
Each spring the general secretary is required to report to the General Synod Council about progress on the various ends policies established by the GSC. The monitoring report for ends policy E-2: Cultivating Transformation in Christ follows.

ENDS POLICY E-2: CULTIVATING TRANSFORMATION IN CHRIST

The RCA will engage, equip, and encourage congregations and missional communities in the work of cultivating transformation that results in faithful and passionate disciples of Jesus.

GENERAL SECRETARY’S INTERPRETATION

“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 28:19-20).

Jesus’ command to make disciples is the church’s mandate to help all people grow and deepen their faith as they live it out in everyday life. Transformed disciples become more like Christ as they read and reflect on God’s Word, pray and listen to God, spend time in community with other Christ followers, and engage in Christ’s mission. The RCA’s commitment is to help provide accessible environments, processes, resources, and relationships that local congregations can use to foster, in cooperation with the Holy Spirit, more fully devoted followers who willingly and boldly live and love like Jesus.

The unique discipleship pathways created by congregations will foster transformation in both hearts and minds, exhibited in changed actions in the lives of equipped and empowered disciples. These growing disciples will make contributions as leaders, teachers, and people of influence within their congregations. Transformation will manifest in our relationships with one another, our increasing love for each other, our sacrifice for the cause of Christ, our willingness to influence our world for the gospel, and how we advocate for justice with compassion in communities where we live and serve. The way we live and love like Jesus will impact how we reach out to those who live on the margins, to those who have been disempowered in our society, and to those who have no voice in the broken world in which we reside.

TRANSFORMATIONAL PROCESSES

“Go and make disciples of all nations” is a pretty clear instruction from Jesus. In Transformed & Transforming, the discipleship priority area is called “Cultivating Transformation in Christ”—with Jesus’ words at its heart. As we follow Jesus as disciples, both leadership and mission follow.

The Transformational Experiences (discipleship) guiding coalition, led by Jill Ver Steeg, is a team of people who are passionate about changing lives and communities for greater kingdom impact. This is a team of ten to twelve practitioners in the field of discipleship who help shape the goals of this priority area and the approach to accomplishing them. The guiding coalition will work passionately toward every RCA congregation having a discipleship pathway or process to bring greater kingdom impact and deeper transformation, both personally and systemically.
The Transformational Experiences guiding coalition is focusing on the following six processes to help congregations create a discipleship pathway in their context.

**Discipleship Connection Events**

The purpose of a discipleship connection event is to help congregations discern and dream about what future ministry could look like, serving as an on-ramp for a discipleship learning community. This is a group of 12 to 20 churches in relatively close geographical proximity who share current discipleship challenges and celebrations, together creating a sense of urgency around seeing greater transformation in their context. The goal of a discipleship connection event is to paint a picture of a future greater ministry impact and invite churches to take a next faithful step toward that future.

**Discipleship Pathway Learning Communities**

A discipleship pathway learning community is a cluster of eight to ten RCA congregations in relatively close geographical proximity that each gather a team of three to five people, including the pastor, to learn about discipleship together. Each congregation in the learning community will develop its own unique pathways through which people will be transformed, through the power of the Holy Spirit, into passionate, outwardly focused followers of Jesus that live for the sake of others.

**Discipleship Leadership Communities**

Teams of three to five staff and leaders from RCA congregations engage in a two-year process; each leadership community will have between five and seven congregations, drawn from all geographic regions of the RCA. Teams from the pilot group of eight RCA congregations completed their two-year process at the end of April 2016. Reports from all eight congregations are extremely positive. Four of those eight congregations are now serving as “discipleship bases of operation” where ongoing learning, coaching, resourcing, and partnership are happening for wider impact. Another discipleship leadership community was launched in October 2016.

**Faithwalking Learning Communities**

Faithwalking is the personal transformation component of Ridder Church Renewal. Many RCA congregations lead Faithwalking experiences with neighboring congregations as one dimension of their discipleship pathway. A long-term goal will be to expand Faithwalking to non-Ridder congregations through the development of learning communities.

**3DM Learning Communities**

3DM learning communities consist of ten to twelve RCA, CRC, and other neighboring congregations that gather four times over the course of two years, implementing what they learn between gatherings. Each congregation will learn and employ the 3DM missional community process as a primary way to focus on multiplying disciples, leaders, and mission. The RCA is also partnering with 3DM to see five to seven pastors trained in 3DM by June 2017.

**VantagePoint3 Learning Communities**

This is a one-year learning community of three to five RCA congregations in which each congregation will learn from and with one another as they employ VantagePoint3’s
primary introductory resource, *The Journey*, which focuses on discipleship and leadership development.

**Year Four Goals (by June 2017)**

- Launch one discipleship leadership community with six to eight RCA congregations.
- Launch one Growing Generosity leadership community with seven to ten congregations.
- Launch two discipleship learning communities with ten to fifteen RCA and CRC congregations.
- Launch four Creating Congregational Cultures of Generosity learning communities.
- Train five to seven pastors for leadership in 3DM.
- Twelve to fifteen RCA congregations have participated in a 3DM learning community.
- Launch one to two Faithwalking retreats, involving six to eight RCA and other congregations.
- Hold five connection events focused on cultivating transformation.

**Progress**

- One discipleship leadership community launched in October 2016 at Corinth Reformed Church in Byron Center, Michigan, involving six congregations from Michigan, Iowa, and Pennsylvania. A seventh congregation was added for the second gathering in April 2017.
- One Growing Generosity leadership community launched in November 2016 with three participating congregations. The intention is to add three or four more congregations by the second gathering.
- One discipleship learning community launched in East and West Sioux Classes in September 2016 at Trinity Reformed Church in Orange City, Iowa. Nine congregations are involved in this learning community.
- A joint RCA/CRC discipleship learning community launched in Holland, Michigan, in May 2017.
- A discipleship learning community will launch in the Rochester, New York, area in June 2017.
- Three Creating Congregational Cultures of Generosity learning communities have launched, one in each of Albany, Mid-America, and New York. Each of these learning communities has three congregations participating.
- Seven pastors (from Lynden, Washington; Chino, California; Sheboygan, Wisconsin; Okoboji, Iowa; and Colorado Springs, Colorado) are in the process of being trained for leadership in 3DM.
- Thirteen RCA congregations—from Sheboygan, Wisconsin, to Okoboji, Iowa, to Edmonds, Washington—are participating in a 3DM learning community.
- Approximately eight Faithwalking retreats, involving 25 RCA congregations, have been held in classes such as Canadian Prairies, Albany, Wisconsin, and New York.
- Discipleship connection events have been held in Orange City, Iowa; Holland, Michigan; and Rochester, New York.
- A joint next generation/discipleship connection event was held in Pella, Iowa.
Five-Year Goals (June 2013 to June 2018)

- 16 RCA congregations have completed a two-year discipleship leadership community and are providing other congregations resources for discipleship as requested.
- Ten to fifteen RCA congregations have participated in a discipleship learning community and are implementing their own unique disciple-making pathway in their congregation.
- 50 to 65 RCA congregations are engaged in Faithwalking as a core process for cultivating transformation in Christ.
- Ten to twelve RCA congregations have participated in a joint RCA and 3DM learning community and have launched missional communities focused on discipleship, leadership, and missional living.
- Ten to fifteen RCA congregations have participated in a VantagePoint3 learning community and are using VantagePoint3 resources to develop disciples and equip leaders.
- We have collaborated with Organic Outreach to develop a pre-discipleship learning community to launch in 2017–2018.

NEXT GENERATION ENGAGEMENT

Rick Zomer assumed leadership of this team as the coordinator for Next Generation Engagement in February 2016. The team consists of nine members—three are RCA staff and six are RCA pastors. Their purpose is to empower young adults, ministry teams, and congregations to create a culture where people of all ages serve in leadership positions at the church, classis, and denominational levels. The goal is to create an environment where the emphasis moves from merely keeping people in the church when they reach adulthood to equipping congregations to both fully include younger members in the church and reach out to those who have left the church.

Next Generation Connection Events

Clusters of RCA churches in the same geographical area gather for a one-day process to examine their current reality regarding young adults’ presence and involvement in their congregations. In addition, participants are given the opportunity to envision ways to increase the number and involvement level of young adults in their church.

Next Generation Learning Communities

Plans have been developed and clusters of churches have been asked to consider an 18-to 24-month process focused on three specific goals: creating a shared understanding of their current reality as it relates to young adults, considering steps for connecting across generations, and developing plans to commit to ministry with young adults in their church and regions.

Growing Young Learning Community

Growing Young is a transformational process that is offered by the Fuller Youth Institute (FYI), housed at Fuller Theological Seminary. RCA churches are given the opportunity to engage in a one-year process with congregations from across North America. The goal is to have congregations identify and implement specific steps to engage young adults in connection and leadership in their church.
Year Four Goals (by June 2017)

- Launch one high-quality learning community focused on next generation engagement.
- Recruit and complete the Growing Young learning community with at least two RCA churches.
- Design and execute six connection events focused on involvement and leadership pathways for emerging adults in the local church.
- Recruit a Next Generation guiding coalition composed of a diversity of ages and contexts within the RCA and begin meeting quarterly.

Progress

- Ten congregations from Central Iowa Classis are thinking about joining a joint discipleship/next generation learning community that would launch in September 2017. These congregations gathered for a connection event on January 31, 2017, in Pella, Iowa.
- Three RCA churches (New Life Community Church in Artesia, California; Rancho Community Church in Temecula, California; and Third Reformed Church in Pella, Iowa) completed the Growing Young cohort in March 2017. Each participant received coaching calls between cohort meetings from FYI staff.
- 18 churches participated in two connection events held in Wisconsin in August 2016. Congregations were given the opportunity to consider joining a learning community focused on next generation engagement.
- Seven churches attended a connection event in Des Moines, Iowa, in September 2016. Several of these churches also attended the next generation/discipleship connection event in Pella and are currently discerning becoming involved in a learning community.
- Eight churches participated in a connection event in Sioux Falls, South Dakota, in September 2016. These churches were offered the opportunity to form a learning community focused on next generation strategies.
- Six RCA churches in the Regional Synod of New York participated in a connection event in New York City in November 2016 that focused on calling and vocation and the next generation.
- Three RCA churches participated in a connection event in German Valley, Illinois, in April 2017.
- Six RCA churches in the Regional Synod of Canada are participating in a learning circle that is utilizing FYI materials.
- Three RCA churches (New Life Community Church in Artesia, California; Woodhaven Reformed Church in Byron Center, Michigan; and Fifth Reformed Church in Grand Rapids, Michigan) have hosted learning events focused on understanding young adults and faithful next steps for their churches regarding the next generation.

Five-Year Goals (June 2013 to June 2018)

- 30 congregations will have participated or will be participating in a learning community and will have a next generation ministry that is resourced.
- 150 congregations will have attended a next generation connection event and will have been invited to participate in a learning community as a next step toward developing a next generation strategy and ministry.
- Onboarding of the FYI collaboration is complete and Growing Young resources have been introduced to 20 congregations through participation in the onsite cohort experience or through specific FYI-resourced connection events.
ENDS POLICY E-3: EQUIPPING EMERGING LEADERS

The RCA will identify potential leaders and encourage and equip potential and existing leaders for missional, congregational, and pastoral leadership. These leaders will reflect the full diversity of the RCA with regard to such things as gender, age, race, ability, and cultural backgrounds, with a special emphasis on young leaders.

GENERAL SECRETARY’S INTERPRETATION

“Remember your leaders, those who spoke the word of God to you; consider the outcome of their way of life, and imitate their faith” (Hebrews 13:7).

Women and men are open to being used by God to help guide the church as they actively pursue God’s purpose for congregations and ministries. Leaders willingly and passionately live out their calling and giftedness to accomplish a missional vision that brings a gospel of grace and hope to a lost and broken world.

The RCA’s commitment is to help develop leaders, based on a foundation of discipleship, who:

- Know how to lead themselves (their leadership begins with their inward journey).
- Know how to lead others (they are equipped to lead and influence in a God-ordained direction).
- Know how to reproduce new leaders (they view leadership development as a key component of their call to be a leader).

This commitment to leadership development requires environments and accessible opportunities for growth and learning that will help lead RCA congregations forward in mission.

The RCA vision for leadership sees the leadership potential in all followers of Jesus Christ. It helps to raise up servant leaders who develop a courage and competence to lead in the church and the world, in many different environments, and with an openness to equipping and empowering all people to be influencers for Christ’s kingdom. This leadership vision has a special focus on empowering people who may not have leadership positions, privilege, power, or even access to these things, but who have been called and gifted by God to serve boldly. It is a vision that is especially committed to the next generation and developing leaders for the church of the future.

OVERVIEW

Three initiative teams work within the Equipping Emerging Leaders strategic priority. Emerging Leaders focuses on leadership mobilization and development. Thriving Leaders, Thriving Churches focuses on supporting the spiritual transformation and health of the leadership teams of RCA congregations. Women’s Transformation and Leadership works toward full inclusion of women’s gifts in the life of the RCA.
EMERGING LEADERS

The Emerging Leaders initiative is guided by a coalition of local pastors and lay leaders representing different regions of the RCA. Eddy Alemán has been providing GSC staff leadership for this initiative since 2014. The work of the Emerging Leaders initiative is to increase awareness that God is calling all people to become leaders in the church, and to help local RCA congregations develop and design leadership development processes customized to their vision and needs. We believe that, through this process, RCA congregations will be spiritually renewed and aspiring leaders will be identified, equipped, and sent out to impact their local communities and the world with the gospel of Jesus Christ.

Leadership Development Connection Events

A leadership development connection event is a gathering of churches that can last anywhere from a few hours to a full day. Its purpose is to introduce pastors and congregational leaders of a region or classis to ways in which they might get involved in developing leaders in their local congregations. The goal for these gatherings is for pastors and congregational leaders to join a learning community, leadership community, or leadership collaborative.

Leadership Development Leadership Communities

Leadership development leadership communities consist of up to 11 congregations who are already engaged in leadership development but want to make their ministry even stronger. These congregations can come from any geographic region of the RCA. Each congregation commits a team of three to five staff members, pastors, and lay leaders to engage in a two-year process. The newest leadership development leadership community had its first meeting in the spring of 2017 in West Michigan.

