Report of the General Synod Council on Discipleship

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 in providing accessible environments, processes, resources, and relationships that can be used by local congregations to foster—in cooperation with the Holy Spirit—more fully devoted followers who willingly and boldly live and love like Jesus.

The discipleship pathways uniquely 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 be 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. As we live and love like Jesus, it 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 Processes (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 12 practitioners in the field of discipleship who help shape the goals of this priority area and the approach to accomplishing them through coaching, webinars, resourcing, writing, teaching, and facilitating. The guiding coalition is working passionately toward the goal of every RCA congregation having a discipleship pathway, process, or environment in place to grow disciples who make disciples who bring
greater kingdom impact and deeper transformation, both personally and systemically.

The Transformational Processes guiding coalition is focusing on the following seven processes to help congregations create a discipleship pathway in their context.

**Discipleship Coaching**

The purpose of discipleship coaching is to explore the question, “How am I growing in my capacity to participate in what God is doing?” This question is asked of the individual being coached in order to get at the next question, “How is the church growing in its capacity to participate in what God is doing?” The goal is to guide the person being coached toward greater discipleship in his or her own life in order to facilitate discipleship movements in his or her church and community. Coaching often happens monthly for 12 sessions, based upon the need(s) of the person being coached.

**Discipleship Connection (Taste and See) Events**

The purpose of a discipleship connection event is to help congregations discern and dream about what future ministry could look like. It serves 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 with 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 pathway(s) through which people will be transformed through the power of the Holy Spirit into passionate, outwardly focused followers of Jesus who live for the sake of others.

**Discipleship Leadership Communities**

Teams of three to five staff and leaders from RCA congregations engage in this 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 were extremely positive. Four of those eight congregations are now serving as “discipleship bases of operation” where ongoing learning, coaching, resourcing, and partnerships are happening for wider impact. Another discipleship leadership community launched in October 2016.

**Faithwalking Learning Communities**

Faithwalking is the personal transformation component of Ridder: Churches Learning Change (formerly 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 also partnered with 3DM to train a total of 12 pastors 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 Five Goals (June 2017 to June 2018)

- 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

- Discipleship learning communities:
  - The discipleship learning community that launched in East and West Sioux Classes in September 2016 at Trinity Reformed Church in Orange City, Iowa, continues. Nine congregations are involved in this learning community.
  - A discipleship learning community launched in the Rochester, New York, area in June 2017. Two congregations are participating in this learning community.
  - A discipleship learning community launched in George, Iowa, in January 2018. Two congregations are participating in this learning community.
  - A discipleship/local missional engagement learning community launched in Fulton, Illinois, in February 2018. Six congregations are involved in this learning community.
- Four Creating Congregational Cultures of Generosity learning communities have launched, one each in Albany, Mid-America, New Jersey, and New York. A total of 18 congregations have participated.
- Fifteen pastors (from California, Colorado, Iowa, Michigan, New Jersey, South Dakota, Washington, and Wisconsin) 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 Albany, Canadian Prairies, New York, and Wisconsin.

- Discipleship connection events have been held in Orange City, Iowa; Holland, Michigan; Rochester, New York; New Brunswick, New Jersey; Fulton, Illinois; George, Iowa; Ames, Iowa; and Bridgewater, New Jersey. A joint next generation/discipleship connection event was held in Pella, Iowa.

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

- Ten to fifteen RCA congregations have completed a two-year discipleship leadership community and are providing other congregations with 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.
- Forty to fifty RCA congregations are engaged in Faithwalking as a core process for cultivating transformation in Christ.
- Five to ten 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.
- Two Growing Generosity leadership communities will be in process or completed.
- Six Creating Congregational Cultures of Generosity learning communities will have been launched or completed.

**Progress**

- Fourteen RCA congregations have completed a two-year discipleship leadership community and are providing other congregations with resources for discipleship as requested.
- Nineteen RCA congregations have participated in a discipleship learning community and are implementing their own unique disciple-making pathway in their congregation.
- Fifty-five to sixty-five RCA congregations are engaged in Faithwalking as a core process for cultivating transformation in Christ.
- Fifteen RCA congregations have participated in a joint RCA and 3DM learning community and have launched missional communities focused on discipleship, leadership, and missional living.
- Eleven RCA congregations have participated in a VantagePoint3 learning community and are using VantagePoint3 resources to develop disciples and equip leaders.
- One Growing Generosity leadership community with four congregations concluded in May 2017.
- Four Creating Congregational Cultures of Generosity learning communities have been completed, representing eighteen congregations.
- One joint next generation/discipleship learning community has launched.
- One joint discipleship/local missional engagement learning community has launched.
- One joint discipleship/leadership development learning community with Native American Ministries has launched.
Thirty-five to forty-five congregations have participated in a discipleship connection (Taste and See) event.

