Called: The RCA’s Campaign for Transformed & Transforming was launched in the summer of 2015 with a goal of raising $6.5 million. As of February 1, 2017, $6.1 million had been raised or committed toward the goal. We are grateful for the many people throughout the RCA who have responded to the vision of Transformed & Transforming through financial commitment to the Called campaign. We anticipate celebrating a successful conclusion to the campaign in mid-2017.

The RCA continues to partner with the Barnabas Foundation for resources about estate planning, planned giving, and planned gift resource management. To learn about how you can include the RCA in your estate plans, or how you can both receive annual income for life and benefit the RCA through a planned gift, please contact Michele Quick at mquick@rca.org.

To make an outright gift in support of the RCA’s ministry and mission, please visit www.rca.org/give or contact the development staff member for your region.

REPORT OF THE AFRICAN AMERICAN BLACK COUNCIL

Introduction

The bylaws of the General Synod state that “the General Synod Council shall have racial/ethnic councils which express the collective vision and voice of racial and ethnic congregants and congregations as they develop ministries and advocate for policies of racial and ethnic inclusion, economic, social, and racial justice, both within the Reformed Church in America and ecumenically (Book of Church Order, Chapter 3, Part I, Article 3, Section 2b; 2016 edition, p. 105).

This is a task and assignment that we as a council take very seriously. Being an advocate for policies of racial and ethnic inclusion is indeed a difficult task but one that the African American Black Council (AABC) has been committed to historically within the church. In the past several years, the AABC has received many disheartening and egregious stories from RCA ministers of color, seminarians, students under care, and several white colleagues about racial injustices within the RCA and its structures. These acts of injustice have come from our white colleagues, some overt and others less so.

After hearing countless stories, some of which have even been published throughout the denomination, the AABC developed a subcommittee to look at ways to combat the perpetual instances of racism that are still pervasive within our denomination. During Our Call, we pledged as a denomination to live into a “future freed from racism.” While there were some efforts toward this goal, it was not nearly enough. After Our Call ended for us as a denomination, the AABC took the opportunity to reflect on what was and was not effective in Our Call regarding being a denomination with a future freed from racism. Consequently, the AABC concluded that in order to really be a denomination freed from racism, it was necessary to propose to the General Synod a constitutional RCA antiracism policy to be implemented in our polity in the Book of Church Order and, most importantly, lived out in the church so that the RCA would truly move toward being a denomination with a future freed from racism.

After a long and intense study, the AABC began its work on a proposed RCA antiracism policy. While there are many issues within our denomination that we must address, the AABC realizes that we need to be audacious on this issue of antiracism at this time. The
RCA has long held strong convictions regarding the sinfulness of racism and the need to defeat it. Furthermore, and most importantly, we are required as the church of Jesus to proclaim the gospel. Finally, the AABC is proposing policy recommendations. The RCA has undergone many changes in the past decade, including a new general secretary. New strategies are needed to be faithful to our antiracism commitments now. Therefore, the AABC will set forth a number of recommendations to put our theological convictions into practice in the denomination as a whole.

**Vision Statement**

The Bible insistently reveals that God loves diversity and justice. This is seen in the wide variety of creation in which God delights. It is heard in the words of the prophets, who reject oppression and commend justice as true worship. It is embodied in the life and ministry of Jesus Christ, who resists the power of empire and values all persons, regardless of race, as children of God. Jesus gathered a community of people around him that crossed over every racial, social, and cultural boundary.

Racism is the antithesis of what God intends for us. It is the rejection of the other, which is contrary to the Word of God. Racism is the continuing lie that says that some are less than others. It is also a lie about God, for it falsely claims that God favors parts of creation over the entirety of creation.