Leadership Development Learning Communities

Groups of three to six RCA congregations gather for six one-day meetings over the course of two years to learn from one another about different areas of leadership. Each congregation sends a team of three to five people to these gatherings; congregations are encouraged to include a variety of people with regard to gender, age, and ethnicity on their team. Through this process, each congregation develops its own leadership development pathway uniquely designed for its vision, context, and needs.

Leadership Collaboratives

Clusters of 12 leaders from RCA congregations in relatively close geographical proximity commit to a 12-month, 18-month, 24-month, or 36-month leadership collaborative to deepen their personal leadership skills. This experience provides learning, support, and accountability for each participant’s leadership journey. It is a commitment to grow, to invest, to share, and to change. The focus for leadership collaboratives is on personal leadership development for greater kingdom impact in a participant’s local context. Participants grow in their leadership skills, discern God’s call for their lives, and clarify their next steps in ministry. The leadership collaboratives are varied in focus; focuses could include children and family ministry, youth ministry, young adult ministry, multicultural ministry, and developing a strategic ministry plan.

This process includes in-person gatherings and video conference calls. Each participant commits to personally contributing to the process and to peer coaching.

These collaborative groups focus on three key areas of leadership:
1. Personal leadership: leading from the inside out, developing the capacity to lead oneself before leading others.

2. Organizational leadership: developing the competencies and skills required of effective leaders.

3. Reproducing leadership: helping leaders develop more leaders, not just followers.

Reformed Leadership Initiative

The Reformed Leadership Initiative is a collaborative effort between the Christian Reformed Church in North America (CRCNA), the RCA, Calvin Theological Seminary (CTS), and Western Theological Seminary (WTS). Both denominations need leaders at all levels who are grounded in a biblical vision of church and kingdom, personally formed and growing in the image of Christ, and competent to lead thriving congregations in contextualized and mission-focused ministry.

The Reformed Leadership Initiative launched six congregational leadership learning networks (CLLN) in the first six months of 2016. These CLLNs will serve as the first steps in developing diverse networks for leadership training aimed at serving the local church while that local church engages in mission and ministry.

Congregational leadership learning networks that have been launched include a Korean-language network in New Jersey; a Spanish-language network in southern California; and four other networks in New Jersey, Ontario, central Iowa, and central California. Each CLLN has a balance of RCA and CRCNA congregations.

Congregational leadership learning networks are led by a local team of coleaders, one CRCNA and one RCA. These leaders are supported by two codirectors, one from each denomination: Ken Eriks for the RCA and Denise Posie for the CRCNA. An implementation team that includes members of both denominations and both institutions offers additional support to the project and the congregations. The coleaders of the congregational leadership learning networks have an external, paid coach to assist them in their leadership of these networks.

Each network is expected to pursue four outcomes:

- Innovate, create, and engage new leadership development practices that equip leaders, change cultures, and impact the world through local congregations.
- Learn how to prepare leaders of all ages for leadership in diverse environments.
- Evaluate and learn together from what they implement.
- Help all four partners (CRCNA, CTS, RCA, WTS) develop processes that are scalable and sustainable in all regions of our denominations.

Every congregation in a congregational leadership learning network agrees to design and implement leadership development processes that are appropriate to its size, situation, and context. Each congregation will focus on one or more of the following groups: councils or consistories, church staff, emerging leaders, people who lead congregational ministries, people who lead ministries in their local communities, and others.

Each congregation is encouraged to develop and implement equipping processes focused on the same three key dimensions of leadership development mentioned under the leadership collaboratives: personal leadership, organizational leadership, and reproducing leadership.
Four values will undergird the processes in each congregation:

- In-ministry formation: hands-on ministry within the context of the local church as the principal location for leadership development.
- Competency-based equipping: providing tools and skills to be more effective in one’s ministry call and context.
- Missional context: a vision of the church as a covenant community in mission, raising up workers for the harvest.
- Lifelong learning: cultivating and growing one’s leadership takes a commitment that lasts a lifetime.

Year Four Goals (by June 2017)

- Hold five connection events.
- Launch two learning communities in different areas of leadership development.
- Launch three leadership collaborative cohorts.
- Launch one leadership development leadership community.
- Launch the Reformed Leadership Initiative with 27 RCA and CRC congregations.
- Collaborate with World Impact to launch site of the Urban Ministry Institute (TUMI) in Los Angeles.
- Collaborate with seven classis leaders to create an elder and deacon leadership training process. These classis leaders will work with Eddy Alemán to develop a process based on the following principles:
  - Grassroots
  - Research based
  - Easy to contextualize
  - Field tested
  - User friendly
  - Flexible

Progress

- 104 RCA congregations have participated in 15 leadership development connection events in different regions.
- Six RCA congregations completed the first leadership development leadership community, done in collaboration with Leadership Network. This leadership community took place in Dallas, Texas, from December 2014 to June 2016.
- The second leadership development leadership community will take place in Grand Rapids, Michigan, from May 2017 to September 2018.
- Five RCA Hispanic congregations completed a leadership development learning community in West Michigan. The meetings took place from July 2015 to November 2016. Participating congregations were:
  - Alas Conexión Church in Grand Rapids, Michigan
  - My Father’s House Church in Holland, Michigan
  - La Casa de Mi Padre in Wyoming, Michigan
  - Iglesia Alas de Aguila in Allendale, Michigan
  - Iglesia Alas de Aguila in Wyoming, Michigan
- Four RCA African American congregations in the New York area are participating in a two-year leadership development learning community that launched in May 2016. These congregations are:
  - Mott Haven Church in Bronx, New York
  - Highbridge Community Church in Bronx, New York
  - Reformed Church of Prince Bay in Prince Bay, New York
  - First Reformed Church of Astoria in Astoria, New York
Six churches in the Detroit Kingdom Enterprise Zone are participating in a two-year leadership development learning community that launched in August 2016. These congregations are:

- First Christian Reformed Church of Detroit in Detroit, Michigan
- Dearborn Christian Fellowship Christian Reformed Church in Dearborn, Michigan
- Hesed Community Church in Detroit, Michigan
- Grace Reformed Church in Allen Park, Michigan
- CenterPoint Church in Lewis Center, Ohio
- Word Encounter Church in Detroit, Michigan

Six RCA churches in Iowa completed an 18-month leadership collaborative focused on children and family ministries. Participating churches were:

- Adventure Life Reformed Church in Altoona, Iowa
- Bethel Reformed Church in Aplington, Iowa
- Cedar Hills Community Church in Cedar Rapids, Iowa
- Crossroads Church in Norwalk, Iowa
- Orchard Hills Reformed Church in Cedar Falls, Iowa
- Trinity Reformed Church in Allison, Iowa

Six Reformed Leadership Initiative cohorts (congregational leadership learning communities, CLLNs) were launched between September 2016 and January 2017.

- One Spanish-language CLLN with 12 congregations
- One Korean-language CLLN with eight congregations
- Four geographically-based CLLNs (New Jersey, Ontario, Central Iowa, and Central California) with a total of 27 congregations

Launched a Hispanic leadership collaborative in April 2017 in California. Another Hispanic leadership collaborative will launch in May 2017 in New York.

Launched a TUMI site in the fall of 2016 in Los Angeles in collaboration with World Impact. More than 20 emerging leaders are being equipped to minister in urban centers through this site.

One Mandarin-speaking leadership collaborative launched in May 2017 in connection with the pastors’ meeting of the Council for Pacific and Asian American Ministries.

Seven classis leaders have participated in an effort to develop a process to equip elders and deacons as leaders in the church. RCA pastor April Fiet is reviewing the process to ensure that it is inclusive of women who are called to serve as elders and deacons. The classis leaders are:

- Jeff Ludington, Classis of California
- Eric Moreno, Classis of California
- Chris Godfredsen, Classes of East and West Sioux
- Fred Bates, Classis of Southwest
- Lyle Zumdahl, Classis of Wisconsin
- Dale Assink, Classis of Central Plains
- Mike Gafa, Classis of North Grand Rapids

Five-Year Goals (June 2013 to June 2018)

- 30 congregations will have participated in a two-year learning community and are now actively engaged in identifying, equipping, and developing leaders for the work of ministry in the local church and in the world. These congregations will have a clear pathway to develop leaders that is unique to their local vision, context, and need.
- Seven RCA congregations will have completed a two-year leadership development leadership community and are engaged in replicating the process
with other RCA congregations. Ten more congregations will be participating in
the second cohort of the leadership development leadership community.
• 17 congregations will be fully participating in an RCA leadership development
leadership community, with 17 pastors and 85 church leaders who are fully
engaged in creating leadership development processes to help churches identify,
develop, and mobilize young, emerging, and current leaders.
• 27 RCA and CRC congregations will be participating in the Reformed Leadership
Initiative in six congregational leadership learning networks of ten to twelve
congregations each. One of these congregational leadership learning networks
will be in Korean and one will be in Spanish.
• 48 pastors and church leaders of diverse gender, age, ethnicity, and contexts will
have participated or will be participating in a leadership collaborative.
• 120 congregations from different regions will have participated in a leadership
development connection event.
• In collaboration with seven classis leaders, the Emerging Leaders team will have
created an elder and deacon leadership training process. This will be a resource
for RCA congregations to equip elders and deacons as leaders in the church.

THRIVING LEADERS, THRIVING CHURCHES

Thriving Leaders, Thriving Churches is guided by a coalition of pastors, denominational
staff, and regional synod staff. Andy Bossardet leads this team as the coordinator
for equipping thriving congregations. The team’s focus is to empower leaders and
congregations to take the next faithful step in their ministries, navigating the complexities
of leading change. This empowerment happens through high-impact coaching, learning
communities focused on personal and corporate transformation, support systems for
pastors and congregations in transition, and support in vision discernment.

Ridder Church Renewal

Ridder Church Renewal is a partnership of Western Theological Seminary, the RCA, and
the CRCNA that helps leaders develop the tools to confront unhealthy models that hinder
personal and congregational growth. Ridder is comprised of two intensive 30-month
modules; congregations commit to one module at a time. Every module consists of
five retreats (one retreat every six months for the course of the module), coaching, and
homework between retreats. Participating congregations choose a leadership team of four
to six congregants, plus the pastor. Five regions will engage in modules 1 and 2 of Ridder
Church Renewal, and two regions are entering the process by engaging in module 1.

Maximizing First-Call Potential

To maximize first-call potential, pastors in their first call engage with a mentor and a
peer group in self-directed learning based on challenges and opportunities in the ministry
context. Covenants of support and accountability are drawn up between congregations and
pastors to empower the first-call pastors in their learning. The first-call process lays the
foundation for thriving congregational and pastoral ministry. This work is being done in
partnership with the Lilly Endowment’s Sustaining Pastoral Excellence Program. A variety
of methods for learning communities are being pursued to provide support, training, and
accountability.

Pastors and Congregations in Transition

The Thriving Leaders, Thriving Churches team is developing new, more effective ways to
serve churches and pastors in the midst of a ministry transition. This will include training
and certification mechanisms for transitional ministers and vocational assessment for pastors between ministries, as well as clarifying the role that each partner in the RCA plays in helping ministers and congregations through transitions. For now, the focus has been on classes and providing training and resources for classis supervision. New work is beginning on empowering search teams through quality consultation and written resources.

Coaching

The team is developing a catalytic coaching network that will be made up of all the coaches who are working with the various learning community pilots. We will be putting together a catalog highlighting best practices, coaching models, and training for the coaches.

The team also plans to maximize current content-neutral training through better tracking and assessment of coaches. By tracking relationships, we will be able to more easily assess coaches and provide ongoing training and accountability for desired ministry outcomes across the RCA. Salesforce will provide a great platform for helping coaches succeed.

Congregational Vitality Pathways

Congregational Vitality Pathways (CVP) is a tool created by the Evangelical Covenant Church and utilized by the Far West Region to help congregations discern and live into God’s vision for their church. Health and vitality are measured by ten markers. CVP uses assessment tools, events, and an empowered vitality team to help a congregation move toward its goals. RCA congregations engaging CVP are meant to do so in a learning community format.

The Ezra Project

The Ezra Project is a learning community designed to empower and encourage African American pastors in the RCA. The learning community involves five to ten pastors who spend time with African American pastors in thriving ministries, learning personal, organizational, and reproducing leadership content over the course of a year. Ezra graduates then become facilitators and teachers for the next cohort of Ezra pastors.

Year Four Goals (by June 2017)

- Engage 100 congregations in the Ridder Church Renewal process (module 1 or module 2). See 50 RCA congregations complete both modules and continue to cultivate personal transformation and deepen their missional impact.
- Launch one learning community of first-call pastors.
- Create and deploy a training plan for classis supervisors.
- Ten congregations will have used the Transformational Church Assessment Tool.
- Develop and implement a catalytic coaching system that supports all of the learning and leadership communities in each of the three strategic priorities.
- Engage three churches outside the Far West Region in CVPs.
- Launch phase 2 of the Ezra Project (with six RCA pastors).

Progress

- Currently, 112 pastors representing 96 congregations are participating in Ridder Church Renewal; 62 of them are RCA congregations. Those congregations are split across seven regions, representing ten learning communities. Additionally, there is a team of RCA chaplains participating in Ridder in the Great Lakes (a first for Ridder). The Ridder Church Renewal modules will wrap up in the fall of
2017; recruitment for the next round will happen at the same time.

- The first learning community for first-call pastors wrapped up in Albany in May 2017. Recruitment for the second learning community began in late February 2017. Thriving Leaders, Thriving Churches will also supply guidance and potential leadership training to a fellowship program emerging in the Regional Synod of Albany.

- Classis supervisor training has been sent to classis clerks and posted to the RCA website at www.rca.org/ministryservices. Pilot training included approximately 20 supervisors in the Regional Synods of New York and Mid-America.

- Two churches are engaged with CVPs in the Regional Synod of the Heartland. Thriving Leaders, Thriving Churches is committed to partnering with these congregations through resourcing. Conversations continue in the Regional Synod of New York.

