS 2000, R-13, p. 100). Dr. Pitikoe’s presence at synod and his address to synod inaugurated the five-year church-wide study of the Belhar Confession.

THE BELHAR CONFESSION—
ITS HISTORY, DEVELOPMENT,
AND LIFE IN THE CHURCH AND ITS GIFT TO
THE LARGER CHURCH

Mr. President, moderators of committees, honorable members and guests of this great gathering, ladies and gentlemen, it is both an honor and a privilege for me to represent the Uniting Reformed Church in Southern Africa here and to convey a word of greeting to you in the name of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.
We want to thank you very much for the invitation extended to our church to participate in your synod, for the hospitality provided to me, for covering my travel cost, and for all the financial support given to our church (especially the support to cover legal costs). We were also delighted to learn that the General Synod of the Reformed Church in America, through its Commission on Christian Unity, has declared a five-year study of the Belhar Confession and that General Synod 2001 approved the confession as a church-wide study.

Mr. Moderator, I am asked to talk about the Belhar Confession. The Belhar was an outcry of faith. It was a call for faithfulness and repentance. This confession was formulated in a situation in which many felt that the integrity of the proclamation of the gospel was at stake. The Belhar Confession was issued soon after the action taken by the twenty-first General Council of the World Alliance of Reformed Churches declaring status confessio-nis. The situation of apartheid and the attempt on the part of some churches to defend it theologically called for a confession. Let us look back into the past, especially the situation which prepared the ground for the birth of this confession.

In South Africa the Dutch Reformed Church (DRC) was founded when the first settlers set foot on the shore of South Africa. Therefore we must go for more than three centuries back into history. This does not mean that the history of South Africa starts only then. The origin of the church in South Africa, and in particular the DRC, dates back to the seventeenth century.

The DRC founded different churches for different populations, although these churches were based on the same confessions. The separation of races corresponded with the views and politics of that time, which were based on the idea of supremacy of the white population. In the DRC this superiority is reflected in its understanding of itself as the “mother church,” which had a parental role to play towards her “daughter churches.”

The DRC’s justification for racial separation was based on missionary assumption, combined with European supremacy. Thus, the mission theology of the church enhanced a basic inequality in society, which it claimed was overcome in God. This also implied that it was not necessary to make this ultimate equality visible in its church structures. This theology equally influenced the church’s relationship with the social and political spheres.

The Split from One Church to Various Churches

In 1652 Jan van Riebeeck led the first Dutch colony on the shore of Southern Africa. What started as a refreshment post of the Dutch East India Company soon acquired a more established character. Shortly after the arrival in the Cape, soldiers and sailors gained occupation rights from the authorities. From the beginning, the DRC became the established church. Its first independent synod convened in Cape Town in 1824. By that time the British had taken over control in the Cape colony. Under British rule the DRC remained the official church.

From the first autonomous synod, the DRC prepared itself to initiate its theological education. Eventually, in 1853, the synod bought a piece of land in Stellenbosch, where the seminary was erected.

In the nineteenth century several developments took place in the DRC, all of which caused further division and rift within the DRC.

The start of missionary work among coloured people produced the first split in the church. This work became quite successful and many people converted to Christianity. However, this created tensions within the church because of existing social and political relation-
ships. The distinction between white colonists and indigenous people did not only run according to religious lines (Christians as opposed to heathen). It also referred to differences in standing (masters versus slaves and servants), which turned out to be harder to overcome than the religious distinction. White superiority and economic profit clashed with religious values, and appeared stronger than theological arguments.

Initially, the Cape synod refused to allow race to motivate church practice. The synod of 1829 stated that all members must celebrate Holy Communion together. It repeated this conviction at the following assemblies. However, in 1857 the synod felt pressured to make a decision to tolerate separate services, while emphasizing the fact that this was not based on Scripture:

The synod considers it appropriate and Scriptural that, where ever possible, pagan members should be accepted as members into current congregations. However, where such an arrangement should hinder the Gospel, due to the weakness of some, new pagan congregations should be able to enjoy their Christian privileges in separate buildings.

This quotation makes clear that the church considered evangelization its main task. To achieve this objective, it deemed legitimate the founding of distinct churches for people of different populations if incorporation was problematic. “Mission” became a covert phrase for racial intolerance, already apparent in different congregations. The establishment of churches along racial lines was meant as a temporary measure; as black people would become more acceptable in society, church services should again become integrated. However what was intended as an exception soon became the rule. Thus in 1880 the synod decided to institute the Dutch Reformed Mission Church for “coloured” people. According to the DRC, all the people involved preferred this:

As the number of converts grew, both European and colored members felt the necessity of separate places of worship and spiritual leaders, and in 1880 the Mission church was established for our coloured and native members...in which they regulate their own affairs and Boer missionaries sit alongside their coloured elders.

In fact this decision just endorsed the practice that prevailed in the colony. Before 1880 mission congregations had been founded that did not fall under the regulations of the church constitution. The 1880 synod felt the need to organize these congregations in one structure.

The founding of other churches along racial lines succeeded this initiative. The first “Bantu” church, the church for African members, was founded in the Orange Free State in 1910. Other regions followed this example. In 1968 a separate church for Indian members was established, the Indian Reformed Church (now called the Reformed Church in Africa).

Mission to Superiority

From the beginning the relationship between these churches was not based on equality. For cultural and religious reasons—in that time perceived as the same, since European culture equated itself with Christianity—the founding church considered itself superior to the founded churches. This notion of fundamental inequality manifested itself clearly in the missionary attitude of DRC. The following documents of the churches reveal this outlook.

Mission Work

Missionary activity of the DRC started late compared to other churches and missionary societies in South Africa. The requirements of these church members were a priority to the church. Another reason for the lack of an incentive to do missionary work among the
indigenous people can be found in the teachings of Dort. This confessional assembly of 1618 declared that the offspring of the heathen should not be baptized, even if they had become an integrated part of a Christian (eg., white) household.

In South Africa the “Afrikaner volk” considered themselves God’s “chosen people,” endowed with a mission to evangelize and rule over the indigenous population. This nation was constantly under threat of “diabolic” customs or people with malicious intentions. Since an enemy of the “chosen people” was a direct adversary of God, these evil influences had to be resisted to protect both the volk and Christianity. To preserve the purity of the Afrikaner population, fusion of races on all levels of society had to be denounced. Legislation to ensure racial segregation was therefore supported; white individuals and organizations, including the DRC, explicitly asked the government to separate the different communities in all sections of society. Already in 1924 the DRC urged the government to take measures to achieve segregation because:

- Competition between white and black on economic levels...leads to poverty, friction, misunderstanding, suspicion, and bitterness.
- The traditional fear of the Afrikaner of equality of treatment (gelykstelling) between black and white has its origin in his antipathy to the idea of racial fusion. The church declares itself unequivocally opposed to this fusion...every nation has the right to be itself and endeavour to develop and elevate itself. While the church thus declares itself opposed to social equality in the sense of ignoring differences of race and colour between white and black in daily life, it favours the encouragement and development of social differentiation and intellectual or cultural segregation, to the advantages of both sections.

The DRC submitted its Mission Policy to the government. According to the Native Commission, this policy influenced the government in developing apartheid, an influence the church was proud of. This document determined its missionary activities for almost three decades. Only in 1962, after the establishment of the General Synod, did the Sending Reglement replace the Mission Policy.

**Some Voices in the DRC Opposed Apartheid**

Even in those churches which supported apartheid, individuals and groups within them made their voices heard. In Pretoria the Rev. Ben Marais and in Stellenbosch Professor Ben Keet voiced their opposition to apartheid. Both were prominent leaders and highly respected. In 1957 Keet wrote a book entitled *Qua Vadis South Africa?*, which remains a classical theological refutation of apartheid. At the time, however, it went unheeded.

As a result of apartheid the Sharpville massacre occurred on the 21st of March 1960. Over sixty people died on that day. Not only the country, but also the churches, were in conflict. In an effort to reach consensus on the way ahead, the churches convened in Cottesloe, Johannesburg, in December 1960. All the major churches including the DRC were represented by their top leaders. The World Council of Churches chaired the convention, which lasted a week. At the end of the convention they formulated a declaration rejecting apartheid in no uncertain terms. However, during the proceedings it became clear that most of the delegates from the DRC and other white Reformed churches did not fully support this line. When the declaration became known a storm erupted among the delegates from the Afrikaner churches. Most of them withdrew their support of the declaration.

Dr. Verwoerd publicly denounced them, and called on the individual congregations to deal with them, which duly happened. They all lost their positions of leadership in the church-
es. Conservatives, who for the next twenty years supported apartheid fully, filled their places. In the aftermath of Cottesloe, Beyers Naude not only lost his leadership position, but also his congregation. He was excommunicated because he refused to break ties with the Christian Institute.

From the above-mentioned incidents, which precede the drafting of the Belhar Confession, it is the firm conviction of many Christians in South Africa that the ideology of apartheid has its roots within the church itself, especially the DRC. Several historical studies have demonstrated how this ideology gradually grew into a widespread and popular religious way of life, after the famous synodical decision of 1857.

In 1982 WARC declared a status confessionis concerning apartheid, calling it heresy, and suspended the membership of the DRC and the Nederduitse Hervormde Kerk. At the meeting of the Dutch Reformed Mission Church in Belhar during October of the same year, important steps were taken. The events surrounding this synod, including the declaration of a status confessionis and the resultant drafting of a confession, had various far-reaching implications.

The confession was first drafted in 1982 by the Dutch Reformed Mission Church under the leadership of Dr. Allan Boesak and was finally adopted in 1986, after engaging for so many years with the “mother church” that did not want to listen. The church thought it necessary to take a confessional stance on this matter of great urgency.

The draft confession addresses the following three issues:

1. The unity of the church.
2. Reconciliation.
3. The justice of God.

This unity is a gift and an obligation for the church-through the working of God’s Spirit it is a binding force. It must be pursued and sought-the people of God must continually be built to attain it. Furthermore, this unity must become visible so that the world may believe. Separation, enmity, and hatred between people and groups is sin. Anything which threatens this unity has no place in the church and must be resisted. This unity of the people of God must be manifested and be active in a variety of ways.

God has entrusted to His church a message of reconciliation in and through Jesus Christ. The church is called to be salt of the earth and the light of world. The church must be a peacemaker. It must witness by both word and deeds. Any doctrine which sanctions-in the name of the gospel or of the will of God-the forced separation of people, is rejected.

God has revealed Himself as one who wishes to bring about justice and true peace among men. He is in a special way the God of the destitute, the poor, and the wronged. He blocks the path of the ungodly. The church must therefore stand by people in any form of suffering; and as God’s possession the church must stand where God stands.

In all three articles of the Belhar Confession the positive statements are followed by a rejection of false doctrine. No explicit mention is made of apartheid, except in an explanatory footnote on the motivation for the drafting of the confession.

Belhar in the Life of the Uniting Reformed Church

- The Confession of Belhar is indeed a valued possession of the Uniting Reformed Church in Southern Africa. But despite its value to us, we are all very much aware that the Belhar is a controversial document. It was born in controversy (like all other confessions of faith that are worth their while) and in the past fifteen years of its exis-
tence it has not lost its controversial nature.

- One may ask, why is it controversial? Not because of its content, but because of the mere fact that it exists. Its whole existence is controversial.
- Belhar is controversial because it reminds people of an unpleasant past in the history of the church in South Africa. It reminds people of the charge, the accusation of supporting and propagating a heresy—the heresy of apartheid. And people do not like to be reminded of that. That is why they have great difficulty in separating the theological message of Belhar and its origin.
- But whatever the background of Belhar we cannot ignore its content.
- It helps the church to see its calling more clearly and to fulfill it with great dedication in this world.
- It functions in the Uniting Church as an instrument for profound self examination, to help determine whether the church really lives by the faith it proclaims.
- In the Uniting Reformed Church the Belhar Confession has become a stick to protect the church against false doctrine and heresies, but it is especially a staff for the church to walk with.

**Its Gift to the Larger Church**

The Reformed churches, not only of South Africa, but of the world, would be significantly poorer without Belhar and what Belhar professes. The implications of Belhar are far wider than its original context. Our wish is that the Reformed family would recognize this and not see it as only South African.

The traditional Reformed confessions that date from the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, despite their value and significance for the faith of the church, are inadequate to express the fullness of the Reformed faith. The main themes of the Belhar—the unity of the church and the reconciliation between people’s and God’s justice vis-à-vis the poor and the destitute—are not addressed in these confessions. Very little is said about the unity of the church. Reconciliation and justice for the poor are completely absent. Belhar is not only meant for South Africa.

So we have a wonderful document—a confession of outstanding quality.

Once more thank you for your invitation.

May the Lord direct you in all your deliberations and enable you to use each moment to the best advantage.

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**THE BELHAR CONFESSION**

_The Belhar Confession is one of the standards of unity (along with the Belgic Confession, the Canons of Dordt, and the Heidelberg Catechism) for the new Uniting Reformed Church of Southern Africa. Belhar has significance and influence well beyond the church in South Africa. As one member of the Uniting Church expressed it: “We carry this confession on behalf of all the Reformed churches. We do not think of it as ours alone.” This is a translation of the original Afrikaans text of the Belhar Confession._

1. We believe in the triune God, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, who gathers, protects, and cares for his Church by his Word and his Spirit, as he has done since the beginning of the world and will do to the end.

2. We believe in one holy, universal Christian Church, the communion of saints called from the entire human family.

We believe:

that Christ’s work of reconciliation is made manifest in the Church as the community of believers who have been reconciled with God and with one another; that unity is, therefore, both a gift and an obligation for the Church of Jesus Christ; that through the working of God’s Spirit it is a binding force, yet simultaneously a reality which must be earnestly pursued and sought: one which the people of God must continually be built up to attain;

that this unity must become visible so that the world may believe that separation, enmity, and hatred between people and groups is sin that Christ has already conquered, and accordingly that anything that threatens this unity may have no place in the Church and must be resisted;

that this unity of the people of God must be manifested and be active in a variety of ways: in that we love one another; that we experience, practice, and pursue community with one another; that we are obligated to give ourselves willingly and joyfully to be of benefit and blessing to one another; that we share one faith, have one calling, and are of one soul and one mind; have one God and Father, are filled with one Spirit, are baptized with one baptism, eat of one bread and drink of one cup, confess one Name, are obedient to one Lord, work for one cause, and share one hope; together come to know the height and the breadth and the depth of the love of Christ; together are built up to the stature of Christ, to the new humanity; together know and
bear one another’s burdens, thereby fulfilling the law of Christ that we need one another and upbuild one another, admonishing and comforting one another; that we suffer with one another for the sake of righteousness; pray together; together serve God in this world; and together fight against all that may threaten or hinder this unity;

that this unity can be established only in freedom and not under constraint; that the variety of spiritual gifts, opportunities, backgrounds, convictions, as well as the various languages and cultures, are by virtue of the reconciliation in Christ opportunities for mutual service and enrichment within the one visible people of God;

that true faith in Jesus Christ is the only condition for membership of this Church;

Therefore, we reject any doctrine

which absolutizes either natural diversity or the sinful separation of people in such a way that this absolutization hinders or breaks the visible and active unity of the church, or even leads to the establishment of a separate church formation;

which professes that this spiritual unity is truly being maintained in the bond of peace whilst believers of the same confession are in effect alienated from one another for the sake of diversity and in despair of reconciliation;

which denies that a refusal earnestly to pursue this visible unity as a priceless gift is sin;

which explicitly or implicitly maintains that descent or any other human or social factor should be a consideration in determining membership of the Church.

3. We believe that God has entrusted to his Church the message of reconciliation in and through Jesus Christ; that the Church is called to be the salt of the earth and the light of the world; that the Church is called blessed because it is a peacemaker; that the Church is witness both by word and by deed to the new heaven and the new earth in which righteousness dwells;

that God by his lifegiving Word and Spirit has conquered the powers of sin and death, and therefore also of irreconciliation and hatred, bitterness and enmity; that God by his lifegiving Word and Spirit will enable his people to live in a new obedience that can open new possibilities of life for society and the world;

that the credibility of this message is seriously affected and its beneficial work obstructed when it is proclaimed in a land that professes to be Christian, but in which the enforced separation of people on a racial basis promotes and perpetuates alienation, hatred, and enmity;

that any teaching which attempts to legitimate such forced separation by appeal to the gospel, and is not prepared to venture on the road of obedience and reconciliation, but rather, out of prejudice, fear, selfishness, and unbelief, denies in advance the reconciling power of the gospel, must be considered ideology and false doctrine.

Therefore, we reject any doctrine that, in such a situation, sanctions in the name of the gospel or of the will of God the forced separation of people on the grounds of race and color and thereby in advance obstructs and weakens the ministry and experience of reconciliation in Christ.
4. We believe that God has revealed himself as the One who wishes to bring about justice and true peace among men; that in a world full of injustice and enmity he is in a special way the God of the destitute, the poor, and the wronged and that he calls his Church to follow him in this; that he brings justice to the oppressed and gives bread to the hungry; that he frees the prisoner and restores sight to the blind; that he supports the downtrodden, protects the stranger, helps orphans and widows, and blocks the path of the ungodly; that for him pure and undefiled religion is to visit the orphans and the widows in their suffering; that he wishes to teach his people to do what is good and to seek the right;

that the Church must therefore stand by people in any form of suffering and need, which implies, among other things, that the Church must witness against and strive against any form of injustice, so that justice may roll down like waters, and righteousness like an ever-flowing stream;

that the Church as the possession of God must stand where he stands, namely, against injustice and with the wronged; that in following Christ the Church must witness against all the powerful and privileged who selfishly seek their own interests and thus control and harm others.

_Therefore, we reject any ideology that would legitimate forms of injustice and any doctrine that is unwilling to resist such an ideology in the name of the gospel._

5. We believe that, in obedience to Jesus Christ, its only Head, the Church is called to confess and to do all these things, even though the authorities and human laws might forbid them and punishment and suffering be the consequence.

Jesus is Lord.

To the one and only God, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, be the honor and the glory for ever and ever.

The CCU discussed this issue at length at its December 2001 meeting and makes the following report and recommendation:

The CCU will implement the direction of General Synod by using a process for the study of the Belhar Confession that will address the history, theological principles, and practical implications of the Belhar Confession for the RCA. The confession will be introduced and commended to the Church through the General Synod between 2002 and 2004 with a study document for General Synod endorsement and congregational use anticipated in 2005.

1. The History of the Belhar Confession and its role in the life of the URCSA and the RCA will be presented to General Synod 2002 through the Ecumenical Breakfast (voices of the RCA) and the ecumenical presentation to General Synod (visitor from South Africa).

2. The theological principles of the Belhar Confession will be presented to General Synod 2003 by a panel of General Synod professors, for focused discussion by the delegates, as a way of framing the parameters of the study guide.

3. The practical implications of the Belhar Confession, both for the URCSA and the RCA, will be explored by delegates for General Synod 2004 through discernment, presentation, experience, and discussion. This will be done with a view toward expanding the RCA’s understanding, appreciation, and dialogue of the Belhar Confession and will do so through making the study guide accessible for the congregations, using an action/reflection educational process.
The CCU recommends to General Synod:

**R-35**
That General Synod instruct the Commission on Christian Unity to continue guiding the study of the Belhar Confession by the RCA and to report its progress to General Synod 2003. (ADOPTED)

Reason: This fulfills the mandate to the Commission on Christian Unity from General Synods 2000 and 2001.

**R-36**
That General Synod encourage other parts of the church to use the Belhar Confession as they do their work, especially as it relates to dealing with racism and strengthening ecumenical commitment, and to explore the implications of its endorsement by the RCA for life and ministry in the RCA. (ADOPTED)

Reason: This fulfills the mandate to the Commission on Christian Unity from General Synod 2001.

**Decision of the National Association of Evangelicals (NAE) (MGS 2001, R-27, p. 94)**

The 2001 General Synod voted:

To instruct the Commission on Christian Unity to report to General Synod 2002 the decision of the NAE regarding the RCA's application to become a member church of the association.

The RCA made formal application for membership to the NAE in 2001. At the annual meeting in March 2001 the NAE board, at the request of one of its member communions, voted to reconsider its membership rule of March 2000, thus permitting church bodies to hold dual membership with the NAE and other ecumenical bodies. Prior to 2000 the NAE had a provision for membership that prohibited churches from becoming NAE members if they held membership in other ecumenical bodies.

The board requested its bylaws committee to restudy the issue and report to the annual meeting in 2002. In the meantime, the application made by the RCA for membership in the NAE is on hold.

According to NAE representatives the reconsideration of the membership section of the NAE bylaws has nothing to do with the RCA application or any adverse feeling toward the Reformed Church in America. It involves a broader issue within the NAE itself, as the boundaries of the organization are reviewed with regard to receiving churches that are members of other ecumenical bodies.

As of the writing of this report (March 2002) the NAE has not yet met and no decision has been reached concerning the internal bylaw change.


The 2001 General Synod voted:

To instruct the Commission on Christian Unity to report the results of its study of Overture 9 from the General Synod of 2000 to the General Synod of 2002.
Background

Overture 9 to the 2000 General Synod stated:

The Classis of Florida overtures the Synod of 2000 to publicly rebuke the General Council of the United Church of Christ for its toleration of Unitarian clergy and congregations (MGS 2000, p. 121).

The 2000 General Synod voted:

To refer Overture 9 to the Commission on Christian Unity for study and report to the General Synod of 2001 (MGS 2000, R-24, p.121).

The CCU was not able to obtain all of the necessary information from the United Church of Christ by General Synod 2001.

The CCU now makes the following report:

UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST AND UNITARIANISM

The United Church of Christ was constituted on June 25, 1957, by representatives of the Congregational Christian Churches and the Evangelical and Reformed Church in Cleveland, Ohio.

The Congregational tradition traces itself back to the Calvinist Puritans and Separatists who, during the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries, achieved prominence among English Protestants. Emigrating to North America, they helped colonize New England in the seventeenth century. The Christian Churches was an eighteenth-century restoration movement in North America that emphasized Christ as the only head of the church and the New Testament as the rule of faith. Both the Congregationalists and the Christian Churches found a like disposition in one another and in 1931 formally united into the Congregational Christian Churches.

The Reformed tradition traces itself back to the Reformation of the sixteenth century and the second generation of reformers, drawing on the insights of Luther and Calvin and formulating the Heidelberg Catechism of 1563. Members of the German Reformed Church emigrated to North America in the eighteenth century and formally organized in 1793. The nineteenth century in Germany witnessed the merger of Lutheran and Reformed people into one United Evangelical Church. Emphasizing pietistic devotion, these merged with other evangelical church associations and took the name of the German Evangelical Synod of North America in 1877. In 1934 this Synod and the Reformed Church in the U.S. (formerly the German Reformed Church) united to create the Evangelical and Reformed Church.

In 1957 the Congregational stream of tradition merged with the Reformed stream of tradition to constitute the United Church of Christ.

In the Preamble to its Constitution the United Church of Christ states, “The UCC acknowledges as its sole head, Jesus Christ. It looks to the Word of God in Scriptures, and to the presence and power of the Holy Spirit. It claims the faith of the historic Church expressed in the ancient creeds and reclaimed in the basic insight of the Protestant Reformers. It recognizes two sacraments, Baptism and the Lord’s Supper.”

The United Church of Christ comprises 5,923 congregations throughout the United States. Full communicant membership numbers 1,377,320. There are 24,991 pastors serving parishes with a total of 44,118 clergy.
The United Church of Christ is a member of the World Council of Churches, the National Council of Churches of Christ in the USA, and the World Alliance of Reformed Churches.

The history of the United Church of Christ and Unitarianism centers in the New England region of the United States. There are fifteen affiliations between Congregational and Unitarian congregations. Each of these federations predates the constitution of the United Church of Christ in 1957.

In the twentieth century (the 1920s and ’30s), a number of congregations of both the UCC and the UUA could not financially sustain their ministries. Given geographical proximity to one another, and the financial cost of maintaining separate properties, these UCC and UUA congregations came together in federations, known as federated congregations. The new arrangement allowed these historic churches to continue their ministries.

The congregations that entered into federations trace their history to those Congregational churches of the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries and the “Trinitarian controversies” that led to a refining of those congregational bodies that were either more Trinitarian or Unitarian. The fifteen federated congregations of today represent those predecessor, congregational bodies of the Trinitarian side of the controversy.

While admittedly a complex history of relationships, these fifteen federated UCC congregations represent an historic moment within the life of New England congregationalism. Since they are within the bounds of the UCC and have accepted their membership in that denomination it can be accepted that they abide by the constitutive documents of the UCC which are clearly Trinitarian in their understanding and profession as a church within the historic Reformed tradition.

This concludes the study and report by the CCU to the General Synod and the commission makes no further recommendation.

Affirmation of convictions overture (MGS 2001, R-29, p. 100)

The 2001 General Synod voted:

To instruct the Commission on Christian Unity to report to General Synod 2002 the response of the Classis of East Sioux to the commission’s letter (MGS 2000, R-33, pp. 154-155) regarding overture 3.

The CCU has not received an answer to its letter of October 2000 (MGS 2001, R-29, p. 100) and assumes that the matter has been satisfactorily addressed. We therefore make no further recommendation in this matter.

Membership in Reformed Ecumenical Council (MGS 2001, R-30 amendment, p. 102)

The 2001 General Synod voted:

To instruct the Commission on Christian Unity to explore membership in the Reformed Ecumenical Council and to report its recommendation to the 2002 General Synod.

Background

The Reformed Ecumenical Council (REC) began in 1946 when representatives from the Christian Reformed Church in North America, the Reformed Churches in South Africa,
and the Reformed Churches in the Netherlands met in Grand Rapids, Michigan, to build a stronger unity in the post-war climate. It was first known as the Reformed Ecumenical Synod. REC presently has thirty-four member denominations in twenty-three countries, joining in fellowship about seven million Christians. Submission to biblical truths and confessional integrity are essential to the REC’s calling and purpose. The council meets every four years in an assembly to which each member church sends delegates.

The CCU has held preliminary discussions with Richard L. Van Houten, General Secretary of REC; Setri Nyomi, General Secretary of the World Alliance of Reformed Churches (WARC); and members of the RCA African-American Council. Of WARC’s two-hundred-fifteen member churches and REC’s thirty-eight, twenty-one churches hold membership in both organizations. Representatives of WARC and REC will meet in October 2002 to explore the “value the common members experience in each organization” and other issues of mutual interest. Both organizations have strong stands on dismantling racism.

There are significant tensions around this issue for many people in the RCA, in the Uniting Reformed Church in South Africa (URCSA) (with whom the RCA has a formal partnership dating back to the early 1990s), in WARC, and in the REC. In the apartheid era, the Dutch Reformed Church (in South Africa) continued to enjoy external fellowship with the Reformed family through the REC at a time when they were excommunicated from WARC. Even though the URCSA has not documented a stand on the REC, it is important for the RCA to be sensitive to these issues in its exploration of any formal relationship with the REC.

Accordingly, especially in the context of the RCA’s study of the Belhar Confession and its Decade to Overcome Racism, the CCU requests additional time to respond to the instruction of the General Synod. The CCU will continue to study the implications of REC membership in consultation with the African-American Council, the URCSA, and WARC.

The commission recommends:

R-37
That General Synod instruct the Commission on Christian Unity to continue its exploration of membership in the Reformed Ecumenical Council and report its recommendation to the 2004 General Synod. (ADOPTED)

Reason: This provides adequate time to conduct the study.

CONCLUSION

This concludes the report of the Commission on Christian Unity. The commission will next meet in concurrent session with the Inter-Church Relations Committee of the Christian Reformed Church at the ELCA headquarters and the RCA Mid-America Synod office in Chicago on December 10-12, 2002.
Overture

Dialogue with the Christian Reformed Church in North America

1. The Synod of the Great Lakes overtures the General Synod to encourage agencies of the General Synod of the Reformed Church in America as well as the Commission on Christian Unity to enter into a greater dialogue with the Christian Reformed Church in North America and its Inter-Church Relations Committee for the purpose of exploring ways to move toward a seamless ministry and mission of the Christian Reformed Church with the Reformed Church in America.

Reasons:

1. The RCA and CRC share the same confessions, a common tradition and history, and a shared mission to reach the world in the name of Jesus Christ.
2. The mission of the Church would be better served by a seamless ministry and mission of the two churches.

In response to Overture 1, the advisory committee recommended:

R-38
To instruct the Commission on Christian Unity to enter into dialogue with the Christian Reformed Church in North America (CRC), exploring ways of moving toward greater unity between the CRC and the RCA in their ministry and mission, beginning with a discussion of the orderly exchange of ministers, and to report to the 2003 General Synod; and further,

   to encourage the agencies of the RCA to continue to expand their cooperative efforts with their CRC counterparts. (ADOPTED)

Reasons:

1. The RCA and CRC share the same confessions, a common tradition and history, and a shared mission to reach the world in the name of Jesus Christ.

2. The mission of the church of Jesus Christ would be better served by a greater unity of the two churches.

3. Providing for the orderly exchange of ministers of the Word and sacrament would allow for more flexibility and more effective use of our churches’ ordained leaders.
INTRODUCTION

The Commission on Christian Worship’s meeting scheduled October 8-9, 2001, in Chicago was cancelled due to the events of September 11 and the inadvisability of airline flight at that time. A meeting by conference call was conducted on October 1. A second meeting was held at 475 Riverside Drive in New York City on March 4-5, 2002.

Worship is at the heart of the church’s life. In his book *Worship, Community and the Triune God of Grace* (InterVarsity Press, 1996), James B. Torrance defines worship as “our participation through the Spirit in the Son’s communion with the Father, in his vicarious life of worship and intercession. It is our response to our Father for all that he has done for us in Christ. It is our self-offering in body, mind and spirit, in response to the one true offering made for us in Christ” (p. 15).

The Reformed Church in America’s commitment to the centrality of worship is highlighted by the unique fact that its *Liturgy* is included in the church’s *Constitution*. The Preamble to *The Book of Church Order* states that the “Constitution consists of the Doctrinal Standards...the Liturgy with the Directory for Worship, the Government of the Reformed Church in America, and the Disciplinary Procedures” (*BCO* 2001, p. 1).

Further emphasis upon a coherent worship life is emphasized by the fact that each time a minister is ordained and/or installed by a classis, the minister reads aloud and signs a “Declaration for Ministers of Word and Sacrament,” in which he or she promises, among other things, to “conduct the work of the church in an orderly way and according to the Liturgy and the Book of Church Order” (*BCO* 2001, p. 126).

Over the centuries, liturgies with biblical/theological integrity have helped to keep the church true to the gospel and have helped men, women, and children “lift up their hearts in praise.” In our Reformed tradition, we have valued both order within freedom and creativity within structure.

In recent decades, modes of worship and styles of music have been undergoing significant change in many congregations. How can we both draw upon our rich heritage and respond to current needs and expectations? James Torrance has suggested some questions to be asked in evaluating all forms of worship:

- [Do] our forms of worship convey the gospel?
- Are they an appropriate response to the gospel?
- Do they help people to apprehend the worship and ministry of Christ as he draws us by the Spirit into a life of shared communion, or do they hinder?
- Do they make the real presence of Christ transparent in worship, or do they obscure it?” (*Worship, Community and the Triune God of Grace*, p. 15)

Such questions are a good starting point for all who plan and lead worship. The Commission on Worship hopes to provide further resources and guidelines for assisting congregations in thinking about both the purpose and practice of worship in our rapidly changing world.
LITURGICAL WORK

The responsibility for advising the church of changes needed in the Liturgy is given to this commission. To fulfill that charge the commission reviews and revises various orders, being attentive to specific concerns that have been raised and also working toward the goal of having liturgy that is consistent. The principles that guide the development of all liturgical revision are 1) the use of clear and concise language, 2) with vivid, biblical imagery, 3) breadth of imagery for God and inclusive language for people, 4) faithfulness to Reformed theology, 5) congregational participation, 6) historical sensitivity, 7) attention to the aural nature of liturgy, and 8) sensitivity to emerging ecumenical convergence.

Christian Marriage and Christian Burial

Last year the General Synod approved for a one-year period of study and trial use a Proposed Order for Christian Marriage and a Proposed Order for Christian Burial. Prior to drafting the 2001 proposed orders the commission sought input from the church. Many ministers requested the inclusion of Scripture texts in the Order for Christian Burial (as in the 1968 Order for Burial). Providing alternatives for lessons, vows, affirmations, and prayers was desired for weddings.

Over the course of the past year the commission has sought additional comment and response from the church. On the basis of that response the orders now presented are revised slightly from the proposed orders of 2001. The statement of marriage and the declaration from the 1987 order, with the language of covenant, have been incorporated. Additional prayers, including a prayer adapted from the 1968 order and prayers at the burial of a child, have been added to the Order for Christian Burial.

At first glance these orders may appear somewhat long and complex, but that is primarily because a number of options have been included. The full texts of the Scripture lessons will be printed when these orders are approved and published. To conserve space and printing costs only the citations are given here.

OUTLINE OF ORDER FOR CHRISTIAN MARRIAGE

PREPARATION

   Sentences and Salutation
   Statement of Marriage
   Prayer
   Declarations of Intent
   [Affirmations]
   [Hymn, psalm, or other appropriate music]

THE WORD OF GOD

   Readings from Scripture
   Sermon
   [Hymn, psalm, or other appropriate music]

THE MARRIAGE

   Vows
   Giving and Receiving of Rings
   Declaration of Marriage
   Prayers of Thanksgiving and Intercession
   [Hymn, psalm, or other appropriate music]
   Benediction

[ ] Square brackets designate optional elements.
PROPOSED ORDER FOR CHRISTIAN MARRIAGE

This marriage service is brief and may be used in a variety of settings, although a Christian marriage service should be held in the church. Where alternatives are given (prayers, declarations of intent, affirmations, lessons, vows, ring exchange, declaration, and dismissal), the minister together with the couple may select the portions to be used.

As a service of Christian worship, the marriage service is under the direction of the minister and the supervision of the consistory.

As people gather, music appropriate to the praise of God may be offered. At the appointed time the bride, groom, and other members of the wedding party stand before the minister. The families of the bride and groom may stand with the couple.

During the entrance of the wedding party, the people may stand and sing a hymn, an anthem may be sung, or instrumental music may be played.

PREPARATION

SENTENCES

The minister calls the people to worship, either before or after the entrance, using one or more of the following, or another appropriate verse from Scripture.

Our help is in the name of the Lord who made heaven and earth. Amen.  
Psalm 124:8

God is love, and those who abide in love, abide in God, and God abides in them.  
1 John 4:17

This is the day that the Lord has made, let us rejoice and be glad in it.  
Psalm 118:24

SALUTATION

Grace and peace be yours in fullest measure, through the knowledge of God and Jesus our Lord. Amen.  
2 Peter 1:2

STATEMENT OF MARRIAGE

After the people have been seated, the minister may state the gift and purpose of Christian marriage, using the following or similar words:

We have come together in the presence of God for the marriage of N________________ and N________________, to share their joy, and to promise them our support and love.

Christian marriage is a joyful covenancing between a man and a woman. In this covenant they proclaim, before God and human witnesses,
their commitment to live together
in spiritual, physical, and material unity.
In this covenant they acknowledge
that the great love God has shown for each of them
enables them to love each other.
They affirm that God’s gracious presence
and abiding power are needed
for them to keep their vows,
to continue to live in love,
and to be faithful servants of Christ in this world.
Human commitment is fragile and human love imperfect,
but the promise of God is eternal
and the love of God can bring our love to perfection.

PRAYER

Let us pray.

Eternal God, our maker and redeemer,
as you gladdened the wedding at Cana
by the presence of your Son,
so by your Spirit bring joy to this day.
Let the love we celebrate today
be a sign of your eternal love.
As we honor the union of a man and a woman,
draw us into unity with you,
through Christ our Lord. Amen.

or

Gracious God,
who gives the covenant of marriage,
be with us now
as we celebrate the marriage of N_____ and N_____.
Give them your blessing,
grant them happiness and long life together,
and help us support them with our love. Amen.

DECLARATIONS OF INTENT

The minister addresses the groom:

N_____ (Christian name ), do you take N_____ to be your wife?

The groom says:

I do.

Will you love her, comfort her, honor and protect her,
and forsaking all others, be faithful to her
as long as you both shall live?

The groom says:

I will.
The minister addresses the bride:

\[ \text{N (Christian name), do you take N to be your husband?} \]

The bride says:

I do.

Will you love him, comfort him, honor and protect him, and forsaking all others, be faithful to him as long as you both shall live?

The bride says:

I will.

or

The minister addresses the groom:

\[ \text{N (Christian name), will you receive N as your wife and bind yourself to her in the covenant of marriage?} \]

Will you promise to love and honor her in true devotion, to rejoice with her in times of gladness, to grieve with her in times of sorrow, and to be faithful to her as long as you both shall live?

The groom says:

I will, with the help of God.

The minister addresses the bride:

\[ \text{N (Christian name only), will you receive N as your husband and bind yourself to him in the covenant of marriage?} \]

Will you promise to love and honor him in true devotion, to rejoice with him in times of gladness, to grieve with him in times of sorrow, and to be faithful to him as long as you both shall live?

The bride says:

I will, with the help of God.

AFFIRMATIONS OF FAMILIES AND CONGREGATION

Affirmations may be made at the discretion of the minister in consultation with the couple. It is important to consider use of affirmations when there are children from previous relationships. The minister may address the parents:

Will you, the parents of N and N (Christian names only) give your blessing to this new family? Will you support it with your love and care?
We will, with the help of God.

The minister may ask children of the bride or groom:

N____(s), will you accept and support this marriage?

We will.

The minister may address the bride and groom:

N____ and N____,
will you be faithful and loving parents
to N____(s)?

We will.

The minister may ask the congregation:

Will you, their friends and family,
support this couple now,
and in the years ahead?

We will.

The families return to their places, the minister continues:

THE WORD OF GOD

PRAYER FOR ILLUMINATION

O Lord our God,
give us grace to receive your Word in faith and love,
that we may be obedient to your will
and live always for your glory;
through Jesus Christ. Amen.

READINGS FROM SCRIPTURE

One or more lessons from Scripture shall be read.

*Genesis 1:26-28, 31a; Genesis 2:18-25; Song of Solomon 8:6-7; Proverbs 3:3-6; Psalm 37:3-6; Romans 12:1-2, 9-18; 1 Corinthians 12:1, 31-13:8a; Colossians 3:12-17; 1 John 4:7-16; Matthew 5:1-10; Matthew 19:4-6; Matthew 22:35-40; John 2:1-11; John 15:9-14*

(Note: The full text of the Scripture lessons will be printed when this order is distributed; to conserve space only the citations are given here in the workbook and the Minutes of General Synod.)

SERMON

After Scripture is read, a brief sermon shall be preached.
A hymn, psalm, or other appropriate music may follow.
THE MARRIAGE

VOWS

*The minister addresses the couple:*

N____ and N____,
join hands,
and in faith make your promises to each other.

*The bride and groom face each other, join hands and say their vows to each other.*

I, N____, take you, N____, to be my wife/husband,
to have and to hold from this day forward,
for better, for worse,
for richer, for poorer,
in sickness and in health,
to love and to cherish
as long as we both shall live.
To this covenant I pledge myself,
truly, with all my heart.

*or*

I, N____, take you, N____, to be my wife/husband.
I promise,
before God and these witnesses,
to be your loving and faithful husband/wife,
in plenty and in want,
in joy and in sorrow,
in sickness and in health,
as long as we both shall live.

*or*

Before God and these witnesses
I, N____, take you, N____, to be my wife/husband.
I promise to love you,
and to be faithful to you,
as long as we both shall live.

*or*

I take you, N____,
to be my wife/husband from this day forward,
to join with you and share all that is to come.
I promise to be faithful to you
until death parts us.

GIVING AND RECEIVING OF RINGS

*If rings are to be exchanged, the minister may say to the groom:*

What do you bring as a sign of your promise?
The minister shall receive the ring for the bride from its bearer and may pray:

Bless, O Lord, the giving of this ring
that he who gives it and she who wears it
may live in love and faithfulness all their days,
through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

As the groom places the ring on the bride’s finger, he says:

N_____, I give you this ring
as a sign of the covenant
we have made today.
In the name of the Father, and the Son
and the Holy Spirit.

or

N_____, I give you this ring
as a symbol of our marriage.
With all that I am
and all that I have
I honor you.

or

This ring I give you
in token and pledge
of my constant faith and abiding love.

or

I give you this ring in God’s name
as a symbol of all we have promised
and all that we shall share.

Then the minister may say to the bride:

What do you bring as a sign of your promise?

The minister shall receive the ring for the groom from its bearer and may pray:

Bless, O Lord, the giving of this ring
that she who gives it and he who wears it
may live in love and faithfulness all their days,
through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

As the bride places the ring on the groom’s finger, she says:

N_____, I give you this ring
as a sign of the covenant
we have made today.
In the name of the Father, and the Son
and the Holy Spirit.

or
N_____, I give you this ring
as a symbol of our marriage.
With all that I am
and all that I have
I honor you.

or

This ring I give you
in token and pledge
of my constant faith and abiding love.

or

I give you this ring in God’s name
as a symbol of all we have promised
and all that we shall share.

DECLARATION OF MARRIAGE

The minister addresses the congregation:

N____ and N_____ (Christian names)
have made their covenant of marriage together
before God and all here present,
by solemn vows,
with the joining of hands,
and the giving and receiving of rings.
Therefore, I declare that they are husband and wife;
in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.

Following the nuptial kiss/brace, the minister continues:

Let no one come between
those whom God has joined together.

or

Those whom God has joined together,
let no one separate. Matthew 19:6

PRAYERS OF THANKSGIVING AND INTERCESSION

The couple may kneel or remain standing and face the minister.

Let us pray.

Eternal God,
Creator and preserver of all life,
author of salvation, and giver of all grace:
look with favor upon the world you have made and redeemed,
and especially upon N_____ and N_____.

Give them wisdom and devotion
in their life together,
that each may be to the other
a companion in joy,
a comfort in sorrow,
and a strength in need.

Give them the grace,
when they hurt each other,
to recognize and confess their fault,
and to seek each other’s forgiveness
and yours.

Make their life together
a sign of Christ’s love
to this sinful and broken world,
that unity may overcome estrangement,
forgiveness heal guilt,
and joy conquer despair.

Give to them, if it is your will,
the gift of children,
and the wisdom to bring them up
to know you,
to love you,
and to serve you.

Enrich with your grace
all husbands and wives, parents and children,
that, loving and supporting one another,
they may serve those in need
and be a sign of your kingdom.

Grant your Spirit to unite all your children
so that your peace and justice may fill the earth,
through Jesus Christ our Lord.

or

Eternal God,
without your grace no promise is sure.
Strengthen N_____ and N_____
with patience, kindness, gentleness,
and all other gifts of your Spirit,
so that they may fulfill the vows they have made.
Fill them with such love and joy
that they may build a home of peace and welcome.
Guide them by your Word
to serve you all their days.

Gracious God,
you are merciful and forgiving.
Grant that N_____ and N_____
their families, and all who care for them,
may accept your generous love.
Heal their memories, comfort them,
and send them all from here
renewed and hopeful.

Help us all, O God,
to do your will in each of our homes and lives.
Enrich us with your grace
so that, supporting one another,
we may serve those in need,
hastening the coming of peace, love, and justice on earth,
through Jesus Christ our Lord.

or

Eternal God, creator of us all,
we praise you for all the ways
in which your love comes into our lives,
and for all the joys
that can come to men and women through marriage.

Today we especially pray for N_____ and N_____ as they begin their married life.
We thank you for the love and care of their parents,
which has guided them to maturity
and prepared them for this day.

Give them strength
to keep the vows they have made,
and to be loyal and faithful to each other.
May they support each other always,
bearing each other’s burdens
and sharing each other’s joys.
Help them to be honest and patient with each other,
   may they be wise and loving parents,
and welcome both friend and stranger.

In their future together
may they enjoy each other
and grow through the love they share,
until, at the end of this life,
you receive us all into your eternal kingdom,
through Jesus Christ our Redeemer.

or

Eternal God,
in whom we live and move and have our being;
bless N____ and N_____,
that they may live together in marriage
according to the vows they have made before you.

Bless them with your love,
that their love for each other
may grow ever deeper,
and their love for you may shine forth
before the world.
Bless them with your mercy,
that they may be patient and caring,
willing to share each other’s joys and sorrows,
to forgive and to be forgiven,
in their life together and in the world.

Bless them with your peace,
that they may be calm and sure,
trusting in you with confident hearts.
May they live in harmony and concord
within their family and among all people.

Bless them with your presence,
that within their hearts and home
Christ may reign as head.
May they confess Christ
with praise and thanksgiving
now, and through all their life together,
to the glory of your holy name. Amen.

Our Father in heaven,
    hallowed be your name,
your kingdom come,
your will be done,
on earth as in heaven.
Give us today our daily bread.
Forgive us our sins
    as we forgive those who sin against us.
Save us from the time of trial
    and deliver us from evil.
For the kingdom, the power, and the glory are yours
    now and for ever. Amen.

A hymn or other appropriate music may follow.

BENEDICTION

Go in peace to love and serve the Lord.

The Lord bless you and keep you.
The Lord be kind and gracious to you.
The Lord look upon you with favor
and give you peace. Amen.  

or

The grace of Christ attend you,
the love of God surround you,
the Holy Spirit keep you,
that you may live in faith,
abound in hope,
and grow in love,
both now and forevermore.
And may the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ,  
the love of God,  
and the communion of the Holy Spirit  
be with all of you. Amen.  

2 Corinthians 13:14

R-39  
To approve the “Order for Christian Marriage” and commend it  
for use in the church. (ADOPTED)

OUTLINE OF ORDER FOR CHRISTIAN BURIAL

VOTUM  
SENTENCES  
SALUTATION  
[HYMN]  
STATEMENT OF PURPOSE  
PRAYER FOR COMFORT AND ILLUMINATION  
SCRIPTURE READINGS  
SERMON  
[HYMN]  
AFFIRMATION OF FAITH  
[REMEMBRANCE]  
PRAYERS OF THANKSGIVING AND INTERCESSION  
COMMENDATION  
[HYMN]  
COMMITTAL  
Lesson  
[Creed]  
Committal  
Prayer  
Benediction

[ ] Square brackets designate optional elements.

ORDER FOR CHRISTIAN BURIAL  
A SERVICE OF WITNESS TO THE RESURRECTION

The Order for Christian Burial should be conducted in the church among the gathered  
people of God. The casket should be closed before the service and thereafter remain  
closed. It may be covered with a white pall, a baptismal symbol recalling the robe of  
righteousness that covers the redeemed who stand before God (Revelation 7:9). The use  
of a pall is also a reminder that all are equal before God.

The minister begins with the votum and continues with one or more sentences.
VOTUM

Our help is in the name of the Lord, who made heaven and earth. Amen. *Psalm 124:8*

*or*

In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

SENTENCES

Come to me, all you that are weary and are carrying heavy burdens, and I will give you rest.
Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me; for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. *Matthew 11:28-29*

*or*

I am the resurrection and the life. Those who believe in me, even though they die, will live, and everyone who lives and believes in me will never die. *John 11:25-26*

*or*

We do not live to ourselves, and we do not die to ourselves. If we live, we live to the Lord, and if we die, we die to the Lord; so then, whether we live or whether we die, we are the Lord’s. *Romans 14:7-8*

*or*

The LORD gave, and the LORD has taken away; blessed be the name of the LORD. *Job 1:21*

*or*

Peace I leave with you; my peace I give to you. I do not give to you as the world gives. Do not let your hearts be troubled, and do not let them be afraid. *John 14:27*

*or*

The LORD is near to the brokenhearted, and saves the crushed in spirit. *Psalm 34:18*

*or*
The LORD redeems the life of his servants; none of those who take refuge in him will be condemned.  

*Psalm 34:22*

*or*

You who live in the shelter of the Most High, who abide in the shadow of the Almighty, will say to the LORD, “My refuge and my fortress; my God, in whom I trust.”  

*Psalm 91:1-2*

*or*

Do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? Therefore we have been buried with him by baptism into death, so that, just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, so we too might walk in newness of life. For if we have been united with him in a death like his, we will certainly be united with him in a resurrection like his.  

*Romans 6:3-5*

**SALUTATION**

Grace be to you and peace, from [God] who is and who was and who is to come . . . and from Jesus Christ, the faithful witness, the firstborn of the dead and ruler of the kings of the earth. 

*Revelation 1:4,5*

*or*

May grace and peace be yours in abundance in the knowledge of God and of Jesus our Lord.  

*II Peter 1:2*

A *psalm or hymn of praise may be said or sung.*

*The minister continues:*

**STATEMENT OF PURPOSE**

*The minister may make a statement of purpose in these or similar words:*

We are gathered here to praise God, to witness to our faith, and to give thanks for the life of our sister/brother N_____.

We come together in grief, acknowledging our loss. May God grant us grace that in pain—we may find comfort, in sorrow—hope, and in death—resurrection.
Dying, Christ destroyed our death.
Rising, Christ restores our life.
In baptism, N____ was sealed by the Holy Spirit
and marked as Christ’s own forever.

or

We gather in God’s presence
to remember and give thanks for the life of N____,
to affirm God’s love for us,
and to support one another in a time of need.
Let us acknowledge our grief
and be open in our love,
affirming the meaning and mystery of life,
confident in the hope of the resurrection
through Jesus Christ our Lord.

PRAYER FOR COMFORT AND ILLUMINATION

Let us pray:

Most merciful God,
the consolation of the sorrowful
and the support of the weary,
who does not willingly grieve your children,
look down in tender love and pity,
we pray, on these your servants,
whose joy is turned into mourning.
According to the multitude of your mercies,
uphold, strengthen, and comfort them,
that they may not faint under this trial,
but find strength and a refuge in you.

Almighty God,
illumine us now through your Word;
so that hearing your promises,
we may be lifted out of darkness and distress
into the light and peace of your presence,
through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

or

God our Comforter,
you are our refuge and strength,
a helper close at hand in times of distress.
You forgive what we have done
and what we have left undone;
your mercy is from everlasting to everlasting.
Help us so to hear the words of our faith
that our fear is dispelled,
our loneliness eased, and our hope reawakened.
May your Holy Spirit lift us
above our natural sorrow,
to the peace and light of your constant love;
through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.
(Note: The full text of the Scripture lessons will be printed when this order is distributed; to conserve space only the citations are given here in the workbook and the Minutes of General Synod.)

PSALTER READINGS

One or more of the following selections of the Psalms may be read:

Psalm 23; Psalm 27:1-5, 13-14; Psalm 39:4-7, 12a; Psalm 46:1-11; Psalm 62:1-2, 8; Psalm 84; Psalm 90:1-6, 10-12; Psalm 103:1-5, 8-18; Psalm 121; Psalm 130; Psalm 139:1-18, 23, 24

The Gloria Patri or other ascription of praise shall be sung or said.

Glorify be to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Ghost; as it was in the beginning, is now, and ever shall be, world without end. Amen.

OTHER OLD TESTAMENT READINGS


EPISTLE AND APOCALYPTIC READINGS

Romans 8:18, 28, 31-39; 1 Corinthians 15:37-38, 42-44a, 51-58; 2 Corinthians 1:3, 4; 2 Corinthians 4:8-18; Philippians 2:1-11; 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18; Hebrews 12:1, 2; 1 Peter 1:3-9; Revelation 7:9-17; Revelation 21:1-4; Revelation 22:1-5

GOSPEL READINGS


At the death of a child: Matthew 18:1-5, 10-14; Mark 10:13-16

At the conclusion of the reading of the Gospel the minister may say:

Believe this Gospel and live in peace.

SERMON

A brief sermon shall be preached.

Following the sermon a psalm or hymn may be said or sung.

AFFIRMATION OF FAITH

Let us confess the faith of our baptism, as we say:

I believe in God, the Father almighty, creator of heaven and earth.
I believe in Jesus Christ, God’s only Son, our Lord,
who was conceived by the Holy Spirit,
born of the Virgin Mary,
suffered under Pontius Pilate,
was crucified, died, and was buried;
he descended to the dead.
On the third day he rose again;
he ascended into heaven,
he is seated at the right hand of the Father,
and he will come to judge the living and the dead.
I believe in the Holy Spirit,
the holy catholic Church,
the communion of saints,
the forgiveness of sins,
the resurrection of the body,
and the life everlasting. Amen.

or

I believe in God, the Father almighty,
maker of heaven and earth;

And in Jesus Christ, his only Son, our Lord;
who was conceived by the Holy Ghost,
born of the Virgin Mary,
suffered under Pontius Pilate,
was crucified, died, and buried.
He descended into hell.
The third day he rose again from the dead.
He ascended into heaven,
and sitteth on the right hand of God the Father almighty.
From thence he shall come to judge the quick and the dead.

I believe in the Holy Ghost,
the holy catholic Church,
the communion of saints,
the forgiveness of sins,
the resurrection of the body,
and the life everlasting. Amen.

Q. What is your only comfort in life and in death?

A. That I am not my own, but belong
—body and soul, in life and in death-to my faithful Savior Jesus Christ.
Christ has fully paid for all my sins
with his precious blood,
and has set me free from all the power of the devil.
He also watches over me in such a way
that not a hair can fall from my head
without the will of my Father in heaven;
in fact, all things must work together for my salvation.
Because I belong to him,
Christ, by his Holy Spirit
assures me of eternal life
and makes me wholeheartedly willing
and ready from now on to live for him.  Heidelberg Catechism Q and A 1
or

God saves the world through Jesus.
Those who call on that name will have life.
Christ’s hand reaches out beyond those who say “Lord”
to the infants who live in the atmosphere of faith,
even to the farthest stars and planets—all creation.
The boundaries of God’s love are not known,
the Spirit works at the ends of the world
before the church has there spoken a word.

God will renew the world through Jesus,
who will put all unrighteousness out,
purify the works of human hands,
and perfect their fellowship in divine love.
Christ will wipe away every tear;
death shall be no more.
There will be a new heaven and a new earth,
and all creation will be filled with God’s glory.

Come, Lord Jesus:
We are open to your Spirit.
We await your full presence.
Our world finds rest in you alone.  

Our Song of Hope, VII

REMEMBRANCE

The minister or friend/s or member/s of the family of the deceased may offer thanksgiving for the one who has died if this has not been included in the sermon.

PRAYERS OF THANKSGIVING AND INTERCESSION

Let us pray.

O God,
before whom generations rise and pass away,
we praise you for all your servants
who, having lived this life in faith,
now live eternally with you.

Especially we thank you for your servant N_________.
We praise you for the gift of his/her life,
for all in him/her that was good and kind and faithful.
We thank you for the grace you gave him/her,
that kindled in him/her a love for you,
and enabled him/her to serve you faithfully.

Here mention may be made of the person’s characteristics or service.

We thank you that for N__________ death is past and pain ended,
and that he/she has now entered the joy you have prepared;
through Jesus Christ our Lord,
in whose name we are bold to pray:
Eternal and ever-merciful God,
whose blessed Son Jesus Christ our Lord
has triumphed over sin and death and the grave,
we praise and bless your name
for the life and immortality
that have been brought to light in the gospel.
We glorify you, that he,
having destroyed the power of death,
opened the kingdom of heaven to all believers,
and that, because he lives, we shall live also.
Even now, having peace with you through him,
we rejoice in the hope of your glory.
Thanks be to you, O God, who gives us the victory;
through Jesus Christ our Lord.

Father of mercies and God of all comfort,
look in tender love and compassion on your sorrowing servants.
Enable them to find in you their refuge and strength,
very present help in time of trouble;
and to know the love of Christ, which passes knowledge.
Grant them faith and hope in him who by death has conquered death,
and by rising opened the gates of eternal life.

Ever-blessed God,
we give you thanks for all the generations of the faithful,
who, having served you here in godliness and love,
are now with you in glory.
We praise you especially for him/her
whom you have now taken to yourself,
this pilgrim now come to the heavenly city.
For all your loving kindness toward him/her
throughout his/her earthly life we give you thanks;
for all that he/she was, by nature and by grace,
to those who loved him/her and to the church of your dear Son.
We thank you that his/her trials and temptations being ended,
sickness and death being passed,
he/she has now entered into the rest that remains for your people.
Seeing that we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses,
enable us, O God,
to lay aside every weight and sin that clings so closely,
and to run with perseverance the race that is set before us,
looking to Jesus, the pioneer and perfecter of our faith.
Keep us in unbroken fellowship with the church in heaven;
enrich our souls in those things
over which darkness and death
no longer have any dominion;
and bring us at last, with all the faithful in Christ,
to the eternal peace and joy of your presence;
through Jesus Christ our Lord.
O God,
from the dawn of the first day you have cared for your people.
By your hand we were created;
in your hand we live;
and to your hand we return again.
You have revealed yourself in many ways,
until, in the fullness of time,
your word was made flesh and dwelt among us
in Jesus Christ our Lord.
In his life, death, and resurrection
we find our calling in this world
and our hope for the world to come.

We give you thanks for your servants,
who, having lived this life in faith,
will live eternally with you.
We especially thank you for N_____,
for the gift of his/her life,
for the grace you have given him/her,
for all in him/her that was good and kind and faithful.

_Here mention may be made of attributes or service._

We thank you that for N_____ death is past, pain is ended,
and he/she has entered the joy you have prepared
in the company of all the saints.

Give us faith to look beyond touch and sight,
and in seeing that we are surrounded
by so great a cloud of witnesses,
enable us to run with perseverance the race
that is set before us,
looking to Jesus,
the author and finisher of our faith.
Bring us at last to your eternal peace,
through Jesus Christ our Lord,
in whose name we are bold to pray:

Our Father in heaven,
    hallowed be your name,
your kingdom come,
your will be done,
on earth as in heaven.
Give us today our daily bread.
Forgive us our sins
    as we forgive those who sin against us.
Save us from the time of trial
and deliver us from evil.
For the kingdom, the power,
    and the glory are yours
now and for ever. Amen.

_or_
Our Father, who art in heaven,  
hallowed be thy name,  
thy kingdom come,  
thy will be done,  
on earth as it is in heaven.  
Give us this day our daily bread.  
And forgive us our debts,  
as we forgive our debtors.  
And lead us not into temptation,  
but deliver us from evil.  
For thine is the kingdom,  
and the power, and the glory,  
for ever. Amen.

COMMENDATION

The minister, after moving to the head of the casket, continues facing the body:

Let us pray.

Into your hands, O merciful Savior,  
we commend your servant N _______.  
Acknowledge, we pray,  
a sheep of your own fold,  
a lamb of your own flock,  
a sinner of your own redeeming.  
Receive him/her into the arms of your mercy,  
into the blessed rest of everlasting peace,  
and into the glorious company of the saints in light.

If the service concludes here a hymn may be sung and the benediction pronounced.  
If the body is to be committed for burial, the service shall continue at the graveside.

THE ORDER FOR COMMITTAL

LESSON

I am the resurrection and the life.  
Those who believe in me,  
even though they die, will live,  
and everyone who lives and believes in me  
will never die.  

John 11:25-26

or

I lift up my eyes to the hills—  
from where will my help come?  
My help comes from the LORD,  
who made heaven and earth.  
He will not let your foot be moved;  
he who keeps you will not slumber.  
He who keeps Israel  
will neither slumber nor sleep.  
The LORD is your keeper;
the LORD is your shade at your right hand.
The sun shall not strike you by day,
nor the moon by night.
The LORD will keep you from all evil;
he will keep your life.
The LORD will keep
your going out and your coming in
from this time on and forevermore.  

Psalm 121

or

We do not live to ourselves,
and we do not die to ourselves.
If we live, we live to the Lord,
and if we die, we die to the Lord;
so then, whether we live or whether we die,
we are the Lord's.
For to this end Christ died and lived again,
so that he might be Lord of both the dead and the living.

Romans 14:7-9

or

Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth;
for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away,
and the sea was no more.
And I saw the holy city, the new Jerusalem,
coming down out of heaven from God,
prepared as a bride adorned for her husband.
And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying,
"See, the home of God is among mortals.
He will dwell with them as their God;
they will be his peoples,
and God himself will be with them;
he will wipe every tear from their eyes.
Death will be no more;
mourning and crying and pain will be no more,
for the first things have passed away."

Revelation 21:1-4

[CREED]

COMMITAL

In sure and certain hope
of the resurrection to eternal life,
through our Lord Jesus Christ,
we commend to almighty God our brother/sister N_____,
and we commit his/her body
to the ground/the deep/the elements/
this resting place/be cremated,
earth to earth,
ashes to ashes,
dust to dust.
Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord, says the Spirit. They rest from their labors, and their works follow them.  

*Revelation 14:13, adapted.*

**PRAYER**

*The minister continues:*

Let us pray.

O God, in the beginning you formed us from the dust of the earth and breathed into us the breath of life. So also, in the last days, you have promised to raise us from the dust, so we might assume a new body at the coming of your Son. For as in Adam all die, so in Christ shall all be made alive. We thank you for this hope, that N____________, who has died, will be raised to life imperishable.

Look down upon us with tender pity and compassion, grant each of us the comfort of your Spirit. Renew within us the joy of your salvation, through Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, world without end. Amen.

*or*

God of boundless compassion, our only sure comfort in life and in death: Look tenderly upon your children overwhelmed by loss and sorrow. Lighten our darkness with your presence and assure us of your love. Enable us to see beyond this place and time to your eternal kingdom, promised to all who love you, through Christ our Lord. Amen.

*or*

Almighty God, by the death of your son Jesus Christ, you destroyed death; by his rest in the tomb, you sanctified the graves of the saints; and by his glorious resurrection you brought life and immortality to light.
Receive, we pray, our thanks for that victory over death, which Jesus obtained for us, and for all who rest in him. Keep us in eternal fellowship with all who wait for you on earth and with all who surround you in heaven; in union with Christ who is the resurrection and the life, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit ever one God, world without end. Amen.

At the committal of a child:

Loving God, your Son our Savior put his arms around the children and blessed them. Give us grace to entrust N________ to your never-failing care and love, and bring us all to your heavenly kingdom; through Jesus Christ our Lord.

or

Loving God, give us faith to believe, though this child has died, that you will welcome him/her, and will care for him/her, until by your mercy, we are together again in the joy of your promised kingdom; through Jesus Christ our Lord.

BENEDICTION

Now may the God of peace who brought from the dead our Lord Jesus, the great Shepherd of the sheep, by the blood of the eternal covenant, make you complete in everything good so that you may do his will, working among us that which is pleasing in his sight, through Jesus Christ; to whom be glory forever and ever. 

Hebrews 13:20, 21

And the blessing of God Almighty, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit be and abide with you always. Amen.

or

The peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus. Amen.

Philippians 4:7
R-40
To approve the “Order for Christian Burial: A Service of Witness to the Resurrection” and commend it for use in the church. (ADOPTED)

ADDITIONAL WORK

The Commission on Worship has asked the Office of Worship to bring together in one volume the Congregational Services, Classical Services, and Occasional Services that have been revised in recent years and to make them available to the church.

The commission is also working on drafting additional communion prayers, which, if approved by the General Synod and the classes, would be added as alternative prayers in the Order for the Celebration of the Lord’s Supper.

The commission is reviewing some of the resources recently produced by one of our partner churches, the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America. Use of the Means of Grace: A Statement on the Practice of Word and Sacrament was adopted by the ELCA in 1997. In response to emerging changes in the life of the church and the world, the ELCA has also embarked on a multi-year “Renewing Worship” project. A series of consultations in which the Reformed Church was invited to participate has produced additional principles and supporting materials to address four particular dimensions of the church’s worship: language, music, preaching, and worship space. These resources and our continued conversation with our partner churches help inform and enrich worship renewal in the Reformed Church.

Finally, on behalf of the church, the commission wishes to express its gratitude to David Tripold, who is completing his term of service on the commission. David’s gifts and person greatly enriched the life and work of the commission, and he has also generously shared his time and talents in helping to plan and implement the worship services of the General Synod.

Report of the General Synod Council’s Congregational Services Committee

REPORT OF THE OFFICE OF WORSHIP

WORSHIPING THE LORD

Obeying the command and trusting the promise, the people of the Reformed Church in America seek to be Faithful Witnesses to Christ’s resurrection, ministering to the total life of all people by preaching, teaching, and proclamation of the gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God, and by all Christian good works.

The work of the Office of Worship is one part of a common effort in the Reformed Church to live out ministries of worship, discipleship, equipping leaders, and outreach in a wholis-
tic way, as faithful witnesses to the gospel message of Jesus Christ. Our joint summary report, Faithful Witnesses, is found in the section of this book titled “Evangelization and Church Growth”; this is the detailed report of the Office of Worship.

*Each week the church gathers to meet God in Word and sacrament and is sent again into the world to witness to Jesus as Savior and Lord. But worship is more than a preparation for mission. Worship itself is a gift from God. In the assembly gathered for worship, God is at the center and we are placed in community. Here God addresses us with his word, washes us in grace, feeds us at the table, and joins us to Christ and to one another. Here we sing songs, offer praises, receive forgiveness, hear the stories of God’s mighty acts, and bring the world before God in prayer. “In Christ, God was reconciling the world to himself” (2 Cor. 5:19). In worship the people of God witness to and participate in this reconciling movement of God toward the world.*

**Supplemental Hymnal, *Sing! A New Creation***

The 1996 General Synod instructed the Commission on Worship to produce worship resources that include supplemental forms of worship and hymns, songs, and choruses that reflect our faith and speak to our time (*MGS 1996, R-5*, p. 232).

*Sing! A New Creation* was published last year. As of February more than eleven hundred copies had been sold through the RCA Distribution Center. *Sing! A New Creation* provides congregations with greater access to some of the wide diversity of psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs currently available. The collection includes modern hymns, songs from the world church, praise and worship choruses, and responsive and metrical psalms and canticles. Also included in the songbook are worship resources, including prayers, litanies, and responsive readings. A leaders’ edition with musical helps, descants, instrumental parts, background and teaching notes, and additional worship resources became available this spring. All the song texts, prayers, litanies, and psalms for responsive reading are also available on disk.

**Publication of Worship Resources**

Pending the final approval of newly revised orders of worship, a collection of worship resources will be published in both print and CD ROM. Work has begun on translating those orders of worship in frequent use in congregations into Korean, Spanish, and Chinese. The current orders of worship are already available on the RCA websites. Seasonal worship resources for Lent, Easter, and Pentecost have also been posted on the website.

**Ecumenical Consultations**

The RCA’s minister for worship, John Paarlberg, participated in a series of consultations on the next generation of worship resources for the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America. Working groups had the task of identifying issues and developing principles in the areas of preaching, environment (worship space), language and culture, and music. “Principles for Worship” and other resources are posted at www.renewingworship.org. Representatives from the Commission on Worship and the Office of Worship also participate in meetings of the Consultation on Common Texts. These and similar ecumenical forums and consultations provide opportunities to discuss issues and share resources and concerns. They enrich the work of both the commission and the office.

**MAKING DISCIPLES**

*Under the guidance of the Word and Holy Spirit the church is called to form people whose lives are shaped after the life and teachings of Jesus. They will follow Jesus in ministering
CHRISTIAN WORSHIP

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to those in need, standing with those who are oppressed, and comforting those who sor-
row. They will follow Jesus in being a people who are called to do justice, to love kindness,
and to walk humbly with God (Micah 6:8). The making of Jesus-followers and cross-car-
riers is a lifelong process and belongs to the entire community of faith. Through worship
and teaching, through prayer and in ministry to those in need, in our witness in the world
and in our life together we are called to help each other grow up in every way into Christ
(Eph. 4:15).

The Catechumenate: The Congregation’s Ministry of Making Disciples

The method for nurturing new Christians in the early church is summarized in the Book of
Acts: “They devoted themselves to the apostles’ teaching and fellowship, to the breaking
of bread and the prayers” (Acts 2:42). As they did these basic things “day by day the Lord
added to their number those who were being saved” (Acts 2:47). The primary resource for
nurturing people in the Christian faith is the church doing what it does, being what it is
called to be: a community that devotes itself to Scripture, worship, prayer, and ministry in
daily life.

Today many congregations are rediscovering and adapting this practice of the early church.
The catechumenate (a “catechumen” is someone preparing for baptism) is an intentional
and graceful means of accompanying adult inquirers on their spiritual journey toward bap-
tism and discipleship. The process includes regular worship, reflection on biblical pas-
sages, modeling a life of prayer, and engagement in some form of ministry. The catechu-
menal process leads to baptism and admission to the Lord’s Table. Newly baptized adults
continue to receive support from their sponsors and church leaders, who help them explore
ways of living out their faith. The process can also be adapted for previously baptized
adults who are reaffirming their faith and for baptized children and young people who are
making their first public professions of faith.

In the past year representatives from several RCA congregations have participated in train-
ing events and workshops in catechumenal ministry, including an ecumenical event,
“Welcoming New Christians: An Ancient-Future Process for Making Disciples,” in
Oviedo, Florida, in March. In April the Office of Worship cosponsored with the Synod of
Albany “Companions on the Way: Ancient Disciplines for New Disciples.”

Representatives of the RCA, the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), and the United Church of
Christ have agreed to meet periodically to further explore a Reformed understanding of
catechumenal ministry. Meetings were held in Louisville, Kentucky, in November 2001
and April 2002. The RCA was also represented at a conference sponsored by the North
American Academy on the Catechumenate in July. The RCA Distribution Center/
TRAVARCA has print and video resources for catechumenal ministry.
From the Report of the President

In response to P-2 from the report of the president (p. 37), the advisory committee recommended:

**R-41**
To instruct the General Synod Council in consultation with representatives from the Commission on Worship, the Commission on Theology, the racial/ethnic councils, new church development pastors, and persons reflecting our generational and church-size diversity, to experience and reflect on the various worship styles in use in RCA churches, and to bring to the 2003 General Synod strategies and recommendations that will equip churches to lead worship in ways that are consistent with Reformed theology and responsive to the local mission. (ADOPTED)

Reasons:

1. The recommendation fulfills the directive of the Statement of Mission and Vision that synods and staff funnel resources to the local church and keep the RCA connected to the larger church while remaining faithful to its Reformed heritage.

2. This consultation will assist the church in renewing its resources, raising up leaders, and directing its resources to the front lines of ministry.
REPORTS ON CHURCH ORDER

Report of the Commission on Church Order

The Commission on Church Order met October 4-5, 2001, at the Fellowship Deaconry in Liberty Corners, New Jersey, and February 7-8, 2002, at the University Inn and Conference Center, Rutgers University, New Brunswick, New Jersey.

One of the commission’s primary responsibilities is to “provide advisory responses to requests for interpretation of the Book of Church Order” (Chapter 3, Part I, Article 5, Section 4, b2). Such requests may be made directly to the commission through the office of the General Synod, which will provide a more immediate response than submitting an overture. Each year the commission responds to a number of these. In addition, suggestions received directly are given careful consideration and often provide the impetus for recommendations.

Associates in Ministry

The 1999 General Synod instructed the commission to “study the definition, role, and accountability of associates in ministry within Reformed Church polity and to propose changes to the Book of Church Order consistent with its findings” (MGS 1999, R-32, p. 136). The commission was to consult with the General Synod Council’s Congregational Services Committee and with CERCA (Christian Educators, Reformed Church in America) and report back to the 2000 General Synod.

This request grew out of concern for the care and nurture of those who provide leadership for Christian education in RCA congregations. The report raised issues about the certification process and particularly what it means for those who have been so certified: “Christian educators are being asked to meet appropriate requirements for certification; but once those requirements are met, they find little clarity or practical benefit.”

These questions surrounding certification of associates in ministry reflect a broader challenge for the church in these times: How do we acknowledge, honor, and involve in the life of the church those laypersons who have accepted a call from God to ministry lived out in places other than an ordained office of the church? Increasingly, leadership for ministry in RCA congregations is being provided by nonordained persons who are both skilled and called by God and who want to be actively involved not only in that local ministry but in visioning what the church can be for the future. Is there a place for those people in our polity? Are associates in ministry the right place? (MGS 1999, p. 135).

The commission set about identifying the concerns and needs of Christian educators and determining whether the current classis certification of associates in ministry was, in fact, accomplishing what it had been intended to do. As it began, the commission met with representatives of the GSC Congregational Services Committee and CERCA and has had continuing contact and consultation with representatives of these bodies. The task proved to be greater than what could be accomplished in one year.

These conversations identified concerns and issues, some of which are only tangentially related to questions of church order. These issues are similar to the concerns that surfaced in the 1970s and again in the early 1990s and led at that time to the development of the associates in ministry concept (approved in 1993). Certification of associates was conceived out of concern for church educators and was intended to assist the RCA in being more supportive of its educators.
The concerns raised again now include: How can educators have an effective voice in the life of the church? Do educators have a place in the governing structure? Educators, in some situations, are treated in ways that violate fair employment practices. How can church educators be supported more effectively? How can churches develop and follow just employment practices—especially concerning job security, evaluation, and issues of termination? Should there be norms for compensation and benefits?

These issues raise questions of justice and fair treatment for faithful servants of the church. Christian educators are predominantly women in positions that tend to be supervised by male ministers. In our society women are sometimes undercompensated for professional work. Their work and contribution may be devalued. The church needs to be certain that it does not engage in such exploitive practices—for educators or any other employees. The very conditions of employment necessitate great care to create a climate that is respectful and fair.

The teaching ministry of the church is vital to its life and future. Those who have developed professional competence to assist the church in this task need respect and support to be effective. However, some of these concerns perhaps may be best addressed outside of the Book of Church Order. The commission has identified three areas that need attention: 1) employment practices, 2) certification process and supervision, and 3) role in development of policy beyond the local church.

The commission has sought to think broadly, and without constraint, as to what may be the best ways to address these concerns. Therefore, in the broader interest of the church, these proposals go beyond the commission’s usual purview of the church order itself. The commission holds that promising solutions may be found outside the church order.

The question of the treatment of church educators raises the larger question of the treatment of all church employees. Employment practices form a part of our witness—both within and without the church. The commission believes that consistories are well-intentioned and want to do the right thing. However, the necessary skills and experience are not always present. If each consistory had a personnel committee, with guidelines for operating, all church employees and congregations would be better served.

The commission brings the following recommendations to address areas of concern related to employment of church educators and all church employees:

R-42
To instruct the General Synod Council to update and distribute model procedures for congregational personnel committees and training modules to assist churches and classes in carrying out personnel responsibilities with all employees for distribution to congregations, classes, and regional synods by 2004. (ADOPTED)

R-43
To request classes, as part of their general superintendence of churches, to encourage the establishment of personnel committees in all congregations and to provide training for such committees. (ADOPTED)

R-44
To request regional synods, as part of their general superintendence of classes, to work with the General Synod Council and the Office of Ministry Services to support classes in providing training for local church personnel committees within their bounds. (ADOPTED)
R-45
To request regional synods, as part of their general superintendence of classes, to develop compensation guidelines for all types of church employees, e.g., educators, musicians, secretaries, youth workers, administrators, parish nurses, and custodians, to be updated every three years. (ADOPTED)

Certification and supervision

Classes have a unique relationship with ministers of Word and sacrament, one of the offices of the church (the RCA has four such offices: minister of Word and sacrament, elder, deacon, and General Synod professor of theology). Ministers are under such authority because classes are responsible for seeing that ministers are faithful to the Word, thereby assuring the Word is rightly preached and the sacraments faithfully administered in local churches. This is, in fact, what indeed makes a church a church. It is this obligation to assure the presence of the marks of the church (Belgic, 29) that necessitates classis authority over the Office of Minister of Word and Sacrament.

Sometimes classes have been perceived as a professional group charged with care and protection of ministers as a professional group. That, however, is a misunderstanding of both classes’ purpose and the relationship of classes to ministers. Classes license and ordain ministers as part of classis’ supervision of the office. However, certification comes from an agent of the General Synod—an RCA seminary or the Ministerial Formation Coordinating Agency. These agents are charged with determining when candidates have fulfilled academic requirements and been adequately prepared to serve local churches. Certification requires a significant understanding of the skills, gifts, and personal capabilities of candidates—such as develops when involved in a comprehensive course of study. It is only after such certification that a classis moves ahead with its approval process for licensure and ordination.

The church needs a certification process for those who carry out professional educational ministry. Certification values the place of education in the churches’ common life. But, in the case of associates, the classis has been asked to “certify,” although it has not been the educational agent and may have few members, or even persons present within its bounds, who have professional experience and expertise in religious education. So a step seems to be missing—a step that would provide for a professional certification that could yield fair and consistent standards for educators throughout the denomination.

The commission proposes a process analogous to that used with ministers. That is, the General Synod, through its General Synod Council, would form a body to serve as the General Synod’s agent to certify educators. Such would have the advantage of including current Christian educators and active practitioners as well as others representing the greater church. Such a body would have the further advantage of overseeing the process with a number of candidates, giving it the focus and experience to develop fair and consistent criteria and procedures for granting and maintaining certification. Classes could still take a role in commending certified educators for work within their bounds.

Therefore, following extensive review of the issue, the commission believes that certifying, supporting, and affirming persons called to the ministry of education properly belongs within the responsibilities of the General Synod Council, lodged within the Ministry and Personnel Services Committee. The commission recommends:
R-46
To instruct the General Synod Council to form a body to serve as
the agent of the General Synod to develop standards and process
for the certification of Christian educators to include 1) a
Reformed understanding of Scripture, theology, and ecclesiology,
and 2) proven skill in the theory and practice of Christian religious
formation and education, to be implemented by 2004 with a
progress report to General Synod in 2003; and further,

to develop standards for maintaining such certification, including
but not limited to requisite continuing professional development;
and further,

that the body serving as the agent of the General Synod include
current Christian education practitioners and others representing
the greater church; and further,

that the Commission on Church Order review the sections in the
Book of Church Order which refer to “associates in ministry”
(Chapter 1, Part II, Article 7, Section 5 and Chapter 1, Part II,
Article 14) for possible deletion following the establishment of a
process for certification and support within the General Synod
Council.

The advisory committee recommended the following amendment:

R-46 (amended):
To instruct the General Synod Council to form a body to serve as
the agent of the General Synod to develop standards and process
for the certification of Christian educators to include 1) a
knowledge of and commitment to Reformed understanding of
Scripture, theology, and ecclesiology, and 2) proven skill in the
theory and practice of Christian religious formation and
education, to be implemented by 2004 with a progress report to
General Synod in 2003; and further,

to develop standards for maintaining such certification, including
but not limited to requisite continuing professional development;
and further,

that the body serving as the agent of the General Synod include
current Christian education practitioners and others representing
the greater church; and further,

that the Commission on Church Order review the sections in the
Book of Church Order which refer to “associates in ministry”
(Chapter 1, Part II, Article 7, Section 5 and Chapter 1, Part II,
Article 14) for possible deletion following the establishment of a
process for certification and support within the General Synod
Council. (ADOPTED AS AMENDED)

Christian education, certainly one of the vital, necessary ministries in the life of the church,
is carried out in the local church. Thereby its supervision properly belongs to the local con-
sistory as it “provides for the welfare of the church . . . and the spiritual benefit and growth
of all Christ’s people” (Liturgy, 2001). The supervision of a particular Christian educator’s
ministry would continue to be with the consistory of the church and ecclesiastical discipline would remain with the board of elders where the educator’s membership is held.

Christian educators and the classis

Christian educators recognize that educational concerns go beyond the local congregation. They have also rightly discerned that the classis is an important locus of power and influence in the Reformed Church. How could educators have an effective role in Christian education within the classis?

Currently, though associates are named as “non-voting members” of classis, they function as corresponding delegates with their membership, like that of elder delegates, residing in local churches. To enable a clear relationship between educators and classes the commission endorses the proposal R-45 (p. 211) from the Committee to Review the Church Order which makes provision for classes to form such “entities as may assist the congregations in their ministry.” This proposal makes a place to form classis councils for education, to enable classes to assist and support educators, and to be more intentional about promoting shared educational ministries within the classis. Such a body should have a place on classis agendas to report and bring recommendations at least annually. For example, in Holland, Michigan, an ad hoc group of Christian educators meets regularly for study, support, and professional development. They would be able to become the nucleus of a new body within the structure of Holland Classis to support and broaden the ministry of Christian education within the classis. This proposal has the advantage of giving educators a meaningful place and voice in classis structure, while 1) preserving classis assemblies as the coming together of the ordained offices of elder and minister, and 2) not unduly burdening educators with the governance and disciplinary tasks of office.

Christian education and formation in the wider church

The question of how to address issues of education and formation in faith at the denominational level still remains. And it is not a new question. Christian education has been without a voice since the Board of Education was folded into the General Program Council in 1967. In 1995 the Task Force on Remembering Baptism, Professing Faith, and Membership Terminology proposed the establishment of a Commission on Teaching and Discipleship to address the “uneven, haphazard, uncoordinated, and nonintegrated” approach to education and formation in the RCA (MGS 1995, pp. 130-133). Conditions have not changed; there is still no place for theological reflection and policy development related to Christian nurture and discipleship.

Commissions are charged with the development of studies and policy for recommendation to the General Synod within their areas of responsibility; surely Christian education and discipleship deserves to be present alongside theology, worship, church order, Christian action, Christian unity, history, women, and race and ethnicity. The whole church would benefit from such work.

Such a new commission could help the church best use the gifts of those who have taken up teaching ministry—General Synod professors of theology and those others who have been recognized for their abilities and commitments serving the church in this way. It would provide a place in the structure of the church for education, not simply as a program office, but at the core of our theology and practice.

A commission could:
1. Teach the teachers: examine and advise concerning new approaches. For example, a return to catechetical training or a movement to discipleship formation could be evaluated and recommendations made.
2. Consider the culture: help practitioners understand today’s world and suggest helpful ways to work effectively within it.

3. Think theologically: those called to the ministry of Christian education, like those involved in social justice ministry, or in the worship of our congregations, need the voice of the greater church as guidance, in all those places of life (congregations, camps, small groups, work projects, travel seminars) where God’s children are nurtured.

4. Look ahead: the world is changing fast and the greater church needs to provide guidance and help in understanding how these changes impact core convictions, beliefs, and practices. This would then be the task of the church, not just each educator individually, nor the current resident of the program office.

5. Build bridges: between the important scholarship of the day and those who practice education in the church—and between those who discover important new means to practice education and the wider church.

In these ways, and more, a Commission on Christian Education and Discipleship would serve the church, enabling congregations to more effectively fulfill their responsibility to provide for the “spiritual benefit and growth of all Christ’s people” (Liturgy, 2001). The commission brings:

R-47
To adopt in first reading the following addition to the Bylaws of the General Synod, Book of Church Order, Chapter 3, Part I, Article 5, as follows (addition is underlined):

Sec. 12. Commission on Christian Education and Discipleship

a. Membership

The commission shall have seven members. At least three shall be persons with responsibility for education and discipleship in RCA churches and two shall be members from the faculties of RCA-affiliated institutions. A general knowledge of, and interest in, Christian education shall be required of all members.

b. Responsibilities

1. The commission shall prepare studies and develop policies for recommendation to the General Synod concerning Christian education and discipleship within the RCA.

2. It shall inform and advise the church concerning new developments in the practice of Christian formation and religious education.

3. It shall advise the General Synod, RCA colleges and seminaries with regard to the preparation of those who carry out the church’s teaching ministry. (ADOPTED)

Budget implications: Approximately $8,000 per year beginning in 2004 if approved in second reading.
Young Adult Presence at General Synod

The commission received a referral from the president’s report to the 2001 General Synod concerning allowing each regional synod to send a youth delegate with full voting rights to General Synod (MGS 2001, R-102, p. 374). Currently the RCA colleges each send two student observers to the General Synod who do not have the privilege of the floor. The commission examined the problematic constitutional issues which would be present if full voting delegate status were granted to young people who most probably would not be elders or ministers of Word and sacrament (the office bearers who make up the higher RCA assemblies). As the rationale behind the referral was concerned with bringing the voices of young people to the synod, the commission, therefore, recommends that the RCA college student observers be given the privilege of the floor as corresponding delegates and that each regional synod may also appoint one young adult to serve as a General Synod corresponding delegate. This recommendation addresses the president’s concern by giving more young people a voice at General Synod without creating constitutional issues concerning qualifications of voting delegates. The commission proposes:

R-48
To adopt in first reading the following revisions to the Bylaws of the General Synod, Book of Church Order, Chapter 3, Part I, Article 8, as follows (additions are underlined, deletions stricken out):

Sec. 2. Colleges

a. The presidents of the colleges officially related to the Reformed Church in America or other persons designated by the respective boards of trustees in place of the presidents shall be corresponding delegates.

b. Each college shall appoint two students as corresponding delegates.

Sec. 11. Regional Synods Women Delegates

a. Two women shall be appointed corresponding delegates by each regional synod; said appointments may be made in consultation with the Commission for Women.

b. One young adult may be appointed as a corresponding delegate by each regional synod. (ADOPTED)

Budget implications: Approximately $2,000 per year beginning in 2004 if approved in second reading.

Process for a Church to Leave the Denomination

The Book of Church Order, Chapter 1, Part II, Article 7, Section 19, has in place a thorough procedure for consideration of an application by a church to withdraw from the denomination. The process puts a great deal of emphasis on attempting to discover the true will of the congregation in such matters. Experience has shown that the true will of the congregation is more apt to be accurately determined without the influence of the minister or ministers who might be encouraging the separation. The commission is proposing an addition to the Book of Church Order to provide for the automatic dissolution of the pastoral relationship of all ministers and the applicant church upon the filing of a petition to
withdraw but would allow for reestablishment of that relationship upon the determination of the classis, after appropriate hearing, that to do so is in the best interest of Christ’s kingdom.