Twenty RCA pastors are currently in a discipleship coaching relationship.

New Five-Year Goals (June 2018 to June 2023)

- Twenty to twenty-five RCA congregations have completed a two-year discipleship leadership community and are providing other congregations with resources for discipleship as requested.
- Forty to fifty RCA congregations have participated in a discipleship learning community and are implementing their own unique disciple-making pathway in their congregation.
- Sixty-five to seventy-five RCA congregations are engaged in Faithwalking as a core process for cultivating transformation in Christ.
- Twenty-five to thirty-five RCA congregations have participated in a joint RCA and 3DM learning community and have launched missional communities focused on discipleship, leadership, and missional living.
- Twenty to thirty RCA congregations have participated in a VantagePoint3 learning community and are using VantagePoint3 resources to develop disciples and equip leaders.
- Eighty-five to one hundred RCA congregations have participated in a discipleship connection (Taste and See) event.
- Forty to fifty RCA pastors are currently in a discipleship coaching relationship.
- Ten to fifteen RCA congregations have participated in the discipleship/leadership/mission pilot in the Far West Region.
- Fifteen to twenty RCA congregations have participated in Organic Outreach as a core process for cultivating transformation in Christ.
- Seventy-five to one hundred RCA pastors and/or ministry leaders are involved in discipleship coaching.
- Two Growing Generosity leadership communities will have convened between 2018 and 2020. The first one will launch in November 2018 (there will be four sessions between November 2018 and May 2020).
- Ten Creating Congregational Cultures of Generosity (CCCG) learning communities will be facilitated from 2018 to 2023. The next two CCCG learning communities will begin in the fall of 2018.

NEXT GENERATION ENGAGEMENT

Rick Zomer assumed leadership of this team as the coordinator for Next Generation Engagement in February 2016. Rick was called to serve in another capacity outside the RCA in February 2018. Currently, the next generation work for the RCA is being executed by the discipleship guiding coalition. The purpose of Next Generation Engagement 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 both to fully include younger members in the church and to 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 congregation’s 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 other 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 Five Goals (June 2017 to June 2018)

- Launch one high-quality learning community focused on next generation engagement.
- Recruit and complete a 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 individuals with a diversity of ages and contexts within the RCA and begin meeting quarterly.

Progress

- Two central Iowa churches began a Next Generation discipleship learning community in February 2018.
- One RCA church from Zeeland Classis is participating in a Growing Young learning community with Fuller Theological Seminary.
- Connection events were held in Lafayette, Indiana, and Sheldon, Iowa. Congregations were given the opportunity to consider collaborating on a learning community focused on next generation engagement.
- Three people are currently part of the Next Generation guiding coalition.
- A Next Generation presentation and discussion was featured during the fall meeting of Rocky Mountain Classis.
- The RCA, CRCNA, and Fuller Youth Institute developed a strategy and cost structure for a shared Growing Young/Next Generation learning community to be held in 2018–2019 at the RCA’s Michigan Regional Center.
- The director of Next Generation Engagement was invited to attend a Regional Synod of New York event with a faculty member from Fuller Theological Seminary focused on emerging adults.

Five-Year Goals (June 2013 to June 2018)

- Thirty congregations will have participated or will be participating in a learning community and will have a next generation ministry that is resourced.
- One hundred fifty 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.

Progress

• Ten congregations have participated or are participating in a learning community and will have a next generation ministry that is resourced.
• Sixty to seventy congregations have attended a next generation connection event and have been invited to participate in a learning community as a next step toward developing a next generation strategy and ministry.
• Fifteen congregations have been introduced to the Growing Young resources through the cohort experience or FYI connection events.

New Five-Year Goals (June 2018 to June 2023)

*Due to the change in leadership, new goals will be set once a new leader for Next Generation Engagement is in place.*

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-3: Equipping Emerging Leaders follows.

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 youth.