- Catalytic coach training has been completed, and the coaching catalog has been given to every initiative leader for use in their learning and leadership communities. A coach training video was filmed during a live training in the second quarter of 2017.

- Phase 2 of the Ezra Project will launch in Benton Harbor, Michigan, in June 2017. Phase 1 has already shown considerable success, with churches growing in ministry impact and overall health. One of the members will be stepping into a leadership role. Phase 3 of the Ezra Project, which is a new cohort, will be learning from the current Ezra Project churches.

- The Transformational Church learning community ended on March 4, 2017. While staff changes at LifeWay Christian Resources disrupted the flow of this learning community, the churches are strengthening their ministries and have success stories. From this point, the Transformational Church Assessment Tool (TCAT) will be utilized to help congregations connect to an appropriate learning community instead of as a learning community itself. At least three churches (in the Regionals Synods of Great Lakes and Mid-America) have used or will use the TCAT as a discernment tool.

**Five-Year Goals (June 2013 to June 2018)**

- 150 churches will have engaged Ridder; either they will have completed both modules or they will be actively engaging the process.

- At least three first-call learning communities will have been launched, and the Albany Synod Fellows Program will be supported

- A partnership of classes, regional synods, and others will have created resources for all stages of pastoral transition. At least 50 congregations will have benefitted from one or more of these resources.

- Two learning communities for CVPs will have been launched, with at least eight churches participating outside of the Regional Synod of the Far West.

- Phase 2 of the Ezra Project will have been completed; the original six pastors will have completed the Ezra Project and ten more pastors will have been recruited.

- 20 congregations will have used the TCAT in a connection event with the goals of ongoing transformation and (potentially) another learning community.

**WOMEN’S TRANSFORMATION AND LEADERSHIP**

Women’s Transformation and Leadership has been established as part of Transformed & Transforming to help the Reformed Church in America pursue the full inclusion of women’s gifts and influence in all areas of the church and beyond. Liz Testa leads the Women’s Transformation and Leadership team.
We are committed to ensuring that women of all generations and geographical and cultural contexts are able to experience transformation, be raised up for leadership, and live vibrantly into their God-given potential. As we encourage, equip, and empower women to fully and freely use their gifts and be developed as leaders, we usher in a vision of God’s reign, where brothers and sisters work together to build the body for mission in the world.

Women’s Transformation and Leadership has the following components:

- A ministry initiative to help the RCA pursue the full inclusion of the gifts and influence of women in the life of the church and as an integral part of Transformed & Transforming.
- A hub for opportunities that encourage, equip, and empower all women in their callings and connect them more deeply with God, each other, and the church.
- A place for congregations to begin or continue a journey of recognizing and exploring the gifts that women bring and designing ways to equip women for ministry.
- A catalyst for change, opening the RCA as a whole and women as individuals to the Spirit’s movement in women’s lives and ministries.

Women’s Transformation and Leadership lives out its vision by:

- Ensuring women have barrier-free access to RCA resources and opportunities.
- Celebrating the rich history of women in the RCA through things like the Women’s Sankofa trips and the “RCA Women: A Legacy of Leadership” booklet.
- Being an innovation incubator for new ideas such as the Lenten devotional video series.
- Offering an annual global experience for women—to Oman, to Israel/Palestine, and to Italy so far. Nicaragua and India are being explored for 2018 and 2019.
- Encouraging and equipping women through transformational connection events.
- Offering congregational learning communities to empower women to lead in ministry.
- Nurturing and developing both established and emerging female leaders through leadership collaboratives, mentoring, and clergy networks.
- Providing tuition assistance to female seminarians through the Beth E. Marcus Scholarship Fund.
- Connecting women virtually through a Facebook group and a quarterly e-newsletter.
- Creating a dynamic web resource featuring blogs by women; historical, biblical, and theological support for women in ministry; and ways for congregations, classes, and synods to intentionally integrate women’s gifts, voices, and leadership.
- Collaborating with the RCA seminaries, the Commission for Women, and other Transformed & Transforming initiatives to empower women in ministry.

Year Four Goals (by June 2017)

- Hold four to five connection events that encourage, equip, and empower female RCA lay leaders and clergy to live into their God-given callings.
- Develop a connection event model focused on equipping congregations to more fully include women’s gifts and influence, particularly in ministry leadership.
- Develop and launch one learning community focused on strengthening and expanding women’s leadership in church and society.
- Pilot three to five women’s leadership collaboratives with participants from a broad range of ministry contexts to develop their personal, organizational, and multiplying leadership.
• Organize and lead a women’s global mission experience to Italy that includes equipping the women on the trip to bring their learnings back to their congregations and effect change around the refugee crisis and human trafficking.

Progress

• Seven women’s connection events were held between March and December 2016, including the second annual Celebration of Women in Church Leadership at Western Theological Seminary; a women’s connection dinner at General Synod in Palos Heights, Illinois; a Women’s Sankofa through upstate New York; and a Hispanic women’s conference in Sacramento, California. More than 550 women from 110 RCA churches were represented at these events.
• Since 2014, more than 1,350 women have been impacted through Women’s Transformation and Leadership events.
• A connection event held in New York City in December 2016 drew 14 churches. Five of those churches committed to participate in the “Doing a New Thing” learning community, which launched on February 11, 2017.
• 2017 connection events are being developed with local partners in Michigan, New York, southern California, Colorado, Minnesota, and New Jersey.
• Six 18-month women’s leadership collaboratives were launched in February 2017. A lead facilitator and four other facilitators (RCA leaders from the Far West, Heartland, and New York regions) have been trained and will lead cohorts in English, Korean, and Spanish. Forty-five women will meet virtually and at an in-person gathering for personal, organizational, and multiplying leadership development over the next year and a half.
• A mini collaborative called Wholehearted Leadership has been developed as a next step to “Honoring our Stories” connection events. The first cohort was piloted in the fall of 2016 and drew nine women from a broad spectrum of ministry roles and ethnic/racial contexts. Two of these women have now joined the 18-month process.
• The women’s global mission experience took a group of 12 to 14 women to Palermo and Rome, Italy, in April 2017 to visit RCA missionaries JJ and Tim TenClay and experience their ministries for and among refugees and trafficked women. The group is bringing their learnings home to engage their home congregations.
• The Women’s Transformation and Leadership guiding coalition convened for a two-day summit at New Brunswick Theological Seminary in November 2016. Great energy and commitment emerged from this event. This group of 25 denominational leaders will all champion Women’s Transformation and Leadership in their regions.
• A delegation of coalition members will attend the Commission for Biblical Equality’s conference, “Mutual by Design,” in July 2017 to inform the development of a learning community model that assists congregations who want to explore and discern women’s leadership in the church.
• We are honored and delighted to partner with Eddy Alemán in the editing of a new elder and deacon training process. RCA pastor April Fiet is reviewing the process to ensure that it is intentionally inclusive of women who are called to be elders and deacons.
Five-Year Goals (June 2013 to June 2018)

- More than 2,000 women across the denomination will have been positively impacted by connection events.
- Ten to fifteen RCA congregations will have engaged in learning communities to explore and discern women’s leadership and the culture shift necessary to support this process.
- Ten to fifteen RCA congregations will have participated in learning communities to develop intentional leadership training and mentoring processes for women.
- 85 to 100 women will have participated in women’s leadership collaboratives.
- Three to four global mission experiences will have equipped 50 to 60 women and their congregations for deeper missional engagement.
RETIRE MINISTERS OF WORD AND SACRAMENT

During 2016, 54 ministers of Word and sacrament retired from active service. Those who retired are being recognized by General Synod through its endorsement of appreciation for their years of faithful and dedicated ministry in the church.

R 17-36
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.

Lynn Allhusen
Rochester, New York

Robert Anderson
Concord, New Hampshire

Thomas Bartha
East Stroudsburg, Pennsylvania

Ned Beadel
Fullerton, California

Roc Bottomly
Edmond, Oklahoma

Kenneth Bradsell
Boothbay Harbor, Maine

Norman Chen
Monroe, New Jersey

Grover Davis
Lockport, Illinois

Perry De Groot
Spencer, Iowa

Donald De Kok
Alton, Iowa

James DeVries
Kendall Park, New Jersey
Gary De Witt  
Miami, Florida

William De Young  
Belle Mead, New Jersey

John Eichenberger  
Geneva, New York

Robert Hann  
North Chili, New York

Stephen Hanson  
Whiting, New Jersey

Donald Hoaglander  
Ilion, New York

John Kapteyn  
London, Ontario

Diane Konynenbelt  
Hudsonville, Michigan

Harry Koops  
Hudsonville, Michigan

Linda Lachesnez-Norment  
Albuquerque, New Mexico

Harold Lay  
Brick, New Jersey

Louis Lotz  
Hudsonville, Michigan

Terry Maassen  
Lincoln, Nebraska

Lonzy McCarey  
Newark, New Jersey

Deborah McCreary  
Grand Rapids, Michigan

Marlin Meendering  
Eden Prairie, Minnesota

John Ornee  
Zeeland, Michigan

Luis Perez  
Winter Garden, Florida
Roger Peterson
Tulare, California

Richard Plass
Madison, Indiana

Donald Poest
Brunswick, Ohio

Keith Poppen
El Dorado Hills, California

Roger Punt
Woodbury, Minnesota

Allan Ramirez
Hialeah, Florida

Paul Rosa
Bethel, Delaware

Kenneth Ruge
Scarsdale, New York

David Schutt
Pleasant Hill, Iowa

Steven Slater
Kalamazoo, Michigan

Thomas Stewart
Stillwater, Oklahoma

H. Arlan TenClay
Hudsonville, Michigan

Raymond Tilstra
DeKalb, Illinois

Marjorie Vander Wagen
Downers Grove, Illinois

Darwin Vander Wal
Kalamazoo, Michigan

Peter Van Dyke
Canyon Lake, California

Robert Van Hofwegen
Modesto, California

Wayne Van Kampen
Denver, Colorado
Katie Van Veldhuizen
New River, Arizona

Paul Walther
Brielle, New Jersey

Donald Waterhouse
Highland Grove, Ontario

Robert Williams
Cleveland, Tennessee

Joseph Wojnarowski
Milwaukee, Wisconsin

Joseph Woods
Spotswood, New Jersey

Kenneth Zorgdrager
Gulf Shores, Alabama
(ADOPTED)
NECROLOGY

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Wayne E. Kiel  December 19, 2016  87
Louis Otto Springsteen  December 22, 2016  90
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Byron E. “Bud” White

Byron E. White was born on July 3, 1923, in Kalamazoo, Michigan. He studied at the University of Denver, from which he graduated in 1955. He received his LL.B. at the same school in 1956 and his J.D. in 1970. He received his theological education at Western Theological Seminary, from which he graduated in 1962. He also received an M.A. from Wayne State University in 1968 and a Ph.D. from The Fielding Institute (now Fielding Graduate University) in 1983.

Mr. White was licensed by the Classis of West Central in 1962 and ordained by the Classis of Muskegon the same year. He pastored the following congregations: Coopersville, Michigan, from 1962 to 1966; Faith Community, Detroit, Michigan, from 1966 to 1968; Resurrection, Flint, Michigan, from 1974 to 1984; Sunnyside, Long Island City, New York, from 1988 to 1989; Hope Community, Aurora, Colorado, from 1989 to 1990; Rolling Hills
Community, Orlando, Florida, from 1990 to 1991; Second Union, Puerto Rico, from 1991 to 1992; and a church in Malaysia from 1993 to 1994. He also served as the executive director of West Side Ecumenical Ministries in Cleveland, Ohio, from 1968 to 1974 and in private practice in psychology in Traverse City, Michigan, from 1984 to 1987. He also had a career as a corporate lawyer and a business executive.

Mr. White died on January 12, 2016, in Penney Farms, Florida. He was 92 years old.

Virgil E. Dykstra

Virgil E. Dykstra was born on September 4, 1934, in Leighton, Iowa. He studied at Central College, from which he graduated in 1967. He received his theological education at Western Theological Seminary, from which he graduated in 1970.

Mr. Dykstra was licensed and ordained by the Classis of Pella in 1970. He pastored the following congregations: Zion, Sheffield, Iowa, from 1970 to 1980; Carmel, Iowa, from 1981 to 1991; and Trinity, Allison, Iowa, from 1991 to 1998.

Mr. Dykstra died on January 23, 2016, in Des Moines, Iowa. He was 81 years old.

Chester John Droog

Chester John Droog was born on December 16, 1921, in Hull, Iowa. He began his undergraduate studies at Northwestern Junior College and completed them at Hope College, from which he graduated in 1947. He received his theological education at Western Theological Seminary, from which he graduated in 1950. He received a Ph.D. from the California Graduate Seminary in 1976.

Mr. Droog was licensed by the Classis of West Sioux in 1950 and ordained by the Classis of East Sioux the same year. He pastored the following congregations: Hope, Spencer, Iowa, from 1950 to 1953; Fifth, Grand Rapids, Michigan, from 1953 to 1965; and Bethel, Bellflower, California, from 1965 to 1973. He served as the field secretary for the Particular Synod of the West from 1973 to 1988.

Mr. Droog died on February 5, 2016, in Artesia, California. He was 94 years old.

Anna Mae Dekker

Anne Mae Hager Dekker was born on April 27, 1924, in Chicago, Illinois.

She and her husband served as missionaries in Bahrain from 1951 to 1969.

Mrs. Dekker died on February 6, 2016. She was 91 years old.

Armand Robert Renskers

Armand Robert Renskers was born on August 10, 1928, in Cedar Grove, Wisconsin. He studied at Central College, from which he graduated in 1950. He received his theological education at New Brunswick Theological Seminary, from which he graduated in 1953.