The commission recommends:

**R-49**

To adopt the following revision of the *Book of Church Order*, Chapter 1, Part II, Article 7, Section 19 (by including original subsection “a” in new number (3) and adding items (1)-(3) to new section “a”), for recommendation to the classes for approval (additions are underlined, deletions stricken out):

**Sec. 19.** Application for leave to withdraw from the denomination for the purpose of affiliating with another denomination shall be made by written petition of the consistory filed with the stated clerk of classis. Said petition shall state that the applicant church proposes to withdraw from the denomination, and, if such be the case, take with it all or part of its real and personal property free from any claim of the Reformed Church in America, or any assembly, board, or agency thereof. The classis shall deal with such a petition in the following manner:

a. Upon receipt of such a petition, the classis shall:

(1) Dissolve the pastoral relationship between the applicant church and all ministers serving under call or contract, and provide written notice thereof to each such minister and the clerk of the consistory. Any minister subject to such an action may request, by written application to the classis filed with the stated clerk within thirty days after the date of the notice of dissolution, a hearing before the classis to determine whether it is in the best interest of Christ’s Kingdom to re-establish the relationship between the minister and the applicant church as existed prior to the filing of the petition. The hearing shall be conducted in open classis. The president of the classis shall give ten days’ notice of such hearing to both the minister(s) and the consistory of the applicant church. A vote to re-establish the relationship between the minister(s) and the applicant church shall be by two-thirds of the members of the classis present; and

(2) Appoint, as soon as reasonably possible, an interim minister or ministers to serve the church for a period of not less than the time taken by the classis to take final action upon the petition. The interim minister or ministers so appointed shall not have served the applicant church under call or contract; and

(3) Refer promptly the petition for withdrawal shall be promptly referred to either the executive committee, the Committee on Judicial Business, or a special committee, as shall be determined by the classis or its executive committee.

(The remainder of Section 19 remains the same.)
The advisory committee recommended the following substitute:

R-49 (substitute)
To refer R-49 to the Commission on Church Order for report to the 2003 General Synod. (ADOPTED)

Reason: Further consideration needs to be given to the proposed changes to clarify some aspects.

Authority of Office and the Conscience Clauses

Since 1998 the commission has received several referrals and communications regarding the place and role of the “conscience clauses” in the life of the church. The 1998 General Synod requested this commission to “formulate a more general process of dissent for inclusion in the Book of Church Order” (MGS 1998, R-4, p. 474) in response to the Commission on Theology’s work regarding the conscience clauses. Despite several attempts, the Commission on Church Order has not succeeded in formulating a general dissent process deemed beneficial to bring to the church. However, the work on dissent led to continued examination of the place and function of the so-called “conscience clauses” in the life of the RCA and, in particular, in relationship to the church order. As directed, this process has been in consultation with the Commission for Women, which has also raised such issues. The 2001 General Synod requested the Commission on Church Order to examine the Book of Church Order to determine whether there were theological inconsistencies with respect to the authority of offices (MGS 2001, R-69, p. 268).

Following the 1979 General Synod judicial action to uphold the ordination of women to the Office of Minister of Word and Sacrament, the 1980 General Synod approved “A Proposal to Maintain Peace in Diversity in the RCA Concerning Women as Church Officers,” which included amendments to the Book of Church Order that have come to be known as the “conscience clauses.” These amendments allow conscientious objection to participation in the ordination process but do not allow obstruction in the process of care, election, ordination, or installation of women to office:

[The board of elders] shall not penalize nor permit to be penalized any member for conscientious objection to or support of the ordination of women to church offices; nor shall it permit any member to obstruct by unconstitutional means the election, ordination, or installation of women to church offices (BCO, Chapter 1, Part I, Article 5, Section 2h).

The classis shall examine students of theology for licensure, and licensed candidates for the ministry for ordination. If individual members of the classis find that their consciences, as illuminated by Scripture, would not permit them to participate in the licensure, ordination, or installation of women as ministers, they shall not be required to participate in decisions or actions contrary to their consciences, but may not obstruct the classis in fulfilling its responsibility to arrange for the care, ordination, and installation of women candidates and ministers by means mutually agreed on by such women and the classis (BCO, Chapter 1, Part II, Article 2, Section 7).

Ministers shall not be pressured in such a way as to lead either one who supports or one who opposes, on scriptural grounds, the ordination of women to church offices to offend against one’s conscience; nor shall any minister be penalized for conscientious objection to or support of the ordination of women to church offices; nor shall any minister obstruct by unconstitutional means the election, ordination, or installation of a woman to church offices (BCO, Chapter 1, Part II, Article 12, Section 15).
Since the 1980 adoption of these amendments many women have experienced a variety of responses to their ordinations from ministers and elders at both consistory and classis levels—some positive, some negative. Sometimes these clauses have been misused to undermine the authority of women who bear the offices of the church. This commission reported to the 1999 General Synod that “some presume that the existence of the clause means that women’s ordination remains an open question in the Reformed Church. Clearly that is not so...at present the status is plain: the church has decided that women are to be admitted to all the offices of the church” \((\textit{MGS 1999}, \text{p. 215})\).

The continued presence of the conscience clauses leads some to mistakenly reject the authority of women office bearers and thereby refuse to participate when a woman in office presides at an ordination. Such a refusal denies the principles set forth in the Preamble defining the nature of the church’s authority and the parity of ministry \((\textit{BCO}, \text{pp. } 2, 4)\). When a candidate so rejects the authority of a duly installed classis officer, the classis might be well-advised to rethink going ahead with the ordination.

As the commission has wrestled with the effect of the clauses in the church, it has become increasingly clear that the existence of the clauses themselves contributes to the unintended perception that women in office are somehow lesser—in some way second-class office holders. In the twenty-two years since the clauses were approved, many women have contributed significantly to the mission of the church, serving faithfully as elders, deacons, and ministers of Word and sacrament. The clauses are no longer needed to permit women to hold office and appear to be more commonly used to unlawfully obstruct women office holders in the exercise of ministry.

Removing the clauses changes nothing in ordination practice. It would not compel participation in the ordination of any particular candidate. It would not reopen the question of women in office. It would continue present practice without the erroneous perception that women’s office is somehow lesser. These clauses have served their purpose and now seem to be more of a hindrance than a help. The issue is one of the authority of women ordained to office. The removal of the clauses would help the church recognize the validity and equal authority of all people ordained to office. Therefore the commission recommends:

\textbf{R-50}

To adopt the following revision of the \textit{Book of Church Order}, Chapter 1, Part I, Article 5, Section 2h; Chapter 1, Part II, Article 2, Section 7; and Chapter 1, Part II, Article 12, Section 15, renumbering Section 16, for recommendation to the classes for approval (deletions are stricken out):

\begin{verbatim}
Chapter 1, Part I, Article 5, Section 2h

h. It shall not penalize nor permit to be penalized any member for conscientious objection to or support of the ordination of women to church offices; nor shall it permit any member to obstruct by unconstitutional means the election, ordination, or installation of women to church offices.

Chapter 1, Part II, Article 2, Section 7

Sec. 7. The classis shall examine students of theology for licensure, and licensed candidates for the ministry for ordination. If individual members of the classis find that their consciences, as illuminated by Scripture, would not permit them to participate in
\end{verbatim}
the licensure, ordination, or installation of women as ministers, they shall not be required to participate in decisions or actions contrary to their consciences, but may not obstruct the classis in fulfilling its responsibility to arrange for the care, ordination, and installation of women candidates and ministers by means mutually agreed on by such women and the classis.

Chapter 1, Part II, Article 12, Section 15

Sec. 15. Ministers shall not be pressured in such a way as to lead either one who supports or one who opposes, on scriptural grounds, the ordination of women to church offices to offend against one’s conscience; nor shall any minister be penalized for conscientious objection to or support of the ordination of women to church offices; nor shall any minister obstruct by unconstitutional means the election, ordination, or installation of a woman to church offices. (ADOPTED)

Retirement Age for Ministers

Acting on a recommendation from the Advisory Committee on Church Order, the 2001 General Synod voted “to instruct the Commission on Church Order to review Chapter 1, Part II, Article 13, Section 10 as it refers to a mandatory retirement at age seventy” (MGS 2001, R-89, p. 361). Two reasons were given for this action: 1) It relies on an arbitrary number, not the call, skills, gifts, and abilities of each individual, and 2) as presently worded, it inhibits continued ministry at a time when we are experiencing a shortage of ministers.

The Book of Church Order refers to the retirement of ministers in two places. In Chapter 1, Part II, Article 2, Section 8, authority is given to the classis to declare ministers to be retired. In Chapter 1, Part II, Article 12, Section 13c, the minimum age of retirement is set at age sixty. No mandatory retirement age is set forth in either section. Chapter 1, Part II, Article 12, Section 10 speaks about the dissolution of a pastoral relationship at age seventy. However, the section makes it clear that the pastoral relationship may be continued on a renewable contract basis upon approval by the consistory and the classis. The minister may also serve as the supervisor of the church, if appointed by the classis. In response to an overture, the 1992 General Synod changed the age of dissolution of the pastoral relationship from age sixty-eight to seventy and added the language that makes it possible for a minister to continue to serve a church after age seventy on a contract basis (MGS 1992, R-22, p. 380). This does not inhibit ministry; it frees the church, the minister, and the classis to make responsible decisions regarding the call, skills, gifts, and abilities of each minister.

Office of Ordained Evangelist

The 2001 General Synod sent the commission two referrals for study and recommendation, in consultation with the Commission on Theology, regarding a potential office of ordained evangelist with report to the 2002 General Synod (MGS 2001, R-71 and R-72, p. 274). The commission has begun work by identifying the issues and questions that such a proposal raises regarding office in the Reformed tradition. The moderator of the Commission on Theology joined the commission for this discussion in the fall, and the church order moderator was also present for part of the theology commission’s fall meeting. Consultation continued as the two commissions met together in the winter of 2002. The Commission on Theology will develop a paper on the concept of office in the Reformed tradition to form the basis for responding to these referrals. The General Synod professors of theology and
the Center for Reformed Church Studies of New Brunswick Theological Seminary are planning a symposium on office in the Reformed tradition to be held in Holland, Michigan, during October 2002. This symposium will provide a rich opportunity to present various perspectives as it explores this issue, which is central to Reformed identity. The commission is planning its fall 2002 meeting in conjunction with this symposium so commissioners will be able to participate.

Work in Progress

It was brought to the commission’s attention that the *Book of Church Order* does not make provision for federated churches, which would be churches made up of an RCA congregation in partnership with one or more churches not from the Reformed tradition. Currently there is only provision for union churches among members of the Reformed tradition, even though a number of other such partnerships exist. The commission is developing recommendations that will address the particular needs of such federated churches.

The commission engages in editorial correction when it is determined that such change has no substantive effect and would increase clarity in the *Book of Church Order*. Editorial changes were made in Chapter 1, Part II, Article 15, Sections 1 and 3: deleting the “s” on General Synod in both sections. In Chapter 1, Part II, Article 7, Section 19h, the correction clarifies that an action of the classis is complained, not appealed, reading, “Any complaint appeal by the church, or by any other aggrieved party, against from the decision of the classis.”

In other matters, the Committee to Review the Church Order examined ways to make the *Book of Church Order* more user-friendly. To further that goal, the commission has begun work to prepare a glossary of terms to accompany the book. Next year the commission will also be responding to requests to look at the place of specialized interim ministers and clarification of the sequence for examining students for ordination. Further work regarding General Synod’s request pertaining to the Office of General Synod Professor is on hold while the professors continue their deliberations and reflection concerning their place and role in the church.

The commission expresses the gratitude of the church to John De Koster, who completes his service as a member of the Commission on Church Order. He has given generously of his time and energy to the commission’s work, bringing quiet insight and helpful understanding of how church polity differs from civil and criminal law. His gifts of discernment and good spirit have enriched both the commission and the whole church.

From the Report of the General Synod Council’s Policy, Planning, and Administration Services Committee

REVIEW OF GENERAL SYNOD COMMISSIONS

One of the responsibilities of the General Synod Council (GSC) is “to review all General Synod commissions at least once during each five-year period and to recommend to General Synod a continuation of, a reconstitution of, or a discontinuation of such com-
missions, with the understanding that necessity for continuation shall not be assumed (BCO, Chapter 3, Part I, Article 3, Section 6b). The first review under this section was conducted in 1984-85 for report to the General Synod in June 1985. The second review was conducted in 1989-90 for report to the General Synod in 1990.

At its April 1990 meeting, the General Synod Executive Committee (GSEC) voted to review at least two commissions each year, beginning in 1992, rather than review all commissions at one time every five years. A 1991-95 schedule for review of commissions was then approved at the January 1991 GSEC meeting.

GSC, at its March 1995 meeting, voted to continue reviewing at least two commissions each year. The following schedule was approved at the April 2000 GSC meeting:

- 2001- Commission for Women
  Commission on Judicial Business
- 2002- Commission on Church Order
  Commission on Nominations
- 2003- Commission on Christian Worship
  Commission on Theology
- 2004- Commission on Christian Action
  Commission on Christian Unity
- 2005- Commission on History
  Commission on Race and Ethnicity

Review of the Commission on Church Order

Review process: The review of the Commission on Church Order was conducted by Renee House on behalf of the General Synod Council. The review process included a questionnaire completed by members of the commission; a meeting of the reviewer with the commission at its February meeting; and the study of recent Minutes of the General Synod reporting on the work of the commission.

Responsibilities of the Commission: The responsibilities of the Commission on Church Order are defined in the Book of Church Order (BCO) (Chapter 3, Part I, Article 5, Section 4) as follows: 1) The commission shall have responsibility for making recommendations concerning the content, structure, and style of the Book of Church Order; 2) The commission shall provide advisory responses to requests for interpretation of the Book of Church Order.

Commission Membership: As designated by the BCO, the commission includes five members, two of whom are lay persons with legal training and experience. All commissioners have a strong general knowledge of, and interest in, the structure, government, and function of the denomination. Current commissioners are: Carol Myers, moderator; John De Koster; John Hinkamp; Howard Moths; Andrea Van Beek. In addition, Allan Janssen is presently serving as consultant to the commission.

Review Findings: The work of the commission is absolutely essential to the mission and ministry of the Reformed Church in America. The commission, through its work of continually reviewing and revising the BCO in relation to the church’s ongoing ministry, ensures that the structure and framework of the denomination are consistent with our Reformed tradition, and so orders the church’s common life for the sake of faithful engagement in the mission of extending Christ’s reign of justice and peace. The commission always has a very full agenda. Presently this agenda includes the consideration of such things as a proposal for an office of evangelist; associates in ministry; mandatory retirement age; the attendance of General Synod professors of theology at General Synod; a
process of dissent and the conscience clauses; and the definition of federated churches. In recent years, the commission has proposed revisions to the *BCO* in response to changes in the standards on the preparation for ministry and on the oversight of ministerial candidates studying at non-RCA seminaries (from the Theological Education Agency to the Ministerial Formation Coordinating Agency); changes resulting from the denomination’s signing of the *Formula of Agreement*; and myriad smaller changes and clarifications relating to such matters as the office of elder, the calling of copastors, and procedures for filing complaints.

A major focus of the commission’s work since 1999 has been on the complete review of the *BCO*. This review was requested by the 1998 General Synod, and in response the membership of the commission has been augmented to form a special committee/task force for this purpose. The special committee completed its task of soliciting a large selection of persons “at all levels of church order and church office” as instructed by the 1998 General Synod. In listening to the variety of needs that were expressed by respondents, and through theological reflection that focused on the foundations of a Reformed church order, the special committee has begun to articulate a number of proposals. These proposals would have the church order reflect a shaping of the church in a more dynamic way, opening the assemblies to mission and ministry, thus understanding governance as responsive to our Lord’s call to mission and ministry within the world and within the church. The special committee has worked diligently in this review process and will bring recommendations for amendments to the *Book of Church Order* to the General Synod of 2002.

The commission also continues to provide advisory responses to requests for interpretation of the *Book of Church Order*.

The review process indicates that the responsibilities and membership parameters of the commission are appropriately defined in the *BCO*, and that the commission has been highly efficient and effective in fulfilling its responsibilities; therefore, no changes are needed in terms of the committee’s responsibilities, composition, or method of carrying out its work. To aid its work, which is intense and must be done face-to-face, the commission requests that funds for adequate meeting accommodations continue to be available. In addition, the commission registers these needs and concerns:

1) Members of the commission must be able to “hit the ground running” and be equipped with a thorough understanding of and commitment to Reformed church order and the specifics of the *BCO*. For this reason, the commission requests that others in the RCA be alert to and assist in the identification of persons who exhibit gifts for and interest in matters of church order, and that these persons be brought to the attention of those engaged in the nominations process;

2) Care should be taken by the General Synod and its agents to ensure that special committees and task forces are not created to conduct tasks that are more appropriately assigned to an existing agency or commission as defined by the *BCO*. Although it is understood that some special committees and task forces are created in an effort not to overburden the church’s agencies and commissions, where this occurs, it is important that representatives from these agencies and commissions be included on special committees or task forces, or be consulted on matters for which they are responsible by church order;

3) The commission supports the denomination’s commitment to using other methods of spiritual discernment in its decision-making processes, and urges that these methods be carefully evaluated, while also urging that the processes of decision-making set forth in the *BCO* be taken seriously as a means of spiritual discernment that enables minority voices to be heard, allows the church to disagree, and also allows the church to move forward in carrying out its shared mission and ministry.
We commend the commission’s diligence in ensuring that the theology of the RCA is reflected in its church order and that the BCO provides a clear, uncluttered guide for ordering the church’s common life for the sake of our increasingly faithful participation in God’s mission to the world.

R-51
To affirm the continuation of the Commission on Church Order as specified in the Book of Church Order, Bylaws of the General Synod, Chapter 3, Part I, Article 5, Section 4. (ADOPTED)

Review of the Commission on Nominations

Membership: The commission shall have fourteen members: one representing each of the regional synods; one representing African-Americans, Hispanics, Native American Indians, and Pacific and Asian Americans, respectively; one representing the women of the church; and one being the immediate past president of General Synod...the commission will have within its membership four laypersons and four ministers (Book of Church Order, Chapter 3, Part I, Art. 5, Section 8).

Members: the Rev. Rett Zabriskie, moderator; Virginia Bowman; Beverly Clark; the Rev. Madeline Fuentez; Randy Kooy; the Rev. Samuel O Kwon; Jenni Liggett; the Rev. Douglas Mc Clintic; Nancy Mc Nivens; Carol Mutch; Barbara Neveel; Jake Roobal; the Rev. Gary Van Heukelom; the Rev. Shari Brink, RCA staff member.

The Task: To identify those who have the gifts, abilities, and interest to advance the work of each of the commissions, boards, and agencies and who represent the diversity that is the Reformed Church in America.

Meeting and Terms: The commission meets at least twice a year—one face-to-face meeting was held on February 21, 2002, and one conference call was held on April 23, 2002. Terms of office are three years, with members eligible for a second term.

Charge: Identifying the right person for the right position is a process seriously and prayerfully undertaken by the commission. The acronym “shapely” helps in matching the person with the position: S-spiritual gifts, H-heart, A-abilities, P-personality, E-experience, L-leadership, and Y-youth.

Tools: Talent bank forms are used as a type of application form, while references report forms are completed by telephone.

The commission helps the Reformed Church in America to fulfill its mission by its representation reflecting the makeup of the church in geographic location, occupation, experience, and diversity. The workload of the commission is massive but manageable. The excellent staff assistance has been most helpful.

Concerns of the commission: The restructuring of Reformed Church Women’s Ministries has impacted recruitment. The new Office of Women, once in play, will address this issue. Another concern is that persons with gifts may not speak English.

Positive accomplishments: Having talent bank forms on file for three years helps keep available a pool of possible nominees; nominations from the regional synods as well as other structures within the church help provide good candidates. The commission works well together; members are responsible, have high energy levels, and have fun. They also stay within their budget.
Report of the Committee to Review the Church Order

In response to the report of the Task Force on the Purposes and Responsibilities of Regional Synods and Classes, the General Synod of 1998 voted:

To call upon the Reformed Church in America to undertake a comprehensive review of its church order through a four-year process of dialogue and discernment; and further,

to instruct the moderator of the General Synod Council, in consultation with the president of the General Synod and the general secretary, to appoint a task force of up to twelve members that is representative of the Reformed Church in America to guide the above process; and further,

to instruct the task force to conduct its work in consultation with representatives at all levels of church order and church office; and further,

to instruct the task force to present interim reports, which may propose changes, to the General Synods of 1999, 2000, and 2001, and to present a final report to the 2002 General Synod (MGS 1998, R-7, pp. 298-299).

The Commission on Church Order offered itself to the General Synod Council to function as part of this broader task force. The General Synod Council accepted that offer and appointed the commission with several additional members to serve as this task force.

From the Commission on Church Order:
  John De Koster
  Jonathan Hinkamp
  Allan Janssen
  Howard Moths
  Carol Myers
  Russell Paarlberg

Appointed by the moderator of the General Synod Council:
  Richard Baukema
  Stephanie Doeschot
  Carol Mutch
  Okke Postma
  Andrea Van Beek

Kenneth Bradsell, Deborah Morris, and Shari Brink have provided staff support.

Allan Janssen was elected moderator.
The committee began its work in September 1999, and has met twice each year. It has offered reports to the General Synod in 1999 (*MGS 1999*, p. 213), 2000 (*MGS 2000*, pp. 422-423), and 2001 (*MGS 2001*, p. 369).

As the committee began its work, it took a two-pronged approach. First, it began an intensive internal discussion on the foundations of a Reformed church order. It thereby hoped to understand the nature of our church order from within a Reformed understanding of the church, and to assist the broader church in an understanding of the nature and purpose of church order.

Second, it began a broad solicitation of comment from persons “at all levels of church order and church office.” Members of the committee interviewed a wide variety of persons including professors, staff, ministers, elders, and deacons. We spoke with persons from all geographic areas of the church, from churches with strong concentrations of various ethnic groups, and from churches of various sizes.

The results of these conversations were then summarized. The first and most crucial finding was that we found little need or desire across the church for a fundamental change in the order of the church. That is, most people were satisfied with a church that is ordered through assemblies and through the various offices of minister of Word and sacrament, elder, deacon, and professor of theology.

While many persons had suggestions for altering particular provisions in the church order, we could summarize the comments as follows:

- The Preamble to the *Book of Church Order* (*BCO*) was broadly affirmed.
- The church order was appreciated as broad and flexible.
- We were urged to “keep it lean.”
- The parity among the offices was strongly supported.
- The church order needs to be “turned outward,” or become more mission-oriented.
- Larger consistories were finding it difficult to do administrative work in full session.
- Several requested that the current *BCO* be made more “user-friendly.”
- There was broad dissatisfaction with how the concept of associates in ministry now function.
- A number of persons urged that ministries be more “gift-based” than administrative.
- The “fourth office”—that of professor of theology—does not fit well in our church order.

Following this consultation and internal discussion, the committee began to develop a number of proposals that would meet the challenges within the framework of a church ordered in its assemblies.

**Education in Church Order**

In discussions with persons from around the church, it became clear that many, including office-bearers, have little understanding of how church order functions and why. The committee considered a number of ways to make the church order more accessible.

It produced two documents that will be bundled with the contents of the *Book of Church Order*. One is entitled “How to Use the *Book of Church Order.*” It will describe how to find one’s way around the book. A second piece, “Introduction to the RCA *Book of Church Order.*” offers a brief introduction to the basic shape and content of what is distinctive about Reformed church order.
The committee also commissioned a glossary of terms used in the BCO. It is hoped that this might clarify terms that often sound strange to someone coming to the BCO for the first time. It is expected to be particularly helpful to new elders and deacons. The committee commended this task to the Commission on Church Order.

The committee also noted that the current index is not as helpful as might be desired. Thus the committee has consulted with the production staff, requesting it to consider new possibilities for a more sophisticated index for the BCO.

Further, the layout of the BCO might be changed to become more “user-friendly” through, for example, inclusion of marginal notations. The footnotes will be moved to a more appropriate place. It may be possible to build in hyperlinks within the text now available online. The possibilities and cost of such change were referred to the staff who produce the BCO.

The Church as Mission

The Reformed Church in America is heir to the church order developed by the Synod of Dort in 1619, which expressed a Reformation understanding of the church. With its roots in the sixteenth-century Reformation, the Reformed church reflected the ecclesiastical and societal characteristics of that historical era. That is, membership in the church and in the community largely coincided. The church’s primary task was a pastoral ministry through Word and sacrament to all persons within its ambit. The notion of the mission of the church understood as the church sent into the world to proclaim the gospel of God’s gracious reign was strange, since the immediate world, at least, already lived within a corpus christianum (that is, a “Christianized culture”).

The order of the church, developed in the Reformed tradition into offices of elder, deacon, and minister of the Word and gathered into local, regional, and national assemblies, followed this understanding of the church.

The growth of mission consciousness within the churches—including the RCA, the experience of the twentieth century, the emergence of an ecumenical understanding of the church, and the experience of a growing number of congregations at the outset of the twenty-first century have combined to call the church to a renewed understanding of its task in mission. Our Song of Hope, introduced into the Reformed Church in 1978, articulates this changed understanding with the following words:

The Holy Spirit sends the church
to call sinners to repentance,
to proclaim the good news
that Jesus Christ is personal Savior and Lord.
The Spirit sends it out in ministry
to preach good news to the poor,
righteousness to the nations,
and peace among all people (par. 16).

The General Synod expressed the nature of the church in its mission statement adopted by the General Synod of 1997 when it stated that “our shared task is to equip congregations for ministry...following Christ in mission.” That same General Synod resolved to “declare the Reformed Church in America a ‘missionary denomination’ for the twenty-first century” (MGS 1997, R-4, p. 422).

The church is sent. It is called to mission. It not only answers its call as it ministers to those who gather in the local community of believers, but also as it extends itself in proclamation and service to all persons, to those beyond the walls of the church in the local community and to the greater world without.
This committee is responsive to the insights of persons from around the church who have indicated that while our church order functions well in administering the internal affairs of the church, it reflects little of the Scriptural impulse to mission. This lack is most clearly expressed in the paragraph in the Preamble that describes the “nature of the church on earth” (*BCO*, p. 2):

The church, which can be defined in many ways and be represented by many images, may be described as that body of people in the world which professes faith in Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord.

The proposed replacement paragraph offered by this committee attempts to set the church within a new dynamic, by which, as articulated by Our Song of Hope, the church is impelled by the power of the Spirit to mission in the world. That understanding of the church will be carried forward into the responsibilities of the consistories and the classes.

The proposed change articulates a particularly Reformed understanding of the church. That it is a “gathering” of persons reflects both the Heidelberg Catechism, which talks of the church as a “congregation” or “community” (A 54), and the Belgic Confession (27), where the church confesses “one single catholic or universal church—a holy congregation and gathering of true Christian believers.” Those gathered do not do so on their own, but are “elect” (Our Song of Hope) or “chosen” (Heidelberg, A 54).

Nor are they called only to a task, to “do” mission. They are to embody God’s intentions. That is, how the church lives its life in communion and in relation to the world is in itself to reflect what God intends for the created order. This is particularly important in the context of church order. For it is in its order that the church shapes its life together.

The mission that the church embodies does not emerge from reflection of its members and leaders; it is God’s mission. The church lives in obedience to what God intends for all the world, thus mission. Again, this can be understood as a Reformed approach as it honors the sovereignty of God and the lordship of Christ over all the earth.

This has been expressed in the twentieth century by a rediscovery of the centrality of the “kingdom” or “reign” of God for Jesus’ mission (Mark 1:15; Luke 4:18, 19). The author of the kingdom is God; the church lives out its mission within that wonder. The proposed change articulates a movement in two directions: a gathering and a moving outward. The church is gathered around Word and sacrament. Thus it lives only in the presence of its Lord, there nurtured and comforted. But that same Lord lifts the eyes of the church to a vision of God’s reign and speaks the word that impels the church outward toward the future.

God’s reign, having dawned in Jesus Christ, still remains future; it is “already and not yet.” So the church lives in expectation, “awaiting their entire salvation in Jesus Christ” (Belgic, 27). The church lives in mission because it lives within the reality of the promise of God’s sure but unfinished work.

The church then fulfills its call “within” that expectation. It does not, because it cannot, Foreclose on God’s activity. But it participates in the first fruits of God’s reign, and thus proclaims “good news,” calls all persons to the joy of new life in Christ, and announces to all the world—persons, institutions, governments, “powers”—what God promises and what God commands.
Responsibilities of the Assemblies

How is this new dynamic to find its way into the life of the church through its official leadership? This committee discovered that the local assemblies, the consistory and the classis, had no mention of ministry under their particular responsibilities. We acknowledge that consistories and classes do in fact often reflect on their ministry. However, according to our church order, they need not do so.

The Reformed Church’s mission statement envisioned “classes and synods as communities of nurture and vision—accountable, responsible, sustained by prayer, alive to the Spirit.” In receiving the report of its Task Force on Consistories, the 2000 General Synod voted to refer to the Commission on Church Order a request to revise the Book of Church Order (BCO) “to include ‘missional leadership’ in the descriptions of the responsibilities of consistories, boards of elders, and boards of deacons” (MGS 2000, R-50, p. 279).

Hence, in a new paragraph in the BCO’s Preamble that articulates the role and responsibility of the assemblies, we propose the inclusion of this sentence: “Each assembly is charged with determining the nature and extent of its ministry in faithful obedience to Scripture and in responsible concern for the church’s mission in the world.” We further propose the inclusion of new sections under the responsibilities of both consistory and classis that would have the relevant body “regularly consider the nature and extent of the ministry,” thus giving substance to the new understanding of the nature of the church. A consistory would, for example, dedicate time for a broader reflection on the ministry of the local congregation.

It would do so first “in obedience to Holy Scripture,” thus underscoring that the church, through its leadership, lives by the Word of God. The first task in governance, then, is to live subject to God’s leading, asking how God’s Word speaks in a particular instance. With this inclusion, the church order would reflect the first two elements of a “faithful consistory” outlined in the report of the Task Force on Consistories to the 2000 General Synod: that the consistory lives by the call of Jesus Christ, and the authority of Christ (MGS 2000, p. 291). The church does not live by its own vision, design, or plan.

The Word does not simply gather the church, but sends the church. Thus, the consistory and classis act in response to the needs of the community, both local and global. This will entail that elders, deacons, and ministers together take cognizance of the needs of the world about the church.

Introducing “Ministries”

This committee noted that the church has been struggling to come to terms with a number of issues that tended in one way or another to impinge upon the notion of “office” in the church. The emergence of “preaching elders” as a category in the BCO was intended to assist churches that had difficulty finding preachers. The introduction of “associates in ministry” gave educators a certain profile within the classes, but has not solved problems with the place of educators within the church’s full ministry. The press for so-called “lay preachers” highlights the question of how the RCA structures ministry all the more.

We propose that the church is best served by clearly distinguishing between ordained office and ministry within the church. While all ordained persons serve in a ministry, not all ministries need be ordained. In the Order for the Ordination and Installation of Deacons and Elders the officiant states: “By the Holy Spirit all who believe and are baptized receive a ministry to witness to Jesus as Savior and Lord, and to love and serve those with whom
they live and work (N.B., liturgical orders stand as constitutional for the RCA). Furthermore, the paper titled “Faithful Consistories” received and distributed by the General Synod includes as one of the elements of the faithful consistory “the mission of the church”:

Through the offices Christ is represented to the community of faith, which is transformed to be transforming, so that each member according to his or her gifts and situation in life, is sent out by Christ in the power of the Spirit (MGS 2000, p. 293, emphasis added).

Ordination is to office and thus to governance in clearly prescribed ways. We emphasize that in a Reformed understanding, ordination does not imply status, but function. While it cannot be denied and should not be devalued that congregations grant a certain respect to those ordained to the offices, this does not detract from the ministry to which all the baptized are called.

Thus a paragraph is introduced into the Preamble that 1) acknowledges that all members of the church are commissioned by baptism to ministry (thereby articulating the Reformation emphasis on the priesthood of all believers), 2) recognizes a variety of ministries within the greater body of the church, and 3) requires each assembly to reflect on its own ministry in such a way that it will call persons to ministry.

These ministries cannot be and should not be determined in advance. They will include educators, evangelists, youth workers, parish nurses, social workers, musicians, and the like. But the needs of ministry will vary with the context. The ministries envisioned are, thus, not essential for each congregation, but are valued where they are called forth.

We further envision that as classes become cognizant of the ministries done within their bounds, they can form “such entities that may assist” these ministries. Thus, for example, a classis may form its own “council for education” to assist not only local professional educators, but all the churches in their educational responsibility. Classes may take the initiative in forming such bodies or form them in response to those who have ministry commitments that would benefit from such a place in classis structure. These bodies will vary from classis to classis in response to the needs in different places. They may be formed to facilitate any common ministry, such as outreach and evangelism, music, youth work, or social justice ministries.

This task force believes that this proposed new understanding will free the church to carry out its full ministry. It frees the various office-bearers from thinking that elders, deacons, and ministers of the Word and sacrament need to do all ministry by themselves. They have their particular ministries. As office-bearers their ministry includes that of governance of the church. They need not be weighted with the performance of all the ministries. At the same time, those who function in the variety of ministries are not required to bear the weight of governance or discipline.

To meet the concerns raised in the preceding three sections, the task force recommends a replacement paragraph in the Preamble under the subtitle, “Nature of the Church on Earth,” a new paragraph in the Preamble to follow the current paragraph on the “Government of the Church by Elders,” and new sections to be added to the responsibilities of the consistory and the classis:

R-53
To adopt the following revisions to the Book of Church Order, Preamble, p. 2, paragraph 2; Preamble, p. 4, by adding a new paragraph 2; Chapter 1, Part I, Article 2, by adding a new Section
2 (and renumbering the subsequent sections); and Chapter 1, Part II, Article 2, by adding a new Section 2 (and renumbering the subsequent sections), for recommendation to the classes for approval (additions underlined and deletions stricken out):

Preamble, p. 2

*Nature of the Church on Earth.* The church, which can be defined in many ways and be represented by many images, may be described as that body of people in the world which professes faith in Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord. The church, which Scripture represents with many images, is a gathering of persons chosen in Christ through the Holy Spirit to embody God’s intentions for the world. Gathered by the Spirit around Word and sacrament, the church fulfills its call within the expectations of the reign of God as it participates in mission, in calling all persons to life in Christ, and in proclaiming God’s promise and commands to all the world.

Preamble, p. 4

While governance of the Reformed church is executed through the offices gathered in assemblies, the church expresses its full ministry through all its members in a variety of tasks. Each assembly is charged with determining the nature and extent of its ministry in faithful obedience to Scripture and in responsible concern for the church’s mission in the world. Every member receives a ministry in baptism and is called with the whole church to embody Christ’s intentions for the world.

Chapter 1, Part I, Article 2, Section 2 (new)

Sec. 2. The consistory shall regularly consider the nature and extent of the ministry of the congregation in obedience to Holy Scripture and in response to the needs of the local community and the world. The consistory may institute and recognize such ministries that express the congregation’s faithfulness to the ministry to which Christ calls the church, provided the consistory does not infringe upon the prerogatives of other consistories, classes, and synods.

Chapter 1, Part II, Article 2, Section 2 (new)

Sec. 2. The classis shall regularly consider the nature and extent of ministry within its bounds in obedience to Holy Scripture and in response to the needs of the world within which the classis ministers. The classis may form such entities as may assist the congregations in their ministry, provided such bodies do not infringe upon the prerogatives of other classes, consistories, or synods.
The advisory committee recommended the following amendment:

_Chapter 1, Part II, Article 2, Section 2 (new)_

Sec. 2. The classis shall regularly consider the nature and extent of ministry within its bounds in obedience to Holy Scripture and in response to the needs of the world within which the classis ministers. The classis may form such entities as may assist the congregations in their ministry be needed for the ministry of the church, provided such bodies do not infringe upon the prerogatives of other classes, consistories, or synods.

A motion was made to amend the amendment:

Preamble, p. 2

...through the Holy Spirit to profess faith in Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior in order to embody God’s intentions for the world.

The recommendation was adopted as follows:

R-53 (amended):
To adopt the following revisions to the _Book of Church Order_, Preamble, p. 2, paragraph 2; Preamble, p. 4, by adding a new paragraph 2; Chapter 1, Part I, Article 2, by adding a new Section 2 (and renumbering the subsequent sections); and Chapter 1, Part II, Article 2, by adding a new Section 2 (and renumbering the subsequent sections), for recommendation to the classes for approval (additions underlined and deletions stricken out):

Preamble, p. 2

_Nature of the Church on Earth._ The church, which can be defined in many ways and be represented by many images, may be described as that body of people in the world which professes faith in Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord. The church, which Scripture represents with many images, is a gathering of persons chosen in Christ through the Holy Spirit to profess faith in Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior in order to embody God’s intentions for the world. Gathered by the Spirit around Word and sacrament, the church fulfills its call within the expectations of the reign of God as it participates in mission, in calling all persons to life in Christ, and in proclaiming God’s promise and commands to all the world.

Preamble, p. 4

While governance of the Reformed church is executed through the offices gathered in assemblies, the church expresses its full ministry through all its members in a variety of tasks. Each assembly is charged with determining the nature and extent of its ministry in faithful obedience to Scripture and in responsible concern for the church’s mission in the world. Every member receives a ministry in baptism and is called with the whole church to embody Christ’s intentions for the world.
Chapter 1, Part I, Article 2, Section 2 (new)

Sec. 2. The consistory shall regularly consider the nature and extent of the ministry of the congregation in obedience to Holy Scripture and in response to the needs of the local community and the world. The consistory may institute and recognize such ministries that express the congregation’s faithfulness to the ministry to which Christ calls the church, provided the consistory does not infringe upon the prerogatives of other consistories, classes, and synods.

Chapter 1, Part II, Article 2, Section 2 (new)

Sec. 2. The classis shall regularly consider the nature and extent of ministry within its bounds in obedience to Holy Scripture and in response to the needs of the world within which the classis ministers. The classis may form such entities as may be needed for the ministry of the church, provided such bodies do not infringe upon the prerogatives of other classes, consistories, or synods.

(ADOPTED AS AMENDED)

Emphasizing the Diaconate

A particular way by which Reformed church order expresses the nature of the church in mission is through the office of deacon. Deacons are set apart for “a ministry of mercy, service, and outreach” (BCO, Chapter 1, Part I, Article 1, Section 10). The church order evidences a certain elasticity when it states that each consistory will choose the number of deacons necessary to the ministry of the local congregation (BCO, Chapter 1, Part I, Article 6, Section 1). The deacons are the particular means through which the church expresses its mission of mercy and service.

The Reformed Church in America has begun to recover the office of deacon as discrete and vital in the life of the church. The citations from the church order in the previous paragraph are from amendments to the BCO introduced in a series of proposals from the General Synod’s Committee on Ecclesiastical Office and Ministry (MGS 1988, pp. 234-242). That report signaled the “rediscovery of the diaconate.”

The amendments approved to the church order have begun to make their way into the life of the church. However, local boards of deacons can use assistance in the execution of their newly recovered ministry. This is best approached by using the Reformed principle whereby neighboring congregations assist one another in ministry through the instrument of the classis.

Therefore, to assist local boards of deacons, we propose the formation of classical “diaconal conferences.” Each classis would form a body consisting of deacons from local churches, which would enable local boards of deacons to perform their ministry better. Such conferences would not replace the classis, but would be an expression of the classis in ministry. The classis will need to ascertain the authority it deems appropriate to such conferences.

It is the opinion of this committee that the establishment of such bodies will greatly enhance the role of the deacon. While this change would not place deacons in the “greater assembly” of the classis, thus granting them de jure equivalence in power, it would do so de facto. That is, deacons would have that place where they can fulfill the task to which they have been ordained.
Furthermore, by acting together in a classical diaconal conference, the classis can itself minister in ways that no local board could do on its own. The classis could thus reflect on the greater ministry to which it is called, the church thus responding to the needs of its “world.”

R-54
To adopt the following revision of the Book of Church Order, Chapter 1, Part II, Article 2, by adding a new Section 3 (and renumbering the subsequent sections) for recommendation to the classes for approval (additions are underlined):

Sec. 3. The classis shall form a diaconal conference to assist local boards of deacons and to express the diaconal ministry of the church in the geographical area described by the bounds of the classis. The conference shall consist of at least one representative from each local board of deacons. The classis shall delegate authority to the conference as the classis deems appropriate. The conference shall report to the classis. (ADOPTED)

How Consistories Work

This committee heard from a number of places in the church that very large churches were struggling with how large consistories could function effectively. This question has led some churches to form “executive consistories” or establish various categories of elders or deacons.

This committee acknowledges the problem, but it does not endorse all the experiments toward solution. Reformed church order does not, for example, allow for the distinguishing of installed elders in such a way that some share in governance and others do not. And the movement toward smaller consistories is not always advisable either. Larger churches will need more elders and deacons to perform the ministries to which they have been ordained.

The General Synod, in receiving the report of its Task Force on Consistories, did, however, understand the problems facing large consistories and voted to refer the issue to the Commission on Church Order, that the church order “more clearly accommodate the placing of administrative responsibility in the hands of a smaller group within the consistory” (MGS 2000, R-50, p. 279).

The task force concurs, and so proposes that a consistory can delegate much of its administrative work to a smaller body. The full consistory would need to act on all matters that require the decision of the consistory in a local church.

R-55
To adopt the following revision to the Book of Church Order, Chapter 1, Part I, Article 3, by adding a new Section 4 for recommendation to the classes for approval (additions underlined):

Sec. 4. The consistory may select a number of its members to oversee the administrative duties of the consistory. That body may act only with the approval of the consistory.

A motion was made to amend the recommendation:
R-55 (amended)
To adopt the following revision to the Book of Church Order, Chapter 1, Part I, Article 3, by adding a new Section 4 for recommendation to the classes for approval (additions underlined):

Sec. 4. The consistory may select a number of its members to supervise the administrative or personnel responsibilities of the consistory. That body may act without the approval of the full consistory if permitted by that consistory’s rules of order. (ADOPTED AS AMENDED)

Relation of the Assemblies

The task force that recommended to the General Synod the formation of this committee had itself been formed by the General Synod in 1996 to consider the relation of the classes and the regional synods to the General Synod (MGS 1996, R-4, p. 427). While the relation of the classes to the General Synod is quite clear when understood as assemblies, that of the regional synod to the General Synod has been fraught with ambiguity and sometimes misunderstanding.

It is helpful to keep in mind how Reformed churches have historically understood the relation of the various assemblies. In contrast with a vertical model whereby each “higher” assembly assumes authority over the “lower” assemblies, Reformed churches have functioned with a horizontal, or geographical, model, whereby “greater” assemblies (“greater” in this case being more geographically inclusive) assist “lesser” assemblies in those tasks that the lesser assemblies cannot do by themselves. This is most clearly articulated in Article 30 of the church order of Dort:

In those Assemblies, ecclesiastical matters only shall be transacted and that in an ecclesiastical manner. A greater Assembly shall take cognizance of those things alone which could not be determined in the lesser, or that appertain to churches or congregations in general which compose such an assembly.

Upon investigation, the Government says very little about the relation between the regional synods and the General Synod as assemblies. The addition of a new paragraph in the Preamble that articulates this understanding within the broader understanding of the nature of assemblies as gatherings of the offices is proposed.

Further proposed is a new article that parallels BCO Chapter 1, Part II, Article 15 that outlines the relation of the classes to the regional and General Synods.

Proposed first is a change that has the regional synod report to the General Synod annually on the state of religion within its bounds. This makes official and regular a communication whereby the General Synod “takes cognizance” of the ministry and mission of the greater church.

Second, a section stating that the General Synod may assist the regional synods in fulfillment of common tasks of ministry and mission is proposed. This allows the regional synods and the General Synod to enter into conversation and possible program cooperation. It does so, furthermore, in such manner as respects the principle of church order outlined above.

The change in Article 7, Section 3 simply provides a parallel provision to Chapter 1, Part IV, Article 1 that gives to each regional synod a delegate to the General Synod.
R-56
To adopt the following revision to the Book of Church Order, the
Preamble, p. 3, and Chapter 1, Part III, by adding a new Article 7
for recommendation to the classes for approval (additions
underlined):

Preamble, p. 3

The Spiritual authority given to office-holders is exercised in the
assemblies of the church. The offices meeting together represent
the fullness of Christ’s ministry. No office functions apart from the
other offices. Reformed governance understands that the greater
assemblies care for the ministry that extends beyond the purview
of the lesser assemblies without infringing upon the responsibilities of the lesser. Consistories, classes, and synods work
together in mission and ministry within their shared boundaries.

Article. 7. Relation to the General Synod

Sec. 1. The regional synod shall report annually to the General
Synod upon the state of religion within its bounds.

Sec. 2. The General Synod may assist the regional synods in the
fulfillment of common tasks of mission and ministry, provided that
such assistance does not infringe upon the prerogatives of the
regional synods.

Sec. 3. The regional synod shall appoint a delegate to the General
Synod. (ADOPTED)

The Historical Note

While the “Historical Note” found at the end of the Preamble (pp. 4-5) is not constitution-
al in nature, the committee deemed it important to propose a revision that sets the church
order more fully in its historical context. The note acknowledges that the church order
locates the RCA within its family of churches and indicates the gift that our church offers
to the church ecumenical.

In addition, a revision allows opportunity to adjust the note to reflect the results of more
recent historical scholarship. It has been shown and accepted, for example, that the gath-
ering in Wesel in 1568 was not a synod of the Netherlands Reformed Church.

R-57
To adopt the following revision of the Preamble, “Historical Note”
(additions underlined; deletions stricken out):

A Historical Note

The Reformed Church in America is part of the Reformed
tradition in the worldwide Church of Jesus Christ. The RCA has
its immediate source in the Reformed Church in of the
Netherlands and other European countries. These churches grew
out of attempts to reform the church catholic in the sixteenth
Such reform is committed to be ongoing and is guided “according to the Scriptures”—both Old and New Testaments—as the revealed Word of God. Throughout history, reformers have not sought revolution but genuine reform in faith and life. The RCA is grateful to be recognized as a church that emphasizes giving an account of the hope we have in Christ Jesus in word and deed; the RCA values faithful and articulate theology and has demonstrated a deep commitment to ministries of mission. The church knows itself to be connected with all other churches of Christ as well as with those who trace their faith lineage to the God of Abraham.

The Netherlands Reformed Church—latter was formally organized in 1566. In that year a synod held at Antwerp adopted the Belgic Confession of Faith and formulated some preliminary rules of church government. These rules were revised at succeeding synods, receiving at the Synod of Dort in 1619 a form which lasted for nearly two centuries in the Netherlands. The Netherlands liturgy was adopted at a synod held in Wesel in 1568, and the Heidelberg Catechism were adopted by a synod held at Emden in 1571. The Compendium of the Heidelberg Catechism was formulated in 1608. The Canons of Dort were framed by the synod held in that city Dort in 1619.

The three doctrinal statements named above have continued to this day as the Standards of the Reformed Church in America. The Netherlands liturgy was adopted by the American church and underwent no change until 1840. In spite of some amendments since then, and has retained much of its original character. The rules of church government of 1619 were translated into English in 1792. “Explanatory Articles,” adapting the rules to American conditions, were added. In 1833 the rules and general revisions of this “Constitution” (actually only part of the Constitution) have been made since then, notably in 1874, 1910-1916, 1958-1959, and 1965-1968. The amendment of the church’s document of government is an almost annual process.

On the American continent, what began as the Reformed Dutch Church in the 1620s became the “Reformed Church in America” in 1867. While most Scottish Reformed Churches are known as “Presbyterian,” and many German Reformed congregations became the “Reformed Church in the United States” (later to become part of the United Church of Christ), the change of name reflected that congregations with Dutch, French, Hungarian, Swiss, Italian, and German Reformed roots had become part of the RCA. The RCA incorporates churches in Canada as well as the USA.

The advisory committee recommended an amendment to the recommendation:
other faith communities who call on the God of Abraham.

Reasons:

1. The language should reflect the Reformed Church’s historical ecumenical openness.
2. The language should acknowledge the longstanding relationships that exist between the Reformed Church, Judaism, and Islam.
3. The language should indicate that the RCA’s connections to other Christian churches were different than the connections to other communities that trace their faith to the God of Abraham.

The recommendation was adopted as follows:

R-57 (amended)
To adopt the following revision of the Preamble, “Historical Note” (additions underlined; deletions stricken out):

A Historical Note

The Reformed Church in America is part of the Reformed tradition in the worldwide Church of Jesus Christ. The RCA has its immediate source in the Reformed Church in of the Netherlands and other European countries. These churches grew out of attempts to reform the church catholic in the sixteenth century. Such reform is committed to be ongoing and is guided “according to the Scriptures”—both Old and New Testaments—as the revealed Word of God. Throughout history, reformers have not sought revolution but genuine reform in faith and life. The RCA is grateful to be recognized as a church that emphasizes giving an account of the hope we have in Christ Jesus in word and deed; the RCA values faithful and articulate theology and has demonstrated a deep commitment to ministries of mission. The RCA celebrates its bond of community with all other churches of Christ and values the heritage it shares with other faith communities who call on the God of Abraham.

The Netherlands Reformed Church latter was formally organized in 1566. In that year a synod held at Antwerp adopted the Belgic Confession of Faith and formulated some preliminary rules of church government. These rules were revised at succeeding synods, receiving at the Synod of Dort in 1619 a form which lasted for nearly two centuries in the Netherlands. The Netherlands liturgy was adopted at a synod held in Wessel in 1568, and the Heidelberg Catechism was adopted by a synod held at Emden in 1571. The Compendium of the Heidelberg Catechism was formulated in 1608. The Canons of Dort were framed by the synod held in that city Dort in 1619.

The three doctrinal statements named above have continued to this day as the Standards of the Reformed Church in America. The Netherlands liturgy was adopted by the American church and underwent no change until 1840. In spite of some amendments since then, and has retained much of its original character. The
rules of church government of 1619 were translated into English in 1792. “Explanatory Articles,” adapting the rules to American conditions, were added. In 1833 the rules and general revisions of this “Constitution” (actually only part of the Constitution) have been made since then, notably in 1874, 1910-1916, 1958-1959, and 1965-1968. The amendment of the church’s document of government is an almost annual process.

On the American continent, what began as the Reformed Dutch Church in the 1620s became the “Reformed Church in America” in 1867. While most Scottish Reformed Churches are known as “Presbyterian,” and many German Reformed congregations became the “Reformed Church in the United States” (later to become part of the United Church of Christ), the change of name reflected that congregations with Dutch, French, Hungarian, Swiss, Italian, and German Reformed roots had become part of the RCA. The RCA incorporates churches in Canada as well as the USA. (ADOPTED AS AMENDED)

Report of the Task Force to Study the Relationship Between the General Synod and the General Synod Council

It was the intent of the General Synod of 1992 to create one body out of two when it gave birth to the General Synod Council (GSC). The GSC was to combine the intimate governance model of the General Synod Executive Committee with the broad-based representation and focus of the General Program Council. The resultant body, the GSC, has unquestionably succeeded in creating a unified staff, empowered by a unified budget and committed to a unified mission and vision for the church.

The creation of the General Synod Council failed to create an effective governing board with an organic relationship to the General Synod. The size and classical representation of the council, with sixty-seven members, has caused it to function more like a mini-assembly. This has caused confusion in its role and relation to the General Synod. The presence of only the General Synod Council Coordinating Committee at General Synod meetings has left two-thirds of the body with little or no experience of its parent body. Finally, the expected linkage between the GSC and the classes has often not developed, leaving representatives with shallow roots in the ecclesiastical soil from which they have sprung.

It was a growing awareness of these concerns which prompted the General Synod Council in the spring of 2001 to request that the General Synod appoint an ad hoc committee to first address the relationship between the General Synod Council, the General Synod, and its commissions; and second, to turn its focus toward the relationship between the General Synod Council and the classes and regional synods. The recommendation of the General Synod was:

To direct the general secretary and the president of the General Synod to appoint a task force to study the relationship between the General Synod, the General Synod Council, and the General Synod commissions and to recommend any changes to the Book of
Church Order to the General Synod of 2002; and further

that the task force be directed to suggest to the General Synod and its commissions as well as to the General Synod Council a format to better coordinate their work; and further,

that the task force, in consultation with classes and regional synods, be directed in its second year of life, to study the interrelationship between the General Synod Council, regional synods, and classes and recommend changes to empower our common mission in equipping congregations for ministry, with a report to the General Synod in 2003 (MGS 2001, R-13, p. 66).

The president of General Synod and the general secretary appointed a task force of the following persons: Kathleen Edwards; Anna Gonzales; Ronald Hartgerink; Allan Janssen; Toni Macon; Gregg Mast (moderator); Stephen Mathonnet-Vanderwell; Phyllis Palsma; Loretta Rolle; and Carl Ver Beek. Steve Brooks and Wesley Granberg-Michaelson served ex-officio. Kenneth Bradsell served as staff support for the task force. The task force met in November, January, and March. A report-drafting subcommittee met in December, January, and March. Members of the task force met with the General Synod Council Coordinating Committee to review the proposed changes and to listen to suggestions and concerns before drafting this report. Members of the task force and/or staff also met with most of the General Synod commissions to review the report and receive suggestions and comments prior to drafting the report.

It is in response to the first task that the ad hoc committee places before the General Synod a number of proposals, which address the above concerns. The task force will continue its work in the coming year so that it can complete its assignment.

Proposals for Change

**Elect the GSC Primarily from the General Synod**

First, it is proposed that the General Synod Council evolve into a body which is elected primarily from the minister and elder delegates of the General Synod, who will continue to serve as General Synod delegates during their term of office. It is through these two offices that the church has been historically governed. Thus all of the representatives on the council will be ministers or elders and most will be classical delegates to General Synod. It is believed that this organic relationship between General Synod and the General Synod Council, which will serve as the General Synod’s executive committee, will serve the church well.

**Establish a More Workable Size for the GSC**

Second, it is proposed that the number of representatives on the General Synod Council be changed from the present 67 to 27.* It is believed that a smaller, more intimate council will function more like a governing board rather than a mini-assembly. Further, it is expected that the role of each representative will be enhanced in respect to accounta-

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*The General Synod is reminded that the president, vice president, and immediate past president serve as voting members of the GSC. The general secretary also serves on the GSC, ex-officio, without vote. The General Synod has before it at this meeting an action from General Synod 2001 to add an ecumenical delegate ex-officio, without vote from the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America. Vacancies on General Synod agencies and commissions, including the General Synod Council are filled “ad-interim” by the council and are subject to approval by the General Synod at its next regular meeting.
bility and effectiveness as the council assumes greater responsibility for its agenda.

**Enhance Communication with Classes by Using the Elected Delegates from Classes**

Third, it is proposed that General Synod delegates be encouraged to understand that they serve as delegates from the time of their appointment until their successors are appointed. Therefore the General Synod, through its executive committee (the GSC), will communicate regularly throughout the year with the delegates, who in turn will share communications with their respective classes. In addition classes may communicate throughout the year to the General Synod Executive Committee through their General Synod delegates.

**Establish Clear Communication and Coordination Between the GSC and the Commissions of the General Synod**

Fourth, it is proposed that all the commissions of the General Synod and the General Synod Council meet together each fall in the same venue and at the same time. It is hoped that this coordinated meeting will not only receive a common report of the previous General Synod, but will develop a style of leadership and consultation in service of the priorities, mission, and ministry of the church. In fulfillment of its responsibility to propose the agenda for the General Synod, the GSC will invite to its spring meeting a representative from each commission that has business before the subsequent General Synod. This collaboration will enable the synod to give maximum time to the most crucial issues before the church.

**Empower More RCA Members to Serve on Teams, Committees, and Work Groups That Advocate for and Carry Out the Mission and Ministry of the RCA**

Fifth, it is proposed that the General Synod Council work with existing teams, committees, and task forces wherever possible, and that it be empowered to form appropriate bodies as may be needed to carry out particular work of the church in fulfillment of its mission. These groups would be made up of persons from across the church with expertise in, and a commitment to, particular programs, ministries, and the mission needs of the church, and would not be limited to deacons, elders, and ministers.

Several documents need to be amended to effect these changes. Changes need to be made in the *Book of Church Order*, Chapter 1, The Government; and Chapter 3, The Bylaws and Special Rules of Order. Changes also need to be made in the Bylaws of the General Synod Council. The changes in the *Book of Church Order* are proposed below as part of this report. The required changes in the Bylaws of the General Synod Council will be developed in consultation with the GSC following the action of this General Synod.

**Proposed Church Order Changes**

This section of the report is provided in two parts. Part One, comprising changes in Chapter 3, The Bylaws and Special Rules of Order, may be amended at a stated meeting of the General Synod by majority vote, provided that the amendment was submitted in writing at a previous stated session and also received a majority vote at that session. Part Two, comprising changes in Chapter 1, The Government, and Part IV, The General Synod, requires adoption by the General Synod, approval by two-thirds of the classes, and passage of a declarative action by a subsequent General Synod.

**Part One**

Changes in this section will have to be adopted by the General Synod in 2003. These pro-
posed changes do not go to the classes for approval.

The advisory committee recommended these amendments to R-58 that follows:

Chapter 3, Part I, Article 3, Section 2:

Sec. 2. Composition

a. One-half of the membership of the council shall be elders and one-half shall be ministers, and not less than one-third of the membership shall be women. The Commission on Nominations shall assure the composition of the council reflects the full diversity of the church and shall obtain recommendations from each racial and ethnic council in its nominations.

Reasons:

1. This change clarifies the meaning of the sentence.

2. The phrase is unnecessary as it is only through its nominations that the Commission on Nominations can assure the composition of the council.

Chapter 3, Part I, Article 3, Section 3:

Sec. 3. Term of Office

The term of office for the elected member shall be four years. Members shall be ineligible for two years after they have served their term. Members who have served less than a full term or a partial term of less than two years shall be eligible for an additional full four-year term. The term of office shall be from July 1 of the year they are elected and be completed on June 30. A regular employee of the GSC, the regional synods, or the classes of the Reformed Church in America may not hold membership on the council. General Synod officers shall serve as members of the council for one additional year following the expiration of their General Synod term of office.

Reasons:

1. It is consistent with established General Synod policy for other commissions and boards.

2. It would allow a maximum term of six years, rather than nearly eight, when the norm is four.

Chapter 3, Part I, Article 8, Section 7:

Sec. 7. General Synod Council Coordinating Committee

The members of the General Synod Council Coordinating Committee shall be corresponding delegates.

Reason: The reduced GSC will serve as the executive committee of synod and as the
Committee of Reference. It will need to be present at synod meetings, and its members will need to have privilege of the floor.

The recommendation was adopted as follows:

R-58 (amended):
To adopt in first reading revisions of the Bylaws of the General Synod in the Book of Church Order, Chapter 3, Part I as follows (additions are underlined, deletions are stricken out):

Chapter 3, Part I, Article 3, Section 1:

Sec. 1. Membership

The membership of the council shall consist of the following:

a. The president, vice-president, and the immediate past president of General Synod.

b. One member nominated by each of the classes and elected by the General Synod. Nominations shall be open to ministers and all confessing members of the Reformed Church in America. Members shall hold office only as long as they remain resident within the bounds of the classes they represent.

b. One member recommended by each regional synod from among its regular classical delegates to the General Synod, and elected by the General Synod upon nomination by the Commission on Nominations.

c. Seventeen members at large elected by the General Synod upon nomination by the Commission on Nominations. In making such nominations, the commission shall insure that there are within the membership of the council at least two members who are professionally qualified in each of the following fields: law, finance, marketing, and general management. Each of the racial/ethnic councils of the General Synod Council shall recommend persons from their membership to the Commission on Nominations, and the commission shall insure that one person recommended from each of the racial/ethnic councils is serving on the General Synod Council at all times.

c. Ten members elected by the General Synod. In 2003, they shall be elected from among the ministers and elders on the sitting General Synod Council. Thereafter, they shall be elected from among the regular classical delegates to the General Synod upon nomination by the Commission on Nominations.

d. Six members elected by the General Synod upon nomination by the Commission on Nominations from among the ministers and elders of the Reformed Church in America to assure that requisite gifts, skills, and diversity are present on the council. In 2003 these members will be
sought first from among the present membership of the GSC.

The general secretary of the General Synod, *ex-officio* and without vote.

Chapter 3, Part I, Article 3, Section 2:

*Sec. 2. Composition*

a. The one-half of the membership of the council shall be elders and one-half shall be ministers consist of a fifty-fifty ratio of lay and clergy membership, and not less than one-third of the membership shall be women. The Commission on Nominations shall be required to monitor assure the composition of the council reflects the full diversity of the church and shall obtain recommendations from each racial and ethnic council. A nominating body whose delegate to the council is not eligible for re-election may be required by the Commission on Nominations to nominate a person from the opposite category (i.e., male/female, clergy/lay) in order to achieve the required balances. The General Synod Council shall give notice to all nominating bodies, including the General Synod, concerning its membership needs.

Chapter 3, Part I, Article 3, Section 3:

*Sec. 3. Term of Office*

The term of office for the elected member shall be three four years. They shall be subject to re-election for one additional term. Members shall be ineligible for two years after they have served two consecutive terms. Members who have served a partial term of less than two years shall be eligible for an additional full four-year term. The term of office shall be from July 1 of the year they are elected and be completed on June 30. A regular employee of the GSC, the regional synods, or the classes of the Reformed Church in America may not hold membership on the council. General Synod officers shall serve as members of the council for one additional year following the expiration of their General Synod term of office.

Chapter 3, Part I, Article 3, Section 5:

*Sec. 5. Meetings*

a. The council shall hold two three stated meetings each year.

Chapter 3, Part I, Article 3, Section 6:

*Sec. 6. Responsibilities*

The responsibilities of the council shall be:

a. To administer the affairs of the Reformed Church in America between the sessions of the General Synod.

b. To initiate studies and evaluations of policy, strategy, and
long-range planning within the denomination and to submit
to the General Synod any recommendation considered useful
for the development, effectiveness, and efficiency of the life,
work, and organization of the Reformed Church; specifically
to review all General Synod commissions at least once during
each five year period and to recommend to General Synod a
continuation of, a reconstitution of, or a discontinuation of
such commissions, with the understanding that necessity for
continuation shall not be assumed.

e. To be the program agent of the General Synod, establishing
and reviewing policies, and through its staff, seeking to
implement and administer such programs as are appropriate
to the denomination.

d. To maintain a permanent archive for the collection of official
records and documents of the Reformed Church in America,
its churches, assemblies, and agencies.

e. To recommend the assessment and mission askings for the
General Synod.

f. To serve as the Board of Directors of the Corporation.

g. To supervise the office of the general secretary.

h. To recommend the time and place for the session of the
General Synod and to prepare an agenda and schedule for the
General Synod.

i. To authorize its Coordinating Committee to serve as the
Committee of Reference during the sessions of the General
Synod. As such it shall receive referrals from the General
Synod and formulate and present appropriate resolutions to
the General Synod. It shall also receive and act upon
applications for leaves of absence from the sessions of General
Synod.

j. To perform such other duties as shall be delegated and
referred to it by the General Synod and to submit an annual
report of its work to the General Synod.

a. To serve as the Executive Committee of the General Synod of
the Reformed Church in America, as the Committee of
Reference at meetings of the General Synod, and as the Board
of Trustees of the General Synod as may be required by law.

b. To act as the agent of the General Synod of the Reformed
Church in America to enable its participation in God’s work
in the world and to equip congregations and assemblies for
mission and ministry. As such, it shall establish and review
policies for such programs as fulfill these purposes. General
Synod Council staff shall implement and administer such
programs. It shall work with other agencies, commissions,
institutions, and offices of the church to which the General
Synod assigns specific responsibility, and as the General
Synod directs.

c. To prepare a budget to sustain the established priorities,
ministry, and mission of the Reformed Church in America
and propose an assessment to the General Synod.

d. To administer the affairs of the Reformed Church in America
between the sessions of the General Synod.

e. To manage the property, business, financial, legal, and other affairs and concerns of the General Synod of the Reformed Church in America.

f. To support, strengthen, and coordinate the work of the commissions, boards, institutions, and agencies of the Reformed Church in America, thus seeking to increase the effectiveness of the mission and witness of the church.

g. To select and supervise a General Secretary and to establish personnel policies through which other personnel may be employed as may be beneficial to carry out the work of the church.

j. To perform such other duties as shall be delegated and referred to it by the General Synod and to submit an annual report of its work to the General Synod.

Chapter 3, Part I, Article 7, Section 2:

Sec. 2. Names of Advisory Committees

The General Synod shall have such advisory committees as it deems appropriate, in the areas of Christian Action, Christian Education and Discipleship, Christian Heritage and Communications, Christian Unity, Christian Worship, Church Order, Church Vocations, Evangelization and Church Growth, Financial Support, Theology, and World Missions.

Chapter 3, Part I, Article 8, Section 7:

Sec. 7. General Synod Council Coordinating Committee:

The members of the General Synod Council Coordinating Committee shall be corresponding delegates.

Chapter 3, Part I, Article 8, Section 13:

Sec. 13. Personnel and Evaluation Committee Chair or Member

The chair of the Personnel and Evaluation Committee, or another of its members designated by the Personnel and Evaluation Committee, shall be a corresponding delegate.

(ADOPTED AS AMENDED)

R-59
To adopt in first reading the following amendment to the Special Rules of Order of the General Synod in the Book of Church Order, Chapter 3, Part II, Article 3, Section 2 (additions are underlined; deletions are struck out):

Sec. 2. Proposed Amendments to the Book of Church Order
All proposed amendments to the Book of Church Order—which have been approved—shall be referred to the Committee of Reference corresponding delegate from the Commission on Church Order in consultation with the general secretary for final wording and report back to the General Synod.

The advisory committee recommended an amendment to the recommendation:

R-59 (amended):
To adopt in first reading the following amendment to the Special Rules of Order of the General Synod in the Book of Church Order, Chapter 3, Part II, Article 3, Section 2 (additions underlined and deletions stricken out):

Sec. 2. Proposed Amendments to the Book of Church Order

All proposed amendments to the Book of Church Order—which have been approved—shall be referred to the Committee of Reference in consultation with the corresponding delegate from the Commission on Church Order in consultation with the general secretary for final wording and report back to the General Synod.

(ADOPTED AS AMENDED)

Reasons:

1. Having the corresponding delegate from the Commission on Church Order participate in the review of new amendments to the Book of Church Order allows the commission to fulfill its responsibility for “the content, structure, and style of the Book of Church Order” (Chapter 3, Part I, Article 5, Section 4).

2. The corresponding delegate from the Commission on Church Order brings helpful background to such review.

Part Two

Changes in this section require approval by two-thirds of the classes and adoption by declarative action of the General Synod of 2003.

R-60
To adopt the following revisions of the Book of Church Order, Chapter 1, Part IV, Article 1, and Article 7, Section 1 for recommendation to the classes for approval (additions are underlined; deletions are stricken out):

Article 1. General Synod Defined

The General Synod is the highest assembly and judiciary of the Reformed Church in America. It consists of two minister delegates and two elder delegates from each of the classes having four thousand or fewer confessing members on the roll of its churches, and one minister delegate and one elder delegate for each two thousand confessing members, or fraction thereof, from each of the classes having more than four thousand confessing members on the roll of its churches as computed in accordance with the Bylaws of the General Synod; one elder or minister delegate from each of the regional synods; the voting members of the General Synod Council; two General Synod professor of theology delegates
from each of the theological seminaries of the Reformed Church...

Article 7. Committees, Boards, and Agencies of the General Synod

Sec. 1. The General Synod Council is established by and responsible to the General Synod. Its responsibility is to It shall act as the executive committee of the General Synod and it shall administer the affairs of the Reformed Church in America between the sessions of the General Synod. It shall implement decisions, policies, and programs of the General Synod through proper channels and agencies; and to support, It shall support, strengthen, and correlate the work of the several commissions, boards, institutions, and agencies of the Reformed Church in America, thus seeking to increase the effectiveness of the mission and witness of the church.

The advisory committee recommended an amendment to the addition of voting privileges of the General Synod Council at the General Synod meeting, leaving Article 1 as it is currently found in the BCO and changing only Section 7:

R-60 (amended):
To adopt the following revisions of the Book of Church Order, Chapter 1, Part IV, Article 7, Section 1 for recommendation to the classes for approval (additions are underlined; deletions are stricken out):

Article 7. Committees, Boards, and Agencies of the General Synod

Sec. 1. The General Synod Council is established by and responsible to the General Synod. Its responsibility is to It shall act as the executive committee of the General Synod and it shall administer the affairs of the Reformed Church in America between the sessions of the General Synod. It shall implement decisions, policies, and programs of the General Synod through proper channels and agencies; and to support, It shall support, strengthen, and correlate the work of the several commissions, boards, institutions, and agencies of the Reformed Church in America, thus seeking to increase the effectiveness of the mission and witness of the church. (ADOPTED AS AMENDED)

Appendix I

General Synod Council Term-Rotation Chart

This term-rotation chart based on four-year terms of service indicates the number of GSC representatives to be chosen each year and the recommending body.

Ten members will be elected from among General Synod delegates and six members will be nominated at-large. Members will serve a single four-year term. Rotation will be as
<table>
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<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Rec. by regional synods to the Commission on Nominations</th>
<th>Rec. by Commission on Nominations from GS delegates</th>
<th>Rec. by Commission on Nominations at-large</th>
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**Appendix II**

Sec. 8. Commission on Nominations

a. Membership

The commission shall have fourteen members: one representing each of the regional synods; one representing African-Americans, Hispanics, Native American Indians, and Pacific and Asian Americans, respectively; one representing the women of the church; and one being the immediate past president of General Synod. Each regional synod shall nominate a layperson or a minister in alternating six-year periods in order to ensure that the commission will have within its membership four laypersons and four ministers. The members representing African-Americans, Hispanics, Native American Indians, and Pacific and Asian Americans shall be nominated by the African-American, Hispanic, Native American Indian, and Pacific and Asian American Councils. The member representing the women of the church shall be nominated by Reformed Church Women’s Ministries in consultation with the Commission for Women.

b. The Moderator

The commission moderator shall be nominated by the commission from among the members who have served at least two years and shall be elected by the General Synod.

c. Responsibilities

1. The commission shall nominate members for the General Synod Council and all General Synod commissions and agencies, unless otherwise specified in the Bylaws.

2. The commission, in consultation with the general secretary, shall search the denomination for suitable nominees. In making nominations it shall consider the geographic location, occupation, and record of previous service to the denomination of persons suggested by classes, regional synods, and other sources. It shall consider this and other pertinent data in light of each commission’s or agency’s responsibilities, membership needs, suggested nominees, and place and schedule of meetings.

3. The commission members shall, in consultation with the stated clerks of the classes and regional synods from which they are appointed, be responsible for
gathering information on nominees within the bounds of the respective synods.

4. The commission shall monitor the inclusiveness of the membership of the various commissions and agencies with respect to geography, gender, age, cultural and social differences, and academic and other appropriate expertise.

The commission shall also monitor required nominations of racial/ethnic persons to insure that the nominating body has consulted with the appropriate racial/ethnic council and that it has shown cause if it has been unable to meet the requirement.

Report of the Task Force to Establish Accountability for R-43

The Reformed Church in America Statement of Mission and Vision states:

The Reformed Church in America is a fellowship of congregations called by God and empowered by the Holy Spirit to be the very presence of Jesus Christ in the world. Our shared task is to equip congregations for ministry—a thousand churches in a million ways doing one thing—following Christ in mission, in a lost and broken world so loved by God.

General Synod 2001 adopted R-43 and R-44, which state:

To recommend that the General Synod adopt the goal that by the year 2011 the RCA will be one of the fastest growing denominations in North America as evidenced by the number of those confessing Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord (MGS 2001, R-43, p. 199).

To request that the director of Congregational Services/Evangelism and Church Development Services form a task force to establish accountability for the implementation of R-43 and report to the 2002 General Synod (MGS 2001, R-44, p. 199).

On March 12-14, 2002, the following people met in response to R-44 passed by the 2001 General Synod: Kermit Campbell, the Rev. Donald De Kok, the Rev. Todd Van Ek, the Rev. Steven Brooks, and the Rev. Richard Welscott. The group discussed the debate on the General Synod floor regarding R-43. It was noted that some delegates had interpreted the advisory committee’s recommendation as not being wholistic, focusing only on one aspect of the Christian life. The task force developed a statement intended to clarify the 2001 EVCD advisory committee’s intent of R-43. That statement is:

R-43 is the 2001 General Synod’s response to the Reformed Church in America Statement of Mission and Vision and the Great Commission where Jesus, Lord of the church, calls us not only to make disciples, but specifies teaching them to obey everything God commands us. Any attempt to divorce this goal from everything, which Jesus also called “life to the full,” is ill-conceived and short-sighted. “The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy. I have come that they may have life, and have it to the full” (John 10:10 NIV). Both justice and evangelism are required in this goal, not either/or. Both world mission and local mission must thrive, not either/or. Our commitment to both/and takes seriously everything
Jesus commanded.

At the 2001 General Synod the purpose of the advisory committee in recommending this goal was to assure that as many people as possible receive life eternal, putting their faith in Jesus and following him for “life to the full.” This is about growing the kingdom of God, not merely the Reformed Church in America. Far from being competitive, true kingdom health that produces true kingdom growth will be celebrated, wherever the Spirit causes it to happen, in any denomination, any movement, church, or organization.

This goal about growth in numbers is faithful to the 2000 General Synod’s recommendation of a goal that is “clear and compelling.” It envisions becoming one of the fastest growing because it is to be “clear and compelling.” It is a challenging goal that says to all who hear it, “We will no longer do business as usual, nor our usual business,” as our Statement of Mission and Vision promises.

The committee then developed two recommendations, with supporting material.

**Call for Alignment under the Statement of Mission and Vision**

In looking at the Denominational Audit (Van Gelder/Kiefert) the task force (requested in R-44 by the 2001 General Synod to monitor the accountability and implementation of R-43) unanimously affirms the need for the General Synod and its commissions and councils, General Synod Council, regional synods, classes, a thousand congregations, and all leaders of churches and institutions of the Reformed Church in America to be aligned with the purpose of the Statement of Mission and Vision.

Our inability to align these components of the Reformed Church in America is to live in disobedience to Jesus’ prayer in John 17 and gives the forces of evil, the Devil and his minions, the opportunity to sow seeds of divisiveness which severely limit our ability to hear God’s call, be empowered by the Holy Spirit, equip congregations for ministry, or be the very presence of Jesus in a lost and broken world so loved by God. Alignment is critical to achieving any of our missional goals.

The task force recommended:

**R-61**

That the general secretary appoint a volunteer, skilled in organizational behavior, to oversee and facilitate the necessary realignment of the staffs of classes, regional synods, and the General Synod Council to accomplish the mission and vision of the RCA. This appointment is to last until 2011 or until alignment is realized.

The advisory committee recommended a substitute for the recommendation:

**R-61 (substitute)**

To refer R-61 to an appropriate committee or commission of the church, to be determined by the Committee of Reference, for study and report to the General Synod of 2003. (ADOPTED)

Reasons:

1. While the committee believes the idea of a volunteer(s) from within the RCA with skills in organizational behavior may be a good one, the mandate for the proposed
volunteer in this recommendation was not clear to the committee.

2. Both the GSC and the GS Task Force on the Relationship of the General Synod and General Synod Council are working on alignment issues. The committee believes the Committee of Reference (which is the GSC Coordinating Committee) is best equipped to refer this idea for consideration.

The Plan

Preferred Future—2011
- The RCA is recognized for its deep, expectant prayer life.
- RCA New Church Development starts are maximized.
- Most RCA congregations have shared in the birthing of a new RCA church.
- Every RCA church has processes for teaching people to share their faith.
- Every RCA church equips people for their ministry, bringing justice to a lost and broken world, so loved by God.
- We have sufficient qualified leaders to lead the church in mission.
- The RCA celebrates what God is doing to build his kingdom.

Assignment of Responsibility
By the fall 2002 meeting of the General Synod Council a plan will be presented with timelines, resources, and accountabilities to launch R-43 (MGS 2001, p. 199).

Continuing the Task Force
The task force recommended:

R-62
That the Report of the Task Force to Establish Accountability for R-43 (MGS 2001, p. 199) be continued, to give continuity and input to the plan for realizing the goal from R-43. (ADOPTED)

Conclusions
The members of the task force are extremely grateful for the gift of being allowed to dream dreams in the advisory committee and put feet on those dreams in the task force that was requested by General Synod 2001. Because of the expectancy God has created in our hearts we commit to:

- Pray for this vision.
- Be actively engaged in encouraging others to align with the vision.
- Hold one other accountable for our commitment.

Overtures

Concurrent Ordination of a Minister of Word and Sacrament as an Elder

1. The Classis of Delaware-Raritan overtures General Synod to instruct the Commission on Church Order to review and revise the Book of Church Order to remove inconsistencies and to more clearly define the issues of parity
addressed in Chapter 1, Part II, Article 12, Section 6:

A minister not serving as an installed pastor shall become a member of a local church, but shall not represent that church in any classis or synod. A minister remains solely amenable to the classis, but if elected an elder, shall be entitled to all the privileges and responsibilities pertaining to that office.

Reasons:

1. A privilege of being an elder includes being able to represent the church at classis. However, the first sentence, above, states a minister not serving as an installed pastor “shall not represent that church in any classis or synod.” The second sentence allows a non-installed minister to be elected as an elder. Part II (The Classis), Article 3 (Elder Delegates), Section 3 states “The elder delegate to classis shall be chosen from the entire body of elders in a church, whether or not presently a member of the board of elders.”

2. The Book of Church Order (BCO) does not specifically address where and when an individual with dual ordinations is held responsible. The BCO, Chapter 1, Part 1 (The Consistory), Article 5 (Responsibilities of the Board of Elders), Sec. 4 states, “All members of the church are subject to the church’s government and discipline as administered by the board of elders.” This includes elders. However, Chapter 1, Part II, Article 12, Section 6 states “A minister remains solely amenable to the classis, ...”

3. The BCO reflects a balance of ministers and elders in classis, regional synods, and general synod. It is not clear if an individual ordained as both an elder and a minister of Word and Sacrament (regardless of which occurred first), can serve as an elder delegate without distorting the intended balance between elders and ministers of Word and Sacrament at the various assemblies.

4. Chapter 1, Part IV, Article 1 (General Synod Defined) states, “It consists of two minister delegates and two elder delegates from each of the classes....Voting rights shall be limited to elder delegates and those minister delegates who are actively serving in ministries under the jurisdiction or with the approval of an assembly.”

5. It is becoming increasingly common for an individual to become an ordained minister after engaging in a secular occupation. Thus, there are times when an individual has first been ordained as an elder.

6. Ordained elders may move between congregations.

7. A retired minister could become ordained as an elder. As an elder, this individual then appears to be eligible to serve as a (voting) member of classis, regional synod, and General Synod.

In response to Overture 1, the advisory committee recommended:

R-63
To instruct the Commission on Church Order to review the relationship of non-installed ministers of Word and sacrament to the local church and report to the 2003 General Synod. (ADOPTED)
Reason: There are inconsistencies in the Church Order.

*Time Period Regarding Filing a Complaint*

2. The Classis of Chicago overtures General Synod to amend the *Book of Church Order* as follows (additions are underlined, deletions stricken out):

Chapter 2, Part II, Article 2

Sec. 3. Within twenty days after receiving the complaint this same period the clerk of the lower assembly shall file with the clerk of the higher judicatory the original record of all the proceeding pertaining to the complaint, including the notice of intent and any other documents bearing on the complaint. These constitute the record of the case. The clerk of the higher judicatory shall forward upon receipt to each of the parties a copy of the record of the case and all documents subsequently submitted in the case to the higher judicatory.

Chapter 2, Part III, Article 2

Sec. 3. Within twenty days after receiving the appeal this same period the clerk of the lower judicatory shall file with the clerk of the higher judicatory the original record of all the proceedings in the case, including the notice of intent, the evidence, the arguments, and any other documents bearing on the case. These constitute the record of the case. The clerk of the higher judicatory shall forward upon receipt to each of the parties a copy of the record of the case and all documents subsequently submitted in the case to the higher judicatory. The higher judicatory shall not admit or consider as evidence anything not found in this record without consent of the parties.

Reasons:

1. The phrase “this same period” does not clearly distinguish whether the twenty-day period beings with the filing of the written notice of intent or with the filing of the complaint/appeal itself.

2. Requiring the clerk of the lower judicatory to file documentation when it is not definite that a complaint will actually be filed creates a situation which may lead to wasted time and expense.

3. The clerk of the lower judicatory would be in a better position to know what documentation would be appropriate as the original record of the case once the complaint has been received rather than just the notice of intent to complain.

In response to Overture 2, the advisory committee recommended:

**R-64**

To instruct the Commission on Church Order to review the language regarding the time period regarding filing a complaint.

(ADOPTED)
Clarifying Filing a Complaint Against an Officer of an Assembly

3. The Classis of Chicago overtures General Synod to amend the Book of Church Order as follows (additions are underlined):

Chapter 2, Part II, Article 1:

Sec. 4. A complaint may be filed only by:

a. One or more confessing members in good and regular standing against the consistory, an officer of that consistory, or the board of elders having superintendence over them.

b. One or more members of an assembly against that assembly or an officer of that assembly of which they are members.

c. An assembly against that assembly having immediate superintendence over it.

Reason: Sections 1, 2, and 3 of Chapter 2, Part II, Article 1 clearly state that a complaint may be filed against an officer. Section 4, while intending to address the matter of who may submit a complaint, again lists whom a complaint may be filed against. However, officers are not listed as legitimate objects of a complaint.

In response to Overture 3, the advisory committee recommended:

R-65
To instruct the Commission on Church Order to clarify against whom a complaint may be filed. (ADOPTED)

Reason: There appear to be inconsistencies in the Book of Church Order, Chapter 2, Part II, Article 1, between Section 1 and Section 4.

Biennial General Synod Meetings

4. The Classis of Central California overtures General Synod to instruct the general secretary to develop a plan for implementing a change in the frequency of General Synod meetings from annual to biennial, effective with the General Synod meeting of 2004; and further,

that the Commission on Church Order be instructed to prepare necessary amendments to the Book of Church Order, Chapter 1, Part IV, Article 4, Section 1 by striking the word annually, and inserting the word biennially in its place.

Reasons:

1. Direct costs for a General Synod meeting are nearly 10 percent of the assessment budget for a given year, without factoring in the cost of staff salaries and hours that are spent in preparation for the annual meeting. Biennial General Synod meetings would reduce per member assessments by nearly $2.50.

2. The electronic era has forever changed the landscape of organizational structure, planning, and execution of business. Although previous negative votes largely reflect the desire to “remain connected.” and annual synods were considered a “good investment” in building and maintaining relationships, the question remains: at what cost? Electronic networking has largely been unexplored by the denomination and is an untapped resource that other national and multi-national organizations have found
Cost Associated with This Overture:

None. Per member assessments would be decreased approximately $2.50, a savings of nearly $453,000, using confessing member statistics reported for year 2000.

In response to Overture 4, the advisory committee recommended:

**R-66**

To direct the General Synod Council (GSC) to revise the General Synod agenda and schedule to allow commissions, institutions, and agencies to report in rotation as decided by the GSC to reduce the annual workload of the synod; and further,

- to direct the GSC to allow significant time in the schedule to do the work of the church in areas such as ministry and mission, the theological life of the church, and the worship life of the church; and further,

- to direct the GSC to schedule annually essential business such as Commission on Nominations, Commission on Judicial Business, recognition of newly organized congregations, necrology, approval of the assessment budget, and election and installation of officers.

(NOT ADOPTED)

Reasons:

1. In Reformed churches the church exists when meeting in its assemblies.

2. Ministry and mission, theology, and worship need to be addressed by the church in depth. A lessening of the reporting and governance aspects of the agenda will make this possible.

3. Allowing boards, agencies, and institutions to report less frequently will give them the opportunity to do more in-depth study of projects before them.

4. There is value in an annual meeting.

5. The revision of the schedule may result in cost savings.

The synod voted not to reconsider R-66.

A motion was made and supported from the floor to put to the house a new recommendation:

**R-67**

To direct the general secretary and the GSC to develop a plan for implementing a change in the frequency of General Synod meetings from annual to biennial, effective with the General Synod meeting of 2004; and further,

That the Commission on Church Order be instructed to prepare necessary amendments to the *Book of Church Order*, Chapter 1, Part IV, Article 4, Section by striking the word annually, and
5. The Classis of Muskegon overtures the General Synod to direct the General Synod president, working in cooperation with the general secretary, to develop a plan to implement a biennial General Synod meeting schedule, effective with the General Synod of 2005; and further,

to direct the General Synod president and general secretary to develop a mechanism that will address and satisfy the requests of the body to have a relationship-building opportunity on the years that the General Synod does not meet, that is self-funded; and further,

that these plans be presented to the General Synod of 2003 with appropriate proposed changes to the Constitution and the Bylaws of the RCA.

Reasons:

1. The latest figures available to us indicate a cost of $380,000 for General Synod 2001. This does not include the cost of staff time in preparing and conducting the meeting. By going to a biennial meeting significant savings should be possible.