Because of our role defined in the Bylaws of the General Synod, the AABC must stand against, speak against, and work against racism. Antiracism efforts are not optional for us as Christians. It is an essential aspect of Christian discipleship, without which we fail to proclaim the gospel. While recognizing that racism victimizes many different racial and ethnic groups, we acknowledge its unique impact on the African American community. Too many have denied this basic truth for too long. Our choice to align ourselves with love and not hate requires both a rejection of racism and a positive proclamation that black lives matter.

Reformed theology offers a nuanced understanding of sin. Calvin did not understand sin to be simply an individual belief, action, or moral failing. Rather, he viewed sin as the corporate state of all humanity. It is an infection that taints each of us and all of us. No part of us—not our perception, intelligence, nor conscience—is unclouded by sin. This does not mean that human beings are awful. Rather, it means that we must have humility about our own righteousness, and that we must cling to the grace of God in Jesus Christ.

The second valuable resource we have in our tradition is the importance of confession and repentance. Acknowledging our sinfulness ought not to produce self-hatred or paralyzing guilt. Rather, the appropriate response is to confess our sin before God and one another, confident in the grace and love of God. The grace that enables us to confess also empowers us to repent toward the eschatological vision of God’s new creation. By grace we are forgiven, and we respond to this grace with gratitude, humility, and renewed zeal for the gospel.

Finally, as a council we are urging the church to commit ourselves to doing the work of countering racism in the church as our witness to the gospel. In our affirmation that God loves difference, we will honor diversity as that in which God delights. In our conviction that God desires justice, we will learn from others to broaden our understanding of equality. In our humility as sinners saved by grace, we will listen openly to diverse voices regarding how racism still exists in our church and our need to finally eradicate that evil. In our gratitude for God’s grace, we will work toward the kingdom of God evident in the Bible. In our joyous response to God’s love, we will love one another.
The Christian response to racism must have a clear biblical and theological understanding of humanity. The Reformed perspective on the meaning of humanness is informed by John Calvin’s assertion that proper knowledge of ourselves as humans is achievable only through a knowledge of God and God’s will for humans. Calvin used the notion of the image of God to capture the essence of the biblical understanding of what it means to be human: human beings were made by God, in the image of God. Therefore, Scripture portrays God as the being who recognizes the value and worth of human life, and affirms the inherent dignity of human beings. Understanding the image of God is crucial. We must appreciate the sacredness and sanctity of all human life; establish relationships based on the rule of love, respect, and dignity; assume moral responsibility for nurturing the bonds of mutual affection; render supportive aid to those in need; avoid hurtful attitudes and harmful actions; and make justice the basis of our treatment of others. Thus, Calvin and other reformers established a critical linkage between the image of God in humans and the divine mandate to make justice, love, and peace the fundamental basis of human relationships.

The Bible calls us to show love, justice, and peace, especially to one another. In the Old Testament, God’s deliverance of the Hebrews from Egypt is a paradigm of justice. The New Testament embraces and expands the perspective of God’s commitment to love through Scripture, which mandates us to love God with all our heart, mind, soul, and strength and to love our neighbors as ourselves. Furthermore, that love of God and love of neighbor are not mutually exclusive.

Challenge to the Church: What Is God Calling Us to Be and Do?

What is the moral-ethical imperative for the RCA? Are there grounds for hope that can inform us about what can and ought to be done despite the serious levels of brokenness we have experienced and continue to experience in the area of racism? While we are made in God’s image, we recognize that all have fallen short of the glory of God. But we are reminded that as a covenantal church, we live into a covenant offered by God, sealed in Jesus Christ, and mediated through the guidance of the Holy Spirit.

Our call to a covenantal relationship with God is both descriptive and prescriptive. The call is descriptive in that it defines who we are and whose we are. It is prescriptive in that it informs what we must do. Our call to stand against racism once and for all emerges out of our identity as disciples of Christ. Our identity compels us to oppose at every level and in every way the injustice of racism. Antiracism, therefore, is prescriptive for what a faithful community must do in the quest to let justice roll down like waters and righteousness like an ever-flowing stream. The church must actively oppose the forces of racism in concrete and strategic ways. This cannot be determined or achieved in the abstract. If racism is to be eliminated in our church, it must be defined contextually and concretely so that its personal, institutional expressions and structures can be seen, understood, and countered. An antiracism church is one whose institutional behavior and commitment are informed by God’s covenant to establish justice, love, and peace in relationships, and whose identity is visibly expressed in the context of active antiracism engagement.