Mr. Renskers was licensed by the Classis of Wisconsin in 1953 and ordained by the Classis of Raritan the same year. He pastored the following congregations: Peapack, Gladstone, New Jersey, from 1953 to 1955; Harrington Park, New Jersey, from 1955 to 1960; Bethany, Kalamazoo, Michigan, from 1960 to 1965; Pompton, Pompton Lakes, New Jersey, from
1965 to 1968; Second, Pella, Iowa, from 1968 to 1975; First, Grand Haven, Michigan, from 1975 to 1978; and Three Bridges, New Jersey, from 1978 to 1993. He also served as president of the Particular Synod of the West in 1972 and of the Regional Synod of the Mid-Atlantics from 1989 to 1990. He was also the president of the board of trustees of Central College and of the board of directors of The Reserve, where he lived in retirement.

Mr. Renskers died on April 4, 2016, in Urbandale, Iowa. He was 87 years old.

Kenneth Harrison Lobb

Kenneth Harrison Lobb studied at Hope College, from which he graduated in 1977. He received an Ed.M. from Adelphia University and an associate degree in telecommunications from the New York Institute of Technology. He received his theological education at New Brunswick Theological Seminary, from which he graduated in 2007.

Mr. Lobb was ordained by the Classis of Delaware-Raritan in 2010. He pastored nine Presbyterian and Reformed congregations in New Jersey as a student, interim, or supply pastor, including Belvidere, Bradley Gardens, Forks Township, High Bridge, Lebanon, Millstone, Newtown, Phillipsburg, and Stanton. He then pastored Annandale Reformed in Annandale, New Jersey, from 2008 until his death. Mr. Lobb also served as the president of Delaware-Raritan Classis.

Mr. Lobb died on April 6, 2016, in Hanover Township, Pennsylvania. He was 62 years old.

Philip A. Rauwerdink

Philip A. Rauwerdink was born on December 31, 1944, in Sheboygan, Wisconsin. He studied at Hope College, from which he graduated in 1968. He received his theological education at Western Theological Seminary, from which he graduated in 1988.

Mr. Rauwerdink was ordained by the Classis of Wisconsin in 1989. He pastored at Glendale, Queens, New York City, from 1990 to 1999 and Trinity in Munster, Indiana, from 1999 to 2000. He served a number of Reformed churches in an interim capacity during his retirement.

Mr. Rauwerdink died on April 14, 2016, in Sheboygan, Wisconsin. He was 71 years old.

Ernest Doyle

Ernest Doyle was received from the Anglican Church by the Classis of Cascades in 1977. He pastored Monarch Reformed in Alberta, Canada, from 1977 until his retirement in 1988. He retired to Lethbridge, Alberta, where he continued to conduct worship services into his 90s.

Mr. Doyle died on May 5, 2016, in Lethbridge, Alberta. He was 94 years old.

John Hollebrands Meyer

John Hollebrands Meyer was born on September 27, 1937, in Hudson, New York. He studied at Hope College, from which he graduated in 1959. He received his theological education at New Brunswick Theological Seminary, from which he graduated in 1962.

Mr. Meyer was licensed by the Classis of Schenectady in 1961 and ordained by the Classis of Schoharie the same year. He pastored the following congregations: Berne and
Beaverdam, New York, from 1962 to 1967; College Point, New York, from 1967 to 1972; and Douglaston, Queens, New York, from 1972 to 2000. Mr. Meyer has served on the board of trustees for Hope College and as president of the Regional Synod of New York from 1972 to 1975. He continued to preach in his retirement when called upon at the Sugar Run and Wyalusing Presbyterian Churches and Lake Carey Chapel in Pennsylvania.

Mr. Meyer died on May 9, 2016, in Laceyville, Pennsylvania. He was 78 years old.

Richard James Bates

Richard James Bates was born on October 15, 1937, in Detroit, Michigan. He studied at Grand Valley State College (now called Grand Valley State University), from which he graduated in 1966. He received his theological education at Western Theological Seminary, from which he graduated in 1969. He received an M.Th. from Calvin Theological Seminary in 1978 and a D.Min. from Austin Presbyterian Seminary in 1982.

Mr. Bates was licensed and ordained by the Classis of North Grand Rapids in 1969. He pastored the following congregations: Trinity, Grand Rapids, Michigan, from 1969 to 1976; Third, Grand Rapids, Michigan, from 1979 to 1983; Christ, Oakbrook, Illinois, from 1983 to 1990; Fairview, Grand Rapids, Michigan, from 1990 to 1994; and Orchard Hill, Grand Rapids, Michigan, from 1994 to 2000. He also served as a chaplain in the United States Army from 1976 to 1979.

Mr. Bates died on May 11, 2016, in Grand Rapids, Michigan. He was 79 years old.

David William Waanders

David William Waanders was born on January 23, 1941, in Sioux City, Iowa. He studied at Hope College, from which he graduated in 1962. He received his theological education at New Brunswick Theological Seminary, from which he graduated in 1965. He received a Ph.D. from Princeton Theological Seminary in 1973.

Mr. Waanders was licensed by the Classis of South Grand Rapids in 1965 and ordained by the Classis of New Brunswick in 1970. Mr. Waanders’s ministry was spent teaching pastoral care and counseling at New Brunswick Theological Seminary from 1969 until his retirement in 2007. He also served as a pastoral counselor at Trinity Counseling Service in Princeton, New Jersey.

Mr. Waanders died on May 23, 2016, in Piscataway, New Jersey. He was 75 years old.

Paul Leslie Lupkes

Paul Leslie Lupkes was born on January 21, 1927, in Austinville, Iowa. He studied at Hope College, from which he graduated in 1950. He received his theological education at Western Theological Seminary, from which he graduated in 1953. He also received an S.T.M. from Christian Theological Seminary in 1953 and a D.Min. from McCormick Theological Seminary in 1989.

Mr. Lupkes was licensed by the Classis of Pleasant Prairie in 1953 and ordained by the Classis of Germania the same year. He pastored the following congregations: Immanuel, Willow Lake, South Dakota, from 1953 to 1955; Grace, Waterloo, Iowa, from 1955 to 1961; Keystone, Indianapolis, Indiana, from 1961 to 1968; Church of the Rockies, Denver, Colorado, from 1969 to 1974; and the Church of New Hope (independent), Thornton, Colorado, from 1975 to 1976. He also ministered in the following capacities: hospital
chaplain, Denver, Colorado, from 1976 to 1977; minister of evangelism, Particular Synod of the West, from 1968 to 1969; campus ministry, Rapid City, South Dakota, from 1977 to 1992; associate professor, South Dakota School of Mines and Technology, from 1979 to 2000; and chaplain, VA Medical Center, Fort Meade, Sturgis, South Dakota, from 1990 to 2000.

Mr. Lupkes died on May 31, 2016, in Rapid City, South Dakota. He was 89 years old.

Jonathan James Hinkamp

Jonathan James Hinkamp was born on January 22, 1935, in Schenectady, New York. He studied at Hope College, from which he graduated in 1955. He received his theological education at New Brunswick Theological Seminary, from which he graduated in 1958.

Mr. Hinkamp was licensed by the Classis of Poughkeepsie in 1958 and ordained by the Classis of Metropolitan Jersey the same year. He pastored the following congregations: Fifth Street, Bayonne, New Jersey, from 1958 to 1962 and Flatlands, Brooklyn, New York, from 1962 to 2002.

Mr. Hinkamp died on June 21, 2016, in Ticonderoga, New York. He was 81 years old.

Marilyn Tanis Franken

Marilyn Tanis Franken died in July 2016. Marilyn and her husband Darrell served as RCA missionaries in Bahrain for eight years from 1963 to 1968. Marilyn was a nurse at the American Mission Hospital and Darrell was pastor of the National Evangelical Church in Bahrain. The daughter of Edward Tanis, Marilyn graduated from Central College with a BS in 1954, having become a registered nurse at Iowa Methodist Hospital in Des Moines in 1953. She worked as a nurse and nursing instructor in Iowa before moving to Bahrain in 1955 to serve as a volunteer nurse at the American Mission Hospital. She returned to the United States in 1958, but her experience inspired a lifelong passion for mission service. During the first Gulf War in 1991, Marilyn served again as a Red Cross volunteer, this time in Kuwait. The Kuwait City Hospital had a staff of 300 before the war began, but only 24 staff members were left to treat the people of Kuwait during the war. Marilyn received a medal from the Department of Defense for her sacrificial service during that war.

Richard J. Vander Borgh

Richard J. Vander Borgh was born on May 12, 1942, in Bay Shore, Long Island, New York. He studied at Hope College, from which he graduated in 1964. His theological education began at the Oberlin School of Theology in 1964 and was completed at New Brunswick Theological Seminary, from which he graduated in 1967.

Mr. Vander Borgh was licensed by the Classis of Nassau-Suffolk in 1967 and ordained by the Classis of Columbia-Greene the same year. He pastored the following congregations: Linlithgo, Livingston, New York, from 1967 to 1972; Mohawk, New York, from 1973 to 1983; and Old North, Dumont, New Jersey, from 1983 to 2013.

Mr. Vander Borgh died on July 16, 2016, in Westwood, New Jersey. He was 74 years old.

Robert Lawrence Grupe

Robert Lawrence Grupe was born on January 24, 1931, in Schenectady, New York. He studied at Siena College, from which he graduated in 1953. He received his theological
education at New Brunswick Theological Seminary, from which he graduated in 1956.

Mr. Grupe was licensed by the Classis of Schenectady in 1956 and ordained by the Classis of Montgomery the same year. He pastored the following congregations: Sprakers and Currytown, New York, from 1956 to 1959 and Rosendale, New York, from 1959 to 1961. He served as the stated pulpit supply pastor at Highwoods, Saugerties, New York, from 1961 to 1965 and was engaged in specialized ministry as a teacher at Stone Ridge, New York, beginning in 1966 until his retirement. He also served as an interim pastor in various churches, including Ellenville, New York, from 1998 to 1999; Federated, Kerhonkson, New York; Rochester, Accord, New York; Marbletown, Stone Ridge, New York; North Marbletown, Kingston, New York; Woodstock, New York; Community, High Falls, New York; and Gardiner, New York.

Mr. Grupe died on August 5, 2016, in Belgrade, Montana. He was 85 years old.

James Lewis Johnson

James Lewis Johnson was born on December 13, 1944, in Lewisburg, Pennsylvania. He studied at Bloomsburg College. He received his theological education at Bangor Theological Seminary, from which he graduated, with additional graduate study at Drew University.

Mr. Johnson was ordained in the United Methodist Church and served several congregations there. He was received by the Classis of Rockland-Westchester in 1981 and pastored Tappan Reformed in New York from 1981 to 2004. He also served as president of the Particular Synod of New York and as chaplain for the Tappan, New York, fire department.

Mr. Johnson died on August 5, 2016, in Portland, Maine. He was 71 years old.

Bernard Dean Ekema

Bernard Dean Ekema was born on June 23, 1930, in Kalamazoo, Michigan. He studied at Hope College, from which he graduated in 1963. He received his theological education at Western Theological Seminary, from which he graduated in 1966.

Mr. Ekema was licensed by the Classis of Kalamazoo in 1966 and ordained by the Classis of Dakota the same year. He pastored the following congregations: Harrison, South Dakota, from 1966 to 1969; First, Three Oaks, Michigan, from 1969 to 1979; and Community, Williamsville, New York, from 1979 to 1980. Mr. Ekema was engaged in specialized ministry with NuWay, Inc. in Kalamazoo, Michigan, from 1981 to 1996.

Mr. Ekema died on September 1, 2016, in Kalamazoo, Michigan. He was 86 years old.

Thomas James Harris, Jr.

Thomas James Harris, Jr. was born on September 23, 1932, in Blakely, Pennsylvania. He studied at Hope College, from which he graduated in 1958. He received his theological education at Western Theological Seminary, from which he graduated in 1961. He also studied at the International Christian University in Japan from 1963 to 1965.

Mr. Harris was licensed and ordained by the Classis of New York in 1961. He pastored the following congregations: Hillsborough, Millstone, New Jersey, from 1968 to 1978; United, Somerville, New Jersey, from 1978 to 1980; and Stoney Brook, New York, from 1980 to 1998. He was also an administrative assistant for the RCA Board of World Missions from 1961 to 1962 and an RCA missionary in Japan from 1963 to 1968. In his retirement, he was
a contract pastor at First Reformed Church in Denver, Colorado.

Mr. Harris died on September 5, 2016. He was 83 years old.

Wilbur Ervin Ivins

Wilbur Ervin Ivins was born on July 27, 1921, in Feasterville, Pennsylvania. He studied at Central College, from which he graduated in 1942. He received his theological education at New Brunswick Theological Seminary, from which he graduated in 1945.

Mr. Ivins was licensed by the Classis of Philadelphia in 1945 and ordained by the Classis of Schoharie the same year. He pastored the following congregations: Lawyersville and Sharon, Lawyersville, New York, from 1945 to 1949; Pascack, Park Ridge, New Jersey, from 1949 to 1963; First, Catskill, New York, from 1963 to 1968; and Harlingen, Belle Mead, New Jersey, from 1968 to 1988. He served on the staff at First Church in Albany, New York, from 1989 to 2000. Mr. Ivins as served as a chaplain at Boys Training School in Skillman, New Jersey; as a board member of New Brunswick Theological Seminary, the RCA Board of World Missions, and the RCA General Synod Council; and as president of the Regional Synod of the Mid-Atlantics.

Mr. Ivins died on September 23, 2016, in Cobleskill, New York. He was 95 years old.

Wilbur Thornton Washington

Wilbur Thornton Washington was born on January 19, 1924, in Palmyra, New Jersey. He began his undergraduate work at Tuskegee Institute in 1942, then studied at West Virginia State College, and graduated from Rutgers University in 1949. He received his theological education at New Brunswick Theological Seminary, from which he graduated in 1952. He did additional graduate work at Chicago University and the Pacific School of Religion. He received a D.D. from Central College and New Brunswick Theological Seminary.