2. Some have estimated that as much as 33 percent of staff time is devoted to preparing and conducting the annual meeting. A biennial meeting would free up significant resources in staff time and energy for other Kingdom work.

3. Relationship building with the denomination can be accomplished through many options without the significant cost associated with General Synod. Relationship-building opportunities should continue in the off year and can be self-funded.

4. Deeper, broader studies can be accomplished and more effective action plans formulated in a twenty-four month period than in the current twelve month period. The present twelve month rhythm has resulted in many continuances, particularly at the last General Synod.

In response to Overture 5, the advisory committee recommended:

R-68
To deny Overture 5. (ADOPTED)

Reason: This overture is addressed in R-66.

6. The Classis of Central Iowa overtures the General Synod to direct the General Synod president, working in cooperation with the general secretary, to develop a plan to implement a biennial General Synod meeting schedule effective with the General Synod meeting of 2005; and further,

that the General Synod president and general secretary develop a mechanism that will address and satisfy the desires of the body to have a relationship-building opportunity on the years that the General Synod does not meet that is self-funded; and further,

that these plans be presented to the General Synod of 2003 with appropriate
proposed changes to the Constitution and the Bylaws of the RCA.

Reasons:

1. There will be significant financial savings. The 2001 General Synod meeting costs were estimated to be $337,000. This is only the cost of the meeting and does not include the cost of staff time in preparing and conducting the meeting. It is estimated that approximately one-third of staff time is spent in preparing for and conducting the meeting. Biennial meetings would reduce this to one-sixth of the staff time. This would result in significant savings, a more efficient use of staff time, and, perhaps, reductions in staff over time.

2. Deeper, broader studies and action plans can be accomplished in a twenty-four month rhythm than is possible in the current twelve-month rhythm. The twelve-month rhythm results in numerous continuances, and these would be greatly reduced by this proposal.

3. Relationship building within the body can be accomplished through many options (e.g., Spring Sabbath, etc.) without the significant costs associated with the General Synod. Relationship building opportunities should be held in the off year and should be self-funded.

4. Year 2005 is a practical date to implement this proposal, because it will give staff and committees sufficient time to determine the modifications needed for the Book of Church Order and to restructure the denominational staff responsibilities.

In response to Overture 6, the advisory committee recommended:

**R-69**
To deny Overture 6. (ADOPTED)

Reason: This overture is addressed in R-66.

7. The Classis of Pleasant Prairie overtures the General Synod to direct the General Synod president, working in cooperation with the general secretary, to develop an appropriate business plan to implement a biennial General Synod meeting schedule, effective with the General Synod meeting of 2005; and further,

that the General Synod president and general secretary develop a mechanism that will address and satisfy the desires of the body to have a relationship building opportunity on the years that the General Synod does not meet, that is self-funded; and further,

that these plans be presented to the General Synod of 2003 with appropriate proposed changes to the Constitution and the Bylaws of the RCA.

Reasons:

1. The financial savings calculated in today’s dollars is minimally $165,000. This year the estimate is a cost of $337,000 for the General Synod meeting; this does not include the cost of staff time for preparing and conducting the meeting. As much as one-third of the work year is devoted to General Synod preparation and meeting time. An additional four months out of every twenty-four months devoted to other
work would provide a 17 percent productivity increase in the work for our Lord.

2. The most practical date is 2005. Staff will be very busy with the modifications to the Constitution, BCO and in restructuring the denominational staff responsibilities. Remember that they will have an extra four months out of every 24 to work through the stickiness of officer terms and all other administrative details.

3. Relationship building within the body can be accomplished through many options without the significant costs associated with General Synod. Relationship building opportunities should continue in the off year and can be self funded.

4. Finally, it is believed that the deeper, broader studies and action plans can be better accomplished in a twenty-four month rhythm than in the current twelve-month rhythm. The twelve-month rhythm has resulted in all the continuances we have had in this year’s General Synod. Such continuances would be greatly reduced by this proposal.

In response to Overture 7, the advisory committee recommended:

R-70
To deny Overture 7. (ADOPTED)

Reason: This overture is addressed in R-66.

8. The Classis of Red River overtures the General Synod to change the frequency with which the General Synod shall meet from annually to biennially, with revisions to the Book of Church Order as follows (addition underlined, deletion stricken out):

Chapter 1, Part IV, Article 4:

Sec. 1. The General Synod shall meet annually/biennially at such time and place as shall have been determined at its previous session. All meetings of the General Synod shall begin and end with prayer.

Reasons:

1. In an era of rising costs, declining memberships, and shrinking resources, the current practice of holding annual meetings is simply too costly.

2. Since the funds used for implementing an annual synod could be used to support the mission of the church in more effective ways, the current practice is questionable stewardship of God’s material blessings.

3. The most frequently cited benefit of annual meetings is the strong fellowship that occurs at these meetings. Such a benefit can be achieved by events promoted by the General Synod Council and the Office of the General Synod, but which are self-funded.

4. The BCO (1.IV.4.1.2) contains a provision for calling additional meetings, if the needs of the church so warrant.

In response to Overture 8, the advisory committee recommended:

R-71
To deny Overture 8. (ADOPTED)
Reason: This overture is addressed in R-66.

Authority of Translations of the Book of Church Order

9. The Classis of the Red River overtures the General Synod to declare that translations of the Book of Church Order are for the assistance of congregations whose primary language is not English, and for their reference; and further, that the authority of the Book of Church Order rests solely in the original language version as voted and approved by past, present, and future General Synods.

Reasons:

1. Because only the General Synod can change the Book of Church Order (BCO), there is a question regarding the standing of the translated versions. Either the translations are for reference only, or the General Synod must vote to approve each language translation.

2. Resolving the question in the manner proposed removes administrative obstacles that otherwise might exist regarding translated documents.

3. The General Synod of 2001 authorized the BCO translations and thereby created the question of the status of these documents. This question needs to be resolved to avoid confusion.

4. The General Synod is not in a position to knowledgeably vote on other language translations.

5. The process by which the BCO is written and edited is very exacting. It requires several levels of approval. It is not clear the translations can be given the same level of precision.

In response to Overture 9, the advisory committee recommended:

R-72
To direct the General Synod Council to indicate on all of its constitutional materials, that the English version is the authoritative text. (ADOPTED)

Reason: The Commission on Church Order can only assure what is in the English version of the Book of Church Order.

Mandatory Retirement Age

10. The Classis of Schoharie overtures the General Synod to rescind the mandatory age limit applicable to installed ministers of Word and sacrament (Book of Church Order, Chapter 1, Part II, Article 12, Section 10), and to leave the determination of fitness for continued installed ministry past the age of seventy to the individual classes.

Reasons:

1. The Book of Church Order (BCO), Chapter 1, Part II, Article 2, Section 1 states: “The classis shall exercise a general superintendence over its installed ministers and over
the interests and concerns of the churches within its bounds.”

2. The BCO, Chapter 1, Part II, Article 2, Section 2 states: “The classis shall exercise original and appellate supervisory power over the acts, proceedings and decisions of the board of elders and consistories, both temporal and in those relating to Christian discipline.”

3. The BCO, Chapter 1, Part II, Article 2, Section 8 states: “The Classis shall ordain, install, transfer, suspend, depose, declare demitted, declare inactive, and declare retired ministers.”

4. A duly ordained minister, at the Service of Installation, signs the Declaration for Ministers of Word and Sacrament which, in pertinent part, states: “I will submit myself to the counsel and admonition of the Classis...”

5. In the past, the General Synod has seen fit to raise the age limitation at which a minister may no longer enjoy the relationship of installed minister of Word and sacrament of a particular congregation.

6. Factors, unrelated to age, which determine fitness for installed ministry include: length of service to a site specific ministry, length of years as an ordained minister, unique factors include activities within the congregation which require the leadership and oversight of an installed minister (e.g., building campaign, community mission activities, evangelism activities, and the renewal and revitalization of the church and its ministry).

7. The classis, through its church relations committee or executive committee, is fully capable of determining whether it is in the best interest of all parties for the individually affected minister to continue as the installed minister of Word and sacrament for the particular church or ministry site.

8. The board of elders, classis, and the minister him or herself are capable and uniquely aware of the current situation in a site-specific ministry.

9. The age limitation of the BCO Chapter 1, Part II, Article 12, Section 10 removes from the classis an important issue of responsibility and oversight of ministers laboring within its bounds.

In response to Overture 10, the advisory committee recommended:

R-73
To deny Overture 10. (ADOPTED)

Reason: The Commission on Church Order responded to this concern in response to a directive of the 2001 General Synod. The response of the commission is in the report to this synod found on page 219.

Denomination Name Change

11. The Regional Synod of Canada overtures the General Synod of the Reformed Church in America to change its name from the “Reformed Church in America” to the “Reformed Church in North America.”

Reason: The name “America” is generally associated with the United States of America, but there are RCA congregations in both the United States of America and
Canada, and this should be acknowledged with a name change.

In response to Overture 11, the advisory committee recommended:

**R-74**

To direct the General Synod Council to explore ways to make more visible in RCA print and electronic publications the fact that we are a bi-national church; and further,

**to study the cost and other ramifications of changing the name of the Reformed Church in America, with report to the 2003 General Synod. (ADOPTED)**

Reason: The costs and ramifications need to be explored, while continuing to make our bi-national status more visible.
Reports on Church Vocations

Report of New Brunswick Theological Seminary

“‘Love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your mind.’
That is the greatest commandment. It comes first” (Matt. 22:37-38, NEB).

Love the Lord with all your mind. This portion of the first and greatest commandment is
the mission of New Brunswick Theological Seminary. It is a portion of the great commandment that has been neglected by the church in recent years. We have been concentrating on loving the Lord with all our heart and doing it well. In the late 1990s, the worship at General Synod was intentionally focused on the passionate expressions of the world church as we had worship leaders from Geneva and Scotland who led us in song and liturgy from the whole body of Christ. Our response to Reformed Church World Service has grown substantially as we have sympathized with the plight of many. Most poignantly, our response to the tragic events of September 11 has been an outpouring of emotional and material support to those directly affected and to the wider society. We have loved the Lord with our heart, and that is good.

The months following September 11, however, have made clear our need for a whole gospel—to love the Lord with more than heart, to love the Lord with soul and mind as well. In the few Sundays immediately after September 11, our sanctuaries were much more crowded than they had been before the tragedy. Churched and un-churched, believers and seekers, all came. They came looking for God in the midst of tragedy. But they did not stay. Within a few weeks or months, church attendance was back at pre-September 11 levels. What did they find?

The answer will be different in every congregation, but an overall answer is becoming clearer. They did not find coherent, thoughtful, usable means-of-grace pathways to God. Had they found them they would have stayed. With few congregational exceptions, the congregations of all communions have failed to grasp the moment and witness to the deepest needs of which the great commandment speaks.

The whole church, including the Reformed Church in America, has a theological task. In recent years, we have neglected that theological task. RCA parish life over the past twenty-five years has valued service to constituents and numerical growth, not our common theological task. Theology is not perceived as “seeker friendly.” Theology is not perceived as “welcoming.” What we have failed to notice is that the values of constituent service and numerical growth are naturally corrosive of all theology, not just Reformed theology. Constituent service and numerical growth are completely focused on human opinion, human need, and human “skill sets.” Those are values that can be hung on biblical pegs, but they are not values derived from God’s action in our time, the comprehensive witness of Scripture, and the tradition of the church. We have now gone so far down the road of constituent service and numerical growth that the typical RCA parishioner is no longer aware that there is a theological framework to give shape to our life in the church and a theological task to be done in congregations and in the church to refresh and strengthen that framework.

And so, when September 11 strikes and people flock to worship searching for deep meaning, they find warm welcome and popular sounding music but no salve for the depths of the soul. They find no sustaining framework in which they can live out a relationship with God and humanity. They give it a few months to be sure they have taken it seriously, and then they start searching elsewhere.
In its recent special report entitled “The Leadership Situation Facing American Congregations,” the Alban Institute identified that there is, with regard to all issues related to pastoral leadership, a situation in which both turmoil and ferment are present. The turmoil is composed of reduced numbers of ministers of Word and sacrament, of reduced quality within that leadership, and of failure to retain women in ministry. The ferment is seen in new and revitalized formats for congregational life, a spiritual “entrepreneurial-ism,” the emergence of “lay pastors,” a large number of pastors who are thriving, and an emerging leadership role for members of congregations. In the concluding summary of the church’s current situation, the Alban Institute states:

It is the conviction of the Alban Institute that leaders must learn to hold the paradox of turmoil and ferment in hand, but to stand on the side of ferment. The vision for leadership of both laity and clergy in our congregations and congregational systems must be more than solving problems. The leaders who are needed to respond to the ferment that is building must have a passion for the values and truth that they find in their faith and a conviction that leaders have a voice of spiritual imagination that needs to be heard in the larger community as well as in the congregation. We are past the place of understanding spiritual leadership as a distinct role to be played within the structures and programs of an institution. *Our congregations are beginning to seek people of substance and preparation that will allow them to speak the imaginative word of leadership within the broader public* [italics added] of which the congregation and its members are a part and in which the congregation can be seen as the platform from which the voice of faith-based leadership of clergy and laity alike can be heard.

The seminary has direct experience of the truth of the Alban Institute’s conclusion. Each entering class has a number of students from Baptist and Pentecostal traditions who have chosen New Brunswick precisely because they find here the substance, theology, and biblical language instruction that they have discovered the congregations they serve need for the work they are doing.

The Reformed Church has worked at the theological task in many ways over our history. The task was so pivotal to the continued well-being of the church that the office of Professor or Teacher of Theology was established in 1619 as part of the formative Synod of Dort. In the healing of the Coetus/Conferentie controversy of the eighteenth century, a special kind of school was envisioned for the education of American candidates for ministry. It was not to be the strictly academic university education that the church had known in Europe. It was to be a focused education for the theological task, done in a free-standing school established for just this work. And it was an education to be undertaken only by those who had mastered the education of the world, as admittance required a college education.

The Reformed Church took both the theological task and the preparation of leadership for it seriously, founding this special kind of school as its first major institutional act, before mission program, before writing the church Constitution, before most anything else. In doing so, the Reformed Church acted on its clear understanding that there are no short-cuts to assuring pastoral ministry leadership for the church in which theology is whole and healthy. The church clearly understood that only a leadership with a whole and healthy theology can endure and adjust over the long haul. The seminary was not valued because of some supposed “prestige” or “put-on airs” of those who received its education and its degree. The seminary was valued because of the practical service it provided to congregations. Congregations knew that there was a theological task to be done and that they needed persons trained to lead them in doing it.

The recovery of the theological task in the whole church—from General Synod professors of theology to the three-year-olds in Children in Worship—is an intentional work of New
Brunswick Seminary. The leadership being educated at the seminary needs to be able to address the needs of the church in the modern world. The seminary is about preparing persons who are both minister of Word and sacrament, and pastor and teacher. The Office of Minister of Word and Sacrament has its focus on the worship life of the congregation, and that is important. The theological task must so infuse the content, context, leadership, and specifics of the service of worship that the post-September 11 seekers will find the sustaining framework and the grace of God all people need. And in the spiritual and public life of the congregation there is need for the pastor-and-teacher role to give leadership that has theological integrity and depth.

In our Reformed way of expressing the church catholic, ministers are not recruited according to their ability to master a set of professional and technical skills. This sort of “technical” leadership has some value. Knowing the Bible is a technical accomplishment, and every pastor must have that capacity. But knowing what the Bible says is not enough. For that reason we understand pastors to be called by God and the church because they have gifts for service in the name of Jesus. Ministry is therefore a vocation, not a profession—a lifelong passion, not a means of earning a living. Those in ministry must be capable of “adaptive” leadership, responding with deftness and sensitivity to each new pastoral concern. Each person’s need, each situation’s demands, each question’s implications require a fresh, unique, and helpful response. Such responses will not arise out of learned “skill sets.” They arise only out of a deeply lived and profoundly understood core theology. Such a theology must provide a broad framework upon which all our understanding of God can be fastened. This framework must be enduring enough to connect all perceptions of God. This constructive understanding of God then becomes substantive enough to enable us genuinely to respond as disciples of Jesus.

There are no shortcuts. A faithful ministry is of necessity an educated ministry. New Brunswick Seminary provides a theological education, not a set of skills for serving church programs or harvesting great numbers. The seminary lives today, as it always has, on the edge. We have realistic hopes for an almost complete rebuilding of the campus to serve the 250 students we are now serving in buildings built for 75. The seminary is in conversation with the Blanton-Peale Institute to see how we might educate together. With schools from the Formula of Agreement churches, the seminary is developing the Capitol Area Theological Center in the Albany/Schenectady, New York, region to provide theological education to a vital region that has no seminary. The Center for Reformed Church Studies and the Suydam Ethics Conference are regular programs of the seminary to aid the whole church in understanding who we are and how we are to live. All of these are only possible when we take seriously the church’s theological task. The roll since 1784 recalls how well the theological task of the Church has been done—educators such as Livingston and Worcester; missionaries such as Scudder, Underwood, and Zwemer; outstanding pastoral leaders such as Muste, Taylor, Holbrook, Pontier, and Hildebrand. Jeanne Boland, 2001 graduate and minister in Manhattan, is the latest to understand that we have a theological task:

As I read the board’s response (to September 11), I was moved and grateful for the board’s commitments, and I was also reminded once again of how happy I am that NBTS was the seminary I chose—because while on the one hand nothing could have prepared me for September 11 and its aftermath, on the other, I have been able to respond faithfully and effectively, in very, very large part thanks to my education at NBTS. So, I thank you and the whole NBTS community.

We intend to continue in that tradition and ask the church to join us in this necessary, joyous common theological task.
Professors Beardslee, Koops, and Kooy

New Brunswick Theological Seminary gives thanks to God for the life and witness of three of its General Synod professors who have died since the last General Synod necrology report: Abraham Messler Quick Professor of Church History (1964-1984) John Walter Beardslee III (1914-2001); Professor of Ethics and Community (1970-1997) Hugh A. Koops (1932-2001); and Thomas De Witt Professor of Hellenistic Greek and New Testament Exegesis (1953-1985) Vernon H. Kooy (1916-2002). The necrology report to General Synod this year provides the details of their gifts to the whole church of Jesus Christ. The seminary celebrates their life among us, giving thanks to God for the gift of these teachers and encouragers of the theological task of the church.

Report of Western Theological Seminary

The world to which Western Theological Seminary (WTS) is called to minister has changed dramatically since the General Synod of the Reformed Church in America last met. The terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001, have not only unleashed a global military counterattack against the perpetrators and heightened tensions between peoples and nations throughout the world, they also have shattered the confidence of those who, by the fact that North America is home, felt secure and invulnerable to outside forces. These events have demonstrated again what the psalmist professed so long ago:

God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble. Therefore we will not fear, though the earth should change, though the mountains shake in the heart of the sea; though the waters roar and foam, though the mountains tremble with its tumult (Psalm 46:1-3).

Word of the attacks reached WTS during a daily chapel service. As the events unfolded, the WTS community responded as did people throughout the world: in stunned silence, praying that our God of refuge and strength would comfort the victims of this violence and bring order and redemption to the chaos in the United States.

As the seminary carries out its ministry of preparing leaders for the church in this new age, it is reminded that the unchanged gospel must intersect with an ever-changing world. So, as Western Theological Seminary builds upon a ministry that began one hundred and thirty-four years ago, it faces a new set of challenges and opportunities.

Implementing the Strategic Plan

Three years ago the WTS board of trustees and faculty embarked upon a strategic planning process to discern how God is calling the seminary to equip those who will lead future generations of the church in mission. Seeking direction, the planning committee met with congregational and denominational leaders throughout the Reformed Church as well as with students, faculty, staff, and members of the board of trustees.

This process resulted in three general initiatives: 1) to provide for additional facilities, faculty, and staff for the seminary, not merely to keep pace with recent enrollment growth, but also to address the growing leadership shortage of the Reformed Church; 2) to provide more flexible and creative ways to train Christians to lead the church in mission; and 3) to provide the church and its non-ordained and ordained leaders with many more opportuni-
ties to engage in lifelong learning. During the past year WTS has begun to implement all three aspects of its strategic plan.

1. Increase facilities, faculty, and staff. At its February 2002 meeting, the board of trustees approved the construction of a building addition that will include classrooms, offices, and a center for continuing education. This new facility will be positioned on the north side of the existing building between Mulder Chapel and Semelink Hall. Groundbreaking has been scheduled for June 2002. The new classrooms will help accommodate increasing enrollments, but additional faculty is also needed. To that end, the board has approved a new faculty position.

2. A distance-learning Master of Divinity program. As the Strategic Planning Committee listened to the church across North America, the need for new ways to reach and prepare prospective pastors became evident. In response, the seminary has begun to implement a bold and far-reaching distance-learning program. It is a full-fledged six-year Master of Divinity program for those who are unable to become residential students at a Reformed Church seminary. The curriculum will be taught by WTS faculty in creative ways, maintaining standards of learning and highly interactive methods of teaching. Classes of students will begin modules of learning through intensive classes at the Holland, Michigan, campus. When students return to their home bases, they will receive assignments and presentations on the internet or through tapes and audiocassettes. Like students in the residential program who are assigned to teaching churches, distance-learning students will be active in their local churches and will be guided by mentors and peer groups. The first classes for this new program in seminary education are scheduled to begin in the fall of 2003.

To assist in the development of this new program, the board of trustees has appointed Meri MacLeod as the director of distance learning. A native of the Boston area, she has earned a Master of Religious Education from Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary and a Ph.D. in Educational Studies from Trinity International University. A longstanding participant in the Gospel and Our Culture Network, which has close ties to Western Seminary, Meri is excited about the challenge of broadening the reach of the seminary through distance leaning.

3. The Center for Continuing Education. In the quickly changing culture of today’s churches, leaders need to be engaged in lifelong learning. The strategic plan framed the development of a Center for Continuing Education that would sponsor cutting-edge events and speakers, develop networks of learning and exchange for church leaders, and provide for much-needed research in mission and evangelism. Based in Holland, this center will be mobile and flexible—able to serve the entire church.

Home base for the center will be located within the new facility mentioned above. This inviting space will allow WTS to host events, meetings, and study groups as well as a small core of faculty who will interact with those engaged in lifelong learning.

The board of trustees affirmed the proposed continuing education center and the role of Dr. George R. Hunsberger, professor of missiology at Western, as the one who will develop and direct the center. In recent years, Professor Hunsberger has sensed a strong call from God to be directly engaged in lifelong learning. He brings a great passion to this position as he seeks to enlist a broad range of leaders in the church to join him in this important new ministry.
The Capital Funds Campaign
To provide the financial resources necessary to support the strategic plan, the board of trustees has approved the inauguration of a capital campaign drive, The Campaign for Western: Leadership, Challenge, and Change. The campaign has been developed by Kenneth Neevel, director of advancement, and the other members of the advancement office. Even during this post-September 11 era, the seminary is confident that these funds will be raised for the future of Christ’s church.

Harold Ritsema
The seminary community has been deeply saddened by the sudden death of Harold Ritsema on February 1, 2002, after he suffered cardiac arrest on the evening of January 30. As director of planned giving, Harold had faithfully and effectively served Western Seminary since 1987. He is survived by his wife, Anna, and their three sons, Paul, Timothy, and Andrew, and their families.

New Staff Appointments
In the fall of 2001, Bruce Wierks was appointed associate director of advancement. Wierks replaced the recently appointed Mark Poppen, who accepted the position of director of admissions at the seminary. Poppen brings to his position a passion for assisting persons as they discern God’s will for ministry. Both appointments will enhance the seminary’s ability to prepare leaders for the church of the twenty-first century.

Enrollment
While overall enrollment remained steady in 2001-2002 at 164 students, the number of Master of Divinity students increased to 116, nearly double that of 1996-1997. The incoming class of juniors was both large and academically strong. The large number of students has put considerable pressure on faculty and facilities. Several classes had enrollments ranging between forty and fifty students, and two courses were divided into two sections. While the increasing enrollments have posed special challenges—some of which are addressed by the strategic plan—it is by God’s grace that these committed students and church leaders have been called to seek training at Western Seminary.

Finances
While the world financial markets inject a degree of uncertainty into Western’s financial health, tuition and gift income continue to provide encouragement and promote health and growth. The RCA community has demonstrated its commitment to future theological education through its strong and generous response to our capital campaign. This support will allow WTS to meet the diverse educational needs of pastors at all stages of their ministries.

Dispensations
Western Seminary received and granted two petitions for dispensation:

a petition from the Classis of Cascades for a dispensation from the Hebrew requirement of the Certificate of Fitness for Ministry for John Haas, and

a petition from the Classis of Minnesota for a dispensation from the biblical languages requirement of the Certificate of Fitness for Ministry for Gary Hanson.

Petition to Substitute a Period of Supervised Ministry for Part of the Twenty-Seven-Month Requirement
Holland Classis petitioned the General Synod to substitute a period of supervised ministry for part of the twenty-seven-month requirement of the Certificate of Fitness for Ministry...
for Chad Pierce. As the agent of the General Synod, the Western Seminary Board of Trustees recommends:

**R-75**

That the petition of Holland Classis to substitute a period of supervised ministry for part of the twenty-seven-month requirement of the Certificate of Fitness for Ministry for Chad Pierce be granted. (ADOPTED)

Reasons:

1. Although Chad Pierce will complete the Master of Divinity program and graduate from Western Theological Seminary on May 13, 2002, the required twenty-seven months from the date of filing of a petition for the Certificate of Fitness for Ministry by Holland Classis will not occur until December 2002. Thus, Chad would not be eligible for ordination until seven months after receiving the M.Div. degree.

2. Chad has the promise of a call from an RCA congregation and will be expected to begin his pastoral duties this summer.

3. Chad has been enrolled as an M.Div. candidate at Western Theological Seminary since 1997. He spent the 1997-98 and 1998-99 academic years studying at Western and then studied at Jerusalem University College from 1999 until the fall of 2001, at which time he returned to Western to complete the M.Div. degree. It was during his time in Jerusalem that Chad decided to seek ordination in the RCA. He came under the care of Holland Classis in September of 2000.

**Report of the Ministerial Formation Coordinating Agency**

General Synod exercises oversight of ministerial formation and the standards for preparation for ministry, and the coordination of theological education through the Ministerial Formation Coordinating Agency (MFCA).

The Ministerial Formation Coordinating Agency of the Reformed Church in America possesses a deep commitment to developing faithful, educated, and evangelical Reformed leaders. Its purpose is the preparation of men and women for the ministries of Christ and his church; most specifically those called to the Office of Minister of Word and Sacrament.

It is also the intent of the Ministerial Formation Coordinating Agency to complement and support the mission of the Reformed Church in America:

The Reformed Church in America is a fellowship of congregations called by God and empowered by the Holy Spirit to be the very presence of Jesus Christ in the world. Our shared task is to equip congregations for ministry—a thousand churches in a million ways doing one thing—following Christ in mission, in a lost and broken world so loved by God.
Toward the end of these purposes we seek:

1. To equip present and future leaders by providing accessible, affordable, and effective preparation in a hospitable environment to diverse people.

2. To assess the changing needs of church and society and design innovative policies and programs to meet those needs.

3. To improve the effectiveness and efficiency of the MFCA board, administration, and staff in fulfilling the mission of the MFCA and the Reformed Church in America.

**Governance and Purpose**

General Synod elects nine people to serve as the MFCA Board of Trustees: four laypersons, three parish pastors, one specialized minister, and one General Synod professor of theology. The director of the Office of Ministry Services, the general secretary of the RCA, the presidents of New Brunswick Theological Seminary and Western Theological Seminary, and the director of the MFCA are ex-officio members, without vote.

The MFCA’s responsibilities include: 1) providing a uniform framework by which the classes will care for and nurture candidates in preparation for the ministry of Word and sacrament, 2) coordinating the roles of congregations, classis, and seminaries in the overall process of ministerial calling and formation, 3) reviewing and monitoring the implementation of General Synod’s standards for ministerial formation, 4) awarding the Certificate of Fitness for Ministry upon recommendation of the Certification Committee for candidates at non-RCA seminaries, and 5) guiding and assisting candidates attending non-RCA seminaries.

The MFCA originated from a concern for new ways of ministerial formation to respond to new dynamics within the denomination—the needs of racial/ethnic minorities in ministry, the need for coordination of theological education in the denomination, and the need to define the standards for ministerial formation and implement programs to achieve the standards. A task force was formed to explore the shape such a new approach should take. That effort came to fruition with the approval of the Ministerial Formation Coordinating Agency by General Synod in June 1998.

**Female Candidates and the Conscience Clauses**

The MFCA board has for some time been concerned that women candidates for minister of Word and sacrament, as well as women elders and deacons, have full opportunities for service in the RCA and be accorded the respect due all officeholders in the denomination. Accordingly, it welcomes the recommendation from the Report Regarding the Long-Term Strategy for Recruiting, Training, and Empowering Those Called to Ordained Pastoral Leadership: “To direct the General Synod Council to make available educational resources for pastors and congregations to support the full inclusion of women in all the offices of the church.” (See p. 266.)

Educational resources, however, may not be enough. The board is especially concerned that the conscience clauses not be used to reduce the role of women in the denomination. It seems clear that the conscience clauses should not be construed to prevent any ordained woman officeholder from exercising the full normal functions of such an office. For example, the board believes that an elected woman classis president should participate fully in a classis ordination liturgy regardless of the personal views of the candidate being ordained. If the conscience clauses are being used to prevent the full exercise of office, the
board believes it is time for a change in the language of the *Book of Church Order (BCO)* to make it clear that those male officeholders who do not agree with women’s ordination must nonetheless allow female officeholders to exercise the full functions and prerogatives of their offices.

**R-76**

To instruct the Commission on Church Order to add to the conscience clauses in the *Book of Church Order* wording that protects candidates from misuse of the clauses and their intent.

(NOT ADOPTED)

### Financial Support for Candidates for Ministry

The MFCA continues to rely heavily upon the theological assessment for its funding. By not expanding the agency’s program it has been possible to stay within proposed budgets and the MFCA has been in the black every year of its existence.

The fee and tuition structure has been kept the same for 2002-2003, with no increases to candidates for the services provided. Increased giving by classes and congregations has allowed this to occur. This generosity is greatly appreciated.

The board affirms the desire of those who gathered to develop a long-term strategy for recruiting, training, and empowering those called to ordained leadership, to see the RCA “develop a plan to identify and challenge obstacles (i.e., financial, ethnic, gender, bylaws, etc.)” to call forth and ordain an adequate number and diversity of ministers of Word and sacrament for the future ministry of RCA churches. Indeed, much of our own work as a board has been focused on expanding and improving theological education and access to it. We believe, however, that the gathering failed to address one of the most significant obstacles to accomplishing its goals: the failure of most classes to give adequate financial support to candidates under their care. The board believes it should be the expectation that any candidate under care of an RCA classis should receive financial support from the classis (or, if the classes prefer to work collectively, from the regional synods) sufficient to pay for their tuition and other direct educational expenses. We applaud those classes that have taken on this responsibility, and other individuals and groups who have contributed to seminaries and the MFCA. We urge the many classes that currently do not accept this responsibility to do so.

**R-77**

To urge all classes and regional synods to work together to provide sufficient financial support for all candidates under their care so as to pay for tuition and other direct educational expenses.

(ADOPTED)

**Reasons:**

1. Candidates often bring a burden of debt from undergraduate studies and incur additional debt as seminary students that increases stresses on their families and that affects their ability to concentrate on their studies.

2. Taking candidates under the care and supervision of the classis implies a commitment to care for the person in more tangible and effective ways, as well as through prayer and words of encouragement.

3. Financial support for candidates varies widely across the denomination, with some candidates receiving very little financial assistance. This measure would help assure a minimum baseline of support for candidates.
Equipping Classes to Care for and Supervise Candidates for Ministry

The MFCA has worked diligently at communication efforts with the larger church by circulating a monthly newsletter, providing manuals for both the regular and the Approved Alternate Route certification processes, and providing seminars for the stated clerks and other regional gatherings. Despite these efforts there appears to be a need for more communication. It is for this reason that the MFCA Board of Trustees is asking the director for Ministry Services and the minister for Candidate Care and Certification to offer an annual workshop outlining procedures and changes to the process for those participating with candidates and their care. To make this as efficient and successful as possible the following recommendation is brought to the General Synod:

R-78
To request and encourage the attendance and participation of classis student care committee chairs in an annual workshop held by the Ministerial Formation Coordinating Agency to assist classes in the care and supervision of candidates for ordination to the Office of Minister of Word and Sacrament. (ADOPTED)

Reasons:

1. While a process manual exists to guide classis student care committees in their work with candidates, written instructions are not always helpful without some additional interpretation or guidance in their use.

2. A gathering of those who are charged with responsibility for the care and supervision of candidates for ordination to the Office of Minister of Word and Sacrament will help facilitate the exchange of ideas and information among classes and provide a more consistent articulation of the denomination’s procedures and policies.

Staffing

Hopefully, a director for Ministry Services will be announced at General Synod. The director will work closely with the MFCA and assist in making theological education a denominational priority. The director will commit up to half of his or her time to MFCA. The MFCA Board of Trustees has worked closely with the general secretary in shaping the new relationship between the Ministry Services director and the MFCA. A number of consultations occurred and board members gave many hours in order to attend meetings with the general secretary and his staff.

The staff in California has remained the same for 2001-2002. The Rev. Dr. Cornelis Kors remains the only full-time employee, with the new title of “Minister for Candidate Care and Certification.” For ten hours per week, Kors is supported by an associate, Walter Bouwman, an elder from Artesia, California. Office staff includes administrative assistant Kelly Talsma (thirty hours per week) and Joan Bouwman, who does clerical and bookkeeping tasks (twenty-four hours per week).

Certification Committees

The MFCA Board of Trustees created and implemented a second certification committee for the sole purpose of overseeing the Approved Alternate Route. Serving on the committee are two General Synod professors of theology, one from each RCA seminary, two ordained ministers of Word and sacrament, and one elder. The individuals serving this year are Dr. James Brownson (WTS), Dr. Paul Fries (NBTS), parish pastor the Rev. Kathleen Edwards, specialized minister the Rev. Dr. Andrea Godwin-Stremler, and elder Eugene Fisher.
After three years of careful study the Reformed Candidate Supervision and Care (RCSC) Certification Committee composition (MFCA Bylaws—Appendix I) has also been reviewed and revised. The rationale for this change is as follows:

While historically the certification committee consisted of four professors of theology (two from each RCA seminary), one RCA seminary professor teaching at a non-RCA seminary, two pastors from the MFCA Board of Trustees, and the MFCA director as non-voting convener, the following composition has been determined. There will now be two committees, each consisting of two seminary professors (one from an RCA seminary), two pastors, an elder or deacon, and the minister for Candidate Care and Certification as the non-voting convener. The MFCA board determined that it would be more effective if the committee were smaller. Also, with two committees in place, committee membership will not prove to be such an overwhelming assignment for members.

Certification interviews are by their nature stressful for RCSC candidates, and a five-person committee is less daunting than a seven-person committee.

While reducing the number of members serving on the certification committee, the MFCA also recognized the wisdom of a better balance between seminary professors and parish pastors. This is confirmed by one of the recommendations in the report from the January summit on ministerial leadership. The reduction in the size of the certification committee has been accomplished by reducing the number of seminary professors by two, while maintaining the number of parish pastors.

In keeping with the recognition of how offices function in the RCA, the fifth person is to be an elder or deacon.

The recommended changes reflect time-proven practices of the certification committee, the experience and expertise required for effective functioning of the committee, and consistency with RCA polity and its understanding of the nature of the offices of the church.

Possible Future Initiatives

In addition to working on the above proposals and other tasks during the past year, the MFCA board has also looked to the future. In response to needs expressed by various parts of the church and concerns identified by the board, several future initiatives have also been identified. They are:

1. Develop programs that meet the needs of newly emerging and currently unreached constituencies, especially the multicultural constituencies.

2. Assess and adapt new models for preparing leaders—being open to “teaching churches,” in-ministry training, “smart” classrooms, new technology, and curricular innovation.

3. Refine and streamline alternate routes to ordination, guaranteeing minimum competencies for all those serving in ministry in the RCA.

4. Bring extension, distance learning—originating at RCA seminaries—to new regions of the RCA.

5. Increase financial subsidy to those individuals preparing for ministry and incurring debt beyond their ability to repay.
6. Establish a West Coast Center for theological education and ministerial formation.

**Awarding of the Certificate of Fitness for Ministry**

The MFCA Board of Trustees awarded twenty-two certificates of fitness for ministry during the 2001-2002 session:

- Raj Christodoss, Classis of Greater Palisades
- Larry Dougherty, Classis of Pleasant Prairie
- Peter Burrill, Classis of Ontario
- John Erik Buteyn, Classis of Red River
- Philip Chung, Classis of California
- John DeGiovanni, Classis of British Columbia
- Seth Kaper-Dale, Classis of Holland
- Stephanie Kaper-Dale, Classis of Holland
- Barton Keefer, Classis of Cascades
- Darrin Kimpson, Classis of Dakota
- Douglas Leonard, Classis of Mid-Hudson
- Lucas Leys, Classis of California
- Michael Johnson, Classis of Passaic Valley
- Jacob Marvel, Classis of the Southwest
- Joseph Paglia, Classis of Illiana
- Gregg Pusateri, Classis of Chicago
- John Tilstra, Classis of Minnesota
- Gretel VanWieren, Classis of Holland
- David Vandervelde, Classis of British Columbia
- James Vellenga, Classis of Ontario

AAR
- Jane Brown, Classis of Central Iowa
- Donald Waterhouse, Classis of Ontario

Statistically the MFCA has completed its busiest year ever. In the three tracks available in the MFCA (RCSC, AAR, and Licensed Candidates) there are 112 candidates for ministry enrolled with the MFCA. This population represents twenty-two seminaries.

**Changes to the Book of Church Order**

There has been confusion regarding the twenty-seven-month petition process, and to bring it in line with the “Alternate Means” process the following changes to the *Book of Church Order* are recommended:

**R-79**

To adopt the following revision of the *Book of Church Order*, Chapter 1, Part II, Article 8, Section 3, for recommendation to the classes for approval (additions underlined, deletions stricken out):

**Article 8. Supervision of Students of Theology**

- **Sec. 3.** Immediately following the enrollment of a candidate for the ministry, the classis shall petition the General Synod on behalf of the candidate for a Certificate of Fitness for Ministry. Such a petition must be received a minimum of twenty-seven months prior to the time it is to be given final disposition by the General Synod through its agent (the board of trustees of an RCA seminary...
or the Ministerial Formation Coordinating Agency). However, in instances where completion of theological training takes place prior to the required period of twenty-seven months, the classis may petition the appropriate agent of the General Synod to substitute a period of ministry supervised by the General Synod agent through the board of trustees of an RCA seminary or the Ministerial Formation Coordinating Agency for all or part of its twenty-seven month requirement. The agent shall report its actions to the next General Synod. (ADOPTED)

Alternative Means (formerly known as dispensations)

The Classis of California petitioned the MFCA Board of Trustees for an alternate means to meet the requirement of a Master of Divinity degree from a non-accredited seminary on behalf of Philip Chung under the provision of the Book of Church Order, Chapter 1, Part II, Article 9, Section 3b.

The following was cited for the request:

1. Philip has fulfilled all requirements recommended by the New Brunswick Theological Seminary faculty and has been recommended to the MFCA board for a Certificate of Fitness for Ministry. NBTS had been asked by MFCA to evaluate Philip’s transcripts and interview him concerning his studies. The faculty recommended a course of study at an Association of Theological Schools (ATS) seminary. Philip audited these studies at Talbot School of Theology of Biola University, an ATS seminary.

2. Philip has successfully completed all of the Summer Intensives.

3. Philip has demonstrated the gifts of pastoral leadership as he has planted a Korean-speaking church in the city of Lakewood, California.

4. Philip has been recommended by Ella Campbell, secretary for the Pacific and Asian American Ministries Council, for the Certificate of Fitness for Ministry.

5. Philip has participated in the Asian-American Ministries Committee of the Classis of California and is recommended by the classis for the Certificate of Fitness for Ministry.

6. Philip is forty-eight years old, and it is unreasonable to ask him to repeat the courses he has already completed.

7. Philip has three children, ages 18, 14, and 7, and he would be financially unable to return to an accredited seminary.

The MFCA Board of Trustees approved the request of the Classis of California to allow an alternate means to satisfy the Master of Divinity degree requirement for the Certification of Fitness for Ministry for Philip Chung.

The Classis of California petitioned the MFCA Board of Trustees for an alternate means to meet the Master of Divinity degree requirement on behalf of Vicky Eastland. Initially New Life Community Church in Artesia, California, made this petition under the provision of the Book of Church Order, Chapter 1, Part II, Article 9, Section 3b.
The following was cited for the request:

1. An alternate means is sought because Eastland has completed master’s level studies at Fuller Theological Seminary in Pasadena (an M.A. in theology). She is currently pursuing an M.A. in biblical studies. Fuller is an ATS-accredited seminary and most of the classes taken include M.Div. students. With the guidance of the MFCA and her full-time ministry at New Life Community Church, she is completing the equivalent of an M.Div. program.

2. It is the opinion of the Classis of California that it would be a poor use of Vicky’s energy and time to ask her to actually earn a Master of Divinity degree when an equivalent program can serve in providing the same preparation.

3. Eastland is completing the Certificate of Fitness for Ministry through the MFCA, including the credo, interview, supervised ministry, Clinical Pastoral Education, and summer intensives. The Certification Committee has found her prepared and fit for ministry.

4. Eastland has served RCA churches for a number of years and her ministry is considered effective. She has done exemplary ministry at Emmanuel Reformed Church, Crystal Cathedral, and New Life Community Church and proven her call and gifts.

The MFCA Board of Trustees approved the request of the Classis of California to allow an alternate means to satisfy the Master of Divinity degree requirement for the Certification of Fitness for Ministry for Vicky Eastland.

The Classis of Ontario petitioned the MFCA Board of Trustees for an alternate means to meet the Master of Divinity degree requirement on behalf of Meine Veldman. The Classis of Ontario made this petition under the provision of the Book of Church Order, Chapter 1, Part II, Article 9, Section 3b.

The following was cited for the request:

1. Mr. Veldman has earned a Master of Theological Studies degree. He is currently pursuing a doctoral degree in biblical studies (Ph.D.) at the University of Toronto, and the classis has determined that this surpasses the normal academic requirements of the Master of Divinity degree.

2. Mr. Veldman has been a full-time summer interim at Immanuel Reformed in Whitby, and will continue to work in a church setting at Emmanuel Reformed Church in Woodstock to gain the necessary experience for pastoring.

3. Mr. Veldman is capable of handling the Word of God in both of the original languages, and is prepared to do exegetical work well beyond the level normally required as part of a Master of Divinity degree.

4. The MFCA will supervise a program for Mr. Veldman that will provide all the necessary courses and experiences normally included in the Master of Divinity curriculum, including at least one unit of Clinical Pastoral Education (CPE).

The MFCA Board of Trustees approved the request of the Classis of Ontario to allow an alternate means to satisfy the Master of Divinity degree requirement for the Certification of Fitness for Ministry for Meine Veldman.
The Classis of New Brunswick petitioned the MFCA Board of Trustees to release Richard S. Ruch from the Hebrew language requirement. Initially the Classis of New Brunswick made the petition under the provision of the *Book of Church Order*, Chapter 1, Part II, Article 9, Section 3.

The following was cited for the petition:

1. The Classis of New Brunswick requests that Richard S. Ruch, age fifty-three, be released from the Hebrew language requirement by reason of age and dyslexic-learning difficulties. Richard is a middler student at Princeton Theological Seminary in Princeton, New Jersey, and has also taken courses at New Brunswick Theological Seminary. He has maintained a 3.7 grade point average in his M.Div. studies and has obvious gifts for ministry.

2. During childhood elementary school days Richard was diagnosed with dyslexia, which explained his increasing difficulty with memorization and recitation of facts, vocabulary lists, etc. Throughout his academic studies Richard has had to compensate for this deficiency; it still takes him inordinate time to learn and manage lists of numbers, facts, and the use of lexicons and dictionaries.

3. Richard was successful in satisfying the Greek language requirement, but has been unable to successfully complete the Hebrew language requirement at Princeton Seminary, despite concerted effort. He has, through the course of his study of Hebrew, become familiar with the basic structure of the language and has learned how to translate from the Hebrew using a lexicon and computer software.

4. The Classis of New Brunswick, therefore, petitions the General Synod to grant this request for dispensation of the Hebrew language requirement, by reason of age and dyslexic-learning difficulty.

The MFCA Board of Trustees granted Richard S. Ruch a dispensation from the Hebrew language requirement of the Certificate of Fitness for Ministry.

**Twenty-Seven-Month Requirement**

The Classis of Queens petitioned General Synod through the Ministerial Formation Coordinating Agency to substitute a period of ministry for part of the twenty-seven-month requirement for Sebastian Ong (BCO, Chapter 1, Part II, Article 8, Section 3).

**Reasons:**

1. Mr. Ong graduated from Princeton Seminary in 2001. He has been involved in supervised ministry in Bowne Street Community Church (RCA) since June of 2000. He currently is leading worship, is preaching regularly, and also is responsible for the youth program in the above-mentioned church. The church is so impressed and satisfied with his ministerial gifts that they want to call him as soon as possible to the position of associate pastor of education and youth.

2. Based on his ministry experience in the Reformed Church and the need in Queens Classis for ministers with his skills in Asian ministry, we strongly feel that the required twenty-seven-month period should not apply in his case. We request that he be granted a Certificate of Fitness for Ministry as soon as he has fulfilled the other requirements set forth by MFCA.
3. The Rev. Albert Potgieter has the highest regard for this young man and feels we should do whatever we can to enable him to be ordained as soon as possible. As an ordained minister he will be able to accept the promise of a call in this Reformed Church in America congregation and continue to be a blessing to them.

The MFCA Board of Trustees recommends:

R-80
That the General Synod approve the request of the Classis of Queens that Sebastian Ong be allowed to substitute his past ministry experience in order to fulfill the twenty-seven months required for the Certificate of Fitness for Ministry. (ADOPTED)

The Classis of Queens petitioned General Synod through the Ministerial Formation Coordinating Agency to substitute a period of ministry for part of the twenty-seven-month requirement for James Long (BCO, Chapter 1, Part II, Article 8, Section 3).

Reasons:

1. Since his graduation with an M.Div. from a non-RCA seminary in 1997, Mr. Long has acquired extensive experience in ministry. He was the part-time English pastor and youth director at Chinese Alliance Church of Westchester until 1999. From October 1999 to September 2001 he was the minister under contract for the English ministry of the Winfield Reformed Church in Queens, New York. This is an extensive period of supervised ministry in a Reformed Church. He has just entered a one-year contract with Newtown Reformed Church in Queens, New York.

2. Based on his ministry experience in the Reformed Church and the need in Queens Classis for ministers with experience in Asian churches, we strongly feel that the required twenty-seven-month period should not apply in his case. We request that he be granted a Certificate of Fitness for Ministry as soon as he has fulfilled the other requirements set forth by MFCA.

3. The Rev. Albert Potgieter has been in a pastors’ prayer and support group with Mr. Long and he has the highest regard for his personal piety, faith, maturity, knowledge, and skills in ministry. He feels we should do whatever we can to enable Mr. Long to be ordained sooner, rather than later, and enable him to continue with his ministry in the Reformed Church in America as an ordained minister.

The MFCA Board of Trustees recommends:

R-81
That the General Synod deny the request of the Classis of Queens that James Long be allowed to substitute his past ministry experience in order to fulfill the twenty-seven months required for the Certificate of Fitness for Ministry. (ADOPTED)

Reasons for postponement:

1. The period at Winfield Reformed Church was not supervised in the manner expected as part of the twenty-seven-month period. There is no documentation indicating development and growth in line with RCA requirements to warrant the substitution of this segment of ministry.
2. The requirements still having to be met by Mr. Long—CPE, credo, and RCA courses—will take at least twenty-seven months to complete, and a reduction of the requirement is therefore not necessary.

The Classis of Greater Palisades petitioned General Synod through the Ministerial Formation Coordinating Agency to substitute a period of ministry for part of the twenty-seven-month requirement for Seung-Ryee (Salome) Ryew (BCO, Chapter 1, Part II, Article 8, Section 3).

Reasons:

1. Since her graduation from Alliance Theological Seminary more than two years ago, Salome has been a member at the Reformed Church of Closter, New Jersey.

2. Salome has been under the tutelage of the Rev. Dr. John Hiemstra throughout this time and he strongly supports the substitution of this ministry to make up the twenty-seven months.

The MFCA Board of Trustees recommends:

R-82
That the General Synod deny the request of the Classis of Greater Palisades that Seung-Ryee (Salome) Ryew be allowed to substitute her past ministry experience in order to fulfill the twenty-seven months required for the Certificate of Fitness for Ministry. (ADOPTED)

Reasons for denial:

1. There is no record of supervised ministry in an RCA setting prior to June 2001.

2. Salome is barely acquainted with the RCA and needs to have more exposure to the larger RCA, its ethos, and theology.

The Classis of Rockland-Westchester petitioned General Synod through the Ministerial Formation Coordinating Agency to substitute a period of ministry for part of the twenty-seven-month requirement for Yosup (Joseph) Sohn (BCO, Chapter 1, Part II, Article 8, Section 3).

Reasons:

1. Mr. Sohn has already completed his seminary education, receiving both an M.Div. and Th.M. degree from Princeton Theological Seminary.

2. Mr. Sohn is presently working at New Hope Reformed Church and has done so since January 2000. As youth director for the junior and senior high ministries he also has had responsibility for regular preaching and teacher training.

3. New Hope Reformed Church is eager to have him participate in full pastoral duties as part of their pastoral staff.
The MFCA Board of Trustees recommends:

**R-83**

That the General Synod approve the request of the Classis of Greater Palisades that Yosup Sohn be allowed to substitute his past ministry experience in order to fulfill the twenty-seven months required for the Certificate of Fitness for Ministry.  

(ADOPTED)

**Bylaws**

Changes made to the Bylaws of the MFCA throughout the past year have radically changed them from their former state. It is for this reason that the changed bylaws are presented in their entirety:

**R-84**

To adopt the following revisions to the Bylaws of the Ministerial Formation Coordinating Agency, effective July 1, 2002.  

(ADOPTED)

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**REFORMED CHURCH IN AMERICA**

**CONSTITUTION AND BYLAWS FOR OF THE MINISTERIAL FORMATION COORDINATING AGENCY**

**Preamble**

The Ministerial Formation Coordinating Agency (MFCA) is designed to respond to serve the RCA in the following three needs:

1. The need for an organizational structure for theological education which provides quality standards that recognize for ministerial preparation that are responsive to the challenges facing the church and faithful to the tradition of the Reformed Church in America as well as the challenges facing the new leaders who are to become ministers of Word and sacrament in the future.

2. The need to develop a strategy to identify and recruit pastoral leadership for the church of the future—call forth gifted persons for the ministry of Word and sacrament.

3. The need for a flexible alternate route that culminates in an ordination to the Office of Minister of Word and Sacrament for those who are gifted for ministry but not able to meet the traditional requirements through a Master of Divinity degree and the regular dispensation process as identified by the Book of Church Order (BCO).

4. Oversee and award the Certificate of Fitness for Ministry for Reformed Church in America Master of Divinity candidates enrolled at non-RCA seminaries through Reformed Candidates Supervision and Care (RCSC).
A Historical Note

In the development of MFCA it was recognized that an existing agency, the Theological Education Agency (TEA), was similar in purpose, function, and mission to MFCA.

From 1984 to 1998 the Reformed Church in America was served by TEA in overseeing the Certificate of Fitness for Ministry process for candidates at non-RCA seminaries. MFCA, in addition to its new and unique responsibilities, continues the ministry of TEA. MFCA performs the appropriate functions through the work of a director, staff, and the evaluation and approval process of a Certification Committee.

Article I

Name

Sec. 1 The name of this agency shall be the Ministerial Formation Coordinating Agency (MFCA) of the Reformed Church in America, hereinafter referred to as the Agency.

Article II

Members

Sec. 1 The General Synod of the Reformed Church in America shall be the sole member of the Agency for all purposes.

Article III

Function and Responsibilities

Sec. 1 The General Synod of the Reformed Church in America, acting through its agent the MFCA, shall exercise its oversight over theological education and ministerial formation by way of overseeing the standards for the preparation for the ordained ministry of Word and sacrament and assisting classes with oversight.

Sec. 2 The Board of Trustees of the Ministerial Formation Coordinating Agency, in consultation with the General Synod professors of theology, shall provide recommend to the General Synod the standards for the basis on which the Certificate of Fitness for Ministry in the Reformed Church in America is awarded by the agencies of New Brunswick Theological Seminary, Western Theological Seminary, and the Ministerial Formation Coordinating Agency through its Reformed Candidates Supervision and Care (RCSC) committee.

Sec. 3 The Ministerial Formation Coordinating Agency shall have the following central purposes and responsibilities:

a. To provide the RCA with a uniform framework by which the classes will care for and nurture candidates in preparation for the ministry of Word and sacrament.

b. To coordinate roles of the congregation, classis, and seminary the efforts of congregations, classes, and seminaries in the overall process of ministerial calling and formation, and to facilitate their respective responsibilities.

c. To review and monitor the implementation of the General Synod’s standards for ministerial formation.
d. To award the Certificate of Fitness for Ministry upon the recommendation of the Certification Committee for candidates at non-RCA seminaries, to M.Div. candidates enrolled at non-RCA seminaries, candidates going through the Approved Alternate Route (AAR), and Licensed Candidates.

e. To guide and assist candidates not attending non-RCA seminaries in the Certificate of Fitness for Ministry process.

Sec. 4 Specific responsibilities of the Agency shall include:

a. To study and evaluate the overall process of ministerial formation and make recommendations, as necessary, to the General Synod, the General Synod Council, the RCA seminaries, the Certification Committees, and the classes.

b. To establish and monitor standards for the continuing education and professional development for ministers of Word and sacrament.

c. To provide oversight in the implementation of the alternative route for ordination Proposed Alternate Route (AAR) for ordination and to award the Certificate of Fitness for Ministry to AAR candidates.

d. To offer create and make available resources and tools to classes, and to facilitate the sharing of experiences among classes, that may support their tasks of identifying, caring for, examining, ordaining, and mentoring those called to the ministry of Word and sacrament.

e. To provide guidance, resources, and support to classis committees supervising candidates under their care.

f. To provide flexible guidelines for and to monitor the implementation of to classes for Candidate Care Committees (CCC) in the process of ministerial leadership and formation.

g. To provide annually a standard examination as the written component for the evaluation of candidates for the Certificate of Fitness for Ministry. This examination shall be prepared by a team of RCA seminary faculty members selected by the Agency. The examination shall include sections on biblical knowledge and exegesis, Reformed theology, church history and government, pastoral ministry, leadership, ethics, church and society, mission, and such areas as the Agency may determine.

h. To provide flexible guidelines for and to monitor the implementation of Teaching Churches and Ministries in the process of ministerial formation. To promote the Teaching Church concept as part of ministerial formation in the RCA and, where requested, to provide guidelines for Teaching Churches and Ministries.

i. To compile identify and recommend assessment instruments and procedures for persons received under the care of classis and enrolled as candidates for ministry.

j. To guide and assist candidates at non-RCA seminaries in academic preparation, spiritual formation, ministerial development, personal wholeness, and denominational identity.
k. To maintain a census of all candidates in the Certificate of Fitness for Ministry process, in cooperation with the seminaries, Office of Ministry Services, and the Certification Committees.

l. To coordinate the work of the Reformed Candidates Supervision and Care and the Certification Committees in their responsibilities for candidates at non-RCA seminaries.

m. To coordinate the summer intensives which offer RCA courses on confessions, polity, history, missions, and worship. The RCA seminaries will be asked to provide the teaching faculty for the courses offered at the intensives.

Sec. 5 The Agency shall make an annual report to the General Synod and regular reports to the General Synod Council. A regular liaison with the General Synod Council shall be established.

Sec.6 The General Synod of the Reformed Church in America will provide the necessary funding for the Agency to accomplish its mandated work.

Sec. 7 The Board of Trustees will administer all restricted gifts in the way the donors have stipulated.

Article III

Membership of the Board of Trustees

Sec. 1 The Board of Trustees shall consist of nine members who shall be elected for a term of three years, beginning the first day of July following their election by the General Synod and continuing until their successors shall be elected and qualified, voting members, all of whom shall be confessing members in good standing of the Reformed Church in America. The trustees shall reflect the diversity of the Reformed Church in America and demonstrate an understanding and knowledge of theological education and ministry formation.

Sec. 2 No trustee who has served two full terms shall be eligible for reelection until at least one year has elapsed. Two voting members shall be members of the General Synod Council (GSC). Such members shall be nominated by the General Synod Council Coordinating Committee and elected by the GSC for a term expiring with their term on the General Synod Council.

Sec. 3 The other seven voting members (members at large) shall be elected by the General Synod of the Reformed Church in America upon nomination by the Commission on Nominations from persons recommended by the Ministerial Formation Coordinating Agency Board of Trustees. At-large members shall be elected to terms of three years and may be reelected for a second three-year term. Members shall be ineligible for one year after they have served two consecutive terms.

Sec. 4 The Commission on Nominations will ensure that the voting membership of the Board of Trustees includes at least three laypersons, at least two parish pastors, at least one specialized minister, and one General Synod professor of theology.

Sec. 5 The director of Ministry and Personnel Services of the General Synod, the general secretary. The director of Ministry Services, the minister for Candidate Care and Certification, the general secretary of the Reformed Church in America, and the presidents of New Brunswick Theological Seminary and Western Theological Seminary or their representatives shall be ex-officio members, without vote, of the Board of Trustees. The general secretary shall meet with the Board of Trustees annually.
Sec. 6 The director of the Agency shall be an ex-officio member, without vote, of the board of trustees. The Board of Trustees may invite others to meetings as resource people on a regular basis if it is discerned determined that these individuals can assist the board in its duties.

Article V.

Nomination and Election

Sec. 1 All trustees shall be elected by the General Synod of the Reformed Church in America.

Sec. 2 The trustees shall be elected annually from nominees submitted by the Ministerial Formation Coordinating Agency Board of Trustees. The Commission on Nominations will ensure that the membership of the Board of Trustees includes four laypersons, three parish pastors, one specialized minister, and one General Synod professor of theology. The trustees shall reflect the diversity of the Reformed Church in America and demonstrate an understanding and knowledge of theological education and ministry formation.

Article VI

Meetings

Sec. 1 The Board of Trustees will meet at least two times a year, and the annual meeting shall be the first meeting following General Synod.

Sec. 2 The moderator shall call special meetings whenever special business requires it or on written request of any five members of the Board of Trustees. Written notice of special meetings, stating the nature of the business to be considered, shall be given to the members of the Board of Trustees not less than ten days prior to each meeting. No other business shall be considered at such special meetings.

Sec. 3 A majority of the membership of the Board of Trustees shall constitute a quorum.

Sec. 4 The agenda shall be mailed to received by the trustees at least ten days prior to the meeting of the board of trustees.

Sec. 5 Each meeting of the Board of Trustees shall be opened and closed with prayer.

Sec. 6 The Agency trustees may elect to meet in executive session for a portion of their business meeting, at which time only voting trustees shall be present unless the trustees, while in executive session, shall vote to invite other persons to be present. No recommendation shall be acted on.

Article VII

Officers

The elected officers of the board of trustees shall consist of a moderator, vice moderator, and clerk.
Article VIII

Election of Officers

Sec. 1 In the election of the moderator, vice moderator, and clerk, a written nomination ballot shall be considered in nomination. The trustees shall then proceed to a written electing ballot. A majority of the total votes cast shall be necessary for election. If there is no majority on the first electing ballot, the voting shall be confined to the two persons receiving the greatest number of votes. If a person receives a majority of votes on the nominating ballot, the trustees may vote to declare the nominating ballot an electing ballot.

Sec. 2 Each of the officers shall be elected at the annual meeting of the Board of Trustees for a term of one year, not serving more than three terms, to extend beyond the regular tenure on the Board of Trustees unless no successor is elected and willing to serve. An officer must be declared at the next formal meeting of the Board of Trustees if the officer is asked to serve beyond his or her tenure on the board.

Sec. 3 The term of each office shall begin July 1, and the person shall serve until his or her successor has been elected and has qualified for the office. A vacancy in any office shall be filled at the next regular or special meeting of the board of trustees.

Sec. 4 The Agency shall employ a director. The director of the Agency shall be elected by the Board of Trustees in consultation with the general secretary. Other employed staff required for the operation of the Agency shall be hired by the director after approval by the Board of Trustees.

Sec. 5 The Board of Trustees is responsible for the performance of the director of the Agency, with the right to terminate, after consulting with the general secretary. The director shall supervise other Agency staff and shall have the authority to terminate, following consultation with the board of trustees.

Article IX

Duties of Officers

Sec. 1 The moderator shall call and preside at all regular and special meetings of the Board of Trustees, shall be an ex-officio member of all committees of the Board of Trustees, and shall perform such other duties and exercise such other powers as usually pertain to the office. The moderator shall be entitled to vote on all matters coming before the Board of Trustees for decision.

Sec. 2 The vice-moderator shall act as moderator when the moderator is not able or available to serve.

Sec. 3 The clerk shall keep a true and accurate record of all proceedings of the Board of Trustees and perform such other duties as usually pertain to the office.

Sec. 4 The duties of the director of the Agency, director of Ministry Services and the minister of Candidate Care and Certification are defined by their position descriptions as adopted by the General Synod Council or its agents in consultation with the Board of Trustees and the provisions of their contracts at the time of employment.
Article IX

Committees

Sec. 1 The Board of Trustees shall establish a Certification Committee (see Appendix I) and may establish such other committees and task forces as it deems necessary to carry out its work.

Sec. 2 The establishment of such other committees, their duties and responsibilities, shall be described in written form by the Board of Trustees.

Article IX

Personnel

Sec. 1 The Reformed Church in America shall employ all staff, including the director of Ministry Services and the minister for Candidate Care and Certification. Half of the director of Ministry Services’ time shall be dedicated to serving as the director of the agency.

Sec. 2 The general secretary shall consult with the Board of Trustees regarding the appointment of the director of Ministry Services and the Board of Trustees shall participate in the appointment of the minister for Candidate Care and Certification and other staff.

Sec. 3 The Board of Trustees shall participate in the performance evaluations of the director of Ministry Services and the minister for Candidate Care and Certification and other staff and shall solicit user evaluations.

Sec. 4 The general secretary shall consult with the Board of Trustees before proceeding to terminate either the director of Ministry Services or the minister for Candidate Care and Certification.

Article XI

Amendment of the Constitution and Bylaws

Sec. 1 These bylaws may be amended by a majority vote of the General Synod Board of Trustees at any regular meeting upon recommendation of the Ministerial Formation Coordinating Agency at any regular meeting after ten days notice to board members, and the amendments become effective upon the approval of the General Synod.

Sec. 2 The bylaws, when adopted by the board and the General Synod of the Reformed Church in America, shall supersede all previous documents controlling the affairs of the Ministerial Formation Coordinating Agency.

Appendix I

The Certification Committee

The Reformed Candidates Supervision and Care (RCSC) Certification Committee

Sec. 1 The Certification Committee shall consist of five persons elected by the Board of Trustees. One shall be a professors or associate professors, one of whom shall hold the Office of General Synod Professor of Theology, nominated by and from with-
in the faculty of New Brunswick Theological Seminary. Two One shall be a professors or associate professors, one of whom shall hold the Office of General Synod Professor of Theology, nominated by and from within the faculty of Western Theological Seminary. One shall be a professor or associate professor teaching at a non-Reformed Church in America seminary accredited by the Association of Theological Schools. Two shall be ordained ministers of Word and sacrament nominated by the Ministerial Formation Coordinating Agency Board of Trustees. One shall be an elder or a deacon. All nominees shall be confessing members of the Reformed Church in America.

Sec. 2 The Certification Committee members shall be elected for a term of three years beginning the first day of July following their election by the Board of Trustees.

Sec. 3 No member who has served two full terms shall be eligible for reelection until at least one year has elapsed.

Sec. 4 The Certification Committee shall exercise supervision of the certification procedure for candidates enrolled in the Certificate of Fitness for Ministry process who do not attend New Brunswick Theological Seminary or Western Theological Seminary. The Certification Committee shall serve a function parallel to the faculties of New Brunswick Theological Seminary and Western Theological Seminary in matters pertaining to the recommendation of candidates for the Certificate of Fitness for Ministry.

Sec. 5 The director of the Agency, Minister of Candidate Care and Certification shall attend all meetings of the Certification Committee unless otherwise requested and shall serve as the moderator of the Certification Committee without vote.

Sec. 6 Regular meetings of the Certification Committee may be held without notice at such time and place as the Certification Committee may fix from time to time by resolution. Special meetings of the Certification Committee may be called by the director moderator and shall be called by the director moderator on written request of any two members of the Certification Committee upon one day’s oral or five days’ written notice stating the place, date, and hour of the meeting. Any member of the Certification Committee may waive in writing notice of any meeting, and no notice of any meeting need be given to any member thereof who attends in person. The notice of a meeting of the Certification Committee need not state the business proposed to be transacted at the meeting.

Sec. 7 A majority of the members of the Certification Committee shall constitute a quorum for the transaction of business at any meeting thereof, and an action of the Certification Committee shall be authorized by the affirmative vote of a majority of the members present at a meeting at which there is a quorum.

Sec. 8 Any action that may be taken by the Certification Committee at a meeting may be taken without a meeting if a consent in writing, setting forth the action to be taken, shall be signed before such action by all of the members of the Certification Committee.

Sec. 9 Any member of the Certification Committee may be removed at any time with or without cause by a resolution adopted by a majority of the full membership of the Board of Trustees. Any member of the Certification Committee may resign from the Certification Committee at any time by giving written notice to the moderator or secretary of the Board of Trustees, and unless otherwise specified therein, the acceptance of such resignation shall not be necessary to make it effective.

Sec. 10 A vacancy in the Certification Committee shall be filled by an election according to the usual manner at a regular or special meeting of the Board of Trustees.
Appendix II

The Approved Alternate Route (AAR) Certification Committee

Sec. 1 The Certification Committee shall consist of five persons elected by the Board of Trustees. Two shall be General Synod professors of theology, one from each RCA seminary. Two shall be ordained ministers of Word and sacrament nominated by the Ministerial Formation Coordinating Agency Board of Trustees. One shall be an ordained elder in the Reformed Church in America nominated by the Ministerial Formation Coordinating Agency Board of Trustees.

Sec. 2 The Certification Committee members shall be elected for a term of three years beginning the first day of July following their election by the Board of Trustees.

Sec. 3 No member who has served two full terms shall be eligible for reelection until at least one year has elapsed.

Sec. 4 The Certification Committee shall exercise supervision of the certification procedure for candidates enrolled in the Certificate of Fitness for Ministry process according to the process defined in the Book of Church Order and the process defined by the Ministerial Formation Coordinating Agency procedures.

Sec. 5 The Minister of Candidate Care and Certification shall attend all meetings of the Certification Committee unless otherwise requested and shall serve as the moderator of the Certification Committee without vote.

Sec. 6 Regular meetings of the Certification Committee may be held without notice at such time and place as the Certification Committee may fix from time to time by resolution. Special meetings of the Certification Committee may be called by the moderator of the committee and shall be called by the moderator on written request of any two members of the Certification Committee upon one day's oral or five days' written notice stating the place, date, and hour of the meeting. Any member of the Certification Committee may waive in writing notice of any meeting, and no notice of any meeting need be given to any member thereof who attends in person. The notice of a meeting of the Certification Committee need not state the proposed business to be transacted at the meeting.

Sec. 7 A majority of the members of the Certification Committee shall constitute a quorum for the transaction of business at any meeting thereof, and an action of the Certification Committee shall be authorized by the affirmative vote of a majority of the members present at a meeting at which there is a quorum.

Sec. 8 Any action that may be taken by the Certification Committee at a meeting may be taken without a meeting if a consent in writing, setting forth the action to be taken, shall be signed before such action by all of the members of the Certification Committee.

Sec. 9 Any member of the Certification Committee may be removed at any time with or without cause by a resolution adopted by a majority of the full membership of the Board of Trustees. Any member of the Certification Committee may resign from the Certification Committee at any time by giving written notice to the moderator or secretary of the Board of Trustees, and unless otherwise specified therein, the acceptance of such resignation shall not be necessary to make it effective.
Sec. 10 A vacancy in the Certification Committee shall be filled by an election according to the usual manner at a regular or special meeting of the Board of Trustees.

Sec. 11 The Certification Committee shall work within the power granted to the members of the Board of Trustees by the Book of Church Order of the Reformed Church in America and the Bylaws of the Ministerial Formation Coordinating Agency.

Revised Draft 11-16-01 02-25-02

Report of the Commission for Women

At its meetings in October 2001 and February 2002, the Commission for Women wrote and approved the following letter as its report to the 2002 General Synod:

From the Commission for Women, whose members are servants of Jesus Christ, commissioned by the General Synod of the RCA to work for the full and complete participation of women in church and society,

To our sisters and brothers in the RCA, called by God to equip congregations for ministry—a thousand churches in a million ways doing one thing—following Christ in mission, in a lost and broken world so loved by God:

Grace and peace to you from God our Creator, Redeemer, and Comforter.

We give thanks to God for your deep commitment to the gospel of Jesus Christ and for your faithful service to your calling to be the presence of Christ in the world. The Spirit is at work in new ways among you—moving you in mission. This movement of the Spirit is bringing you toward the joy of being the full, working body of Christ.

We are grateful for your continuing willingness to open new doors to ministry, to find new frontiers for mission, and to discern God’s yearnings for new forms of service in the new millennium; and we pray that you will continue to be open to the guidance of God’s Spirit as you seek to identify and encourage the spiritual gifts and passions of those among you on whom God has poured out visions and dreams.

We appeal to you now to unleash the gifts of women for use in our shared mission. The need for congregational leadership is urgent and great. Our general secretary, Wesley Granberg-Michaelson, in his report to the 2001 General Synod (MGS 2001, pp. 40-52), has described the growing need for committed leaders at the mission frontiers of the church in North America, and has called us to a “creative search for new categories of pastor to meet the missional requirements of our time” (p. 47) and “a long-term strategy to meet our mission-driven needs for ministers of the Word and sacrament” (p. 48). Along with several past presidents of synod, he has decried the unwillingness of the RCA to be true to its mission heritage and welcome the gifts of women in leadership and mission fully in its local churches and classes: “Congregations looking for future pastoral leadership need to open their minds and hearts to welcome the gifts of women in the same way that we have affirmed women in the missionary service of the gospel around the world” (p. 48).
The harvest in North America is plentiful and the laborers are few.

Yet it still happens that young girls who hear God’s call to ministry are told by their elders that they must be mistaken.

It still happens that women of significant life experience who long for ministry opportunities find themselves covered by a shroud of silence when they approach their consistories for endorsement.

It still happens that seminary candidates who are fully trained and heartily recommended for ministry find obstacles to their calling in the bylaws of churches that will consider only males as ordained leaders.

It still happens that search committees decide that their congregation is “not ready” to have a woman pastor.

In a time when the church’s mission in North America is being seriously hindered by a shortage of pastors, too many churches are saying “no” to gifted and Spirit-filled leaders to whom God is saying “yes!”

We urge you not to ignore the leading of the Spirit in this matter. Where the Spirit bestows gifts they are intended to be engaged in God’s work. There can be no doubt that in our day the Spirit has given both women and men the gifts of preaching and teaching and pastoral care and evangelism. Our denominational leaders have discerned these gifts in women and have affirmed and encouraged them. Our church order declares women to be eligible for ordination and call. In some of our regional synods, the classes have already identified and ordained substantial numbers of women as ministers of Word and sacrament, and their gifts have been confirmed by their service to the church.

But in other geographical areas, local congregations and classes claim a right of conscience to apply a standard for ordination that the church as a whole does not endorse. They believe that their ordained leaders must be male.

The urgency of our mission context and the great need for leaders who can equip congregations for ministry brings us to a situation not unlike that of the Council in Jerusalem that is described in Acts 15. As with the apostle Peter we are compelled to say (in paraphrase of Acts 15:7-10): Brothers, you know that God has testified [to women] by giving them the Holy Spirit, just as God did to you; and in cleansing their hearts by faith and calling them into service God has made no distinction between them and you. Now, therefore, why are you putting God to the test by placing on the neck of the church a yoke it can no longer bear?

We implore you to acknowledge the work of God’s Spirit and to affirm, empower, and enable the ordained ministry of women along side of and in partnership with the ministry of men.

In doing so you will unleash great energy toward healing the hurt, feeding the hungry, mending the broken, restoring hope, and transforming the lives of people in our world through the love of Jesus Christ.

We claim this promise with you: that in recognizing the face of Christ in those around us, we will feel the Spirit of God filling us. In walking with Christ, we will discover the abundant life of God’s realm.

May the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirits.
Report of the General Synod Council’s Ministry and Personnel Services Committee

OFFICE OF MINISTRY SERVICES

Ministry and Personnel Services (MAPS) has experienced a time of transition beginning with the retirement of Vernon L. Hoff as director. The transition also included a change of name from the Office of Ministry and Personnel Services to the Office of Ministry Services (OMS). With that change the assignment of the senior pastors ministry, the administration of assistance grants, and oversight of homes for retired clergy have been moved to the Office of Benefits Services. Another change was to place Personnel Services under the leadership of Gloria McCanna, in the office of Policy, Planning, and Administration.

The new Office of Ministry Services will oversee the activities of the Ministerial Formation Coordinating Agency; give guidance to the ministries of elders and deacons; and give priority to the calling, recruiting, and preparation of candidates for pastoral ministry and the care of pastors in ministry.

Chaplains

The OMS endorses and certifies military, prison, and institutional chaplains of the Reformed Church in America. Currently, ninety-five men and women serve as chaplains (fifty-six with hospitals, hospices, or institutions; nine with prisons; twelve with active military personnel; fifteen with military reserves, and three with colleges). Each year prior to General Synod, the OMS, under the direction of Ellen Mers, gathers the chaplains for a time to build relationships, learn from one another, and share resources. This time also provides an opportunity for the chaplains to interact with the General Synod delegates.

Each area of chaplaincy needs men and women who are called to this specialized ministry. The Rev. Donald den Dulk is the endorsing agent for the military chaplains and the Rev. Donald Jiskoot is the endorsing agent for the prison chaplains. Those interested in this ministry should contact the endorsing agents.

Each year one of the RCA chaplains is called to minister as the General Synod chaplain during the synod meetings. This year Trygve Johnson, chaplain of Northwestern College, will serve in this capacity.

RCA Clergy/Spouse Retreat

Each January for the past twenty-two years, clergy from the three eastern synods have gathered with their spouses at Warwick Conference Center in Warwick, New York, for a weekend called “Freedom in Ministry.” The gathering comes after the busyness of Advent and provides a time to relax, feed the body, mind and soul, and enjoy the company of friends and colleagues. Scheduled to include a Sunday and subsidized by grants from regional synods and denominational funds, Freedom in Ministry has consistently provided the context for a ministry of mutual encouragement to clergy and their spouses.

Specialized Interim Ministry

One of the very valuable ministries provided for churches is the Specialized Interim Ministry. When a church is without a pastor, specialized interim ministers are available to help a church process the departure of the pastor, set a new vision for ministry, and prepare for the new pastor. The Reformed Church in America has a strong specialized interim ministry with fifty-six active trained pastors. The specialized interim ministers gather prior to
General Synod for a time of training, support, and sharing resources.

Senior Pastors

One of the most valuable ministries of the Reformed Church in America is the designated senior pastor ministry to retirees of the denomination. Currently, twelve pastors and their spouses make scheduled visits to all retired RCA pastors, staff, and missionaries. The senior pastor ministry, now coordinated by the Office of Benefits Services, insures that adequate care is provided to those who have served faithfully in the denomination. When the need arises the Office of Benefits Services provides a variety of assistance grants for the retirees. The senior pastors and spouses are: the Rev. Russell and Janet Pater, the Rev. Roger and Bernice Leonard, the Rev. Harold and Dorothy De Roo, the Rev. Henry and Emily Mouw, the Rev. Eric and Connie Schulze, the Rev. John and Mary Ver Hoog, the Rev. Joseph and Jean Muyskens, the Rev. Cornie and Alvina Keunen, the Rev. Clement and Louise Birkelbach, the Rev. William and Nancy Cameron, the Rev. Herman and Adeline Gruis, and the Rev. Joseph and Jean Muyskens. The Rev. Bruce and Patricia Penn concluded nine years of ministry in the senior pastors program. We are thankful to God for their devoted and excellent ministry.

Lay Pastoral Ministry Summit

The General Synod, in response to the recommendation of President Carol Mutch, approved a one-time Lay Pastoral Ministry Summit to study the concept of lay pastoral ministry in the RCA, with report back to the 2002 General Synod (MGS 2001, R-73, p. 275).

REPORT ON THE SUMMIT TO STUDY THE CONCEPT OF
LAY PASTORAL MINISTRY IN THE RCA

Two subjects captured the attention and enthusiasm of delegates to General Synod 2001: evangelism and lay leadership. As the RCA intentionally focuses on planting churches and bringing renewed vitality to our congregations, we simultaneously face a significant shortage of theologically trained leaders to serve the growing missional needs of the church.

The Leadership Impact Study Report conducted in 2000 by the Office of Ministry and Personnel Services revealed that 182 churches were without a full-time ordained minister, which means that there is a leadership need in approximately 19 percent of our congregations. One hundred four of those churches have been without a full-time pastor for the past two years, and these openings are considered not-fillable because the churches have limited finances and are of small size. In addition, there is a growing need for new church plant pastors, many churches are unable to fill vacancies they have for full-time staff members, and in the next five years ninety-one pastors are scheduled to retire, with insufficient numbers of graduating seminarians to fill these vacancies. Also, a diverse talent pool is needed to serve and connect with congregations in our urban, rural, racial/ethnic, and blended congregations.

The problem may not be insufficient people to carry on these ministries, but rather our failure to acknowledge and utilize a great untapped resource within the church—the gifts, leadership skills, and ministry potential of the our own priesthood of all believers—the laity. We have an army of dedicated, knowledgeable, faithful individuals whom God is calling out to serve in full- and part-time ministries, but the RCA has no place in its polity where they fit and no clearly defined denominational requirements that validate their preparation and commitment.

Carol Mutch, the 2001 General Synod president, challenged delegates to consider a new
way to meet this need by equipping gifted lay leaders to answer God’s command that we “ask the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into his harvest” (Matthew 9:37-38). Mutch also encouraged delegates to find a way for lay leaders to be trained, acknowledged, honored, and mentored and encouraged to answer God’s call.

General Synod responded by voting in favor of Recommendation 73:

That the moderator of the General Synod Council and the director of Ministry and Personnel Services convene a one-time summit to study the concept of lay pastoral ministry in the RCA to equip gifted lay leadership being called by God into the mission of the church. A maximum of fifteen participants representing differing perspectives, experiences, and regional concerns would gather to assess the need and viability of such a ministry, review ways it is already being used, and determine its possible place in the overall ministry of the RCA, for report to the 2002 General Synod (MGS 2001, p. 275).

The summit was held October 18-19, 2001, in Chicago, Illinois. The participants were George Brown, Brígido Cabrera, John Chang, Mary Clark, Joe Colon, Glenn DeMaster, Thomas DeVries, Paul Fries, Lynne Gilgore, Wesley Granberg-Michaelson, Gail Hughes, Ellen Mers, Ina Montoya, Howard Moths, Beverly Muffin, Phyllis Palsma, Cora Taitt, and Rodney Veldhuizen. Vernon Hoffs and Carol Mutch served as facilitators, and Carol Wagner was the “discernamentarian.”

Those in attendance came from a variety of backgrounds, experiences, and ministries, but they were one in their consensus that there is a strong need for equipping and sending forth leaders to meet the demands of a new age and the challenges of the church in the twenty-first century.

The summit participants identified four leadership-related problems that need to be addressed:

1. Many pastoral openings in various congregational settings are not being filled by our current supply of ordained ministers of Word and sacrament because of the location of the opening, the financial limitations of the churches, or a lack of interested candidates.

2. There is a shortage of trained ministers of Word and sacrament to expand the RCA’s ministry to include more church starts, enhanced youth ministry, new staff positions, and emerging fields of ministry.

3. People who are raised up by their congregations (for example, racial/ethnic, rural, and small-membership churches) and are clearly called by God to lead their church are sometimes unable to complete in-residence theological training due to family obligations, finances, age, or the need to stay in an already established ministry.

4. Some potential leaders in our midst—gifted, dedicated, knowledgeable laity within the RCA who are called by God to serve have no clear, attainable pathway to receive training nor a clearly defined position within the denomination to reach for.

The summit participants believe that these areas of need can best be addressed by establishing within the structure of the RCA a ministry designation of “commissioned pastor,” which would require an intermediate level of professional theological training available close to home, and provide the credentials to serve within the bounds of a classis.

Therefore, to meet the ministry needs and challenges of the twenty-first century, and to
provide means by which all believers who feel called by God to serve in full- or part-time ministries can be properly trained, honored, and sent forth to serve, the summit participants recommend:

**R-85**
To establish a new ministry designation of commissioned pastor in the RCA. (ADOPTED)

The synod voted not to refer R-85 to the Office of Ministry Services for clarification for report to the 2003 General Synod.

**The Biblical Foundation for This Ministry**

“Each of us has been given a special gift, in proportion to what Christ has given... [God] did this to prepare all God’s people for the work of Christian service, to build up the body of Christ” (Ephesians 4:7 and 12, TEV).

Every Christian—called by God, gifted for ministry. Churches are not just to function, they are to be living and alive communities of faith that are continuing to carry on the work and ministry of Jesus Christ. Every believer has been blessed with a spiritual gift that is to be used for the building up of the church.

For far too long the cry of the church has been, “Let the pastor do it: that’s what we pay for anyway.” The vision of the Reformed Church in America in the twenty-first century is to see a new reformation of lay people equipped and inspired to serve Christ and his church.

A major rallying cry of the Reformation was “the priesthood of all believers.” No longer were priests the exclusive agents and conduits for communication with God. Part of the reforming of the church was the discovery of direct access to God: through prayer, through the Word, and through worship and the sacraments. This access was not at the direction and discretion of the clergy, but was available to all believers.

The next step in the reforming process is to live out our biblical challenge, responsibility, and call. Pastors are to equip, the people are to minister, faithfully and fruitfully as they use their gifts and passions for the benefit of the church, the body of Christ. Ministry in the church is not the exclusive responsibility of the clergy. It is not to be controlled through the direction and discretion of ministers of Word and sacrament.

We stand on the threshold, wanting and waiting to step forward to empower and equip laity for ministry. The Spirit of God is moving in profound ways in calling out and gifting believers in RCA churches to contribute and serve for the benefit of all of Christ’s people.

These people have been active in RCA churches for many years as children’s ministers, youth pastors, ministers of music, Christian educators, prayer ministry leaders, and care pastors. Some have ministered as volunteers and others have been called into full-time service and commitment.

They are living out the exhortation of 1 Peter 4:10 (NASB): “As each one has received a special gift, employ it in serving one another as good stewards of the manifold grace of God.” These individuals are not ministers of Word and sacrament, but they are gifted and called leaders who are serving in our churches in significant ways.

The spiritual gifts resource provided by the RCA Distribution Center to every church after the 2001 General Synod correctly communicates a biblical truth:

As the church of the New Testament was being formed and nurtured, it was also explor-
ing a new and remarkable understanding: that God had blessed not simply the priests or other leaders of the church, but every believer, with unique abilities intended for the building up of the community of faith and for the enabling of Christ’s message to be most effectively conveyed.

This truth is bringing greater joy, freedom, and effective ministry to many members and churches in the RCA today. One of the ways that we together continue to be “reformed and ever reforming according to the Word of God” is by living out the biblical instruction of equipping and unleashing God’s people in ministry. The minister of Word and sacrament is not the only person equipped to serve in ministry in the church.

God is raising up new leaders and ministers who can serve in the church and in the world. The RCA mission and vision statement is birthing a new reformation—one where lay people are not only priests, but servants who are the hands and feet of Christ in our midst.

Commissioned pastors are men and women who have been called, who are equipped and eager to serve in our churches. They have heard God’s voice, sensed a distinct leading of the Spirit, and are living out what it means to be the body of Christ as a church. We bless them, commission them, and unleash them for ministry in the Reformed Church in America.

The words of the apostle Paul provide a foundation for the blessing of these new lay leaders in the twenty-first century who are being developed and deployed in ministry: Let each of you lead the life that the Lord has assigned, to which God called you (1 Corinthians 7:17).

Basic Assumptions Regarding the Ministry of the Commissioned Pastor

1. That all ministry gifts have equal value, with the recognition that certain ministry areas need special training and equipping.

2. That the Commissioned Pastor will not only exercise ministry gifts, but will also equip others for ministry.

3. Certain people are set apart for the ministry of equipping the saints and should be held to a higher standard of education and accountability.

The Ministry Designation Title of Commissioned Pastor

The task force discussed an acceptable title for the new ministry designation and it was agreed that “commissioned pastor” is the most fitting title.