The RCA is operating today in a culture of brokenness for many reasons but particularly on this historic sin of racism. We must speak clearly about what it means to embrace antiracism as a major part of our corporate identity. The Belhar Confession, one of the confessional standards of the church, is a clear and unequivocal mandate for the church to live out its call to unity, reconciliation, and justice.

The possibility now exists for the RCA, in light of our call, tradition, heritage, theology,
ethics, and spiritual commitment, to truly become a denomination with a future freed from racism. The African American Black Council is tasked in part to challenge policies, actions, and structures that promote and perpetuate racism within the church. We can honor the divine will of God for each other by demonstrating a serious commitment to our confession for unity, reconciliation, and justice.

Understanding Racism

A starting point for understanding racism is clarifying the distinction between racism and prejudice, a common and costly point of misunderstanding two distinct phenomena. This will help us better understand how to eliminate racism. Prejudice is understood to be judgments made in the absence of due examination and consideration of facts; these judgments are held even when contradicted by facts. In the absence of a factual basis, prejudices are driven primarily by emotional responses such as fear. When prejudice is based on racial consideration, it is race prejudice. However, race prejudice alone is not racism.

When prejudice is combined with power, it becomes racism. Power is the capacity to command, control, and dominate social reality for the purpose of achieving a desired outcome. Those who control power have the capacity to transform prejudice into racism by establishing and maintaining institutions and structures that embody group biases. Thus, it is the combination of power and prejudice that is so destructive. Racism is, therefore, the marriage of power and prejudice. Simply stated, racial prejudice plus power equals racism. Power transforms prejudice into racism. Racism gives direction to the use of power.

An understanding of racism must include these facts: no one is born a racist; no one is born oppressed. Racism is a consequence of learned values and behaviors. It is possible, therefore, to learn values and behaviors that do not result in racism. Some people benefit from racism while others are victimized by it. As we learn different values, we must unlearn and undo existing racist values and structures. That process is twofold and involves dismantling institutional racism as well as rooting racism out of our personal lives and communities. It is a long-term struggle that is achievable through prayer, commitment, and persistence.

Systemic Racism

Racism is nurtured and sustained by systemic power. Power must be understood in institutional and not just individual terms. An institution is an organized way of meeting basic needs. Our classes are a primary institution within our church. Institutions, especially the church, do not function as isolated entities, although sometimes it feels that way in our church. They are integrally related and interconnected. A group of related institutions constitutes a system such as the church. Power resides in the institutions and systems we create.

Societies establish and structure their common lives by exercising power to create and perpetuate institutions that reflect common values to meet their basic needs as well as determine their goals and aspirations. The power to access and participate in the institutional life of a community is essential to affirming our humanity. Those who control power have the capacity to limit the rights of others to participate fully. To deny others such rights is to deny their humanity.

Historically, institutions—especially the church—have tended to be preferential to some group or groups in comparison to others. Racist institutions are not accidents of history. They are created and maintained intentionally. For the most part, they serve the needs of those who control power and access. In most contexts, racist institutions preserve power and privilege for certain groups of people. Rewards are based on group membership, not
personal attitude. Consequently, some groups of people benefit from racism whether or not they have ever committed a racist act, uttered a racist word, or had a racist thought.

Our Strategy

The proposed antiracism policy has to be accepted and lived into within the General Synod, regional synods, classes, consistories, congregations, RCA colleges and seminaries, mission partners, ecumenical partners, and every other area in our church. The task of dismantling racism must be a partnership effort that involves all levels of the church. Since context is essential within an institution, we contend that the approach to dismantling racism may be carried out differently in different situations. Nevertheless, the objective and goal must still be to become an antiracism church so that the church will live out its call and mission.