Mr. Washington was licensed by the Presbytery of Cleveland in 1953 and ordained by the same presbytery in 1954. He was received by the Classis of Iliana that same year. He pastored the following congregations: Pembroke, St. Anne, Illinois, from 1954 to 1959; Community, Oakland, California, from 1959 to 1969; and First, Jamaica, New York, from 1985 to 1993. He served interim pastorates at Fort Washington Collegiate, New York City, New York, from 1994 to 1997 and Community, Glen Rock, New Jersey, from 1998 to 1999. Mr. Washington also served as a professor at Central College from 1969 to 1980 and at New Brunswick Theological Seminary from 1980 to 1985. He was president of the Particular Synod of the West from 1969 to 1970 and the first African American president of the General Synod from 1988 to 1989. He also served on the World Alliance of Reformed Churches board for the Caribbean/North America area from 1991 to 1992.

Mr. Washington died on October 3, 2016, in Cinnaminson, New Jersey. He was 92 years old.

Eloise Hannah (Boynton) Bosch

Eloise Hannah Bosch was born on August 4, 1919, in Mohawk, New York. She studied at Hope College, from which she graduated in 1941. She also studied at the Biblical Seminary in New York.

Mrs. Bosch was married to Dr. Donald Bosch, a medical missionary in the Arabian Gulf. Together they served on the mission field from 1955 until their retirement in 1983. She
served her working life in Oman as a teacher at the American Mission School in Muscat (the Al Amana School), teaching in both Arabic and English.

Mrs. Bosch died on October 7, 2016, in Oman. She was 97 years old.

**James E. Ribbans**

James E. Ribbans was born in 1951 in Somerville, New Jersey. He studied at the University of Southern California, from which he graduated in 1975. He received his theological education at New Brunswick Theological Seminary, from which he graduated in 1984.

Mr. Ribbans was ordained by the Classis of Raritan in 1984. He began his ministry as associate pastor in Syracuse, New York, from 1984 to 1988. He then served as the coordinator of programs in the Regional Synod of Albany from 1988 to 1990. He also served as pastor at First, Chatham, New York, from 1990 to 2000 and at Spotswood, New Jersey, from 2001 until his death.

Mr. Ribbans died on October 17, 2016, in Spotswood, New Jersey. He was 65 years old.

**Elinor Heusinkveld Faber**

Elinor Heusinkveld Faber (Ellie) died on November 17, 2016. Ellie was born in St. Paul, Minnesota, on November 2, 1922, to Christian and Hilda Gran. After graduation from the University of Minnesota as a registered nurse in 1943, she married Dr. Maurice Heusinkveld. Maurice and Ellie were RCA missionaries to the Arabian Mission from 1946 to 1967, with assignments in Kuwait, Iraq, Bahrain, and Oman. After Maurice died in 1967, Ellie returned to America and settled in Holland, Michigan.

**Stanley Bernard Vander Aarde**

Stanley Bernard Vander Aarde was born on September 26, 1931, in Orange City, Iowa. He began his studies at Northwestern Junior College in Orange City in 1949 and completed them at Hope College, from which he graduated in 1953. He received his medical degree from Northwestern University in 1957 and became a fellow of the American Board of Otolaryngology in 1970.

Dr. Vander Aarde served as a medical missionary for the RCA in India from 1961 to 1987. He was in general practice at the Mary Lott Lyles Hospital in Madanapalle, India. After his otolaryngology residence in 1970, he served as director of the Union Mission Tuberculosis Sanatorium and as medical superintendent in the same hospital.

Dr. Vander Aarde died on November 19, 2016, in Orange City, Iowa. He was 85 years old.

**Barnabas Roczy**

Barnabas Roczy was born on November 24, 1935, in Szendrőlád, Borsod County, Hungary. He studied at the Földes Ferenc Gimnázium in Miskolc, Hungary, and graduated in 1956. He received his theological education at Faith Theological Seminary, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, from which he graduated in 1961. He received his S.T.M. from Westminster Theological Seminary in Philadelphia.

Mr. Roczy was ordained in 1965 in the Hungarian Reformed Church of Roebling, New Jersey. He served many congregations in the Hungarian Reformed and Presbyterian churches. He was received by the Classis of New Brunswick in 1981 and served as pastor
of the Magyar Reformed Church, in New Brunswick, New Jersey, from 1981 to 2008.

Mr. Roczey died on November 23, 2016, in New Brunswick, New Jersey. He was 80 years old.

John Richard Boender

John Richard Boender was born on October 30, 1930, in Hospers, Iowa. He studied at Central College, from which he graduated in 1951. He received his theological education at Western Theological Seminary, from which he graduated in 1954.

Mr. Boender was licensed and ordained by the Classis of East Sioux in 1954. He began his ministry as a chaplain in the United States Army, where he served from 1954 to 1956. He then pastored the following congregations: First, Allendale, Michigan, from 1956 to 1961; Harrison, South Dakota, from 1961 to 1966; Salem, Little Rock, Iowa, from 1966 to 1974; Hingham, Wisconsin, from 1974 to 1990; American, Woodstock, Minnesota, from 1990 to 1999; First, Allendale, Michigan, from 1999 to 2000; and Covenant Community, Hudsonville, Michigan, from 2001 to 2003.

Mr. Boender died on December 3, 2016, in Sheldon, Iowa. He was 86 years old.

Donald Robert Baird

Donald Robert Baird was born on December 11, 1933, in Jersey City, New Jersey. He studied at Hope College, from which he graduated in 1955. He received his theological education at New Brunswick Theological Seminary, from which he graduated in 1958.

Mr. Baird was licensed by the Classis of Paramus in 1958 and ordained by the Classis of Columbia the same year. He pastored the following congregations: Philmont, New York, from 1958 to 1962; Massapequa, New York, from 1963 to 1972; Feasterville, Pennsylvania, from 1972 to 1977; Pompton Plains, New Jersey, from 1977 to 1982; and Canajoharie, New York, from 1982 to 1990. He served on the staff of the Particular Synod of Albany, and was associate for congregational evangelism for the General Synod Council from 1990 to 1999.

Mr. Baird died on December 7, 2016, in Laurinburg, North Carolina. He was 82 years old.

Lee Llewelly Kester

Lee Llewellyn Kester was born on August 20, 1926, in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. He studied at Central College, from which he graduated in 1947. He received his theological education at New Brunswick Theological Seminary, from which he graduated in 1951.

Mr. Kester was licensed by the Classis of Philadelphia in 1951 and ordained by the Classis of Westchester the same year. He pastored the following congregations: Reformed Church of Cortlandtown, Montrose, New York, from 1951 to 1954; Bronxville, New York, from 1954 to 1964; Oradell, New Jersey, from 1964 to 1977; and St John’s, Jersey City, New Jersey, from 1977 to 1987. He also worked as a financial planner for American Express from 1978 to 1995 and served as the president of the Particular Synod of New York from 1959 to 1960.

Mr. Kester died on December 10, 2016, in Brunswick, Maine. He was 90 years old.
Willis Arthur Jones

Willis Arthur Jones was born on May 28, 1938, in El Dorado, Arkansas. He studied at Arkansas College, from which he graduated in 1960. He received his theological education at Austin Theological Seminary, from which he graduated in 1964. He did additional graduate study at Trinity College, Glasgow University, in 1966.


Mr. Jones died on December 17, 2016, in Inverness, Scotland. He was 78 years old.

Norman Charles Hamm

Norman Charles Hamm was born on March 12, 1952, in Troy, New York. He studied at Hope College, from which he graduated in 1974. He received his theological education at Western Theological Seminary, from which he graduated in 1978.

Mr. Hamm was licensed and ordained by the Classis of Schenectady in 1978. He pastored the following congregations: Glen, New York, from 1978 to 1983; Germantown, New York, from 1984 to 1992; Faith, Hazlet, New Jersey, from 1992 to 2000; contract pastor, Keyport, New Jersey, from 1999 to 2000; First Glenville, Amsterdam, New York, from 2001 to 2007; First, Athens, New York, from 2010 to 2015; and Jerusalem, Feura Bush, New York, from 2015 until his death.

Mr. Hamm died on December 18, 2016, in Scotia, New York. He was 64 years old.

Wayne Kiel

Wayne Kiel was born on April 21, 1929, in Jenison, Michigan. He studied at Hope College, from which he graduated in 1963. He received his theological education at Western Theological Seminary, from which he graduated in 1966.

Mr. Kiel was licensed and ordained by the Classis of South Grand Rapids in 1966. He served as pastor at Peace, Middleville, Michigan, from 1966 to 1989 and as minister for congregational care at First, South Holland, Illinois, from 1989 to 1995. He served on staff at Gun Lake Community Church for 15 years during his retirement.

Mr. Kiel died on December 19, 2016, in Zeeland, Michigan. He was 87 years old.

Louis Otto Springsteen

Louis Otto Springsteen was born on September 12, 1926, in Jamaica, New York. He studied at Dartmouth College, from which he graduated in 1948. He received his theological education at New Brunswick Theological Seminary, from which he graduated in 1953.

Mr. Springsteen was licensed by the Classis of North Long Island in 1953 and ordained by the Classis of Orange the same year. He served as pastor at New Prospect, Pine Bush, New York, from 1953 to 1958 and at Trinity, Old Tappan, New Jersey, from 1958 to 1991.
Mr. Springsteen also served as a senior pastor in the pastor-to-pastor program of the Board of Pensions from 1991 to 1994 and as a pastor of calling at Old Paramus, Ridgewood, New Jersey, in 1996. He also served interim pastorates at Old Paramus, Ridgewood, New Jersey, in 1999 and at Saddle River, Upper Saddle River, New Jersey, from 1998 to 2000. Mr. Springsteen also served as the stated clerk of the Classis of Greater Palisades.

Mr. Springsteen died on December 22, 2016. He was 90 years old.

**Bernard Daniel Hakken**

Bernard Daniel Hakken was born on December 26, 1926, in Bahrain. He studied at Hope College, from which he graduated in 1950. He received his theological education at Western Theological Seminary, from which he graduated in 1953.

Mr. Hakken was licensed by the Classis of Holland in 1953 and ordained by the Classis of Zeeland the same year. He pastored the following congregations: Dunningville, Allegan, Michigan, from 1953 to 1954; Forest Home, Muskegon, Michigan, from 1963 to 1969; Everglade, Grand Rapids, Michigan, from 1969 to 1974; New Life, Grand Rapids, Michigan, from 1974 to 1978; and First, Sully, Iowa, from 1978 to 1992. Mr. Hakken also served the RCA as a missionary in Manila, Philippines, from 1956 to 1963.

Mr. Hakken died on December 24, 2016, in Wayland, Michigan. He was 89 years old.

**William Howard Jewett**

William Howard Jewett was born on June 7, 1930, at Schenectady, New York. He studied at Central College, from which he graduated in 1951. He received his theological education at New Brunswick Theological Seminary, from which he graduated in 1955. Mr. Jewett also received an MBA from the Wharton School, University of Pennsylvania, in 1953.

Mr. Jewett was licensed by the Classis of Schenectady in 1955 and ordained by the Classis of Ulster the same year. He pastored the following congregations: Fair Street, Kingston, New York, from 1955 to 1956; West New Hempstead, Spring Valley, New York, from 1956 to 1969; and Brielle, New Jersey, from 1969 to 1995. Mr. Jewett also served as the president of the Particular Synod of New Jersey from 1977 to 1978 and as the chaplain of the New Jersey Senate for four years under the Byrne administration.

Mr. Jewett died on December 26, 2016, in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. He was 86 years old.

Each spring, the general secretary is required to report to the General Synod Council about progress on the various ends policies established by the GSC. The monitoring report on ends policy E-4: Christ’s Kingdom Mission follows.

ENDS POLICY E-4: CHRIST’S KINGDOM MISSION

The RCA will engage, equip, and encourage congregations and missional communities to participate in Christ’s kingdom mission, both locally and globally.

GENERAL SECRETARY’S INTERPRETATION

“May God be gracious to us and bless us and make his face to shine upon us, that your way may be known upon earth, your saving power among all nations” (Psalm 67:1-2).

Mission becomes a way of life when we reach out to people with the gospel, meeting needs in neighborhoods, cities, and throughout the world. Empowered by the Holy Spirit, we boldly give witness to the hope within us and willingly serve others by becoming the hands and feet of Christ in every corner of the world. The RCA’s commitment is to respond with God’s love to meet spiritual and individual needs around the globe. It is envisioning the people of the RCA as a movement of faithful followers who live and love like Jesus as they radically follow Christ in mission together.

Individuals and churches experience transformation as they open themselves to be used by God and reach out in giving and receiving, learning and sharing, and extending the kingdom of God through missional engagement. This means bringing the good news of God’s grace in Jesus Christ to those who have never heard the message, mobilizing RCA congregations to connect with global partners for greater kingdom impact, helping resource volunteers for expanding involvement in mission efforts, and extending compassion, mercy, and justice in places of discrimination, poverty, famine, disaster, and injustice. In a world of brokenness and need, we offer help, hope, and tangible expressions of God’s love.

OVERVIEW

Six initiative teams work within the Christ’s Kingdom Mission strategic priority: Local Missional Engagement, which helps congregations express the gospel of Christ in transformational ways in their local community; Global Missional Engagement, which equips congregations to increase their global mission impact; Church Multiplication, focused on reaching the spiritually disconnected with new churches that proclaim the gospel; Volunteer Engagement, which provides opportunities for volunteers of all ages to engage in service for Christ; and Missional Mosaic, focused on equipping congregations for cultural competency and empowering them to advocate on behalf of the marginalized. RCA Disability Concerns also falls under the umbrella of the Christ’s Kingdom Mission strategic priority.

LOCAL MISSIONAL ENGAGEMENT

Local Missional Engagement helps churches and individuals look beyond the obvious for new ways to bring hope to their communities. Local mission also brings groups of churches together to explore what mutual mission looks like in their context. Effective local mission ministries can transform neighborhoods and cities. The Local Missional Engagement initiative is led by Eliza Bast.
Year Four Goals (by June 2017)

- Launch two high-quality learning communities.
- Launch two local impact areas that mobilize at least three congregations for collective impact on their community.
- Hold six to eight connection events.