Words take on different meanings in different contexts. The task force wanted to choose a name that would clearly describe this new ministry role without using the word “minister,” which is short for the office of minister of Word and sacrament. The Book of Church Order (Chapter 1, Part I, Article 1, Sec. 6) lists a series of ministry designations or roles that ministers may fulfill. Looking at the list it is apparent that the roles can be fulfilled by a variety of people. For example, teachers and missionaries can be ordained ministers or nonordained workers. The word pastor is one of the words in the list. In some contexts the word pastor is used to describe an ordained minister. In other contexts the word is used to describe nonordained workers, for example, a youth pastor. The Book of Church Order uses the word to describe the nature of a ministry, not an office within the church. The use of the modifier “commissioned” also helps make this ministry designation unique. The ministry of a commissioned pastor is initiated by a commissioning service, rather than an installation. Installed pastors are those ordained ministers serving a church under a call. It
Guidelines for the Commissioned Pastor

In order to assure a universal level of competency and theological training that can be honored and utilized throughout the RCA, the summit participants have formulated the following guidelines and standards to be used by the classes for the process, course study, authorization, and commissioning of individuals to this ministry designation.

Statement of Guidelines

1. A confessing member of a congregation in the Reformed Church in America who desires to become a commissioned pastor shall apply to the classis with jurisdiction over the church in which membership is held to be enrolled as a candidate for commissioned pastor. This application shall be made through the consistory of the church in which membership is held. The Office of Ministry Services will provide a standard application form.

2. When the classis grants the candidate’s application as a commissioned pastor, it will be the responsibility of the classis, in consultation with the regional synod and/or the racial/ethnic councils, to approve and supervise the training plan for each person.

3. Upon completion of the training plan, the classis will examine the person in the standards approved by General Synod for the role of commissioned pastor.

4. Upon successful completion of the classis examination, the classis will grant a certificate of ministry competence. Upon the receipt of an invitation for ministry, the classis will authorize the ministry, approve a contract if needed, and commission the candidate using the Order for Commissioning Christians to the Ministries of the Church, approved by the 2001 General Synod.

5. A minister of Word and sacrament will be appointed by the classis as a mentor for the commissioned pastor’s period of training and continuing until one year after the commissioning.

6. The classis may authorize a commissioned pastor to perform any or all of the following functions:
   a. Preach the Word.
   b. Administer the sacraments.
   c. Serve as presiding officer of the consistory under the supervision of the classis supervisor.
   d. Preside at the ordination and installation of elders and deacons.
   e. Have voice in the meetings of the classis.
   f. If ordained as an elder, serve as an elder delegate of the church.
   g. Perform a service of Christian marriage when approved by consistory and allowed by state law.

7. If the candidate’s ministry includes the administration of the sacraments and the candidate is not an elder, the church in which membership is held will ordain the commissioned pastor as an elder of the great consistory before the commissioned pastor is allowed to administer the sacraments.

8. The performance of the commissioned pastor will be evaluated by the classis every
two years. The classis shall require at least one course of continuing education every two years.

9. The sole responsibility for the approval of the ministry designation resides with the commissioning classis and is transferable from one classis to another upon acceptance and approval by the receiving classis.

Statement of Standards

Ministry competency must be demonstrated in the following areas:

CHARACTER
Commitment to Christ
Maturity of faith
Personal integrity
Faithfulness to the theology and mission of the RCA

KNOWLEDGE
Old Testament
New Testament
Biblical interpretation
RCA theology
Church history
RCA government/polity

SKILLS
Leadership/discipleship/spiritual formation
Ministry in the missional church
Care ministry/interpersonal skills

In addition, the candidate’s program of study shall include at least two courses in the area of specialization. For example:

Preaching
Worship leadership
Christian education
Youth ministry
Spiritual formation

Additional courses of study may be required by the classis until the candidate achieves the desired level of competency. The method of assessment shall be culturally and linguistically appropriate.

In keeping with its responsibilities for oversight of all those in ministry within the RCA, the Office of Ministry Services will be the ideal facilitator for the initiation and ongoing health and vitality of this ministry designation, with the understanding that the classes and regional synods are the front lines of decision-making and implementation of individual plans of study and completion of requirements for those seeking to become commissioned pastors.

Therefore the participants of the summit recommend:
R-86
To direct the Office of Ministry Services, in cooperation with the classes and regional synods, to implement the guidelines and standards for the ministry designation of commissioned pastor as presented in this report.

The advisory committee recommended the following amendment:

R-86 (amended):
To direct the Office of Ministry Services, in cooperation with the classes and regional synods, to develop and implement the guidelines and standards for the ministry designation of commissioned pastor, as presented in this report, on a provisional basis, and to submit a final draft of the guidelines and standards for approval by the 2003 General Synod. (ADOPTED AS AMENDED)

Reason: The amended recommendation directs the office to develop and implement the appropriate guidelines, while still allowing the new ministry designation of commissioned pastor to begin.

Budget implications: $4,000.

R-87
To instruct the Commission on Church Order, in consultation with the Office of Ministry Services and key members of the Summit to Study the Concept of Lay Pastoral Ministry in the RCA, to propose any revisions to the Book of Church Order necessary to address the ministry designation of commissioned pastor, for report to the 2003 General Synod. (ADOPTED)

Reason: It is good to do things decently and in order.

Resources for the Ministry of Commissioned Pastor

The role of the General Synod professors of theology and the Office of Ministry Services staff will be to provide input and resource development to the classes for the ministry of commissioned pastor. A vital part of this input and resource development will be to suggest approved and competent courses that can be used by the candidates for commissioned pastor. A key goal will be to identify distance-learning opportunities so that training will be accessible to all candidates.

Relation to Other Ministry Roles

The Book of Church Order names two other ministry roles that are defined differently than that of commissioned pastor. The roles of Associate in Ministry and preaching elder do not offer the degree of flexibility and authority that comes with this new designation of commissioned pastor.

Future Directions

Within our current polity, other ministry roles are defined. It is not the prerogative of members of this summit to make definitive statements or recommendations regarding those ministries, but we do believe that a careful review of how they blend with and/or comple-
ment the commissioned pastor designation is a discussion that would be valuable in the future.

The summit participants considered it premature to decide at this time whether or not the ministry designation of commissioned pastor should be considered a new office within the Reformed Church in America. That decision is best made after individuals have entered into training and are serving in ministry. However, a dialogue about its feasibility and theological basis and questions and clarifications of what this could mean for the denomination are certainly valid conversations that we should begin now.

Therefore, in closing, the summit participants recommend:

R-88
To direct the Office of Ministry Services to initiate a discernment process in the denomination in 2002 in conjunction with the General Synod professors of theology, to determine the advisability of establishing a new office of commissioned pastor, with report back to the General Synod of 2005.

The advisory committee recommended an amendment to the recommendation:

R-88 (amended):
To direct the Office of Ministry Services to initiate a discernment process in the denomination in 2002 in conjunction with the General Synod professors of theology, to determine the advisability of establishing a new office of commissioned pastor, and report to the 2006 General Synod. (ADOPTED AS AMENDED)

Reason: These advisers need adequate time to complete their work.

From the Report of the Board of Benefits Services

RETIRE MINISTERS OF WORD AND SACRAMENT

During 2001 forty-one RCA ministers of Word and sacrament retired from active service. Those who retired are being recognized by a display of their pictures and service records as well as by General Synod’s endorsement of an appropriate certificate of appreciation for their years of faithful and dedicated ministry in the church.

R-89
To adopt the following resolution:

These have loved Christ and fed his sheep. They have devoted themselves to spreading the Word and equipping the saints for the work of ministry.

Their contribution to a needy world is rich beyond measure; their
record is on high.

The Reformed Church in America, with admiration, deep affection, and overflowing thanks to God, celebrates their lifelong service.

Don Bekkering  
Zeeland, Michigan  

Clement Birkelbach  
Whiting, New Jersey  

Esther Bong Min  
Bayside, New York  

Roger Bruggink  
Sunriver, Oregon  

Gordon Damsteegt  
Jamestown, New York  

James DeWitt  
Cedar Springs, Michigan  

Wilfred Fiet  
Indianapolis, Indiana  

Wayne Hall  
Kentwood, Michigan  

Charles Hesselink  
Amsterdam, New York  

Carl Hiemstra  
Rensselaer, New York  

Harold Hiemstra  
Fort Collins, Colorado  

William Hoffman  
Mt. Marian, New York  

Vernon Hoffs  
Secaucus, New Jersey  

William Hudson  
Qualicum Beach, British Columbia  

Lewis Kain  
Schenectady, New York  

Robert Vander Aarde  
Great Falls, Montana  

Harold Korver  
Roger Vander Kolk
Report of the Task Force on Long-Range Funding for Theological Education

The General Synod Council, in response to the General Synod directive to study funding of theological education (MGS 2000, R-76, p. 346, and R-78, p. 348) appointed a task force to study the long-range funding needs for theological education in the RCA (GSC 00-38).

The Task Force on Long Range Funding for Theological Education met on October 16, 2001, at the Ramada Plaza O’Hare Hotel in Chicago, Illinois. The following people attended the meeting: Wesley Granberg-Michaelson, Cornelis Kors, Norman Kansfield, Dennis Voskuil, Okke Postma, and Vernon L. Hoffs.

The task force members reviewed the financial needs of theological education and ministry formation. Reports were received from the Ministerial Formation Coordinating Agency, Western Theological Seminary, and New Brunswick Theological Seminary in reference to their anticipated costs in the coming years.

The task force noted the following realities as related to theological education and ministry formation:

- Institutions that are supported by assessments cannot depend on increasing assessment for long-range funding.
- There are clear indications that churches and classes are willing to take a greater responsibility to provide funds for ministry formation and theological education.
- There is an urgent need to educate the denomination on the priority of theological education and the need to provide funding for theological education.

Considering these realities, the following recommendation was presented to and approved by the General Synod Council (GSC 01-71):

To approve the recommendations from the task force for long-range theological funding as follows:

That the present level and distribution of assessment for theological education recommended by the 2000 General Synod continue through the year 2005, and further;

that beginning in the year 2003 the congregations of the RCA be
encouraged and educated by the Office of Ministry Services and the seminaries to begin tithing one half of one percent of their annual congregational income and their annual giving for other purposes for the denomination’s program of ministry formation and theological education, and further;

that beginning in the year 2006, the assessment for theological education be reduced by 20 percent for that and each of the following four years, with the result that by the year 2010 there would no longer be assessments for theological education, and further;

that an evaluation of the assessment reduction plan be done in the year 2008.

Report Regarding a Long-Term Strategy for Recruiting, Training, and Empowering Those Called to Ordained Pastoral Leadership

The 2001 General Synod, in response to the Report of the General Secretary, adopted the following recommendation:

That the General Synod instruct the general secretary to convene a process bringing together denominational leadership, including representatives of Ministry and Personnel Services, the new church development staff, the Ministerial Formation Coordinating Agency, the two RCA seminaries, the three RCA colleges, the Commission for Women, the racial/ethnic councils, the regional synods, and others as necessary, to devise a long-term strategy for recruiting, training, and empowering those called to the ordained pastoral leadership of the RCA in order to carry out our mission; and further,

that this strategy include recommendations for changes in our present system, requirements, and process for the training and ordination of ministers of Word and sacrament that may be required to fulfill our mission and vision, for report to the General Synod of 2002 (MGS 2001, R-74, p. 275).

In fulfillment of this task, the general secretary convened a gathering from January 8 to 11, 2002. The planning team for this gathering included the Rev. Kathleen Edwards, the Rev. Gregg Mast, and the Rev. Anthony Vis as well as the Rev. Wesley Granberg-Michaelson (general secretary) and the Rev. Vernon Hoffs (then-director of Ministry and Personnel Services). The Rev. Jacqui Lewis-Tillman, a consultant from the Alban Institute, served as the group facilitator for this meeting. Other participants were as follows:

Elders Ella Campbell and Carol Mutch and the following ordained ministers of Word and sacrament: Gloria McCanna, Timothy Brown, Stephanie Doeschot, Beverly Sullivant, John Chang, Evelyn Diephouse, Carolyn Holloway, Thomas De Vries, Daniel Gillett, David Izenbart, Cornelis Kors, Norman Kansfield, Glen Missick, Paul Fries, Luis Pérez, Sherwin Weener, Richard Otterness, James Brownson, Charles Van Engen, Randal Wieland, and David Zomer.

To gather a sense of the wider church concerning its expectations and evaluation of the
RCA’s process of ministerial formation, a questionnaire designed by the planning team was sent to each minister serving an RCA congregation and each vice-president of consistory. These questions were posed: “In your judgment, is our present system for training and ordaining ministers of Word and sacrament adequately meeting the needs of our congregations? Why or why not?” and “What changes, if any, would you propose in our present requirements and process for training and ordaining ministers of Word and sacrament in the RCA?”

The planning team developed the following two outcomes for the meeting:

1. Provide an opportunity for denominational leaders to present their perspectives on the pastoral leadership needs in the denomination and to share their evaluation of our present ministry formation system.

2. To review the current process leading to ordination of ministers of Word and sacrament and determine what changes are necessary and what additional avenues leading to ordination are required for the recruitment and development of future ordained pastoral leadership.

Approximately 230 responses were received. These were sent to each participant prior to the meeting, and served as an important source of information reflecting perspectives in the RCA on these questions.

During the meeting the group identified five areas in the RCA’s system of ministerial formation needing critical attention. Recommendations were formulated for the General Synod in each of these areas. Decisions of the group concerning these recommendations were made generally by consensus; recommendations were not approved when there was significant and strong reservation among part of the group, even if that was a minority. Throughout its process, the group agreed to a common commitment that served as a foundation for its work: “to equip the whole church for mission in its current cultural setting.”

The five broad areas identified, and the recommendations made, are as follows:

1. The Role of Office, Ordination, and Commissioning

   In the view of the group, the offices of the Reformed tradition can and should continue to be the means for equipping the whole church for mission in its current cultural settings. The challenges faced by the Reformed Church in America can be effectively addressed through an expanded, re-envisioned, and reinvigorated deployment of the offices of minister, General Synod professor, elder, and deacon. Therefore, the group recommends:

   **R-90**
   That the General Synod Council’s Office of Ministry Services continue to focus on ways that expand, re-envision, and refocus these offices for equipping the whole church for mission in its current cultural settings.

The advisory committee recommended an amendment to the recommendation:

**R-90 (amended):**
To direct the Office of Ministry Services to continue to focus on ways that expand, re-envision, and refocus the offices of deacon, elder, minister of Word and sacrament, and General Synod professor of theology for equipping the whole church for mission.
in its current cultural settings. (ADOPTED AS AMENDED)

Reason: This addition clarifies the offices presented in the report.

Within our polity we also should explore ways to empower classes to commission any persons for any ministries the classis believes would be strengthened by classical support and supervision, assuming the framework of our four offices.

In this light, the group also took note of the recommendations coming to the 2002 General Synod concerning establishment of a “commissioned pastor,” which grew out of the report given to the 2001 General Synod by its president, Carol Mutch. This recommendation does not involve the Office of Minister of Word and Sacrament, and thus was not a focus for this group’s work. However, since it relates to the overall issue of providing pastoral support for the ministry of our congregations, the content of this proposal was thoroughly shared.

Finally, the group recognized that a discussion of whether or not the Reformed Church in America should consider establishing a new office (for example, an office of evangelist) to support our call to ministry and mission was brought to last year’s General Synod. This dialogue continues in some parts of the church. Again, because the purpose of this gathering was to focus specifically on the process of formation and ordination for ministers of Word and sacrament, the issue of a new office was not directly addressed. However, the group did agree that the understanding of our present offices should be re-envisioned and expanded, as noted in the recommendation above.

2. The Recruitment, Deployment, Retention, and Sustaining of Ministers of Word and Sacrament

The Reformed Church in America has no integrated strategy, and no clear goals, for discovering and inviting those who may be called by God, in sufficient number and diversity, into the pastoral ministry of the church. While each RCA seminary does commendable work in “recruiting” RCA candidates, we have no denominational plan for meeting the diverse needs of our present and future congregations for pastoral leadership. Statistics presented by the general secretary to last year’s General Synod indicated that 182 of our congregations—nearly one-fifth of our total—are without any minister of Word and sacrament. Therefore, the group offers this recommendation:

R-91
To instruct the General Synod Council’s (GSC’s) Office of Ministry Services, in consultation with appropriate partners, to initiate a denominational strategy with clear goals to identify and call forth future ministers of Word and sacrament to meet the diverse needs of the denomination in order to carry out the mission of the church; for an initial report to the GSC in the fall of 2002 and a complete report to the GSC and the General Synod in 2003.

The advisory committee recommended an amendment to the recommendation:

R-91 (amended):
To instruct the General Synod Council’s (GSC’s) Office of Ministry Services, in consultation with appropriate partners, to initiate a denominational strategy with clear goals to identify and
call forth future ministers of Word and sacrament to meet the
diverse needs of the denomination in order to carry out the
mission of the church; for an initial report to the GSC in the fall of
2002 and report to the 2003 General Synod. (ADOPTED AS
AMENDED)

Reason: It is important to grant sufficient time for the office to do the work well.

The group discussed many ideas for implementing such a strategy. For example,
every regional synod could offer a weekend designated for junior and senior high
school students identified by their congregations and church camps to explore the
vocational call to ministry. Also, congregationally-based training/internship pro-
grams for young people considering this call could be established. These and many
other potential initiatives could be developed appropriately once an overall denom-
national strategy and goals are established.

Many are called by God to ministry, prepared through a process of ministerial for-
mation, and ready to serve the church, but they are blocked from utilizing their gifts
by a variety of obstacles. This is especially true for women who successfully com-
plete all their training and desire to fulfill God’s call on their lives, but find congreg-
gations resistant and unwilling to consider calling them simply because they are
women. However, many congregations would welcome assistance and resources as
they consider their theological views on women in office. Therefore, this recom-
mandation is proposed:

R-92
To direct the General Synod Council to make available additional
educational resources for pastors and congregations to support the
full inclusion of women in all the offices of the church.

The recommendation was amended as follows:

R-92 (amended):
To direct the General Synod Council to make available additional
educational resources, including biblical and theological
resources, for pastors and congregations, supporting the full
inclusion of women and minorities in all the offices of the church.
(ADOPTED AS AMENDED)

Reason: The revised recommendation clearly states the variety of resources requested.

Obstacles to utilizing the gifts of all those qualified and trained for the RCA’s diverse
needs of pastoral leadership and ministry today can take many forms. Further, situ-
atations vary between regions of the church. This recommendation could address such
a challenge:

R-93
To direct the General Synod Council to develop regional strategies
for identifying the current “invisible” leadership pool; and
further,

to develop a plan to identify and challenge obstacles (i.e., financial,
ethnic, gender, bylaws, etc.) to the utilization of these resources.
The advisory committee recommended an amendment to R-93:

**R-93 (amended):**
To direct the General Synod Council to develop regional strategies for identifying the current “invisible” leadership pool and to develop a plan to identify and challenge obstacles (i.e., financial, ethnic, gender, bylaws, etc.) to the utilization of these resources. *(ADOPTED AS AMENDED)*

**Reason:** This clarifies that the General Synod Council is responsible for the complete process.

One serious restraint to calling forth, training, and ordaining an adequate number and diversity of ministers of Word and sacrament is the financial cost of this process. Candidates from racial/ethnic minority groups, due to various social circumstances, often are confronted with severe financial restraints. As an initial step to address this challenge, the following recommendation is proposed:

**R-94**
To request the General Synod Council to allocate the proceeds from the VanBunschooten bequest to be used to support minority candidates to attend Rutgers University in preparation for ordained ministry in the RCA, and to explore establishing a scholarship fund for the same purpose for students attending RCA colleges. *(ADOPTED)*

In order to enable the resources for theological education and ministerial training to become more accessible to a wider number of potential candidates for pastoral leadership in our congregations, the group proposes this recommendation:

**R-95**
To direct the Ministerial Formation Coordinating Agency to continue to encourage the development of distance learning resources to support the equipping of candidates for ministry in the RCA. *(ADOPTED)*

Throughout the course of the meeting the challenge of ongoing, lifelong learning for ministers of Word and sacrament was frequently raised. This same theme echoes frequently through the responses to the questionnaire sent to pastors and congregations. A strong consensus exists that ministers of Word and sacrament must be nurtured in accountable ways to evaluate and improve their capacity for ministerial leadership. The present provision in the standard call form concerning continued education for ministers of Word and sacrament is a first step. A congregation makes the following commitment: “We promise to provide a minimum of one week and a stipend equal to no less than the equivalent of 1/52 of the minimum cash salary established by the classis for a study program mutually agreed upon by you and us for your professional development, for each year in service.” However, no effective means exists to make certain this is implemented. Further, we have no common expectations as a denomination regarding the ongoing development and learning of our ministers of Word and sacrament.

For example, we might require that each classis, in carrying out its responsibility of oversight of ministers of Word and sacrament *(BCO, Chapter 1, Part II, Article 12, Section 4)*, implement a system of pastoral assessment of its ministers of Word and sacrament every seven to ten years as to fitness for ministry. We can refer to the
United Reformed Church of England for an example of how such a process can work effectively.

As an initial way to move forward on this need, the group proposes:

**R-96**
To direct the General Synod Council’s Office of Ministry Services to propose a denominational standard for lifelong development of ministers of Word and sacrament, along with appropriate procedures for accountability to that standard, for report back to General Synod 2003.

The recommendation was amended as follows:

**R-96 (amended):**
To direct the General Synod Council’s Office of Ministry Services to propose a denominational standard for lifelong development of ministers of Word and sacrament, along with appropriate procedures so that classes can provide accountability to that standard, and report to the 2004 General Synod. (ADOPTED AS AMENDED)

Reasons:

1. This provides time for conversation with classes, which are responsible for holding ministers accountable.

2. It also allows adequate time for the Office of Ministry Services to develop the standard and procedures for classes.

3. **General Synod Standards for Ordination**

The General Synod of the Reformed Church in America has the responsibility to articulate the standards that should be met by any candidate who is called and prepared to be a minister of Word and sacrament. The synod then directs its “agents”—in this case, New Brunswick Theological Seminary, Western Theological Seminary, and the Ministerial Formation Coordinating Agency—to implement programs of ministerial formation that can prepare candidates to fulfill the expectations of our denominational standards. Therefore, whether a candidate for minister of Word and sacrament attends New Brunswick Theological Seminary, Western Theological Seminary, or a non-RCA seminary, or proceeds through the Approved Alternate Route, he or she will be expected to meet a common set of expectations for ministers of Word and sacrament in the RCA, as expressed through these standards.

The General Synod approved the RCA’s present set of standards in 1997 (*MGS* 1997, R-19, p. 352). Subsequently, the General Synod professors of theology organized these standards into seven specific areas, which has proved to be a helpful way for applying them to judge and evaluate candidates for minister of Word and sacrament. Such standards are never immutable. They can be adjusted and changed as the church through the General Synod continually assesses what qualities and forms of preparation are required for ministers of Word and sacrament to meet the challenges of ministry and mission in our time.

The learning of the Greek and Hebrew languages has been part of the RCA’s standards for ordination. The group that met and prepared this report agreed unanimously that this requirement should be changed. While several factors were cited,
those representing our theological seminaries pointed out that our present approach typically does not prepare pastors for a lifetime of language use. More required time is not a realistic option. Many other courses and forms of training are seen by the church at large to be absolutely critical for effective pastoral ministry. Several respondents to the questionnaire echoed this point of view.

More importantly, many believe that the goal of effective biblical interpretation needed for preaching can be achieved reasonably through the use of many interpretive resources now available. Knowledge of the Greek and Hebrew culture and worldview, as well as insight into components of these languages, is certainly helpful for developing the skills of biblical interpretation. But most agree that these skills can be acquired without taking the time and study necessary to fully master the Greek and Hebrew languages. While such language proficiency should remain an option, the group believes it should no longer should be required for ordination to the office of minister of Word and sacrament.

Therefore, the group proposes this recommendation:

R-97
To direct the Ministerial Formation Coordinating Agency to revise the standards for ordination to minister of Word and sacrament and to propose revisions to the Book of Church Order to require the capacity for effective biblical interpretation, but not Greek and Hebrew language study.

The advisory committee recommended voting against the recommendation for the following reasons:

1. The use of Greek and Hebrew by ministers of Word and sacrament is one of the central tenets of our Reformed tradition.

2. The present standard for the languages, “sufficient Greek and Hebrew to understand the nuances of the biblical text,” is not burdensome, but quite flexible, and should be retained.

3. The church already has processes and structures in place to accommodate those who are unable to learn the biblical languages, but are gifted and called for ministry.

A motion was made to refer the recommendation:

R-98
To refer R-97 to the general secretary’s committee to study the long-term strategy for recruiting, training, and empowering those called to ordained pastoral leadership. (ADOPTION)

The advisory committee offered a new recommendation:

R-99
To direct the Commission on Theology to undertake a study of the level of competence in the use of biblical languages required for the ministry of Word and sacrament, with special attention given to preaching and teaching the Word, the integrity of doctrine, and the theological task of the church. (NOT ADOPTED)

Reason: To provide the church with a consistent biblical rationale for the language requirement.
4. Gatekeepers and the Decision-Making Process

Evaluating our system of ministerial formation requires asking not only what should be required and how shall this be accomplished, but also asking who should make decisions regarding whether candidates are adequately prepared and are ready to be examined for ordination. For candidates not attending an RCA seminary, the group agreed that a balanced mix of those representing the offices of our order should play the key roles in the decision-making process in granting the Certificate of Fitness. (The Certificate of Fitness is granted by the board of trustees of the MFCA, upon recommendation of a certification committee, or by the board of trustees of one of the RCA seminaries, before a candidate faces a final examination by classis for ordination.)

In this light, the following recommendation is proposed:

**R-100**
To direct the Ministerial Formation Coordinating Agency Board of Trustees to propose revisions to its bylaws so that the Reformed Candidate Supervision and Care Certification Committee is composed of two professors of theology, one from each RCA seminary; two ministers of Word and sacrament; and two additional members, preferably an elder and a deacon or layperson, for report to the 2003 General Synod. (NOT ADOPTED)

The group also discussed whether the granting of a Certificate of Fitness, or a decision to delay or deny the same, should include an explanation from MFCA or the seminaries giving the reasons for its actions, and then provide an opportunity for the classis to appeal such an action. Recognizing that such actions take place at least on an informal level at present, no recommendations on this matter were made.

5. The Disparity in Student Care Provided by the Classes of the RCA

Perhaps no part of our present system of ministerial formation received more consistent concern among the members of this group than the disparity of student care experienced by candidates among the various classes of the RCA. *The Book of Church Order* gives to each classis fundamental and critical responsibilities for identifying, receiving, supporting, examining, and ordaining those called to be ministers of Word and sacrament (*BCO*, Chapter 1, Part II, Article 8, Sections 1-9; Article 9, Sections 1-4; and Article 10, Sections 1-7). But in many cases, our classes appear ill-equipped for this task. Given that in a majority of cases, a classis carries out this task through the voluntary efforts of its members, it is understandable that the time and consistent attention necessary for these responsibilities often seems lacking. Further, the complexity of the ministerial formation and ordination process, as well as the procedures involved in the new Approved Alternate Route, often are simply not understood sufficiently.

To begin addressing these problems, the group offers two recommendations that can be implemented in the near future:

**R-101**
To instruct the Ministerial Formation Coordinating Agency to publish a user-friendly guide for classes that clearly explains our processes for ministry formation. (ADOPTED)
R-102
To encourage regional synods to sponsor an annual training and resourcing event for the chairs of classis student care committees (or their equivalent) and to urge every classis to establish such a committee if it does not exist.

The advisory committee recommended an amendment to the recommendation:

R-102 (amended):
To urge every classis to establish a student care committee if it does not exist. (ADOPTED AS AMENDED)

Reason: The first part of this recommendation is addressed in R-78.

However, the group also believes that more radical, systemic changes to our structure should be given consideration in order to ensure that our system of ministerial formation functions effectively to support the mission and ministry of the RCA. Fundamentally, the problem is that our polity places crucial responsibilities for ministerial ordination (and other critical functions in the church’s life) at the classis level, while the resources of staff and finance are placed primarily at the regional synod and General Synod level.

One solution would be for regional synods to take on many of the responsibilities currently assigned in our polity to the classis. This could, in effect, create eight major assemblies, with staff and resources, to carry out many of the functions currently given to our forty-six classes. Those present classes would, in turn, be freer to function as networks of pastoral support, focusing on cooperative ministry, recruitment, conflict resolution, and other means to strengthen the ministry of their local congregations.

Naturally, the group recognized the widespread ramifications of such a sweeping change. Yet, the serious consideration given by some members of the group to such a proposal simply indicates the depth of concern about the failures in our present structure.

A task force was appointed by last year’s General Synod to consider in its first year the relationship of the General Synod Council and the General Synod, and in its second year the relationship between our classes, regional synods, and General Synod (MGS 2001, R-13, p. 66). Therefore, the issue raised by the group already has a place for consideration following the 2002 General Synod. With this in mind, the group proposes this recommendation:

R-103
To direct the General Synod Task Force on the Relationship of the General Synod and General Synod Council to consider whether regional synods should begin to function as the classes of the RCA so that classical authority, including care and supervision of candidates for ordination, would be exercised at that level. (NOT ADOPTED)

The advisory committee recommended voting against the recommendation for the following reasons:
1. Reorganization does not address the problem.

2. Working with the current classis structure offers a better solution to proper care of the students.

Remaining Issues to Address

The General Synod of 2001 instructed the general secretary “to convene a process bringing together denomination leadership” in order to address the challenges facing our system of ministerial formation, and make recommendations to the General Synod. The group gathered for this purpose made significant progress in carrying out this task. The recommendations in this report represent important changes and directions that have the widespread support of denominational leadership representing the voices of RCA institutions, agencies, and diverse constituencies.

However, the group also acknowledged that its task is not yet complete. First, all recognize that the two RCA seminaries and MFCA are strengthened by ongoing evaluation of how they prepare candidates who can fulfill the standards set by the General Synod and provide faithful and effective pastoral ministry for our congregations. Such evaluation is welcomed by the seminaries and MFCA, and is an ongoing responsibility of their boards of trustees.

While there are various criteria for such evaluations, the group wants to urge that the information gathered from the questionnaires that were sent to each pastor and congregation, and the research carried out through the work of “natural church development,” which identifies eight common characteristics of healthy congregations*, be utilized. In other words, the effectiveness of our system of ministerial formation, and the role of our seminaries and MFCA in that process, should be measured, at least in part, by the current and desired health and vitality of our congregations as they are served by those called, prepared, and ordained to be ministers of Word and sacrament. In that spirit, the group proposes this recommendation:

R-104
To request the boards of trustees of the RCA seminaries and the Ministerial Formation Coordinating Agency to conduct an evaluation of their roles in the ministry formation process as they prepare ministers of Word and sacrament to lead RCA congregations, in light of the eight characteristics of healthy congregations and the needs of the church as identified through the Office of Ministry Services questionnaires, and to present that evaluation and report to the 2003 General Synod; and further,

to identify changes necessary in that process in order to strengthen the development of ministers of Word and sacrament who will provide for local congregations leadership that nurtures their health and effectiveness in their mission contexts.

The advisory committee recommended an amendment to the recommendation:

R-104 (amended):
To request the boards of trustees of the RCA seminaries and the Ministerial Formation Coordinating Agency to conduct an evaluation of their roles in the ministry formation process as they prepare ministers of Word and sacrament to lead RCA congregations, and to present that evaluation and report to the 2003 General Synod; and further,
to identify changes necessary in that process in order to strengthen the development of ministers of Word and sacrament who will provide for local congregations leadership that nurtures their health and effectiveness in their mission contexts. (ADOPTED AS AMENDED)

Reason: It is important not to restrict the tools used for the study, since there are other resources and tools that are also worthy.

The most challenging issue not yet resolved is whether and how our system of ministerial formation can prepare those who feel genuinely called by God to the pastoral ministry, and who may already be serving a congregation in some capacity, but for whom years of study at a seminary away from their home is not a realistic possibility. More is involved here than issues of practicality. Some in the RCA strongly believe that we need to develop models of ministerial formation that take place more in congregational settings, and enable the resources of theological education and training to be brought to candidates in that context. Others in the RCA are convinced that the focused experience of education and learning that takes place within the seminary community is the only proven and reliable path for preparing ministers of Word and sacrament within the Reformed tradition.

Of course this need not be seen as an either/or. Already, RCA seminaries are making important changes to integrate the learning experience of students in “teaching churches” as part of their normal course of study and preparation. Yet, we do face a serious tension between those who stress the need to bring theological education for candidates into local contexts, and those who are convinced that candidates must be brought to seminaries to receive theological education.

Beneath this tension is the challenge of how to balance the need for flexibility in our system of ministerial formation with the need for all ministers of Word and sacrament in the RCA to meet a common and uniform set of expectations. Can we uphold a trustworthy commitment to our Reformed identity in those whom we ordain to be ministers of Word and sacrament and still allow for a diversity of models for ministerial formation, some that are more congregationally-based, and others primarily based at seminaries? Further, what changes in our system of ministerial formation are essential if we are to ensure in the future that all RCA congregations will have the possibility of being served by a minister of Word and sacrament? How will our present critical shortage of ministers be overcome?

These questions have yet to find compelling answers. The group agreed that it is essential for the Reformed Church in America to resolve these issues if we are to carry out our mission of “equipping congregations for ministry.” Therefore, this final recommendation is proposed:

**R-105**
To instruct the general secretary to continue the present process initiated by the 2001 General Synod and explore how the RCA can more effectively identify, support, train, certify, and ordain emerging leaders who are in faithful ministries in their cultural contexts, for report to the 2003 General Synod. (ADOPTED)

*Budget implications: $12,200*
The intent of this recommendation is to determine how the RCA can allow flexible and diverse models for ministerial formation yet maintain uniform standards.

This report is written and respectfully submitted to the 2002 General Synod by the planning team that facilitated this gathering; the recommendations reflect the consensus of the whole group.

Overture

1. The Classis of Pleasant Prairie overtures the General Synod to direct the president of General Synod to appoint a committee of seven ministers, including at least three retired ministers, to review the “senior pastor” ministry program for retired ministers of Word and sacrament of the RCA. This review shall include a questionnaire sent to all retired ministers and ministers’ widows to determine whether they feel this ministry should be continued, should be made a classis responsibility, or should be dropped, with report to General Synod 2003.

Reasons:

1. There has not been a total review of this program to determine whether retired people want this program.

2. It should be determined if there are other ways that this program could be administered to ensure the costs associated with it are appropriate.

3. One of the original purposes of this program was to determine financial needs of retired ministers; it is necessary to determine whether this is still a valid need.

4. Some retired ministers would like to see the program dropped.

5. The once-a-year visit does not provide a strong support system.

6. The money saved by dropping this program could be better used to make grants to those retired persons in need.

Cost Associated with This Overture:

The costs to be covered by the Board of Benefit Services: one meeting of the committee to plan the survey, printing and mailing of survey, and one meeting to study the survey and make recommendations.

In response to Overture 1, the advisory committee recommended:

R-106
To deny Overture 1.

Reasons:

1. A means of evaluating the “senior pastor” program is in place.

2. It continues to be found an effective and valuable service.
FAITHFUL WITNESSES

The Church Gathered
You will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth (Acts 1:8).

Those words are not a command but a promise. The command was to wait: “While staying with them, he ordered them not to leave Jerusalem, but to wait there for the promise of the Father” (Acts 1:4; cf., Luke 24:45). The promise is that those who wait will receive power to be witnesses.

Obeying the command and trusting the promise, the church gathers to wait and to pray.

We gather to be shaped by the Word and to be fed at Christ’s table.

Our waiting and praying are marks of obedience and trust in the one who has promised the gift of the Spirit.

Our waiting and praying is an acknowledgment that the promised kingdom is not to be built by human hands, but is a gift to be given in God’s own time. Our waiting and praying is an indication that the things that need to be done in the world are beyond our ability to accomplish by our own efforts, programs, or strategies.

Our waiting and praying is an indication that the gift of the Spirit is never an assured possession of the church but is a gift that must be constantly sought anew in prayer.¹

The Church Sent
“All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything that I have commanded you. And remember, I am with you always, to the end of the age” (Matthew 28:18-20).

These words are a command with a promise. The command is to go and make disciples. The promise is that those who go, go not alone, but with the companionship of Jesus Christ.

Obeying the command and trusting the promise, the church goes forth to make disciples.

We go forth to announce good news, to teach all that our Lord commands, and to invite all people to the waters of life and the fellowship of the table.

Our going forth is a mark of obedience and trust in the one who sends us and promises to be with us.

Our going forth is an indication that God makes use of human talents and efforts in bringing to fruition the kingdom that is coming.

We go with the assurance that the one who sends us will be with us always.
We wait and pray in confidence, for he who has promised is faithful and will give us “grace according to the measure of Christ’s gift...to equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ, until all of us come to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to maturity, to the measure of the full stature of Christ” (Ephesians 4:7, 12-13).

We go in confidence, for he who has promised is faithful and will give us “grace according to the measure of Christ’s gift...to equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ, until all of us come to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to maturity, to the measure of the full stature of Christ” (Ephesians 4:7, 12-13).

GOAL

Obeying the command and trusting the promise, the people of the Reformed Church in America seek to be Faithful Witnesses to Christ’s resurrection, ministering to the total life of all people by preaching, teaching, and proclamation of the gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God, and by all Christian good works. In partnership with Mission Services, the racial/ethnic councils, regional synods, and classes, Congregational Services/Evangelism and Church Development (CS/EVCD) will provide leadership, guidance, and resources to assist congregations in being faithful witnesses to the gospel in their own contexts of ministry. It will do this by focusing its efforts jointly in the areas of worship, discipleship, leadership development, and outreach.

During the past year the staff of CS/EVCD has sought to carry out objectives made known through Scripture and expressed in the Statement of Mission and Vision, the Twelve Priorities established by the General Synod Council, and the Faithful Witnesses document. Those accomplishments are highlighted in this report and expanded in the reports of the individual offices: Christian Education, Worship, Social Witness, Diaconal Ministries, Evangelism, and New Church Development.

The work of these offices is represented individually in reports for their respective General Synod advisory committees, so that General Synod delegates and readers of General Synod minutes can more easily find appropriate material. However, the Faithful Witnesses document is based on the premise that, while documents can be separated for reporting purposes, our lives and actions represent the theological truth that word and deed, doing and being, gathering and sending belong together in a wholistic expression of our Christian faith. The Faithful Witnesses document is an expression of that belief in and commitment to unity.

Endnotes:

1 See William Willimon, Commentary on the Acts of the Apostles, Interpretation Series
2 Hebrews 10:23
3 Preamble to the Book of Church Order

WORSHIPPING THE LORD

Great and amazing are your deeds, Lord God the Almighty!
Just and true are your ways, King of the nations!
Lord, who will not fear and glorify your name?
For you alone are holy.
All nations will come and worship before you,
for your judgments have been revealed (Rev. 15:3-4).
Each week the church gathers to meet God in Word and sacrament and is sent again into the world to witness to Jesus as Savior and Lord. Worship itself is both a gift from God and a response to God. In the assembly gathered for worship, God is at the center and we are placed in community. Here God addresses us with his Word, washes us in grace, feeds us at his table, and joins us to Christ and to one another. Here we sing songs, offer praises, receive forgiveness, hear the stories of God’s mighty acts, and bring the world before God in prayer. “In Christ God was reconciling the world to himself” (2 Cor. 5:19). In worship the people of God witness to and participate in this reconciling movement of God toward the world.

These are some examples of how CS/EVCD has lived out this commitment to worship:

Sing! A New Creation: This supplemental hymnal, developed in cooperation with the Christian Reformed Church in North America and released in the summer of 2001, gives congregations single-book access to some of the best current church music, songs, and choruses from around the world.

www.rca.org: The Reformed Church in America website is increasingly becoming a source of worship resources. All new RCA liturgies, many older liturgies, and all seasonal worship resources (Advent and Lent) are accessible through the website. Work is also progressing in translating many of these resources into different languages of the RCA.

Children and Worship: More than three hundred RCA congregations use the Children and Worship program to introduce young children to the gospel in a worshipful setting. The RCA equips trainers across North America to provide congregations with assistance in this ministry.

Children and Worship International: Through the office for children’s ministries and the financial support of individuals and congregations, the Children and Worship program now serves RCA mission partner congregations in The Gambia, Hungary, Kenya, and South Africa.

Worshipful Work: Each staff meeting has worship as an integral part of the meeting as a means to model the importance of worship in a variety of settings. Discernment training also provides congregations with a means for seeing the role of worship throughout life and work.

MAKING DISCIPLES

A disciple is not above the teacher; nor a slave above the master; it is enough for the disciple to be like the teacher, and the slave like the master (Matthew 10:24-25). Whoever does not carry the cross and follow me cannot be my disciple (Luke 14:27).

Under the guidance of the Word and Holy Spirit, the church is called to form people whose lives are shaped after the life and teachings of Jesus. They will follow Jesus in ministering to those in need, standing with those who are oppressed, and comforting those who sorrow. They will follow Jesus in being a people who are called to do justice, to love kindness, and to walk humbly with God (Micah 6:8). The making of Jesus-followers and cross-carriers is a lifelong process and belongs to the entire community of faith. Through worship and teaching, through prayer and in ministry to those in need, in our witness in the world and in our life together, we are called to help each other grow up in every way into Christ (Ephesians 4:15).
These are some examples of how CS/EVCD has lived out this commitment to making disciples:

**Catechumenate:** Modeled after the early Christian church, the catechumenate provides a framework for the welcoming and discipling of new Christians. Three training events have been held in the past year, in Michigan, Florida, and New York; the latter event was cosponsored with the Regional Synod of Albany.

**Peace and the Care of Creation:** Fifty Caring for Creation coordinators serve congregations as resource people, providing materials and learning opportunities on environmental issues and stewardship of the earth.

**September 11:** Key resources for children and adults were made available via the RCA website and in mailings to all RCA congregations in the aftermath of the terrorist attacks of September 11.

**“Every Christian—Called by God Gifted for Ministry”:** This resource on the identification and use of spiritual gifts was developed by the Office of Christian Education and the RCA Distribution Center and sent to every RCA congregation, in response to a 2001 General Synod directive.

**Wind and Fire:** Nearly one hundred people have committed to pray for the RCA daily as part of a denominational prayer network, an outgrowth of Mission 2000. *Wind and Fire* is the network’s newsletter and is available to all interested RCA members.

**Offering of Letters:** Scores of RCA congregations supported Bread for the World in their offering of letters and workshops on world hunger.

**Learning for Life:** This comprehensive, 250-page, loose-leaf notebook helps congregations build the foundation for an effective ministry of education and faith formation. It includes Bible studies, workshop materials, teaching aids, and a host of other practical items. It was distributed at no cost to over 550 RCA congregations that requested a copy.

**Still Learning for Life:** All congregations and interested individuals can receive this monthly newsletter, with new learnings, practical tips for education, and new resources for ministry, by email or regular mail.

**Curriculum:** The RCA, with its ecumenical partners, continues to help develop and make available (through the RCA Distribution Center) the best in core curriculum materials for adults and children. In addition, RCA-specific material such as LIME (Living in Mission Everywhere) has been produced.

**Project Timothy:** annually, fifty RCA young people gain firsthand experience in cross-cultural mission settings, stretching themselves and building foundations of faith that last a lifetime.

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**EQUIPPING THE SAINTS**

*The gifts he [Christ] gave were that some would be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, some pastors and teachers, to equip the saints for the work of ministry* (Ephesians 4:11).

Leaders in the church arise out of the community of faith in order to serve it and to equip
EVANGELIZATION AND CHURCH GROWTH

it for ministry in the world. Church leaders are called by God, empowered by the Holy Spirit, and sustained by the grace of Jesus Christ to witness to the transforming power of the gospel and to serve as Christ served.

In the Reformed Church in America leadership is formally invested in the offices of minister of Word and sacrament, elder, and deacon. Together they are called to enable the whole ministry of the church and to equip all those who through baptism are called to be disciples of Jesus Christ.

These are some examples of how CS/EVCD has lived out this commitment to the equipping of leaders:

**Discernment:** The Pentecost Letter from Mission 2000 was the product of an intentional effort at discernment. A network of trained leaders across the denomination are bringing the values and insights of discernment to denominational gatherings and local congregations.

**Called to Serve: Deacons and Elders Together:** Formerly Deacon’s Bench, this all-new resource, produced and distributed twice a year to all RCA congregations, celebrates and equips people called to the offices of deacon and elder in their specific callings and in their unity.

**What’s an Elder to Be?** This new video resource for elders is scheduled to be released in time for General Synod 2002.

**Children and Worship:** In June 2001 Children and Worship trainers gathered in Michigan for an RCA-sponsored time of updating and equipping.

**Ethnic Writers Training Event:** In response to the church and the General Synod, the office for children’s ministry began a mentoring program that will train and equip curriculum writers from racial/ethnic communities and constituencies.

**Evangelism Webpage:** Updated regularly, this resource on the RCA website provides insights into an intentional ministry of evangelism.

**Revitalization:** The revitalization task force met twice in the last year and planned two events for the east coast: one at New Brunswick Theological Seminary and the other at the Warwick Center. To date, more than two hundred-fifty pastors are involved in revitalization networks; thirty-one new networks were formed in the last year.

**REACHING OUT TO ALL PEOPLE**

“Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved.” But how are they to call on one in whom they have not believed? And how are they to believe in one of whom they have never heard? And how are they to hear without someone to proclaim him? And how are they to proclaim him unless they are sent? As it is written, “How beautiful are the feet of those who bring good news!”...So faith comes from what is heard, and what is heard comes through the word of Christ” (Romans 10:13-15, 17).

Winsomely sharing the good news of Jesus Christ in word and deed is a calling of all Christians. By the Holy Spirit all who are baptized receive a ministry: to witness to Jesus as Savior and Lord and to love and serve those with whom they live and work. We are ambassadors for Christ, who reconciles and makes whole. We are the salt of the earth; we are the light of the world. The ministry of evangelism, “one beggar telling another beggar where to find bread” (D. T. Niles), is a natural and grateful response to the new life we have experienced through Jesus Christ.
The formation of new churches is part of the church’s faithful witness to the resurrection of Jesus Christ. The community of Jesus Christ will look beyond itself, reaching out to those who have not yet heard the gospel or found it compelling. In seeking to present the gospel in a variety of contexts and situations, new congregations may vary widely in worship styles, geographic settings, and socioeconomic conditions. Whatever its particular style or setting, a congregation of Jesus Christ will seek to know him and to make him known; it will gather regularly for the preaching of the Word, prayer, and the celebration of the sacraments; members will serve each other and those in need; they will reach out in love to those who do not yet know Christ.

These are some examples of how CS/EVCD has lived out this commitment to outreach:

**Evangelism Workshops:** Eighteen workshops have been held in congregations across the country.

**Evangelism Training Events:** Two major events were held last year with our ecumenical partners, and two events are being planned for the coming year.

**New Church Planter Training:** A training and support event for over one hundred pastors and spouses involved in the ministry of church plants was held in January 2002 in San Diego, California.

**New Church Pastor Evaluation:** Over twenty candidates have been evaluated by either Gallup or the Ridley interview, in order to identify those persons gifted and called to the ministry of new church development.

**New Churches Started:** Eleven congregations have been approved for inclusion in the denominational plan; three additional ministries are completing their paperwork. Since 1998, the RCA has started 50 percent of churches toward its goal of eighty new churches by December 31, 2005.

**New Church Development Webpage:** A webpage specifically devoted to the needs of church start congregations will have been added to the RCA website by the time General Synod meets.

**New Initiatives Grants:** Over $716,000 has been granted to congregations over a three-year period to develop new ministries to reach the unchurched.

**Restarts:** Since the Faithful Witnesses program began in 1999, ten congregations have been restarted. This is half of our goal of twenty churches by December 31, 2005.

**Churches Organized:** Seven churches have been formally organized and will be recognized at General Synod 2002.

**Growth Task Force:** Established by the 2001 General Synod to monitor the future growth of the RCA, this task force has had numerous communications via mail and phone and met in March 2002 to prepare a report for General Synod 2002.
From the Report of the General Synod Council’s Evangelism and Church Development Services Committee

REPORT OF THE OFFICE OF EVANGELISM AND CHURCH DEVELOPMENT SERVICES

REPORT ON REVITALIZATION

Obeying the command and trusting the promise, the people of the Reformed Church in America seek to be Faithful Witnesses to Christ’s resurrection, ministering to the total life of all people by preaching, teaching, and proclamation of the gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God, and by all Christian good works.

The work of revitalization is one part of a common effort in the Reformed Church to live out ministries of worship, discipleship, equipping leaders, and outreach in a wholistic way, as faithful witnesses to the gospel message of Jesus Christ.

Transforming RCA Pastors and Churches

A Commitment to Revitalization

Is God worth following?
If He is, why don’t we follow Him?
What would happen to us and to our world if we did follow Him?
It is important to think about the kingdom message of Jesus, and His call to follow.
But more than that we must examine the spiritual ground of our own lives and prepare to take some new steps in the footprints of our Master . . .
You see, who I am following will determine where I am going! . . .
The heart of the Christian gospel is Jesus’ offer to be the leader we can trust—and His insistence that every believer become a follower He can trust.

—from Follow Me, by Jan David Hettinga

Revitalization is about control. It is answering the question: “Who is in control of the church?” It is giving back each church to God and the moving of the moving of the Holy Spirit. It is believing the promise of Jesus in Matthew 16:18: “I will build my church, and the gates of Hades will not prevail against it.”

When pastors and churches follow Christ in mission, they are discovering the life that comes from surrendering and serving God in refreshing ways. Revitalization is a spiritual issue. No program, no person alone can bring renewal to a church or congregation—only God can.

A movement of renewal and revitalization is being cultivated in the Reformed Church in America. From Warwick, New York, to Lynden, Washington, and in places like Buena Park, California, and Yankton, South Dakota, people are experiencing the vitality of ministry that is surrendered to and empowered by the Spirit of God.

Background

Since 1997 a group of RCA pastors under the challenge and leadership of the Rev. Anthony Vis, 1996 General Synod president, have been gathering to study and strategize the need and response of the RCA to help pastors and churches in the process of renewal and revitalization.
The 1996 General Synod voted:

To instruct the General Synod Council’s Evangelism and Church Development Services Committee, in cooperation with the Council of Field Secretaries and the Policy, Planning, and Administration Services Committee, to engage in a study of revitalized congregations; and further,

to propose, using that study as a basis, specific plans and strategies for such revitalization that can be implemented through the General Synod Council in cooperation with regional synods, classes, and consistorys; and further,

to make this study a priority during 1997 and 1998, for report to the 1998 General Synod (MGS 1996, R-11, p. 369).

The report to the 1998 General Synod identified barriers to revitalization and foundational elements that are present in turnaround churches.

**Barriers to Revitalization**

- **Demonic Divisions** — The Bible is clear regarding the spiritual struggle and demonic dimension to the realization of the mission of the church. This is especially true of churches in need of revitalization.
- **Leadership Challenged** — From inadequate pastoral training models, which have not produced ministers capable of leading the church, to laity who have not been equipped and encouraged to use their leadership gifts, the declining church faces a leadership challenge that is a significant barrier to the process of renewal.
- **No Passion for God** — When there is no passion, no hunger or thirst for God, new life is illusive. Renewal may need to be preceded by repentance. This barrier can only be broken down through the power of the Holy Spirit, who is able to bring conviction and empowering.
- **Not Mission-Driven** — A congregation’s unwillingness or inability to communicate the gospel, to search out its biblical purpose and live it out accordingly is one of the greatest barriers to revitalization.
- **People Not Using Their Gifts** — Turning a church around is blocked by the limiting of lay participation. The ministry must be entrusted to God’s people, God’s building made with living stones who can minister for God’s glory.
- **Internal Focus** — A major barrier to a church’s revitalization efforts is the maintaining of a self-centered, internal focus that cares not for the people for whom God cares and for whom Jesus died on the cross, but instead communicates: “This church exists for me and my family, and to meet our needs.”
- **Pastors and Lay Leaders Lack Christ-Like Authenticity** — Unless pastors and lay leaders are willing to grow in their walk with God to a place of being living examples of the transforming power of Jesus Christ, they will be both stumbling blocks and barriers to the work of revitalization that God desires to do in the church.

**Foundational Elements**

While there are barriers that make it difficult for stuck and stagnant churches to turn around and experience health and vitality, there are also five foundational elements common to RCA churches that are being transformed and re-formed into communities of life and joy:

- **Spiritual Renewal** — Revitalized churches have members who have personally experienced a spiritual renaissance. They have a passionate spirituality that is reflected in the personal time they spend with God in Bible study and prayer, a hunger and thirst for the righteousness of God, and a living out of their faith with contagious enthusiasm, willingly sharing it with others.
• **Positive Leadership** — Renewed congregations have pastoral leadership that knows where the church should be going. The pastor does not need to personally have all the skills required, but must know how to find people to be actively involved in the work of ministry. It is leadership that possesses a vision for the church and empowers the church and its leaders to be visionaries.

• **Clarity of Purpose** — Refocused churches have embarked on a process of determining God’s unique call for them and their ministries. They have a profound sense of the reason for their church’s existence and are able to articulate it. Ministry decisions flow out of their clarity of purpose, and this clarity helps these churches to do ministry on purpose.

• **Sense of Community** — Churches experiencing renewal are committed to living out the love of Christ in biblical community. These churches celebrate their life in Christ and engage in activities that build greater relationships. These relationships are characterized by a relatively high degree of love and caring and are established with other Christians within the local covenant community and also those outside the church.

• **Effective Management** — Churches who desire revitalization are willing to look at each program and ministry and are open to assess, evaluate, and even change or delete ministries that are no longer effective.

The process of identifying barriers and foundational elements led to the development of a simple vision, commitment, and strategy in order to see revitalization cultivated in the Reformed Church in America:

**The creation of strategic networks that provide environments where personal transformation can be born and sustained in the lives of pastors and other church leaders in order that corporate transformation can be developed and cultivated in the ministries of congregations.**

**Toward Reality**

This vision is becoming a reality in the life of the Reformed Church in America as pastors and churches are experiencing transformation. The catalyst for the vision was the commitment of the Revitalization Team members who led and facilitated networks of pastors to begin the revitalization movement.

The initial development of intentional networks of relationship that provide safe and supportive environments for growth and change has seen pastors and churches turning around and discovering a new vitality in their ministry.

From a handful of team members has grown a movement of 296 RCA pastors and/or churches who are praying and working for renewal.

**Learnings on the Way: What Really Matters**

With the culmination of five years of working with pastors and churches, some significant learnings have developed that can help the RCA as we continue to move forward in faithfully helping churches to turn around:

• **Leadership Matters**
  The importance of leadership in the revitalization process continues to be a critical component. Pastors who can lead congregations and empower and equip lay leaders to serve in the church are necessary. Revitalization will not occur apart from spiritu-
• **Relationships Matter**
  Pastors in relationship in a safe-place environment for change are also a key ingredient. Going through a change process requires the encouragement and support of others who are in the struggle together.

• **Leaders Who Are in Relationship in Community with Other Leaders Matter**
  Who provides the shoulder to cry or lean on? Who gets the phone call when it seems like the entire revitalization process will fall apart? Where can a pastor be honest and authentic? Networks provide the critical outlet for leading the challenge of church renewal.

• **Spiritual Gifts and Empowerment Matter**
  Leaders must know their spiritual gifts and empower others to be able to know their gifts also. Doing ministry alone proves nothing. Gathering gifted people and equipping and unleashing them for ministry is necessary if a congregation is to turn around.

• **God Matters**
  Passionate spirituality is still at the core of revitalization. Renewal is a spiritual issue. And the reverse is also true: we matter to God!

• **Accountability Matters**
  Pastors and church leaders need to be accountable: to each other and to support each other. Changes in behavior significantly increase when accountability is present. While all of the “learnings” listed are important, do we act like we know they are important?

• **Family Matters**
  In ministry, relationships at home are most important. The call to minister comes first on the homefront. It is out of this perspective of putting family first in ministry that the importance of the church family and the church as family arises.

• **Church Health Matters**
  There is value in moving away from “church growth” language and moving to a better understanding of “church health.” Healthy churches experience vibrance and vitality, and can ultimately reproduce.

• **Lifelong Learning Matters**
  There is a continuous need for the ongoing health and development of pastors. A commitment to lifelong learning is necessary if pastors are to experience and lead their congregations in transformation.

• **Classis Structure Matters (and it isn’t working)**
  In general, and with rare exceptions, classes do not provide what pastors and churches need: learning, support, and accountability. The RCA’s classis structure does not produce it.

• **RCA churches are not as healthy as we think they are, and the result has been significant pain in the lives of churches and pastors . . . and that matters to God.**

• **Community Matters**
  One size fits all programs from the denomination no longer work. What will draw us together denominationally in the future is pastors and churches in covenant community.

### Faithfully Forward

**renewal**: to make something new or to bring something back into good condition; to reestablish, revive, or to start over.

Spiritually speaking, renewal refers to a fresh encounter with God resulting in a new state of spiritual understanding or condition. Renewal restores fellowship and provides new empowerment for ministry. The work of renewal is initiated by God and catalyzed by the Holy Spirit. (See John 16:13-14.)
The Reformed Church in America’s commitment is to continue to provide places where fellowship, renewal, and revitalization can be cultivated. New networks are continuing to be developed, initiated, and provided for pastors who can walk with other leaders in the revitalization process.

A groundbreaking event to launch a major revitalization effort on the east coast occurred in March 2002. Leaders from the Regional Synods of Albany, New York, and the Mid-Atlantics gathered to experience and reflect on renewal, and to commit to develop new networks for transformation within their regions.

Providing environments for learning, support, and accountability is a significant way for the revitalization movement to continue within the RCA.

The twenty-first century has brought a new apostolic era, which requires a new commitment to mission. The increasing complexity and difficulty of the challenge of ministry today mandates a change in the way clergy are encouraged and equipped. The issues currently faced by ministers of Word and sacrament require not only heightened awareness and sensitivity, but also the need for greater effectiveness in living out the Great Commission.

The current efforts toward revitalization are bearing fruit, but pastors and churches must continue to experience learning, support, and accountability in networks and classes if the revitalization movement is to make an impact within the RCA.

Pray with us, work with us, and walk with us to help foster personal renewal in the lives of pastors and church leaders that can instigate and implement corporate transformation and change in our congregations—change that will bring glory to God and make a difference for the kingdom.

**Revitalization Team**
Anthony Vis, team leader
Scott Brown
Marc de Waard
Taylor Holbrook
Victoria Menning
Charles Morris
Peter Semeyn

**Staff Resource Persons**
Richard Welscott
Bruce Laverman
Thomas De Vries

**REPORT ON EVANGELISM**

*Obeying the command and trusting the promise, the people of the Reformed Church in America seek to be Faithful Witnesses to Christ’s resurrection, ministering to the total life of all people by preaching, teaching, and proclamation of the gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God, and by all Christian good works.*

The work of evangelism is one part of a common effort in the Reformed Church to live out ministries of worship, discipleship, equipping leaders, and outreach in a wholistic way, as faithful witnesses to the gospel message of Jesus Christ.
Alpha

Alpha is an international evangelism program used by many denominations, from Catholic to Pentecostal, and used increasingly by RCA congregations throughout the United States and Canada. Currently 14,000 courses are being offered worldwide, 3,500 in the U.S. alone. In the fall of 2001 a new resource was released through the joint efforts of the Reformed Church in America, the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), and the Christian Reformed Church.

Alpha from a Reformed Perspective deals with questions that arise for those exploring the possible use of Alpha, and its implementation in the local church. Written by two RCA pastors, Cornelis (Case) Van Kempen and Keith Derrick, who have been using Alpha for some time, the resource is an excellent aid for churches seriously interested in beginning an effective evangelism program. The schedule for Alpha training events is available online at www.alphana.org. The new Alpha Guide and other Alpha materials are available from the RCA Distribution Center, 1-800-968-7221 or orders@rca.org.

Evangelism Online

www.rca.org/churchlife/witness/evangelize/newsletter/index.html
A few strokes on a computer keyboard can bring you to a webpage providing reviews of the latest congregational evangelism books, magazines, articles, and audiovisual resources. Now in its second year, the webpage features monthly updates by Minister of Evangelism Bruce Laverman, and includes input from pastors and other RCA leaders on the subject of evangelism. Most of the material can be downloaded for use by pastors and other evangelism leaders in local congregations. Books, videos, DVDs and other resources can be ordered through the RCA Distribution Center, 1-800-968-7221 or orders@rca.org.

Postmodern Webpage

www.tolive.org
What about the person who is interested in exploring the Christian faith, but is not yet ready to do it within the context of a local church? To meet this need the RCA has joined with its ecumenical partner, the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, to provide a place on the internet for this kind of encounter. “Helping each other do life” is the theme of the webpage, which offers more than a dozen categories of pertinent daily living subjects, with stories by those who’ve gone through experiences that have brought them to faith in God. One of the features of the webpage is a link to local RCA and ELCA congregations for “seekers” or “pre-seekers” who are ready for the next step in their spiritual journey.

Evangelism Connections 2002

Two identical national Evangelism Connections conferences are scheduled this year: one was held in Louisville, Kentucky, on April 12-13 and another will be held in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, on November 15-16. Speakers include Michael Curry, the Episcopal bishop of the Diocese of North Carolina, who has been featured on The Protestant Hour; Roberta Hestenes, international minister at-large for World Vision; and Tom Benjamin Jr., senior pastor of the Light of the World Christian Church in Indianapolis, one of the fastest growing churches of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ). Ten practical workshops with pastors and specialists illustrating numerous ways to strengthen congregational evangelism effectiveness will also be offered five times during the two-day event. Representing the Reformed Church in America will be the Rev. Andres Serrano, pastor of Iglesia Reformada La Senda in Corona, California. Laypersons, who have made up 60 percent of the partici-
pants in the previous six national evangelism workshops in 1998 and 2000, as well as pastors and seminary students, can benefit from the combination of methodological, motivational, and inspirational biblical ideas presented by top Christian leaders from across North America. Planning partners include the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ), Church of the Brethren, Episcopal Church, Evangelical Lutheran Church, Net Results, Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), the Reformed Church in America, and the United Church of Christ. Brochures and registrations have been sent to all RCA pastors and may be downloaded from www.rca.org/churchlife/witness/evangelize/newsletter/index.html or from www.netresults.org/ec2002.

Reclaiming the Great Commission...Together!

Plans are also well underway by Evangelism Connections to produce a national conference aimed at middle-judicatory leaders from eight to ten denominations, including the RCA. The event, which will be held at Camp Allen in Navasota, Texas (near Houston), is scheduled for January 12-14, 2003. The speaker for the event will be Claude Payne, Episcopal bishop of Texas. Payne, along with Hamilton Beazley, associate professor of administrative sciences at George Washington University, authored the book *Reclaiming the Great Commission*. Known for his implementation of the missionary model across the entire diocese, Bishop Payne’s efforts have resulted in increasing the membership of the diocese by ten per cent. Leaders who attend the conference will also be given ample opportunities to meet both in their own denominational groups and across denominations regionally. Additional information on this unique conference is available from Bruce Laverman, minister of evangelism, 1-602-861-3872 or blaverman@rca.org.

Regional Evangelism Team

A dozen members of the Regional Evangelism Team (RET) gathered in Louisville, Kentucky, to participate in the Evangelism Connections 2002 event, and to meet for their annual strategy session following the conference. Each of the team members have pledged to lead from two to four evangelism workshops in congregations in their area each year. (RET members are located in all eight regional synods of the RCA.) These “tailor-made” workshops are offered free of charge to all RCA congregations, who may arrange for a RET workshop by calling the minister of evangelism.

Study on Effective Evangelistic Strategies

General Synod 2000 passed the following recommendation:

To instruct the General Synod Council’s Office of Evangelism and Church Development Services to explore effective evangelistic strategies with denominations who demonstrate strong evangelistic growth and church planting success for the purpose of mutual learning and encouragement (*MGS 2000*, R-16, p. 111).

In response, a study was made of the Christian Missionary and Alliance, the Evangelical Covenant Church, the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), Calvary Chapel, and the Vineyard Church, as well as the Texas Diocese of the Episcopal Church. Included on the following page is a copy of the study “Effective Evangelistic Strategies in Growing Denominations,” by Bruce Laverman, RCA minister of evangelism.

Invite-A-Friend

Religion in American Life (RIAL) has since 1949 worked to advance the spiritual needs of the American people by publicly encouraging regular worship.
Increasing the number of people who attend worship creates a greater sense of community, more stable neighborhoods, stronger families, more support for people under stress, better health, less violence, substance abuse, and crime, better futures for young people, more volunteers for community services, more giving to charitable causes, and more social and spiritual capital (RIAL, 2001 Annual Report).

One of the most effective programs of RIAL is “Invite-A-Friend.” Churches that order and implement plans from the “Action Guide” consistently report an average increase of 15 percent in attendance, and almost 100 percent of the churches that use the program repeat it again. In addition RIAL received more than $42 million in estimated value of time or space donated on radio, TV, billboards, newspapers, and magazines, a 20 percent increase over last year. (See www.RIAL.org.)

Effective Evangelistic Strategies in Growing Denominations

General Synod 2000 passed the following recommendation:

To instruct the General Synod Council’s Office of Evangelism and Church Development Services to explore effective evangelistic strategies with denominations who demonstrate strong evangelistic growth and church planting success for the purpose of mutual learning and encouragement (MGS 2000, R-16, p. 111).

This responsibility was assigned to Bruce Laverman, minister of evangelism. His exploration was accomplished through telephone interviews with Lyle Schaller, the most widely-read commentator on North American congregational life; Gary Walters, the director of Evangelism, Congregational Life, and Church Planting for the Evangelical Covenant Church; and Dan Ackerman, leadership specialist for the Christian Reformed Church in North America. The websites of the following churches were searched for pertinent information on their vision and programs:

- Assemblies of God
- Baptist General Conference
- Calvary Chapels
- Christian Reformed Church in North America
- Church of God in Christ
- Evangelical Covenant Church
- Evangelical Free Church in America
- Presbyterian Church in America
- Vineyard Church

Helpful information was also obtained from Outreach Canada, with the Rev. Murray Moerman providing material on church planting in Canada by all evangelical churches. Reclaiming the Great Commission, by Bishop Claude E. Payne and Hamilton Beazley, provided an effective, currently operating practical model of churches as mission stations in the Diocese of Texas of the Episcopal Church. Additional information was gathered from the video seminar “What Evangelistic Churches Do,” featuring George Barna (1996); and the books Turn Your Church Inside Out, by Walt Kallestad and The Celtic Way of Evangelism, by George Hunter. The Leadership Network, George Bullard’s Journal, and numerous contacts with seminar leaders throughout the United States and Canada, including Tom Bandy, Bill Easum, Robert Schuller, and Bill Hybels, provided context and background. All of these and many more provided significant input for this explorative study.

In summary, evangelism strategies in healthy, growing denominations in North America are as follows:
High priority on church planting.

All denominations surveyed placed church planting as one of the highest if not the number one strategy for evangelism. Bishop Claude Payne sees new church development as essential: “New congregations are crucial to the missionary church because they offer the fastest way of reaching the unchurched. They also provide the quickest route to ethnic and generational diversity.” The fact is that it is much easier to start a new ethnic congregation, or to focus on a particular generation in a new start than to try to change the culture of an established congregation.

Dan Ackerman, from the Christian Reformed Church, said that if they had not planted 160 congregations in the last ten years, after the departure of some congregations over a controversial issue, it would have been disastrous for their denomination. Approximately 75 to 85 percent of the churches started in the last ten years are functioning today, and 2001 is the first year in the last ten that the Christian Reformed Church in North America has shown a net increase in membership.

The Vineyard Church and Calvary Chapel have multiplied incredibly since their birth thirty years ago because of their total commitment to church planting as their primary mission, whether in North America or abroad.

Gary Walters, himself a successful church planter and now director of the church planting and evangelism efforts of the Evangelical Covenant Church (ECC), points out that while there are three new disciples for every one hundred in attendance in established congregations, the ratio is twelve for every one hundred in attendance in new congregations. According to Walters, 80 to 85 percent of the growth of the denomination has come from new church development. The denomination has grown 39 percent since 1992, with 120 new congregations and 30,000 new members. In addition, Walters reports that four of the six largest congregations in the ECC have been planted in the last ten years. Success has come as the result of two strategies: gifted, trained leadership and the ability to do public ministry effectively. Staffing for planting churches is effective. Several reported that regional staff leadership by church planting enthusiasts has positively affected those conferences.

Murray Moerman of Outreach Canada reports the following from interviews with leaders of the ten denominations that most frequently plant churches in Canada:

1. Strong vision-focused leadership for new churches.
2. Churches planting churches.
3. Seasoned pastors make best “planters.”
4. Financial support for church planting as “mission” giving.
5. Prayer foundational for new church support.
6. Leaders cast a vision for new church planting; every congregation involved in a church plant.

Evangelizing unchurched non-Christians is an “up-front” value in denominational mission and vision statements, as well as an actual value of healthy, growing denominations and churches.

A great example:

The Diocese of Texas has a vision of being One Church, under the leadership of Jesus Christ as a “Community of Miraculous Expectation.” It is a missionary diocese, whose bishop is the Chief Missionary, localized in missionary outposts and missionary insti-
tutions...whose purpose under the Great Commandment to love is focused on the unchurched with a goal of growing to 200,000 by the year 2005. This is growth beyond mere numbers toward discipleship and seeks to include all sorts and conditions of people, bringing joy to those who are reaching out and to those who are reached (Reclaiming the Great Commission, p. 45).

This is not just a “preferred value,” but also an actual one. The diocese, which numbers 80,000 members in 156 congregations, has increased ten per cent in the last three years. Attendance has grown from 23,000 to 28,000 (22 percent increase), and confirmations have grown 11 percent. “It is the fourth-largest diocese in America but ranks first in church-school membership, in the number of children in parochial schools, in adult education, and in the number of members confirmed. These changes are a testament to the power of the missionary model implemented in the Diocese of Texas” (Reclaiming the Great Commission, p. 249). Whether we are looking at evangelical churches in the South, African-American denominations like the Church of God in Christ, or new movements like Calvary Chapel or the Vineyard Church, all have a common commitment to keep outward-focused in all that they do.

**Evangelism is an attitude that permeates all ministries of the church and is modeled by all the leaders of the church, lay and clergy.**

Winsome, natural witness to the joys of the Christian life is part of the DNA of growing denominations, not just a program or emphasis. George Barna points out that congregations where the philosophy of ministry includes evangelism as the “hub of the wheel” are characterized by the fact that every ministry has an evangelism component. This is also seen in the catechumenate program, where the regular worship and teaching of the church is formed and shaped around “making disciples.” As the “friend” stands with the “inquirer,” the idea that “this is what we do!” is clearly modeled in the liturgy of initiation and the journey to discipleship. This is not only for a few especially gifted evangelists, but this is the normative behavior of the rank-and-file Christian and member of the body of Christ. Denominations are learning to model this throughout their structure. For example, Bishop Payne is a missionary bishop, not an administrative bishop. Lyle Schaller refers to this phenomenon with reference specifically to the Church of God in Christ, where they have redefined bishop on the New Testament basis, as a leadership role rather than an administrative role.

Dan Ackerman, leadership specialist for the Christian Reformed Church in North America, compares two classes existing side-by-side with almost identical demographics. One of those classes took a more intentional evangelism approach, offering block grants for new church plants, initiating ethnic ministries, inaugurating a Hispanic chaplaincy program, and pursuing other outreach efforts. The other classis continued along maintenance lines. Result: the classis that moved from maintenance to mission grew by 1,500; the other actually declined.

**There is a strong emphasis on prayer undergirding all evangelism efforts.**

In all of the denominations that were surveyed and explored, prayer seems to be the heart of the entire ministry. The “Our Vision 2000 Proclamation” of the Assemblies of God Church, one of the fastest-growing in the twentieth century, reads:

> We will saturate all we do in prayer. With humble hearts, we acknowledge that we may serve God only in the energy of the Holy Spirit. Public and private prayer, a consistent devotional life and the personal study of God’s Word are the very foundation for our future. With one heart we commit ourselves to prayer, to fasting and to the development of networks of prayer throughout our communities and around the world.
Many congregations of all denominations are participating in “Houses of Prayer Everywhere” and the Lighthouse movement of Mission America. Gary Walters reports that Covenant people are praying for 250,000 people at the present time. Families are asked to identify unchurched neighbors to the right and left of where they live, and to pray for them daily before reaching out to them in affirming relationships. All this precedes the “witness,” which only comes when it is the “right time.”

Although church planting accounts for 80 to 85 percent of the growth of the Evangelical Covenant Church (ECC), the membership grew by 8,000 in the last ten years apart from new churches. The reason for this, according to Gary Walters, director of evangelism for the ECC, is that the denomination remains committed to established churches, with a strong program emphasis on prayer, health, and vitality, and on making resources available and offering seminars to local congregations. One could say that the church that prays together not only stays together, but grows together as well.

**Training in natural, effective witness is provided frequently.**

Because growing denominations are made up of churches that are reaching out to neighbors and friends, and because they are naturally welcoming new folks into their open family system, there is need for all the members to be trained in the skills of effective natural evangelism. So, in the exploration of churches known for their growth factor, it was observed that almost all of them offered evangelism training as part of their core adult education curriculum. The Christian Reformed Church is now developing one- and two-year lay leadership network curricula for church volunteers, lay preachers, and other gifted people.

The Assemblies of God vision proclamation makes it crystal clear:

> We commit ourselves to training and equipping. We will diligently train new leaders called by the Lord. We will encourage and enable pastors, teachers, evangelists, missionaries and lay leaders to reach their full potential in ministry. We pledge that our national and district offices, as well as our training institutions, will be vital, indispensable ministry resource centers. Excellent training and meaningful resource materials will be provided for our church leaders to enable them to effectively equip God’s people for service.

Resources that train people how to share their faith naturally are becoming very popular among resources for churches of all denominations. Books, videos, CDs, and sermons on the subject abound as everyday disciples are urged to become everyday witnesses in their own personal spheres of influence. The growing pluralism of North American culture will continue to nudge people to learn to express the basics of their faith naturally to others who may ask them in their quest for the truth.

Evangelism “associates” in the Evangelical Covenant Church are coaching pastors in their evangelism strategies, such as their use of Alpha, in eighteen-month relationships. These include two face-to-face meetings, internet contact, and phone conversations. Strategies are based on the “contagious church” teachings from Willow Creek.

**Churches have intentionally initiated numerous “bridges” and contacts with the community and with those who are non-Christians and unchurched.**

For years Dr. Robert Schuller has taught that the church must meet the culture of disbelief half way. We must move out toward them and not just expect them to come to us. Walt Kallestad, in his book *Turn Your Church Inside Out*, offers many practical way churches are reaching out and building bridges to those who are outside of the church, but not outside of the grace of God in Christ.
In his book *The Celtic Way of Evangelism*, George Hunter points out that St. Patrick was successful in winning the Irish not by rational confrontation, but by coming alongside of them, making friends with them, serving them, and gently leading them to Jesus, the Christ. “Christianity is not so much taught, as caught,” someone has said. Healthy, growing churches and denominations are characterized by their love for people and their flexibility in allowing people of diverse cultures to express their faith in Christ in diverse ways.

Contextualization is the essence of the third commitment for Vineyard U.S.A. churches:

*Commitment to the Contextualization of Kingdom Values by each People Group.*

We believe that the gospel of the kingdom has its greatest impact and long-term effect when it is presented through the language, customs and culture of those who are its recipients. We are committed to sharing our core Vineyard values and allowing people to be led of the Holy Spirit in discovering how these core values should be expressed within their culture.

There is a “kingdom” view that goes beyond the local congregation and the denomination, working collaboratively with other churches and denominations in witnessing to the gospel of Christ.

The vision of the Assemblies of God includes this commitment to cooperation:

Depending on the Holy Spirit, we will discover new ways of networking with other churches in our communities to expand our witness and effectiveness. We will lay aside self-serving promotion and stand ready to encourage and support the ministry of others knowing that we are laborers together with the Lord.

The following is excerpted from a policy statement adopted by the General Board of the National Council of Churches in Christ in 1994:

The world needs a common witness to Christ. Therefore, ecumenism and evangelism must be inseparable. Standing and witnessing together as one evangelizing body will change the way we live and work as Christians. To become an ecumenical, evangelizing church is to trust God to transform it in ways not yet known. We acknowledge this future and reaffirm our readiness to respond to God’s call to united witness and action.

“The closer we get to the mission, the closer we get to one another,” someone has said.

It was the purpose of the synod delegates who crafted the recommendation calling for this report that by exploring effective evangelistic strategies and church planting successes we would experience mutual learning and encouragement. To that end we trust that this study may remind us of the priority of the Great Commission in the ministry of the church, encourage us that it can be done effectively, and inspire us all to “just do it!”

**REPORT ON NEW CHURCH DEVELOPMENT**

*Obeying the command and trusting the promise, the people of the Reformed Church in America seek to be Faithful Witnesses to Christ’s resurrection, ministering to the total life of all people by preaching, teaching, and proclamation of the gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God, and by all Christian good works.*

The work of new church development is one part of a common effort in the Reformed Church to live out ministries of worship, discipleship, equipping leaders, and outreach in a wholistic way, as faithful witnesses to the gospel message of Jesus Christ.
Denominational Plan

An application to be placed in the denominational plan, which all new RCA congregations must complete, requests information dealing with the purpose of the ministry, supervision of the ministry, and the financial plan to support the ministry. Once completed, the application must be submitted to the classis, the regional synod, and the Council of Field Secretaries for approval before submission for final approval to the General Synod Council. The following churches were approved for placement in the denominational plan in the past year:

1. Korean American Peace Church, Los Angeles, California
2. Oasis Community Church, Victorville, California
3. Jesus First Church, Carson, California
4. Chino Ban Suk Reformed Church, Chino, California
5. Wayfarer Community, Caledonia, Michigan
6. Southern California Hope Reformed Church, Chino, California
7. Fraser Heights Christian Community Reformed Church, Burnaby, British Columbia
8. Richmond Hill, Toronto, Ontario,
9. Home Church Langley, Langley, British Columbia
10. The Journey, Surprise, Arizona
11. Open Hearts Community Church, Wyoming, Michigan

R-107
To celebrate the beginning of eleven new ministries in the RCA by supporting them with prayer and highlighting their ministries in our congregations. (ADOPTED)

Reception of New Congregations

The RCA celebrates the organization of seven congregations.

R-108
To adopt the following resolution:

BE IT RESOLVED that the one hundred and ninety-sixth session of the General Synod of the Reformed Church in America, meeting on the campus of Northwestern College on the tenth day of June 2002, gives recognition and heartily celebrates the organization of the following congregations:

- Haven Shores Community Church, West Olive, Michigan
- Prairie Ridge Church, Ankeny, Iowa
- Primera Iglesia Reformada Fuente de Salvacion, Clifton, New Jersey
- New Hope Reformed Church, Yonkers, New York
- Iglesia Reformada La Senda, Corona, California
- Han Ma Um Reformed Church, Palisades Park, New Jersey
- RiverTree Community Church, Grandville, Michigan
- Ghanaian Presbyterian Reformed Church of Brooklyn, New York City
- Igreja Evangelica Vida Nova, Toronto, Ontario (ADOPTED)
Report of the African-American Council

This report can be found beginning on page 82.

Report of the Council for Hispanic Ministries

This report can be found beginning on page 84.

Report of the Council for Pacific and Asian American Ministries

This report can be found beginning on page 86.


The Reformed Church in America Building and Extension Fund, Inc. (RCABEF) is a New York not-for-profit corporation. It functions under the ecclesiastical authority of the Reformed Church in America through the General Synod Council. Its purpose is to render financial assistance in the erection of church buildings. In fulfillment of this purpose, it maintains and operates two separate loan funds. One is the Church Building Fund (CBF). The other is the Extension Foundation Fund (EFF). Detailed information regarding these two loan funds (such as the amounts that can be borrowed from them, the purposes for which funds can be borrowed, the requirements that must be satisfied in order to borrow funds, and how one invests in the EFF) can be obtained through the “Resources” section of the RCA’s website (www.rca.org).

The primary source of funds for the CBF is gifts, bequests, and grants from members, agencies, and instrumentalities of the RCA. The primary source of funds for the EFF is the sale of promissory notes. Such notes are offered in fixed maturities of approximately two, five, and ten years. The notes are securities, and therefore are offered for sale through an offering circular pursuant to registration requirements, exemptions, or other qualifications under applicable regulatory procedures. Presently the RCABEF offers its notes for sale in seventeen states—Arizona, California, Colorado, Florida, Idaho, Illinois, Iowa, Michigan, Minnesota, New Jersey, New York, North Carolina, North Dakota, South Dakota, Texas,
Washington, and Wisconsin. The rates of interest paid on EFF notes are established quarterly by a subcommittee of the RCABEF board.

At the end of fiscal year 2001 (September 30, 2001) the corporation had assets of nearly $36.56 million and liabilities of just over $9.1 million (nearly all of which were represented by EFF notes). Of the nearly $36.56 million in assets, over $25.26 million was in the form of loans outstanding to RCA congregations, and over $4.87 million was committed but not yet funded. One hundred thirty-six CBF loans and fifty-six EFF loans were outstanding (or committed but not yet funded) to local RCA congregations at the end of fiscal year 2001 (compared to one hundred twenty-seven CBF loans and fifty-nine EFF loans at the end of fiscal year 2000). Following this report is a list of all churches that are borrowers from the RCABEF (or for whom loans have been approved) as of the end of fiscal year 2001.

During fiscal year 2001 fifteen loans were paid off (compared to eleven in 2000). In recent years the RCABEF experienced a significant increase in the total number of loan commitments issued as well as the total dollar amounts committed. Following a slight downturn in fiscal year 2000, the numbers are back up again for fiscal year 2001. Specifically, thirty-one commitments for loans were issued to RCA congregations in fiscal year 2001 (compared to twenty-three in fiscal year 2000, thirty-four in 1999, twenty-two in 1998, and eight in 1997), and the total dollar amount committed was just over $5.3 million (compared to over $3.5 million in fiscal year 2000, over $7.5 million in 1999, nearly $4.4 million in 1998, and nearly $1.66 million in 1997). The RCABEF rejoices with the congregations whose loan applications have been approved and prays that the facilities that are built or remodeled will glorify God and help the congregations fulfill their call to ministry in their communities.

In last year’s report the RCABEF reported on several actions it had taken to simplify its operations and increase the amount that churches may borrow (e.g., increasing its aggregate loan limit to $1,500,000, eliminating the Designated Note Program, amending its bylaws, and assisting with the production of a manual for use by churches contemplating building projects) and noted several issues it would be addressing in the future (e.g., how to satisfy requests for larger loans and how to simplify the loan closing and funding process). The RCABEF continues to take steps in these areas. For example, the amount that any church may borrow from the CBF (at “below-market” rates) has been increased from $150,000 to $300,000 and the amount that new churches may borrow from the CBF has been increased from $300,000 to $500,000. Additionally, it is seeking amendments to its certificate of incorporation and bylaws to consolidate the CBF and EFF into a single loan fund, thereby making it possible to eliminate its current practice of making multiple loans to a single borrower (CBF; then EFF; then CBF Third Tier) with substantial loan needs, and to instead make a single loan of up to $1,500,000 from the single, blended fund. Finally, the RCABEF also intends to seek an amendment to its bylaws increasing the amount it may loan on an unsecured basis from $10,000 individually and $100,000 in the aggregate to $25,000 individually and $250,000 in the aggregate.

As in prior years, much has been accomplished, and yet much remains to be done, all for the purpose of equipping congregations for ministry—a thousand churches in a million ways doing one thing—following Christ in mission, in a lost and broken world so loved by God.
As the RCABEF continues its work, it asks for your continued support and prayers.