The proposed antiracism policy must not only have a permanent place in our polity but must be woven into our culture. It must begin in the context in which we find ourselves, in all of our brokenness. Therefore, ongoing dialogue must be designed for use in places where people ordinarily gather for work and worship. There must be ground rules that preserve the integrity of people engaging in dialogue. The dialogue is a starting point but must move beyond the dynamics of interaction to grapple with and clarify the foundations of racism and its structural manifestations that have polarized our church. Merely talking about racist incidents without addressing root causes is to miss the point of this proposed RCA antiracism policy. We must move to where the discussion itself does not result in further polarization. Thus, we must first be honest with ourselves and then with each other. We must name the problem so we can claim it and then change it. Our journey begins with confession, forgiveness, redemption, and then transformation. This kind of engagement will help prevent extraneous conversation that masquerades as dialogue.

While dialogue is a necessary starting point, we must move beyond that to a common assessment of the problem. We must articulate a common vision of what can and ought to be. The shared vision will engender strategies for engagement that result in the transformation of personal lives, institutions, structures, and practices. Dialogue must lead to the identification of measurable and attainable goals that can be benchmarks of progress. Once benchmarks are established, the more challenging task of identifying obstacles that stand in the way of realizing the vision can begin. Only then can specific strategies be designed that will help us overcome racism. Finally, the process of dialogue involves returning to the vision and assessing our progress on a regular basis, perhaps annually.

The RCA has long recognized that eradicating the sin of racism from our church is a high priority. But it cannot be done without sacrifice. Experience has taught us that people cannot leap from centuries of racism into a new vision. It is a long journey that will require discernment, prayer, and worship-based action. Therefore, we are proposing the following RCA antiracism policy that will govern our lives and hold us all accountable.

WHEREAS, racism is rooted in a belief of the superiority of whiteness and bestows benefits, unearned rights, rewards, opportunities, advantages, access, and privilege on Europeans and European descendants; and

WHEREAS, the reactions of people of color to racism are internalized through destructive patterns of feelings and behaviors impacting their physical, emotional, and mental health and their spiritual and familial relationships; and

WHEREAS, through institutionalized racism, laws, customs, traditions, and practices systemically foster inequalities; and
WHEREAS, although the denomination has shown leadership among some Reformed Church in America synods, classes, local congregations, and theological institutions by initiating innovative antiracism programs, by developing antiracism facilitators, and in general making dismantling racism a priority, there is still much to be done. As we continue in this effort, the work we do must reflect the historical and present experiences and stories of all peoples impacted by racism. We must work from a paradigm reflective of the historical relationships of racial and ethnic groups and racial oppression within the Reformed Church in America and society; and

WHEREAS, continued institutional racism within the church emphasizes the need for an antiracism policy as we seek to do justice; and

WHEREAS, previous General Synods of the RCA have voted for resolutions, statements, and goals denouncing racism, and it is time to honor mandates and expectations of the church;

THEREFORE LET IT BE RESOLVED, that the African American Black Council, within its role as defined in Chapter 3, Part I, Article 3, Section 2d of the Book of Church Order (2016 edition, p. 105), is proposing the following antiracism policy to the Reformed Church in America, to be adopted and implemented into the Book of Church Order and lived out at every level of the church.

PROPOSED RCA ANTIRACISM POLICY

It is against the RCA antiracism policy to engage in verbal or physical conduct that denigrates or shows hostility or aversion toward an individual because of his or her race, color, gender, age, ministerial status (student under care, licensed candidate), national origin, disability, or other category that: (1) has the purpose or effect of creating an intimidating, hostile, humiliating, or offensive church and/or assembly or institutional environment; (2) has the purpose or effect of interfering with, slowing down, or terminating a person’s church membership, matriculation toward ordination, or ability to serve within the church; or (3) otherwise adversely affects a person’s ability to gain employment opportunities within the RCA.