Progress

- One Local Missional Engagement leadership community has been completed. Two of the congregations involved in that leadership community are now leading or will be leading a Local Missional Engagement learning community in their area.
  - North Branch Reformed Church in Bridgewater, New Jersey, is now leading a Local Missional Engagement learning community in the New Jersey area that includes six additional churches.
  - Bethany Reformed Church in Sheboygan, Wisconsin, launched a Local Missional Engagement learning community in Wisconsin in May 2017, with a goal of engaging six churches.
- Local Missional Engagement is partnering with Church Multiplication for an experiential joint learning community with five church planters in the southwest Michigan and northern Illinois areas, which began in late spring 2017.
- Local Missional Engagement is partnering with churches and civic leaders in Holland Michigan, to form a local impact area focused on addressing the affordable housing crisis for people who have lower incomes in Ottawa County. This project involves churches in the Classis of Holland and the Classis of Zeeland.
- Through the Local Missional Engagement initiative, the RCA was awarded a planning grant from the State of Michigan to develop math interventions for students in the Wyoming, Michigan, area. Local Missional Engagement staff met with local superintendents, district leaders, and educators to help design a math program targeting the students in this low-income area who are struggling to perform at grade level in math. The RCA will submit an application to AmeriCorps for an implementation grant to help support this project over the next three years. Congregations engaged in this effort are primarily church plants in Wyoming.
- In Chicago, 12 RCA and CRC churches are currently participating in a hybrid local impact area and learning community. They are considering a collaboration that would impact the Chicagoland area.
- Local Missional Engagement is looking at starting a local impact area within the state of Iowa in the summer or fall of 2017.
- Five connection events have been completed this year. Local Missional Engagement is currently working on collaborative connection events with the African American Black Council, Church Multiplication, Next Generation Engagement, and Thriving Leaders, Thriving Churches.

Five-Year Goals (June 2013 to June 2018)

- For churches that have engaged in Local Missional Engagement learning and leadership communities:
  - By 12 months after the process, at least 50 percent of congregations will have adjusted ministry plans and begun work with key community partners.
By 18 months, at least 50 percent of congregations will have begun new ministry projects and processes with key community partners and stakeholders.

- In the local impact areas, all churches will have identified their key community partners and stakeholders. Within six months of the process, all churches will have begun to implement their strategy to impact their local community. Within 12 months of the process, all churches will have adjusted resources to appropriately support their area’s focus.
- One leadership collaborative with Local Missional Engagement leaders (pastors and Christian community development leaders) will have launched.
- Local Missional Engagement will develop and launch an experiment lab model for new approaches to local mission in learning and leadership communities.
- 100 RCA congregations will be equipped for increased local missional engagement with tangible missional impact, reflecting sacrificial service, authentic relationships, and spiritual transformation.
- 50 congregations will have engaged in substantial and quantifiable local missional engagement, with identified and sustained community partnerships.

GLOBAL MISSIONAL ENGAGEMENT

For more than 150 years, RCA Global Mission has been bringing the Word of God to people around the world. Hundreds of missionaries and volunteers have left the comforts of their own communities to be present in distant places, all in an effort to “live and love like Jesus.” We are excited to continue to live out that goal while we more closely engage with congregations.

The Global Missional Engagement initiative is focused on engaging and equipping congregations to serve Christ by serving our international neighbors around the world. Through service, congregations have transformational experiences that equip them to become agents of transformation to the indigenous populations with whom they serve in our global community.

This team, led by Megan Hodgin, is focused on providing clear pathways to help congregations explore their call from God in a global context, to develop the capacity to live out that call, and to develop partnerships with other congregations and missionary organizations in order to carry out God’s call for mission.

This initiative has three areas of focus:

1. Church equipping: Developing, implementing, and working with individual congregations and clusters of congregations to provide consulting services, learning communities, and leadership communities that expand the work of RCA congregations around the world in quantity, quality, and impact.
2. Global strategies: The Global Missional Engagement team will collaborate with Global Mission staff to develop strategic goals for RCA mission in Africa, Asia, the Middle East, and Europe that have measurable outcomes over the next five years. These goals will lead to ministries of transformation that will bring congregations and indigenous populations closer to Christ.
3. Restructuring: Collaborating with Global Mission staff to develop and identify missionaries and mission partners that will work with our congregations to achieve our strategic goals.
Year Four Goals (by June 2017)

- Launch one learning community focused on Re:Forming Missions, which will equip a cluster of congregations to discern and implement a mission action plan.
  - By six months after launch, at least 80 percent of participating congregations will commit to deepening their global engagement in at least one of the following ways: committing to a new global partnership, increasing their mission giving, developing or restructuring their mission team, providing an educational opportunity in their congregation, or committing to a vision or mission trip.
  - By 12 months after launch, at least 80 percent of the congregations will have developed and implemented a mission action plan.
- Hold six to eight connection events designed to provide equipping and connect participants to learning communities and direct missional engagement.
  - At least 50 percent of the congregations involved in the connection events will commit to a learning community or new mission partnership.
- Mobilize one church network with three or more congregations who work together to have a collective impact in a global impact area.

Progress

- Two learning communities have been started, equipping six congregations to develop and implement a mission action plan. The members of one learning community will complete their action plans just prior to General Synod. The second learning community will continue the process in the fall of 2017. A seventh congregation began the process of building its mission action plan in April 2017 and will likely complete the process by August 2017.
- Four connection events have engaged 20 congregations in the U.S. and Canada in discussing the transformational impact global mission has at home and abroad.
- One church network has been established with a focus on the strategic impact area in Nicaragua. More than 140 individuals are participating in the network, engaging in online discussions and discernment facilitated by Olivia Holt, an RCA missionary in Nicaragua.
- An immersive global mission experience engaged RCA women in the global mission work of JJ and Tim TenClay in Italy in April 2017. This was a collaborative effort with Women’s Transformation and Leadership. The participants are networked together for continued learning and implementation of ministry initiatives among their congregations.

Five-Year Goals (June 2013 to June 2018)

- 25 congregations will have participated in Re:Forming Missions, and 75 percent of these congregations will have developed and begun implementing their mission action plan.
- Three church networks will have formed, equipping and encouraging groups of churches to collaborate with each other and RCA Global Mission personnel for deep impact in three global impact areas.
- Two immersive global engagement experiences will have been facilitated, introducing participants to a global impact area and equipping them to implement their learning by initiating a global ministry in their own congregation.
- Partnerships will have been established with ten RCA congregations who were not previously engaged with RCA Global Mission.
CHURCH MULTIPLICATION

The RCA continues to start new churches that further the gospel—reaching the spiritually disconnected, bringing them into a community of authentic relationships, and introducing them to the God of grace who transforms lives and eternities.

The RCA fosters a sustainable movement of church multiplication by starting new congregations and missional communities. An environment for church multiplication is created through an intentional system and process, which begins with prayer and empowering through the Holy Spirit. “Then [Jesus] said to his disciples, ‘The harvest is plentiful, but the laborers are few; therefore ask the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into his harvest’” (Matthew 9:37-38).

A multiplication movement is built on a solid foundation of assessment and evaluation of church planters and church planting locations, and then strengthened through training. It encourages the ongoing ministry of church planters and new churches by providing coaching relationships and networks of planters for learning, support, and accountability. It expands as new congregations reproduce and established churches join in starting new churches.

RCA Church Multiplication reaches out to those not yet found among the churches and Christians who make up the Reformed Church in America (John 4:23, Luke 15).

Seven strategic benchmarks fill out the multiplication vision statement and 15-year strategic plan. We seek to increase both the quantity and the quality of our church plants every year through 2028. One central qualitative benchmark is to organize our new congregations within five years of their launch date; at the time of organization, the church will be thriving, missional, reproducing, self-supporting, and self-governing. Another benchmark is that more than 40 percent of our new plants will be congregations of color or multicultural from the start. More than 50 percent of the growth of these congregations will come from new professions of faith and adult baptisms.

We are thoroughly pursuing a movement, working intensely with the innovators and the most energized partners we can find. Intentional factors include anticipating change and growth, creating pathways for leadership capacity, cultivating the spiritual giftedness of movement leaders, gospel foundations, incarnational practices, and Holy Spirit empowerment. All of these contribute to an expanding, exponential movement, as opposed to the maintenance of current patterns and structures. These culture shifts are in alignment with the global kingdom of God and have encouraged an environment of risk and reward in RCA Church Multiplication.

The Church Multiplication initiative is led by Mike Hayes, Tim Vink, and Randy Weener.

Year Four Goals (by June 2017)

- 22 New Congregation Plans (NCPs) will be approved.
- Organize 14 church plants and/or new sites of already organized churches.
- Launch four learning communities focused on equipping potential parent congregations.
- Launch one MC² leadership community of at least 15 high-capacity parent churches (defined as churches who parent a new church every year, every other year, or every third year).
- Launch one learning community focused on foster parenting and mutual mission.
with smaller churches. This learning community will include ten or more churches.

- Launch one pilot learning community focused on learning to be led and to lead through the Holy Spirit’s presence and power for kingdom expansion. This learning community, called Kingdom Ambassadors, will include 20 or more churches.
- See 100 percent of planters complete a full assessment process, including an initial screening assessment (ISA), church planter profile (CPP), and Multiply Assessment Center, and/or Ridley behavioral assessment tools (or comparable assessments).
- Train six new parent church coaches and work to have 75 percent of all planters paired with qualified coaches.
- Provide Multiply training for 25 planters and to train four new equippers.

**Progress**

- Five of twenty-two NCPs are fully approved. Others are in the process of being approved.
- Four of fourteen church plants have either organized or been started as additional sites of organized churches.
- Three learning communities focused on equipping potential parent congregations have been launched in Iowa, Chicago, and Wisconsin, with several churches in each one.
- We have launched a strong MC² leadership community of at least 15 high-capacity parent churches. Several of these churches have started 4, 8, 14, or even 35 congregations directly in the past two decades, and are individually committed to 5 more, 8 more, even 23 more plants by 2023.
- We launched one learning community with 12 churches (two more than the ten in our goal) focused on the sustainability and multiplication of smaller congregations in their own unique way. The RCA has more than 400 congregations with fewer than 95 people in attendance at worship; these congregations need a pathway of their own to learn, grow, and multiply.
- We launched one pilot learning community focused on learning to be led and to lead through the Holy Spirit’s presence and power for kingdom expansion. The West Michigan pilot group is called Kingdom Ambassadors; 22 churches and more than 250 regular participants of all ages are involved. Exploration of reproducing this 12-month training in California and Iowa is underway now.
- We have used the Multiply Assessment Center, ISA, CPP, and Ridley tools (or comparable tools) with 100 percent of planters.
- We have trained four of the six new parent church coaches, and are on track to have 75 percent of all planters paired with qualified coaches by June 2017.
- We are on track to provide Multiply training to 25 RCA planters and to train four new equippers.

**Five-Year Goals (June 2013 to June 2018)**

- 100 new RCA congregations will be planted in all eight regional synods, reflecting increased church multiplication momentum and effectiveness.
- 50 congregations will have organized and be thriving, missional, and reproducing.
- 40 intentionally ethnic/multiethnic/multiracial church plants, congregations of color, or congregations led by a female planter will be started.
- 5,000 new disciples of Jesus Christ will be engaged in new church plants.
VOLUNTEER ENGAGEMENT

The Volunteer Engagement initiative is focused on empowering, equipping, and engaging RCA volunteers of all ages in service for Christ through mission volunteer opportunities that have a transforming impact on individuals, congregations, and the partner communities in which they serve. We believe that as volunteers serve in the name of Christ, whether in their local community or around the world, their service can have long-term impact on all participants.

This team, led by Stephanie Soderstrom, is focused on supporting congregations and equipping volunteers for service with RCA missionaries and mission partners. We work with volunteers throughout the planning process, providing support in the field and helping ensure effective debriefing and follow-through.

Four areas of focus:

- Mission trips: Working with local, long-term ministries, mission teams can help meet needs, build relationships, and share the hope of Christ. Mission trips are available for teams of all ages.
- Disaster response: When disaster strikes, RCA volunteers can help provide much-needed support in the months and years that follow. Individual and group opportunities are available.
- Individual volunteer opportunities: Opportunities are available for students and adults to serve for a few weeks or up to two years alongside RCA missionaries and partners.
- Church equipping: Working with RCA churches, we will offer resources, training, and equipping processes to help them take their next step in volunteer engagement. These equipping resources will be available to both churches that serve through the RCA and those that do not.

Many RCA churches have been engaged in sending volunteers in mission for years. Our vision is to become value-added for these churches as well as churches that are new to engaging volunteers in mission. Additionally, we will seek to engage individuals, especially the next generation, in dynamic volunteer opportunities and internships that allow volunteers to utilize their unique gifts to contribute to the long-term goals of our mission partners.

Year Four Goals (By June 2017)

The RCA will engage all generations of volunteers in service for Christ through North American and global mission volunteer opportunities that will have a transforming impact on individuals, congregations, and the partner communities where they serve.

- Engage 1,250 RCA volunteers in service with RCA missionaries and mission partners.
- Support 60 RCA congregations through volunteer equipping processes or mission volunteer opportunities.
- Establish baseline metrics to track volunteer satisfaction and mission partner impact through RCA volunteer engagement experiences.
- Engage 35 volunteers in service through an RCA Local Mission Engagement intensive.
- Send at least three volunteer groups to serve in partnership with the RCA Peace Project in Israel/Palestine.
- Send at least two volunteer groups to serve in partnership with World Vision through their U.S. programs.
Progress

- Engaged 1,155 volunteers in service with RCA missionaries and mission partners, as compared to 1,075 in year three.
- Supported 82 congregations through volunteer equipping processes or mission volunteer opportunities.
- Baseline metrics have been established and data is being collected.
- The Local Missional Engagement intensive was postponed due to scheduling difficulties.
- Sent eight volunteer groups to serve in partnership with the RCA Peace Project in Israel/Palestine.
- Three groups were connected with World Vision U.S. programs, though none were able to serve with them.
- In the 2016 calendar year, the Next Generation Missional Engagement fund awarded 76 scholarships. These scholarships totaled $68,430 and benefited 332 young volunteers.