**Canada**
- Christ Community Church, St. Albert, Alberta
- New Life Community Church, Burnaby, British Columbia
- Grace Community Church, Surrey, British Columbia
- Elmwood Community Reformed Church, Winnipeg, Manitoba
- Bethel Reformed Church, Brantford, Ontario
- Drayton Reformed Church, Drayton, Ontario
- First Reformed Church, St. Catharines, Ontario
- Classis of Ontario (Igreja Evang. Vida Nova), Stevensville, Ontario
- Classis of Ontario (Christ Community Church), Welland, Ontario
- Emmanuel Reformed Church, Woodstock, Ontario

**United States**
- New Hope Community Church, Gilbert, Arizona
- Christ’s Community Church, Glendale, Arizona
- Hope Community Church, Scottsdale, Arizona
- Desert Haven Community Church, Tempe, Arizona
- Canyon Lake Community Church, Canyon Lake, California
- Christ Community Church, Carmichael, California
- Corona Community Church, Corona, California
- Crossroads Community Church, Elk Grove, California
  (Classis of California)
- New Hope Community Church, Fremont, California
- New Hope Community Church, Glendora, California
- CrossWinds Community Church, Hesperia, California
- Living Faith Community Church, Modesto, California
- Palm Canyon Community Church, Moreno Valley, California
- New Hope Community Church, Aurora, Colorado
- The Springs Community Church, Colorado Springs, Colorado
- Christ Community Church, Denver, Colorado
- Church of the Rockies, Denver, Colorado
- Faith Community Church, Littleton, Colorado
- West Broward Community Church, Fort Lauderdale, Florida
- Palm Grove Reformed Church, Holiday, Florida
- Chinese Reformed Church, Miami, Florida
- Classis of Florida (Korean Choong Hyun Church), Orlando, Florida
- Christ Community Church, Palm Springs, Florida
- First Reformed Church, Tampa, Florida
- Rolling Hills Community Church, Zellwood, Florida
- North Atlanta Community Church, Roswell, Georgia
- Twin Falls Reformed Church, Twin Falls, Idaho
- New Life Community Church, Wendell, Idaho
- Downers Grove Community Church, Downers Grove, Illinois
- Peace Reformed Church, Mt. Prospect, Illinois
- Second Reformed Church, Pekin, Illinois
- Christ’s Community Church, Fort Wayne, Indiana
- Community Reformed Church, Lafayette, Indiana
- The Adventure Life Reformed Church, Altoona, Iowa
- Christ’s Family Reformed Church, Davenport, Iowa
- Calvary Reformed Church, Des Moines, Iowa
- Hope Reformed Church, George, Iowa
- Classis of Central Iowa (Knoxville restart), Knoxville, Iowa
- First Reformed Church, Maurice, Iowa
Good News Community Church, Okoboji, Iowa
American Reformed Church, Orange City, Iowa
Heartland Reformed Church, Pella, Iowa
First Reformed Church, Prairie City, Iowa
First Reformed Church, Rock Valley, Iowa
New Life Reformed Church, Sioux Center, Iowa
Classis of West Sioux (New Hope Community Church), Sioux City, Iowa
Hope Reformed Church, Spencer, Iowa
Westview Church, Waukee, Iowa
Crossroads Church, Overland Park, Kansas
Harvest Community Church, Wichita, Kansas
Monocacy Valley Church, Frederick, Maryland
Boston Taiwanese Christian Church, Framingham, Massachusetts
Reformed Church of Corinth, Byron Center, Michigan
CrossWinds Community Church, Canton, Michigan
Open Door Reformed Church, Dorr, Michigan
University Reformed Church, East Lansing, Michigan
Calvary Reformed Church (a.k.a. Common Ground Community Church), Grand Rapids, Michigan
Classis of North Grand Rapids and Clancy Street Ministries, Grand Rapids, Michigan
Central Park Reformed Church, Holland, Michigan
Grace Reformed Church, Holland, Michigan
Covenant Community Church, Hudsonville, Michigan
Second Reformed Church, Kalamazoo, Michigan
Twin Lakes Reformed Church, Kalamazoo, Michigan
Martin Reformed Church, Martin, Michigan
Calvary Reformed Church, Mattawan, Michigan
Fourth Reformed Church, Oshtemo, Michigan
Classis of Northern Michigan (for New Hope Community Church), Shelby, Michigan
Gun Lake Community Church, Wayland, Michigan
Riverside Reformed Church, Bloomington, Minnesota
Peace Reformed Church, Eagan, Minnesota
Minnesota Valley Community Church, Prior Lake, Minnesota
American Reformed Church, Worthington, Minnesota
Christ’s Church, St. Peter’s, Missouri
Reformed Church of Firth, Firth, Nebraska
Lakeview Heights Reformed Church, Clifton, New Jersey
Old Bergen Church, Jersey City, New Jersey
The Reformed Church in Kinnelon, Kinnelon, New Jersey
First Reformed Church, Lincoln Park, New Jersey
Classis of Albany, Albany, New York
Community Church of Colonie, Albany, New York
New Lots Community Church, Brooklyn, New York
Old First Reformed Church, Brooklyn, New York
Christ Community Church, Clifton Park, New York
Siloam Church, Flushing, New York
Taiwanese American Reformed Church in Queens, Flushing, New York
Helderberg Reformed Church, Guilderland Center, New York
Herkimer Reformed Church, Herkimer, New York
Levittown Community Church, Levittown, New York
Nakwon Reformed Church, Sunnyside, Long Island, New York
Pitcher Hill Community Church, North Syracuse, New York
The New Church of Greater New York, Roslyn Heights, New York
New Life Community Church, Sayville, New York
Bellevue Reformed Church, Schenectady, New York
First Reformed Church, Scotia, New York
Grace Christian Church, Staten Island, New York
Reformed Church of Syracuse, Syracuse, New York
Clarkstown Reformed Church, West Nyack, New York
Pultneyville Reformed Church, Williamson, New York
First Reformed Church, Wynantskill, New York
New Hope Reformed Church, Yonkers, New York
First Reformed Church of Cary, Cary, North Carolina
Red River Reformed Church, West Fargo, North Dakota
New Hope Reformed Church, Powell, Ohio
Newtown Reformed Church, Newtown, Pennsylvania
The Reformed Church, Willow Grove, Pennsylvania
Bethany Reformed Church, Canton, South Dakota
The Reformed Church, Dell Rapids, South Dakota
Good News Reformed Church, Sioux Falls, South Dakota
Franklin Fellowship Church, Franklin, Tennessee
Christ Community Church, Dallas, Texas
St. Thomas Reformed Church, St. Thomas, U.S. Virgin Islands
Fourth Corner Community Church, Bellingham, Washington
Faith Community Church, Edmonds, Washington
Servants of Christ, Federal Way, Washington
Trinity Reformed Church, Kent, Washington
Church of the Good Shepherd, Lynnwood, Washington
East Valley Reformed Church, Yakima, Washington
Emmanuel Reformed Church, Clinton, Wisconsin
New Life Community Church, Milwaukee, Wisconsin
Bethany Reformed Church, Sheboygan, Wisconsin
Gibbsville Reformed Church, Sheboygan Falls, Wisconsin
Hope Community Reformed Church, West Bend, Wisconsin

PROPOSED AMENDMENTS TO RCABEF CERTIFICATE OF INCORPORATION AND BYLAWS

Background

The Reformed Church in America Building and Extension Fund, Inc. (RCABEF) is a New York not-for-profit corporation. Its principal activity is the operation of two separate loan funds. One fund is the Church Building Fund of the Reformed Church in America (CBF), which consists of donated funds. The other fund is the Reformed Church in America Extension Foundation Fund (EFF), which consists of borrowed funds.

The CBF originally was administered by the Board of North American Missions of the Reformed Church in America (BNAM). Through a series of mergers in 1968, responsibility for administration of the CBF was transferred by BNAM to the Trustees of the General Program Council of the Reformed Church (TGPC). In 1993 the TGPC changed its name to the General Synod Council of the Reformed Church in America (GSC).

From its creation in 1958, and continuing thereafter until 1994, the EFF was administered by a New York not-for-profit corporation called The Reformed Church in America - Extension Foundation, Inc. In 1994 the General Synod of the Reformed Church in America voted to consolidate the administration of the CBF and EFF. To effect this policy, (a) the certificate of incorporation of The Reformed Church in America - Extension Foundation, Inc. was restated to (i) change the name of the corporation to The Reformed Church in America Building and Extension Fund, Inc., and (ii) make certain other changes to the structure of the corporation to enable it to administer the CBF (in addition to the EFF), and
EVANGELIZATION AND CHURCH GROWTH

(b) the GSC transferred to the RCABEF all assets related to the CBF (namely, all notes receivable, all cash on hand, and all loan documents and related files and ledgers).

As a result, both the CBF and EFF are now administered by the RCABEF. In nearly all other respects, however, the two funds remain separate (maintaining separate identities, separate loan portfolios, separate means of raising funds, and separate books and records).

Current Conditions

Throughout the years the RCA's building loan programs (in the form of the CBF and EFF) have grown and adapted to meet (where possible) the changing needs of local churches. Funds have been raised to increase the amount of money available to loan to local churches. Loan limits have increased as construction projects have become more costly. Interest rates have evolved to reflect changing market conditions. Purposes for which funds may be borrowed have evolved. Some funds have been made available on an unsecured basis. Some interest earnings have been made available to fund matching grants for new programs initiated by local churches. Some funds from the EFF have been made available to agencies and instrumentalities of the RCA other than local churches.

Most of these changes have been implemented through actions taken by the governing boards of the loan programs (currently the board of directors of the RCA's Building and Extension Fund). At times, however, amendments to the RCABEF’s bylaws have been necessary, and this has required the approval of the RCA's General Synod and General Synod Council.

Currently the RCABEF has reached a point where changes to its certificate of incorporation and bylaws are necessary. Simply put, while recent changes to the CBF and EFF loan programs have been responsive to the needs of local churches (e.g., by reducing CBF interest rates, increasing aggregate loan limits, and making both CBF and EFF loan funds available to all local churches), they have also created (unintentionally) a rather complicated and cumbersome process. For example, a church seeking a loan in excess of $800,000 must actually obtain the funds in the form of two or three separate loans, each with its own separate set of documents and unique interest rate and amortization schedule.

This has caused some churches to become frustrated with the process, and other churches to avoid the process altogether and seek funding from a local bank instead.

Proposed Changes

The RCABEF board believes that much of the complication and cumbersomeness of the current system can be eliminated by consolidating the CBF and EFF into a single, integrated loan fund. Loans of any amount could be funded as a single loan (rather than as multiple loans). Disparate interest rates (currently differing by two to three percentage points, depending upon the loan fund) could be narrowed significantly, or perhaps even eliminated. Moreover, in many situations the blended rate may be below typical market rates. In short, the RCABEF could fund and price its loans in a manner that is more consistent with customary lending practices.

Despite these significant changes, however, important features of the current system (important either because donors made campaign contributions in reliance upon them or because they result in tangible benefits to borrowers) can be retained. For example, significant sums can be made available to new church starts at “below-market” interest rates (as promised in the “$9.8 by ’98” campaign), and new church starts can continue to receive “high priority” treatment in the loan process.
For the foregoing reasons, the RCABEF board proposes that its certificate of incorporation and bylaws be amended. The proposed amendments to the certificate of incorporation and bylaws follow this report (the format of the certificate of incorporation naturally highlights the amendments proposed; amendments to the bylaws are underlined and deletions to the bylaws are stricken out). In addition to consolidating the CBF and EFF, the proposed amendments (primarily to the bylaws) also make the following changes (all of which are essentially administrative or “clean-up” in nature):

1. Board membership is rotated in a way that ensures that no more than one board member’s term expires each year.

2. Grants-in-aid to local churches are specifically authorized (thereby returning to the policy that had been in effect prior to 1994).

3. Classes (in addition to local churches) are specifically identified as eligible borrowers (thus making it possible for classes to fund projects for local congregations that have not yet been formally organized as a local church in the RCA).

4. The group of people who are ineligible to serve on the RCABEF board of directors is expanded slightly.

5. The RCABEF fund executive is designated as an assistant vice-president of the corporation (thereby formalizing a practice that has been in effect since early 1995).

6. The amount that can be loaned on an unsecured basis is increased from $10,000 to $25,000.

7. To accommodate some churches with substantial investment portfolios, loans can be secured by either mortgages on real estate or pledges of publicly traded, marketable securities.

8. To accommodate borrowers who may seek funding in amounts greater than are available from the RCABEF, the RCABEF may participate in loans with other lenders, but only if the loan is of a type that is permitted by the RCABEF’s certificate of incorporation and bylaws.

9. The multiple approvals required for the RCABEF to amend its bylaws (General Synod and General Synod Council) are consolidated into a single approval from the GSC, thereby simplifying the amendment process while at the same time retaining appropriate checks and balances.

At its April 9-11, 2002, meeting the GSC voted to approve the amended bylaws and to recommend to the 2002 General Synod that it also approve the amended bylaws. Accordingly, the following recommendation is made:

R-109
To approve the proposed amendments to the Certificate of Incorporation and Bylaws of the RCA Building and Extension Fund, Inc. (ADOPTED)
We the undersigned, being the President and Secretary of
The Reformed Church in America Building and Extension Fund, Inc. do hereby certify:

A. The name of the corporation is The Reformed Church in America Building and Extension Fund, Inc. Pursuant to a Restated Certificate of Incorporation dated August 9, 1994 and filed with the Department of State, State of New York on November 30, 1994 as Document No. 941130000, the name of the corporation was changed from The Reformed Church in America - Extension Foundation, Inc. to The Reformed Church in America Building and Extension Fund, Inc.

B. The corporation’s Certificate of Incorporation was filed with the Department of State, State of New York, on June 25, 1958. The corporation was formed pursuant to the Membership Corporation Law. A Certificate of Type, as a Type B Not-for-Profit Corporation, pursuant to Section 113 of the Not-for-Profit Corporation Law was filed with the Department of State, State of New York on September 13, 1973. The Certificate of Incorporation was thereafter restated by certificates filed with the Department of State on April 27, 1989 and November 30, 1994.

C. The Reformed Church in America Building and Extension Fund, Inc. is a corporation as defined in subparagraph (a)(5) of Section 102 of the Not-for-Profit Corporation Law and is a Type B corporation under Section 201 of the law.

D. The Certificate of Incorporation of The Reformed Church in America Building and Extension Fund, Inc. as previously restated is amended to effect the following changes authorized by the Not-for-Profit Corporation Law:

1. to amend Part First thereof to eliminate the number “1” at the very beginning thereof.

2. to amend Part Second thereof which presently reads as follows:

“SECOND: A. The purpose of the Corporation shall be to support the work of the General Synod Council of the General Synod of the Reformed Church in America by rendering financial assistance in the erection of church buildings. The Corporation shall function under the ecclesiastical authority of the Reformed Church in America through the General Synod Council.”
B. The Corporation shall be the successor in interest to the Reformed Church in America Extension Foundation, Inc.; shall receive and manage its assets; shall assume its liabilities; shall establish a fund to be known as the Reformed Church in America Extension Foundation; shall solicit monies for said fund from members, agencies, and instrumentalities of the Reformed Church in America by the issuance of notes and other evidences of indebtedness; and shall disburse said monies as loans to churches of the Reformed Church in America engaged in Reformed Church in America engaged in building programs.

C. The Corporation shall be the successor to interest to the Church Building Fund of the Reformed Church in America; shall receive and manage its assets; shall assume its liabilities; shall establish a fund to be known as the Church Building Fund of the Reformed Church in America; shall solicit monies for said fund from members; agencies, and instrumentalities of the Reformed Church in America by gifts, bequests, and grants; and shall disburse said monies as loans to churches of the Reformed Church in America engaged in building programs.

D. The Corporation shall have the authority to acquire, hold, and dispose of real property. Any and all real property acquired by the Corporation through foreclosure of any mortgage or deed of trust or other lien, or through the exercise of any right of equity of redemption belonging to the Corporation or in any way acquired by it, may be sold, conveyed, mortgaged, or otherwise transferred as in the ordinary course of business, by order of the Board of Directors.

E. This purpose shall be fulfilled on a non-profit basis and no part of the Corporation’s earnings shall inure to the benefit of any individual or organization but such earnings may include reasonable charges designated for administrative services.”

so that the same shall read as follows:

A. “SECOND: A. The purpose of the corporation shall be to support the work of the General Synod Council of the General Synod of the Reformed Church in America by making loans to local churches, classes, and other agencies and affiliates of the Reformed Church in America that are (i) constructing or purchasing church buildings, (ii) otherwise improving property that is already owned by them, or (iii) in the case of classes only, purchasing land for future development as a local church facility, or by making grants in aid to local churches or classes. Loans may be made either directly or indirectly through participation agreements with other lenders; provided, however, that the corporation shall not participate in any loan that it cannot, by the terms of this certificate, make directly to the same borrower. The corporation shall function under the ecclesiastical authority of the Reformed Church in America through the General Synod Council.

B. The corporation is the successor in interest to the Reformed Church in America-Extension Foundation, Inc. and the Church Building Fund of the Reformed Church in America; has received and manages their respective assets; has assumed their respective liabilities; may solicit monies from members, agencies, and instrumentalities of the Reformed Church in America by gifts, bequests, grants, and the issuance of notes and other evidences of indebtedness; and may disburse said monies as loans or grants in aid to the entities and for the purposes set forth in Paragraph A of this Part Second.
C. The corporation shall have the authority to acquire, hold, and dispose of property. Any and all property acquired by the corporation through foreclosure of any mortgage, deed of trust, security interest or other lien, or through the exercise of any right of equity of redemption belonging to the corporation, or in any other way acquired by it, may be sold, conveyed, mortgaged, or otherwise transferred as in the ordinary course of business, by action of the Board of Directors.

D. The purposes of the corporation shall be fulfilled on a non-profit basis, and no part of the corporation’s earnings shall inure to the benefit of any individual or organization but such earnings may include reasonable charges designated for administrative services.”

3. to amend Part Third thereof which presently reads as follows:

“THIRD: Its principal office is to be located in the City, County and State of New York.”

so that the same shall read as follows:

“THIRD: The corporation’s principal office shall be located in the City, County and State of New York.”

4. to amend Part Fourth thereof which presently reads as follows:

“FOURTH: The number of directors shall be 6 voting members, all of whom shall be members in good standing of the Reformed Church in America and the General Secretary of the Reformed Church in America who shall be a non-voting member of the corporation, ex officio with the right to attend all of its meetings and to speak on any matter before the Corporation.”

so that the same shall read as follows:

“FOURTH: The corporation shall have six voting board members, all of whom shall be members in good standing of the Reformed Church in America and of full legal age. The General Secretary of the Reformed Church in America shall be an ex officio board member without vote, with the right to attend all meetings and to speak on any matter before the corporation.”

5. to amend Part Fifth thereof to change the word “form” to “from”

so that the same shall read as follows:

“FIFTH: The corporation shall not engage in any transaction described or defined as a “prohibited transaction” by Section 503(c) of the Internal Revenue Code of 1954 as the same may be amended from time to time; nor shall the income of the corporation be unreasonably accumulated or invested in such a manner as to jeopardize the carrying out of the purposes of the corporation within the intendment of Section 504(a) of the Internal Revenue Code of 1954 as the same may be amended from time to time; nor shall any part of the activities of the corporation consist of carrying on propaganda or otherwise attempting to influence legislation or participating in or intervening in (including the publishing or distributing of statements) any political campaign on behalf of any candidate for public office.”
6. to amend Part Seventh which presently reads as follows:

“SEVENTH: Subject to an order of a Justice of the Supreme Court in the event of a liquidation, dissolution, termination or winding up of the corporation (whether voluntary, involuntary or by operation of law), the property and assets of the corporation shall be distributed to the General Synod Council of The Reformed Church in America or its successors so long as it or they qualify as exempt from income tax under Section 501(a) as organizations described in Section 501(c)(3) in the Internal Revenue Code of 1954 as the same may be amended from time to time. In the event that said corporation(s) is not then in existence and has not been succeeded by a qualifying corporation, then none of the property or assets of the corporation shall be made available in any way to any individual, corporation or other organization except to corporations or other organizations located within the United States which qualifies as exempt form income tax under Section 501(a) as organizations described in Section 501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code of 1954 as the same may be amended from time to time, subject to an order of the Justice of the Supreme Court of the State of New York.”

so that the same shall read as follows:

“SEVENTH: Subject to an order of a Justice of the Supreme Court in the event of a liquidation, dissolution, termination or winding up of the corporation (whether voluntary, involuntary or by operation of law), the property and assets of the corporation shall be distributed to the General Synod Council of The Reformed Church in America or its successors so long as it or they qualify as exempt from income tax under Section 501(a) as organizations described in Section 501(c)(3) in the Internal Revenue Code of 1954 as the same may he amended from time to time. In the event that said corporation(s) is not then in existence and has not been succeeded by a qualifying corporation, then none of the property or assets of the corporation shall be made available in any way to any individual, corporation or other organization except to corporations or other organizations located within the United States that qualify as exempt from income tax under Section 501(a) as organizations described in Section 501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code of 1954 as the same may be amended from time to time, subject to an order of the Justice of the Supreme Court of the State of New York.”

7. to amend Part Ninth thereof to insert the words “New York” before the word “Not”

so that the same shall read as follows:

“NINTH: The corporation is a corporation as defined in subparagraph (a) (5) of Sec. 102 and it shall be a Type B corporation under Section 201 of the New York Not for Profit Corporation Law.”

E. The text of the Certificate of Incorporation is hereby restated as amended to read as herein set forth in full:
RESTATED
CERTIFICATE OF INCORPORATION
OF
THE REFORMED CHURCH IN AMERICA
BUILDING AND EXTENSION FUND, INC.
UNDER SECTION 805 OF THE NOT-FOR-PROFIT CORPORATION LAW

* * * * *

We the undersigned, being the President and Secretary of The Reformed Church in America Building and Extension Fund, Inc. do hereby certify:

FIRST: The name of the corporation is The Reformed Church in America Building and Extension Fund, Inc. The name of the corporation has been changed from The Reformed Church in America-Extension Foundation, Inc.

SECOND: A. The purpose of the corporation shall be to support the work of the General Synod Council of the General Synod of the Reformed Church in America by making loans to local churches, classes, and other agencies and affiliates of the Reformed Church in America that are (i) constructing or purchasing church buildings, (ii) otherwise improving property that is already owned by them, or (iii) in the case of classes only, purchasing land for future development as a local church facility, or by making grants in aid to local churches or classes. Loans may be made either directly or indirectly through participation agreements with other lenders; provided, however, that the corporation shall not participate in any loan that it cannot, by the terms of this certificate, make directly to the same borrower. The corporation shall function under the ecclesiastical authority of the Reformed Church in America through the General Synod Council.

B. The corporation is the successor in interest to the Reformed Church in America-Extension Foundation, Inc. and the Church Building Fund of the Reformed Church in America; has received and manages their respective assets; has assumed their respective liabilities; may solicit monies from members, agencies, and instrumentalities of the Reformed Church in America by gifts, bequests, grants, and the issuance of notes and other evidences of indebtedness; and may disburse said monies as loans or grants in aid to the entities and for the purposes set forth in Paragraph A of this Part Second.

C. The corporation shall have the authority to acquire, hold, and dispose of property. Any and all property acquired by the corporation through foreclosure of any mortgage, deed of trust, security interest or other lien, or through the exercise of any right of equity of redemption belonging to the corporation, or in any other way acquired by it, may be sold, conveyed, mortgaged, or otherwise transferred as in the ordinary course of business, by action of the Board of Directors.

D. The purposes of the corporation shall be fulfilled on a non-profit basis, and no
part of the corporation’s earnings shall inure to the benefit of any individual or organization but such earnings may include reasonable charges designated for administrative services.

THIRD: The corporation’s principal office shall be located in the City, County and State of New York.

FOURTH: The corporation shall have six voting board members, all of whom shall be members in good standing of the Reformed Church in America and of full legal age. The General Secretary of the Reformed Church in America shall be an ex officio board member without vote, with the right to attend all meetings and to speak on any matter before the corporation.

FIFTH: The corporation shall not engage in any transaction described or defined as a “prohibited transaction” by Section 503(c) of the Internal Revenue Code of 1954 as the same may be amended from time to time; nor shall the income of the corporation be unreasonably accumulated or invested in such a manner as to jeopardize the carrying out of the purposes of the corporation within the intent of Section 504(a) of the Internal Revenue Code of 1954 as the same may be amended from time to time; nor shall any part of the activities of the corporation consist of carrying on propaganda or otherwise attempting to influence legislation or participating in or intervening in (including the publishing or distributing of statements) any political campaign on behalf of any candidate for public office.

SIXTH: The corporation shall indemnify any person made a party to any action, suit or proceeding (or any appeal therein), whether civil or criminal and whether by or in the right of the corporation or otherwise, by reason of the fact that such person, or such person’s testator or intestate, is or was a Director or officer authorized to act for or on behalf of the corporation, against all judgments, fines, amounts paid in settlement and reasonable expenses, including attorneys fees, actually and necessarily incurred as a result of such action or proceeding or any appeal therein, provided that no indemnification may be made to or on behalf of any Director or officer if a judgment or other final adjudication adverse to such person established that such person’s acts were committed in bad faith or were the result of active and deliberate dishonesty and were material to the cause of action so adjudicated or that such person personally gained in fact a financial profit or other advantage to which such person was not legally entitled.

SEVENTH: Subject to an order of a Justice of the Supreme Court in the event of a liquidation, dissolution, termination or winding up of the corporation (whether voluntary, involuntary or by operation of law), the property and assets of the corporation shall be distributed to the General Synod Council of The Reformed Church in America or its successors so long as it or they qualify as exempt from income tax under Section 501(a) as organizations described in Section 501(c)(3) in the Internal Revenue Code of 1954 as the same may be amended from time to time. In the event that said corporation(s) is not then in existence and has not been succeeded by a qualifying corporation, then none of the property or assets of the corporation shall be made available in any way to any individual, corporation or other organization except to corporations or other organizations located within the United States that qualify as exempt from income tax under Section 501(a) as organizations described in Section 501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code of 1954 as the same may be amended from time to time, subject to an order of the Justice of the Supreme Court of the State of New York.

EIGHTH: The Board of Directors in its discretion may appoint a corporate trustee of any or all of the property of the corporation; may confer on such trustee such of the
EVANGELIZATION AND CHURCH GROWTH

powers, duties or obligations of the directors of the Corporation in relation to the
care, custody or management of such property as the Board of Directors may deem
advisable; from time to time may modify or revoke any or all of the powers, duties
or obligations of any such trustee, as the Board of Directors may deem advisable;
may at any time remove any such trustee; and upon the resignation or removal of any
such trustee may appoint a new or successor corporate trustee.

NINTH: The corporation is a corporation as defined in subparagraph (a) (5) of Sec.
102 and it shall be a Type B corporation under Section 201 of the New York Not for
Profit Corporation Law.

TENTH: The Secretary of State of the State of New York is herewith designated as
agent of the corporation upon whom process against it may be served and the post
office address within the State to which the Secretary of State shall mail a copy of
any papers served upon him with respect to it is:

c/o Burns, Kennedy, Schilling & O’Shea
598 Madison Avenue
9th Floor
New York, N.Y. 10022

This restatement of the Restated Certificate of Incorporation of the Reformed
Church in America Building and Extension Fund, Inc. was authorized by unanimous
vote of all of the directors of the corporation required or permitted to vote thereon at
a meeting duly called and held on the ____ day of _____________, 20___ in accor-
dance with Section 802 of the Not-for-Profit Corporation Law, there being no mem-
ers entitled to vote thereon.

IN WITNESS WHEREOF, we have made, subscribed and acknowledged this cer-
tificate this ____ day of _________, 20___.

___________________________
___________________________, President

___________________________
___________________________, Secretary

STATE OF _____________)
SS:
COUNTY OF _____________)

On the ___ day of ______________________________ 20___, before me came
___________________________ to me known, who being by me duly
sworn, did depose and say that he is the President of the Reformed Church in
America Building and Extension Fund, Inc. the corporation described in and he exe-
cuted the foregoing instrument at the unanimous direction of the Board of Directors
of said corporation; and that he has read the foregoing certificate, knows the contents
thereof and that the statements therein are true.

___________________________

Sworn to before me this
___ day of ___________, 20__
___________________________
APPROVAL OF
CERTIFICATE OF INCORPORATION
BY SUPREME COURT JUSTICE

I, ___________________________, Justice of the Supreme Court of the State of New York, First Judicial District, do hereby approve the foregoing Restated Certificate of Incorporation of Reformed Church in America-Extension Foundation, Inc. and consent that the same be filed.

Dated: ____________________

Supreme Court, New York County
Part _______
New York, New York

Justice of the Supreme Court
State of New York
___________ Judicial District

BYLAWS
OF
THE REFORMED CHURCH IN AMERICA
BUILDING AND EXTENSION FUND, INC.

ARTICLE I NAME
The name of this organization shall be the corporation is The Reformed Church in America Building and Extension Fund, Inc., a not-for-profit corporation organized and existing under the laws of the State of New York.

ARTICLE II PURPOSE AND RESPONSIBILITIES
A. The corporation shall be the successor in interest to the Reformed Church in America — Extension Foundation, Inc., and the Church Building Fund of the Reformed Church in America; shall has received and manages their respective assets; shall assume has assumed their respective liabilities; shall establish a fund to be known as the Extension Foundation Fund of the Reformed Church in America; may solicit monies for said fund from members, agencies, and instrumentalities of the Reformed Church in America by gifts, bequests, grants, and the issuance of notes and other evidences of indebtedness; and shall may disburse said monies as loans to local churches, classes, and other agencies and affiliates of the Reformed Church in America which that are (i) constructing or purchasing church buildings, (ii) otherwise improving property that is already owned by them, or (iii) in the case of classes only, purchasing land for future development as a local church facility, or may disburse said monies as grants in aid to local churches or classes. Loans may be made either directly or indirectly through participation agreements with other
lenders; provided, however, that this corporation shall not participate in any loan that it cannot, by the terms of its certificate of incorporation or bylaws, make directly to the same borrower, engaged in building or capital improvement programs; and to other agencies or instrumentalities which are authorized by, and subject to the general oversight of, the Reformed Church in America or any of its regional synods or classes, and which are engaged in building or capital improvement programs.

B. The corporation shall be the successor in interest to the Church Building Fund of the Reformed Church in America; shall receive and manage its assets; shall assume its liabilities; shall establish a fund to be known as the Church Building Fund of the Reformed Church in America; shall solicit monies for said fund from members, agencies, and instrumentalities of the Reformed Church in America by gifts, bequests, and grants, and shall disburse said monies as loans to churches of the Reformed Church in America engaged in building or capital improvement programs.

C. The purpose of the corporation shall be to support the work of the General Synod Council of the General Synod of the Reformed Church in America by making loans or grants to the entities and for the purposes set forth in Section A of this Article II, rendering financial assistance in the erection or improvement of buildings for (i) churches and (ii) in the case of loans from the Extension Foundation Fund, other agencies or instrumentalities which are authorized by, and subject to the general oversight of, the Reformed Church in America or any of its regional synods or classes. The corporation shall function under the ecclesiastical authority of the Reformed Church in America through the General Synod Council.

D. The purposes of the corporation shall be fulfilled on a nonprofit basis, and no part of the corporation’s earnings shall inure to the benefit of any individual or organization; but such earnings may include reasonable charges designated for administrative services. It shall be understood that upon the dissolution of the corporation all of the assets, if any, remaining after payment of liabilities, shall become the property of the General Synod Council of the Reformed Church in America, or its successor. In the event that said organization is not then in existence and has not been succeeded by a qualifying corporation, then the property or net assets of the corporation shall be made available to other corporations located within the United States which qualify as tax exempt under Section 501(c) (3) of the Internal Revenue Service Code, subject to the approval of the Supreme Court of the State of New York.

E. The corporation shall have the authority to acquire, hold, and dispose of real property. Any and all real property acquired by the corporation through foreclosure of any mortgage, deed of trust or other lien, or through the exercise of any right of equity of redemption belonging to the corporation or in any way acquired by it, may be sold, conveyed, mortgaged, or otherwise transferred as in the ordinary course of business, by order of the Board of Directors.

F. The corporation shall consider all applications for loans only on the recommendation of (a) the classis of which the loan applicant is a member, and (b) in the case of loans with an original principal amount in excess of $10,000, the Council of Field Secretaries of the Reformed Church in America and the General Synod Council. The Board of Directors shall review for the determination of investment validity and act upon all applications for loans and report its actions to the General Synod Council and the Council of Field Secretaries.

ARTICLE III MEMBERSHIP
A. The corporation shall consist of six voting members, all of whom shall be members in good standing of the Reformed Church in America and of full legal age. The General Secretary of the Reformed Church in America shall be an ex officio member without vote, with the right to attend all meetings and to speak on any matter before the corporation.

B. At least two-thirds of the voting members of the board shall be citizens of the United States of America. A majority of the board members shall have competence in one or more of the following fields, particularly as they relate to the evaluation of loans secured by real estate: banking, finance, accounting, real estate, or law.

C. One voting member shall be a member of the General Synod Council Finance Services Committee. Such board member shall be nominated by the General Synod Council Coordinating Committee and elected by the General Synod Council for one-year term(s). Such board member may serve consecutive one-year terms for so long as he or she remains a member of the General Synod Council Finance Services Committee, and shall be ineligible for one year after he or she has completed his or her service on the General Synod Council.

The other five voting members (members at large) shall be nominated by the General Synod Commission on Nominations and elected by the General Synod. All such nominees for at-large membership shall be the persons specified by the Board of Directors. The length, number, commencement date, and calculation of the terms of all at-large board members shall be as provided in the RCA's Book of Church Order. At-large board members shall be ineligible for one year after they have served two consecutive terms.

D. No person employed by the General Synod, the General Synod Council, the RCA Foundation, or the Board of Benefits Services, nor a spouse, parent, or sibling, or child of such person, shall be eligible for membership.

ARTICLE IV BOARD OF DIRECTORS

A. The Board of Directors shall consist of all the members of the corporation as herein above constituted.

B. The directors shall meet at least twice annually.

C. Special meetings shall be called by the president of the corporation in consultation with the staff or upon the request of any three members of the Board of Directors.

D. A written notice of each regular and special meeting, together with an agenda, background information, and proposed actions shall be mailed to each director at least ten days before each regular meeting or five days before a special meeting.

E. The spring meeting immediately preceding July 1 of each year shall be designated as the annual meeting of the corporation, unless problems arise which necessitate holding the annual meeting at another time.

F. A majority of the voting members of the corporation shall constitute a quorum. An affirmative vote of a majority of the voting members of the corporation shall be necessary to take any action, but a lesser number present may adjourn the meeting to a
ARTICLE V OFFICERS

A. The officers of the corporation shall be a President, a Vice-President, a Secretary, a Treasurer, an Assistant Secretary, and an Assistant Vice-President. The President, Vice-President, and Secretary shall be elected by and from the directors. The Board of Directors shall designate the Treasurer of the General Synod of the Reformed Church in America as shall be Treasurer, shall designate the Assistant Secretary of the General Synod of the Reformed Church in America as shall be Assistant Secretary, and shall designate the Fund Executive of the corporation as shall be the Assistant Vice-President. The board may elect such other officers as it may from time to time deem appropriate.

B. The officers, with the exceptions of the Treasurer, the Assistant Secretary, and the Assistant Vice-President, shall be elected for one-year terms and shall be eligible for no more than two consecutive terms.

C. The duties of the respective officers shall be those ordinarily performed by such officers.

D. The President shall preside at all meetings.

E. The Vice-President shall perform the duties of the President in the event of the absence or disability of the President.

F. The Secretary shall be responsible for the minute books and other records of the corporation and of the corporate seal, and shall be responsible for the maintenance of regular records of all business transacted by the corporation, including the minutes of the Board of Directors and of the corporation, and shall otherwise perform such duties and exercise such authority as the Board of Directors may direct.

G. The Treasurer shall be responsible for the keeping of all monies of the corporation, for the administration of all loans, and for the maintenance of regular records of the financial transactions, and shall make an annual report as well as such other reports as the Board of Directors and the General Synod Council may from time to time require.

ARTICLE VI FUND EXECUTIVE

A. The Board of Directors may employ a Fund Executive who shall serve at the pleasure of the Board of Directors or upon such terms as shall be determined by mutual agreement of the parties, consistent with the then-applicable Employee Handbook of the Reformed Church in America. The Fund Executive shall be an Assistant Vice-President of the corporation.

B. The Fund Executive shall report and be accountable to the Treasurer and shall have such authority and duties as are determined by the Board of Directors. The Fund Executive shall be responsible to coordinate operation of the corporation with the staff of the Reformed Church in America through the director of the unit in the Reformed Church in America that is principally responsible for evangelism and
ARTICLE VII OPERATING PRINCIPLES

A. All loans with an original principal amount in excess of $10,000-$25,000 made by the corporation in pursuit of its corporate purposes shall be made upon the security of pledges of publicly traded, marketable securities or deeds of trust or mortgages upon real property or and any improvements situated in, upon, or appurtenant there-to. Any and all such deeds of trust and mortgages may be made subordinate, however, to such liens, mortgages, and deeds of trust upon such property as the Board of Directors may deem appropriate.

B. The maximum amount of each loan, the time for which it is granted, the terms of its repayment, and the rate of interest to be charged, shall be fixed from time to time as the Board of Directors may deem appropriate.

C. The Extension Foundation Fund shall be managed with the objective of providing a ready source of monies to be loaned to churches as an alternative to commercial sources or where commercial sources are not available. Loans shall be made upon terms and at interest rates that reflect the cost of funds and that will assure the ability of the corporation to meet its obligations to note-holders from Extension Foundation income and assets.

D. The Church Building Fund shall be managed with the objective of providing a ready source of monies to be loaned primarily to new and young churches upon terms and at interest rates favorable to new church development and intended to assure the continuing availability of funds.

All funds held by the corporation shall be managed with the objectives of (i) ensuring that the corporation is able to meet its financial obligations to note-holders when and as those obligations arise, (ii) providing a ready source of loan funds as an alternative to commercial sources or where commercial sources are not available, and (iii) providing loans at interest rates that balance the desire to fund loans at below-market interest rates with the need to ensure that loan funds continue to be available in the future and with the desire to cause the net assets of the corporation to grow steadily over time.

D. The Board of Directors shall establish policies and procedures for operation of the corporation consistent with the principles contained herein.

ARTICLE VIII THE CORPORATE SEAL

The corporation shall have a seal, an impression of which is affixed to these bylaws.

ARTICLE IX AMENDMENT TO THE BYLAWS

These bylaws may be amended by a majority vote of the voting board members after such proposed amendments have been approved by a majority vote of both the General Synod Council and by majority vote of the General Synod of the Reformed Church in America. Proposed amendments shall be submitted to the board members in writing prior to any regular meetings, with final approval given at a subsequent meeting.

Endnotes:

1Fund drives have included the “Eendracht Appeal” of the late 1940s, a $500,000 fund-rais-
ing goal established in the early 1950s (funded in part through a “Nickel-A-Meal” pro-
gram), annual “askings” in the 1960s ($175,000 in 1966), the Church Building Fund
Campaign in the 1980s, and the “$9.8 by ’98” campaign of the 1990s. Additionally, for a
time in the 1970s portions of GSC reserves were used to meet loan demand.

2In 1961 CBF and EFF loans were limited to $20,000 each. In 1962 the CBF increased its
loan limit to $30,000 and the EFF increased its loan limit to $40,000. In 1971 the CBF and
EFF each had raised their loan limits to $50,000. By 1977 the CBF and EFF loan limits
had increased to $70,000 and $100,000, respectively. This was described in the report of
the Special Committee on Church Funding as “not realistic for adequate church buildings.”
(MGS 1975, p. 70). By the early 1990s loan limits had increased to $300,000 for the CBF
and $500,000 for the EFF (for an aggregate of $800,000). In 1999 the loan limits were
increased to an aggregate of $1,500,000—up to $1,000,000 of which can be funded from
the CBF and $500,000 can be funded from the EFF.

3CBF loan rates in 1957 were 1 percent per annum, payable annually. In the 1980s they
rose as high as 7 percent during the first five years of the loan, 7.75 percent during the sec-
ond five years of the loan, and 8.5 percent during the final ten years of the loan. Currently
CBF rates are 5 percent per annum during the first five years of the loan, 6 percent per
annum during the second five years of the loan, and 7 percent per annum during the final
ten years of the loan. EFF loan rates have been as low as 6 percent in the early 1970s and
as high as 9 percent in the mid-1990s. At the beginning of 2002 they were 7.25 percent.
EFF loan rates were maintained at a lower level in the 1960s and 1970s, in part because
many of the EFF’s administrative costs were paid by the CBF.

4The types of projects currently funded by loans from the RCABEF include construction
of new churches, additions to existing churches, remodeling or rehabilitation of existing
church facilities, installation of lifts or elevators to improve handicapped accessibility, con-
struction or purchase of residences for use as parsonages, and purchase and conversion of
commercial buildings for church use.

5In 1997 the RCABEF’s bylaws were amended to permit unsecured loans of up to $10,000.

6Since 1999 $200,000 of the interest earnings of the CBF have been provided to the RCA’s
Evangelism and Church Development Services unit for the sole and exclusive purpose of
funding matching grants (up to $30,000 over a three-year period) for new programs initi-
ated by local churches and classes.

7In 1997 the RCABEF’s bylaws were amended to permit agencies and instrumentalities of
the RCA other than local churches to borrow funds from the EFF.

8The RCABEF’s bylaws provide that they “may be amended by a majority vote of the
members after such proposed amendments have been approved by both the General Synod
Council and by majority vote of the General Synod of the Reformed Church in America.
Proposed amendments shall be submitted to the board members in writing prior to any reg-
ular meetings, with final approval given at a subsequent meeting.”

9Indeed, the $300,000 promised for new church start loans at a starting rate of 5 percent per
annum was recently increased to $500,000.

10Amendments to the RCABEF’s certificate of incorporation require General Synod
approval (BCO, Chapter 1, Part IV, Article 7, section 3).
From the Report of the General Secretary

In response to P-1 from the report of the general secretary (p. 48), the advisory committee recommended:

**R-110**
To affirm the General Synod Council (GSC) report titled “Implementation of the Statement of Mission and Vision: A Five-Year Evaluation” and endorse the action steps for implementation by the GSC; and further,

...to instruct the GSC to work in cooperation with the regional synods, classes, congregations, and local church leaders to monitor progress made and work still to be achieved in implementing the Statement of Mission and Vision, for report to the 2003 General Synod and thereafter as needed. (ADOPTED)

Reasons:

1. The GSC is the program agency of the General Synod and is the body best equipped to enable the staff to implement the Statement of Mission and Vision.

2. Regional synods, classes, congregations, and local church leaders must have ownership in the Statement of Mission and Vision if it is to be implemented.
REPORTS ON FINANCIAL SUPPORT

From the General Synod Council’s Finance Services Committee

REPORT OF THE OFFICE OF FINANCE

The Office of Finance provides centralized finance and accounting services to the denom- inational corporations, including the General Synod, the General Synod Council, the Board of Benefits Services, the RCA Building and Extension Fund, and the RCA Foundation. Its goal is to ensure that adequate financial systems, procedures, and controls are in place to support the program efforts of the RCA and to permit the officers and directors of our corporations to fulfill their fiduciary responsibilities.

The Director of Finance, who serves as the RCA’s treasurer and chief financial officer, is charged with primary responsibility for the oversight of all activities related to the Office of Finance. The Office of Finance is staffed with a team of dedicated professionals who handle a wide range of tasks including: 1) proper recording and reporting of contributions and other income, 2) payment of all bills, including the program expenditures that make up the RCA’s total mission worldwide, 3) supervision of income and expense budgets, 4) preparation of payroll for RCA staff and missionaries, 5) preparation of financial reports, and 6) working with outside investment managers, the Investment Advisory Committee, and board members to ensure that its funds are prudently invested. Finance staff members are also responsible for interacting with legal counsel, independent auditors, state regulators, the Internal Revenue Service, and corporate insurance providers.

Office of Finance: 2001 Highlights and Challenges for 2002

In 2001, the Office of Finance succeeded in:

- Completing a comprehensive set of financial policies that was approved by the General Synod Council at its fall 2001 meeting.
- Entering into an agreement with Scudder Private Investment Counsel for the investment management of the RCA Investment Program.
- Creating a new position, Assistant Controller—Budgets and Reporting, to assist in implementing better internal controls and financial reporting.
- Eliminating other staff positions, which has allowed us to reduce our operating budget.
- Instituting a new computerized endowment financial system.
- Placing the complete set of audited financial statements on the RCA website.
- Transitioning the payroll system from Paychex to ADP.

In addition to ongoing work in the above areas, challenges for 2002 and beyond that will demand the attention of the Finance Office include:

- Working with Office of Benefits Services staff to outsource the insurance billing function.
- Working with the Investment Advisory Committee to investigate alternative financial services providers for the RCA’s planned giving programs.
- Improving our financial analysis, projections, and reporting capabilities.
- Continuing work on Office of Finance organization, staffing, and cross-training to ensure that the organization can fulfill its fiduciary responsibility in an effective, cost-efficient manner.
Financial Summary - 2001

In 2000 the General Synod Council, the Board of Benefits Services, the RCA Foundation, and the RCA Building and Extension Fund all adopted a new fiscal year-end of September 30. This change was made so that the bulk of the contributions that are normally received in December will be recorded at the beginning of the fiscal year rather than at the end. This change has allowed better management of budgets and workflow. The information provided below is for the fiscal year ending September 30, 2001. The complete set of financial statements is available on the RCA website.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Fiscal Year Ending September 30, 2001</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Income</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>General Synod Council</td>
<td>$20,630,548</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GSC - Unrestricted Fund</td>
<td>$19,405,813</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Board of Benefits Services - General Fund</td>
<td>$1,423,662</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Board of Benefits Services - Insurance Fund</td>
<td>$10,868,471</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RCA Building and Extension Fund</td>
<td>$2,270,688</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RCA Foundation</td>
<td>$1,583,190</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Investment Programs

The RCA’s investments are managed by outside investment managers. The treasurer, the Investment Advisory Subcommittee, and the various boards are responsible for ensuring that the RCA's funds are prudently invested and that investment managers adhere to established Investment Objectives and Guidelines. Performance of the funds is monitored on an ongoing basis by the treasurer, the Investment Advisory Subcommittee, and the relevant boards. The following is a brief overview of the investments in the RCA Fund, the RCA Investment Program, and the RCA Retirement Plan.

The RCA Fund

The Trustees of the General Program Council designed the RCA Fund (formerly the RCA Cash Program) in 1979, primarily as a means for providing capital for the RCA Extension Foundation. Up to 20 percent of the RCA Fund’s Outside Depositor assets of $14.3 million (or $2.9 million) may be invested in Extension Foundation Fund (EFF) notes; however, given the present liquidity of the EFF, only about 2 percent of the RCA Fund’s Outside deposits are presently comprised of EFF notes. In addition to raising new capital for the building of churches, the RCA Fund makes it possible for local churches, classes, agencies, and regional synods to receive an attractive rate of return for the short-term investment of surplus funds.

The Bank of New York actively manages a fixed income portfolio, which comprises the bulk of the RCA Fund assets. The Fund also invests in EFF notes, and about 5 percent of its assets are held in a Dreyfus Money Market account to provide liquidity. The total return of the assets managed by the Bank of New York was 7.5 percent in 2001 and 6.5 percent since Bank of New York assumed responsibility for investment management in April 1999. RCA Fund investors receive distributions of cash earnings on a quarterly basis. The average payout to RCA Fund investors was 5.63 percent in 2001.

The Investment Objectives and Guidelines for the RCA Fund marketable securities, for which the Bank of New York serves as investment manager and custodian, are as follows:

1. **Investment Objectives**: To preserve capital, maximize current return on investment consistent with safety of principal, and maintain a high degree of liquidity in accordance with anticipated needs. The portfolio is an aggregation of investments from denomina-
tional and affiliated agencies, and at any time depositors may draw on the fund. Therefore, the fund should be structured so that 50 percent of the assets are easily liquidated.

2. **Investment Guidelines:**
   **Maturity Restriction:** The average duration of the fixed income portfolio shall remain within a 25 percent range versus the average duration of the Lehman Brothers Intermediate Government/Corporate Index. Individual investments may not exceed 10 years in maturity from the date of purchase.

   **Social Screening Constraints:** The following are not permissible investments for issuers in the fixed income asset classes: alcoholic beverages, tobacco products, gambling devices, and other products or services which may be deemed unethical or in violation of biblical principles, which would be determined by General Synod Council upon investigation and recommendation.

   **Fixed Income Investments:**
   - The portfolio seeks to diversify risk by holding the securities of a variety of issuers.
   - With the exception of U.S. Government and Agency securities, no single issuer will represent more than 5 percent of the overall value of the portfolio at the time of purchase.
   - Individual issuers shall be limited to a minimum rating of A by either Standard and Poor’s or Moody’s at the time of purchase.

**RCA Investment Program**

The restricted and unrestricted endowment funds of the General Synod and the General Synod Council are managed through the RCA Investment Program. Scudder Private Investment Counsel, which acts as investment manager for the bulk of the portfolio, has been transitioning the portfolio from a value to a core equity style. Target asset allocation, as specified in the Investment Policy, is 65 percent stocks; 35 percent bonds. In order to preserve the corpus of the endowments, the RCA Foundation’s policy is to pay out 6 percent of a five-year rolling average market value in four equal quarterly installments. On December 31, 2001, the market value of the Scudder portfolio was $13,240,889. Performance summary statistics follow:

| RCA Investment Program Performance Summary as of December 31, 2001 |
|-----------------|-----------------|---------------|---------------|---------------|
|                  | 3 Months Ending 12/31/01 | 12 Months Ending 12/31/01 | 3 Year Annualized | 5 Year Annualized | Since Inception Annualized |
| Equity Benchmark* | 11.55 (2.79) | 10.69 (11.88) | 3.60 (1.03) | 10.00 | 10.70 | 12.35 |
| Fixed Income Benchmark** | 0.21 | 0.06 | 7.92 | 8.50 | 6.17 | 5.90 | 7.76 | 7.37 | 8.87 |
| Portfolio Benchmark*** | 6.29 | 4.84 | 0.37 | 0.59 | 4.54 | 4.12 | 8.87 | 10.15 | 11.27 |

*S&P 500 Stock Composite Index with Dividends
**Lehman Brothers U.S. Government/Credit Index
***Blend Russell 1000V 65 percent; Lehman Government Credit 35 percent
RCA Retirement Plan

In January 2001, the Board of Benefits Services transferred the Retirement Plan and the Supplemental 403(b) Plan assets from the Bank of New York to Fidelity Investments. Plan participants were afforded the opportunity of selecting from a variety of Fidelity and socially screened Citizens mutual funds, and they have the option of transferring their account balances from one fund to another within the guidelines established by the Board of Benefits Services. A summary of investment returns follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>RETIREMENT PLAN</th>
<th>1 Year</th>
<th>3 Year</th>
<th>5 Year</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Fidelity Retirement Money Market</td>
<td>4.05</td>
<td>5.12</td>
<td>5.23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Citizens Income Standard</td>
<td>4.37</td>
<td>3.53</td>
<td>5.34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fidelity Freedom Income</td>
<td>2.22</td>
<td>5.21</td>
<td>7.49</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fidelity Freedom 2000</td>
<td>(0.09)</td>
<td>5.23</td>
<td>9.14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fidelity Freedom 2010</td>
<td>(4.34)</td>
<td>4.66</td>
<td>10.30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fidelity Freedom 2020</td>
<td>(9.07)</td>
<td>3.83</td>
<td>10.26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fidelity Freedom 2030</td>
<td>(11.69)</td>
<td>2.51</td>
<td>9.81</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fidelity Freedom 2040</td>
<td>(13.50)</td>
<td>NA</td>
<td>NA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Citizens Core Growth A</td>
<td>(18.22)</td>
<td>(6.16)</td>
<td>9.74</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>SUPPLEMENTAL 403(b) PLAN (all of the funds listed above plus the following funds)</th>
<th>1 Year</th>
<th>3 Year</th>
<th>5 Year</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Fidelity US Bond Index</td>
<td>8.08</td>
<td>6.05</td>
<td>7.30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fidelity Equity Income</td>
<td>(5.02)</td>
<td>3.37</td>
<td>10.07</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fidelity Fund</td>
<td>(11.22)</td>
<td>(0.61)</td>
<td>11.18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fidelity Growth Company</td>
<td>(25.31)</td>
<td>7.89</td>
<td>13.70</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fidelity Mid-Cap Stock</td>
<td>(12.80)</td>
<td>17.21</td>
<td>18.71</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Citizens Emerging Growth A</td>
<td>(32.96)</td>
<td>3.84</td>
<td>13.45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MSI Small Co. Growth B</td>
<td>(34.00)</td>
<td>(1.60)</td>
<td>4.70</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Citizens Global Equity A</td>
<td>(29.02)</td>
<td>(0.12)</td>
<td>9.58</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fidelity Diversified Intl</td>
<td>(12.99)</td>
<td>6.07</td>
<td>9.20</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Mission Investments

In 1970 the General Synod Executive Committee (GSEC) established a mission investment policy that directed the General Program Council to make “available for mission investment purposes 10 percent of the appropriated and unappropriated operating reserve” (GSEC Action 70-50). The main operating criteria for this policy was that it assist projects owned and/or controlled by “minority” individuals, groups, or local organizations whose goal was to assist in building economic participation or growth in the community. Maximum returns on investments are not the main objective of mission investments.

On December 31, 2001, mission investments in thirteen banks, credit unions, and other organizations totaled $338,943. Mission investment monies are placed with firms such as the South Shore Bank, located in the African-American section of Chicago; the NCCC Minority Bail Bond Fund; the Shared Interest Group, which is investing in South Africa’s democratic development; Navigators Kenya, which is making small-business loans in impoverished parts of Kenya; and EDCS (Oikocredit), which is making small-business loans in impoverished parts of Nicaragua.
Because of certain maturities in recent years, the total funds invested are far below the 10 percent allowance established in 1970. A committee of five meets regularly to analyze the portfolio, and is currently seeking additional opportunities for mission investing.

Assessments

Of the total assessment giving for 2001, 94 percent was collected by the due date of December 31. Of the outstanding 6 percent, all was received during the first two months of calendar year 2002. The total assessment for 2002 is $32.59 per communicant member. It is comprised of $27.06 for the General Synod Operations Budget, $1.50 for the Board of Benefits Services General Fund, and $4.03 for Theological Education. A verbal report will be given at General Synod regarding any balances that continue to be outstanding.

IRS Group Tax Exemption

As the denomination’s parent organization, the General Synod of the Reformed Church in America was granted a group tax exemption by the Internal Revenue Service on January 17, 1986. The exemption covers all participating churches, agencies, and educational institutions within the RCA that have asked to be included.

As one of the conditions for tax-exempt status, the commissioner of the IRS requires the church to file an annual update listing churches and/or agencies that fall under the 501(c)(3) designation of the IRS code. A complete listing is supplied to the IRS, incorporating any revisions under the RCA group exemption umbrella. The report, filed with the commission in August 2001, listed six newly formed churches to be added, fifteen name/address changes, and six churches/agencies to be removed from the list.

During recent years the IRS has directed increased attention to its review of church activities and related filing requirements. As a result the Office of Finance has experienced steadily growing requests, not only for advisory assistance in dealing with tax-related matters, but also for documentary evidence attesting to a church’s/agency’s tax-exempt status under section 501(c)(3) of the IRS code.

Annual Audit

The 2001 financial statements of the Reformed Church in America are examined and certified by Lambridges, Lamos, Moulthrop & Co., Certified Public Accountants. The complete set of financial statements is available on the RCA's website (www.rca.org).

Report of the Board of Benefits Services

The mission of the Board of Benefits Services is to provide retirement income, supplemental pensions, assistance grants, insurance benefits, and certain specified personnel support services for all ordained ministers and their families and for lay workers of the Reformed Church in America in accordance with the rules prescribed in the Constitution and Rules of the Board of Benefits Services.

The Board of Benefits Services met on October 31 to November 1, 2001, and on April 11-12, 2002, in Chicago, Illinois. The board also met by teleconference between stated sessions. The retirement plan approved by the 2001 General Synod and administered by
Fidelity Investments was monitored and evaluated positively, despite the poor performance of financial markets in the face of economic recession and the aftershocks of September 11. The board also participated with other RCA agencies in the Task Force on Socially Responsible Investing, a group established by the General Synod of 2001.

Major attention was given this past year to the RCA insurance program. The board is grateful to participants and the churches for patience in the transition to a new third-party administrator (Professional Benefit Administrators, Inc. of Oakbrook, Illinois) and we welcome the improved services already being received. The board reluctantly approved insurance premium increases of 15 percent on October 1, 2001, and again on January 1, 2002. Dramatic increases in our participant’s medical claims, escalating costs of medical services and prescription drugs, and the emerging national health care funding crisis threaten the solvency of the RCA insurance fund, now operating in deficit.

Given the pressures of an uncertain economy and growing health care costs, the board recognizes its responsibility to make explicit to the General Synod and the church the compelling biblical and theological rational for a comprehensive and covenantal provision of benefits for ministers, their families, and lay employees of the church. Over the years the board has used the term “covenant of care” to express our mutual obligations as a denomination to those who earn their living by serving our denomination. Recognizing the social and economic pressures that may tempt us toward more individualistic and secular security options, the board is renewing its efforts to express to the church the core theological convictions that undergird our comprehensive benefits programs. The board called upon the Rev. Dr. James Cook, professor emeritus at Western Theological Seminary and a past president of General Synod, to assist the board in biblical and theological reflection. The following study is the fruit of the board’s work with Dr. Cook this year. It provides the faith foundation for the board’s mission and for the church’s continuing commitment to assume the cost of care for those who give their lives in service to Christ and the Reformed Church in America. However, in its discussions with Dr. Cook the board became aware that the paper’s significance is much broader than the work of this board. It offers biblical and theological reflection that can be applied meaningfully to all aspects of the life and ministry of the Reformed Church in America through the work of all of its agencies and assemblies. The board is already using the paper to guide its policies and its work. It offers it to the wider church, hopeful that it will stimulate discussion and inspire renewed commitment to the work we do together in ministry.

**COVENANT OF GRACE/COVENANT OF CARE**

A church whose faith and life are drawn from the word of God finds every form of its ministry in that word. The several assemblies of the Reformed Church in America—consistory, classis, regional synod, and General Synod—are not administrative or legislative gatherings based on civic or corporate models without biblical or theological foundation. Rather, each of their meetings belongs to a tradition reaching back to the Jerusalem Council of the first century. Now as then, representatives of the church equipped by the Holy Spirit, discuss and determine how the church can best carry out its life and mission.

Similarly, the evangelistic outreach of the Reformed Church, from local congregations to world mission, is not motivated by models of corporate growth or marketing techniques, but rather by the Spirit-filled words of Jesus: “As you have sent me into the world, so I have sent them into the world”; by his post-resurrection commission: “Go therefore and make disciples of all nations”; and by his pre-ascension promise: “But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.”
The often lower-profile “inreach” of the Board of Pensions, now the Board of Benefits Services, is also rooted in the word of God. Its mandate is drawn not from the occasional New Testament text but from the very centerpiece of God’s self-revelation that spans the testaments, namely, the covenant. Its perspective views the Scriptures as the story of God’s remarkable love affair with the human race. It recognizes that what really made Eden Eden in the beginning was that on any given day, the first man and woman could hear the sound of the Lord God walking in the garden at the time of the evening breeze. When the sin of Adam and Eve replaced that mutual affection with alienation, the couple and their descendants learned that God loved them with a love that would not let them go. And so God came again, this time walking in the fields of Haran. There God made a covenant with Abram and Sarai that began with the promise to be God to them and to their children, and ended with the assurance that in them all the families of the earth would be blessed!

From there, the long story of God’s people that culminates in the renewal of the covenant through the coming of Jesus is the story of how God’s enduring love makes us one with God and with each other. God’s loving, persistent concern to be in relationship with us is always expressed in the covenant of grace that not only binds the Old and New Testaments into one, but also makes those testaments God’s gracious invitation to covenant life. This covenant life is from first to last a gift of God’s unmerited love.

I. THE COVENANT OF GRACE

As the apostle Paul reminded his Jewish and Gentile Christian readers at Rome, Abraham is the father of all who trust God as Abraham did. With a single stroke of his pen, Paul takes us back to Genesis, the book of beginnings, where God’s covenant with Abraham is hinted at in chapter 12, clarified in chapter 15 (“On that day the Lord made a covenant with Abraham”), and had its heart laid bare in chapter 17: “I will establish my covenant between me and you, and your offspring after you throughout their generations, for an everlasting covenant, to be God to your offspring after you.” And centuries later when God assured Moses that there was an exodus and a destiny in his people’s future, it was because God was remembering the covenant made with Abraham and Sarah, Isaac and Rebekah, and Jacob and Rachel—the covenant to take them as his people and be their God.

Throughout the unfolding drama of Old Testament history, God’s people broke the covenant from their side with tragic regularity. Appropriate discipline followed, but the covenant itself was never broken from God’s side! In fact, the Old Testament moves to a hope-filled close with Jeremiah’s bright word for the future, a text that focuses on covenant renewal:

The days are surely coming, says the Lord, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and the house of Judah. It will not be like the covenant that I made with their ancestors when I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt—a covenant that they broke, though I was their husband, says the Lord. But this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, says the Lord: I will put my law within them, and I will write it on their hearts, and I will be their God, and they shall be my people. No longer shall they teach one another, or say to each other, “Know the Lord,” for they shall all know me, from the least of them to the greatest, says the Lord; for I will forgive their iniquity, and remember their sin no more (Jer. 31:31-34).

For Christians, that promised covenant renewal was realized in the coming of Jesus. Although the New Testament does not complete any of Jesus’ “I am” sayings with the words, “a new” or “renewed” covenant, it does make clear connections between Jesus and the covenant of grace. Paul’s witness to the institution of the Lord’s Supper in
1 Corinthians—the earliest record in the New Testament—is a shining example. There the bread saying is followed by this significant word about the cup: “This cup is the new covenant in my blood. Do this, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of me.” The letter to the Hebrews makes the point again, for what is implicit in the comparison made in chapter 8:

But Jesus has now obtained a more excellent ministry, and to that degree he is the mediator of a better covenant, which has been enacted through better promises (v.6).

becomes explicit in the next chapter:

For this reason he is the mediator of a new covenant, so that those who are called may receive the promised eternal inheritance, because a death has occurred that redeems them from the transgressions under the first covenant (9:15).

Both of these texts bring Jesus and the new covenant together in the context of his death, his promises, and his deliverance from sin, without explicitly identifying him as the new covenant. That identification is made by attending to the Old Testament witness to what was essential to the old covenant, and then observing how those essentials are effectively incarnated in Jesus, the new covenant.

As we have seen, the heart of the covenant is the gift of God’s self in a relationship of enduring love. In Jeremiah’s splendid vision, even the promise of land, historically significant as it was, merits no mention. With unerring insight, the prophet points to the inner life where the heart of the covenant is laid bare: “But this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, says the Lord: ...I will be their God, and they shall be my people” (Jer. 31:33). Above all else, then, covenant means a personal relationship with God!

That a gracious renewal of the covenant is precisely what God is about in Jesus received definitive confirmation in the prologue of John’s Gospel: “And the Word became flesh and lived among us, and we have seen his glory, the glory as of the Father’s only Son, full of grace and truth” (1:14). That the incarnation is the full and final enactment of God’s declared desire, “I will be your God, and you shall be my people” (Jer. 31:33), is plain enough. But how is the testimony that Jesus was “full of grace and truth” to be understood? Once again, this new covenant language about Jesus points us to the old. Behind John’s words “grace and truth” stands a pair of Hebrew words. “Grace” translates the first one well enough, but to translate the second one as “truth” invites misunderstanding. It can lead us to think that Jesus champions some abstract truth over against falsehood or that Jesus is above all else the repository of all true knowledge and right thinking. But the Hebrew word used is a covenant word, a relational word that means truth in the sense of fidelity. It means being true or faithful to the covenant partner. The evangelist John, therefore, is not witnessing to Jesus as the embodiment of every kind of objective truth, but as the incarnation of God’s covenant of grace and covenant fidelity. Israel’s long experience of divine grace and faithfulness under the old covenant was now fully and finally manifested in Jesus, the new covenant. Jesus Christ is overflowing with God’s enduring love. In him, the new covenant, we reach the supreme good of the old: “See, the home of God is among mortals. He will dwell with them as their God, and they will be his people, and God himself will be with them” (Revelation 21:3).

This is the covenant of grace celebrated repeatedly in Reformed Church worship. Setting out the meaning of the sacrament of baptism our liturgy declares:

In baptism, God reveals and seals to us his covenant of salvation, given first to Noah and his whole family whom God saved from the waters of the flood, and renewed time after time through the patriarchs and prophets until it reached perfection in the person
of Jesus Christ our Lord. We participate in this covenant through faith in Christ, and in him become a new creation.

At the heart of the meaning of the Lord’s Supper lies this thrilling confession about the work of the Lord Jesus Christ: “By his death, resurrection, and ascension he established a new and eternal covenant of grace and reconciliation that we might be accepted of God and never be forsaken by him.”

And the language of covenant runs like a refrain through the order of worship for Christian marriage, underlining the enduring joy of this most intimate human relationship. The minister declares that the wedding party and their guests

are gathered here to praise God for the covenant of grace and reconciliation made with us through Jesus Christ, to hear it proclaimed anew, and to respond to it as we witness the covenant of marriage [the man and woman] make with each other in Christ’s name. Christian marriage is a joyful covenanting between a man and a woman in which they proclaim, before God and human witnesses, their commitment to live together in spiritual, physical, and material unity. In this covenant they acknowledge that the great love God has shown for each of them enables them to love each other.

Nor is it surprising, given this order’s powerful witness to the covenant of grace, that the ceremony climaxes in vows to live together in a covenant of care: The man and woman take each other

to have and to hold from this day forward,
for better, for worse
for richer, for poorer,
in sickness and in health
to love and to cherish
as long as they both shall live.

Not surprising, indeed, for God’s covenant of grace always carried within itself a covenant of care!

II. THE COVENANT OF CARE

Primary as the vertical relationship with God was in the old covenant, it was never separated from the horizontal relationship with other members of the covenant community. The Book of Exodus records God’s strong covenant care for his people suffering as slaves in Egypt. In response to their groaning God remembered the covenant made with the patriarchs, looked down upon the Israelites, and took notice of them. That notice in turn motivated God to appear to Moses at the burning bush, complete with a full explanation:

Then the Lord said, “I have observed the misery of my people who are in Egypt; I have heard their cry on account of their taskmasters. Indeed, I know their sufferings, and I have come down to deliver them from the Egyptians, and to bring them up out of that land to a good and broad land, a land flowing with milk and honey, to the country of the Canaanites, the Hittites, the Amorites, the Perizzites, the Hivites, and the Jebusites. The cry of the Israelites has now come to me; I have also seen how the Egyptians oppress them. So come, I will send you to Pharaoh to bring my people, the Israelites, out of Egypt” (Exodus 3:7-10).

Exodus also specifically names the widow and the orphan as of special concern to the covenant community (22:22). In fact, these fatherless and unprotected members of the community could rest in the knowledge that “Father of orphans and protector of widows is God in his habitation” (Psalm 68:5).
More than any other Old Testament witness, the Book of Deuteronomy declares that God’s own care and compassion for the covenant people were to be mirrored in their covenant care and compassion for one another. Sample instances from that book alone serve to demonstrate that that care was both concrete and personal. No one was to be hard-hearted or tight-fisted toward needy members of the community. Their needs were to be met liberally and ungrudgingly (15:7-11). When a bondman or bondwoman was set free, they were not to be sent out empty-handed but were to be provided for liberally from the harvest or flock, thus giving to them some of the bounty with which God had blessed their masters (15:12-14). (Israel was to remember how good it was to leave Egypt with the gifts of their masters.) During the harvest festivals, the slaves, the orphans, and the widows were to share in the joy and the abundance of food of the prosperous (16:11, 14).

Throughout these expressions of covenant care, God showed great concern for the rights and the dignity of those whose poverty had forced them into borrowing. Witness these remarkable Torah lines:

When you make your neighbor a loan of any kind, you shall not go into the house to take the pledge. You shall wait outside, while the person to whom you are making the loan brings the pledge out to you. If the person is poor, you shall not sleep in the garment given you as the pledge. You shall give the pledge back by sunset so that your neighbor may sleep in the cloak and bless you; and it will be to your credit before the Lord your God (Deut. 24:10-13).

The lender, said God, is not to invade the poor man’s house and help himself to whatever pleased him as collateral. Rather, the poor man is to decide which of his things to offer as a pledge, and the lender is to wait on the porch until the poor man brings it out to him. And if the borrower is so destitute that his only collateral is his cloak, the lender must return it when the day’s temperature goes down with the sun, so he can use it as his blanket through the night. Thus does the covenant God who inhabits eternity and dwells in the high and holy place make it a matter of personal concern to be sure a poor man sleeps warmly!

No wonder then that covenant privileges with God were always joined to covenant responsibilities toward covenant partners. Old covenant law and prophets were at one in demanding care for the needy, justice for the oppressed, and love for the stranger. In this way too, our Lord Jesus Christ is the embodiment of the new covenant. Jesus promised the blessing of God and inheritance in God’s realm to all who care for the physical and material well-being of the needy. To care for the least of those who are members of my family, he said, is to care for me (Matthew 25). And to the covenant commandment, “Love your neighbor as yourself,” Jesus not only added the parable of the Good Samaritan but also his own concern for covenant care: “This is my commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you” (John 15:12).

The book of Acts testifies that the covenant of care was close to the heart of the church from its inception. All who believed were not only together but had all things in common. They sold their possessions and distributed the proceeds to all according to need (chap. 2). The apostle Paul laid his understanding of the gospel before the leaders of the Jerusalem church, and when those church pillars had recognized the grace that had been given to him, they offered him and Barnabas the right hand of fellowship and blessed their gentile mission asking only one thing: that they remember the poor (Galatians 2). And when the apostle John needed to remind his readers that the covenant of grace and the covenant of care are a seamless whole he simply raised the inescapable question for every Christian then and now: “How does God’s love abide in anyone who has the world’s goods and sees a brother or sister in need and yet refuses to help?” (1 John 3:17).
Texts like those remind us of the moment in Jesus’ earthly ministry when a Pharisee asked him which commandment in the law, the Torah-God’s instruction for covenant life—is the greatest (Matthew 22). Remarkably, although the request was for one (“which commandment”), Jesus gave him two (“and a second is like it!”)! Apparently, Jesus thought it impossible to say the one without the other. Love of God is inseparable from love of neighbor. This suggests that like the seamless wholes—covenant of grace/covenant of care and love God above all/love your neighbor as yourself—the second commandment may also be a seamless whole: love your neighbor as yourself/care for your neighbor as yourself.

At its meeting on April 11-12, 2002, the Board of Benefits Services voted to forward the following recommendations to the General Synod for its consideration and action:

R-111
To affirm the paper “Covenant of Grace/Covenant of Care” as a foundational statement for the church; and further,

to commend the paper to the General Synod’s boards and agencies, regional synods, classes, consistories, and congregations of the RCA for study and application to their life and ministry.

The Advisory Committee on Theology considered R-111 and recommended an amendment to the recommendation:

R-111 (amended):
To affirm the paper “Covenant of Grace/Covenant of Care” as a foundational statement for the life and work of the church; and further,

to commend the paper to the General Synod’s boards and agencies, regional synods, classes, consistories, and congregations of the RCA for study and application to their life and ministry. (ADOPTED AS AMENDED)

Reason: To clarify that the paper is not being put forth as part of the Standards of the Reformed Church in America.

Recommendations 112 and 113 were considered by the Advisory Committee on Theology:

R-112
To direct the Board of Benefits Services to apply the Biblical and theological principles of the paper “Covenant of Grace/Covenant of Care” to the policies, programs, ministries, and services of the board. (ADOPTED)

R-113
To bless God for the life and ministry of Dr. James I. Cook for the contribution he has made to the Reformed Church in America by editing Volumes I and II of The Church Speaks. (ADOPTED)

Reason: The Reformed Church in America is grateful for the service of Dr. James I. Cook.
R-114
To instruct the Board of Benefits Services to continue a full and careful review of the medical and other insurance programs, and the assistance programs, to assure that these programs are offering coverage and assistance for RCA ministers and church workers within the framework established in the paper “Covenant of Grace/Covenant of Care,” and that these programs are offered at the fairest possible cost to the churches and other RCA employers.

The advisory committee recommended an amendment to the recommendation:

R-114 (amended):
To instruct the Board of Benefits Services to continue a full and careful review of the medical and other insurance programs, and the assistance programs, to assure that these programs are offering coverage and assistance for RCA ministers and church workers within the framework established in the paper “Covenant of Grace/Covenant of Care,” and that these programs are offered at the fairest possible cost to the churches and other RCA employers, with report to the 2003 General Synod. (ADOPTED AS AMENDED)

Reason: To ensure that appropriate due diligence is completed by the Board of Benefits Services and a full report is made to next year’s General Synod.

R-115
To direct the Board of Benefits Services to deliver to the General Synod of 2003 proposed amendments to The Constitution and Rules of the Board of Benefits Services, Part II (Reformed Church in America Retirement Plan, Plan Document), Part III (Reformed Church 403(b) Retirement Plan, Plan Document), and Part IV (Supplemental Assistance and Insurance) to assure that retirement plan and 403(b) plan participants are also full participants in the group life, long-term disability, and medical insurance plans offered through the Board of Benefits Services.

The advisory committee recommended an amendment to the recommendation:

R-115 (amended):
To direct the Board of Benefits Services to deliver to the 2003 General Synod proposed amendments to The Constitution and Rules of the Board of Benefits Services, Part II (Reformed Church in America Retirement Plan, Plan Document), Part III (Reformed Church 403(b) Retirement Plan, Plan Document), and Part IV (Supplemental Assistance and Insurance) to comply with the final action of General Synod arising out of any Plan changes. (ADOPTED AS AMENDED)

Reasons:

1. The original recommendation was premature.

2. This will provide for modifications to the Plan Documents called for by recommendations made by the Board of Benefits Services in response to R-89.
Implementing the Covenant of Care within the Covenant of Grace

The Board of Benefits Services has begun to review all of its programs and ministries in light of the paper, “Covenant of Grace/Covenant of Care.” With Dr. Cook’s assistance, the following initial response to the study is offered:

Through Reformed Church World Service the Reformed Church in America seeks to address the needs of people, whoever and wherever they are. Through its Board of Benefits Services the Reformed Church in America seeks to anticipate and address the needs of those covenant partners whom God has called to ministry within the covenant community. As grateful recipients of the covenant of grace and responsible stewards of the covenant of care, the board seeks to respond to the former and to implement the latter by providing retirement income, supplemental pensions, assistance grants, insurance benefits, counseling services, and certain specified personnel support services for all ordained ministers and their families and for lay workers of the Reformed Church.

Both the board and its ministry belong to the history of the Reformed Church in America. In the beginning that ministry was both small and fragile. The General Synod of 1837 established the Widows Fund. Ministers who wished their wives to benefit from this fund were required to contribute twenty dollars per year. In 1855 the synod added a similar fund for the relief of disabled ministers. These funds were administered by the Board of Corporation, the earliest name given to the Board of Direction of the General Synod. Both funds apparently required demeaning evidence of genuine poverty to qualify for benefits, including a full hearing and vote by the classis. In retrospect neither fund amounted to much, for seventy-five years after their inception the total in both stood at only $183,000. The Widows Fund was closed to new applicants in 1925 and is now virtually extinct.

These early efforts were followed by the much more successful Ministerial Pension Fund that remains in existence today as the restricted endowment of the General Fund. In 1923 the General Synod had formally incorporated the Board of Pensions to be responsible for the Ministers Pension Fund as well as for the widows and disabled ministers fund. Fourteen years later the General Synod approved the Contributory Annuity Fund. This fund has survived periods of turmoil and transition to become the centerpiece of what is now called the Reformed Church Retirement Plan.

The Reformed Church plan is unlike the defined contribution retirement plans used by other denominations. Its uniqueness lies in the concept that because those who serve the church are members of one body, the retirement funds belong to the church and not to the individual participant. Thus, the General Synod manages the funds through the Board of Benefits Services not only for the benefit of individuals but also for the common security of all who serve the church. Moreover, with IRS approval both the assistance grant and senior pastor ministry are funded through fees taken from the accounts of the participants. In this way, each participant in the retirement plan also participates in the covenant of care.

The material dimension of this care is represented by the six types of assistance grants provided for retirees. Ongoing bimonthly assistance grants are provided to retirees whose combined income from Social Security and Reformed Church benefit sources are insufficient to meet basic needs. Emergency or temporary assistance grants meet one-time or short-time needs. In response to member’s needs grants are also made to cover Contributory Annuity Fund contributions, medical insurance premiums, and funeral expenses. These grants are funded through gifts from churches and individuals, a General Synod assessment, and administrative fees taken from the individual accounts of Retirement Fund participants.
The personal dimension of the covenant of care is represented by the Senior Pastor Program that serves more than five hundred retirees, spouses, and widows. Each of ten geographical areas across the denomination has at least one contracted senior pastor who visits each retiree at least once a year. The visit’s purpose is to provide pastoral care and to inquire about financial needs. Senior pastor written reports include recommendations for financial assistance or special care.

Since 1959, the Reformed Church has also offered its servants health, disability, and life insurance. Although these programs inevitably share the common national burden of the ever spiraling upward cost of medical care, their grounding in the covenant of care makes them remarkably unique. Unlike for-profit commercial programs, risks here are spread over all participants. Thus, a high cost incurred in one instance is shared by those in better circumstances. Such immediacy of shared covenant care sets these insurance programs apart.

Moreover, their theological grounding in God’s covenant presupposes maximum participation by the covenant partners. The economic temptation for young or healthy participants to leave their church’s plans for lower premiums can only be overcome by their covenant commitment to partners whose age or infirmity exclude such action. In short, the Reformed Church insurance programs embody a Christian response to the biblical call to bear one another’s burdens (Galatians 6:2).

Thus, whether the Board of Benefits Services is providing retirement income, supplemental pensions, assistance grants, insurance benefits, or counseling services, it seeks to uphold, to implement, and to extend throughout life the gracious covenant of care God’s people make with those they call to ministry:

We promise and oblige ourselves to encourage you in the discharge of the duties of your important office, and to free you from worldly avocation while you are dispensing spiritual blessings to us.

403(b) and Retirement Plan Amendments

At its April 2002 meeting the Board of Benefits Services approved several amendments to the Retirement Plan and the 403(b) Retirement Plan for consideration and action by the General Synod. The proposed amendments relate to changes in the tax laws that were included in the Economic Growth and Tax Relief Reconciliation Act (EGTRRA) of 2001. The basic feature of the change is to allow greater amounts to be contributed to the 403(b), as it increases the maximum annual contribution and provides for more generous catch-up provisions. EGTRRA also allows for greater flexibility in options related to rollovers. There are also amendments to the plans that relate to the distribution of accounts in the event of the divorce of the participant. Finally, an amendment acknowledges that the retirement plans of the RCA are operating on a calendar year rather than a fiscal year.
conform to certain requirements of the Internal Revenue Code of 1986, as amended by the Economic Growth and Tax Relief Reconciliation Act of 2001 (EGTRRA);

NOW THEREFORE, in consideration of the foregoing, these Plan Documents are hereby amended and restated, effective as of January 1, 2002. (ADOPTED)

RETIREMENT PLAN:

ARTICLE II
Definitions

2.20 “Plan Year” shall mean the fiscal year, shall mean the calendar year (January 1 to December 31), notwithstanding the fact that the Reformed Church may adopt or utilize a Fiscal Year based on a consecutive twelve-month period other than the calendar year.

ARTICLE XIII
Miscellaneous Provisions

13.1 Spendthrift Provisions.
(b) A Participant’s benefits under the Plan will be distributed into a nonparticipant ex-spouse, or the designated beneficiary of a nonparticipant ex-spouse, only in the form of a lump sum pursuant to the terms of a divorce decree issued under state law, or may be retained and held in a separate account in the name of the non-Participant Spouse, if the Board approves. Notwithstanding anything in the Plan to the contrary, upon the Board’s segregation of a Participant’s Account for the sole benefit of a non-Participant Spouse in accordance with a divorce decree, the non-Participant Spouse will be deemed an unmarried Participant for purposes of this Plan and his or her Account will be held and administered as such under the terms of Articles V (Investment Options), VI (Distribution Elections), VII (In-Service Withdrawals; Hardship Distributions), IX (Retirement Benefits), X (Benefits Payable Upon Death), and XIII (Miscellaneous Provisions)—a marital property settlement agreement, or any other written agreement signed by the Participant and the nonparticipant ex-spouse as part of a divorce action. The nonparticipant ex-spouse shall not be entitled to maintain any benefit under the Plan.

403(B) RETIREMENT PLAN:

ARTICLE II
Definitions

“Effective Date” means January 1, 2001, the date on which this Plan Document, as part of the Constitution, becomes effective; and January 1, 2002 is the date this amended and restated Plan became effective.

“Plan Year” shall mean the calendar year (January 1 to December 31), notwithstanding the fact that the Reformed Church may adopt or utilize a Fiscal Year based on a consecutive twelve-month period other than the calendar year.
ARTICLE IV
Participant Accounts; Contributions

4.1 Salary Reduction Contributions.
(b) Notwithstanding Sections 4.8 and 4.10 herein, except as provided in Sections 4.1(c) and 4.12, in no event shall Salary Reduction Contributions for any Plan Year exceed the annual elective deferral limit under Section 402(g) of the Code ($10,500 for 2001) ($11,000 for 2002) or regulations thereunder. The Board shall establish procedures which shall provide for the return to the Participant by the April 15 next following the close of any Plan Year of any Salary Reduction Contributions (and any income thereon) made by the Employer on the Participant’s behalf for such Plan Year which exceed the limits set forth herein. The Participant must include the returned excess amounts in income for the year in which it was deferred.

4.2 Participant Payments.
(b) Beginning January 1, 2002, a Participant Payment Account cannot be transferred may be rolled over to an IRA or other plan, another plan, as permissible, in accordance with the provisions contained in Section 11.1 of this Plan.

Participant Payments will be distributed in a lump sum by the Board if requested by the Participant, with the Participant’s understanding that federal, state, and local taxes will be incurred on such distributions at that time.

4.3 Rollover Contribution Account.
(a) With the approval of the Board, an Employee may transfer to this Plan (or cause to be transferred) to this Plan directly from another arrangement under Code Section 401(a), 403(a), 403(b), or 457(b) (eligible governmental deferred compensation plans only), excluding after-tax employee contributions, or from an individual retirement account or individual retirement annuity, cash in an amount which constitutes: (i) all or part of an eligible rollover distribution (as defined in Code Section 403(b)(8)); or (ii) all of a rollover contribution (as defined in Code Section 408(d)(3)(A)(iii)). The cash so transferred shall be deposited in a Rollover Contribution Account. The Plan will not accept rollovers of after-tax employee contributions.

4.8 Maximum Contributions.
(a) Defined Contribution Limit. Notwithstanding anything contained in the Plan to the contrary, the total amount of all contributions to a Participant’s Accounts (excluding rollovers) for any “Limitation Year” shall not exceed the limitations on contributions imposed under Section 415 of the Code (as may be adjusted by the U.S. Secretary of the Treasury from time to time). For this purpose, the Limitation Year shall be the calendar year or any consecutive twelve month period designated by the Board in accordance with Treasury Regulation §1.415-2(b). Currently, annual additions in the form of contributions and other additions with respect to a Participant Account cannot exceed the lesser of $30,000 or 25% $40,000 or 100% of the Participant’s Compensation. For Limitation Years ending before January 1, 2002, a Participant may make an irrevocable election to have this Section 4.8(a) apply in place of the limits set forth in Section 4.9.

4.9 Exclusion Allowance.
(a) The exclusion allowance contained in this Section 4.9 shall not apply after January 1, 2002. Notwithstanding Sections 4.1 and 4.8, and anything contained in the Plan to the contrary, the total contributions with respect to a Participant under this Article for
any taxable year of such Participant shall not exceed the Participant’s maximum permissible contribution under Code Section 403(b)(2) which shall be an amount equal to the excess, if any, of:

20% of the Participant’s “Includible Compensation” for such taxable year times the total number of “Years of Service” (as defined below) of the Participant at the close of such taxable year, over

The total amount that has been contributed by the Employer for “Annuity Contracts” for the Participant which was excludable from the gross income of the Participant, for all taxable years ending prior to the taxable year for which the exclusion allowance is being determined; and

In the case of any individual (i) qualifying as a duly ordained, commissioned, or licensed minister of a church, or a lay person, as an employee of a church, a convention or association of churches, including an organization described in Section 414(e)(3)(B)(ii) of the Code, and (ii) whose adjusted gross income for any taxable year is under $17,000, the amount determined under this section (a) shall not be less than the lesser of $3000 or the “Includible Compensation” of such individual;

All as determined in accordance with Section 403(b) of the Code and regulations thereunder.

The exclusion allowance provided for in Section 4.9 shall not apply after January 1, 2002. For taxable years beginning on or after January 1, 2002, a Participant’s permissible maximum annual contribution shall be determined solely in accordance with Sections 4.1 and 4.8.

4.11 Overall Contribution Limits. For taxable years ending before January 1, 2002, the amount of contributions a Participant can exclude from gross income for a tax year is the smallest of the Section 4.1(b), 4.8, and 4.9 limits described above. For taxable years ending on or after January 1, 2002, the amount of contributions a Participant can exclude from gross income for a tax year is the smallest of the Section 4.1(b) and 4.8 and 4.9 limits described above.

4.12 Beginning January 1, 2002, all employees who are eligible to make elective deferrals under this Plan and who have attained age 50 before the close of the Plan Year shall be eligible to make catch-up contributions in accordance with, and subject to the limitations of, section 414(v) of the Code. Such catch-up contributions shall not be taken into account for purposes of the provisions of the Plan implementing the required limitations of sections 402(g) and 415 of the Code.

ARTICLE VI
In-Service Withdrawals; Hardship Distributions

6.2 Hardship Distributions.

(d) For purposes of this Section, distribution will be deemed to be necessary to satisfy an immediate and heavy financial need of the Participant if all of the following requirements are satisfied:

(i) The distribution is not in excess of the amount of the Participant’s immediate and heavy financial need;
(ii) The Participant has obtained all distributions, other than Hardship withdrawals from the Plan; and

(iii) The amount of Salary Reduction Contributions permitted hereunder following the year in which the Hardship withdrawal is received shall not exceed the dollar limitation described in Code Section 402(g) minus the sum of Salary Reduction Contributions made by the Participant during the taxable year in which the Hardship withdrawal is received. Beginning January 1, 2002, a Participant who receives a distribution of elective deferrals after December 31, 2001, on account of hardship shall be prohibited from making elective deferrals and employee contributions under this Plan for 6 months after receipt of the distribution.