Depending on the circumstances, the following conduct may constitute racial discrimination: epithets, slurs, negative stereotyping, jokes, or threatening, intimidating, or hostile acts that relate to race, color, gender, religion, age, national origin, or disability; and (2) written or graphic material that denigrates or shows hostility toward an individual or group because of race, color, gender, religion, age, national origin, or disability and that is circulated anywhere within the RCA, its assemblies, churches, institutions, or ecumenical settings. Other conduct may also constitute racial harassment and discrimination if it falls within the definition of racial discrimination or harassment.

Reporting under the Proposed RCA Antiracism Policy

If a student under care of a classis believes that he or she has experienced or witnessed the antiracism policy violated in any way, the student shall report it immediately to his or her classis without fear of retribution or retaliation. Furthermore, the classis will immediately, thoroughly, and genuinely address these concerns, as outlined in the Book of Church Order.

If a minister of classis believes that he or she has experienced or witnessed the antiracism policy violated in any way within his or her church or classis, the minister shall report it immediately to his or her classis without fear of retribution or retaliation. Furthermore, the
classis will immediately, thoroughly, and genuinely investigate these concerns according to the judicial procedures of classis outlined in the *Book of Church Order*.

If a member of an RCA church believes that he or she has experienced or witnessed the antiracism policy violated in any way within his or her own church, the member shall report it to the board of elders without fear of retribution or retaliation. Furthermore, the board of elders will immediately, thoroughly, and genuinely address these concerns, as outlined in the *Book of Church Order*.

If anyone of the regional synod believes that he or she has experienced or witnessed the antiracism policy violated in any way while serving in his or her role in the regional synod, the person shall report it to the officers of the regional synod without fear of retribution or retaliation. The regional synod representatives will determine the best way to go forward in addressing these concerns.

If anyone of the General Synod (staff, delegate, guest, etc.) believes that he or she has experienced or witnessed the antiracism policy violated in any way while serving in his or her role for the General Synod, the person shall report it to the general secretary and/or officers of the General Synod without fear of retribution or retaliation. The Committee of Reference during General Synod shall determine the best way to address these concerns.

If any student within an RCA academic institution believes that he or she has experienced or witnessed the antiracism policy violated in any way while serving in his or her role at the institution, the person shall report it to the appropriate board or committee of that institution without fear of retribution or retaliation. The institution shall determine the best way to address these concerns.

If anyone within any area of the RCA at any time believes that he or she has experienced or witnessed the antiracism policy violated in any way while serving in his or her role in the church, the person shall report it to the appropriate person and/or committee without fear of retribution or retaliation. The committee shall determine the best way to address these concerns.

LET IT BE FURTHER RESOLVED, that this proposed RCA antiracism policy shall never lead to retaliation or retribution if someone experiences or witnesses this proposed policy being violated in any way.

LET IT BE FURTHER RESOLVED, that this proposed RCA antiracism policy is not intended in any way to be used as a weapon, fear tactic, or personal attack, or to be misused or overused by anyone at any time.

LET IT BE FURTHER RESOLVED, that the Reformed Church in America must work in concert with each other at every level of the church to dismantle racism.

LET IT BE FINALLY RESOLVED, that the Reformed Church in America, through adopting this antiracism policy, implementing it into our polity, and living it out within the whole church, declare that the RCA is finally a denomination with a future freed from racism.

**Recommendations**

The AABC recommends the following to the General Synod Council:
1. To authorize the African American Black Council to work with the Commission on Church Order over the next year to determine how and where the proposed RCA antiracism policy could be incorporated into the Book of Church Order, and to bring specific proposed changes to the BCO to the General Synod Council at its March 2018 meeting, which General Synod Council may then bring to the 2018 General Synod.