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 who are open to being used by God 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 commitment is to help develop leaders, based on a foundation of discipleship, who:

• know how to lead themselves (their leadership is focused on their inward journey).
• know how to lead others (they are equipped to lead and influence in a God-ordained direction, increasing their leadership gift).
• 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 in the world in a multiplicity of environments and with an openness to equip and empower 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 them, but who have been called and gifted by God to serve boldly. It is a vision that especially is 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, which focuses on leadership mobilization and development; Thriving Leaders, Thriving Churches, which focuses on supporting the spiritual transformation and health of the leadership teams of RCA congregations; and Women’s Transformation and Leadership, which focuses on full inclusion of the gifts and influence of women.
EMERGING LEADERS

The Emerging Leaders team is guided by a coalition of local pastors and lay leaders representing different regions of the RCA. GSC staff member Eddy Alemán has been leading this since 2014. The work of Emerging Leaders is to increase the awareness that God is calling all people—youth, young adults, and adults—to become leaders in the church and to help RCA congregations develop and design leadership development processes uniquely fitted to their own vision, context, and need. We believe that through this process, RCA congregations will thrive and be spiritually renewed and transformed, and young emerging leaders of today and tomorrow will be identified, developed, equipped, and mobilized to impact their local communities and the world with the gospel of Jesus Christ.

Leadership Development Connection Events

A leadership development connection event is an informational and instructional gathering of one full day or just a few hours. Its purpose is to introduce pastors and congregational leaders in a region or classis to ways in which they might get involved in developing leaders in their local congregations. The desired outcome for these gatherings is for pastors and congregational leaders to join a learning community or a leadership community or to participate in a leadership collaborative.

Leadership Development Leadership Communities

Leadership development leadership communities consist of up to 11 congregations from all geographic regions of the RCA that are already engaged in leadership development and want to further increase their effectiveness. Each congregation commits a team of three to five staff members, pastors, and lay leaders to engage with this two-year process.

Leadership Development Learning Communities

Groups of three to six RCA congregations in different geographical areas will gather for six one-day meetings over the course of two years to learn from one another around different areas of leadership. Each congregation will develop its own leadership development pathway uniquely designed for its own vision, context, and need. Each participating congregation will form a leadership development learning community team of three to five people to be part of the process. Congregations are encouraged, when forming their teams, to include a variety of people with regard to gender, age, ethnicity, etc.

RCA Leadership Collaboratives

Clusters of 12 leaders from RCA congregations in relatively close geographical proximity will commit to a 12-month, 18-month, 24-month, or 36-month leadership collaborative to deepen their personal leadership skills. This experience will provide education, support, and accountability for each participant’s leadership journey. Deciding to participate is a commitment to grow, to invest, to share, and to change. The focus for these leadership collaboratives will be on personal leadership development for greater kingdom impact in their local context, helping participants grow in their leadership skills, discern God’s call for their lives, and clarify their next steps in ministry. The leadership collaboratives will be varied in focus depending on the group’s needs or interests; possible focuses include children and family ministry, youth ministry, young adult ministry, multicultural ministry, or developing a strategic ministry plan.
This process will include both in-person gatherings and video conference calls. Each participant will commit to personally contributing to the process and to peer coaching.

These collaborative groups will 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: providing the competencies and skills required of effective leaders.
3. Reproducing leadership: helping leaders develop more leaders, not just followers.

Year Five Goals (June 2017 to June 2018)

- Hold five connection events.
- Launch two learning communities in different areas of leadership development.
- Launch two leadership collaborative cohorts.
- Launch one leadership development leadership community.
- Collaborate with seven classis leaders to create an elder/deacon leadership training process.

Progress

- Six leadership development connection events took place:
  - One in the Classis of Queens on June 24, 2017.
  - One for West Michigan Hispanic pastors on July 27–28, 2017. All participants were from different classes.
  - One at Fifth Reformed Church in Grand Rapids, Michigan, on September 14, 2017.
  - One in the Classis of California on October 7, 2017.
  - One in the Classis of Ontario on October 21, 2017.
  - One in Sioux Center, Iowa, on April 4, 2018.
- One leadership development learning community launched in Central California in October 2017.
- Two leadership development leadership collaboratives launched.
  - One leadership collaborative launched with 14 leaders in West Michigan in January 2018. The leadership collaborative meets once a month and focuses on leadership development and preaching.
  - One leadership collaborative was scheduled to launch in May 2018 in the Classis of Queens. It will focus on developing elders and deacons as leaders in the local church.
- One leadership development leadership community launched on February 21, 2018. Six RCA churches are participating in this leadership community. It will be an 18-month cohort that meets five times. Here are the descriptions participants received for each session:
  - Meeting #1 (February 21, 2018): Essentials for Developing Your Leadership Pathways
    This gathering lays out the essential structure and foundations of any effective plan for leadership development. You’ll work on the incorporation of discipleship, creating ministry flow charts, and clarification of your specific goals. After this session, you’ll complete a comprehensive audit of your current systems and a clarification of your vision for moving forward.
  - Meeting #2 (June 20, 2018): Process Skills for Developing Leaders
Our second learning community session focuses on the coaching and mentoring skills necessary for developing individual leaders to their fullest potential. Here we’ll not only cover essential communication skills such as listening and asking good questions, but we’ll also look at team leadership and the role of supervision for key leaders. The key outcome of this session will be practicing and solidifying skills for developing individual leaders.