ARTICLE XI
Account Transfer to Retirement Program

11.1 Direct Rollovers.
(b)Definitions:

(iii) Eligible Retirement Plan: An Eligible Retirement Plan is an individual retirement account described in Section 408(a) of the Code, an individual retirement annuity described in Section 408(b) of the Code, an arrangement qualified under Section 401(a) or 403(a) of the Code, an eligible arrangement under Section 457(b) of the Code sponsored by a governmental unit, or an annuity contract described in Section 403(b) of the Code that accepts the Distributee’s Eligible Rollover Distribution. However, in the case of an Eligible Rollover Distribution to a surviving Spouse, an Eligible Retirement Plan is an individual retirement account or individual retirement annuity.

(v) For the purposes of the direct rollover provisions in sections 11.1(a) and 11.1(b)(iv) of the Plan, a portion of a distribution shall not fail to be an Eligible Rollover Distribution merely because the portion consists of after-tax employee contributions which are not includible in gross income. However, such portion may be transferred only to an individual retirement account or annuity described in Section 408(a) or (b) of the Code, or to a qualified defined contribution plan described in Section 401(a), 403(a), or 403(b) of the Code that agrees to separately account for amounts so transferred, including separately accounting for the portion of such distribution which is includible in gross income and the portion of such distribution which is not so includible.

ARTICLE XIV
Miscellaneous Provisions

14.1 Spendthrift Provisions.
(b)Distribution Under Qualified Domestic Relations Orders. The preceding paragraph shall also apply to the creation, assignment, or recognition of a right to any benefit payable with respect to a Participant pursuant to a domestic relations order, unless such order is determined to be a Qualified Domestic Relations Order as defined in Section 414(p) of the Code, so long as the benefit does not exceed 50 percent of the total accumulations of an account. The benefit assigned to the Alternate Payee shall be payable only as a lump sum distribution; and, upon qualification of the domestic relations order by the Plan Administrator, shall be paid as soon as is administratively possible. In such case, the Plan shall make the distribution to an Alternate Payee pursuant to a Qualified Domestic Relations Order even if the affect-
ed Participant has not terminated his Employment and has not reached his Earliest Retirement Age. Under no circumstances will an Alternate Payee be entitled to maintain a benefit in the Plan. For purposes of this Section, the terms “Alternate Payee,” “Qualified Domestic Relations Order,” and “Earliest Retirement Age” shall have the meanings ascribed to such terms in Section 414(p) of the Code.

Assistance Funding from the RCA Retirement Plan

The General Synod of 2001 referred to the Board of Benefits Services the following overture:

The Regional Synod of the Mid-Atlantics and the Regional Synod of New York overture the General Synod to instruct the Board of Benefits Services to cease funding the Senior Pastors Program and the Assistance Grant Program from assessments on the assets of the RCA Retirement Plan; and further, to instruct the General Synod Council to incorporate the costs of both programs within the assessments levied on the classes of the RCA. (MGS 2001, p. 347)

In its referral of the overture the General Synod requested that the board “include a recommendation for the funding of Assistance Grants and the Senior Pastor Program.” (MGS 2001, R-85, p. 348).

The Board of Benefits Services initiated a review of the policies and procedures for approving assistance grants prior to the General Synod request of 2001. Revised policies along with application and review/renewal procedures were adopted by the board in 2001 and were implemented in January/February 2002. All assistance grants are provided on a “need” basis. Annually, each grantee forwards a renewal application along with documentation of financial need. The request for continuation is reviewed prior to renewal, adjustment, or termination of a grant. In many cases BOBS senior pastors are part of a pastoral team that advises the board’s staff about individual circumstances and needs.

The Board of Benefits Services reaffirmed its belief in and commitment to the Senior Pastors Program. The part-time retirees who provide this pastoral care provide invaluable service and support to retired pastors, spouses, and retired church workers and are an important communication “bridge” to the board and its staff. This program is unique to the RCA and fulfills the principles articulated in the paper prepared for the board, Covenant of Grace/Covenant of Care.

Following extensive discussion of the overture and the request of the 2001 General Synod the board reaffirmed its belief that the Assistance Grant Program and the Senior Pastors Program are essential components of the ministry of the RCA Board of Benefits Services as mandated by the General Synod, and that it is appropriate that these programs continue to be funded from the Retirement Plan assets for the following reasons:

1. The contribution of 11 percent of compensation or the EBPH, whichever is greater, made by the churches to the Board of Benefits Services was set to allow the board to finance the Assistance Grant and Senior Pastor programs, and the member accounts.

2. At any time congregations may contribute additional funds to support these programs.

3. The programs are already subsidized by per-member assessment and contributions.

4. The board feels this is an important example of the Covenant of Care concept articulated in the report, Covenant of Grace/Covenant of Care.
Report of the RCA Foundation

The RCA Foundation began in 1994 as an organization seeking to serve the financial needs of the local congregation. It is now transitioning into a fundraising arm that seeks financial support for the programs of the Reformed Church in America.

It is not the intent of the RCA Foundation staff to abandon the financial needs of the local congregation. The foundation will continue to offer estate planning seminars and services to all members of the RCA. Whether you have a charitable intent for the RCA or not, the RCA Foundation wants to help you “set your house in order” (2 Kings 20:1).

Anyone seeking the assistance of a Certified Financial Planner in planning his or her estate is strongly encouraged to call Norman Tellier (1-800-766-9660). Norm will be more than happy to work with you in preparing for the transfer of assets from one generation to the next.

We, the board and staff of the RCA Foundation, are equally committed to continue serving as resource people for those congregations who seek fund-raising guidance and counsel in their capital campaigns. Churches who wish to inquire about this assistance can call Larryl Humme (1-800-228-3813).

The new fundraising emphasis allows the foundation to strengthen and support the program components of the RCA, so that together we can “equip congregations for ministry—a thousand churches in a million ways doing one thing—following Christ in mission, in a lost and broken world so loved by God” (RCA Statement of Mission and Vision).

The foundation staff will match the passion of donors with the programs of the denomination. How do we do that? By establishing and nurturing relationships with those who support the RCA. The staff want to understand which ministries make you excited. We want to plug you in where you can best serve and be served. The foundation is a ministry that is vitally important both to donors and to the Reformed Church in America.

The entire staff is grateful for this opportunity to work with you as we further the kingdom together.

The Staff and Board

Larryl Humme continues to serve as the director of the RCA Foundation. Humme has been with the Reformed Church in America since 1993 and works out of the Chicago, Illinois, office. You can reach Larryl and his administrative assistant, Deborah Von Feldt, at 8765 W. Higgins Rd., Suite 410, Chicago, IL 60631 or 1-800-228-3813. Norman J. Tellier continues to serve as the Coordinator for Gift Planning. Tellier has been with the Reformed Church in America since 1987. You can reach Norm and his administrative assistant, Noreen Fargione, at 1790 Grand Blvd., Schenectady, NY 12309 or 1-800-766-9660. Joanne Fernandez serves as the Coordinator for Foundation Services. Joanne has been with the Reformed Church in America since 1968 and works out of 475 Riverside Drive, 18th Floor, New York, NY 10115. You can also reach her at 1-800-722-9977, ext. 2949. The Coordinator for Special Gifts position has been vacant since August 2000. A search is currently underway to fill this vacancy.

The RCA Foundation board is composed of five members of the General Synod Council (GSC) and four persons at large. The present board members are:
Office of the Director

While transitioning the foundation into being a fundraising entity for the RCA, the director is intricately involved in the entire process of fundraising, working closely with the coordinators for special gifts and gift planning, in the development of a community of donors for the RCA. The director articulates the mission and vision of the denomination in such a way as to inspire confidence and enthusiasm amid this growing community of donors. He works closely with the foundation staff, the general secretary, the Foundation board, and other GSC staff members in establishing a clear direction, as well as a plan of action, for further establishing a full array of fundraising programs.

Office of Special Gifts

The Office of Special Gifts encourages people to give gifts to specific causes. The goal is to seek gifts from individual donors to fund projects that otherwise would not be funded. This service is offered to all offices and assemblies of the RCA.

The Office of Special Gifts identifies and solicits funding from individual donors for special programs or projects. The coordinator for special gifts is responsible for identifying, cultivating, and soliciting support from RCA members who may be interested in making gifts to various RCA ministries. The RCA programs and projects identified as needing funding are items that either the General Synod Council or the RCA’s Leadership Advisory Team have approved.

In funding these approved projects or programs, the coordinator for special gifts looks at a variety of potential funding sources. The coordinator for special gifts works with individuals who contributed previously to RCA appeals and/or fund drives, moving toward transferring their support to new RCA programs. Additionally, the coordinator for special gifts works with current donors to RCA programs and continues to identify and solicit new donors to contribute to RCA programs.

Money raised in calendar year 2001 by the Office of Special Gifts includes:

- $55,000 Urban Ministries (new pledges and gifts)
- $183,250 RCA Foundation/Philanthropic Fund
- $245,260 GSC Undesignated
- $483,410

The Office of Special Gifts has been vacant since August 1, 2000.

New Fund Raising Approaches for 2001

In its desire to expand the fundraising capacity for the Reformed Church in America, the RCA foundation staff began a relationship with NewDea, Inc., a leading provider of high-quality, philanthropic matching technology and services. NewDea offers high-capacity
donors an effective solution to the costly and labor-intensive alternative of establishing private foundations. As a targeted, philanthropic matching service, NewDea provides donors with access to hundreds of faith-based charitable organizations worldwide, as well as research tools, analyses, and project assessments to aid donors in their due diligence” (NewDea website). This is a fundraising service offered to the RCA Foundation at no cost. Deborah Von Feldt, administrative assistant to the RCA Foundation director, manages the RCA information posted on the NewDea website.

The RCA Foundation also entered a working relationship with the RCA’s Mission Services Unit in establishing a new 501(c)(3) to attract additional financial resources for the Reformed Church in America. The new 501 (c)(3), Reformed Economic Development, Inc. (REDI), will write funding grants for various programs of the RCA. Initially, much of the energy and work generated by the REDI staff will be in support of the urban ministries initiative for the Reformed Church in America. In the foreseeable future, the REDI staff and function will become fully integrated into the fundraising services offered by the Foundation, continuing to write funding grants for the RCA as well as offering grant-writing assistance to local congregations and other agencies affiliated with the Reformed Church in America.

For more information about either NewDea or REDI, please contact RCA Foundation Director Larryl Humme.

Office of Gift Planning

The task of the RCA Foundation Office of Gift Planning (OGP) is to promote the variety of methods available for making gifts to the RCA and its related organizations. In order to provide these services, the OGP uses several methods to communicate the benefits of gift planning to the members and friends of the RCA.

In 2001 the office had one full-time staff person—the coordinator, Norman J. Tellier—and an administrative assistant, Noreen Fargione. The coordinator makes presentations on estate planning and/or financial planning to groups in churches and other organizations. These presentations explain the need for estate planning, share something of the intricacies of estate taxation, and explain how charitable giving may reduce estate taxes.

Presentations on endowments are made to deacons, consistories, and other decision-making bodies. These presentations suggest that churches establish endowment funds and guidelines for the use of gifts or bequests prior to the receipt of contributed funds.

A workshop for ministers and deacons on the importance of gift planning with an emphasis on how to get started locally and the resources available to churches within the foundation is also available.

Help with estate and financial planning is offered to members and friends of the RCA at no cost. Tellier is a CERTIFIED FINANCIAL PLANNER™ practitioner (CERTIFIED FINANCIAL PLANNER™ is a federally registered mark of the Certified Financial Planner Board of Standards, Inc.).

The Board of Benefit Services of the RCA provides pre-retirement workshops for ministers and other persons who work for the RCA. Tellier assists in the presentations at these workshops and works with ministers doing pre-retirement financial planning. The Board of Benefits Services pays a fee to the RCA Foundation in order to provide these services.

The office keeps on hand a large supply of literature on the value of having a will and how gifts can be made in other ways. These materials are sent on request and are distributed at workshops and displays.
The major work of the OGP is to promote giving through bequests and to generate life income gifts. These gifts include gift annuities, a pooled income fund, charitable trusts, revocable gift agreements, the GIFTS Philanthropic Fund, and other instruments. In 2001 the RCA Foundation has continued working toward registration of its gift annuity program in those states that require registration and in which it is expected the Foundation staff will generate annuities.

The following charts illustrate the gifts received by the Office of Gift Planning during calendar year 2001 and the wishes of the donors in the final disposition of those gifts. While the “gifts received” chart represents money received, in most cases, the distribution of the gift will take place upon the death of the donor or some other specified event. The work of the Office of Gift Planning in the United States resulted in gifts totaling $499,809 during 2001 (Canadian gifts are reported below). These gifts were received in the following forms:

Total Received: $499,809

The GIFTS Philanthropic Fund is a donor-advised fund that allows donors to make a gift to the Foundation, which distributes the gifts to charitable organizations at a later date. This is especially helpful for donors who wish to make a gift in the current year but have not yet decided how they want it distributed. In 2001 $229,426 was received in this fund, and $141,790 was distributed to charities. The Foundation received one-half of the interest earned on GIFTS Philanthropic Fund accounts. In 2001 this was almost $7,000.
The gifts received by the Foundation during 2001 in all funds were designated as follows:

The gifts received by the Foundation during 2001 in all funds were designated as follows:

Total gifts designated: $412,173

The amounts shown on the above chart do not equal those of the previous chart since gifts to the GIFTS Philanthropic Fund are carried over into following years.

The above charts reflect gifts received in 2001 and their designations. In the case of the GIFTS Philanthropic Fund, distributions were made to the designated parties. In the case of the life income gifts, distribution will not take place until the RCA no longer has to make income payments to the income beneficiaries. Every year several of these gifts mature due to the death of the life income beneficiary. Of special significance in 2001 was the gift provided by Lucile and Henry Eggink, which matured and began to be distributed. Mr. Eggink died in 2001; Mrs. Eggink had died earlier. The gift to the RCA is in the form of an endowment fund for a mission program. As of early 2002 $1.6 million has been received for this endowment.

One of the benefits to congregations is that while the RCA Foundation promotes giving through wills and other means, persons often act upon the suggestions made by RCA Foundation staff without notifying the Foundation of the gift. These gifts come to the churches at a later time. In order to judge the effectiveness of the RCA Foundation program the churches of the RCA are asked the number and amount of bequests and planned gifts received by them each year. Gift-planning staff noted while reading the consistorial reports from 1996 onward that bequests and planned gifts came more frequently from churches where the Foundation has worked than from other churches. In 2000 the churches reported receiving 234 bequests totaling $6,354,130 and 77 planned gifts totaling $802,504. The planned gifts came in the form of trust distributions and matured life insurance policies and annuities. Total bequests and planned gifts reported by the congregations amounted to $7,156,634. The distribution of these gifts by synods is as follows:
Total received: $7,156,634

It should be noted that 2000 was the second year to show a significant increase in the amounts received in bequests by the Synods of the Great Lakes and Mid-America. It will be interesting to see if this trend continues.

RCA Foundation Canada (RCAFC)

A concern of RCA Foundation Canada (RCAFC) has been its inability to offer a full range of services to our churches in Canada. Canadian law prevents the RCAF from offering gift annuities or management of funds to our churches in Canada. With the cooperation of the Regional Synod of Canada, RCAFC was incorporated in October of 2000.

Because of Canadian law a foundation may not offer gift annuities. The regional synod has agreed that it will become the agency through which gift annuities will be written. All annuities will be re-insured since only a few non-profit organizations in Canada are allowed to manage and invest annuity portfolios.

The primary purpose of the foundation will be to manage endowments and other funds for the churches and other RCA organizations in Canada. In 2001 the staff of RCAF working on behalf of RCAFC generated one charitable gift annuity of $10,000 and the second payment on a scholarship fund administered by RCAFC of $50,000. The scholarship fund now has a principal amount of $100,000. It provides scholarships for Canadian students at New Brunswick and Western seminaries.

Office of Gift Planning and the RCA Building and Extension Fund

The OGP also promotes the RCA Building and Extension Fund (RCABEF) investment notes. Investments in the RCABEF are used for the construction of church buildings. Promotion is done by Church Herald ads, publicity material, and personal contacts. The office is also responsible for obtaining state registrations, writing the offering circular, and issuing new and rollover notes.
Van Bunschooten Society

In 1814 Dominie Elias Van Bunschooten made the first planned gift to the RCA. His gift continues to provide scholarship funds to this day. In honor of that gift the RCA has formed the Van Bunschooten Society. This society recognizes those who have made planned gifts. The planned gift may be a designation in a will, a life income gift, or some other means. Any part of the RCA, except the colleges and seminaries, may be the beneficiary of the gift. The society has more than two hundred-fifty members.

The General Synod Council voted at its October 1993 meeting to have the following summary of the Van Bunschooten Bequest (adopted by the 1937 General Synod) read at the General Synod meeting as part of the report of the Advisory Committee on Financial Support:

THE VAN BUNSCHOOTEN BEQUEST

Summary for Voluntary Use in Classes

At a meeting of General Synod in New York City, June 9, 1814, Dominie Elias Van Bunschooten, one of the advisory members, walked up the aisle and laid down on the table ten bonds amounting to $13,800 and $800 in cash and asked Synod to accept the gift for the education of young men for the ministry. On January 10, 1815, in his seventy-seventh year, Dominie Van Bunschooten went home to his reward and was buried in the church yard of First Reformed Church of New Brunswick, New Jersey. In his last will and testament he added over $3,000 to his former donation, making a total of more than $17,000—a princely gift for those days. (Additions of income have increased the principal to $20,000.) Dominie Van Bunschooten thus had the honor of making the first substantial contribution for assisting young students of theology. His example has been followed from time to time by others, thus realizing his desire as expressed in the bequest “that he might be an humble pattern for others to copy after.” It would be impossible to catalogue all the results that have flowed from these donations. For more than a century they have made possible the education of candidates for the ministry, for the work both at home and abroad. All honor to him and the other liberal donors who have followed his example (MGS 1937, pp. 8-9).

In honor of Dominie Elias Van Bunschooten, the Van Bunschooten Society has been formed in the Reformed Church in America to honor those who have included the Reformed Church in America in their wills.

From the Report of the Board of Directors

BUDGET

PROPOSED 2003 GENERAL SYNOD OPERATIONAL (ASSESSMENT) BUDGET

Framework for the FY2003 General Synod Council Budget

In October 1999 the General Synod Council (GSC) voted “to endorse the ‘Mission Is One’ model; and further, to ask staff to proceed with developing the 2001 budget with this con-
cept as the framework” (GSC 99-90). This model, which continues to serve as the basis of the FY2003 General Synod Council budget, is based on the following principles:

- Infrastructure costs are covered primarily by revenue from assessments. Budget areas that receive assessments are the General Secretary Cluster; Policy, Planning, and Administration (including General Synod Operations, Archives, Racial Ethnic Councils, and Personnel); Finance; Ministry; Information Technologies; Communication and Production Services (communications vehicles); and the RCA Foundation (fundraising staff costs). Note that *Church Herald* assessments are also included in the General Synod Operational (Assessment) Budget line.

- Program costs for Mission Services, Evangelism and Church Development, and Congregational Services are covered primarily by contributions and designated investment income.

- Basic service charges are charged to outside agencies based on services provided (e.g., Board of Benefits Services and RCA Building and Extension Fund).

- Investment income is allocated to budget areas based on designations. Undesignated investment income is available to program and infrastructure budget areas based on agreements made by the Leadership Advisory Team.

- A percentage of the overall Mission Services budget will continue to be used to create a Mission Is One fund to support the work of Congregational Services and Evangelism and Church Development Services (CS/EVCD) and to stimulate new initiatives related to the Twelve Priorities.

**Assumptions and Strategies for the FY2003 General Synod Council Budget**

These are the assumptions and principles supporting the proposed FY2003 General Synod Council budget. More detailed assumptions for each of the GSC budget areas are contained in the pages that follow.

1. The overall budget is balanced, but there is little flexibility or cushion for error in it.

2. The goal of “equipping congregations for ministry,” the twelve priorities approved by the GSC, and staff objectives for implementing these priorities increasingly guide budget decisions.

3. The 2003 GSC assessment budget that will be proposed to General Synod will not be increased by more than 3.5 percent, as was the case last year. The assessment request is adequate to support the church’s ability to conduct its work in representative assemblies, commissions, councils, and task groups. Staff will continue to implement operational efficiencies while sustaining the ability to provide effective and required oversight of the administrative and financial needs of the church. A reduction in office capacity will be undertaken within the next few months and continue into 2003.

4. The “Ministry Cluster” will be funded and resourced in order to meet the clear denominational priority of providing future pastoral leadership.

5. The Ministerial Formation Coordinating Agency’s (MFCA) budget will be administered as part of the Ministry Cluster budget. (Note that the assessments received by MFCA are part of the assessment for theological education, not the GSC assessment.)
6. The Mission Services budget will be supported by designated contributions and designated investment income. Thus, it can spend to the level of anticipated contributions, but must balance itself.

7. The Mission Is One fund will continue to be supported by 10 percent of Mission Services expenditures for undergirding “local mission” through evangelism, new church development, and discipleship programs. This was instituted two years ago in lieu of payments from Mission Services to cover the costs of services provided by other units of the GSC.

8. The program activities of CS/EVCD will be supported at least at a base line level established two years ago, following budget reductions made at that time.

9. We will continue developing an integrated communications strategy and allow this to guide efforts toward a coordinated budget that includes our various means and methods of official denominational communication.

10. We will achieve some savings in staff travel by reducing the frequency of certain staff meetings, by increasing the use of conference calls for staff, commissions and task forces, and by beginning to utilize video conferencing as it becomes available at a reasonable cost.

11. The RCA Foundation budget calls for the vacant Coordinator of Special Gifts position to be filled and continues to support the Coordinator of Gift Planning and the Office of the Director. Budget savings and additional streams of income are projected.

12. Any surplus up to $50,000 from the FY2002 GSC budget will be utilized to fund the Mission is One New Initiatives grant program for FY2003.
## General Synod Council

### Eliminations

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**REFORMED CHURCH IN AMERICA**
Approved Budgets for Fiscal Year 2003

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<td>EXPENSES</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Personnel Costs</td>
<td>6,185,665</td>
<td>413,290</td>
<td>295,000</td>
<td>6,893,955</td>
<td>202,207</td>
<td>7,096,162</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Travel &amp; Office Costs</td>
<td>1,436,986</td>
<td>87,550</td>
<td>104,000</td>
<td>1,628,536</td>
<td>64,800</td>
<td>1,693,336</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Program Costs</td>
<td>8,626,520</td>
<td>19,500</td>
<td>669,500</td>
<td>9,315,520</td>
<td>89,493</td>
<td>9,405,013</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other Program Costs</td>
<td>224,000</td>
<td>33,386</td>
<td>19,000</td>
<td>276,386</td>
<td>20,000</td>
<td>296,386</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fundraising Grants</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Basic Service Cost Charged</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>TOTAL EXPENSES</strong></td>
<td><strong>16,473,171</strong></td>
<td><strong>553,726</strong></td>
<td><strong>1,087,500</strong></td>
<td><strong>18,114,397</strong></td>
<td><strong>376,500</strong></td>
<td><strong>18,490,897</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Net Revenue/(Expense)</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### FY2003 GSC Assessment Budget

**PROPOSED FY2003 GSC ASSESSMENT**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Budget Area</th>
<th>Amount of Assessments Allocated to the Budget Area FY2002</th>
<th>Assessments Allocated to the Budget Area as a percentage of the Total GSC Assessment Budget FY2002</th>
<th>FY2002</th>
<th>FY 2003</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Communication &amp; Production Services</td>
<td>302,561</td>
<td>6.2%</td>
<td>6.3%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Finance</td>
<td>667,566</td>
<td>13.7%</td>
<td>13.0%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>General Secretary Cluster</td>
<td>404,504</td>
<td>8.3%</td>
<td>9.8%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Information Technologies</td>
<td>406,676</td>
<td>8.4%</td>
<td>7.9%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ministry Cluster</td>
<td>150,126</td>
<td>3.1%</td>
<td>3.2%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Policy, Planning &amp; Administration</td>
<td>1,714,147</td>
<td>35.3%</td>
<td>36.3%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RCA Foundation</td>
<td>284,513</td>
<td>5.9%</td>
<td>5.3%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Church Herald</td>
<td>926,483</td>
<td>19.1%</td>
<td>18.2%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>4,856,576</td>
<td>100.0%</td>
<td>100.0%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Function</th>
<th>Amount of Assessments Allocated to the Function FY2002</th>
<th>Assessments Allocated to the Function as a percentage of the Total GSC Assessment Budget FY2002</th>
<th>FY 2003</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Communications Vehicles</td>
<td>1,229,044</td>
<td>25.3%</td>
<td>24.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Finance Services</td>
<td>667,566</td>
<td>13.7%</td>
<td>13.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Governance Structure</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Commissions</td>
<td>50,600</td>
<td>1.0%</td>
<td>1.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• General Synod</td>
<td>414,290</td>
<td>8.5%</td>
<td>8.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• General Synod Council</td>
<td>118,905</td>
<td>2.4%</td>
<td>2.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• General Synod Operations</td>
<td>502,863</td>
<td>10.4%</td>
<td>10.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• General Secretary</td>
<td>278,898</td>
<td>5.7%</td>
<td>5.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Ecumenical</td>
<td>58,024</td>
<td>1.2%</td>
<td>1.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Racial/Ethnic Councils</td>
<td>534,718</td>
<td>11.1%</td>
<td>11.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total Governance</td>
<td>1,958,298</td>
<td>40.3%</td>
<td>41.5%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

| Information Technologies                  | 406,676                                                 | 8.4%                                                                                          | 7.9%   |
| Ministry Services                         | 150,126                                                 | 3.1%                                                                                          | 3.2%   |
| Personnel                                 | 104,771                                                 | 2.2%                                                                                          | 2.6%   |
| Planning & Development                    | 340,095                                                 | 7.0%                                                                                          | 7.3%   |
| Total                                     | 4,856,576                                               | 100.0%                                                                                       | 100.0% |
FY2003 GSC Assessment Budget

The General Synod Council budget is based on a fiscal year ending September 30, whereas the assessment budget approved by General Synod is on a calendar-year basis. Therefore, in FY2003, GSC will receive assessments based on the 2002 rate for the first quarter of the year (10/1/02 - 12/31/02) and assessments based on the 2003 rate for the last three quarters of the year (1/1/03 - 9/30/03). In order to generate total assessment income of $5,031,096 for the FY2003 GSC budget, an assessment of $5,073,992 in 2003 is required. This represents a 3.5 percent increase over the 2002 GSC assessment of $4,902,408, a percentage increase that is in line with prior-year increases.

The moderator of the General Synod Finance Services Committee, who is also a member of the Committee of Reference, presented the recommendation of the Board of Directors.

The General Synod took action that resulted in the following increase in the assessment budget for General Synod Operations:

1. R-86 (amended) – Church Vocations .................................................................$4,000
2. R-105 – Church Vocations ..............................................................................$12,200
3. R-25 (amended) – Christian Education and Discipleship .........................$4,830

Total proposed additions ..................................................................................$21,030

This increases the assessment amount by $.12 per member. With these revisions, the 2003 per-member assessment amount represents an increase of 5.95 percent over the previous year.

The following numbers in the Assessment Summary have been adjusted to include the increases that resulted from General Synod actions:

**RCA 2003 ASSESSMENT BUDGET SUMMARY**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Assessment Summary</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Confessing Members, 12/31/01</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>2003 GSC Assessment</th>
<th>Total</th>
<th>Per-Member</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2002 GSC Assessment</td>
<td>$4,902,408</td>
<td>$27.06</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assessment change</td>
<td>$ 1.68</td>
<td>6.21%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Percent change</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>2003 BOBS and Theol. Ed. Assessment</th>
<th>Total</th>
<th>Per-Member</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2002 BOBS and Theol. Ed. Assessment</td>
<td>$1,001,136</td>
<td>$ 5.53</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assessment change</td>
<td>$ 0.26</td>
<td>4.70%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Percent change</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>2003 Total General Synod Assessment</th>
<th>Total</th>
<th>Per-Member</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2002 Total General Synod Assessment</td>
<td>$5,903,544</td>
<td>$32.59</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assessment change</td>
<td>$ 1.94</td>
<td>5.95%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Percent change</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Each percentage change in assessment requires a $61,102 change in amount of assessment.
The Committee of Reference reported that the General Synod took actions that resulted in an increase of $.12 per member in the GSC assessment amount.

**R-117**
To approve the GSC Assessment Budget of $5,095,022; and further,

... to set the 2003 per-confessing-member assessment for GSC Assessment Budget at $28.74. (ADOPTED)

(The 2002 GSC assessment is $27.06 per member.)

**2003 General Synod Assessments for Retired Clergy (pre-1973) and for Theological Education Administration**

In addition to the GSC Assessment the General Synod has authorized other assessments to ensure adequate funding for denominational concerns.

- $1.50 to provide sufficient retirement income for clergy who retired prior to 1973 (no increase).
- $4.29 to provide unified funding for the administration of theological education ($4.03 in 2002).

$5.79 TOTAL

**R-118**
To fix the 2003 budget for other General Synod assessments (sufficient retirement income and theological education administration) at $5.79 per confessing member. (ADOPTED)

(The 2002 General Synod assessment amount for the above two items per confessing member is $5.53.)

**Total 2003 General Synod Assessments**

The preliminary total assessment for General Synod concerns in 2003 is $34.53 ($28.74 plus $5.79). This is an increase of 5.95 percent over the 2002 total of $32.59 ($27.06 plus $5.53) per confessing member.

**R-119**
To fix the total General Synod assessment budget at $34.53 per confessing member. (ADOPTED)

The Committee of Reference recommended:

**R-120**
To direct General Synod staff to include with the report titled Summary of the Statistical Report of the Reformed Church in America (p. 72) in subsequent years, an estimate of the number of participants in organized congregations whose membership numbers are not yet included in the statistical report and an estimate of the number of participants in new congregations in the RCA Denominational Plan. (ADOPTED)
FINANCIAL SUPPORT

From the Report of the General Synod Council and the Board of Benefits Services

SOCIALLY RESPONSIBLE INVESTMENT COMMITTEE

The General Synod of 2001 appointed a committee “to be in regular dialogue with the custodians of the assets of the denominational corporations regarding the implementation in the marketplace of the biblical values and vision we hold dear” (MGS 2001, R-15, pp. 70-71). The committee was instructed:

- To maintain a continuing conversation with the custodians of the assets of the denominational corporations, in order to advance the values and visions of Christ’s kingdom and to strongly encourage those who manage the assets to be conscious of moral and biblical concerns as well as economic ones.

- To identify specific companies within the mutual funds used which have policies and practices clearly opposed to the gospel, and to strongly recommend their deletion from the mutual fund or funds.

- On behalf of the Reformed Church in America, to exercise full shareholder rights and responsibilities, to engage in dialogue with the custodian of its funds and the companies held in the mutual funds, and if necessary, initiate shareholder resolutions which seek to implement biblical values.

- To provide leadership in the ecumenical and interfaith communities which utilize Fidelity Investments as their custodian and/or investor of their funds. This leadership will include identifying such communities and encouraging them to act with the Reformed Church in America in the service of biblical values (MGS 2001, pp. 70-71).

The Socially Responsible Investment committee met on January 11, 2002, at the Reformed Church offices at the Interchurch Center in New York City. Members of the committee include:

- Carol Mutch, moderator of the General Synod Council
- Robert White, president of the Board of Benefits Services
- Harry De Bruyn, Investment Advisory Committee member
- Steven Mathonnet-Vander Well, moderator of the Commission on Christian Action
- Terry Troia, Commission on Christian Action member
- Susan Converse, treasurer of the RCA
- Jack Dalenberg, director of the Board of Benefits Services
- John Paarlberg, minister for social witness for the RCA

Carolyn Zimmer and Roland Jacobson, representatives from Fidelity Investments, were also present for part of the meeting.

Identify Specific Companies within the Mutual Funds

Tobacco, Gambling, and Alcohol. The committee reviewed the top ten holdings in each of the Fidelity Mutual Funds that comprise the Fidelity Freedom Funds (as reported on the Fidelity website). It was noted that four of the funds list Phillip Morris, a major tobacco company, in the top ten holdings.
Fidelity representatives Carolyn Zimmer and Roland Jacobson reported to the committee on the amount of tobacco, gambling, and alcohol stocks in the RCA portfolios. The percentages of net assets in tobacco, alcohol, and gambling stocks in the various funds range from zero to 4.19 percent. Currently (January 2002), participants in the RCA retirement plan have slightly more than $2 million invested in such companies. In addition to Phillip Morris, other investments of concern were Harrod Entertainment, MGM Mirage, and RJR Nabisco. The committee asked about the possibility of divesting in Phillip Morris, in particular. The response was that the main focus of the fund managers is to maximize shareholder value, and investment in Philip Morris was necessary in order to be financially competitive. The committee was told “We will not convince fund managers to sell Philip Morris because of its attractive dividend yield. Financial reasons are paramount.”

**Talisman Oil and the Sudan.** The 2001 General Synod heard a report from Dr. Haruun Ruun, general secretary of the New Sudan Council of Churches and an RCA mission associate, on the peace process in Sudan (*MGS 2001*, pp. 231-234). Among the concerns is how the presence of international oil companies, particularly Talisman Oil, is fuelling the war in Sudan. The Khartoum government has admitted that oil revenue is funding the wider civil war. Recent reports showed that Fidelity held over 5 million shares in Talisman and was the largest U.S investor in the company. Carolyn Zimmer and Roland Jacobson reported that except for its Canadian funds, Fidelity no longer holds Talisman stock. None of the funds in the RCA retirement plan is currently invested in Talisman.

**Distribution of Pornography.** The committee also reviewed the equity holdings managed by Scudder and Fleet Bank. It was noted that the RCA holds shares of Comcast. Comcast recently purchased the AT&T cable network, which offers subscribers pornographic programming. The RCA attempted to co-file a resolution with AT&T on this issue in 2000.

**Disclosure of Proxy Votes.** The committee asked about Fidelity’s proxy voting guidelines and raised the issue of disclosure of proxy votes, arguing that shareholders have a right to know how managers intend to vote their shares on important issues. As is common practice in the industry, Fidelity does not disclose how it votes its shares. Roland Jacobson and Carolyn Zimmer reported that it would be extremely unlikely that Fidelity could be persuaded to do so. Ethical and social considerations do not figure into the decision about how shares are voted.

**Exercise Full Shareholder Rights and Initiate Resolutions**

The minister for social witness reported on two shareholder resolutions that the RCA has co-filed to date in the 2001-2002 shareholder season: a resolution with General Electric asking for disclosure of costs of the delay in the cleanup of PCBs in the Hudson River (*MGS 1982*, pp. 63-70, esp. 67-68) and another with ExxonMobil asking the company to promote renewable energy sources in order to reduce greenhouse gas emissions (*MGS 1993*, pp. 98-103; *MGS 1999*, pp. 98-104). Additional possible shareholder resolutions in the coming year include Procter and Gamble (use of chlorine in paper production; *MGS 1997*, pp. 89-93) and the possibility of dialogue and/or a resolution with Comcast concerning the distribution of pornography (noted above).

**Provide Options in Socially Screened Mutual Funds**

At the time the committee met (January 2002) approximately 1.9 million dollars, less than 1 percent of the nearly 278 million dollars of the RCA retirement funds, was invested in socially screened funds. Two additional socially screened mutual funds, Neuberger Berman Socially Responsive Fund and Calvert Social Investment, will be added as options for participants in the RCA retirement plan.
Leadership in the Ecumenical and Interfaith Communities

Among other churches utilizing Fidelity Investments are the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) and the Episcopal Church. Members of the committee will explore the possibility of enlisting representatives from these other possible partners in dialogue with Fidelity.

Overture

Accepting Canadian Currency for Assessments

1. The Regional Synod of Canada overtures General Synod to accept Canadian currency at par with United States currency for assessment purposes.

Reason: The present exchange rate between Canadian and American currency places the RCA churches in Canada at a monetary disadvantage.

In response to Overture 1, the advisory committee recommended:

R-121
To return the overture to the Regional Synod of Canada for further justification of the request. (ADOPTED)

Reasons:

1. Data on which to make a determination are insufficient.

2. Additional information is needed regarding:

   a. A comparison between the cost of living in the United States and Canada.

   b. Median incomes in the United States and Canada.

   c. Any other compelling data to support the request.
REPORTS ON THEOLOGY

Report of the Commission on Theology

The Commission on Theology met twice during the past year. The October 12-13, 2001, meeting was held at the Ramada Hotel at Chicago O’Hare Airport, and the February 8-9, 2002, meeting was held at the Rutgers University Inn and Conference Center in New Brunswick, New Jersey.

Completed Work

The Church Speaks, Volume II, under the very able editorship of the Rev. Dr. James I. Cook, has been completed and is expected to be available for purchase at the 2002 General Synod. General Synod will recognize Dr. Cook along with other authors of Reformed Church publications at a special book signing event during the 2002 General Synod.

The commission also completed its work on the study guide for the paper “The Crucified One Is Lord,” and it has been forwarded to the Communication and Production Services staff for publication and distribution. It will be available from the RCA Distribution Center and will be placed on the RCA website.

Continuing Work

The commission continues to work on global environmental and economic issues in relation to a response to the World Alliance of Reformed Churches. Efforts to secure funding for preparatory workshops are proceeding with grant proposals. Last year the commission’s report included an extensive bibliography of resources that can be of benefit for local congregations. The commission has been in communication with the Church Herald and has requested that an upcoming issue include this bibliography along with an article or sermon to illustrate how some of these materials may be utilized.

The RCA Office of Social Witness has agreed to distribute the World Alliance of Reformed Churches booklet Economic Injustice and Ecological Degradation in one of its upcoming mailings to RCA congregations.

The commission reviewed an initial draft of a paper that deals with God’s sovereign grace in evangelism (MGS 2000, R-31, p. 149). It is expected that this paper will be included in the Report of the Commission on Theology for the General Synod of 2003.

Work continues on a study of baptism. Some preliminary papers will be reviewed during the coming year, and the commission will then consider the nature and scope of a paper on baptism.

Referrals from General Synod 2001

There were two overtures to the General Synod which proposed that the office of “evangelist” be added to the other offices of the church. General Synod made two recommendations regarding these overtures (MGS 2001, R-71 and R-72, p. 274). Recommendation 71 was referred to the Commission on Church Order, with R-72 referred to Church Order in consultation with the Commission on Theology.

In responding to these overtures the moderators of the Commission on Church Order and Commission on Theology each met with both commissions for the October meetings to outline a procedure for our work and consultation. A plan was established for both commissions to meet jointly in February, which they did.
The commission reviewed these two overtures and an additional overture on the office of deacon, and reflected upon how often questions regarding “office” have come up in the church in recent years. The Commission on Theology believes that some theological work on the understanding of “office” itself and how “office” relates to the ministry of Christ and how the Church of Jesus Christ is constituted by “offices” needs to be done. A paper is planned to describe how “office” is understood within a Reformed theological context. The commission will establish some general principles for understanding the concept of “office” in the church as a base from which to then examine individual offices, their relation to one another, and their structure within the church. The commission believes that the consideration of individual offices needs to be done in a systemic way so that it can be seen how each office is unique, and also how each office relates to and complements the other offices.

A third overture regarding the inclusion of deacons in all assemblies of the Reformed Church was referred to the Commission on Theology with a request for a progress report in 2002 (MGS 2001, R-97, p. 371). Because this recommendation involves the interrelationship of each of the offices and because the commission wants to establish some general principles regarding our understanding of office in the Reformed Church, the commission wants to develop a response to this request in conjunction with the systemic study of office in the coming year.

Recommendations 111 and 112 regarding the Covenant of Care were considered by the Advisory Committee on Theology and can be found on page 363.
REPORTS ON WORLD MISSION

Report of the General Synod Council’s Mission Services Committee

REPORT OF THE OFFICE OF MISSION SERVICES

The mission of God calls the church to faithful and wise use of its resources in the proclamation of the good news to neighbors and nations. Says Paul to the church in Ephesus, “Be careful then how you live, not as unwise people but as wise, making the most of the time” (Eph. 5:15-16). In a time of great changes, it is particularly important to understand the context of mission in light of one’s values and historic mission principles.

Three years ago Mission Services began the process of strategic planning under the title “Discipling All Nations,” which intentionally references the Great Commission (Matthew 28:18-20). It confesses that the mission of God knows no geographical or racial boundaries. In all nations—including the United States and Canada—believers are to cross boundaries to baptize, teach, and disciple in Christ.

The following discernment process was used to write “Discipling All Nations:”

• Mission Services staff provided initial input.
• The director of Mission Services wrote the first draft.
• Global mission partners, RCA mission personnel, and selected RCA pastors critiqued the first draft.
• The director of Mission Services incorporated the critiques into the second draft.
• The General Synod Council (GSC) approved “Discipling All Nations” as a strategic planning document.

The future of RCA missions will be shaped by the “Crucial Challenges,” identified in “Discipling All Nations,” and guided by values (i.e., “Mission in the Way of Christ”) and mission principles which have been discerned throughout 150 years of mission commitments around the globe.

As in the writing of “Discipling All Nations,” wide participation also was valued in developing strategic plans:

• Mission Services regional supervisors met with global mission partners and mission personnel in planning sessions.
• Regional plans based on the crucial challenges identified in “Discipling All Nations” were presented to Mission Services colleagues.
• The director of Mission Services compiled a unified Mission Services strategy.
• GSC approved the “Discipling All Nations” strategic plan.

The major new thrusts of mission strategy are included as “RCA Response” following each “crucial challenge” near the end of “Discipling All Nations,” which follows.

DISCIPLING ALL NATIONS—A STRATEGY FOR RCA MISSIONS

THE GLOBAL MISSION OF THE REFORMED CHURCH IN AMERICA INTO THE TWENTY-FIRST CENTURY

At the dawn of the third millennium the Great Commission of Christ calls the church into the mission of God with a new sense of urgency.
All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Go therefore and make disci-
ples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy
Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything that I have commanded you. And remember,
I am with you always, to the end of the age (Matthew 28:18-20).

The core of the commission is “making disciples of all nations.” The discipling of the
nations begins with inviting individuals into a personal trust in Jesus as Savior and per-
sonal submission to Jesus as Lord. But it doesn’t end there. We understand “discipling” to
be a process of hearing and believing the promises of God in Jesus Christ, growing in faith
and knowledge by the power of the Holy Spirit in the company of the believers, and wit-
nessing to the gospel wherever the people of God live, work, or play. Discipling envisions
the spreading of the gospel throughout every nation, tribe, and tongue.

The process of discipling requires discerning. In order to be effective, we need to know not
only the message we proclaim but also the times in which we are living. The RCA’s
Statement of Mission and Vision speaks of the challenge facing the church today.

The Reformed Church in America is a fellowship of congregations called by God and
empowered by the Holy Spirit to be the very presence of Jesus Christ in the world.

Our shared task is to equip congregations for ministry—a thousand churches in a million
ways doing one thing—following Christ in mission, in a lost and broken world so loved by
God.

The purpose of this paper is to discern the context of and challenges to the mission of God
at the dawn of the third millennium. The challenges are indeed great. But we rejoice that
the God of history and salvation is pleased to use the gifts of the Reformed Church in
America in the discipling of all nations.

A CONTEXT OF CHANGE

We are living in an age of unprecedented change. “The only thing we can be certain of
today is change” has become a cliché. Many authorities maintain that the world has
changed more in the last hundred years than it did in its entire previous history. And the
rate of change continues to accelerate exponentially. Economies, technologies, scientific
assumptions, worldviews, and even approaches to faith and spirituality have changed so
dramatically that they would have been all but unrecognizable only a few decades ago.

When change contests our assumptions and drags us headlong into the future, Reformed
faith professes that God’s providence guides history with divine purpose to its fulfillment
in Christ. And, in spite of the current context of change, the church of Jesus Christ has
never been better placed or equipped for the task of discipling all nations. Its resources of
experience, technology, personnel, and funding are unequaled in history. The Holy Spirit
builds and strengthens the church with anticipation for what many believe can be the great-
est mission era of the history of the church—if the church rises to the occasion and is faith-
ful to its calling.

How can the context of change be characterized and understood? For our purposes, change
will be identified as “world change” and “church change.”

World Change

Urbanization. A hundred years ago just one of every ten individuals worldwide lived in a
city. As we enter the new millennium, half of all humanity lives in urban centers. In anoth-
er twenty-five years, two out of every three people will call the city home.
cities have become “catch basins” for the poor. One point five billion urbanites live in poverty; 740 million are abjectly poor slum dwellers.

**Uprootedness.** The world is a violent place, often inhospitable to human life. Almost fifty million uprooted people have had to flee their homes because of military, political or religious violence, natural and environmental disasters, or failing economies.

**Pluralization.** As a direct result of urbanization and uprootedness, cultural homogeneity has become a thing of the past. The interactions of everyday life are becoming increasingly cross-cultural. Daily encounters include a growing diversity of ethnicity, language, dress, world view, value system, and religion. Especially evident are the rapid spread of Islam and the influence of Eastern religions, particularly in the West.

**Globalization of the Economy.** Political systems and national boundaries are becoming far less significant as multinational banks and corporations, abetted by modern technology, increasingly shape the lifestyles of all humanity. For some, this seems like good news; for most, it’s not. The globalization of the world’s economy, which has enriched relatively few countries and individuals while promising prosperity for many more, is also threatening to leave billions permanently poor.

In the task of discipling all nations, the “world changes” of urbanization, forced migration, pluralization, and the globalization of the economy have produced a worldwide cross-cultural context for mission.

**Church Change**

**Post-Christian.** There was a time when societal assumptions, thoughts, values, mores, and customs were defined by Western Christianity and imposed globally through colonialism. This was sometimes spoken of as the era of Christendom. Although the seeds of Christendom’s present decline began with the Enlightenment and Renaissance, the twentieth century has seen the influence of the Western church decline rapidly. In the West, faith has been reduced to a private option with little public relevance. As a result, the church has weakened its life and diluted its witness by conforming to post-Christendom culture rather than discovering afresh its distinctive identity as the people of God called to public witness.

**South.** During the period of colonial Christendom the population center of believers was in the West. However, with the decline of the church in the West and the rapid growth of the church in Africa, Asia, and Latin America, two-thirds of all Christians now live in the South. The number of cross-cultural missionaries sent by the West, including North America, is now exceeded by those sent worldwide by the South.

**Reciprocal Flow.** The church of the West has historically seen itself as the sending agent. The spiritual blessings of faith, material blessings of abundance, technical blessings of medicine and education, and community blessings of missionaries were sent to those who joyfully received them. In a post-Christian era it is clear that mission relationships must be characterized by both sending and receiving partnerships. And, if the decline of the church in the West is to be reversed, if the West is to be re-evangelized, we will need to become joyful receivers, welcoming the gifts, insights, and missionaries of our brothers and sisters from around the world.

**Unreached Peoples.** The global church of Christ continues to grow numerically. Yet over one billion human beings live in places where it is unlikely they will ever hear the good news about Jesus Christ. The task of missions is further challenged as the world’s population adds an additional billion people every twelve years.
The result of “church changes” is that the church must discover again that its task is the discipling of all nations. “The church exists for mission,” says Emil Brunner, “as fire exists by burning.”

**Definition of Mission**

True to its biblical foundations, historical confessions, and reading of the “signs of the times,” the Reformed Church understands mission as the following:

In the belief that the Son of God, through his Spirit and Word, out of the entire human race, from the beginning of the world to its end, gathers, protects, and preserves for himself a community chosen for eternal life and united in true faith, the Reformed Church in America defines mission as our personal and corporate participation in this work of God by intentionally crossing barriers from church to nonchurch, faith to nonfaith, to proclaim by word and deed the coming of the kingdom of God in Jesus Christ, in works of evangelism, witness, reconciliation, healing, and diaconal service, gathering people into the church through repentance and faith in Jesus Christ by the work of the Holy Spirit with a view to the transformation of the world as a sign of the coming kingdom of Jesus Christ.

**Mission in the Way of Christ**

The RCA has always sought to be a faithful participant in God’s mission. Methods, assumptions, and even the message of mission have at times been unnecessarily and detrimentally filtered through the culture and values of the West. Indeed, while all mission is filtered through cultural values, we—as did our predecessors in mission—seek to be as faithful as possible to the model of mission in the way of Christ.

**Leadership**

**Incarnational Leadership.** “And the Word became flesh and lived among us” (John 1:14). Mission witnesses to the fact that the divine has entered into the human and that eternity has entered into time. Mission that is also cross-cultural follows the example of Christ in affirming culture, speaking language, observing customs, and identifying with felt needs.

**Servant Leadership.** “The Son of Man came not to be served, but to serve” (Matthew 20:28). The needs of the world as seen through the eyes of Christ determine the ways the church is involved in mission. There is no human condition from which the church recoils. There is no face that does not bear the image of God. Christ “emptied himself, taking the form of a slave, being born in human likeness. And being found in human form, he humbled himself and became obedient to the point of death” (Philippians 2:7-8).

**Empowering and Challenging Leadership.** Old Covenant prophecies of peace and justice are close at hand in the New Covenant in Jesus who said, “I came that they may have life, and have it abundantly” (John 10:10). The reign of God brings peace to individual
lives and corporate systems. We believe that every person, every people, and every human enterprise of government and commerce will ultimately bow and confess that Jesus is Lord (Philippians 2:10-11).

**Lifestyle**

**Simplicity.** The Messiah who was laid in a manger, raised in a humble home, and in his ministry had “nowhere to lay his head” (Matthew 8:20), taught his disciples to “strive first for the kingdom” (Matthew 6:33) and to pray, “Give us this day our daily bread” (Matthew 6:11). The way of Christ, particularly in cross-cultural mission both at home and abroad, calls us to simple living. How we live the gospel may speak more loudly than our words and confessions. Furthermore, simplicity is truly a gift for those who practice its life-giving disciplines.

**Community.** “Then Jesus summoned the twelve disciples” (Matthew 10:1). On the road, the apostolic band shared their stories, tasks, money, and accountability. Jesus gave to and received from not only the twelve, but also from the band of disciples who followed and supported the messianic mission. The confession that “Jesus is Lord” (Romans 10:9) binds the believer not only to Christ, but also the body of Christ in all times and all places. Our participation in God’s mission is not to be done unilaterally or individually.

**Unconditional Love.** “The Son of Man came to seek out and to save the lost” (Luke 19:10). Jesus loved bureaucratic Pharisees, Roman generals, and rich young rulers; Jews, Gentiles, and Samaritans; women, men, and children; outcasts and the poor; the well and the sick; the lovely and the unlovely. Expecting nothing in return and respecting both the high and the lowly, we affirm that the basis of all mission is the love of God. “God so loved both the world that he gave his only Son, so that everyone who believes in him may not perish but may have eternal life. Indeed, God did not send the Son into the world to condemn the world, but in order that the world might be saved through him” (John 3:16-17).

**Spirituality**

**Grounded in Call.** Jesus’ mission was grounded at his baptism by John when God said, “You are my Son, the Beloved; with you I am well pleased” (Luke 3:22). It was confirmed in his reading of Scripture in Nazareth: “The Spirit of the Lord is upon me” (Luke 4:18). Although tested by powers in the wilderness, dominions in the city, and principalities on the cross, Jesus was always able to say, “Your will be done.” The call of God provides a rudder in the storm and a safe harbor at journey’s end.

**Focused in Prayer.** “He went to the synagogue on the Sabbath day, as was his custom. He went out to the mountain to pray” (Luke 4:16, 6:12). Jesus nurtured his spiritual life with prayer, both in the company of the people of God and in the privacy of lonely places. The life of prayer strengthens reliance on God, acknowledges that the mission is God’s, casts its cares upon God, and draws upon God’s power.

**Nurtured in Engagement and Retreat.** A rhythm of engagement and retreat marked the ministry of Jesus: movement between noonday seashore and midnight passage, crowded mountain top and lonely wilderness, thronging marketplace and living room sanctuary. It was this movement that sustained and fed Jesus and his followers. The sustaining and invigorating power of God is encountered in both engagement and retreat. Contact with the world drives us into deeper communion with God, which drives us deeper into all sorts and conditions of humanity.
RCA Mission Principles

We will seek to disciple all nations in the way of Christ according to mission principles that have guided the Reformed Church in its fruitful history of mission service.

We seek to be holistic. We are known as an evangelical church, a people who preach and teach the gospel of Jesus Christ. We understand evangelism as word and deed. Holistic mission calls for repentance and forgiveness for those who have sinned and justice for those who have been sinned against. It addresses all facets of life, since Jesus is Lord and Creator of all (Matthew 25:31-46).

We work with mission partners. We are committed to working whenever possible with partner churches and mission agencies within the context of ecumenical relationships, affirming the primary responsibility of the local church to set the agenda and invite the participation of the global church. Partnerships necessitate mutual praying and planning. They also witness to the unity of the church in the world (John 15:34-35).

We make long-term commitments. We believe that effective cross-cultural mission depends upon sensitive mastery of language, custom, and history in the context of genuine relationship. This itself is essential work of mission. It takes time. On a spiritual level, we reach out to make and baptize disciples, then stay long enough to teach the disciples to make and train other disciples (Matthew 28:19-20).

We believe mission is one. Mission is the one task of the whole church in the whole world. As populations shift and migrate, the church in every place is called to cross cultures and existing barriers, beginning with neighbors across the street and ending on the other side of the globe. Mission is done locally, regionally, and globally (Acts 1:8). And, when mission is one, it is reciprocal, marshaling our “traditional” resources of personnel and experience in mission to assist North American congregations in understanding the specific missiological challenges in our changing society.

We advocate for peace and work for justice and mercy. We dialogue with others to call upon rulers and civil authorities to heed the prophetic standards of the gospel. We advocate for peace in places of war and violence and seek justice and mercy for the poor, the oppressed, and those afflicted by natural disasters (Isaiah 58 and Micah 6:8).

We respect the faith and identity of the people we serve. Because we confess and witness to the truth that Jesus is the way, the truth, and the life, by which all must come to the Father (John 14:6), with love, humility, and sensitivity the Reformed Church will engage in ongoing in-depth encounters and dialogue with people of other faiths.

We are faithful stewards. We believe that the Lordship of Jesus Christ over all creation calls us to witness by our faithful stewardship of all that is placed in our care. God’s mission includes sustaining the beauty and diversity of life on the planet and bringing justice to those who destroy God’s creation (Genesis 1:26).

Five Crucial Challenges

If the Reformed Church in America is to remain faithful to the mission of God within the context of mission at the dawn of the third millennium, its mission program will be shaped by the example of Christ, time-honored mission principles, and its response to five crucial challenges of discipleship.
Discipling the Unreached. In spite of the growth of the global church, there are still billions living in darkness who have yet to hear the good news of Jesus Christ. We believe God is calling us to commit our personnel and funding resources to make disciples among the unreached through global partnerships that are both evangelical and ecumenical.

New RCA Response to the Challenge of Discipling the Unreached.

- **Niger.** Partner: Evangelical Church of the Republic of Niger. Training and equipping evangelists and spouses at the Dogon Gao Bible School to plant churches in a country that is 98 percent Islamic.
- **The Gambia.** Partner: The Anglican Church, the diocese of the Gambia. Training priests, teaching Christian curriculum, and supporting self-sufficiency farming operations in a country that is 98 percent Islamic.
- **Senegal.** Partner: The RCA is facilitating a “South-South” partnership between the Protestant Church of Senegal and the Presbyterian Church of East Africa. Church revitalization and outreach in a country that is 98 percent Islamic.
- **Ethiopia.** Partner: Mekane Yesus and PROCMURA. Providing a director of Muslim/Christian Institute. Mekane Yesus has many conversions but few pastors are trained in Muslim relations.
- **Ethiopia.** Partner: Mekane Yesus. Church planting with unreached peoples. Mekane Yesus has partners interested in community development but not in church planting, which the RCA will provide.
- The RCA will continue its mission to unreached peoples among the Daasenach in Ethiopia; the Orma and Pokot in Kenya; and in Estonia, Albania, Mexico, Oman, and Bahrain. We will continue to support all of our global mission partners who find themselves to be religious minorities in pluralistic cultures and are often ignored, belittled, or persecuted.

Discipling the West. We believe that God continues to call us to disciple all nations. Out of fresh awareness that the mission of God is one to both neighbors and nations, we will serve the church not only as it is globally connected, but also as it is locally engaged. We will provide resources to local churches seeking to retool as mission stations in the midst of an atmosphere of unbelief and a culture of materialism, following Jesus into a broken world so loved by God. We will engage the reciprocal resources of the global church in the re-evangelization of the West.

New RCA Response to the Challenge of Discipling the West

- **Niger.** Partner: Evangelical Church of Niger (EERN). Volunteers and work groups. EERN has capacity to host groups and individuals. Poverty is extreme. The RCA is EERN’s only partner in mission.
- **Mozambique.** Partner: Reformed Church of Mozambique (IRM). Work groups to build office for IRM led by Larry McAuley.
- **Malawi.** Partner: Church of Central Africa Presbyterian. Experiential and work group opportunities to work with and experience a vibrant, growing church in a poor country.
- **Ethiopia.** Partner: Mekane Yesus (EECMY). EECMY has identified a work project in an extremely poor and needy area where the RCA has historical ties among the Nuer people living on the Sudan border. The new facility will replace a mud-and-stick building for a Bible college.
- **India.** Partner: Church of South India (CSI). An exchange with RCA youth going both ways. Also pastor/presbyter exchanges.
- **Bodi, South India.** Partner: A.H. Memorial Trust. Short-term volunteers to assist the work of the DeJongs in medicine, education, and women’s self-development.
- **Bahrain.** Partner: American Mission Hospital and Al Raja School. Short term volunteers to teach English as a second language, and assist the administration and staff of the hospital.
• **Egypt.** Partner: St. Andrew’s Refugee program. Short-term volunteers.

• **Oman.** Partner: Al Amana Center. Short-term volunteers.

• **Hungary.** Partner: Hungarian Reformed Church (HRC). The Reformed Church Mission Association will expand mutual mission opportunities already in place and nurture the next generation of HRC leadership.

• Already twelve assemblies (e.g., presbytery, diocese, or district) of the RCA’s mission partners are ready to enter into a mutual mission partnership with an RCA classis.

**Discipling the City.** We believe that God wants to redeem the city and waits for the people of God to disciple its neighborhoods and institutions, transforming it into the City of God. We believe God has been preparing the RCA and calling forth leaders to serve in the cities of the world. We are committed to raising funds and leaders for urban ministry in partnership with indigenous churches that are specially equipped to build the church in the midst of the unique challenges and opportunities of the city.

**New RCA Response to the Challenge of Discipling the City**

• Working with the RCA’s current global mission partnerships in discerning the future, no new initiatives in urban ministry have been requested.

• **Korea.** Partners: Presbyterian Church of South Korea and the United Church of Christ in the Philippines. Together supplying resources to meet the needs of workers who immigrate to Korean cities to find work and money for family “back home.”

• The RCA will continue its commitment to the city under the heading of “Our Future Depends on the City.” USA and Canadian cities are very diverse racially and in faith expression, attracting people from around the globe.

**Discipling the Forces of Poverty.** We believe the heart of God is grieved by the injustice of humanity. God brings down the powerful from their thrones and lifts up the lowly; God fills the hungry with good things and sends the rich away empty (Luke 1:52). We believe the abject poverty of a quarter of the world’s people, most of whom are women and children, demands the advocacy of the church for mercy and justice. We are committed to challenging the injustice and racism of our systems, to being peacemakers, to working for the preservation and restoration of creation, alleviating hunger, providing disaster relief, and empowering communities.

**New RCA Response to the Challenge of Poverty**

• **Mozambique.** Partner: Reformed Church of Mozambique. Assignment of a community development consultant. Mozambique has one of the highest human suffering indexes in the world.

• **Honduras.** Partner: Moravian Church of Honduras. Self-development projects for women.

• **Nicaragua.** Partner: Moravian Church of Nicaragua. Development of a pregnancy counseling center.

• **Ecuador.** Partner: Prince of Peace Children’s Home. Vocational training for young women.

• **Argentina.** Partner: ESUR. Vocational training for young women.

• **Romania.** Partner: Hungarian Reformed Church in Romania. Pregnancy counseling centers to provide family planning and to discourage abortion as a means of birth control. The church in Romania is incredibly poor.

• One of the RCA’s mission principles is wholistic outreach in word and deed. Thus, all new initiatives among unreached people, involving mutual mission, and reaching the city incorporate concerns for mercy, compassion, and justice.

• Reformed Church World Service will continue its strong support of relief, development, and advocacy, responding through the generosity of RCA churches and individuals to natural disasters and crises, the results of war and political greed.
Discipling the Developing Church. We rejoice in the rapid growth in numbers, gifts, energy, and maturity of the church in the South. We discern in the growth and maturation of the global church the reciprocal nature of partnerships. We commit ourselves to not only receive with open hands, but also to give according to the needs and requests of our partners. We discern a “Barnabas” role of encouragement and mentoring for Western mission personnel. We will serve the developing church as it seeks to deepen its discipling abilities of organizational capacity, leadership training, Scripture translation, and resource production.

New RCA Response to the Challenge of Discipling the Developing Church

- **Mozambique.** Partner: Reformed Church of Mozambique. Seminary professor. Church has few trained leaders following a long history of communist repression. Could facilitate a “South-South” partnership with the South America Seminary in Brazil since both are Portuguese-speaking countries.
- **Sudan.** Partners: Presbyterian Church of Sudan and Nile Theological College. Professor. The war has limited the supply of trained professors. The exploding church needs trained leaders.
- **Sudan.** Partner: Presbyterian Church of Sudan. Administrative Assistant. The PCOS is very weak in administration.
- **Albania.** Albanian Evangelical Alliance. Professor to oversee the Protestant study program. The potential for the church in Albania is great.
- **Latin America.** Partner: Latin America Leadership Development. Ph.D.-level contextual training to provide professors to Latin American seminaries.
- **China.** China Christian Council. Resources for training ministers; seminary scholarships; seminary libraries; meeting point leader training; support for new meeting points.
- **Latin America.** RCA partners in Latin America. Children in Worship training training for leaders who will use this program to provide sound biblical and theological education for children.
- **Latin America.** RCA partners in Latin America. Moving the church from financial dependency to self-sufficiency by developing income-generating projects.
- **Native American Indian Churches of the RCA.** Changes regarding lay and pastoral leadership are anticipated pending completion of a study and recommendations by the Native American Indian Council.

To God Be the Glory

Through the eyes of the apostle John, we are privileged to see the mission of God in its fullness:

After this I looked, and there was a great multitude that no one could count, from every nation, from all tribes and peoples and languages, standing before the throne and before the Lamb...saying “Salvation belongs to our God who is seated on the throne, and to the Lamb!” (Revelation 7:9-10)

By the enabling of the Holy Spirit and the obedience that the Spirit produces in us, we believe that God will work in and through the RCA to glorify his name as we work together with all members of Christ’s body to disciple all nations.

MISSION PERSONNEL HANDBOOK

After two years of work, the mission personnel handbook of Mission Services was revised and approved by General Synod Council in the fall of 2001.
It had been many years since a revision was completed. The handbook was reorganized, terminology updated, outdated policies “modernized,” unused policies deleted, and new policies for current situations added.

The most far-reaching aspect of the new handbook was a revision of the mission personnel compensation scale. This was done to adequately and equally compensate spouses for the work they accomplish in service of needs of mission partners.

In some cases, the new salary scale resulted in a reduction of salary for single wage-earners and mission personnel couples. In these cases, salaries were “grandfathered” to mitigate negative consequences.

The benefits package for mission personnel now includes two new provisions—sabbaticals and parental leave.

PARTNERSHIPS

A partnership covenant between the RCA and the United Church of Christ in the Philippines was signed at the General Assembly of the UCCP held in Baguis City, Philippines, meeting, May 21-26, 2002. The church-to-church partnership reflects the maturing of the global church and its desire to enter church-to-church relationships of equality as well as mission partnerships, which have traditionally been characterized by sending from the West and receiving by non-Western churches.

The United Church of Christ in the Philippines (UCCP) was established in 1948 as an organic union of five churches in mission from the United States of America. After almost fifty years of mission work in the Philippines, the United Brethren Church, the Congregational Church, the Disciples of Christ, the Philippine Methodist Church, and the Presbyterian Church agreed to a union, forming the UCCP.

Today, the UCCP includes 2,714 churches, 16 schools, 4 hospitals, and 5 seminaries, and has a membership of 1.2 million. It has established itself as an outspoken, valiant defender of the poor and oppressed, often suffering persecution for its courageous presence.

Evolving as a result of an ecumenical agenda of forging union, the UCCP has endeavored to maintain its active participation in ecumenical bodies. It is a founding member of the National Council of Churches in the Philippines and the new United Evangelical Mission. It is also a member of the Christian Conference of Asia, the World Alliance of Reformed Churches, and the World Council of Churches. It has also forged partnership covenants with other church bodies in the Philippines and throughout the world.

Our partnership with the UCCP is based upon the biblical mandate “that all may be one” (John 17:21), mutual accountability, an understanding that there are no absolute givers and no absolute recipients in partnership, and a respect for mutual autonomy which respects polity, structures, and priorities.

This covenant strengthens the relationship between the RCA and the UCCP and will undergird new mutual initiatives in mission.

MUTUAL MISSION

The concept of mutual mission has been a part of RCA mission since the 1970s. It has also been known as “reciprocal mission” or “reverse-flow mission.” In short, it means that though mission resources have traditionally flowed from the West to non-Western church-
es, today the non-Western church has grown and matured to the point that all mission activity must involve both sending and receiving. Mission in today’s global church must be mutual.

To assist the RCA in mutual mission, Mission Services has designated the Rev. David Dethmers as its Mutual Mission Coordinator. The centerpiece of David’s work will be the facilitation of “assembly-to-assembly” partnerships. For example, the Classis of Muskegon could partner with the Evangelical Church of the Republic of Niger, a mission partner of the RCA. The partnership would not be based upon funding, but upon the exchange of spiritual gifts, cultural settings, faith experiences, and members. In so doing, each partner’s view of the reign of God is expanded and its own witness is strengthened.

The Mutual Mission Coordinator also oversees the Volunteer Services staff of Mission Services and coordinates the print and video resources of Mission Services. The office is housed in Grand Rapids, Michigan.

CHRISTIANS AND JUSTICE IN THE MIDDLE EAST

The Reformed Church’s involvement with mission in the Middle East began with the journey of New Brunswick graduates Samuel Zwemer and James Cantine to Lebanon for Arabic language study in 1889. Their purpose was to bear witness to the good news of Jesus Christ in what was acknowledged to be the world’s most challenging environment for Christian mission work—the Arabian Gulf. Out of this pioneering effort, institutions of Christian compassion and witness, educational and medical, were established in Iraq, Bahrain, Oman, and Kuwait. Missionary doctors, nurses, teachers, and pastor/evangelists attached themselves to these institutions to live out a gospel witness among the people of a region who would experience tremendous upheaval due in no small measure to the discovery and exploitation of oil resources and the establishment of a Jewish state in the largely Arab province of Palestine in the middle years of the twentieth century.

In Iraq in particular, RCA missionaries found themselves working alongside Christians whose spiritual roots stretched back to the early days of Christianity. Other Christians from Syria, Palestine, Egypt, and Lebanon who were living and working in the Gulf made the RCA aware that we had come to a region where faithful Christian witness had long preceded our own. The “unsung heroes” of the early days of our mission effort were, in fact, Middle Eastern Christians who befriended and served alongside RCA missionaries in the dissemination of Scriptures, often at great risk to themselves.

The vital link between RCA ministry in the Gulf and the witness of the various Middle Eastern Christian communities took concrete shape in 1980 when Lew and Nancy Scudder were appointed by the RCA to serve with the Middle East Council of Churches (MECC) in the establishment of a Gulf liaison office. They came to work with MECC, which brought together in a cooperative fellowship all of the various Christian communions of the Middle East—Protestant, Catholic, and Orthodox, its ecumenical character an acknowledgement that in a region of the world where Christians are sometimes an embattled minority, division is a luxury that is ill afforded.

Lew and Nancy Scudder left this particular ministry in 1986, and it continued in other hands, but the Scudders returned to the MECC in 1994, when Lew became a consultant in communications, the editor of the council’s English-language magazine and special assistant to the General Secretary. In 1999 Lew and Nancy’s son, Tom, was appointed by the RCA to work with the MECC as editor of their news magazine and operator of their website, thus underscoring the RCA’s commitment to maintaining this vital partnership.
The work of the MECC Gulf liaison office, begun by Lew Scudder, links the witness of the indigenous churches of the Middle East to our ministry with and through the largely expatriate churches of the Gulf (expatriate = foreign worker. The Gulf is home to several million, many of whom are Christian). Dick Westra serves one of these churches in Bahrain with his wife, Maja, adding her gifts to the educational ministry of the al Raja School from which long-time RCA missionary Gary Brown retired from his position as principal this year. Willis Jones and his wife, Pat, are involved in an interim ministry with the Protestant Church in Oman while the search continues for a full-time missionary pastor for that congregation. The Al Amana Center in Oman under the directorship of RCA missionary Michael Bos draws on MECC resources to carry on its bridge-building ministry between Christians and Muslims in the region. Outside the Gulf in the African, yet culturally Middle Eastern, country of Egypt, Dick Allhusen, in a partnership with the ELCA and Presbyterian mission, directs the work of the Joint Refugee Ministry. This provides compassionate service largely to southern Sudanese refugees, many of whom come from churches that belong to the family of MECC churches.

Wherever we are involved in ministry in the Middle East we are aware of the need to be in partnership with indigenous churches. Our relationship with the MECC helps to keep our witness grounded in the long and complex history of Christian-Muslim relations.

The Christians who belong to the various communions of the MECC have always found themselves having to frame their witness in challenging circumstances. But the current situation is perhaps one of the most challenging and potentially devastating they have ever faced. Growing Islamic militancy, a lack of recognition and support from the larger Christian community, and an increasing migration of Christians from the region in the face of difficult political and economic circumstances all contribute to a problematic, and at times, precarious, existence. But these are just the symptoms of a much more foundational crisis that the MECC has identified as the leading cause of tension in the region. It is a crisis which, unless resolved in a peaceful and just manner, will only lead to the further decimation of the Christian community and destruction of a normal, well-functioning civil society. This crisis is the continued and humiliating occupation of Arab land in the disputed territory of Palestine. In the words of a recent MECC publication prepared for its partner churches:

We observe now, as we have observed before, that the conflict within (and over) geographical Palestine is a controlling factor throughout the Arab world. Its heady symbolism (Jerusalem at its center) and its clear-cut political, military, ideological, and ethical configurations have meant that no fraction of Arab society is untouched. Its military and economic emanations radiate in all directions, drawing in even the reluctant. Even the conflict over Iraq (with its own distinct set of disaster-causing UN sanctions and daily bombings, and the resulting misery of its people) can be seen as a spin-off of the basic dynamic of violence focused in Palestine (NewsReport, Vol. 13, No 3-4, p. 18).

This is the context for the witness of Middle Eastern Christians. To be in partnership with them means that the RCA must find ways to lend support to their efforts to be the reconciling agents of Christ in a highly conflicted situation.

The presence of the general secretary of the MECC, the Rev. Dr. Riad Jarjour, at this year’s General Synod (GS) is an expression of the value the RCA places on this vital partnership as well as our desire to find ways to express our solidarity with our Middle Eastern brothers and sisters in these difficult times. The Rev. Lewis Scudder, who works closely with Dr. Jarjour through the MECC office in Cyprus, introduces him to the RCA in this way:

The Rev. Dr. Riad Jarjour, an ordained minister in the Evangelical Synod of Syria and Lebanon, has been an outspoken advocate of ecumenical relations and of the cause of justice and peace in the Middle East. Since 1978 he has been a key staff person in the
council, focusing his efforts upon Christian education and youth ministries. In 1994 he was elected to his present post and has worked to sustain the council through one of the region’s most difficult historical passages. Against all odds and through dreadfully turbulent times, the council continues to be a vibrant part of the Church’s witness in the region, and Rev. Jarjour has been largely responsible for keeping the council on course. Under Rev. Jarjour’s leadership, the churches are in sustained and intense discussions with the region’s Muslims to help stem the tide of fanaticism and to build a civil society that recognizes the values of pluralism and the rights of every citizen to the basic elements of dignity. And as suffering continues to plague the region, the council under Rev. Jarjour’s able leadership has maintained its reputation as a provider of aid, comfort, and hope for the downtrodden, the marginalized, and the displaced and lost. It serves as the rallying point for people who search for a more just and humane society, a venue where they can meet and establish bonds of affection and where the gospel is made known by the fruit it bears.

R-122
That the General Synod give the Rev. Dr. Riad Jarjour twenty-five minutes to address this body on the principal issues of concern voiced by the churches of the Middle East; and further,

that the General Synod set aside a moment following Dr. Jarjour’s presentation to offer up prayers for the people of the Middle East, interceding for justice and peace and the fruitful witness of the Church in the midst of great conflict and troubled relationships. (ADOPTED)

Ecumenical Address from the Rev. Dr. Jarjour

The Rev. Dr. Riad Jarjour, General Secretary of the Middle East Council of Churches, gave the ecumenical address:

Greetings

Ladies and gentlemen, friends, brothers and sisters in the Lord, bone of my bone and flesh of my flesh in the mystery of the body of Christ:

I thank you for granting me opportunity to address the synod of this the most venerable of American denominations. It is an honor, a privilege. The Middle East Council of Churches, which I represent, is pleased that you have invited me here. And from all four of the larger church’s families, the fourteen million Christians who are native to the Middle East cannot but be pleased as well. I bear you greetings in Christ’s name from them, and I will be honored to personally bear your greetings to them when I return home.

Not as an alien

I do not stand here as a stranger, an alien in your midst. First of all, I am a Christian in the Reformed tradition. I stand with you as a member of that inner household, and I have come from a distant place to celebrate with you the gospel by which we all live. We in the Middle East have known and cherished the Reformed Church in America since it first sent mis-
sionaries into our region in 1889. They followed ground rules refreshingly different to those of an earlier generation of Protestant missionary. And as we have grown to know each other, and as the movement for Christian reconciliation gathered momentum among us, the Reformed Church in America has been a faithful and supportive companion, first in the Arab Gulf but also region-wide. We thank you for the personnel you have seconded to us, as well as for the material assistance you have given. You have walked the same road with us, and it is a testimony to the breadth of our Reformed heritage that I, a Reformed clergyman, now represent before you not only our shared tradition, but also the ecumenical aspirations and prayers of Oriental Orthodox, Greek Orthodox, Catholics, and Protestants (or, as we say, ‘Evangelicals’) of Reformed, Episcopal, Lutheran, and Methodist heritage.

Think about it. This is remarkable. It is victory for the gospel over all our human tendencies to disrupt the unity of the church, and sow discord within the human community. The fact that I, a Reformed Christian, am accredited to represent to you virtually the whole church of Christ in the Middle East is a thing to ponder. The Spirit of God always achieves among us far more than we can ask or think. We are not bound together by contract; we are bound together in the Spirit, and the Spirit knits together the body of Christ in marvelous ways, in ways so much more profound than the weak word, ‘partnership’, can ever express.

But along with the happy news that God’s saints continue to endure in the Middle East, I bring pain with me as well. The body of Christ in the lands where the Christian church was born daily lives and ministers in the midst of overwhelming stress. The disciples of Christ along with all their neighbors in the church’s homeland...in its heartland...are caught up in a spiral of conflict and misery. They are not spared because they are Christian. As Christ ministered among struggling people, so Christ’s church is woven into the very fabric of society in the Middle East, and that society is now suffering and profoundly embattled. We are part and parcel of it. As he did, so we too know firsthand the agonies of this present age.

‘Tough joy’

You have a folk expression in English: ‘tough love.’ By that, I take it you mean love that is sometimes sternly expressed in ways that can bring pain. I suggest to you that Christian experience knows of something we might call ‘tough joy.’ Like ‘tough love,’ it is joy known within the context of stress and suffering. Paul says to the Romans (5:3-5), “We also rejoice (or boast or glory) in our sufferings, knowing that suffering produces endurance, and endurance produces character, and character produces hope, and hope does not disappoint us, because God’s love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit that has been given to us.”

I have asked that the first chapter of Colossians be read here. This epistle is a strong statement on the lordship of Jesus Christ. Not incidentally, it is also a powerful confession about the ministry of the body of Christ, his church. And in verse 24 there is a remarkable statement that obviously made those who translated the Bible for England’s King James uneasy. It is this: “I am now rejoicing in my sufferings for your sake, and in my flesh I am completing what is lacking in Christ’s afflictions for the sake of his body, that is, the church.” This, my friends, is ‘tough joy.’ But, if you think of it, it links together the whole ecumenical discussion. In this ‘tough joy’ there is no separation between Christ and the experience of his body and the witness of the gospel. In the experience of one member there is a gift of participation and fulfillment for all the body’s other members. The work of redemption, the ministry of reconciliation goes on in us, in all of us, in all of us together.
As he wrote to the Colossian church, Paul was rejoicing in his suffering in prison. There had also been times when he suffered in other ways—he was beaten, shipwrecked, pursued, humiliated, labored on in spite of physical pain, agonized over his kinsmen by race. He knew suffering. Yet no other New Testament writer sings hymns of joy so exuberantly.

We Christians in the Middle East feel an affinity for Paul. He too, after all, was a native of a tortured and turbulent Middle East. In our days, we too are in the throes of suffering. Wars afflict us on all sides—Iraq, Palestine, Sudan, Afghanistan, even North Africa. Deep crises afflict our societies—our economies are disastrous, the poor among us daily grow more numerous, we are overrun with refugees, we know the lashings-out of fanaticism (none better nor more intimately), we are slaughtered and cursed, mocked and belittled. And yet, if you gather together a group of Arab Christians, their capacity for joy will immediately infect you, their irrepresible sense of humor, and their happiness in sharing and joining in celebration. There is a ‘tough joy’ that transcends misery, a gospel-bred optimism that instinctively knows that, in Christ, we endure the suffering of the present day for the sake of the strength and vitality of the church, the whole body of Christ, whether other members are aware of it or not.

The bond of Christian witness

I have said that the Middle East is the heartland of the Church. \textit{And it is}. From the first Day of Pentecost and the gathering in of those who were being saved in Jerusalem, the living stones of God’s holy temple have been there. Through persecution in those early days, the gospel exploded out of Jerusalem upon the world, going beyond Judea and Samaria to the uttermost parts of the earth...even to Orange City, Iowa. In Antioch, as you will recall, those who mocked them first called the disciples ‘Christians’, but the name came to stick and gained honor. The saints in Antioch were inspired to ordain Paul, Barnabas and Mark to preach the gospel first in Cyprus and then throughout the Roman world. In Alexandria, where Mark came to live and die for his faith, there sprang up a strong Christian community that gave us the treasure of monasticism, the blood of many martyrs, and glorious devotional art. Its witness probed south into Ethiopia and even as far as South Arabia, the lands of Sheba. Apostles, many of them nameless, wandering even as far as India. In the depths of Arabia’s deserts where once Paul took refuge, whole tribes came to confess Jesus as Lord. Their witness we have in our literature, and their descendants—al-Kindâ, al-Ghassân, the Banî-Lakhm and others—are with us today.

But, as we know, the core remained ‘at home’ and continued faithful through the sweeping historical changes that rolled over Palestine and the Middle East. The rise of Islam brought new pressures but also new opportunities. Behind the veil of Islam, new Christian spiritualities were born, but tragically it also meant that the western church drifted away. Still we took up the challenge of our new circumstances. Under Islam, the eastern churches evangelized as far as China. Christian Arabs translated the Greek classics into Arabic and helped midwife a flowering of culture that, in the European awakening, gave inspiration to geniuses like Thomas Aquinas and to the forerunners of the European Reformation. These were subtle extensions of the body of Christ. We may not always be conscious of them, but they are there.

So, today, I bear you witness that the church of Christ, rejoicing in its sufferings with ‘tough joy,’ is vital and alive in the Middle East; and its ties to you defy language. Those ties lie within the mystery of what we call the ‘Eucharist,’ the thankful and joyful feast of Christ in us and as our head. And the sufferings that we experience in the Middle East are for your sake...for the sake of the whole body of Christ...to fill out in flesh the ministry of reconciliation with which we have all been entrusted.
In these days, that church in the Middle East is being challenged to the core. The crises of our region have deeply wounded and disrupted society. As evil goes unchecked, despair grows rampant. People are streaming out of the region. More often than not they are the youngest, the best and the brightest. In this country (and many other countries as well) you have benefited from our loss. We do not begrudge you that. But still the churches in the Middle East know that their rising generation is being depleted of leadership and talent, and the healing presence and reconciling witness of Christians is being weakened. We see this most severely in Palestine, in Lebanon, and in Iraq, but even Egypt and other countries are affected.

Alarm has spread. Some pessimists (and I am not one of them) even predict that, within a generation or two, the church will vanish from the lands that gave it birth. Indeed, all churches are sharply aware that this problem has no easy solution. Even Muslim groups and prominent individuals have spoken out, encouraging Christians to remain in their homelands. They speak about how Arab society is impoverished when Christians leave. I sometimes think they echo Paul when he says that Christians show among them “...the riches of the glory of this mystery, which is Christ in you, the hope of glory.”

But as their pool of human talent shrinks, churches have come to realize how essential Christian witness is both for the sake of others in the region and for the sake of the church throughout the world. Along with all its member churches in a wide variety of ways, the Middle East Council of Churches has focused all its programs upon this challenge—to foster and encourage and deepen Christian presence and witness. And I say to you today that, to fully come to grips with it, we in the Middle East need the compassionate encouragement of our brothers and sisters in Christ elsewhere. I plead for your prayers and increased (and even increased) support. This is a matter that concerns you directly because it involves the overall health and vitality of the whole body of Christ, which is the witness-bearing church in its widest understanding. As we share with you our ‘tough joy’ so too we ask for your ‘tough love’...help complete our joy.

Conclusion

I will have opportunity this evening to speak of other matters. I understood my task this morning was to speak about the intimate relationship between the ecumenical vocation and the witness of the body of Christ. You will have noticed, perhaps, that I have not used the word ‘partnership’ except to say that it is inadequate. It has been my hope, in these words, to emphasize to you that we are organically related together in fulfilling the ministry of reconciliation—we are all together the body of Christ. And this relationship expresses a ‘tough joy’ that goes beyond suffering and hardship, celebrating the love of God that the Spirit makes alive within us.

Let me end with these words of Paul to the Colossians:

‘As you therefore have received Christ Jesus the Lord, continue to live your lives in him, rooted and built up in him and established in the faith, just as you were taught, abounding in thanksgiving’ (Colossians 2:6-7).

Ladies and gentlemen, friends:

I am honored to be given this second opportunity to address you on behalf of the Middle East Council of Churches and all its member churches. I believe this is something unique. And I express to you again the greetings from your fellow members in the body of Christ, your brothers and sisters in the faith, in the Middle East.
I will not review with you my address of this morning. It is available to you in printed form. My task now is to build upon what I have said and go into areas that are, in a sense, more practical, and in another sense more stressful. After all, this evening is devoted to mission, and a great deal with which the mission of the church deals is stressful.

**The environment of crisis**

You do not have to be very well informed to know that the Middle East these days is caught in a resonating system of violence and the hatred, bigotry and fear that goes with it. Nor do you have to be well versed in foreign affairs to be aware that the United States is an active participant. It is neither a bystander nor an observer. Ten million dollars flow out of American government coffers every day into those of Israel, and the Israeli military is fully equipped with the most sophisticated and deadly of American weapons. These facts you can read anywhere. Even former president Jimmy Carter has laid them out in great detail. And I do not mention them now in order to throw something in your face, or to antagonize you, or to make you uncomfortable. It is simply necessary to begin with a clear idea of where we are and what we are dealing with.

There are a host of crises in our region, but almost all of them are linked, in one way or another, with the battle—going on now for more than half a century—over that piece of geography we know as Palestine. If there is one thing that colors everything else in day-to-day life in the Middle East, it is this. And there is no more profound challenge facing the Middle East’s Christians than how do we balance our having been entrusted with the ministry of reconciliation over against the brutal fact that violence engulfs us, evil probes to the very depths of our being, and not a day passes but we are touched by its tendrils of hate and vengeance.

In 1993 there was a brief flicker of hope that, somehow, we were on a road that might lead to peace. No sooner were we embarked upon it, however, than we found it to be sown with land mines. In March of this year, following the suicide bombing in Natanya, and in spite of the peace overture made the same day by the League of Arab States, as we watched the massive Israeli invasion of the West Bank begin, we knew that the peace process was dead. Humiliation, death, and destruction then became the daily fare of our brothers and sisters in Palestine.

Again, I ask: What were we Christians in the Middle East to do? How were we to respond ...not least of all when you bear in mind that one of our faith’s symbols, the Church of the Nativity in Bethlehem, became one of the main bones of contention?