Five-Year Goals (July 2013 to June 2018)

- We will engage 5,000 volunteers with measurable impact on youth and adult participants, sending congregations, and partner communities.
- We will support 200 congregations through volunteer equipping processes or mission volunteer opportunities.
- We will become fully accredited with the Standards of Excellence in Short-Term Mission and develop tools to help volunteers, congregations, and mission partners align with standards.

MISSIONAL MOSAIC

Missional Mosaic focuses on helping congregations to live more fully into the biblical vision of shalom and the human hope of the beloved community. The initiative is led by Earl James.

The ancient Hebrews spoke the word shalom both at greeting and parting. The word meant “peace,” but conveyed more, including life with complete wholeness wherever one lived, worked, and worshiped.

The beloved community grows naturally out of Jesus’ own hunger for the felt unity of his followers, mirroring the unity he shared with the Father (John 17:20-23). That unity expresses a readiness to engage everyday life in close friendship and to actively take a stand when society and societal systems block access to the abundant life for people and places God created.

Missional Mosaic offers congregations two pathways as they strive for shalom and the beloved community, helping congregations:

- Increase their cultural agility.
- Advocate by addressing public policy.

“Cultural agility” begins with whatever culturally rooted style of communication a person or congregation has and focuses on adapting that style when communicating, negotiating, and building trust with other people, congregations, or groups whose cultures differ from one’s own.
As congregations increase in cultural agility, tangible, sustainable transformations can occur in leadership, outreach, and worship.

In advocacy, congregations come to see and engage public policy matters as simply a third expression of their shared compassion ministries. Many congregations express compassion by “giving a fish.” They see a need and meet a need. Food pantries are excellent examples of “giving a fish” compassion ministry.

Congregations also express compassion by “teaching to fish.” By sharing any particular knowledge, skill, or ability, they assist a person or family in overcoming a particular life challenge that threatens them. Tutoring and financial stewardship ministries are excellent examples of “teaching to fish” ministries.

Not very many congregations ask, “Why do so many people and families need those fish to begin with?” Advocating by addressing public policy results in congregations partnering with others to make tangible differences in everyday life challenges locally or globally for hundreds of thousands of people and to add greater liveliness and focus to the shared life of the congregation itself.

**Year Four Goals (by June 2017)**

- Launch three cultural agility learning communities. By April 2017, see at least 50 percent of the congregations involved make a shift in leadership, outreach, or worship with the long-term goal of better reflecting their communities.
- Launch one learning community focused on advocacy. By June 2017, at least 50 percent of the congregations involved have a ministry partnership with a pertinent advocacy group and/or have launched a new congregational advocacy ministry.
- Launch one learning community, in partnership with New Brunswick Theological Seminary, focused on interfaith relations. By September 2017, at least 50 percent of the congregations involved develop a significant new partnership.
- Hold seven connection events designed to provide equipping and connect participants to direct engagement with learning communities and/or direct missional engagement.

**Progress**

- Four cultural agility learning communities have been launched, two of which are now completed. In March, using the Sankofa journey ministry model, the Synod the Heartland experimental learning community traveled to Cincinnati, Ohio, to visit a church that, with its leaders, has been on the cultural agility journey for more than ten years. All the churches have agreed to build a long-term relationship that emphasizes “beloved community warmth” and learning together about increasing the impact of cultural agility within their congregations and in their outreach.
- One advocacy learning community focused on mass incarceration has been launched. A second group of congregations who met at a connection event is close to a decision about becoming an advocacy impact learning community.
- A critical recruitment feature of the learning community in partnership with NBTS was to ensure sufficient numbers of leaders from various faiths would participate. The local interfaith group was not prepared at this time to endorse or participate. NBTS and Missional Mosaic have agreed to revisit this learning community in 2017–2018.
To date, for this program year, Missional Mosaic has completed five connection events. Participants in these connection events were encouraged to engage in learning communities or in direct impact opportunities. Since tracking of connection events began, Missional Mosaic has completed 25 connection events.

**Five-Year Goals (June 2013 to June 2018)**

- Nine cultural agility and advocacy learning communities or advocacy impact teams will have launched, involving 40 congregational teams.
  - At least 50 percent of the cultural agility learning community congregational teams will make a shift in leadership, outreach, or worship with the long-term goal of better reflecting their geographic communities.
  - At least 50 percent of the advocacy learning community teams will form ministry partnerships with pertinent, successful advocacy groups or launch their own congregational advocacy ministries.

- 35 cultural agility and advocacy connection events will have been held, engaging representatives from 200 congregations.
  - At least 25 percent of the cultural agility participants will become directly connected to successful cultural agility groups or their congregations will participate in cultural agility learning communities.
  - At least 50 percent of the advocacy participants will become directly connected to successful advocacy groups or their congregations will participate in advocacy learning communities or impact teams.

**DISABILITY CONCERNS**

Scripture’s vision of the kingdom is a unifying embrace of the love and grace of Jesus Christ that reaches all people—every race, tribe, people, and language, every disability and special need. Raising awareness and making our churches accessible to people with disabilities establishes a needed foundation, but our own attitudes require even greater transformation, so that ministries to and for people with disabilities grow into ministries with and by people with disabilities. The vision of RCA Disability Concerns is to welcome and engage the gifts of all people in Christ’s ministry—becoming accessible, inclusive, missional churches where everybody belongs and everybody serves.

The Disability Concerns initiative is led by Terry DeYoung.

**Year Four Goals (by June 2017)**

- Launch one combined RCA-CRC learning community focused on Disability Concerns initiatives in the local church. By 2019, at least 50 percent of the congregations involved will conduct an accessibility audit, adopt a church disability policy, launch a new disability ministry, develop a new strategic partnership, or make shifts in church staffing or budget.
- Hold three to four connection events designed to raise awareness about advocacy with people with disabilities, provide equipping, and connect participants to learning communities. At least 50 percent of the congregations involved in the connection events will commit to a learning community or appoint a church disability advocate.
- Through the leadership of church disability advocates, 15 churches will conduct an accessibility audit or adopt a church disability policy—with at least five of these congregations removing barriers to full participation.
Progress

- In October 2016, RCA-CRC Disability Concerns hosted a three-day leadership conference in Niagara Falls, Ontario, that equipped 25 RCA disability advocates—enfolded within a larger disability conference cosponsored by Christian Horizons, a faith-based disability service provider in Ontario. One day was devoted exclusively to RCA-CRC advocates and incorporated teaching on a learning community model in local missional engagement that included a conversation with an RCA disability advocate whose church has launched a weekly day program for residents of area group homes.

- In November 2016, RCA Disability Concerns initiated an accessibility survey of all RCA churches to assist in evaluating physical barriers, communication barriers, and inclusive programming. Results of this yearly survey will be added to each participating church’s information in the RCA’s online church search, in part so that potential visitors with disabilities can anticipate if the church will be able to accommodate their needs.

- In February 2017, all church disability advocates in the RCA database were encouraged to facilitate an accessibility audit (identifying and addressing barriers in attitude, communication, and facility design) and/or work with leaders to adopt a disability policy for their church.

- Planning is underway for RCA-CRC Disability Concerns connection events in Arizona, Florida, Iowa, Michigan, and Ontario.

Five-Year (June 2013 to June 2018)

- 40 churches will have conducted an accessibility audit or adopted a church disability policy so that substantive changes are made in their welcome of people with disabilities.

- 100 churches will have identified a church disability advocate who is empowered to champion the full welcome and engagement of people with disabilities so that disability awareness is deepened and people with disabilities are engaged.

- 15 churches will have engaged in local mission efforts, volunteer engagements, or public advocacy campaigns that address issues that are harmful in some way to people with disabilities so that people with disabilities can flourish as active community members.

- 125 churches will have participated in connection events designed to raise awareness about advocacy with people with disabilities, provide equipping, and connect participants to learning communities.

- Three RCA-CRC learning communities focused on Disability Concerns initiatives in the local church will have been established.

- One leadership community will be established for churches that are engaging people with disabilities exceptionally well.

ADDITIONAL GLOBAL MISSION REPORTING

The purpose of RCA Global Mission is to support the growth of the kingdom of God on earth, to foster the presence of the living Christ deeply in the hearts of people, and to advance ministries of compassion, justice, reconciliation, education, economic development, and disaster relief.

The way that Global Mission engages God’s mission in the world has changed. The gospel complements and grows in and with the cultures of the world. Rather than to impose a North American understanding of the church and of ministries of compassion onto other cultures and countries, RCA Global Mission seeks to partner with national churches, indigenous
church planting movements, and local organizations. Its purpose is to build the capacity of in-country organizations to engage in God’s mission in each place. The RCA is no longer exporting its definition of mission. Instead, the RCA is listening to people at the local level as they define God’s mission in their context and is seeking to build capacity in the places where the local people invite the RCA in.

Missionaries from North America are still urgently needed to conduct this capacity-building work. Rather than sending RCA missionaries out to provide direct services, they are sent out to come alongside, to equip, and to train local populations to lead.

Global Mission has also developed a new global mission consulting service for RCA congregations, including the following services:

- Training for mission committees and pastors to develop their own strategy for effective global mission programs.
- Helping RCA congregations evaluate potential mission partners. With the emerging marketplace of independent global mission agencies, there is a need to discern the effectiveness of these organizations. What percent of every dollar goes to their administrative overhead? Are they seeking to empower in-country leaders and movements? How effective are they in achieving their organizational goals?
- Helping congregations add value to and scale up their mission goals.

The Challenge

These are tough times for North American denominational mission programs. Denominational mission programs are experiencing a decline in funding. RCA Global Mission, too, has less income than it did a decade ago. There has been a decline in bequests and designated gifts for mission over the past ten years. As a result, Global Mission ended the 2016 fiscal year with a $430,000 deficit (6.5 percent of the Global Mission budget). In order to balance the budget in 2017, several areas of the budget have needed to be cut, including the elimination of two and a half staff positions in Global Mission. Supervision and administrative overhead have been streamlined. Global Mission believes that it has been able to maintain its effectiveness.

The Vision

The exciting news is that we are living through the greatest growth of Christianity in human history. In parts of Asia, Africa, Europe, and South America, indigenous church planting movements are thriving and local capacity for mission is increasing. It is a joy that RCA churches are able to be a part of this tremendous global growth in the body of Christ. It is an inspiration to realize the incredible work we are supporting throughout the world.

PIM Shares

RCA Global Mission is grateful for the faithfulness of congregations and individuals in their support of the RCA’s ministries overseas. PIM (Partnership-in-Mission) shares pledged by congregations and individuals are the major source of financial support for RCA missionaries and programs, providing mission personnel with adequate resources to fulfill their ministries. Global Mission staff give thanks to God for the faithfulness of RCA congregations and individual members.

General Synod 2016 set the value of a PIM share for 2017 at $6,400; Global Mission is recommending an increase of $300 in the value of a PIM share for 2018. It is also asking
that all congregations consider increasing pledges to RCA missionaries by $300 to address the increasing costs of doing ministry around the world. That 4.7 percent increase would add $247,200 to the Global Mission budget, which would close the budget gap.

R 17-37
To set the value of a Partnership-in-Mission (PIM) share for 2018 at $6,700. (ADOPTED)

Global Mission Statistics

The RCA impacts the church of Jesus Christ around the world through the work and witness of 44 in-country workers employed by RCA global partners and 49 RCA missionaries, supported by RCA congregations through PIM shares. Together, these 93 mission personnel serve and relate to 81 national churches and Christian service agencies in 26 different countries. These mission personnel around the world are supported by the pledges of 460 RCA congregations.

Transitions in Mission Personnel: Retirements

Jhonny Alicia-Báez

Jhonny Alicea-Báez retired from RCA Global Mission on December 31, 2016. In 2001, Jhonny was hired by RCA Global Mission to serve as the supervisor for Latin America. Jhonny served on the board of Words of Hope and helped bring the RCA into new mission relationships. In 2007, Jhonny was appointed director of Global Mission, a position he held for many years.

Ken and Marcia Bradsell

After Ken retired from his service with the General Synod Council and the Board of Benefits Services, he and his wife, Marcia, followed God’s call to serve the Protestant Church in Oman (PCO). Ken served the church with pastoral leadership of an expatriate congregation of more than 500 families in the capital city of Muscat. He also served as the liaison between the PCO and the Omani Minister of Awqaf and Religious Affairs and was a mentor and guide to other staff members.

Duncan Hanson

In 2002, Duncan joined RCA Global Mission staff as the supervisor for Europe, the Middle East, and India. Duncan led the RCA into a commitment with the Roma of Central Europe, with the Kurds in the eastern Mediterranean, and with African, Syrian, and Iraqi refugees in Italy. He also introduced the RCA to a relationship with the Waldensian Church. Additionally, Duncan helped to resolve a number of serious conflicts and strengthen partnerships in his region.

Tom and Liz Stewart

Tom and Liz witnessed to and served international students on the Oklahoma State University campus from 1980 to 2016. They ministered through retreats, welcome socials, host-family events, evangelistic programs, Bible studies, pastoral guidance, one-to-one witnessing, and gatherings in their home. More than 80 percent of OSU’s international students return to their home countries after graduation and, by the grace of God, many students to whom the Stewarts ministered received Christ and became influential witnesses to their own culture. The Stewarts served in partnership with Mission to Internationals, Inc.
Marlin Vis

Marlin and Sally Vis have been leading educational tours in Israel and Palestine since 2005. In addition to tours of the Holy Land and the biblical history of the old city of Jerusalem, they have been leading tours of the Palestinian territories, helping groups of RCA leaders to understand the nature of the ongoing conflict in the region. Over the past several years, they have also supported programs for Israeli-Palestinian dialogue and summer camps designed to foster peace in the region. Marlin served on the board of directors of World Vision in Jerusalem, and they have supported a network of Christian organizations that provide aid and training to Palestinian Christians. Marlin and Sally’s son, Josh, has replaced Marlin as an RCA missionary leading these initiatives. Sally currently is continuing her work with logistics and administration assistance for the study tours.