2. To direct the general secretary to challenge RCA congregations, assemblies, institutions, and agencies, through a direct communication, to eradicate all structures and/or systems that support and maintain racism.

3. To direct the general secretary, in consultation with the African American Black Council, to collect and distribute stories of congregations and assemblies dismantling racism throughout the church.

4. To direct the general secretary, in consultation with the African American Black Council, to jointly formulate a communication plan to share antiracism resources, and to create an electronic campaign to send information on antiracism resources and trainings to RCA assemblies and seminaries.

5. To encourage the general secretary to include antiracism training in the existing leadership development initiatives of Transformed & Transforming.

The AABC recommends to the General Synod Council that it make the following recommendations to the 2017 General Synod on behalf of the African American Black Council:

6. To urge RCA assemblies to provide an annual one-day event dedicated to antiracism.

7. To urge RCA assemblies and institutions to provide regular antiracism training for students, faculty, and staff, to integrate racially and culturally diverse voices in the curriculum, and to revisit hiring policies to ensure that faculty and staff are racially diverse.

8. To urge General Synod delegates to consider African Americans and people of color for General Synod officer positions.

9. To commend the African American Black Council for its historical and ongoing commitment to holding up antiracism to the church and holding the RCA accountable for deficiencies.

Respectfully submitted,
James Steward, chairperson

At its meeting on June 8, 2017, the General Synod Council received the AABC report and affirmed the council’s work around antiracism and the importance of that work. GSC has decided not to bring the above recommendations to this year’s General Synod, but rather to appoint a small task force of GSC members to work directly with the AABC over the next year to more fully develop these recommendations and bring them to General Synod 2018. GSC commends the AABC for its work and looks forward to working with the council on this important issue.
REPORT OF THE COUNCIL FOR PACIFIC AND ASIAN AMERICAN MINISTRIES

2016 marks the culmination of 37 years of ministry for the Council for Pacific and Asian American Ministries (CPAAM) in the RCA. Since CPAAM was formally recognized as one of the minority councils in June 1980 by the General Synod, it has grown and continues its work of advocating for the needs, gifts, and concerns of Pacific and Asian Americans within the RCA, and advising the various governing bodies of the RCA on how Pacific and Asian Americans can be fully integrated and included in the life of the church, its mission, and its ministry. As CPAAM enters into its 38th year of ministry in 2017, it is grateful to continue to engage in the RCA’s ministry vision and goal, Transformed & Transforming, which is focused on three priority areas—discipleship, leadership, and mission—to which God has called all CPAAM churches and leaders.

2016 Annual Consultation

CPAAM successfully held its annual consultation meeting on May 16–18, 2016, in Suwanee, Georgia, a suburban area 40 minutes from downtown Atlanta. There are three Korean churches in the Suwanee area, where there is a fast-growing population of both Korean immigrants and Koreans moving from other parts of United States. During the three days, Disciples Church allowed CPAAM to use its facility as a meeting place for our annual consultation. The council was so grateful for the three Korean church leaders who provided services such as local transportation, guidance of the area, and all other needs for the participants. The purpose of the annual consultation was to discuss needs and concerns and to support and encourage one another with a time of worship, fellowship, and networking. The people who participated in the meeting appreciated the opportunity to retreat from ministry, to be refreshed and renewed, and to return to ministry with new insights and resources.

Next Generation Engagement

During the annual consultation, CPAAM leaders had an opportunity to explore ministry and the next generation with Rick Zomer, RCA coordinator for Next Generation Engagement. His presentation about the next generation provided helpful information to a senior leader struggling with the generation gap and losing young members, and a young leader who felt isolated and was looking for ministry resources. CPAAM can play an important role in supporting immigrant churches as they struggle to nurture next generation leaders because of linguistic and cultural barriers. The CPAAM language group leaders decided to invite emerging leaders in their churches to participate in various learning opportunities hosted by the RCA’s Transformed & Transforming initiative leaders.