Let us begin at the beginning:

The ministry of reconciliation, indeed, lies at the heart of the Christian life. By the grace of Christ, this trust we have from God. It is a valid and urgent ministry because, as the prophet Jeremiah observed so long ago, people carelessly say, ‘Peace, peace,’ but there is no peace. Saying ‘Peace,’ what they actually and cynically do is injustice. Someone must speak the truth.

Our view of the conflicts in the Middle East—in Palestine, Iraq and the Sudan—is different to yours. For us they are spelled out in terms of the suffering and blood of people whose faces, friends, and families we know. They are not abstract projections on a flickering TV screen.

But here, today, we must bridge this existential gap. As I did this morning, I stress that the mysterious working of the Holy Spirit bonds together the body of Christ precisely in order to break down the walls of enmity, division, and conflict.
The Middle East Council of Churches has linked three aspects of its work into one integrated program: ‘justice’ and ‘peace’ and ‘human rights.’ And, indeed, our gospel teaches that without justice there will be no peace; and without peace human beings cannot realize their inherent dignity as living souls created in the image and likeness of God. Among the churches in the Middle East, we in the council have been addressing this challenge on many levels, helping to train and encourage those who effectively want to establish justice, work for peace, and champion the dignity of people. These are not secondary concerns; they lie at the very heart of Christian witness and service. They are the building blocks of reconciliation. And, in our region, it means that the churches must address directly the causes and effects of conflict and violence.

I plead for your understanding, for your compassion. The challenges we face in the Middle East are not all of our own making. They so far exceed our physical and material resources that we come to the edge of despair. But our faith calls us back from the brink. Christ himself assures us that we are not isolated in a world that does not care. At least there is one worldwide community that can be counted upon to respond and that is the church, the body of Christ. And, without hesitation, we claim that bond with you. We need your help and support in the struggle for justice, for peace, and for all those things that make it possible for people to live in dignity.

As I understand it, each delegate here has been given documents that provide her or provide him with information on specific matters, particularly on Palestine and Iraq. I also know that our colleague (and your missionary), Tom Scudder, has prepared a brochure outlining what we do as a council. Over the past months we have published on our web site and circulated to friends and partners statements and analyses concerning what we see going on at hot points of the swiftly evolving conflict. I do not wish to repeat these and insult your intelligence. But I do urge you to approve the resolutions addressing the Middle East situation that have been put before you for action by your review committee. In essence, these all speak to the causes of justice, peace and human dignity. What makes them particularly significant is that they speak to these causes from a strong foundation in scripture and out of the motive of Christian witness. In harmony with your denomination’s strong record in ecumenical affairs, I also urge that the Reformed Church in America work closely with all its ecumenical partners in the United States to promote a program of education and action among the seemingly ignorant members of the American Congress and the American public generally. With its manifest integrity, and the blessing of the Spirit of God, its efforts cannot but bear fruit.

**Civil Society and Muslim-Christian dialogue**

Before allowing you to relax and get on with business, I wish to turn your attention to a matter that is not unrelated to what I have been discussing. The witness and presence of Christian in the Middle East has a specific context.

At least from the beginning of the eighteenth century weak government has made the Middle East vulnerable to external exploitation and manipulation. Our society, culture, and political institutions were catapulted into the modern age at a pace we did not choose, and it is a fact that we, in the Middle East, have yet to find our own center of gravity, our sense of balance. Since Napoleon invaded Egypt in 1798, western powers have aggressively grabbed at the resources and riches of our region, and these outside forces have been helped by internal factors.

The First World War saw the collapse of the Muslim Caliphate, the institution that symbolized the region’s unity and focused its process of building consensus. Not just the Middle East but the whole Muslim world was thrown into confusion by this. Muslims have been struggling since with how to order their affairs. And that confusion has not yet been resolved.
Since the beginning of the twentieth century, and particularly after the Second World War, the Arab world has been governed not by the will of the people but by a variety and succession of regimes that have been tied to outside interests in one way or another. The insertion of the State of Israel in 1948 only confused the picture further. Israel constituted a deliberately alien and periodically violent factor that, time and again, has drawn popular and political attention away from the vital internal issues that must be addressed if our society is to become strong and integrated.

The rise of Islamist extremism in this environment (and especially since 1967) must be seen as one small group’s angry and simplistic answer to the sad state of affairs. But, as we know only too well, it has only precipitated another crisis. Modeled upon the superficial success of the Israeli experiment, Islamist extremism preaches a political system that excludes non-Muslims. With its violent fringe, it rests upon coercion and intimidation to achieve its goals. It holds out no promise whatsoever for an open and democratic society that can harness the wealth and creativity of a truly pluralistic citizenry.

Well before the sad events of September 11, 2001, thoughtful people in the Middle East—both Muslim and Christian—realized that Islamist extremism is a dead-end. We—Muslims and Christians—have been talking to each other about how to shape a new civil society that is truly inclusive. This is, as you can well imagine, of vital importance to the Christians of the region. Experiments in pluralism, like those in Lebanon and Syria, have had limited success. At least they have pointed the way toward something better and more enduring. And a whole new vocabulary has been introduced into the way in which Arabs are discussing their culture and politics.

Again, I point out that our experience in these things is not irrelevant to you. The ‘dialogue of life’ in which we in the Middle East are engaged with our Muslim neighbors is targeted directly toward drawing the fangs of extremism and any effort to exploit religion in the service of disruptive political ends—be those Muslim or Christian or Jewish.

We in the Middle East were deeply shocked by the tragedy that struck the United States in the horrible events of September 11, 2001. But given our existential circumstances, we have been in a good position to understand the why and how of the movement that engineered that disaster. Only dialogue and heart-to-heart discussion and clear expressions of good will have a chance of helping people move beyond despair and the fanaticism it breeds, and toward a peaceful and constructive vision of a world made up of many different sorts of people who can enrich each other.

It is their gospel that inspires Christians in the Middle East with this vision. Christ came into the world not to condemn it, but to save it. And using the model of Paul and all the apostles, we Christians make our confession in an extremely varied social and cultural environment, respecting those who differ from us while, at the same time, exhibiting why we hold fast to the hope that is in us.

In other words, as we address such intimidating things as terrorism, we must not be reduced to the animal level of violence ourselves. Killing is not the solution, and Christians cannot succumb to that demonic response. In the Middle East we are opening our hearts and minds in dialogue, and extending our hands in a ministry of compassion even to those who think they are our enemies. We also insist, in this dialogue, that truth must be spoken bluntly and clearly, and that those who have sincere religious convictions should not stop short of being critical of their social, cultural and political institutions. We hold to the conviction that only truth and justice will bring reconciliation and peace. There are no substitutes.
Conclusion

We live in complex and difficult times when, within seconds, the business of any one region becomes the business of the whole world. The global era brings with it both blessings and curses. The wolf packs gather everywhere. We must move as wisely as serpents and as innocently as doves, and the Spirit will give us the gift of utterance when we most need it. We have a gospel to proclaim. Let us, in word and in deed, proclaim it together, members one of another, in the Body of Christ.

And may God bless you, imbue your deliberations with wisdom, and give wings to the witness that goes forth from this place to touch and transform many.

Again, I thank you for giving me your attention and this opportunity to share with you things that lie at the very heart of our faith, our witness, our mission, and...

...the peace of the Lord be with you all.

R-123
That the General Synod instruct the Mission Services Unit to work with TRA V ARCA to make available and publicize educational resources for use in our churches that highlight the lives and ministries of Middle Eastern Christians.

The advisory committee recommended an amendment to the recommendation:

R-123 (amended)
To instruct Mission Services to work with TRA V ARCA and the RCA Distribution Center to make available and publicize educational resources for use in RCA churches that highlight the lives and ministries of Middle Eastern Christians. (ADOPTED AS AMENDED)

Reason: TRA V ARCA works with the RCA Distribution Center to make educational resources available.

R-124
That the General Synod instruct the general secretary to compose a letter expressing the solidarity of the Reformed Church in America with its brothers and sisters in Christ in the Holy Land in this time of deep conflict, with the letter to be sent to all heads of churches in the Holy Land, and to the Middle East Council of Churches and the World Council of Churches; and further,

that the General Synod instruct the general secretary to ask the appropriate government officials, beginning with the President of the United States and the Secretary of State, to implement the following recommendations that have been voiced by the Middle East Council of Churches in the council’s desire to encourage the establishment of peace with justice in countries disfigured by years of conflict:

To exercise their influence with the government of Israel to withdraw its military forces from all occupied territories in
accordance with repeated UN resolutions and to take steps to dismantle the settlements it has planted and maintains in Palestinian territories as a first step toward the negotiation of a just and lasting peace.

To take action to bring an end to the devastating embargo against Iraq, recognizing that it has not achieved its stated purpose but instead has led to the unnecessary and enormous suffering of ordinary people, including the death of thousands of innocent women, children, and elderly.

The advisory committee recommended dividing the recommendation and offered the following:

R-124 (substitute)
To instruct the general secretary to send a letter, expressing the solidarity of the Reformed Church in America with its brothers and sisters in Christ in the Holy Land in this time of deep conflict, to all heads of churches in the Holy Land, and to the Middle East Council of Churches and the World Council of Churches. (ADOPTED)

Reason: The substance of recommendations 125 and 126 were originally part of R-124, but the paragraphs of the original R-124 are better dealt with separately since they reflect different considerations.

Recommendation R-125 was amended from the floor and adopted as follows:

R-125 (amended)
To instruct the general secretary, on behalf of the Reformed Church in America, to petition the pertinent governing authorities of the United States of America and Canada to exercise their political influence with the governments of Arab nations to bring pressure on Palestinians to cease hostile actions toward Israel, especially terrorist activities and suicide bombings; and further, to exercise their political influence with the government of Israel:

- To withdraw its military forces from all territories occupied during the war of 1967 in accordance with repeated United Nations resolutions.
- To take immediate steps to dismantle the network of settlements Israel has created, maintained, and expanded in Palestinian territories since 1967.
- To facilitate all responsible international inquiries into the impact of the recent Israeli incursion into the West Bank upon civilian populations, into the present status of the conflict, and into required humanitarian relief measures.
- To accept the presence in both Israel and Palestine of an effectively mandated international peace-keeping force (including a substantial American component) that will separate combatants, facilitate rebuilding destroyed infrastructures, and ensure an environment for peaceful dialogue and negotiation.
• To establish the conditions for founding of a sovereign and self-sufficient Palestinian state in the West Bank and Gaza that also recognizes Israel with safe borders.

• To take all necessary steps, in the context of the overture addressed to Israel by the Beirut summit of Arab states on March 28, 2002, to normalize its relationships both with the new Palestinian state and with all states in the region. (ADOPTED AS AMENDED)

Reason: The earlier resolution did not take into account current developments, in particular the Israeli incursion into West Bank villages and the overture from the Arab summit in Beirut.

R-126
To instruct the general secretary on behalf of the Reformed Church in America to petition the pertinent governing authorities in the United States of America to take action to bring an end to the devastating embargo against Iraq, recognizing that the embargo has not achieved its stated purpose but has instead led to the unnecessary and enormous suffering of ordinary people, and to use all possible political and diplomatic means to achieve U.S. policy goals rather than using violence, which will only lead to further destruction and death of innocents and foment ill will throughout the region. (ADOPTED)

Reason: The government of the United States has made clear its intent to attack Iraq against the clear wishes of most of the rest of the world. Any resolution on Iraq needs to take into consideration this threatened attack.

A division of the house was called for: yes—122; no—103.

RCA MISSION PERSONNEL

The Rev. Gordon D. Laman graduated from Hope College in 1956 and from Western Theological Seminary in 1959. He has also earned two graduate degrees from Western—Th.M. (1970) and D.Min. (1980). He and Evon Janice Southland were married in 1957. Gordon was ordained by the Classis of Muskegon in 1959. Gordon and Evon Laman have served as RCA missionaries in Japan since 1959, first on the island of Kyushu in southwestern Japan and, since 1981, in Tokyo. Gordon served for the Tokyo Union Theological Seminary as a professor of Practical Theology. The Lamans retired in March 2002 to Holland, Michigan.

R-127
WHEREAS Gordon and Evon Laman responded with heart, soul, and strength to God’s call to serve as mission personnel of the Reformed Church in America in Japan; and,

WHEREAS they served the needs of God’s people in the United Church of Christ in Japan through the preaching of the Word, pastoral presence, and teaching with distinction in the Tokyo Union Theological Seminary; and

WHEREAS Gordon Laman was the first missionary in the history of the United Church of Christ in Japan and Union Theological
Seminary to be granted an honorary Doctor of Divinity degree and proclaimed professor emeritus, on January 23, 2002, recognizing the key role he played in both theological education and the church in Japan; and

WHEREAS in the best tradition of the RCA they joined hands and hearts in mission with the evangelical and ecumenical global church to bring the gospel to all people; and,

WHEREAS they not only enriched the life of the RCA with stories of faith and courage from those they served, but also sensitized the RCA to the realities challenging the societies and churches of the global church;

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the one hundred ninety-sixth session of the General Synod of the Reformed Church in America, meeting June 7-12, 2002, at Northwestern College in Orange City, Iowa, with gratitude to God for their lives and witness, honors the Rev. Gordon and Evon Laman with a prayer of thanksgiving, a token of our esteem, and a reception in their honor. (ADOPTED)


R-128
WHEREAS Robert and Lavina Block selflessly gave of their gifts to the Lord’s service in Iraq and to Muslim/Christian outreach in New Jersey; and

WHEREAS they most recently came out of retirement to serve the Al Amana Center in Muscat, Oman, in a time of critical transition in this vital ministry and witness in the Middle East; and

WHEREAS in the best tradition of the RCA they joined hands and hearts in mission with the evangelical and ecumenical global church to bring the gospel to all people; and

WHEREAS they not only enriched the life of the RCA with stories of faith and courage from those they served, but also sensitized the RCA to the realities challenging the societies and churches of the global church;

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the one hundred ninety-sixth session of the General Synod of the Reformed Church in America, meeting June 7-12, 2002, at Northwestern College in Orange City, Iowa, with gratitude to God for their lives and witness, honors the Rev. Robert and Lavina Block with a prayer of thanksgiving, a token of our esteem, and a reception in their honor. (ADOPTED)
Sharon Blanksma is a 1957 graduate of the Butterworth Hospital School of Nursing in Grand Rapids, Michigan, and was certified as an adult nurse practitioner in 1981. Emery Blanksma graduated from Ferris State College with an associate degree in trades and industry. The Blanksmas were married in 1957. In 1970 Emery began serving as the superintendent of buildings and grounds for Hope College, where Sharon served as the director of Health Services. They both served as elders of Fellowship Reformed Church in Holland, Michigan. In 1994, the Blanksmas responded to God’s call to serve in a partnership with the Africa Inland Church in the remote village of Alale, Kenya. Sharon directed a primary health care program and Emery administered and maintained the mission station. The Blanksmas will conclude their ministry in August 2002.

R-129
WHEREAS Sharon and Emery Blanksma have given their lives joyfully and sacrificially to the Lord’s service among the Pokot people in Kenya and to Hope College; and,

WHEREAS the Blanksmas served the acute medical and spiritual needs of the Pokot people, administered and maintained the mission station and diligently trained, equipped, and encouraged the African staff to take over their ministry; and

WHEREAS in the best tradition of the RCA, they joined hands and hearts in mission with the evangelical and ecumenical global church to bring the gospel to all people; and

WHEREAS they not only enriched the life of the RCA with stories of faith and courage from those they served, but also sensitized the RCA to the realities challenging the societies and churches of the global church;

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the one hundred ninety-sixth session of the General Synod of the Reformed Church in America, meeting June 7-12, 2002, at Northwestern College in Orange City, Iowa, with gratitude to God for their lives and witness, honors Sharon and Emery Blanksma with a prayer of thanksgiving, a token of our esteem, and a reception in their honor. (ADOPTED)

The Rev. George Montanari graduated from Western Theological Seminary in 1990 and was ordained that same year by Classis of Passaic. George and Mary Anne were married in 1987. They began serving the Apache Reformed Church in Apache, Oklahoma in 1991 and concluded their ministry there in May 2002.

R-130
WHEREAS George and Mary Anne Montanari responded to God’s call to tirelessly serve the Apache Reformed Church for the past eleven years; and

WHEREAS they served the needs of all of God’s people through the preaching of the Word, celebrating the sacraments, pastoral presence, teaching and administration; and

WHEREAS they enriched the life of the RCA with stories of faith and courage from those they served, and also sensitized the RCA to the traditions and concerns of the Native American people;
THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the one hundred ninety-sixth session of the General Synod of the Reformed Church in America, meeting June 7-12, 2002, at Northwestern College in Orange City, Iowa, with gratitude to God for their lives and witness, honors the Rev. George and Mary Anne Montanari with a prayer of thanksgiving, a token of our esteem, and a reception in their honor. (ADOPTED)

REFORMED CHURCH WORLD SERVICE

Reformed Church World Service (RCWS) is a ministry of compassion and hope. There have been ample opportunities this past year to offer both.

- Hope in the form of 4,000 goats was given to needy people in Kenya and Mozambique.
- A thousand residents of Siksayari, Nicaragua, were given a boost in their attempt to rebuild 196 houses destroyed by Hurricane Mitch.
- Support was given to encourage the peace process in Sudan.
- Comfort was given to earthquake survivors in Central America and India.
- Food was supplied to countless hungry patrons of food pantries in the United States and Canada.
- Hot meals were delivered to fire fighters and police personnel in New York City.
- Teddy bears brought joy to 52,000 school children in the New York City area.
- Traumatized children and youth in the New York City area will be reassured of God’s love for them through the Isaiah 61 project.
- Families who lost their homes in Goma, one of the largest cities in the eastern Democratic Republic of Congo, as a result of a ravaging volcano received mosquito nets and basic necessities.
- Tents and food have been provided to displaced families in Afghanistan.

All of this has been made possible by the generosity of RCA members who enabled RCWS to expend a total of about $945,000 to assist hungry and needy people in 2001.

DIACONAL MINISTRIES

As a result of recommendations from the 2001 RCA General Synod, the Deacon’s Bench has been expanded to include information for elders, also. The first issue of Called to Serve: Deacons and Elders Together made its debut in the fall of 2001. The newsletter will be published twice a year.

A new deacon’s video, What’s a Deacon to Do? was completed in 2001. A copy was mailed to every congregation in December.

The annual Diaconal Gathering was held in Zion, Illinois, on April 26-28, 2002. Delegates included deacons and an elder from all eight regional synods.

VOLUNTEER SERVICES

Retirees have always had an interest in volunteering their skills, wisdom, and talents in North America. But lately, they have also volunteered for overseas placements. Volunteers may spend a month or up to two years on assignment in such places as Egypt, India, and Sudan. Long-term volunteer John De Jong, who teaches carpentry skills to Sudanese refugees in Cairo, Egypt, describes the call to volunteering he and his wife, Irene, experienced.
When the RCA advertised for a two-year term to Cairo I was ready right away but did not have the heart to tell Irene and leave five married children and twelve grandchildren behind. It was about two weeks later that she read the *Church Herald*, and when her eye caught the Cairo ad, she asked me if I had read it; she thought it was exactly what we were looking for. I could hardly believe what I heard. From that day on, God put everything in place. And here we are in Cairo, both teaching four days a week and having three days to spend on attending church, visiting, sightseeing, shopping, and cleaning our apartment. What a great life. We loved Cairo from day one and never had one minute of disappointment. After four months here, we know that God is still in control of our lives. Our children and grandchildren pray for us every day and we for them.

In 2001, 175 mission teams representing 3,250 volunteers throughout the world were facilitated by the Volunteer Office.

Three post-disaster construction sites have been developed in the USA with Church World Service partners: Columbus, Mississippi; Hoisington, Kansas; and Houston, Texas. Work continues in North Carolina with the United Methodist Church.

In partnership with the Moravian Church in Honduras, Volunteer Services planned the building of a Bible School in Puerto Lempira, Honduras. The work was additionally coordinated by the Central California Classis, which has a companion relationship with the Moravian Church in Honduras.

Twenty-five short-term volunteers were placed in countries throughout the world including South Africa, Nicaragua, Kenya, Malawi, India, Honduras, and the United States.

Forty-two long-term volunteers are currently on assignment for one year or longer.

New volunteer partnerships were established in 2001. At the South American Theological Seminary in Londrina, Brazil, the Rev. Kristen and Bryan Meyer have been placed to teach English as a second language, assist a Portuguese congregation, and provide computer programming for the seminary. Partnership has also been strengthened in Sudan, where Alan and Martha Rice will be the first long-term volunteers placed by the RCA. In India, RCA volunteers work alongside the Church of South India.

A new video, *Walk Humbly: An Orientation for Christian Servants*, will be used as a resource for orienting mission teams before they depart for service. It was developed from the lessons learned in previous RCA mission team projects. It emphasizes working in partnership, cross-cultural sensitivity, and being flexible on a mission trip.

The Office of Volunteer Services planned and coordinated a re-entry retreat at Camp Geneva in Holland, Michigan, for ten volunteers who returned from their places of service in 2001. The group reflected on their mission experiences and transitioning from the culture of their assignments back to North American culture.

**URBAN MINISTRY**

**Commitment to Urban Ministry**

In his February 2002 article in the *Church Herald*, entitled “Seeking an Inclusive Kingdom,” Wesley Granberg-Michaelson wrote that the RCA’s statement of mission and vision asks us to imagine being a denomination that “prays in many languages and beholds the face of Christ in every face.” He went on to say that we see this happening through our commitment to urban ministry. Such a pledge requires spiritual commitment, cultural openness, and hard work.
Granberg-Michaelson outlined a course of action the RCA must follow to fulfill our commitment to urban ministry. We need to deal honestly with our sin of racism; we must discover, train, and support pastoral leaders; we have to take risks by experimenting with new models of urban churches; and we are called to build partnerships to revitalize the ministry of our oldest urban congregations even as this challenges and enriches the life of newer suburban churches.

Such actions are consistent with the RCA’s commitment to urban ministry known as “Our Future Depends on the City,” which has four goal areas: people, places, partners, and prophecy.

People: Developing Effective Leaders

One of the most significant contributions of the Rev. Stanley Perea, past director of the Office of Urban Ministries, was establishing the Urban Training Center in Berwyn, Illinois. The center provides four-day training for pastors and lay leaders. The training sessions have been a source of strength and affirmation for many of our urban leaders. The fellowship offers a unifying aspect for all attendees, who return to their ministries spiritually renewed.

The location of the Urban Training Center in the facilities of Berwyn Reformed Church provides a context for urban ministry that a classroom setting could not provide. Being exposed to an RCA church that is experiencing urban transition issues can teach a very valuable lesson. At the core of the training center’s curriculum is shaping leaders’ skills so they can lead God’s people to minister in changing urban communities.

Places: Revitalizing Congregational Life and Witness

The RCA’s Urban Ministry Team approved fourteen churches to receive Urban Innovation Grants. The money for the grants came from the Urban Ministries Fund Drive. The grants are intended to assist churches to minister more effectively by building partnerships with other churches and community resources. The program grants are based on a three-year funding plan that will require continued fundraising by the urban ministry staff in order to secure the nearly half-million dollars devoted to this program.

More than forty churches applied for the Innovations Grants program. Many of the proposals included program designs that would enable congregations to serve their communities better. It is hoped that the restructuring of the urban ministry office will contribute to making more resources available to direct programming needs of these churches.

Partnership: Linking Urban and Non-urban Congregations

Developing partnerships between urban and non-urban congregations will greatly enrich the RCA through cross-cultural awareness, the intercession of prayer, member exchanges, and mutual programming. An example of such a partnership is the relationship between the Tulare Community Church of Tulare, California; The Way Out Ministries in Hawaiian Gardens, California; and the Classis of California. Long supportive of each other, the partnership’s members are now providing resources for the Gardens Christian Fellowship, a new urban church development. Urban Ministries funds are assisting this partnership project.

Prophecy: Working to Eliminate Racism

Much anti-racism work is being done at the General Synod and General Synod Council levels. The General Synod’s Commission on Race and Ethnicity has been active in advo-
cacy and action initiatives. One of the GSC’s twelve priorities is to enable the RCA to reflect the growing diversity of Canada and the United States. In this connection, anti-racism training for all GSC staff is scheduled. Additional anti-racism initiatives also are planned.

The Urban Ministries Team is seeking anti-racism approaches that will complement those of the GS and GSC and impact local congregations.

Funding and Staffing

Due to budget constraints the office of the coordinator for urban ministry was closed on December 31, 2001. There were two reasons for the closing. One, it was thought that the urban ministries fund drive would raise an endowment to financially support the office. The endowment was not raised. Two, it was felt that program funds raised by the fund drive should not be used for administrative purposes. The closing of the office does not diminish the RCA’s commitment to urban ministry.

Bruce Menning, director of Mission Services for the RCA, has assumed responsibility for the direction of urban ministries. He will devote a quarter of his time to urban ministries. In the past three years he has assisted urban ministries in the formation of the Urban Ministries Team advisory group and in the fund drive.

In addition, Bruce Menning will be assisted by the Rev. Richard Rienstra, director of development for Urban Ministries. Instead of funding an office of urban ministries, efforts will be made to assist congregations in funding and resource development. It is anticipated that a new non-profit corporation known as the Reformed Economic Development International, Inc. (REDI) will become a vehicle to obtain more resources for urban and related RCA ministries.

CATEGORIES OF MISSION PERSONNEL

RCA missionaries are appointed by Mission Services for a specific ministry. Mission Services establishes salary and benefits and supervises the missionary. Mission Partner Personnel (MPP) are employed by partner organizations. They are under the supervision of the partner who also establishes and regulates salaries and benefits. Volunteers are appointed by the Office of Volunteer Services to specific job responsibilities; they generally receive housing and a stipend. Mission affiliates are members of the RCA who work outside the boundaries of the U.S. and Canada, who give evidence of being intentional in their desire to represent Jesus Christ among non-Christians, and who agree to maintain the discipline of worship and service within the fellowship of the Christian community where they are based. They do not receive financial benefits or supervision from the RCA.

NUMBER OF MISSION PERSONNEL BY CATEGORY, 1992 - 2002

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>YEAR</th>
<th>MISSYS</th>
<th>MPP</th>
<th>VOLUNTEERS</th>
<th>AFFILIATES</th>
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FUNDING

Developing a balanced 2003 budget has been very challenging for Mission Services staff because of sharply rising fixed costs combined with the loss of revenue streams. Facing major increases in RCA medical insurance premiums in a budget built primarily on mission personnel has already resulted in drastic cuts in mission programs and the elimination of one Volunteer Services staff position. The $180,000-a-year increases in insurance costs for both the 2002 and 2003 budgets also come at a time when a $100,000 reduction in investment income and a $100,000 loss of support from Reformed Church Women’s Ministries make it most difficult to balance the budgets in spite of the cuts.

Realizing the possible effect of the slow economy on congregational giving, and the insurance increases that congregations must also face with their pastor(s) and staff, the Mission Services staff recommends an increase of only $200 per share over the 2002 share amount ($4550). This would bring a full share in 2003 to $4,750 and a half share to $2,375.

R-131
To approve the mission share increase of $200 for the year 2003, bringing a full mission share to $4,750.

The advisory committee recommended an amendment to the recommendation:

R-131 (amended)
To approve the mission share increase of $250 for the year 2003, bringing a full mission share to $4,800. (ADOPTED AS AMENDED)

Reason: This increase will generate approximately $35,000 to help offset increased fixed costs.

CHANGES IN MISSIONARY AND MISSION SERVICES STAFF

APPOINTMENTS

Craig Hollander has been appointed as a RCA missionary as of October 1, 2001. Craig will be seconded to Missionary Aviation Fellowship and plans to serve as an aircraft pilot/mechanic in Indonesia.

Elari Tamm, a pastor of the Union of Evangelical Christian and Baptist Churches of Estonia, has been selected by that church to serve as its Youth Secretary. The RCA will partner with them in the creation and support of this position.

Richard (Dick) Allhusen has been appointed to assume the responsibility as the Site Manager of the Joint Refugee Ministry of St. Andrew’s Church in Cairo, Egypt.

RESIGNATIONS AND COMPLETIONS OF SERVICE


Dr. Patricia Stanley, who served as an RCA missionary with the Moravian Church Medical Program along the upper Coco River in Nicaragua, has resigned from her position to seek employment with a government medical program.

Thomas and Barbara VandeBerg have resigned as RCA missionaries in Japan. Their work was completed on September 30, 2001.
Robert and Lavina Block retired at the end of October 2001, after a three-year commitment to ministry with the Al Amana Center in Oman.

Ana Gan completed her assignment at the Presbyterian Evangelical Theological Seminary in Monterrey, Mexico, on December 1, 2001.

Ana Pino Garcia has resigned as administrative director of the Prince of Peace Children’s Home in Guayaquil, Ecuador.


Emery and Sharon Blanksma retire in June 2002. They began serving in Kenya in 1994 with the Africa Inland Church.

Gary Brown retires in June 2002. Gary has served in different positions at the Al Raja School in Bahrain since 1970.

CHANGES OF ASSIGNMENT

The Rev. Dr. David Dethmers, who served as supervisor of RCA mission in Eastern Europe and Russia and as stewardship developer in the Regional Synod of Albany and the classes of Mid-Hudson, Orange, and Rockland-Westchester, has been named the RCA’s new mutual mission coordinator. In this capacity, he will develop, coordinate, and supervise mutual mission opportunities, including classis-to-classis partnerships in which RCA classes are paired with a corresponding agency abroad; exchanges between RCA leaders and mission partner leaders; and volunteer opportunities.

Appu Varghese, a mission partner personnel working with the Protestant Church in Oman, has accepted a position with the American Mission Hospital in Manama, Bahrain. Appu will work part-time with the hospital as chaplain and part-time with the English Language Congregation of the National Evangelical Church in its TEE (Theological Education by Extension) program and ministry to lower-income South Asian workers. The latter is a continuation of the ministry with which he was engaged in the interior of Oman.

VOLUNTEER SERVICE ASSIGNMENTS

Brazil: Bryan and Kristen Meyer and son Sterling
China: Erin De Vos
Estonia: Trish Curry
Ethiopia: Christi Carpenter
Egypt: John and Irene De Jong
Honduras: Jennifer Hubers
India: Andras and Angelika Jo
Japan: Ruth Bavin  
Ken and Erinn Bently  
Betsy Brunnink  
Anita Driese  
Bill and Amanda Faulkner  
Jodie Grabill  
Karla Johnson  
Jana Marvel  
Colleen Ryan  
Wynette Terpstra  
Kevin Tysen  
Susan Victor  
Shaun and Julie Wayman  
Taylor White  
Sorell Yue  

Kenya: Bill and Carolyn Overway  

Malawi: Kristen Clark  
Gene and Jean Straatmeyer  

Oman: Willis and Pat Jones and daughter Amy  

Sudan: Alan and Martha Rice  

Taiwan: Don and Jill Van Singel and family  

United States: Sarah Werner  

DEATHS  

John Walter Beardslee III died April 1, 2001. John served as a missionary in Iraq and at the Annville Institute in Kentucky.  

Roger Van Liere died May 7, 2001. Roger was a former mission affiliate for the Florida Classis and General Synod Council member.  


Bernice TenHaken died July 4, 2001. Bernice served with her husband, Reuben, on several Native American Indian mission sites and also taught school in Wisconsin for many years.  


Edward Van Gent died November 23, 2001. Edward and his wife, Eleanor, served as missionaries at Umo ho Reformed Church in Macy, Nebraska.
Jeanette Boersma died January 14, 2002. Jeanette served for 42 years as a missionary nurse and midwife to Muslim women in Bahrain, Kuwait, Iraq, Oman, and Saudi Arabia, and wrote a book about her life’s work called *Grace in the Gulf*.

**Report of the Native American Indian Ministries Council**

This report can be found beginning on p. 89.

**Report of Words of Hope**

As the international outreach of Words of Hope has expanded, two things have remained constant. The first is the basic mission, which was defined by the founders this way: “To preach Jesus Christ as the world’s only Savior.” Second, the basic structure and accountability have not changed. Words of Hope continues to be owned and governed by supporting Reformed Church in America classes through their elected representatives. This highly valued partnership with churches and individuals of the RCA enables the work of sharing the gospel throughout the world to continue.

**Broadcasting Highlights**

Throughout its history, Words of Hope has increasingly focused its efforts on broadcasting the gospel in languages spoken by people who have the highest need for Christian witness and who live where programs can have significant impact. The strategic focus on expanded outreach to the Islamic world seems remarkably providential in light of recent world events.

**Arabic**: For more than two decades, Words of Hope has been broadcasting the gospel in the Arabic language. Expansion of this ministry is possible because of a growing partnership with the Middle East Reformed Fellowship, an indigenous ministry to the Muslim world, and the Back to God Hour, the radio ministry of the Christian Reformed Church. Recently established studios in Cairo, Egypt, and Beirut, Lebanon, work closely with the Arabic broadcasting headquarters in Larnaca, Cyprus, to produce daily gospel programming, as well as ensure that the growing number of listeners who respond continue to receive personalized spiritual nourishment and care.

**Persian (Farsi)**: Despite Iran’s reputation as an exporter of fundamentalist Islam, many of its citizens have become disillusioned with their homeland’s authoritarian rule. Although overt evangelism is forbidden and churches are restricted, openness to the gospel is growing. Iran has more than sixty million speakers of Persian (Farsi), the official language of the country. In October 2001, Words of Hope began a weekly thirty-minute broadcast to Iran and Afghanistan in the Farsi language, and a second program began in March 2002.
**Kashmiri:** Wars with Pakistan over disputed territory and a growing Muslim revolt against Indian rule have made violence a way of life in the northern Indian states of Jammu and Kashmir. The militancy of the Kashmiri Muslims further restricts the gospel witness among the more than four million Kashmiri speakers. Weary from years of constant violence, many Kashmiri Muslims are more open than ever to Christ’s gospel of peace. Pilot programs in the Kashmiri language will be recorded during 2002, and regular broadcasts will begin early in 2003.

**Dinka and Nuer:** While Sudan’s Khartoum-based government aggressively promotes Islam, the impact of Words of Hope’s nightly Dinka and Nuer broadcasts is growing rapidly. Church leaders from North and South Sudan report widespread listening to the clear gospel programs being broadcast over FEBA Radio from the Seychelles. Earlier this year, a group of four hundred Dinka listeners from South Sudan’s Bahr el Ghazal all received baptism on a single day—January 6.

**A Strategic Vision**

In early 2001 Words of Hope staff and trustees completed a strategic planning process. This process resulted in a strategic vision that will enable Words of Hope to adapt to the changing international broadcasting culture while continuing its mission to share the gospel with more people in more places in more effective ways. To raise the funds necessary to implement this vision and its objectives, Words of Hope has launched “The Campaign for Words of Hope—Into All the World.” Support raised is targeted toward three specific objectives: 1) to add new broadcast languages, 2) to expand and enhance current broadcast languages, and 3) to increase financial reserves. Words of Hope’s most recent video, *Into All the World,* is available at no charge and provides an overview of this vision for the ministry.

**Internet Outreach**

Email subscriptions to Words of Hope’s daily devotional and weekly radio messages are available free at www.gospelcom.net/woh. Currently more than one thousand subscribers receive these messages by email every day. Internet users can also view the weekly English broadcast in web text or listen via audio format (RealMedia and MP3) at the Words of Hope website, www.gospelcom.net/woh The number of hits on their web page has increased from 39,000 per month in 2001 to over 65,000 per month in 2002.

**Literature Update**

**Daily Reflections:** Each quarter Words of Hope publishes one hundred thousand copies of the “Words of Hope” devotional for worldwide distribution. This pocket-size devotional includes daily reflections that provide busy readers with a spiritual boost in contemporary, readable language. Lay and ordained writers follow themes, share personal spiritual journeys, and walk through books of the Bible to assist users in Bible reading, contemplation, and prayer. As a special outgrowth of the literature ministry, Words of Hope now makes the devotional available at no charge to prisoners. Scores of new requests arrive each month.

**Light from Tzeltal Lamps:** Words of Hope is very grateful to Sam and Helen Hofman, RCA missionaries for over forty years to Chiapas, Mexico, for their assistance in producing the newest Words of Hope publication, *Light from Tzeltal Lamps.* For more than seventy-five years, Chiapas has been a key mission location in Reformed Church history. This devotional book contains forty-eight short, Bible-based messages translated from Tzeltal writers. Each meditation is also illustrated in its cultural context by Louise Bass of Faith Reformed Church in Traverse City, Michigan.
Update newsletter: In addition to the annual fall release of full-color bulletin covers, Words of Hope produces Update, a quarterly newsletter available in convenient 81/2" by 51/2" size for use in church bulletins or mailboxes. With approximately one hundred thousand copies being produced, over six hundred RCA congregations now receive this free publication.

Grateful Thanks

Words of Hope is very thankful for the prayer support of RCA members and congregations. It is an integral component to the continuing success of the ministry. Monthly prayer lists of concerns from listeners and broadcast partners are distributed to over thirteen hundred individuals and various prayer groups. Local prayer partners faithfully gather each month both in Grand Rapids and Holland, Michigan, for breakfast, fellowship, and an extended time of prayer.

During 2001, RCA congregations contributed a total of $852,985, including $703,463 in regular giving and $149,522 in specially designated gifts. Words of Hope is sincerely grateful for the faithful support provided by RCA members and congregations, enabling this ministry to continue to touch hearts and lives around the world with the saving good news of Jesus Christ.
REPORT OF THE COMMISSION ON NOMINATIONS

The Commission on Nominations met in person on February 21, 2002, and again by conference call on April 23 and May 30, 2002. Between these meetings members of the commission actively sought out qualified candidates for each of the commissions and agencies of the Reformed Church in America. In order to effectively fulfill the responsibilities of the commission, members seek out potential nominees, solicit Talent Bank Forms (a brief two-page application), and check references on those who are interested. In these ways the commission is proactive in fulfilling its responsibilities, as stated in the Bylaws of the General Synod:

The commission, in consultation with the general secretary, shall search the denomination for suitable nominees. In making nominations it shall consider the geographic location, occupation, and record of previous service to the denomination of persons suggested by classes, regional synods, and other sources. It shall consider this and other pertinent data in light of each commission’s or agency’s responsibilities, membership needs, suggested nominees, and place and schedule of meetings (Chapter 3, Part I, Article 5, Section 7.c.2).

In reflecting on the responsibilities of the commission, members have found a popular acronym to be helpful: “SHAPE.” The commission added “LY” to the acronym in order to reflect its desire to involve those with special leadership abilities and young adult members of the RCA. The goal of the commission is to match people with positions on the basis of their:
  - Spiritual gifts
  - Heart (or passion)
  - Abilities
  - Personality
  - Experience
  - Leadership
  - Youth

The Commission on Nominations has proactively filled its responsibility to “search the denomination” (Book of Church Order, Chapter 3, Part I, Article 5, Section 8.c.2) and believes those nominated have spiritual gifts, heart, abilities, and other traits that are particularly well-suited for the work of the positions to which they are being nominated.

In addition to finding the best possible people for positions on the RCA’s various commissions and agencies, the Commission on Nominations also bears responsibility for ensuring that the Book of Church Order and its bylaws are upheld. This required extensive effort by members of the Commission on Nominations in the case of this year’s General Synod Council nominees. However, the commission is pleased to report that this year’s slate of nominees meets the requirements set forth.

As it looks toward next year’s nomination process, the commission is eager to build a base of as many qualified candidates as possible. Those interested in serving on one of the commissions or agencies in the list that follows are asked to fill out a Talent Bank Form and submit it to the Commission on Nominations as indicated on the form. Forms are available from the Commission on Nominations staff person, Shari Brink, 1-212-870-2711 or sbrink@rca.org.
Note: * indicates a final term.

# indicates an official nomination from the assembly, institution, or agency listed.

## GENERAL SYNOD COUNCIL

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<th>Class of 2003</th>
<th>Class of 2004</th>
<th>Class of 2005</th>
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<td>The Rev. Hung Yong Song Classis of Queens#</td>
<td>The Rev. George Grevenstuk Classis of Zeeland#</td>
<td>* Tammy De Ruyter Classis of Central California#</td>
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<td>The Rev. Linden De Bie Classis of Delaware-Raritan#</td>
<td>The Rev. Daniel Ramm Classis of Brooklyn#</td>
<td>Mary Dobrovolc Classis of Montgomery#</td>
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<td>* Barbara Frierson At-large</td>
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<td>* The Rev. Daniel Gillett Classis of Holland#</td>
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## COMMISSION ON CHRISTIAN ACTION

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<th>Class of 2005</th>
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<td>The Rev. Seth Kaper-Dale</td>
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<td>* Sara Tolsma</td>
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<td>Robert Van Dyken</td>
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<td>Vacant                 Reformed observer, to be named by Commission on Christian Action</td>
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<tr>
<td>Vacant                 ELCA observer, to be named by Commission on Christian Action</td>
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COMMISSION ON CHRISTIAN UNITY

Class of 2005

* The Rev. David Baak
* Sue Damon
The Rev. Suzanne Hodges
The Rev. Susan Ganelin ELCA, named by Commission on Christian Unity

COMMISSION ON CHRISTIAN WORSHIP

Class of 2005

* The Rev. Sandra Damhof
  Martin Tel

COMMISSION ON CHURCH ORDER

Class of 2005

Gordon Meyer
* The Rev. Howard Moths

COMMISSION ON HISTORY

Class of 2005

The Rev. Scott Manetsch
* The Rev. Robert Terwilliger

COMMISSION ON JUDICIAL BUSINESS

Class of 2005

* The Rev. Judith Gorsuch Regional Synod of New York#
* Mark Schouten Regional Synod of the Heartland#

COMMISSION ON NOMINATIONS

Class of 2005

* Randy Kooy Regional Synod of Mid-America#
* The Rev. Everett Zabriskie Regional Synod of the Mid-Atlantics#
Vacant Native American Indian Ministries Council#

COMMISSION ON RACE AND ETHNICITY

Class of 2004

Steven Robbins Council for Pacific and Asian American Ministries

Class of 2005

* The Rev. Steven Hoogerwerf At-large
* Oliver Patterson African-American Council

COMMISSION ON THEOLOGY

Class of 2005

* Michael Andres
  The Rev. John Coakley
* The Rev. Kathryn Roberts
  The Rev. Scott Ickert
  LeAnn Van Dyk
ELCA, named by Commission on Theology
PC(USA), named by Commission on Theology

COMMISSION FOR WOMEN
Class of 2005

* The Rev. Christine Dyke
  Don Rorapaugh

BOARD OF BENEFITS SERVICES
Class of 2005

* Mary Baumann
* The Rev. Thomas Bos
* Gordon Dobson
* Donald Nash

BUILDING AND EXTENSION FUND
Class of 2005
Barney Beeksma
The Rev. Craig Hoffman

EDITORIAL COUNCIL OF THE CHURCH HERALD
Class of 2005

The Rev. Alex Pak
  At-large
* Suzanne De Boer
  Regional Synod of the Far West#
The Rev. Kristi Kiel
  Regional Synod of Albany#
* Jane Konitz
  Regional Synod of New York#

MINISTERIAL FORMATION COORDINATING AGENCY
Class of 2005

* Martie Bultman
* Bradley Lewis
* The Rev. David Schutt

RCA FOUNDATION
Class of 2005

* Robert De Young

WORLD ALLIANCE OF REFORMED CHURCHES
Class of 2005
The Rev. Luis Pérez
NEW BRUNSWICK THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY

All nominees to the boards of the seminaries are the official nominees of the board. However, some of them have been made in consultation with a regional synod (MGS 1993, R-4, p. 300). These are indicated in the list that follows.

Class of 2006

The Rev. Nathan Busker Regional Synod of the Far West
* David Cooper New Brunswick Theological Seminary#
* The Rev. Hak Kwon Lee New Brunswick Theological Seminary#
* The Rev. Kenneth Saunders New Brunswick Theological Seminary#
Darryl Schregardus New Brunswick Theological Seminary#
* David Van Ningen Regional Synod of the Heartland
The Rev. Barbara Wright Regional Synod of the Great Lakes

WESTERN THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY

All nominees to the boards of the seminaries are the official nominees of the board. However, some of them have been made in consultation with a regional synod (MGS 1993, R-4, p. 300). These are indicated in the list that follows.

Class of 2005

Cheryl Schregardus Regional Synod of the Mid-Atlantics
Bud Mouw Western Theological Seminary#
The Rev. Jane Brown Regional Synod of the Heartland
William Blunt Western Theological Seminary#

CENTRAL COLLEGE

Class of 2006

* J. Lanier Little
* John Sikkink
* Donna Smith

HOPE COLLEGE

Class of 2003

Vacant

Max Boersma
* Lynne Hendricks
The Rev. Charles Van Engen

R-132
To elect the above-named nominees to General Synod agencies and commissions as indicated. (ADOPTED)

R-133
To elect Everett Zabriskie III moderator of the Commission on Nominations for the 2002-2003 term. (ADOPTED)
Report of the Committee of Reference

The Committee of Reference presents the following resolutions:

R-134
WHEREAS the delegates, staff and guests of General Synod were most graciously welcomed and received in the Spirit of Christ by Northwestern College;

WHEREAS the well-equipped and maintained buildings and meeting spaces have been conducive to the work, sustenance, engagement, productivity, and discernment of the delegates; and

WHEREAS the vivid presence of the color orange is not merely a token tribute to the royal family of its forebears in name, but is made visible in tangible ways through the royal treatment proffered to all synod participants;

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the one hundred ninety-sixth General Synod of the Reformed Church in America, meeting in Orange City, Iowa, on the twelfth day of June 2002, expresses its gratitude to the entire staff provided by Northwestern College for its hospitality in hosting delegates of the General Synod. (ADOPTED)

R-135
WHEREAS the consistories and members of area churches within the vicinity of Orange City, Iowa, opened their houses of worship to the delegates for Sunday worship; and

WHEREAS these Christian brothers and sisters offered us refreshments, food, and table fellowship, and graciously welcomed us into their churches with eagerness and openness; and

WHEREAS volunteers from congregations within the bounds of the Classes of East Sioux and West Sioux provided cheerful welcomes at airports, and efficient transportation;

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the one hundred ninety-sixth General Synod of the Reformed Church in America, meeting in Orange City, Iowa, on the twelfth day of June 2002, expresses its sincere appreciation to the consistories and members of the churches of the Classes of East Sioux and West Sioux. (ADOPTED)

R-136
WHEREAS the worship design team of the Commission on Worship, led by David Tripold, planned inspiring morning worship in Christ Chapel; and

WHEREAS the Hope College Chapel Worship Team and Chaplain Jill Ver Steeg; Pastor Jonathan Opgenorth of Trinity Reformed Church, Orange City, Iowa, and the impromptu Acting Prayer Group of Northwestern College; Pastor Steven Vander Molen of First Reformed Church of Orange City, Iowa, and musician Andrea Van Beek, soloist Kimberly Utke Svaneoe, and
college organist Mary Lou Wielenga; and Mark Schwarz, pastor of
the Good News Community Church, Okoboji, Iowa, and his
energetic worship team provided inspiring worship and messages
of comfort and challenge;

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the one hundred ninety-
sixth General Synod of the Reformed Church in America, meeting
in Orange City, Iowa, on the twelfth day of June 2002, expresses
its sincere gratitude to God for receiving the blessings of the
ministry of Word and the ministries of music and drama.
(ADOPTED)

R-137
WHEREAS the Rev. Steven Brooks has presided with persistent
calls for prayer during his tenure as president of General Synod,
calling upon us all to make our churches Houses of Prayer,
opening our eyes to new ways of doing ministry and mission; and

WHEREAS he has chaired the meetings of the General Synod
with help of a 9/11 bear attached to his presidential bell, and has
worn colorful shirts to keep the delegates alert; and

WHEREAS he has presented his presidential message in a multi-
media savvy way, called for an RCA Prayer Convocation on
Prayer and Mission, demonstrated his desire for the gathering of
stories of women in ministry by inviting two women, Chie de
Forest and Carol Mutch, to tell parts of their stories as part of his
message, and brought the entire synod to its knees,

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the one hundred ninety-
sixth General Synod of the Reformed Church in America, meeting
in Orange City, Iowa, on the twelfth day of June 2002, expresses
its heartfelt gratitude to our LORD God for the energetic, joyful,
and strong leadership of the Rev. Steven Brooks; with
thanksgiving to his family and his congregation, Springs
Community Church in Colorado Springs, Colorado, for allowing
him to serve the larger church as its president.  (ADOPTED)

R-138
WHEREAS the Rev. John Chang has been elected president of
General Synod; and

WHEREAS the Rev. David Schutt has been elected vice president
of General Synod;

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the one hundred ninety-
sixth General Synod of the Reformed Church in America, meeting
in Orange City, Iowa, on the twelfth day of June 2002, expresses
its congratulations, and commends the Rev. John Chang and the
Rev. David Schutt to the utterly reliable care and keeping of the
Triune God.  (ADOPTED)

R-139
WHEREAS the Saturday evening Community Night on the Town
was blessed with foresight in planning and the good weather
requested; and
WHEREAS General Synod participants were transported by a horse-drawn tram, enjoyed being fed Dutch family soul food, relaxed with the silliness of the comedy improv of Northwestern College’s Drama Team, were spellbound by an uncanny Abraham Lincoln impersonation by Stan De Haan, understood at a harp concert by Anna Voorhees why Saul’s soul was soothed by David’s strings, were bathed in luxurious sounds of Romantic pieces at a grand piano virtuoso concert by Brian Lee, and were tempted by four desserts in one evening;

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the one hundred ninety-sixth General Synod of the Reformed Church in America, meeting in Orange City, Iowa, on the twelfth day of June 2002, expresses its appreciation for the thoughtful planning for the entertaining Community Night on the Town. (ADOPTED)

R-140
WHEREAS the General Synod was privileged to have among its distinguished guests the Rev. Dr. Riad Jarjour, general secretary of the Middle East Council of Churches; and

WHEREAS his Spirit-filled willingness to share with passion, compassion, and integrity in the discernment and deliberations of synod in the advisory committee on Christian Unity, in a special forum on the challenges of the issues in the Middle East, as well as in various addresses to plenary session and special events; and

WHEREAS General Synod, in response, has voted to commit itself in word and deed to formulate its positions and actions according to the scriptural mandate to love justice, act kindly, and walk humbly with the one Lord and God of all other rulers of the earth;

BE IT THEREFORE RESOLVED that the one hundred ninety-sixth General Synod of the Reformed Church in America, meeting in Orange City, Iowa, on the twelfth day of June 2002, assures the General Secretary of the Middle East Council of Churches of its heightened awareness of the circumstances of its sisters and brothers in the region of said council, and that the assemblies and members of the Reformed Church in America continue their prayers in a more informed and dedicated way, and of its willingness to take seriously its responsibility to address its own governments on the issues and our involvement. (ADOPTED)

R-141
WHEREAS the General Synod was privileged to have among its distinguished guests the Rev. Dr. Meiti Seth Pitikoe, General Synod of the Uniting Reformed Church in Southern Africa; and

WHEREAS the address of the Rev. Dr. Pitikoe further enlightened the synod about the context and the content of the Belhar Confession and its applicability to the divisions that exist elsewhere in the world;
BE IT THEREFORE RESOLVED that the one hundred ninety-sixth General Synod of the Reformed Church in America, meeting in Orange City, Iowa, on the twelfth day of June 2002, asks God to continue to bless his work and the work of the Uniting Reformed Church, and joins him in hoping for the coming of the Kingdom in all its fullness. (ADOPTED)

R-142
WHEREAS the general secretary of the Reformed Church in America, the Rev. Wesley Granberg-Michaelson, has continued to encourage dialogue throughout the church, reminding us of our evangelical and ecumenical heritage, calling us to unity and faithfulness; and

WHEREAS he serves the denomination with passion, integrity, courage, and tireless commitment; and

WHEREAS he has demonstrated that he is always thinking about the church, even when fly-fishing in the Lamar or Yellowstone Rivers, both of which, although not quite the river of life in the Book of Revelation, come close enough to inspire a compelling metaphor for the challenges of mission and ministry in the RCA;

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the one hundred ninety-sixth General Synod of the Reformed Church in America, meeting in Orange City, Iowa, on the twelfth day of June 2002, expresses its sincere appreciation and thanks to its general secretary and praises God for the gifts it receives through his leadership. (ADOPTED)

R-143
WHEREAS the moderators and vice moderators of the various advisory committees, staff members, and resource persons have facilitated the work of the advisory committees and the General Synod in such a fashion that the deliberative decisions of the General Synod have been reached with a spirit of mutual respect, a willingness to wait upon the Lord for discernment, and a constant awareness of the Spirit’s presence and labors among and within the members of its assembly; and

WHEREAS the synod during its marathon session on the last evening was greatly relieved that one of the admirable resource persons only removed his tie and that the exhaust fans were at long last turned on to further confuse a poor bird that hovered over the assembly, adding nothing to the deliberations of the body;

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the one hundred ninety-sixth General Synod of the Reformed Church in America, meeting in Orange City, Iowa, on the twelfth day of June 2002, expresses its heartfelt thanks for the dedicated service of all those mentioned above. (ADOPTED)

R-144
WHEREAS the many elder delegates offered their tireless energies, attention, and careful consideration to the sometimes mysterious work and complex deliberations of the General Synod; and
WHEREAS many have sacrificed personal vacation time, shown willingness to endure heat and humidity because they allowed the local corn to grow eight inches in five days, and braved a few violent lightning storms;

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the one hundred ninety-sixth General Synod of the Reformed Church in America, meeting in Orange City, Iowa, on the twelfth day of June 2002, expresses its thanksgiving to almighty God for the commitment and love of its elder delegates to the General Synod of the Reformed Church in America. (ADOPTED)

R-145
WHEREAS the staff and personnel of the Reformed Church in America have once again facilitated the remarkably smooth and efficient operation of the General Synod, serving the servants of God with a commitment and attention to detail that should never be taken for granted, whether under the glaring lights of the dais, or behind the scenes in the small hours of the night, with the kind of love, joy, peace, and patience that only the Spirit makes possible;

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the one hundred ninety-sixth General Synod of the Reformed Church in America, meeting in Orange City, Iowa, on the twelfth day of June 2002, expresses its sincere appreciation to each and every one of the RCA denominational staff and offers its prayers for God’s blessings upon them and their families. (ADOPTED)

R-146
WHEREAS Russell Paarlberg has served the General Synod as its parliamentarian with competence and alertness, despite long stretches of being underemployed and acquiring a suntan by lengthy overexposures under the klieg lights only on his face because he never even took off his suit jacket when all in the house were in various states of undress;

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the one hundred ninety-sixth General Synod of the Reformed Church in America, meeting in Orange City, Iowa, on the twelfth day of June 2002, expresses its thanks to Russell Paarlberg for his dedication to the work of the synod. (ADOPTED)

R-147
WHEREAS members of various General Synod commissions, councils, and agencies are completing their terms of service this year, having served God and the church faithfully in their respective capacities;

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the one hundred ninety-sixth General Synod of the Reformed Church in America, meeting in Orange City, Iowa, on the twelfth day of June 2002, expresses its heartfelt appreciation to these dedicated servants of the church. (ADOPTED)
R-148
WHEREAS Northwestern College Chaplain Trygve Johnson through his ministry of presence made visible the love and presence of Christ through his service as the General Synod chaplain;

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the one hundred ninety-sixth General Synod of the Reformed Church in America, meeting in Orange City, Iowa, on the twelfth day of June 2002, expresses its appreciation to the Rev. Trygve Johnson for his care. (ADOPTED)

R-149
WHEREAS the 2002 General Synod was blessed with discernment leaders who led in even discerning the discernment process itself and sacrificially surrendered their final scheduled session to allow the Spirit to work through the prolonged deliberations on the future of leadership roles in the church; and

WHEREAS the H.O.P.E. (Houses of Prayer Equipping) Team faithfully and steadfastly lifted the body in prayer; and

WHEREAS the Seminarian Seminar participants exercised their important servant roles during the elections even though it is not a MFCA requirement, and kept the best candy so as not to lead the assembly into temptation since they managed to find it by themselves; and

WHEREAS Renae made the cafeteria a café of Cheers where she, at least, knew everybody’s name;

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the one hundred ninety-sixth General Synod of the Reformed Church in America, meeting in Orange City, Iowa, on the twelfth day of June 2002, commends these angels in disguise for their contagious generosity of Spirit. (ADOPTED)

R-150
WHEREAS the attendees of the 2002 General Synod were invited to a well planned series of forums on important issues facing the synod, such as worship wars, Middle East, commissioned pastors, the RCA insurance program, genetic technologies, possible goals, and GSC-GS relationship;

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the one hundred ninety-sixth General Synod of the Reformed Church in America, meeting in Orange City, Iowa, on the twelfth day of June 2002, gladly notes that nothing funny happened on the way to the forum except for a lightning strike that gave but a momentary impersonation of a burning bush. (ADOPTED)

R-151
WHEREAS the General Synod of 2002 was joined by members of the greater Orange City community for a gala evening of presentations and depictions of various ministries of mission at home and abroad; and
WHEREAS those assembled enjoyed seeing the dancing angels of Hope Reformed Church in Grand Rapids, hearing the tender voices of the cherub choir of First Reformed Church in Orange City and the enthusiastic song styling of SOKS, and watching the drama of the lost guy;

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the one hundred ninety-sixth General Synod of the Reformed Church in America, meeting in Orange City, Iowa, on the twelfth day of June 2002, celebrates the work of God through the ministries of mission of the Reformed Church in America. (ADOPTED)

R-152
WHEREAS a full accounting of all the manifold impressions, stories, reports, acts of kindness, new friendships, accomplishments, could fill more than the synod books could hold,

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the one hundred ninety-sixth General Synod of the Reformed Church in America, meeting in Orange City, Iowa, on the twelfth day of June 2002, acknowledges that nothing is hidden from the Lord God and that all the saints not mentioned may draw comfort from knowing that “God is not unjust; he will not overlook your work and the love that you showed for his sake in serving the saints, as you still do” (Hebrews 6:10). (ADOPTED)
STATISTICAL REPORTS OF THE CLASSES

The statistics given in the Statistical Tables are for the calendar year ending December 31, 2001, unless otherwise indicated. Churches and pastors are listed as of the latest reports from the stated clerks received before printing deadlines.

ABBREVIATIONS

AAC—African-American Council
Adh—Adherents
AP—associate pastor
Assmnts—Assessments (General Synod, Regional Synods, Classes)
Bapt—Baptisms
Bapt Mbrs—Baptized Members
Conf—Received on Confession
Conf Mbrs—Confessing Members
Cert—Received on Certificate
CH—Church Herald
CHM—Council for Hispanic Ministries
Congr Purpose—Congregational Purposes
Contrib—Contributions
CPAAM—Council for Pacific and Asian American Ministries
CSU—Congregational Services Unit
Decd—Deceased
FND—Foundation
FSU—Finance Services Unit
Gen Syn/GS/Gen S—General Synod
Houshld—Church Households
Inact Mbrs—Inactive Members
M/C—Ministers under Contract or Assistant Pastors
M/Cntrct—Ministers under Contract or Assistant Pastors

NAIMC—Native American Indian Ministries Council
New Mbrs Clas—New Membership Classes
Other—Other Removals from Roll
Other Contrib—Non-RCA Contributions
Other Educ Pcms—Other Educational Programs
PE—Preaching Elders
RET—Retired Minister
RS—Regional Synod
RSA—Regional Synod of Albany
RSC—Regional Synod of Canada
RSFW—Regional Synod of the Far West
RSGL—Regional Synod of the Great Lakes
RSH—Regional Synod of the Heartland
RSM-AM—Regional Synod of Mid-America
RSM-AT—Regional Synod of the Mid-Atlantics
RSNY—Regional Synod of New York
ST—Student under Contract
Sun Sch—Sunday Church School
Total Mbrs—Total Membership
Trans—Transferred

KEY TO FOOTNOTES

Headings “A,” “B,” “C,” and “D” relate to Column 18 and reflect amounts included from the following categories:

“A”— Income from bequests and/or investments.

“B”— Major capital funds received for local church expansion, replacement property investment—including funds for land purchases, new building construction, or major renovation

“C”— Funds received from RCA assemblies or institutions; e.g., salary supplement, program aid.

“D”— Income from other programs/associations.
## STATISTICAL REPORTS OF THE CLASSES

### Alphabetically by classes:

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### Summary by regional synods

Grand totals

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STATISTICAL TABLES
2001
### Regional Synod of Albany

**CLASSIS OF ALBANY**

**Stated Clerk**
Harlan E. Ratmeyer, MC 19, Albany Medical Center, 43 New Scotland Ave, Albany, NY 12208; 518/262-3176

**Treasurer**
Mark William Ennis, Third Reformed Church, 20 Ten Eyck Ave., Albany, NY 12209; 518/463-7276

#### Membership

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Warren Fullerton  
George Jacob Holler  
Merle Hoogheem  
Richard Pruiksma  
Gerald E. Shibley

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### Regional Synod of Albany CLASSIS OF MONTGOMERY

**Stated Clerk**
James N. Foster, 607 Pine Ave, Herkimer, NY 13350; 315/866-6126

**Treasurer**
Kenneth Palmer, 19 Walnut Street, Mohawk, NY 13407; 315/866-6253

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### Regional Synod of Albany CLASSIS OF ROCHESTER

**Stated Clerk**  
Anita Manuele, c/o Trinity Reformed Church, 909 N Landing Rd, Rochester, NY 14625; 585/385-1157

**Treasurer**  
Eugene Ligtenberg, 52 Marble Dr, Rochester, NY 14615-340; 585/621-3813

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* SEE SUPPLEMENT D

**Average Worship Attendance**

- Conf: 8
- Cert: 9
- Trans: 10
- Layp: 11
- Other: 12
- Infant: 13
- Adult: 14
- Sun: 15
- Sch: 16
- Pgs: 17
- RCA Contrib: 18
- Other Contrib: 19
- Total Income: 20
- Assmnts: 21
- Contributions: 22
- CPA: 23

**Education**: 

- New Mbrs: Class (1)
- New Mbrs: Ch (16)
- New Mbrs: Congr (17)
- Total Income: (18)
- Assmnts: (19a)
- Contributions: (19b)
- CPA: (19c)
- Other: Amount (19d)
- Total: Amount (19e)
- CPA: Purpose (19f)

**Stewardship**

- New Mbrs: Ch (1)
- New Mbrs: Congr (16)
- Total Income: (18)
- Assmnts: (19a)
- Contributions: (19b)
- CPA: (19c)
- Other: Amount (19d)
- Total: Amount (19e)
- CPA: Purpose (19f)
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## Regional Synod of Albany CLASSIS OF SCHENECTADY

### Stated Clerk
Jan Luben Hoffman, First Reformed Church, 224 N. Ballston Ave., Scotia, NY 12302-2599; 518/370-4751

### Treasurer
Clarence H. Linder, Jr., 2115 Route 67, Charlton, NY 12019-2914; 518/457-7499

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*SEE SUPPLEMENT D*
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FOOTNOTES

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(3) 4,977 (4) 2,000 (5) 2,000 (6) 1,060 (7) 5,005
(4) 169,933 (5) 1,465 (6) 4,977 (7) 4,977 (8) 4,977
(5) 672 (6) 672 (7) 672 (8) 672 (9) 672
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(21) 13,605 (22) 13,605 (23) 13,605 (24) 13,605 (25) 13,605
## Regional Synod of Albany CLASSIS OF SCHOHARIE

**Stated Clerk**
Robert G. Hoffman, First Reformed Church, 1664 Helderberg Trl, Berne, NY 12023-9701; 518/872-1553

**Treasurer**
Robert G. Hoffman, First Reformed Church, 1664 Helderberg Trl, Berne, NY 12023-9701; 518/872-1553

### Membership

| CHURCHES | PASTORS | pastor name | date | household | Conf Mbrs | Inact Mbrs | Bapt Mbrs | Mbrs | Total | Adh | Sec | Chrs | Conf | WC | Trans | Losses | Reg | Gains | Bapt | Sun | Mbrs | Educ | Total | RCA | Other | Congr | Income | Assmnts | Contrib | Comp | Purpose |
|----------|---------|-------------|------|-----------|-----------|------------|------------|-------|-------|-----|----|------|------|-----|-------|--------|-----|-------|------|-----|-------|------|-------|--------|-------|--------|--------|--------|--------|-------|------|--------|
| New York  |         |             |      |           |           |            |            |       |       |     |    |      |      |     |       |        |     |       |      |     |       |      |       |         |        |         |        |        |        |       |       |
| (1) Amsterdam, Craneston       |     | Jacob Marvel | 09/01 | 59 | 88 | 60 | 46 | 194 | 20 | 85 | 3 | 1 | 6 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 2 | 0 | 70 | 3 | 25 | 59,190 | 3,370 | 945 | 0 | 4,315 | 54,875 | (1) |
| (2) Amsterdam, First           |     | Derek Delager | 04/01 | 19 | 21 | 47 | 32 | 100 | 4 | 20 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 10 | 1 | 10 | 41,851 | 1,126 | 2,290 | 3,875 | 7,311 | 34,540 | (2) |
| (3) Amsterdam, Florida         |     | Derek Delager | 04/01 | 33 | 43 | 73 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 116 | 10 | 35 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 26 | 0 | 0 | 29 | 0 | 3 | 50,815 | 2,122 | 912 | 517 | 3,552 | 47,263 | (3) |
| (4) Berne, First               |     | Robert G. Hoffman | 06/94 | 47 | 80 | 111 | 35 | 226 | 15 | 65 | 2 | 0 | 2 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 20 | 8 | 8 | 67,200 | 4,949 | 3,212 | 330 | 9,481 | 58,739 | (4) |
| (5) Fonda, Vacant              |     | Vacant       | 08/01 | 95 | 139 | 77 | 69 | 285 | 29 | 119 | 6 | 1 | 1 | 8 | 3 | 1 | 3 | 1 | 105 | 6 | 135 | 147,976 | 8,161 | 21,822 | 1,807 | 32,790 | 115,188 | (5) |
| (6) Fultonville                |     | Adriana G. Gray | RET M/C | 05/01 | 26 | 39 | 69 | 10 | 118 | 21 | 22 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 3 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 11 | 0 | 10 | 41,520 | 2,527 | 957 | 427 | 3,913 | 37,409 | (6) |
| (7) Fultonville, Glen          |     | Joyce L. Jennings | 06/97 | 43 | 56 | 180 | 22 | 255 | 38 | 68 | 6 | 0 | 0 | 2 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 4 | 4 | 30 | 6 | 38 | 66,282 | 2,370 | 2,960 | 2,960 | 9,280 | 58,992 | (7) |
| (8) Hugnum, Albany             |     | Vacant       | 05/98 | 33 | 49 | 47 | 25 | 121 | 16 | 35 | 2 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 5 | 1 | 0 | 5 | 0 | 15 | 53,282 | 2,260 | 1,100 | 450 | 4,814 | 48,514 | (8) |
| (9) Howe’s Corn, Second        |     | Vacant       | 05/01 | 12 | 10 | 6 | 4 | 20 | 7 | 25 | 0 | 0 | 2 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 4 | 0 | 0 | 11,486 | 684 | 1,200 | 550 | 2,434 | 9,034 | (9) |
| (10) Johnstown                 |     | Jack H. Millard | 11/76 | 82 | 95 | 178 | 99 | 372 | 26 | 75 | 5 | 2 | 3 | 7 | 2 | 7 | 0 | 68 | 7 | 0 | 86,237 | 5,891 | 5,620 | 475 | 11,986 | 74,251 | (10) |
| (11) Laurensville              |     | Gretel Van Wieren | 03/03 | 50 | 70 | 70 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 70 | 10 | 60 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 10 | 0 | 8 | 66,154 | 4,739 | 5,438 | 3,133 | 15,280 | 55,284 | (11) |
| (12) Middleburg                |     | Mary Winner   | 06/02 | 55 | 78 | 120 | 24 | 222 | 20 | 53 | 8 | 0 | 6 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 5 | 47 | 8 | 8 | 61,978 | 2,355 | 362 | 1,159 | 3,876 | 58,102 | (12) |
| (13) Prattsville, Reformed Dutch Mem |     | Diana L. Smith | 02/01 | 22 | 32 | 2 | 4 | 38 | 15 | 35 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 0 | 11 | 1 | 6 | 30,569 | 1,492 | 496 | 196 | 2,684 | 26,385 | (13) |
| (14) Rehoboth, Joy Gould |     | Richard A. Dybitzki | 09/01 | 68 | 85 | 92 | 52 | 227 | 33 | 82 | 8 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 4 | 2 | 0 | 28 | 8 | 25 | 76,263 | 4,212 | 3,000 | 800 | 6,012 | 66,251 | (14) |
| (15) Schoharie                 |     | Vacant       | 05/01 | 165 | 147 | 19 | 0 | 166 | 19 | 100 | 7 | 0 | 1 | 2 | 0 | 3 | 1 | 52 | 0 | 12 | 146,379 | 6,687 | 2,540 | 4,100 | 11,287 | 131,095 | (15) |
| (16) Sharon Springs, Sharon    |     | Gretel Van Wieren | 03/03 | 17 | 27 | 8 | 0 | 35 | 6 | 23 | 4 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 29 | 4 | 7 | 24,147 | 1,580 | 973 | 702 | 3,273 | 20,969 | (16) |
| **Total**                      |     |              |      | 828 | 1,057 | 1,089 | 422 | 2,568 | 289 | 58 | 51 | 8 | 20 | 36 | 43 | 25 | 14 | 529 | 52 | 510 | 1,033,964 | 56,639 | 54,687 | 21,450 | 132,776 | 900,788 | **10** |

**Purpose**
- (1) **New York**
- (2) **Amsterdam, First**
- (3) **Amsterdam, Florida**
- (4) **Berne, First**
- (5) **Fonda, Vacant**
- (6) **Fultonville, Vacant**
- (7) **Fultonville, Glen**
- (8) **Hugnum, Albany**
- (9) **Howe’s Corn, Second**
- (10) **Johnstown**
- (11) **Laurensville**
- (12) **Middleburg**
- (13) **Prattsville, Reformed Dutch Mem**
- (14) **Rehoboth, Joy Gould Memorial**
- (15) **Schoharie**
- (16) **Sharon Springs, Sharon**

**Contributions**
- RCA
- Other
- Total
- Comp
### Specialized Ministry

Orville J. Hine

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### Retired

Paul C. Ferenczy

Charles B. Hesselink

Wilbur E. Ivins

Peter Shortway

Carlton Van Schaick

Jared Van Wagenen

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### Regional Synod of Canada CLASSIS OF BRITISH COLUMBIA

**Stated Clerk**
David C. Vandervelde, Bethel Reformed Church, 3260 Gladwin Rd, Abbotsford, BC

**Treasurer**
Doug Waymark, 21245 92A Ave., Langley, BC

### Membership

| CHURCHES         | PASTORS                      | Househld Mbrs | Conf Mbrs | Inact Mbrs | Bpt Mbrs | Mbrs | Total Adh | Average Worship Attendance | Gain | Loss | Trans | Lousy | Other | Bpt Inf Inf | Sun Sch | New Mem | RCA Contrib | Other Contrib | Total Income | Assmnts | RCA Contrib | Other Contrib | Total Amount | Cong 
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FOOTNOTES

(1) 64 (2) 5,040 (3) 7,222 (4) 3,886 (5) 4,134 (6) 12,915 (7) 90,455 (8) 3,528 (9) 6,991 (10) 1,402
## Regional Synod of the Far West CLASSIS OF CALIFORNIA

**Stated Clerk**

Roger G. Beukelman, 27420 Jefferson Ave, Ste 202, Temecula, CA 92590; 909/693-1600

**Treasurer**

John Bos, 37396 Pine Knoll Ave, Palm Desert, CA 92211-2132; 760/772-9738

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See Supplement A

† The number of confessing members to be reported for the Crystal Cathedral is in agreement with the Classis of California. This matter remains under discussion with the General Synod and Crystal Cathedral due to the unique nature of this congregation’s ministry. The per-member assessment approved by the General Synod of 2002 for calendar year 2003 will not be affected by any future correction in this number.

Specialized Ministry

David Alexander
Alan Baker
Roger G. Beukelman
Michael Blankers
Charles D. Bordner
Bruce L. Bugbee
Eric Carpenter
Thomas De Vries
John C. Foster
Jesus M. Garcia
Craig Gilbert
Andrea Godwin-Stremler
William Godwin-Stremler
Linda K. Hodson
Eun Mok Kim
Peter Kim
Kenneth Kolenbrander
Cornelis Kors
Jae Bong Lee
Lucas Leyes
Steven D. McNary
Bob J. Myers
John M. Scholte

David W. Schreuder
Samuel Setyawan
Gregory Simpson
Keiji Soga
David Son
Charles Van Engen
Eugene H. Van Zee
Jerry A. Zandstra

John Edward DeJong
Donald E. Den Dulk
Chester Droog
Henry M. Haga
Gerald D. Heemstra
Walter A. Henrichsen
Harvey Thomas Hoekstra
Richard Huls

Harold John Korver
Harold F. Leestma
Kenneth N. Leestma
William J. Miedema
Rodwell Morgan
James Zwemer Nettinga
John W. Oldenburger
William Stevens

Duane Tellinghuisen
Albert Terry
Raymond A. Van Beek
Robert A. Van Earden
Douglas R. van Gessel
Kenneth W. Van Wyk
A. Paul Veenstra
Kenneth Vermeer

Without Charge

Soon Kil Choi
Richard L. Detrich
Joel Hansma
A. Eugene Pearson
Dunstan Sampson
J. Matthew Soeter

Inactive

David John Van Lant
David Van Carpenter

Retired

Stan Carpenter
Spencer C. De Jong
Richard J. Decker

Footnotes

A
B
C
D
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(4) 109,689
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(3) 25,000
(4) 1,603
(6) 166,925
(10) 5,000
(6) 6,545
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(10) 3,226
(15) 5,000
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(10) 26,411
(17) 14,420
(23) 4,000
(8) 289,100
(12) 17,026
(18) 10,887
(26) 14,726
(10) 35,572
(15) 24,818
(20) 8,576
(28) 2,500
(11) 3,734,580
(17) 401,309
(21) 140,994
(19) 1,231
(22) 11,194
(20) 15,784
(25) 15,800
(24) 1,108,000
(27) 744
(22) 12,000
(26) 24,626
(28) 11,000
(29) 249,300

See Supplement D
### Regional Synod of the Far West CLASSIS OF CASCADES

**Stated Clerk**
Larry G. Martinsen, 1589 E Polnell Rd, Oak Harbor, WA 98277-8603; 360/675-3802

**Treasurer**
Larry G. Martinsen, 1589 E Polnell Rd, Oak Harbor, WA 98277-8603; 360/675-3802

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Without Charge:
- Joel A. De Boer
- Vernon Wayne McNear
- P. Wayne Townsend

FOOTNOTES:
- (2) 42,129
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- (5) 1,000
- (2) 12,559
- (3) 7,858
- (4) 5,520
- (8) 68,431
- (10) 30,000
- (14) 12,850
# Regional Synod of the Far West CLASSIS OF CENTRAL CALIFORNIA

**Stated Clerk**
Don Werkhoven, Classis of Central California, 4555 Barrett Rd, Carmichael, CA 95680-1107; 916/966-3418

**Treasurer**
Don Werkhoven, Classis of Central California, 4555 Barrett Rd, Carmichael, CA 95680-1107; 916/966-3418

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**Membership**

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## Regional Synod of the Far West CLASSIS OF ROCKY MOUNTAINS

### Stated Clerk
Ronald D. Gray, Springs Community Church, 1860 Dublin Blvd, Ste A, Colorado Springs, CO 80918; 719/590-1705

### Treasurer
Ronald D. Gray, Springs Community Church, 1860 Dublin Blvd, Ste A, Colorado Springs, CO 80918; 719/590-1705

### Table of Memberships

| CHURCHES       | PASTORS                          | Membership | Youth | Average | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 | 11 | 12 | 13 | 14 | 15 | 16 | 17 | 18 | 19a | 19b | 19c | 19d | 20 |
| (1) Aurora, New Hope Community | Philip Schuiling                    | 01/91      | 106   | 186    | 99  | 60 | 60 | 305 | 0  | 206 | 11  | 0  | 0  | 1  | 0  | 4  | 1  | 90  | 13  | 120 | 338,709 | 14,443 | 19,245 | 3,200 | 36,888 | 301,821 | (1) |
| (2) Colorado Springs, Springs Comm | Steven R. Brooks                   | 09/86      | 212   | 342    | 37  | 301 | 301 | 680 | 211 | 590 | 30  | 0  | 46 | 2  | 13 | 5  | 25 | 243 | 83  | 292 | 780,583 | 22,700 | 22,621 | 25,937 | 71,258 | 709,225 | (2) |
| (3) Denver, Christ Community | Bruce Van Dusseldorp                   | 09/86      | 135   | 211    | 23  | 99 | 333 | 72  | 200 | 6  | 3  | 11 | 2  | 0  | 6  | 1  | 80  | 12  | 119 | 319,513 | 16,485 | 21,139 | 26,602 | 62,226 | 257,287 | (3) |
| (4) Denver, Church of the Rockies | Thomas J. Harris                      | 09/91      | 46    | 70     | 0   | 28 | 98 | 15 | 61  | 0  | 0  | 37 | 1  | 50 | 0  | 0  | 46  | 0  | 12  | 105,636 | 9,931 | 21,136 | 26,602 | 62,226 | 257,287 | (4) |
| (5) Denver, First          | David Alan Phillips                   | 09/01      | 55    | 72     | 4   | 13 | 89 | 3  | 60  | 0  | 0  | 5  | 0  | 0  | 0  | 15 | 0  | 15  | 87,256 | 4,993 | 11,106 | 2,522 | 18,222 | 69,035 | (5) |
| (6) Denver, Mountain View Community | Vacant                                | 09/91      | 45    | 71     | 16 | 12 | 99 | 14 | 65  | 2  | 2  | 8  | 0  | 0  | 0  | 15 | 0  | 0   | 123,875 | 6,579 | 6,000 | 1,500 | 16,679 | 109,196 | (6) |
| (7) Lakewood, Our Saviour’s | Barbara Morphet                       | 09/97      | 153   | 218    | 33  | 100 | 351 | 45 | 218 | 15 | 0  | 0  | 2  | 24 | 4  | 0  | 145 | 20  | 125 | 406,884 | 18,754 | 14,165 | 16,367 | 49,206 | 357,598 | (7) |
| (8) Littleton, Faith Community | Nathan S. Brucker                    | 09/91      | 110   | 202    | 8   | 147 | 357 | 93 | 225 | 7  | 0  | 2  | 0  | 18 | 5  | 7  | 198 | 7  | 65  | 347,412 | 23,820 | 3,000 | 26,104 | 54,924 | 292,488 | (8) |
| New Mexico       |                                  |            |       |         | (9) | (10) | (11) | (12) | (13) | (14) | (15) | (16) | (17) | (18) | (19a) | (19b) | (19c) | (19d) | (20) |
| (9) Dulce, Jicarilla Apache | William John De Beer                 | 09/94      | 53    | 67     | 21  | 72  | 160 | 16 | 62  | 6  | 0  | 0  | 1  | 0  | 4  | 2  | 34  | 8  | 36  | 72,804 | 5,052 | 2,130 | 0  | 7,132 | 65,622 | (9) |
| **Total**       |                                  |            | 915   | 1,439  | 201 | 832 | 2,472 | 469 | 187 | 77 | 5  | 104 | 14 | 105 | 28 | 36 | 866 | 143 | 804 | 2,582,672 | 112,426 | 100,546 | 102,516 | 315,488 | 2,267,184 |
### Specialized Ministry

Wendell L. Brenneman  
David W. Grooters  
Eric Ishimaru  
Robert C. Laning  
Timothy R. Miller  
Stanley E. Perea  
Eugene Van Dusseldorp  
Loren van Galder  
Wayne A. Van Kampen  
Young C. Yoo

### Without Charge

Nancy Van Wyk Phillips

### Retired

John E. Bandt  
John E. Busman  
Ronald Thomas Gross  
Thomas J. Harris  
Harold L. Hiemstra  
James L. Moore  
Garrett C. Roorda  
Willis J. Vander Kooi

#### FOOTNOTES

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### Regional Synod of the Far West CLASSIS OF SOUTHWEST

**Stated Clerk**
Lynn Fischer, 3521 E Suncrest Ct, Phoenix, AZ  85044-3509; 480/893-8933

**Treasurer**
Lynn Fischer, 3521 E Suncrest Ct, Phoenix, AZ  85044-3509; 480/893-8933

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**Total** 906 1,435 247 452 2,134 450 145 67 45 35 33 44 37 10 657 107 1,193 2,946,864 71,808 99,774 92,718 264,360 2,232,281

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* SEE SUPPLEMENT D

**LINE 10—A UNION CONGREGATION WITH THE AMERICAN BAPTIST CHURCHES USA, CHRISTIAN CHURCH (DISCIPLES OF CHRIST), MONROVIAN CHURCH, UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST, AND PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH USA. IT MAINTAINS SEPARATE MEMBERSHIP ROLLS FROM WHICH STATISTICS ARE OBTAINED.
### Specialized Ministry

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### Michigan

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<td>Holland, Beechwood</td>
<td>James K. Lankheet</td>
<td>02/02</td>
<td>347 850 91 336 629 1,277 70 16 11 18 9 82 17 0 157 0 250 1,696,561 54,831 40,929 128,735 224,495 1,472,066 (1)</td>
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<td>Larry J. Terlouw</td>
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<td>345 601 46 201 848 68 490 20 24 11 5 1 18 4 200 40 220 793,150 32,346 55,974 2,872 91,192 70,138 (2)</td>
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<td>Daniel Dean Edgerly</td>
<td>06/97</td>
<td>308 703 15 190 724 64 430 7 26 9 10 0 8 338 45 305 687,409 29,125 103,388 14,651 61,567 347,219 (3)</td>
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<td>Michael Gene Pluimenberger</td>
<td>09/01</td>
<td>1,548 2,007 115 903 3,915 20 1,917 74 45 83 22 50 45 3 1,007 119 1,948 3,125,806 167,157 100,310 243,678 169,115 2,434,671 (4)</td>
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<td>William Boersma</td>
<td>05/00</td>
<td>39 48 0 15 58 44 115 0 7 5 0 0 3 59 5 15 142,904 2,605 0 0 2,605 140,299 (5)</td>
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<td>Fredric R. Kruithof</td>
<td>06/00</td>
<td>326 520 13 155 688 2 450 7 34 6 16 1 11 1 220 45 220 826,973 28,775 22,900 26,810 76,565 750,408 (7)</td>
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<td>Kenneth W. Ekh</td>
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<td>396 1,021 96 497 1,614 26 670 15 28 19 34 4 27 0 467 52 836 1,208,252 50,247 90,448 184,362 1,023,990 (8)</td>
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<td>Daniel N. Gillett</td>
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<td>326 520 13 155 688 2 450 7 34 6 16 1 11 1 220 45 220 826,973 28,775 22,900 26,810 76,565 750,408 (7)</td>
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<td>Dick A. Doeden</td>
<td>05/00</td>
<td>103 165 9 36 210 20 140 4 0 4 8 3 1 48 11 38 211,864 9,786 6,629 13,538 29,935 181,931 (8)</td>
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<td>P. Keith Lash</td>
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<td>171 329 41 183 553 28 200 7 2 22 5 17 0 121 15 129 408,886 22,466 24,190 16,651 61,567 347,219 (9)</td>
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<td>Regis R. Paul</td>
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<td>296 517 47 190 754 16 340 7 26 9 10 0 8 338 45 305 687,409 29,125 103,388 24,354 196,867 530,542 (10)</td>
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<td>65 85 13 44 142 40 155 2 3 3 0 0 0 7 20 50 16 55 526,101 1,770 7,000 19,250 20,020 498,081 (11)</td>
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<td>198 315 95 207 697 18 245 4 5 7 4 0 3 148 4 195 208,562 16,545 500 718 19,763 188,829 (13)</td>
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<td>128 371 104 209 1,044 10 475 15 23 11 13 5 6 2 190 38 175 1,062,760 47,482 89,684 54,665 191,831 870,529 (14)</td>
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<td>323 564 31 178 773 26 325 13 9 10 12 0 2 109 25 190 627,548 35,988 66,639 49,681 152,218 475,310 (15)</td>
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<td>David Douglas Bailey</td>
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<td>42 68 4 38 110 40 115 40 32 0 0 0 0 13 6 50 72 50 399,662 0 0 0 1,160 1,160 396,592 (16)</td>
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### Total

| Total | 5,219 | 9,259 | 760 | 3,551 | 13,570 | 496 | 425 | 235 | 260 | 219 | 133 | 204 | 172 | 36 | 5,311 | 508 | 4,964 | 11,076,441 | 548,927 | 649,963 | 843,480 | 2,062,781 | 11,604,414 |

**SEE SUPPLEMENT A**

**SEE SUPPLEMENT D**

**LINE 11—A UNION CONGREGATION WITH THE CHRISTIAN REFORMED CHURCH. STATISTICS GIVEN ARE 1/2 OF ACTUAL TOTALS.**
Professor/Teacher
Matthew D. Floding
Christopher B. Kaiser
Paul Smith
Robert E. Van Voorst
Allen Verhey
Dennis Voskuil