R 17-38

Whereas the Rev. Jhonny Alicea-Báez has retired from the RCA Global Mission staff after more than 15 years of service, first as supervisor of Latin America and then as director of Global Mission; and

Whereas the Rev. Ken and Marcia Bradsell have retired from their service with the Protestant Church in Oman, following Ken’s years of service on the General Synod Council and Board of Benefits Services staff; and

Whereas the Rev. Dr. Duncan Hanson has retired from the RCA Global Mission staff after more than 15 years supervising RCA Global Mission personnel and projects in Europe, the Middle East, and India; and

Whereas the Rev. Tom and Liz Stewart have retired from the mission field after more than 35 years of ministering to international students at Oklahoma State University; and

Whereas the Rev. Marlin Vis has retired from the mission field after 12 years of leading educational tours in Israel and Palestine with his wife, Sally;

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the 211th session of the General Synod of the Reformed Church in America, meeting June 8 through 13, 2017, on the campus of Hope College in Holland, Michigan, gives glory to God for the life and witness of Rev. Jhonny Alicea-Báez, Rev. Ken and Marcia Bradsell, Rev. Dr. Duncan Hanson, Rev. Tom and Liz Stewart, and Rev. Marlin Vis, and offers a prayer of thanksgiving for their service to RCA Global Mission. (ADOPTED)

New Mission Assignments

Larry Austin has been appointed to work in partnership with the Classis of Central California in the Inside-Out program in Oakland, California. Larry will be working with young men and boys as a chaplain at the Juvenile Justice Center and continuing those relationships after they are released back to their families and communities.
Michael and Carrie Johnson will partner with United World Mission to serve Christians in Scotland and to support church planters throughout Europe with mentoring, training, retreats, and workshops. Their work will include an internship program that will mentor and equip people to serve within the local community and across Europe.

Aaro Rytikönen has been appointed as the new director of the Al Amana Centre in Oman. The Al Amana Centre is dedicated to hosting visiting groups, college- and seminary-level educational programs, and dialogue between Christians and Muslims for the purpose of mutual understanding.

Filipe and Janelle Silva are serving with New Horizons Foundation in Romania, engaging youth through impact groups, camps, service in the community, and a climbing gym. Janelle is developing a ministry to women that will include a women’s center.

Lois Wanyoike is the project leader for Setschabelo Family and Child Services in Botshabelo, South Africa, one of the RCA’s new strategic impact areas. The goal of this strategic impact area is to reduce the number of orphans and vulnerable children and to strengthen families in Botshabelo.

Deaths

Eloise Bosch, former missionary in Oman, died on October 7, 2016. Eloise and her husband, Don, served in Oman from 1955 to 1985. Don was a surgeon at American Mission Hospital and Eloise was a teacher at Al Amana School. The Bosches were beloved by the Omani people. When the Bosches retired, Oman’s ruler gave them Omani citizenship and provided them a home near Muscat. Eloise epitomized what a missionary should be: caring, committed, creative, and imaginative. For many decades, Eloise has been a model of what it can mean to follow Christ. The Reformed Church in America, the people of Oman, and indeed, the people of the whole world, are poorer that she is gone but richer that she was with us.

Elinor Heusinkveld Faber (Ellie) died on November 17, 2016. Ellie was born in St. Paul, Minnesota, on November 2, 1922, to Christian and Hilda Gran. After graduation from the University of Minnesota as a registered nurse in 1943, she married Dr. Maurice Heusinkveld. Maurice and Ellie were RCA missionaries to the Arabian Mission from 1946 to 1967, with assignments in Kuwait, Iraq, Bahrain, and Oman. After Maurice died in 1967, Ellie returned to America and settled in Holland, Michigan.

Marilyn Tanis Franken died in July 2016. Marilyn and her husband Darrell served as RCA missionaries in Bahrain for eight years from 1963 to 1968. Marilyn was a nurse at the American Mission Hospital and Darrell was pastor of the National Evangelical Church in Bahrain. The daughter of Edward Tanis, Marilyn graduated from Central College with a BS in 1954, having become a registered nurse at Iowa Methodist Hospital in Des Moines in 1953. She worked as a nurse and nursing instructor in Iowa before moving to Bahrain in 1955 to serve as a volunteer nurse at the American Mission Hospital. She returned to the United States in 1958, but her experience inspired a lifelong passion for mission service. During the first Gulf War in 1991, Marilyn served again as a Red Cross volunteer, this time in Kuwait. The Kuwait City Hospital had a staff of 300 before the war began, but only 24 staff members were left to treat the people of Kuwait during the war. Marilyn received a medal from the Department of Defense for her sacrificial service during that war.

A copy of the remarks made to the General Synod by director of Global Mission Doug Leonard is available from the RCA Archives upon request.
Report of Words of Hope

Words of Hope is an international media ministry founded by supporting classes of the Reformed Church in America. Words of Hope’s mission is to build the church in the hard places by equipping indigenous Christian churches and ministries to proclaim the gospel, especially through the use of media.

The areas where Words of Hope does ministry are difficult to reach with the gospel, either because of poverty, geography, persecution, or social antagonism toward Christianity. Words of Hope partners with existing Christian organizations in these hard-to-reach countries and equips them to more effectively minister in their own language and context, among their own people.

Currently, Words of Hope’s regions of ministry include Albania, the Arab world, Bhutan, India, Indonesia, Iran, Nepal, Niger, North America, South Sudan, Tibet, Turkey, and Uganda. Each ministry field requires its own unique media outreach approach. Depending on the variety of resources and preferences in a given region, an assortment of radio programs, CDs, DVDs, text messages, Internet, Skype, Facebook, print materials, and satellite television are used to proclaim the gospel.

Some notable highlights from Words of Hope’s ministry in the past year include the welcoming of a new president to lead the ministry, the start of daily devotional distribution in Uganda, and the expansion of outreach into five new tribal languages in the country of Niger.

Jon Opgenorth has succeeded David Bast as president of Words of Hope. “I am confident that God has called Jon to this role,” said Bast. “I am excited to see how God will use him to lead Words of Hope in new and wonderful ways to advance God’s kingdom and build Christ’s church in the world’s hard places.”

Opgenorth comes to Words of Hope from Trinity Reformed Church in Orange City, Iowa, where he served as senior pastor for 18 years. “My heart has been part of the Words of Hope family for many years,” Opgenorth said. “When I was ten I had a providential encounter with former Words of Hope president Dr. Bill Brownson. On a sabbatical I traveled to Uganda with the Rev. David Bast. And recently I served a number of years on the board. In these ways, I sensed God’s preparation for this new chapter,” he said. “I look forward to leading Words of Hope in the great work of proclaiming salvation in Jesus in the hard-to-reach places of the world.”

Opgenorth received a bachelor of arts in religion from Northwestern College in Orange City, Iowa, and a Master of Divinity degree from Fuller Theological Seminary in Pasadena, California. He has a proven track record in fundraising, team building, and vision casting. He has also traveled extensively, most recently to Uganda, where he ministered with Words of Hope Uganda’s Titus Baraka.

The Words of Hope daily devotionals are now being printed and distributed in Uganda. In Uganda, good Christian materials are hard to find and expensive to buy. The Words of Hope devotional now provides Ugandans with theologically sound teaching. The booklets are available at a nominal fee that is charged to readers who can afford it or waived for those who cannot. The first print run of 10,000 copies was distributed across the country in all 13 dioceses that partner with Words of Hope. The original Words of Hope daily devotionals are contextualized by Ugandan editors to better apply to their own local readership, and devotional covers and ad pages are changed in order to direct Ugandan readers to Words
of Hope radio programming and church services within the country. The next print run of devotionals will include devotional submissions written by local Ugandan writers that will coordinate with themes being addressed in Ugandan churches.

In the strongly Muslim country of Niger, Words of Hope has been producing good news broadcasts for ten years in French, the national language of education, and in Hausa, the more commonly spoken native tongue. Now, because of partnership with Back to God Ministries International, Words of Hope has been able to start new language broadcasts in the country that are designed to foster church plants. In addition to being able to reach further in the languages of French and Hausa, programs will now be produced in five additional heart languages: Zarma, Kanuri, Tubu, Fulfulde, and Gourmantché.

Words of Hope is deeply grateful for the support of RCA churches that continues to allow this outreach ministry to grow. In 2016, contributions from RCA congregations totaled $584,405, an increase from 2015. We celebrate this increase in giving, knowing that these dollars are allowing people to be introduced to Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior. Thank you for proclaiming hope to the refugee, the orphan, the oppressed, the impoverished, and the imprisoned. Thank you for sending the gospel out to the ends of the earth.
Report of the Church Growth Fund

The Reformed Church in America Church Growth Fund, Inc. (CGF) is a nonprofit corporation that functions under the supervision of the RCA General Synod. The CGF supports the work of the denomination by making affordable-rate loans to RCA churches and related agencies for the purchase, construction, and improvement of buildings and other properties used in their ministries. The CGF loan programs offer unsecured loans of up to $100,000 and secured borrowing of up to $5 million.

As a primary source of funding for loans, the CGF sells interest-bearing investments called savings certificates. The CGF offers two types of savings certificates:

1. Term savings certificates, which are available in maturities from one to ten years.
2. Demand savings certificates, which allow the investment of additional funds and the redemption of amounts in the certificate (subject to the limits described in the CGF offering circular).

To further support the denomination, the CGF contributes a portion of its earnings annually to the General Synod Council (GSC), which awards the funds as grants to support RCA church planting. In 2014, as a way to support Transformed & Transforming, the CGF began making additional contributions to the GSC for the Next Generation Missional Engagement Scholarship Fund. This fund provides scholarships to youth and young adults age 25 and under to cover the cost of mission trips and mission internships, disaster response work, vision and study tours, and missional training experiences.

More specific information on CGF loans and how to invest in savings certificates is available on the CGF website at www.rca.org/cgf.

Assets

In the fiscal year ending September 30, 2016 (FY16), assets grew by $6.8 million (9 percent) to $79.3 million. CGF assets at the end of FY16 consisted primarily of $53 million in loans and cash and investments of $27.3 million. Loans during FY16 increased by $4 million (8 percent) as the CGF funded $10 million in new loans to 16 churches and received principal payments of $6 million from existing borrowers.

The U.S. economy continued its steady growth in FY16, and the overall financial health of CGF church borrowers is strong. As a result, there have been few delinquent loans in the CGF portfolio, and the CGF has maintained its record of never experiencing a loan principal loss. We continue to have a few church borrowers who find repaying their loans challenging; the CGF works in partnership with these congregations by restructuring debt repayment terms to ensure viable continuance of their ministries.

Savings Certificates

At the end of FY16, savings certificate investment was at $35.8 million, representing an increase of $5.3 million (17 percent) over the previous year. Savings certificate investors continue to recognize both that they receive a favorable return on their funds and that their investment supports the mission of the CGF. The CGF primarily uses funds received from investment in savings certificates to make loans to RCA congregations throughout the United States, its territories, and Canada.

CGF savings certificates are state-regulated securities. Currently, the CGF is authorized to sell savings certificates in 30 states, which are listed on its website (www.rca.org/cgf).
Rates of interest paid on savings certificates, along with other information on the CGF and how to invest in savings certificates, can also be found on the website.

Earnings

In FY16, the CGF had net earnings of $1,954,840 before making its annual contribution to the GSC for church multiplication grants and mission scholarships. Net earnings in FY16 increased by $960,025 (96 percent) from the previous year as a result of loan growth and gains in its investment portfolio through fixed income and equity markets, which strengthened during the year.

Ministry Grants

In 1999, the CGF began contributing a portion of its earnings to the GSC to be used for grants to new church plants in support of the RCA’s ten-year goal, Our Call. Though Our Call is now complete, the CGF has maintained its support of RCA church planting initiatives that are continuing through Transformed & Transforming. Since 1999, the CGF has contributed $4.8 million to support RCA Church Multiplication; those funds have provided grants for 255 church plants. In FY16, the CGF contributed $352,000 for church plant grants.

In FY16, the CGF also contributed $50,000 to the GSC to be used for the Next Generation Missional Engagement Scholarship Fund. The CGF has given a total of $150,000 in support of this program and has committed an additional $150,000 of financial support over the next three years.

Financial Strength

One measure of the financial strength of an entity is its level of net assets, also known as capital or equity. As of September 30, 2016, the CGF had capital of $43.3 million, which represents its accumulation of earnings and contributions received over its years of operations.

The funds received from savings certificates are used by the CGF primarily to make loans to RCA churches. The ability of the CGF to repay savings certificate investors is related to its level of capital, its net earnings, as well as repayment of the loans funded from certificate investment dollars. CGF loans are typically secured by first mortgages on church facilities. The CGF follows strict guidelines to make sure congregations can sustain such loan payments. While past performance is no guarantee of future events, the CGF has never experienced a loss of principal on any loan. No CGF savings certificate investor has ever experienced a loss of investment or missed receiving an interest payment.

Financial Highlights

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<th>FY 2015</th>
<th>FY 2016</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Total assets</td>
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<td>Net assets (capital)</td>
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<td>Savings certificates outstanding</td>
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<td>Number of churches with loans</td>
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<td>Dollar amount of loans outstanding</td>
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<td>Number of loans funded in year</td>
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<tr>
<td>Dollar amount of loans funded in year</td>
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<td>$10,080,846</td>
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<td>Net earnings before church multiplication grants</td>
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<td>$1,954,840</td>
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<td>Contributions to GSC for ministry grants</td>
<td>$400,000</td>
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Future CGF Activity

The CGF will continue to follow its primary mission of providing affordable-rate loans to RCA churches for the purchase, construction, and improvement of buildings used in ministry. The CGF has also set as a goal the ability to contribute increasing amounts to the GSC for ministry grants to support the growing church planting initiative and the anticipated popularity and requests for next generation missional scholarships. Other ministry grant programs consistent with the CGF’s mission are also under consideration.

To meet the goal of larger contributions to the GSC, the CGF needs to increase earnings, which can be done primarily through growing its loan portfolio. A larger loan portfolio needs to be funded primarily from the sale of savings certificates.

The CGF will continue to implement marketing programs as a way to create a greater awareness within the denomination of the organization, its products, and how borrowing churches and investors can benefit through them.