RCA Leadership Collaborative

Eddy Alemán, director of strategic leadership development, was one of the keynote speakers during the consultation meeting. His session provided a great chance for all the participants to consider RCA leadership collaboratives and learning communities. Pastors of local churches were more interested in learning communities. The young leaders, who are mostly in college, part of English ministries, and are ministry candidates in the MFCA, were more interested in leadership collaboratives. After Eddy’s presentation, all the participants were divided into three groups, where they engaged the topic of personal leadership experience in relation to spiritual growth, time management, gifts, emotions, struggles, and life focus. Taiwanese pastors decided to create a learning community in which they could grow together by sharing their unique ministry contexts in their own language. The next-generation leaders, including ministry candidates in the RCA, would like to have a chance to be part of the leadership development process.
Jesus Youth Retreat 2016

Jesus Retreat 2016 was successfully completed with more than 100 participants. There was wonderful feedback regarding the overall program. Most of the participants came from youth groups of Korean churches, although several non-Korean and non-RCA youth groups in New York and New Jersey participated as well, celebrating God’s love and grace in their lives and faith. The Jesus Retreat staff team is looking forward to expanding this great opportunity to churches outside the Korean community. It’s gratifying to see many staff members who were once participants in the retreat now providing leadership to the next generation of students.

CPAAM’s Ongoing Issues

CPAAM has several ongoing issues: developing young leaders across a generation gap, encouraging women’s leadership, supporting immigration, and contextualizing denominational resources for ethnic churches. CPAAM is working hard to be aware and to raise these issues whenever the council gathers together. The council has been encouraged to see the Transformed & Transforming initiatives provide helpful resources to support the needs of each local church in these ongoing issues and problems. It is particularly wonderful for the young leaders and the women, who are overlooked by the local church in the Asian community, to have these benefits and assistance from the denomination.

Most CPAAM churches are immigrant churches, and certain members of each congregation are impacted by immigration policy. President Trump’s executive order on immigration creates fear and discomfort within the immigrant communities and churches. As an ethnic council, we would like to advocate to the larger denomination on behalf of these vulnerable groups of people for the issues of immigration and refugees. CPAAM can’t solve the problem itself, nor can members of the council directly participate in politics as church leaders, but we can join together in God’s healing work through prayer, education, and church activity.

Conclusion

There is a uniqueness to CPAAM ministries, as members of CPAAM are in one group with one faith, but CPAAM is also a big mosaic. Members of CPAAM have different languages: Korean, Taiwanese, Mandarin, Lao, Thai, Japanese, Indian, and English. CPAAM understands that different languages bring different cultures, backgrounds, practices, and perspectives. CPAAM has confirmed that pluralism should not obstruct its ministry but rather be transformed into an asset, a power to preach the gospel to the ends of the earth and to fulfill the Great Commission of Jesus Christ.

The council thanks all the executive committee members of CPAAM for their time and the work that they have put into CPAAM’s precious ministries. The council also appreciates GSC staff: En Young Kim, coordinator for CPAAM, and Wanlin Chang, administrative assistant for CPAAM, for their hard work to ensure that CPAAM runs smoothly.

Respectfully submitted,
David Theonugraha, chairperson
REPORT OF THE COUNCIL FOR HISPANIC MINISTRIES

There are many great things that are going on right now through the Council for Hispanic Ministries, but in this brief report, the council would like to highlight three of them.

1. New Vision to Plant 50 Hispanic Churches in the Next Five Years (2017–2021)

The Council for Hispanic Ministries had its 42nd annual assembly in Corona, California, on August 25–27, 2016. In that meeting, the assembly voted unanimously to embrace the vision of planting 50 new churches in the next five years, starting on January 1, 2017, and ending on December 31, 2021. Although this is a huge task, we believe we can achieve it with the help of the Holy Spirit.