Specialized Ministry
Carole Jean Aardsma
Sharon Arendshorst
David Blauw
Celaine Bouma-Prediger
Kenneth R. Bradsell
H. Curtis Bush
Robert Dahl
Elizabeth A. De Jonge
Roger D. De Young
Terry A. De Young
Darrell V. Franken
Jaco Hamman
Alan J. Heystek
Marvin D. Hoff
Steven Hoogerwerf
Wayne Alan Jansen
Jeffrey S. Japinga
Joel Jongerius Zuidema
David Kool
Jay Lindell
Dianne Mugg

Dennis L. Mulder
Jeffrey L. Munroe
Fumihito Andy Nakajima
J. Ben Patterson
Mark G. Poppen
Jessica Scholten
Jon Mark Schoon
Larry L. Schuyler
Lewis R. Scudder
Vernon J. Sterk
Mary T. Van Andel
Rowland D. Van Es
Leigh Ann Van Kempen
Cynthia J. Veldheer-De Young
Stanley Lee Vugteveen
C. Bruce Wierks
Ruth Zwald

Retired
Paul J. Alderink
Louis H. Benes
Marvin C. Beukelman
Arie William Blok
William Brownson
Elton J. Bruins
Richard V. Coffill
H. Paul Colenbrander
Marion de Velder
John M. Hains
J. Samuel Hofman
Wendell Karsen
Earl Wm Kennedy

Wesley E. Kiel
Roger E. Kleinheksel
Earl A. Laman
John H. Maassen
Henry A. Mowu
George P. Murray
Russell L. Norden
Robert J. Palma
Lambert Ponstein
Lynn Post
Chester Postma
Herman J. Riddler
Howard D. Schipper
Paul Schmidt

Carl J. Schroeder
Frank J. Shearer
John M. Smith
Russell Sybesma
Ellsworth M. Ten Clay
William Unzicker
Henry J. Van Der Schaaf
Merwin D. Van Doornik
Cornelius A. Van Heest
Gerard J. Van Heest
Delbert J. Vander Haar
Marlin A. Vander Wilt
Henry Voogd
Theodore F. Zandstra

FOOTNOTES

A

(1) 937
(3) 11,316
(4) 94,231
(7) 35,460
(8) 1,559
(9) 9,600
(10) 4,742
(11) 40,000
(12) 18,732
(13) 68
(15) 109,420
(16) 2,914

B

(1) 699,034
(2) 206,976
(3) 735,230
(4) 217,957
(5) 96,568
(6) 157,221
(7) 21,052
(8) 101,912
(9) 35,288
(10) 28,394
(11) 238,357
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C

(5) 2,500
(8) 41,500
(11) 43,025
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(16) 19,500

D

(1) 3,835
(5) 910
(11) 193,083
## Membership

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### Kentucky

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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Annville, Community</td>
<td>Vacant</td>
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<tr>
<td>Gray Hawk</td>
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<tr>
<td>McKee</td>
<td>Calvin Hays</td>
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### Michigan

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<tr>
<td>Allen Park, Grace</td>
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<tr>
<td>Ann Arbor, University</td>
<td>Thomas Elenbaas</td>
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<td>Canton, CrossWinds</td>
<td>Jonathan L. Beyer</td>
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<td>Robert Morris</td>
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<td>Thomas Mark Duanepeck</td>
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<td>Royal Oak, Church of the Redeemer</td>
<td>Stephen P. Numan</td>
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<td>Southgate, Calvary</td>
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<td>Warren, Church of the Master</td>
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<td>Westland, Good Shepherd</td>
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### Ohio

<table>
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<tr>
<td>Brooklyn</td>
<td>Carl Czar</td>
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<td>Donald J. Poest</td>
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<td>Cleveland, Calvary</td>
<td>Dean S. Van Farsee</td>
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<tr>
<td>Fairview Park, New Hope</td>
<td>Daniel C. Sewell</td>
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<tr>
<td>Gahanna, Good Samaritan</td>
<td>Stephen A. Hielkema</td>
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<td>Parma Heights, Parma Park</td>
<td>Vacant</td>
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<tr>
<td>Powell, New Hope</td>
<td>Stephen M. Norden</td>
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### Total

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### Stated Clerk

Donald R. Veltman, 31716 Sweetbriar Dr, Rockwood, MI 48173; 734/379-9191

### Treasurer

Malcom Cox, 1309 Fountain St, Ann Arbor, MI 48103-2962; 734/769-0635

### Average New Other Contributions

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*SEE SUPPLEMENT D*
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### FOOTNOTES

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</table>
## Stated Clerk
Gary L. De Witt, Church of the Saviour, 180 68th Ave, Coopersville, MI 49404-9704; 616/997-8050

## Treasurer
Katherine D. Sonneveldt, 921 S Beechtree 6A, Grand Haven, MI 49417-2340; 616/842-9033

### Michigan

#### Conklin
- **Richard R. Christy**
  - Commissioned Minister 1992
  - Average Worship Attendance: 128
  - Contributions: $45,975

#### Coopersville
- **Robert D. Wondergem**
  - Commissioned Minister 1999
  - Average Worship Attendance: 247
  - Contributions: $56,320

#### Coopersville, Church of the Saviour
- **Gary L. De Witt**
  - Commissioned Minister 1997
  - Average Worship Attendance: 265
  - Contributions: $78,105

#### Fruitport, Word of Hope
- **James Bos**
  - Commissioned Minister 1987
  - Average Worship Attendance: 175
  - Contributions: $17,551

#### Grand Haven, First
- **Ronald L Geschwendt**
  - Commissioned Minister 1993
  - Average Worship Attendance: 325
  - Contributions: $57,898

#### Grand Haven, Hope
- **Arnold D. Van Beek**
  - Commissioned Minister 1989
  - Average Worship Attendance: 250
  - Contributions: $27,670

#### Grand Haven, Second
- **Lary D. Jackson**
  - Commissioned Minister 1987
  - Average Worship Attendance: 185
  - Contributions: $18,849

#### Grand Haven, Trinity
- **John C. Koodylter**
  - Commissioned Minister 1997
  - Average Worship Attendance: 100
  - Contributions: $10,004

#### Montague, Ferry Memorial
- **Dick B. Kraver**
  - Commissioned Minister 1993
  - Average Worship Attendance: 150
  - Contributions: $14,455

#### Muskegon, Central Community
- **Timothy D. Vander Haar**
  - Commissioned Minister 1984
  - Average Worship Attendance: 150
  - Contributions: $5,033

#### Muskegon, Fellowship
- **Jerry Worel**
  - Commissioned Minister 1999
  - Average Worship Attendance: 200
  - Contributions: $9,000

#### Muskegon, Fifth
- **Norman F. Swier**
  - Commissioned Minister 1997
  - Average Worship Attendance: 280
  - Contributions: $30,573

#### Muskegon, Hope
- **Steven S. Hynia**
  - Commissioned Minister 2002
  - Average Worship Attendance: 150
  - Contributions: $12,693

#### Muskegon, Laketon Bethel
- **Shevron L. Brantien**
  - Commissioned Minister 2002
  - Average Worship Attendance: 250
  - Contributions: $25,683

#### Muskegon, Olivet
- **Russell K. Camp**
  - Commissioned Minister 2001
  - Average Worship Attendance: 90
  - Contributions: $8,674

#### Muskegon, Unity
- **Vacant**
  - Commissioned Minister 2002
  - Average Worship Attendance: 200
  - Contributions: $15,000

### Ravenna, First
- **Kevin T. Schutt**
  - Commissioned Minister 2000
  - Average Worship Attendance: 150
  - Contributions: $9,078

### Total
- Average Worship Attendance: 2,821
- Contributions: $5,799,117

*SEE SUPPLEMENT D*
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Specialized Ministry</th>
<th>Retired</th>
<th>FOOTNOTES</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Raymond Dekker</td>
<td>James Bos</td>
<td>A</td>
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### Michigan

#### (1) Ada, Community
- Pastor: Thomas J. Bartha
  - Years: 10/88
  - Household: 91
  - Members: 170
  - Baptisms: 49
  - Confirmed: 21
  - Inactive: 21
  - Average Worship Attendance: 174
  - Average Membership: 5

#### (2) Casnovia
- Pastor: Raymond J. Steigenga
  - Years: 06/88
  - Household: 68
  - Members: 91
  - Baptisms: 4
  - Confirmed: 73
  - Inactive: 4

#### (3) Flint, Resurrection
- Pastor: Paul David Pratt
  - Years: 10/85
  - Household: 130
  - Members: 254
  - Baptisms: 50
  - Confirmed: 312
  - Inactive: 94

#### (4) Grand Rapids, Aberdeen
- Pastor: Roger E. Eernisse
  - Years: 10/90
  - Household: 74
  - Members: 130
  - Baptisms: 50
  - Confirmed: 217
  - Inactive: 3

#### (5) Grand Rapids, Central
- Pastor: Cheryl Molhoek
  - Years: 11/01
  - Household: 387
  - Members: 627
  - Baptisms: 305
  - Confirmed: 892

#### (6) Grand Rapids, Common Ground
- Pastor: Thomas Archer
  - Years: 04/96
  - Household: 58
  - Members: 85
  - Baptisms: 0
  - Confirmed: 12

#### (7) Grand Rapids, Fourth
- Pastor: Timothy Menvorder
  - Years: 03/96
  - Household: 120
  - Members: 185
  - Baptisms: 60
  - Confirmed: 249

#### (8) Grand Rapids, Knapp Street
- Pastor: Vance Elzinga
  - Years: 03/97
  - Household: 115
  - Members: 195
  - Baptisms: 78
  - Confirmed: 288

#### (9) Grand Rapids, Oakview
- Pastor: John M. Delger
  - Years: 06/00
  - Household: 61
  - Members: 100
  - Baptisms: 0
  - Confirmed: 40

#### (10) Grand Rapids, Orchard Hill
- Pastor: Cindy Mitchell Pikkart
  - Years: 07/06
  - Household: 437
  - Members: 660
  - Baptisms: 218
  - Confirmed: 907

#### (11) Grand Rapids, Remembrance
- Pastor: Thomas L. Bos
  - Years: 03/08
  - Household: 319
  - Members: 556
  - Baptisms: 5

#### (12) Grand Rapids, Richmond
- Pastor: Larry A. Ausen
  - Years: 02/02
  - Household: 221
  - Members: 361
  - Baptisms: 18
  - Confirmed: 164

#### (13) Grand Rapids, Servants Community
- Pastor: Michael L. Mudder
  - Years: 08/96
  - Household: 56
  - Members: 76
  - Baptisms: 26
  - Confirmed: 106

#### (14) Grand Rapids, Standale
- Pastor: Stephen C. Simon
  - Years: 08/01
  - Household: 169
  - Members: 331
  - Baptisms: 140
  - Confirmed: 503

#### (15) Grand Rapids, Third
- Pastor: Kent A. Fry
  - Years: 07/91
  - Household: 198
  - Members: 350
  - Baptisms: 14
  - Confirmed: 463

#### (16) Grand Rapids, Trinity
- Pastor: Vacant
  - Years: 08/01
  - Household: 180
  - Members: 319
  - Baptisms: 135
  - Confirmed: 464

#### (17) Rockford
- Pastor: Richard C. Tigchon
  - Years: 08/97
  - Household: 148
  - Members: 287
  - Baptisms: 23
  - Confirmed: 131

### Tennessee

#### (18) Franklin, Franklin Fellowship
- Pastor: Thomas S. Monka
  - Years: 03/93
  - Household: 24
  - Members: 28
  - Baptisms: 4

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**Note:** The table provides detailed information about church memberships, including household, members, baptisms, confirmed members, inactive members, average worship attendance, and contributions for each location. The data is categorized by Michigan and Tennessee, with further breakdowns for specific churches and pastors. This information is crucial for understanding the membership and financial aspects of the Regional Synod of the Great Lakes CLASSIS OF NORTH GRAND RAPIDS.
### Specialized Ministry

- Andrew Atwood
- David P. Baak
- Richard J. Bates
- Mary Ellen Bos
- David Dalenberg
- Evelyn Jean Diephouse
- Charlotte Ann Ellison
- Carol Faas
- William H. Fennema
- Roger Grandia
- Robert P. Huizenga
- Diane Lynn Konynenbelt
- Henry M. Kroondyk
- Diane Maodush-Pitzer
- Bruce A. Menning
- Barbara Pekich
- Ronald L. Redder
- Janet Rogacki
- James Schuen
- E. Jay Sowers
- Richard J. Ter Maat
- Lisa Hansen Tice
- Amy L. Van Gunst
- Julie VanDerVeen
- Susan Vanderwall-Post
- Thomas J. Woudstra
- Bonita Zobeck

### Without Charge

- Andrew L. DeBraber
- Marcia Elders
- Lisa Greene Henderson
- Melody T. Meeter
- Victoria M. Menning
- Bradley Olson
- Ronald Rienstra
- Neva J. Evenhouse
- Donald Hoffman
- Charles W. Krahe
- Truman Raak
- James P. Rozeboom
- Gerald A. Vander Velde
- Kenneth E. VanderBroek

### FOOTNOTES

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### Regional Synod of the Great Lakes CLASSIS OF NORTHERN MICHIGAN

**Stated Clerk**: Lee Pranger, 4670 1st St, PO Box 7, New Era, MI  49446-0007; 231/861-4303

**Treasurer**: Lee Pranger, 4670 1st St, PO Box 7, New Era, MI  49446-0007; 231/861-4303

| CHURCHES | PASTORS |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
|----------|---------|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|---
**Specialized Ministry**

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**Without Charge**

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**Inactive**

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**Retired**

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**FOOTNOTES**

- (1) 50,000
- (2) 2,473
- (4) 1,115
- (5) 125,895
- (6) 5,442
- (9) 2,915
- (11) 1,227
- (12) 11,922
- (13) 8,169
- (14) 10,759

- (1) 62,152
- (5) 28,671
- (6) 6,700
- (7) 34,094
- (8) 7,757
- (12) 154,330
- (13) 271,104
- (14) 114,193

- (4) 1,500
- (4) 1,124
- (10) 2,500
- (6) 2,510

- (9) 2,915
- (11) 1,227
- (12) 11,922
- (13) 8,169
- (14) 10,759
## Regional Synod of the Great Lakes
### CLASSIS OF SOUTH GRAND RAPIDS

**Stated Clerk**

Pamela R. De Windt, 2530 Angela St, Jenison, MI  49428-8178; 616/662-0696

**Treasurer**

Randy Vander Lugt, 2900-28th St SW Ste B, Grandville, MI  49418; 616/949-9030

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**CHURCHES**

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### Membership

- **Total Adh**: Total adherents
- **Total Congr**: Total congregations

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### Financial Information

- **Total Income**: Total income
- **Contributions**: Contributions

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* SEE SUPPLEMENT D
## Regional Synod of the Great Lakes CLASSIS OF SOUTHWEST MICHIGAN

### Stated Clerk
Jennifer Liggett, Classis of Southwest Michigan, 302 Academy St., Kalamazoo, MI 49007; 616/349-6359

### Treasurer
Barbara Patterson, 302 Academy St., Kalamazoo, MI 49007; 616/349-6359

### Membership

| CHURCHES | PASTORS | Conf Mbrs | Inact Mbrs | Bapt Mbrs | Total Mbrs | Average Worship Attendance |Avg Grows | Cent (9) | Trans (10) | Local (12) | RBC (13) | Sun Sch (15) | New Mbrs | Other Mbrs | Total RCA | Other Total Congr |
|----------|----------|-----------|------------|-----------|------------|--------------------------|----------|---------|-----------|-------------|---------|------------|----------|----------|-----------|----------------|-----------------|
| Michigan |          |           |            |           |            |                          |          |         |           |             |         |            |          |          |           |                |                |
| Allegan, Main Street Ministries | Thomas M. Bier | 1209 | 35 | 62 | 22 | 18 | 102 | 32 | 88 | 11 | 0 | 5 | 2 | 6 | 0 | 2 | 52 | 12 | 45 | 109,528 | 5,536 | 1,220 | 16,399 | 23,135 | 86,933 |
| Battle Creek, Christ Community | Alan J. Hofland | 09/05 | 48 | 74 | 16 | 21 | 111 | 22 | 90 | 1 | 0 | 2 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 59 | 0 | 20 | 132,192 | 5,711 | 11,910 | 11,604 | 29,225 | 102,967 |
| Decatur, First | Mark Allen Hofstra | 04/01 | 63 | 93 | 0 | 14 | 107 | 29 | 104 | 1 | 0 | 2 | 6 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 70 | 4 | 34 | 145,000 | 5,719 | 400 | 5,022 | 11,141 | 133,859 |
| Hopkins, Community | Vacant | 05/02 | 88 | 201 | 40 | 150 | 391 | 30 | 215 | 8 | 4 | 0 | 2 | 0 | 11 | 0 | 0 | 130 | 15 | 100 | 205,708 | 12,472 | 9,858 | 10,417 | 32,747 | 172,941 |
| Kalamazoo, Bethany | Robert H. Terwilliger | 10/98 | 145 | 225 | 23 | 70 | 325 | 57 | 198 | 14 | 2 | 0 | 2 | 0 | 3 | 3 | 90 | 18 | 55 | 282,192 | 14,227 | 19,615 | 21,718 | 55,560 | 228,630 |
| Kalamazoo, Bethel | David R. Armstrong | 05/90 | 49 | 54 | 7 | 13 | 74 | 22 | 41 | 1 | 0 | 3 | 1 | 5 | 0 | 0 | 8 | 1 | 18 | 61,287 | 4,346 | 1,356 | 1,564 | 7,262 | 54,021 |
| Kalamazoo, First | Mark L. Walvoord | 02/01 | 67 | 92 | 47 | 25 | 164 | 43 | 72 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 11 | 0 | 0 | 48 | 5 | 24 | 156,339 | 7,822 | 10,000 | 11,000 | 29,722 | 129,617 |
| Kalamazoo, Greenwood | Todd D. Bush | 07/96 | 87 | 97 | 6 | 44 | 201 | 35 | 132 | 7 | 2 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 6 | 3 | 41 | 11 | 45 | 163,059 | 8,815 | 17,106 | 72,644 | 135,396 | 178 |
| Kalamazoo, Haven | Roy A. Ackermann | 06/84 | 369 | 616 | 93 | 262 | 991 | 232 | 690 | 4 | 3 | 14 | 14 | 15 | 9 | 13 | 675 | 72 | 745 | 1,405,205 | 41,045 | 18,000 | 23,132 | 31,232 | 64,888 |
| Kalamazoo, Trinity | Jacques Nel | 03/02 | 109 | 199 | 12 | 69 | 280 | 25 | 145 | 5 | 3 | 9 | 4 | 7 | 4 | 6 | 101 | 4 | 71 | 244,485 | 15,020 | 14,004 | 2,827 | 29,655 | 214,832 |
| Kalamazoo, North Park | Vacant | 09/00 | 115 | 209 | 14 | 77 | 303 | 66 | 160 | 3 | 0 | 2 | 2 | 19 | 5 | 1 | 73 | 0 | 57 | 245,566 | 12,600 | 17,125 | 5,200 | 32,225 | 213,541 |
| Kalamazoo, Southridge | Mark A. Vanderson | 09/95 | 416 | 636 | 9 | 327 | 972 | 60 | 600 | 33 | 27 | 10 | 21 | 6 | 4 | 296 | 60 | 561 | 950,606 | 31,647 | 34,477 | 52,088 | 186,212 | 641,594 |
| Kalamazoo, Third | Jeff Potter | 07/87 | 820 | 1,358 | 186 | 566 | 2,057 | 200 | 1,045 | 109 | 68 | 10 | 7 | 75 | 36 | 12 | 324 | 136 | 1,250 | 2,301,555 | 40,456 | 110,250 | 59,800 | 230,906 | 2,071,047 |
| Martin, James T. Goldschmeding | 03/02 | 109 | 199 | 12 | 69 | 280 | 25 | 145 | 5 | 3 | 9 | 4 | 7 | 4 | 6 | 101 | 4 | 71 | 244,485 | 15,020 | 14,004 | 2,827 | 29,655 | 214,832 |
| Oshtemo, Fourth | James J. Vander Roest | 06/92 | 108 | 209 | 13 | 51 | 273 | 29 | 187 | 2 | 9 | 3 | 2 | 0 | 4 | 0 | 72 | 11 | 38 | 268,000 | 12,072 | 12,750 | 6,737 | 31,509 | 252,531 |
| Plainwell, Doster | Steven J. Baker | 09/99 | 55 | 95 | 0 | 1 | 96 | 26 | 82 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 1 | 0 | 1 | 30 | 3 | 0 | 306,550 | 5,014 | 1,340 | 825 | 7,737 | 99,315 |
| Three Oaks, First | James Poit | 02/99 | 141 | 249 | 77 | 87 | 413 | 25 | 210 | 4 | 1 | 6 | 10 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 82 | 7 | 150 | 286,419 | 15,830 | 25,350 | 0 | 41,180 | 242,259 |
| South Haven, Hope | Gene Poll | 11/91 | 199 | 299 | 13 | 111 | 423 | 58 | 276 | 9 | 5 | 11 | 0 | 12 | 2 | 3 | 159 | 0 | 38 | 377,783 | 22,083 | 30,600 | 9,777 | 62,490 | 315,323 |
| Plainwell, Faith | Vacant | 08/01 | 34 | 66 | 26 | 36 | 128 | 11 | 60 | 0 | 0 | 6 | 2 | 9 | 0 | 0 | 36 | 0 | 50 | 75,849 | 11,482 | 7,644 | 590 | 19,716 | 56,133 |
| Three Oaks, First | Vacant | 10/99 | 249 | 418 | 49 | 211 | 678 | 87 | 361 | 14 | 5 | 22 | 3 | 85 | 5 | 1 | 174 | 40 | 175 | 550,658 | 34,332 | 32,750 | 11,900 | 78,982 | 471,076 |

* SEE SUPPLEMENT D
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<td>Donald H. DeYoung</td>
<td>(1) 103,460</td>
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<td>John H. DeKam</td>
<td>Frederic C. Dolfin</td>
<td>(2) 657</td>
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<td>Bernard D. Ekema</td>
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<td>Richard R. Patterson</td>
<td>Wallace R. Stoepker</td>
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<td>Denise Thompson</td>
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FOOTNOTES:
(1) 103,460  (2) 657  (3) 44,486  (4) 57,604  (5) 4,000  (6) 24,205  (7) 461,544  (8) 1,078  (9) 57,604  (10) 68,626  (11) 5,000  (12) 4,250  (13) 361,397  (14) 533,702  (15) 4,983  (16) 48,895  (17) 60,935  (18) 3,500  (19) 36,935  (20) 1,500  (21) 37,154  (22) 10,530
Stated Clerk
Treasurer
CHURCHES

Steven A. Smallegan, 2554 Riley St, PO Box 168, Jamestown, MI 49427; 616/896-0243
Randy Bohl, 2594 Floral Dr, Zeeland, MI 49464-9106; 616/772-9144

Timothy J. TenClay
Paul I. Burmeister
George Gerrit Grevenstuk
Ralph Houston
Larry D. LePoire
Jonathan C. Brownson
( 7) Hamilton, Bentheim
Ronald J. VerWys
( 8) Hamilton, Haven
Robert J. Rook
Andrew Rozendaal
( 9) Holland, Ebenezer
Todd D. Krygsheld
Dewey VanDenBerg
(10) Holland, Harlem
John William Nyitray
Shane Ver Steeg
(11) Holland, North Holland
Dewey Thompson
(12) Holland, Overisel
Scott Lokers
(13) Hudsonville
Donald L. Van Slyke
(14) Hudsonville, Covenant Community LeRoy Boender
(15) Hudsonville, Fellowship
Michael H. Van Buren
Shawn Hulst
(16) Hudsonville, Forest Grove
James W. Ikerd
(17) Hudsonville, Heritage
Vacant
(18) Hudsonville, North Blendon
Steven F. Demers
(19) Hudsonville, South Blendon
Stanley Francis Craig
(20) Jamestown
Vacant
(21) West Olive, Ottawa
Mical R. Pugh
Kevin P. Kleinheksel
(22) Zeeland, Beaverdam
James F. Dykstra
(23) Zeeland, Community
Dann A. Stouten
(24) Zeeland, Faith
Jonathan Elgersma
Timothy D. Custer
(25) Zeeland, First
Scott Van Oostendorp
Thomas W. Grabill

M/C
M/C

AP
AP
M/C

AP

AP

M/C
AP

Membership
Average
Worshp
Gains
Attend
Conf Cert
(7)
(8)
(9)

52

219

63

200

24

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3

2

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209

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12
10

7
11
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6
2
22

5
21
5
2
10
15

14
32
0
15
8
26

3
0
2
4
3
3

210
850
825

7
22
20

0
21
59

9
21
32

800

13

19

30

Assmnts
(19a)

RCA
Contrib
(19b)

Contributions
Other
Total
Contrib Amount
(19c)
(19d)

Congr
Purpose
(20)

5,573

5,485

33,326

346,624 ( 1)

20
180
62
5
175

378,009 2,016
386,912 13,753
138,377 1,398
43,401
671
539,048 31,050

5,383
27,530
0
805
56,795

4,235 11,634
19,605 60,888
5,254 6,652
3,277 4,753
23,936 111,781

366,375
326,024
131,725
38,648
427,267

8
0

149
200

494,630 16,360
502,916 25,884

15,527
49,950

25,463 57,350
63,920 139,754

437,280 ( 7)
363,162 ( 8)

165

9

245

372,369 13,585

4,164

9,716

27,465

344,904 ( 9)

1

128

0

159

373,677 12,697

18,238

32,997

63,932

309,745 (10)

4
9
13
7
27

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1
4
0
5

225
297
330
180
540

2
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15
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42

625 471,416 27,400
377 455,569 19,369
200 1,133,487 22,020
301 328,682 19,075
380 915,408 34,869

50,366
42,676
66,747
13,260
87,260

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58,534

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275,306
734,745

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(14)
(15)

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424

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30,430

24,000
20,590
14,315
4,931
30,690
124,624

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22,994 59,639
12,300 35,407
50,556 68,307
19,415 66,561
62,695 217,749

316,713
247,084
125,551
214,458
404,939
547,265

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(17)
(18)
(19)
(20)
(21)

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29

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350
380

7
30
43

115
410
497

638,084 7,503
790,314 37,003
671,030 51,153

25,926
60,970
108,719

7,082 40,511
13,000 110,973
35,200 195,072

597,573 (22)
679,341 (23)
475,958 (24)

15

0

7

2

418

32

617 1,207,480 37,187

60,543

101,583 199,313 1,008,167 (25)

Losses
Trans Decd
(10)
(11)

Other
(12)

Bapt
Infant Adult
(13) (14)

Total
Income
(18)

44,384

( 2)
( 3)
( 4)
( 5)
( 6)

GENERAL SYNOD/JUNE 2002

Georgia
( 1) Roswell, N. Atlanta Community
Michigan
( 2) Allegan, Dunningville
( 3) Allendale, First
( 4) Dorr, Open Door
( 5) Fennville, Immanuel
( 6) Hamilton

484

Regional Synod of the Great Lakes CLASSIS OF ZEELAND


<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Specialized Ministry</th>
<th>FO OTNOTES</th>
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<tr>
<td>Paul Boersma</td>
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<td>David J. Grissen</td>
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<td>Mary Lokers Merrill</td>
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<td>Christopher Stahl Pieters</td>
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<td>Steven A. Smallegan</td>
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<tr>
<td>Rowland D. Van Es</td>
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<tr>
<td>Kirk Vander Molen</td>
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<td>Marlin P. Vis</td>
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<tr>
<td>Randy L. Weener</td>
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<tr>
<td>Barbara Yandell</td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Without Charge</td>
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<tr>
<td>Richard Borst</td>
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<tr>
<td>Carl John Folkert</td>
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<tr>
<td>Daniel Van Houten</td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Victor Downing</td>
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<td>Bradley Norg</td>
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<td>Lee Bayer</td>
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<td>Don Jay Bekkering</td>
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<td>John R. Boender</td>
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<tr>
<td>Rodger H. Dalman</td>
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<tr>
<td>Edward L. Grant</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>John C. Hanse</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

| Specialized Ministry | Paul Boersma        | David J. Grissen    | Mary Lokers Merrill | Christopher Stahl Pieters | Steven A. Smallegan | Rowland D. Van Es   | Kirk Vander Molen   | Marlin P. Vis       | Randy L. Weener     | Barbara Yandell     |                      | Without Charge      | Richard Borst       | Carl John Folkert   | Daniel Van Houten   |                      |                      |
|----------------------|---------------------|---------------------|---------------------|--------------------------|----------------------|---------------------|---------------------|---------------------|---------------------|---------------------|---------------------|---------------------|---------------------|---------------------|---------------------|---------------------|---------------------|---------------------|
|                      | FO OTNOTES          | FO OTNOTES          | FO OTNOTES          | FO OTNOTES               | FO OTNOTES          | FO OTNOTES          | FO OTNOTES          | FO OTNOTES          | FO OTNOTES          | FO OTNOTES          | FO OTNOTES          | FO OTNOTES          | FO OTNOTES          | FO OTNOTES          | FO OTNOTES          | FO OTNOTES          | FO OTNOTES          | FO OTNOTES          | FO OTNOTES          |
### Regional Synod of the Heartland—CLASSIS OF CENTRAL IOWA

**Stated Clerk**
Forrest Harms, 3011 Pleasant St, West Des Moines, IA 50266-2022; 515/277-6969

**Treasurer**
Wayne Van Heuvelen, 2400 86th St Ste 19, Urbandale, IA 50322-4306; 515/252-0796

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CHURCHES</th>
<th>PASTORS</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Iowa</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>(1) Altoona, Adventure Life</td>
<td>David Lee Bonselaar 07/01</td>
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<tr>
<td>(2) Des Moines, Bethany</td>
<td>Barry L. Wynveen 06/00</td>
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<tr>
<td>(3) Des Moines, Calvary</td>
<td>Gina A. Blumer 08/00</td>
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<td>(4) Des Moines, Meridian Drive</td>
<td>Anthony D. Vis 03/84</td>
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<tr>
<td>(5) Eddyville, Faith Community**</td>
<td>Jane Brown AP 11/01</td>
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<tr>
<td>(6) Leonia, Ebenezer</td>
<td>Sara Beaver Vogel AP 12/99</td>
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<tr>
<td>(7) Newton, Community</td>
<td>Jonathan R Sherrill AP 06/00</td>
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<tr>
<td>(8) Osbourn, Central</td>
<td>Kenneth A. Dykstra RET M/C 05/87</td>
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<tr>
<td>(9) Otley</td>
<td>Sophie Mathonnet-Vanderwell 02/99</td>
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<tr>
<td>(10) Pella, First</td>
<td>Donald R. Orange AP 08/93</td>
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<td>(11) Pella, Heartland</td>
<td>Stephen Mathonnet-Vanderwell 02/99</td>
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<td>(12) Pella, Second</td>
<td>Kevin E. Korver AP 08/93</td>
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<td>(13) Pella, Third</td>
<td>Brice Hoyt AP 08/90</td>
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<td>(14) Pella, Trinity</td>
<td>Jay Rodland 11/96</td>
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<td>(15) Prairie City, First</td>
<td>1200</td>
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<td>(16) Sally, First</td>
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<td>(17) Waukee, Westview</td>
<td>11/96</td>
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**Total** 3,491 6,174 613 2,427 9,214 491 338 194 157 139 65 107 141 26 3,741 291 3,925 7,051,437 420,185 531,485 716,113 1,800,783 7,141,654

**Note:** LINE 5—A UNION CONGREGATION WITH THE UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST. STATISTICS GIVEN ARE 1/2 OF ACTUAL TOTALS.
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<th>Gary H. Vande Kamp</th>
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<td>(17) 166,726</td>
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<td>(16) 5,410</td>
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</table>
**Regional Synod of the Heartland CLASSIS OF CENTRAL PLAINS**

**Stated Clerk**
Timothy Peters, 6801 S 52nd, Lincoln, NE 68516; 402/421-1641

**Treasurer**
Timothy Peters, 6801 S 52nd, Lincoln, NE 68516; 402/421-1641

<table>
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<tr>
<th>CHURCHES</th>
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<th>Pastoral Membership</th>
<th>Education</th>
<th>Stewardship</th>
<th>Contributions</th>
<th>Comp</th>
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<td>58</td>
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<td>154</td>
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<td>154</td>
<td>272</td>
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<td>96</td>
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<td>07/95</td>
<td>39</td>
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Total: 913 | 1,562 | 197 | 701 | 2,460 | 293 | 152 | 85 | 31 | 17 | 10 | 4 | 44 | 12 | 987 | 142 | 1,143 | 2,494,596 | 91,099 | 114,741 | 77,227 | 285,067 | 2,211,929 |
**Specialized Ministry**

Dale A. Assink  
Paul E. Copeland  
Ronnie G. Helmink  
Roy D. Paterik  
Harry R. Tysen  
Amy Jo Van Es-Hawley  
Richard Westra  

**Without Charge**  
Curtis R. Liesveld

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
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<th>B</th>
<th>C</th>
<th>D</th>
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<td>22,000</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
# Regional Synod of the Heartland
## CLASSIS OF DAKOTA

**Stated Clerk**
Wayne A. Van Regenmorter, First Reformed Church, 4800 Tomar Rd, Sioux Falls, SD 57108; 605/338-1553

**Treasurer**
LeRoy Ligtenberg, 903 West Ash, Mitchell, SD 57301; 605/996-8783

---

**North Dakota**

### Bismarck Community
- Maurice D. Millican
- *M/C 10/97*
- Membership: 164
- Average New Othr Contrib: 44
- **Contrib Amount Purpose:** 291,187

### Hague, Hope
- Westfield Stewart Mowry
- *M/C 01/01*
- Membership: 53
- Average New Othr Contrib: 101
- **Contrib Amount Purpose:** 92,687

### Strasburg
- Vacant
- *M/C 03/96*
- Membership: 18
- Average New Othr Contrib: 44
- **Contrib Amount Purpose:** 18,783

### West Fargo, Red River
- Daniel Kaik
- *M/C 10/99*
- Membership: 55
- Average New Othr Contrib: 4
- **Contrib Amount Purpose:** 133,712

---

**South Dakota**

### Amherst, Zion
- Glenn Raynor
- *M/C 01/98*
- Membership: 21
- Average New Othr Contrib: 41
- **Contrib Amount Purpose:** 30,739

### Armour, Grandview
- Jerry L. Johnson
- *M/C 04/02*
- Membership: 37
- Average New Othr Contrib: 70
- **Contrib Amount Purpose:** 50,876

### Brookings, Faith
- Edward H. Schreur
- *M/C 09/97*
- Membership: 44
- Average New Othr Contrib: 81
- **Contrib Amount Purpose:** 88,516

### Chancellor
- Vacant
- *M/C 11/96*
- Membership: 138
- Average New Othr Contrib: 240
- **Contrib Amount Purpose:** 132,863

### Colton, First
- Vacant
- *M/C 08/00*
- Membership: 58
- Average New Othr Contrib: 107
- **Contrib Amount Purpose:** 60,760

### Corsica, Grace
- Jerry L. Johnson
- *M/C 04/02*
- Membership: 108
- Average New Othr Contrib: 190
- **Contrib Amount Purpose:** 95,794

### Harrison SD, First
- Ronald K. Kelley
- *M/C 02/99*
- Membership: 61
- Average New Othr Contrib: 101
- **Contrib Amount Purpose:** 85,228

### Lennox, Delaware
- Vacant
- *M/C 06/02*
- Membership: 59
- Average New Othr Contrib: 129
- **Contrib Amount Purpose:** 79,716

### Monroe, Calvary
- John DeGroff
- *M/C 11/98*
- Membership: 122
- Average New Othr Contrib: 165
- **Contrib Amount Purpose:** 79,716

### Sioux Falls, Community
- Wayne A. Van Regenmorter
- *M/C 08/98*
- Membership: 100
- Average New Othr Contrib: 41
- **Contrib Amount Purpose:** 60,662

---

**Notes:**
- *ST* indicates Stated Teacher
- *MC* indicates Ministerial Counselor
- Membership figures include households and members.
- Average New Othr Contrib represents contributions from other sources to the church budget.
- **Contrib Amount Purpose** details the purpose of specific contributions.

---

**Contact:**
Wayne A. Van Regenmorter, First Reformed Church, 4800 Tomar Rd, Sioux Falls, SD 57108; 605/338-1553
LeRoy Ligtenberg, 903 West Ash, Mitchell, SD 57301; 605/996-8783
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Specialized Ministry</th>
<th>F O O T N O T E S</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Timothy Moermont</td>
<td>(1) 726</td>
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**Professor/Teacher**
Donald P. Lindskoog

**Specialized Ministry**
Donald W. De Kok
John Michael Hubers
Trygve Johnson

**Retired**
Robert Block
Don Gordon Bloemendaal
Arthur T. De Hoogh
Gordon De Pree
Gerald G. Dykstra
Clarence F. Greving
Robert Hector
Alvin L. Honken
Donald D. Jiskoot
Cornie D. Keunen
Sylvio J. Scorza
Ralph G. TenClay
David C. Ter Beest
Robert S. Vander Schaaf
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### Regional Synod of the Heartland

**CLASSIS OF PLEASANT PRAIRIE**

**Stated Clerk**
Melvin J. Voss, 712 Third Ave NE, Belmond, IA 50421-1234; 641/444-7150

**Treasurer**
Melvin J. Voss, 712 Third Ave NE, Belmond, IA 50421-1234; 641/444-7150

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#### Iowa

- **Ackley, Washington**
  - Jack D. Ritsema
  - 03/99
  - 75 Mbrs
  - 114 Conf Mbrs
  - 28 Home Mbrs
  - 142 Total Mbrs
  - 110 Average Mbrs

- **Alexander, First**
  - Philip Arnold
  - 04/01
  - 57 Mbrs
  - 82 Conf Mbrs
  - 25 Home Mbrs
  - 77 Total Mbrs

- **Allison, Trinity**
  - Steven L. Petrieje
  - 06/99
  - 117 Mbrs
  - 219 Conf Mbrs
  - 26 Home Mbrs
  - 145 Total Mbrs

- **Aplington, Bethel**
  - Scott A. Summers
  - 02/97
  - 104 Mbrs
  - 158 Conf Mbrs
  - 36 Home Mbrs
  - 193 Total Mbrs

- **Aplington, First**
  - Harlan R. De Jong
  - 04/01
  - 120 Mbrs
  - 212 Conf Mbrs
  - 10 Home Mbrs
  - 220 Total Mbrs

- **Belmond, Bethany**
  - Vacant
  - 10/97
  - 43 Mbrs
  - 60 Conf Mbrs
  - 11 Home Mbrs
  - 54 Total Mbrs

- **Belmond, Immanuel**
  - Robert Allen Ford
  - 02/97
  - 54 Mbrs
  - 89 Conf Mbrs
  - 3 Home Mbrs
  - 92 Total Mbrs

- **Bristow, First**
  - Vacant
  - 02/01
  - 125 Mbrs
  - 20 Home Mbrs
  - 145 Total Mbrs

- **Buffalo Center, First**
  - William A. Peake
  - 11/82
  - 127 Mbrs
  - 169 Conf Mbrs
  - 126 Home Mbrs
  - 154 Total Mbrs

- **Cedar Falls, Orchard Hill**
  - B. Edward Baker
  - 07/98
  - 484 Mbrs
  - 870 Conf Mbrs
  - 165 Home Mbrs
  - 1,047 Total Mbrs

- **Douglas K. Tensen**
  - AP
  - 08/97
  - 112 Mbrs
  - 210 Conf Mbrs
  - 14 Home Mbrs
  - 265 Total Mbrs

- **Cedar Rapids, Cedar Hills Comm**
  - Kent Landmus
  - 07/95
  - 110 Mbrs
  - 201 Conf Mbrs
  - 24 Home Mbrs
  - 268 Total Mbrs

- **Cedar Rapids, New Life Community**
  - John C. White
  - 03/00
  - 119 Mbrs
  - 24 Conf Mbrs
  - 34 Home Mbrs
  - 156 Total Mbrs

- **Dumont**
  - Robert G. Scholten
  - 08/01
  - 154 Mbrs
  - 216 Conf Mbrs
  - 10 Home Mbrs
  - 226 Total Mbrs

- **Evansdale, First**
  - Vacant
  - 04/00
  - 67 Mbrs
  - 119 Conf Mbrs
  - 12 Home Mbrs
  - 122 Total Mbrs

- **Hawarden, New Song Community**
  - Vacant
  - 12/98
  - 29 Mbrs
  - 52 Conf Mbrs
  - 2 Home Mbrs
  - 53 Total Mbrs

- **Holland, Pleasant Valley**
  - Russell J. Muenkirch
  - 08/99
  - 82 Mbrs
  - 147 Conf Mbrs
  - 4 Home Mbrs
  - 151 Total Mbrs

- **Morseby, First**
  - Rodney M. Meester
  - 08/77
  - 125 Mbrs
  - 163 Conf Mbrs
  - 18 Home Mbrs
  - 150 Total Mbrs

- **Parkersburg, Hope**
  - Neal Ooms
  - 08/97
  - 125 Mbrs
  - 167 Conf Mbrs
  - 12 Home Mbrs
  - 150 Total Mbrs

- **Sheffield, Zion**
  - Arthor J. Zwert
  - 01/00
  - 120 Mbrs
  - 204 Conf Mbrs
  - 43 Home Mbrs
  - 254 Total Mbrs

- **Stout**
  - David H. Powers
  - 07/98
  - 90 Mbrs
  - 147 Conf Mbrs
  - 2 Home Mbrs
  - 122 Total Mbrs

- **Toro, Ramsey**
  - Dennis E. Redeker
  - 06/92
  - 92 Mbrs
  - 146 Conf Mbrs
  - 4 Home Mbrs
  - 150 Total Mbrs

- **Winterset, Grace**
  - David R. Van Netta
  - 04/98
  - 83 Mbrs
  - 124 Conf Mbrs
  - 11 Home Mbrs
  - 135 Total Mbrs

- **Wellsburg**
  - Vacant
  - 07/01
  - 121 Mbrs
  - 218 Conf Mbrs
  - 18 Home Mbrs
  - 238 Total Mbrs

---

**Total**

- Mbrs: 2,378
- Conf Mbrs: 3,900
- Home Mbrs: 648
- Total Mbrs: 1,528
- Average Mbrs: 6,074
- Total: 809
- Age: 162
- Total: 97
- Home: 105
- Total: 48
- Age: 69
- Total: 37
- Home: 70
- Total: 22
- Total: 1,367
- Mbrs: 166
- Conf: 2,330
- Total: 16,765
- Mbrs: 259
- Conf: 75,130
- Total: 224,150
- Mbrs: 212
- Conf: 414
- Total: 825
- Mbrs: 404
- Conf: 3,499
- Total: 3,049
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## Regional Synod of the Heartland CLASSIS OF RED RIVER

### Stated Clerk
James J. O’Connell, Jr., Hope Reformed Church, 1400 W Frankford Rd, Carrollton, TX 75007; 972/492-2131

### Treasurer
James J. O’Connell, Jr., Hope Reformed Church, 1400 W Frankford Rd, Carrollton, TX 75007; 972/492-2131

### Membership

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### Regional Synod of the Heartland

#### Oklahoma

1. **Apache**
   - George H. Montanari
     - 02/91
     - Conf: 47
     - Mbrs: 59
     - Init: 166
     - Bapts: 70
     - Total: 52
     - Adh: 7
     - Worshp: 2
     - Gains: 1
     - Losses: 0
     - Bapt: 3
     - Sun: 12
     - Mbrs: 73
     - Educ: 53,850
     - Total: 2,821
     - RCA: 2,821
     - Other: 6,417
     - Congr: 12,937
     - Income: 53,850
     - Assignments: 2,821
     - Contributions: 6,417
     - Total Contributions: 12,937
     - Purpose: 40,913

2. **Lawton, Comanche**
   - Charles D. Spencer
     - 03/96
     - Conf: 48
     - Mbrs: 76
     - Init: 117
     - Bapts: 14
     - Total: 58
     - Adh: 2
     - Worshp: 0
     - Gains: 1
     - Losses: 2
     - Bapt: 1
     - Sun: 26
     - Mbrs: 75
     - Educ: 75,006
     - Total: 3,612
     - RCA: 3,612
     - Other: 0
     - Congr: 0
     - Income: 75,006
     - Assignments: 3,612
     - Contributions: 0
     - Total Contributions: 0
     - Purpose: 71,394

3. **Oklahoma City, Our Lord’s Corn**
   - Robert T. Woodyard
     - 02/01
     - Conf: 221
     - Mbrs: 415
     - Init: 133
     - Bapts: 104
     - Total: 360
     - Adh: 9
     - Worshp: 18
     - Gains: 2
     - Losses: 3
     - Bapt: 22
     - Sun: 51
     - Mbrs: 225
     - Educ: 127,032
     - Total: 41
     - RCA: 41
     - Other: 2,514
     - Congr: 71,056
     - Income: 127,032
     - Assignments: 41
     - Contributions: 2,514
     - Total Contributions: 71,056
     - Purpose: 70,000

#### Texas

4. **Carrollton, Hope**
   - J. Erik Buteyn
     - 01/88
     - Conf: 84
     - Mbrs: 136
     - Init: 43
     - Bapts: 203
     - Total: 114
     - Adh: 11
     - Worshp: 0
     - Gains: 0
     - Losses: 12
     - Bapt: 6
     - Sun: 6
     - Mbrs: 89
     - Educ: 122,131
     - Total: 16
     - RCA: 16
     - Other: 2,954
     - Congr: 207
     - Income: 122,131
     - Assignments: 16
     - Contributions: 2,954
     - Total Contributions: 207
     - Purpose: 200,300

5. **Colleyville, Valley Ridge Conn**
   - Joel Plantinga
     - 06/01
     - Conf: 34
     - Mbrs: 70
     - Init: 5
     - Bapts: 41
     - Total: 57
     - Adh: 0
     - Worshp: 6
     - Gains: 0
     - Losses: 0
     - Bapt: 0
     - Sun: 6
     - Mbrs: 30
     - Educ: 98,722
     - Total: 5
     - RCA: 5
     - Other: 2,514
     - Congr: 20
     - Income: 98,722
     - Assignments: 5
     - Contributions: 2,514
     - Total Contributions: 20
     - Purpose: 96,208

6. **Dallas, Christ Community**
   - John M. Daniels
     - 10/97
     - Conf: 56
     - Mbrs: 78
     - Init: 5
     - Bapts: 90
     - Total: 80
     - Adh: 14
     - Worshp: 2
     - Gains: 0
     - Losses: 2
     - Bapt: 0
     - Sun: 0
     - Mbrs: 30
     - Educ: 160,621
     - Total: 25
     - RCA: 25
     - Other: 3,300
     - Congr: 10
     - Income: 160,621
     - Assignments: 25
     - Contributions: 3,300
     - Total Contributions: 10
     - Purpose: 163,326

7. **Plano**
   - John E. Buteyn
     - 01/88
     - Conf: 368
     - Mbrs: 640
     - Init: 195
     - Bapts: 341
     - Total: 535
     - Adh: 60
     - Worshp: 31
     - Gains: 5
     - Losses: 73
     - Bapt: 235
     - Sun: 385
     - Mbrs: 128
     - Educ: 896,360
     - Total: 283
     - RCA: 283
     - Other: 49,079
     - Congr: 159,071
     - Income: 896,360
     - Assignments: 283
     - Contributions: 49,079
     - Total Contributions: 159,071
     - Purpose: 740,289

### Total

- Conf: 858
- Mbrs: 1,474
- Init: 433
- Bapts: 613
- Total: 2,520
- Adh: 680
- Worshp: 185
- Gains: 103
- Losses: 26
- Bapt: 62
- Sun: 10
- Mbrs: 166
- Educ: 41
- Total: 848
- RCA: 201
- Other: 1,053
- Congr: 2,744,722
- Income: 106,567
- Assignments: 151,621
- Contributions: 280,885
- Purpose: 539,173
- Total Purpose: 2,205,549
### Specialized Ministry
Paul S. Andreasen  
Martin Batts  
William J. Bischoff  
Michael S. Bos  
Richard J. Chavarria  
James De Hoog  
Sarah Ellen Henseler  
Jeong Yeop Lee  
Kathryn L Roberts  
Kenneth L. Sampson  
Thomas Michael Stewart  
Jonathan Tice

### Retired
Ross L. Arnold  
George (Brick) C. Bradford  
John E. Buteyn  
Douglas J. Groen  
Barbara Nauta

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**FOOTNOTES**

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**Membership**

- **Total Membership**: 3,906
- **Confirmands**: 7,038
- **Inactive Members**: 297
- **Baptisms**: 33
- **Total Wages**: 200

**Input and Output**

- **Average New Other Contributions**: 6
- **Conf. Inact.**: 9
- **Baptisms**: 12

**RCA Contributions**

- **Total**: 8,269,970
- **Other Contributions**: 4,289
- **Total Contributions**: 8,269,970

*SEE SUPPLEMENT D*
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FOOTNOTES

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(5) 5,006 (7) 74,886 (7) 500 (8) 22,000
(8) 431 (9) 1,956 (11) 30,945
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(12) 3,550 (13) 18,094 (12) 15,000
(13) 9,799 (14) 16,000 (13) 667
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<td>Harold S. Vogelaar</td>
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Without Charge
- Liala R. Beukema
- Philip A. Grawburg
- Ruth Hawley-Lowry
## Regional Synod of Mid-America CLASSIS OF FLORIDA

### Stated Clerk
Charlotte Heinen, 657 Kissimmee Pl, Winter Springs, FL 32708-4617; 407/699-1100

### Treasurer
Jill Sas, 3718 Rundo Dr, Orlando, FL 32818-2264; 407/291-7320

---

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### Florida

- **Bradenton, Bayshore Gardens**
  - Pastor: David D. Tellinghuisen
  - M/C: 09/01
  - Mbrs: 122, 142, 29, 30, 201, 125, 139
  - Conf. Mbrs: 7, 3, 7, 8, 9, 0
  - Inst. Mbrs: 4, 4, 6, 4, 1
  - Bapt. Mbrs: 2, 0, 2, 0
  - Total Mbrs: 73, 0
  - Income: 290,337, 9,900
  - Assmnts: 19,456
  - Contributions: 8,074
  - Total: 352,907

- **Clearwater, Community**
  - vacant: 05/96
  - Mbrs: 45, 66, 13, 0
  - Conf. Mbrs: 7, 9, 7, 75
  - Inst. Mbrs: 3, 4, 6, 4
  - Bapt. Mbrs: 2, 0, 2, 0
  - Total Mbrs: 25, 0, 25
  - Income: 110,984
  - Contributions: 9,875
  - Total: 14,683

- **Venice, Calvary**
  - vacant: 08/01
  - Mbrs: 36, 47, 5
  - Conf. Mbrs: 2, 0, 2
  - Inst. Mbrs: 2, 0, 2
  - Bapt. Mbrs: 2, 0, 2
  - Total Mbrs: 35, 4
  - Income: 66,138
  - Contributions: 4,330
  - Total: 67,108

- **Zellwood, Rolling Hills**
  - Pastor: Peter D. Nordstrom
  - M/C: 12/01
  - Mbrs: 89, 52, 41
  - Conf. Mbrs: 8, 7, 7, 50
  - Inst. Mbrs: 10, 10, 7, 9
  - Bapt. Mbrs: 5, 2, 1, 1
  - Total Mbrs: 86, 7
  - Income: 219,811
  - Contributions: 16,358
  - Total: 236,169

---

**Total**

- Mbrs: 904, 1,334
- Conf. Mbrs: 199, 1718
- Inst. Mbrs: 648, 91
- Bapt. Mbrs: 45, 35
- Total Mbrs: 177, 6
- Income: 2,440,265
- Contributions: 70,813
- Total: 2,511,078

**Notes:**

1. **Bradenton, Bayshore Gardens**
   - David D. Tellinghuisen
   - 09/01
   - 122, 142, 29, 30, 201, 125, 139
   - 7, 3, 7, 8, 9, 0
   - 4, 4, 6, 4, 1
   - 2, 0, 2, 0
   - 73, 0
   - 290,337
   - 9,900
   - 19456
   - 8074
   - 352907

2. **Clearwater, Community**
   - vacant: 05/96
   - 45, 66, 13, 0
   - 7, 9, 7, 75
   - 3, 4, 6, 4
   - 2, 0, 2, 0
   - 25, 0, 25
   - 110984
   - 9875
   - 14683
   - 98301

3. **Venice, Calvary**
   - vacant: 08/01
   - 36, 47, 5
   - 2, 0, 2
   - 2, 0, 2
   - 2, 0, 2
   - 36, 4
   - 66,138
   - 4,330
   - 67,108

4. **Zellwood, Rolling Hills**
   - Pastor: Peter D. Nordstrom
   - 12/01
   - 89, 52, 41
   - 8, 7, 7, 50
   - 10, 10, 7, 9
   - 5, 2, 1, 1
   - 86, 7
   - 219,811
   - 16,358
   - 236,169
Specialized Ministry
Jhonny Alicea-Baez  
Dale Haven Cox  
George Cruz  
Charlotte Heinen  
Robert W. Jackson  
Seok Won Kim  
James W. Sutherland  
Without Charge
Kelvin Lee Kronemeyer  
James C. McDonald  
Peter Yao  
Retired
Levi W. Akker  
Louis M. Branning  
Harold De Roo  
Herbert Du Mont  
Barclay Fishburn  
Blaise Levai  
John H. Muller  
William E. Nelson  
Albert Studley  
Harry D. Vanderbilt

FOOTNOTES

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### Regional Synod of Mid-America CLASSIS OF ILLIANA

**Stated Clerk**
Randy Kooy, Classis of Illiana, 524 W Division St, De Motte, IN 46310-8621; 773/693-0138

**Treasurer**
Randy Kooy, Classis of Illiana, 524 W Division St, De Motte, IN 46310-8621; 773/693-0138

---

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<td>(4) Frankfort, Peace Community</td>
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<td>(5) Glenwood, Living Springs Comm</td>
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#### Education

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#### Total

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| Inactive             | David Jay Kasper | |

FOOTNOTES

ABCD

(1) 2,551 (1) 355 (6) 10,000 (8) 28,558
(2) 1,354 (2) 42,216 (15) 1,000 (10) 6,395
(3) 5,008 (4) 121,438 (13) 9,400
(4) 14,185 (5) 345,416 (19) 10,400
(6) 1,699 (7) 11,544 (20) 15,388
(8) 650,789 (8) 36,190
(10) 1,228 (10) 22,913
(14) 6,981 (14) 437,625
(15) 7,650 (15) 87,579
(16) 100,416 (17) 156,605
(19) 1,659 (20) 15,237
(20) 3,386 (22) 17,812
(21) 3,415 (23) 25,113
(22) 7,996 (24) 15,723
(23) 118
(24) 33,293
(25) 146,701
## Regional Synod of Mid-America CLASSIS OF ILLINOIS

**Stated Clerk** Jeanne Kettler, 405 17th Ave, Fulton, IL 61252-1755; 815/589-2101

**Treasurer** Garry Medema, 111 11th St, Fulton, IL 61252-1854; 815/589-2502

### Membership

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<td>( 4) Foristern</td>
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### Notes

* SEE SUPPLEMENT D
Specialized Ministry
Franklin De Graaf
Henry C. Elgersma
Corinne Spencer Ellis
David Spencer Ellis
Paul A. Reynen
Michael Wiersema
Bruce A. Wilterdink

Without Charge
Jeffrey S. Levine

Retired
George Chermak
Ralph H. Cordes
Herman H. Dragt
Robert J. Hekhuis
Alvin A. Hook
William Matthews
Robert Wildman

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## Regional Synod of Mid-America CLASSIS OF WISCONSIN

**Stated Clerk and Treasurer:**

William P. Te Winkle, Wisconsin Classis Stated Clerk, 607 N. 8th St, 7th fl, Sheboygan, WI 53081; 920/458-5501 ext. 14

Edith Daane, N2081 Wittwood Rd, Oostburg, WI 53070-1636; 920/564-3267

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### Average Worship Attendance

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### Additional Information

- **Total Income:** 8,341,229
- **Total Source:** 547,022
- **Total Amount:** 513,905
- **Total Complimentary Purpose:** 6,409,990
## Specialized Ministry

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**FOOTNOTES**

(1) 1,150 (2) 7,000 (15) 3,750 (2) 13,082
(2) 9,592 (4) 406,651 (17) 10,000 (11) 875
(4) 5,804 (5) 22,997 (18) 3,098 (18) 2,325
(5) 463 (6) 13,371 (24) 2,000 (23) 14,770
(7) 2,249 (8) 59,128
(8) 407 (9) 128,757
(9) 17,985 (10) 14,831
(10) 17,169 (11) 36,498
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*SEE SUPPLEMENT D

# STATISTICS PRINTED FROM PREVIOUS YEAR

**LINE 1—A UNION CONGREGATION WITH THE PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH USA. IT MAINTAINS SEPARATE MEMBERSHIP ROLLS FROM WHICH STATISTICS ARE OBTAINED.

**LINE 2—A UNION CONGREGATION WITH THE BAPTIST AND THE UNITED METHODIST CHURCHES. STATISTICS GIVEN ARE 1/2 OF ACTUAL TOTALS.

**LINE 16—A UNION CONGREGATION WITH THE UNITED METHODIST CHURCH. STATISTICS GIVEN ARE 1/2 OF ACTUAL TOTALS.

**LINE 20—A UNION CONGREGATION WITH THE PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH USA. STATISTICS GIVEN ARE 1/2 OF ACTUAL TOTALS.
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### Stated Clerk

Paul J. Walther, The Church in Brielle, 821 Riverview Dr at Rankin, PO Box 25, Brielle, NJ 08730; 732/528-7070

### Treasurer

Frederick Mold, Jr., 564 Pompano Ave, Manasquan, NJ 08736-3923; 732/223-0108
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### Stated Clerk

| Everett L. Zabriskie, III, 32 Franklin Ave., Oakland, NJ 07436; 201/405-0623 |

### Treasurer

| Andrew Lee, Holland Home, 151 Graham Ave., North Haledon, NJ 07508; 793/427-4087 |

### Statistics

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### Specialized Ministry

- Gabriel Gonzalez
- Charles Lester Higgins
- William L. Hill-Alto
- James D. Knol
- Nelson R. Murphy
- Paul F. Nulton
- John D. Paarlberg
- Karyn Ratcliffe
- Lynn Van Ek
- Steve Alan Young
- Everett L. Zabriskie
- Graduate Study
- Paterson, Iglesia Cristiana Ebenezer: Vacant
- Paterson, People’s Park: John Oppendorf
- Pompton Lakes, Pompton: Vacant
- Pompton Plains, First: Andrew R. Rienstra
- Thomas Horace Larkin
- Sadle Brook, First: Allan D. Couper
- Upper Montclair, Montclair Heights: Beverly B. Sullivant
- Warane: Arthur C. Hirst
- Wayne, Pequannock: Ronald M. Franklin
- Wayne, Pequannock: Dennis L. Helbert
- Wyckoff: Robert L. Gran
- Wyckoff, Second: Bruce J. Bach

### Graduate Study
- Louise Ann (L’Anni) Hill

### Retired
- Donner B. Atwood
- Paul Babich
- William Bennett
- Donald A. Drewett
- S. William Duitsman

### Footnotes

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* SEE SUPPLEMENT D
### Regional Synod of New York CLASSIS OF BROOKLYN

**Stated Clerk**
Daniel Ramm, Reformed Protestant Dutch Church of the Town of Flatbush, 890 Flatbush Ave, Brooklyn, NY 11216; 718/284-5140

**Treasurer**
Albert Hollenga, 223 Bay Ridge Pkwy, Brooklyn, NY 11209-2403; 718/630-5492

### CHURCHES

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* SEE SUPPLEMENT D

**LINE 1—A UNION CONGREGATION WITH THE PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH USA. STATISTICS GIVEN ARE 1/2 OF ACTUAL TOTALS.

**LINE 5—A UNION CONGREGATION WITH THE PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH USA. STATISTICS GIVEN ARE THOSE SUPPLIED BY THE CONGREGATION.

**LINE 7—A UNION CONGREGATION WITH THE ADVENT LUTHERAN CHURCH. STATISTICS GIVEN ARE 1/2 OF ACTUAL TOTALS.
### Specialized Ministry

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### Retired

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## Regional Synod of New York CLASSIS OF MID-HUDSON

**Stated Clerk**  
David M. Brechter, St Remy Reformed Church, CPO Box 2736, Kingston, NY 12402; 845/338-3312  
**Treasurer**  
Alice V. Mongin, 286 Flatbush Ave, Kingston, NY 12401-2740; 845/338-2262

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<table>
<thead>
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<td>(3) Bloomingburg, United of Rosendale</td>
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<td>(4) Fishkill, First</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>(5) Gardiner</td>
<td>Gary Sissel</td>
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<td>(6) High Falls, Community</td>
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<tr>
<td>(7) Hopewell Junction, Hopewell</td>
<td>Taylor Holbrook</td>
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<tr>
<td>(8) Hyde Park, Dutch</td>
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<td>(10) Kingston, Fair Street</td>
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<td>(11) Kingston, Old Dutch</td>
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<tr>
<td>(12) Krumville</td>
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| (13) Millbrook, Lyall Mem Federated** | Karl E. Esmark *
| (14) Mount Marion, Plattekill | Vacant |
| (15) Mount Tremper, Shandaken | Vacant |
| (16) New Paltz | Howard B. Major |
| (17) Saugerties | *M/C | *M/C |
| (18) Saugerties, High Woods | Howard Smith |
| (19) Saugerties, Katsbaan | William W. Sacher |
| (20) St. Peter, Marbletown | Robert P. Mitchell |
| (21) Wappingers Falls, New Hackensack | Vacant |

### Contributions

#### Income
- **Total Income**: $78,061
- **Assessments**: $2,260
- **Contributions**: $1,305
- **Other Contributions**: $549
- **Purpose**: $4,114

#### Other Income
- **Total Other Income**: $73,947

#### Total RCA Other Congr.
- **Total RCA Other Congr. Amount**: $81,510

#### Congreg.
- **Total Congreg. Amount**: $15,552

### Membership

#### New Members
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<td>(3) Bloomingburg, United of Rosendale</td>
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<td>(12) Krumville</td>
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| (13) Millbrook, Lyall Mem Federated** | Karl E. Esmark *
| (14) Mount Marion, Plattekill | Vacant |
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| (19) Saugerties, Katsbaan | William W. Sacher |
| (20) St. Peter, Marbletown | Robert P. Mitchell |
| (21) Wappingers Falls, New Hackensack | Vacant |

### New Members

#### New Members
- **Total New Members**: 25
- **Total New Mbrs Educ**: 10
- **Total RCA Other Congr.**: 20

#### RCA Other Congr.
- **Total RCA Other Congr.**: 15

#### Congreg.
- **Total Congreg.**: 15

### Other Income

#### Income
- **Total Income**: $78,061
- **Assessments**: $2,260
- **Contributions**: $1,305
- **Other Contributions**: $549
- **Purpose**: $4,114

#### Other Income
- **Total Other Income**: $73,947

#### Total RCA Other Congr.
- **Total RCA Other Congr. Amount**: $81,510

#### Congreg.
- **Total Congreg. Amount**: $15,552

### Contributions

#### Income
- **Total Income**: $78,061
- **Assessments**: $2,260
- **Contributions**: $1,305
- **Other Contributions**: $549
- **Purpose**: $4,114

#### Other Income
- **Total Other Income**: $73,947

#### Total RCA Other Congr.
- **Total RCA Other Congr. Amount**: $81,510

#### Congreg.
- **Total Congreg. Amount**: $15,552

### New Members

#### New Members
- **Total New Members**: 25
- **Total New Mbrs Educ**: 10
- **Total RCA Other Congr.**: 20

#### RCA Other Congr.
- **Total RCA Other Congr.**: 15

#### Congreg.
- **Total Congreg.**: 15
### Specialized Ministry

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### Footnotes

1. See Supplement D

2. Line 14—A union congregation with the United Methodist Church and the Quaker Church. It maintains separate membership rolls from which statistics are obtained.
## Regional Synod of New York CLASSIS OF NASSAU-SUFFOLK

**Stated Clerk**
Daniel C. Heemstra, New Life Community Church, 380 Lakeland Ave, Sayville, NY 11782; 631/589-5890

**Treasurer**
Robert C. Engel, 418 Willow St, Westbury, NY 11590; 516/938-1233

### Average Income and Gifts

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*SEE SUPPLEMENT D*
### Specialized Ministry

- **J. Karel Boersma**
- **Kent E. Huyck**
- **Chong Sung Lee**
  - Without Charge
- **Song Kuk Kim**
- **Darcy Pavich**
- **Beverly Bell Winslow**
  - Inactive
- **Young Ae Na**
  - Retired

### Footnotes

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## Members in Education and Stewardship

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*SEE SUPPLEMENT D*

**LINE 7—A UNION CONGREGATION WITH THE UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST. STATISTICS GIVEN ARE 1/2 OF ACTUAL TOTALS.

**LINE 14—A UNION CONGREGATION WITH THE UNITED METHODIST CHURCH. STATISTICS GIVEN ARE 1/2 OF ACTUAL TOTALS.
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Professor

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(1) $716, (2) $3,468, (3) $86,230, (4) $10,550, (5) $9,750, (6) $21,000, (7) $65,000, (8) $56,260, (9) $50,711, (10) $18,600, (11) $20,406, (12) $19,320, (13) $28,324.
## Regional Synod of New York CLASSIS OF ORANGE

**Stated Clerk**

Kenneth B. Kobza, New Hurley Reformed Church, 1145 Rt 208, Wallkill, NY 12589; 845/895-3794

**Treasurer**

Janice Joyce Randazzo, 489 Rt 17K, Rock Tavern, NY 12575; 845/567-1369

### Membership

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### New Jersey

1. Montague, Minisink
   - Angelo Forleo 09/95
   - Membership: 91
   - Income: $42,000

2. Claryville
   - Vacant 07/99
   - Membership: 62
   - Income: $50,424

3. Cuddebackville
   - Jay E. Vogelaar 05/99
   - Membership: 51
   - Income: $81,808

4. Ellenville
   - Vacant 09/97
   - Membership: 30
   - Income: $30,675

5. Grahamsville
   - Paul Z. Rutter 04/98
   - Membership: 30
   - Income: $75,751

6. Kerhonkson, Federated
   - Vacant 01/01
   - Membership: 50
   - Income: $67,226

7. Montgomery, Brick
   - Brian J. Randazzo 05/99
   - Membership: 53
   - Income: $129,275

8. Newburgh, Meadow Hill
   - Vacant 05/00
   - Membership: 70
   - Income: $100,721

9. Pine Bush, New Prospect
   - Paul Rosa 11/99
   - Membership: 50
   - Income: $79,200

10. Port Jarvis, Deepwater
    - Vacant 12/99
    - Membership: 44
    - Income: $90,600

11. State Hill, Faith
    - Bert E. van Soot 01/88
    - Membership: 90
    - Income: $107,478

12. Walden, First
    - John A.M. Rottenberg 08/91
    - Membership: 64
    - Income: $118,123

13. Walkill
    - Keith W. Tumlin 06/92
    - Membership: 237
    - Income: $325,205

14. Walkill, New Hurley
    - Kenneth B. Koffa 04/96
    - Membership: 57
    - Income: $70,061

15. Walkill, Shawangunk
    - Richard S. Blum 11/99
    - Membership: 36
    - Income: $151,617

16. Warwick
    - Scott J. Edinger 02/00
    - Membership: 120
    - Income: $222,951

17. Woodbourne
    - Vacant 05/00
    - Membership: 48
    - Income: $27,480

18. Wurtsboro, Community
    - Robert G. Schneider 11/01
    - Membership: 54
    - Income: $72,930

19. Youngsville, United
    - Vacant 11/99
    - Membership: 38
    - Income: $64,646

### Pennsylvania

20. Bokshill
    - Steven Sayer 05/98
    - Membership: 69
    - Income: $265,883

21. Lords Valley, Hemlock
    - Vacant 06/96
    - Membership: 35
    - Income: $20,465

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**Statistics**

- **New Jersey**: Total 35,612
- **New York**: Total 3,950
- **Pennsylvania**: Total 3,950

**STATISTICS PRINTED FROM PREVIOUS YEAR**

**LINE 6—A UNION CONGREGATION WITH THE UNITED METHODIST CHURCH. STATISTICS GIVEN ARE 1/2 OF ACTUAL TOTALS.**

**LINE 21—A UNION CONGREGATION WITH THE EVANGELICAL CHURCH. STATISTICS GIVEN ARE 1/2 OF ACTUAL TOTALS.**

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### Footnotes

- **#1**: STATISTICS PRINTED FROM PREVIOUS YEAR
- **#2**: LINE 6—A UNION CONGREGATION WITH THE UNITED METHODIST CHURCH. STATISTICS GIVEN ARE 1/2 OF ACTUAL TOTALS.
- **#3**: LINE 21—A UNION CONGREGATION WITH THE EVANGELICAL CHURCH. STATISTICS GIVEN ARE 1/2 OF ACTUAL TOTALS.

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528 GENERAL SYNOD/2002
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Footnotes:
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(4) 3,226
(5) 150
(6) 6,850
(7) 7,500
(8) 1,305
(9) 5,293
(10) 7,302
(11) 49,000
(12) 200
(13) 3,000
(14) 27,462
(15) 1,500
(16) 12,679
### Regional Synod of New York CLASSIS OF QUEENS

**Stated Clerk**
Judith N. Gorsuch, 229 W. 78th St. #41, New York, NY 10024; 718/229-2169

**Treasurer**
Catherine Raines, 19919 19th Ave, Whitestone, NY 11357-3312; 718/352-6089

#### CHURCHES

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#### Massachusetts

(1) Framingham, Boston Taiwanese
Sheng-To Shih
M/C 03/01
0000 55 73 12 17 102 34 83 7 0 6 9 1 2 0 0 0 127,857 3,132 0 2,410 5,542 122,315 (1)

#### New York

(2) Bayside, Colonial
Vacant
0100 100 55 73 12 17 102 34 83 7 0 6 9 1 2 0 0 0 221,275 4,371 0 0 4,371 219,904 (2)

(3) Bayside, Shin Kwang
Jie Hong Han
Hsing Yong Song
AP 05/91
40 40 65 8 12 85 18 88 7 3 0 0 5 1 2 2 0 221,275 4,371 0 0 4,371 219,904 (4)

(4) Bayside, Taiwanese American
Chang-Hun Cho
AP 05/91
40 40 65 8 12 85 18 88 7 3 0 0 5 1 2 2 0 221,275 4,371 0 0 4,371 219,904 (5)

(5) Cambria Heights, Community
Derrick Jones
*M/C* 04/01
70 70 110 12 10 91 6 98 5 0 1 3 6 5 2 45 0 20 261,553 5,748 3,000 3,441 10,899 264,444 (5)

(6) College Point, First
Linda Breslo
04/02
103 112 80 30 230 72 67 8 0 1 0 0 0 35 9 16 114,286 7,486 5,775 865 14,126 10,100 (6)

(7) Douglaston, Community
Adrienne Filipse Harsh
AP 08/95
63 63 99 161 31 201 50 89 7 0 1 3 3 4 5 0 60 12 8 202,590 7,637 6,600 31,987 177,993 (7)

(8) Elmhurst, Newtown
Norman Y. Chen
Ronald T. Bechtel
AP 05/96
132 132 153 185 91 81 5 35 3 7 6 5 2 1 3 44 6 22 480,789 5,155 3,900 24,336 33,291 367,498 (8)

(9) Flushing, Bowne Street Comm**
David Westcott
Norman Chang
03/01
150 150 180 92 342 250 300 0 0 12 0 4 10 80 0 50 450,000 5,873 1,600 15,500 22,973 247,027 (9)

(10) Flushing, Church on the Hill
Robert A. Peterson
06/95
120 120 140 127 45 112 81 125 9 0 5 8 8 5 3 93 5 7 260,032 10,616 8,852 15,978 30,496 250,146 (10)

(11) Flushing, Queensboro Hill
Vacant
04/98
70 70 80 50 15 0 120 5 0 0 35 0 5 50 0 100 240,000 5,500 5,000 5,000 102,900 374,900 (11)

(12) Flushing, Siloam
Jong Ouk Kim
04/98
70 70 80 50 15 0 120 5 0 0 35 0 5 50 0 100 240,000 5,500 5,000 5,000 102,900 374,900 (12)

(13) Glendale, First
Mark S. Kellar
04/98
38 38 39 39 33 9 81 5 35 1 0 0 24 0 10 10 239,372 3,162 1,755 1,438 6,375 232,997 (13)

(14) Jamaica, First
Anna Melissa Jackson
11/00
23 23 31 6 9 20 10 18 2 5 0 1 0 0 0 30 4 12 218,849 5,476 2,000 8,899 16,365 202,484 (14)

(15) Long Island City, First
Mark S. Kellar
05/01
132 132 153 185 91 81 5 35 3 7 6 5 2 1 3 44 6 22 480,789 5,155 3,900 24,336 33,291 367,498 (15)

(16) Long Island City, First
Eric Y. W. Lui
06/97
46 46 102 18 102 120 18 102 6 10 0 2 1 52 8 12 352,159 6,395 11,350 47,330 65,075 287,084 (16)

(17) Queens Village, Iglesia de Cristo
Vacant
06/01
28 28 9 0 4 13 0 30 7 0 3 1 12 0 4 19 3 0 37,500 5,500 0 0 5,500 32,000 (17)

(18) Queens Village, Iglesia de Cristo
Vacant
01/01
20 20 30 10 40 10 28 0 0 0 0 15 0 8 84,878 2,400 3,000 5,800 11,200 73,678 (18)

(19) Queens Village, Juanita
Carlos M. Torres
06/01
80 80 122 14 36 172 18 158 36 4 21 4 4 6 8 82 16 36 80,400 10,891 13,000 8,400 25,490 58,909 (19)

(20) Woodhaven, Forest Park
Charles T. Botkin
REI M/C 01/96
13 13 14 0 4 17 4 23 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 20,149 918 460 0 1,378 18,771 (20)
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*SEE SUPPLEMENT D
#STATISTICS PRINTED FROM PREVIOUS YEAR
**LINE 9—A UNION CONGREGATION WITH THE UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST. STATISTICS GIVEN ARE 1/2 OF ACTUAL TOTALS.
**LINE 21—A UNION CONGREGATION WITH THE EVANGELICAL CHURCH. STATISTICS GIVEN ARE 1/2 OF ACTUAL TOTALS.
## Regional Synod of New York
### CLASSIS OF ROCKLAND-WESTCHESTER

#### Membership

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<th>Inst Mbrs</th>
<th>Bapt Mbrs</th>
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<th>Average Weekly Attendance</th>
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<th>Lenten Devotions</th>
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<th>Comp Purpose</th>
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#### Total

- 1,661
- 2,503
- 988
- 208
- 3,779
- 436
- 90
- 109
- 38
- 31
- 51
- 79
- 62
- 9
- 914
- 144
- 161
- 5,300,295
- 165,904
- 139,945
- 158,468
- 442,317
- 4,887,978

### Notes
- Statistics printed from previous year.
- Line 11—A Union Congregation with the United Church of Christ. Statistics given are 1/2 of actual totals.
Specialized Ministry
David G. Dethmers
George Fiencke
Donald J. Heringa
Jon N. Norton
A. Rand Peabody
Nancy Sorokoff
Walter B. Tennyson
C. Carter Via
Carol Westphal

Without Charge
Jack E. Wahlberg
Michael A. Weber

Inactive
Santi Phattanachitchon

Retired
George J Ammerman
Theodore L. Chandler
Robert R. deForest
Robert F. Dorer
David W. Jenks
James B. Parsons
Richard J. Skoog
Edward Swartout
Gerald P. Vander Hart

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Houshld
(1)

Conf
Mbrs
(2)

Inact
Mbrs
(3)

Bapt
Mbrs
(4)

Trans
(10)

Losses
Decd
(11)

Other
(12)

Infant
(13)

Adult
(14)

Sun
Sch
(15)

Education
New
Mbrs
Clas
(16)

Gains
Conf
(8)

Cert
(9)

Bapt

Stewardship
Othr
Educ
Pgms
(17)

Total
Income
(18)

Assmnts
(19a)

RCA
Contrb
(19b)

Contributions
Other
Total
Contrb
Amount
(19c)
(19d)

Congr
Purpose
(20)

5,817
3,206
2,581
2,844
5,952
2,568
22,968

969
524
430
367
969
289
3,548

90
55
75
111
120
58
84

118
83
50
24
135
51
461

40
21
25
22
59
6
173

19
9
17
14
46
20
125

80
53
33
50
95
36
347

130
122
32
65
71
43
463

58
46
22
22
61
25
234

9
6
2
6
15
14
52

1,144
636
502
860
1,338
529
5,009

180
67
92
38
200
52
629

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161
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593
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310
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73,231
114,884
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31,631
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196,407
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301,010
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2,142,243

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769
707
4,369
5,845

437
187
466
1,090

90
85
119
107

15
33
71
119

6
8
55
69

16
14
84
114

6
10
30
46

56
28
41
125

15
18
55
88

21
6
21
48

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2,472
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34,674

8,800
968
1,615
469
450
12,302

500 625
226 143
237 247
187
77
145
67
313 1,159

98
50
62
5
45
260

135
42
43
104
35
359

173
20
45
14
33
285

571
77
120
105
44
917

209
67
88
28
37
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258
32
100
36
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7,058

423 233
96 125
243 207
234 134
262 132
407 362
256 346
379 312
294 1,851

260
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84
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402
182
362
1,535

219
29
58
134
71
302
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307
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133
34
93
68
36
96
78
101
639

214
149
88
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490
305
93
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172
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213
149
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13
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58
27
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2,357,924
1,284,486
2,573,546
11,475,552

11,404,414
2,817,338
5,010,379
5,982,568
4,180,255
11,486,630
8,787,808
11,737,233
61,406,625

GENERAL SYNOD/JUNE 2002

REGIONAL SYNOD OF ALBANY
Albany
22
1,982
2,901
1,648
1,268
Columbia-Greene
22
1,047
1,402
1,200
604
Montgomery
14
911
1,309
665
607
Rochester
13
1,030
1,678
498
668
Schenectady
20
2,232
3,270
1,510
1,172
Schoharie
16
828
1,057
1,089
422
TOTALS
107
8,030
11,617
6,610
4,741
REGIONAL SYNOD OF CANADA
British Columbia
10
443
551
113
105
Canadian Prairies
6
299
481
74
152
Ontario
25
1,617
2,798
230
1,341
TOTALS
41
2,359
3,830
417
1,598
REGIONAL SYNOD OF THE FAR WEST
California
29
7,594
8,088†
6,428
5,876
Cascades
14
1,640
3,070
252
1,127
Central California
16
2,050
3,288
382
1,557
Rocky Mountains
9
915
1,439
201
832
Southwest
11
906
1,435
247
452
TOTALS
79 13,105 17,320†
7,510
9,844
REGIONAL SYNOD OF THE GREAT LAKES
Holland
16
5,219
9,259
760
3,551
Lake Erie
20
1,187
1,922
385
585
Muskegon
19
2,821
4,832
774
1,941
North Grand Rapids
18
2,856
4,827
229
1,799
Northern Michigan
14
2,019
3,715
440
1,474
South Grand Rapids
27
5,825
10,727
983
4,943
Southwest Michigan
25
4,142
6,847
873
2,740
Zeeland
28
5,052
10,029
523
5,230
TOTALS
167 29,121
52,158
4,967 22,263

Total
Mbrs
(5)

Membership
Average
Worship
Adh Attend
(6)
(7)

534

STATISTICAL SUMMARY 2001


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<th>Confessing Members</th>
<th>Contributing Members</th>
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<td>0.1414</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>West Sioux</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>9,068</td>
<td>2,488</td>
<td>0.93</td>
<td>0.1414</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

## REGIONAL SYNDIC OF MID-AMERICA

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Region</th>
<th>Total</th>
<th>Confessing Members</th>
<th>Contributing Members</th>
<th>Confessing Members/Total</th>
<th>Contributing Members/Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Chicago</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>3,801</td>
<td>675</td>
<td>0.92</td>
<td>0.1414</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Florida</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>913</td>
<td>97</td>
<td>0.93</td>
<td>0.1414</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Illiana</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>2,780</td>
<td>490</td>
<td>0.93</td>
<td>0.1414</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Illinois</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>2,770</td>
<td>493</td>
<td>0.93</td>
<td>0.1414</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wisconsin</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>2,870</td>
<td>426</td>
<td>0.93</td>
<td>0.1414</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

## REGIONAL SYNDIC OF THE MID-ATLANTICS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Region</th>
<th>Total</th>
<th>Confessing Members</th>
<th>Contributing Members</th>
<th>Confessing Members/Total</th>
<th>Contributing Members/Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Delaware-Raritan</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>2,578</td>
<td>390</td>
<td>0.93</td>
<td>0.1414</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Greater Palesades</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>2,780</td>
<td>490</td>
<td>0.93</td>
<td>0.1414</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>New Brunswick</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>2,770</td>
<td>493</td>
<td>0.93</td>
<td>0.1414</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Passaic Valley</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>2,870</td>
<td>426</td>
<td>0.93</td>
<td>0.1414</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

## REGIONAL SYNDIC OF ST. LOUIS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Region</th>
<th>Total</th>
<th>Confessing Members</th>
<th>Contributing Members</th>
<th>Confessing Members/Total</th>
<th>Contributing Members/Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>St. Louis</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>2,578</td>
<td>490</td>
<td>0.93</td>
<td>0.1414</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

## REGIONAL SYNDIC OF NEW YORK

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Region</th>
<th>Total</th>
<th>Confessing Members</th>
<th>Contributing Members</th>
<th>Confessing Members/Total</th>
<th>Contributing Members/Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Brooklyn</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>2,578</td>
<td>490</td>
<td>0.93</td>
<td>0.1414</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mid-Hudson</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>2,780</td>
<td>490</td>
<td>0.93</td>
<td>0.1414</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nassau-Suffolk</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>2,780</td>
<td>490</td>
<td>0.93</td>
<td>0.1414</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>New York</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>2,780</td>
<td>490</td>
<td>0.93</td>
<td>0.1414</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Orange</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>2,780</td>
<td>490</td>
<td>0.93</td>
<td>0.1414</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Queens</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>2,780</td>
<td>490</td>
<td>0.93</td>
<td>0.1414</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rockland-Westchester</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>2,870</td>
<td>426</td>
<td>0.93</td>
<td>0.1414</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

## GRAND TOTAL

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Region</th>
<th>Total</th>
<th>Confessing Members</th>
<th>Contributing Members</th>
<th>Confessing Members/Total</th>
<th>Contributing Members/Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Crystal Cathedral</td>
<td>149</td>
<td>12,494</td>
<td>10,840</td>
<td>0.94</td>
<td>0.1414</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

†The number of confessing members to be reported for the Crystal Cathedral is in agreement with the Classis of California. This matter remains under discussion with the General Synod and Crystal Cathedral due to the unique nature of this congregation’s ministry. The per-member assessment approved by the General Synod of 2002 for calendar year 2003 will not be affected by any future correction in this number.
### SUPPLEMENT A: CHANGES IN CHURCH STATUS/NAME
### JANUARY 2001 THROUGH JUNE 2002

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CHANGE</th>
<th>CONGREGATION</th>
<th>CLASSIS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>transferred classis, 1/01</td>
<td>First Reformed Church Baldwin, Wisconsin</td>
<td>from wis to minn</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>organized, 1/01</td>
<td>Oak Springs Community Church Murrieta, California</td>
<td>cal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>disbanded, 1/01</td>
<td>Corona Community Church Corona, California</td>
<td>cal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>organized, 2/01</td>
<td>Celebration Life Ministries Elk Grove, California</td>
<td>cc</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>organized, 5/01</td>
<td>HanMaUm Reformed Church Palisades Park, New Jersey</td>
<td>gpal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>organized, 5/01</td>
<td>Iglesia Reformada la Senda Corona, California</td>
<td>cal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>disbanded, 10/01</td>
<td>Christ Church of Watervliet Watervliet, NY</td>
<td>cal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>organized, 10/01</td>
<td>Ghanaian Presbyterian Reformed Church Of Brooklyn, Brooklyn, New York</td>
<td>bkln</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>disbanded, 10/01</td>
<td>Christ Church Watervliet, New York</td>
<td>alb</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>organized, 10/01</td>
<td>Haven Shores Community Church West Olive, Michigan</td>
<td>hol</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>disbanded, 11/01</td>
<td>Rancho Capistrano Community Church San Juan Capistrano, California</td>
<td>cal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>organized, 2/02</td>
<td>Igreja Evangelica Vida Nova (New Life Reformed Church) Toronto, Ontario</td>
<td>ont</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>organized, 3/02</td>
<td>Prairie Ridge Church Ankeny, Iowa</td>
<td>ci</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>disbanded, 3/02</td>
<td>Servants of Christ Reformed Church Federal Way, Washington</td>
<td>casc</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>organized, 4/02</td>
<td>RiverTree Community Church Wyoming, Michigan</td>
<td>sgr</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>