Based on the realities of the Hispanic population growth in America, we will be focusing on planting:

- 15 Spanish-speaking Hispanic churches (first-generation Latinos)
- 15 bilingual Hispanic churches (first- and second-generation)
- 20 English-speaking, multiethnic, Hispanic-led congregations (second-, third-, and fourth-generation)

Locations Where We Are Currently Working

- Bogota, New Jersey
- Chicago, Illinois
- Esparto, California
- Grandville, Michigan
- Houston, Texas
- Miami, Florida
- Orlando, Florida
- Portland, Oregon
- Tampa, Florida
- Turlock, California
- Visalia, California
- Yakima, Washington

Training and Equipping

The council is working with Multiplication Network to train and equip Hispanic church planters. This is a ministry that has done great work all over the world, particularly in Latin American countries. They have developed great resources for Hispanic church planters, and the council is collaborating with them to train and equip Hispanic planters.

Church Planting Process

The council has also developed a process for the church planters to follow that includes identification, assessments, and equipping from the beginning of the process until the church is organized as an RCA congregation. The RCA Office of Church Multiplication has been very helpful in adapting to the needs of the Hispanic church planters. Please see the depiction of the process included with this report.
**Hispanic Summit**

The second Hispanic Summit was held on April 24, 2017, in the lead-up to Exponential East. The Council for Hispanic Ministries gathered in Orlando with potential Hispanic church planters, classis leaders, regional synod leaders, and potential parent churches for a day of equipping and vision casting for Hispanic Ministries in the RCA.

**2. Transformed & Transforming**

The Council for Hispanic Ministries is happy to report that it has reorganized its leadership according to the three main priorities of Transformed & Transforming: discipleship, leadership, and mission. As Latinos in the RCA, we have fully embraced the vision of Transformed & Transforming because this is a vision coming from God and given to a group of people to live and love like Jesus, following him in mission.

- Alberto Salazar from Toronto, Ontario, is serving as the discipleship person.
- Luis Perez is serving as the leadership development person.
- Barbara Pimentel is serving as the mission person.

Along with the rest of the RCA Hispanic Ministries leadership team, they are in charge of helping Hispanic leaders and congregations in the RCA participate in Transformed & Transforming.

**3. New Bylaws That Will Help the Council for Hispanic Ministries Accomplish Its Vision**

The assembly also approved new bylaws that are less complicated and that will help the council to accomplish the vision that it has embraced. The General Synod Council needs to approve these bylaws so that they become the official document.

*The General Synod Council approved the new bylaws submitted by the Council for Hispanic Ministries at its March 14–16 meeting in Orlando, Florida.*

Respectfully submitted,
Andres Serrano, president
REPORT OF THE GENERAL SYNOD COUNCIL ON COMMUNICATION

“I give thanks to my God always for you because of the grace of God that has been given you in Christ Jesus, for in every way you have been enriched in him, in speech and knowledge of every kind” (1 Corinthians 1:4-5).

Since its origins in 1628, the RCA has given testimony to the goodness and faithfulness of God. Now, as we live into Transformed & Transforming, we continue to share stories of how God is at work in our midst. We also share ideas, goals, concerns, prayer needs, and other information and resources. This happens in a wide variety of ways, using tried-and-true communication channels alongside new ones.

Supporting Transformed & Transforming

Over the last year, GSC staff have worked to raise awareness of Transformed & Transforming, the denomination’s vision to engage in discipleship, leadership, and mission. Stories of transformation have taken the form of magazine and website features. They’ve also been told through tweets, Facebook posts, and video testimonies.

Transformed & Transforming initiatives were designed in response to needs expressed by churches and leaders. As those initiatives took shape, congregations and leaders were invited to take their next step toward better fulfilling God’s call for them. A plethora of learning and equipping opportunities are available through the initiatives. The RCA communication team has supported each initiative in sharing these opportunities and in developing related resources where needed.

Over the past year, communication staff have also worked to share a clear vision of what Transformed & Transforming is and the opportunities it holds for RCA congregations and members.