- **Meeting #3 (October 24, 2018): Engaging Your Key Ministry Areas**
  Our third session will lead into the development of an apprentice system, how to identify new candidates for leadership, and how to strengthen existing leaders across your system. We’ll look at biblical models of growing ministries, as well as a show-how system you can use for training leaders. From here you’ll work with key leaders across various ministry areas in your church to engage them in identifying key issues and needs within their sphere of influence.

- **Meeting #4 (January 23, 2019): Designing Your Leadership Pathways**
  After examining your own leadership style and strengths, we’ll look at how you can leverage those to lead the change process within your organization. We’ll look at creating ownership of ministry, bridging to implementation, and how to conduct a strategic planning workshop. Your team will then gather before the final session to engage in a thorough strategic planning workshop.

- **Meeting #5 (May 22, 2019): Sharpening Your Leadership Pathways**
  During our final session, each team will present their plan for developing leadership pathways within their congregations. They will receive feedback affirming and strengthening that plan in a process of continuing improvement as implementation moves forward.

- Seven classis leaders worked with Eddy Alemán to develop a resource called *Elder and Deacon Leadership Development Journey*. This resource is designed to equip elders and deacons as leaders in the church. The resource was completed in fall 2017 and is available both online and upon request. The resource is based on the following principles:
  - Grassroots
  - Research-based
  - Easy to contextualize
  - Field-tested
  - User-friendly
  - Flexible

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

- Thirty 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.

- Seventeen congregations are fully participating in an RCA leadership development leadership community, with 17 pastors and 85 church leaders fully engaged in creating leadership development processes to help churches identify, develop, and mobilize young, emerging, and current leaders.
Twenty-seven RCA and CRC congregations are 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.

Forty-eight pastors and church leaders of diverse gender, age, ethnicity, and contexts will have participated or will be participating in a leadership collaborative.

One hundred and twenty 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/deacon leadership training process. This will be a resource for RCA congregations to equip elders and deacons as leaders in the church.

Progress

Leadership development learning communities:

- 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, My Father’s House Church in Holland, La Casa de Mi Padre in Wyoming, Iglesia Alas de Águila in Allendale, and Iglesia Alas de Águila in Wyoming.

- Four RCA African American congregations in the New York area completed a two-year leadership development learning community that launched in May 2016 and ended in November 2017. Participating congregations were Mott Haven Reformed Church in the Bronx, Highbridge Reformed Church in the Bronx, Reformed Church of Prince Bay in Prince Bay, and First Reformed Church of Astoria in Astoria.

Leadership development leadership communities:

- 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. Participating congregations were Emmanuel Reformed Church in Paramount, California; Grace Church Ann Arbor in Ann Arbor, Michigan; Good News Community Church in Okoboji, Iowa; Orchard Hill Reformed Church in Cedar Falls, Iowa; Sunnybrook Community Church in Sioux City, Iowa; and Beechwood Reformed Church in Holland, Michigan.

- Six RCA congregations are participating in the RCA leadership development leadership community that is meeting in the Grand Rapids, Michigan, area from February 2018 through May 2019. Participating congregations are South Blendon Reformed Church in Hudsonville, Elevation Church in Wyoming, Comunidad Cristiana de Grand Rapids in Grand Rapids, My Father’s House Church in Holland, Comunidad Cristiana Internacional in Wyoming, and Nepali-Speaking Community Church in Grand Rapids.

Six congregations in the Detroit Kingdom Enterprise Zone participated in a two-year leadership development learning community that launched in August 2016 and ended in February 2018. These congregations are First Christian Reformed Church Detroit in Detroit, Dearborn Christian Fellowship Christian Reformed Church in Dearborn, Hesed Community Church in Detroit, Grace Church in Allen Park, Center Point in Columbus (Ohio), and Word Encounter Church in Detroit.

Six Reformed Leadership Initiative cohorts (Congregational Leadership Learning Communities, or CLLNs) were launched between September 2016 and January 2017.
○ One is a Spanish-language CLLN with 12 participating congregations.
○ One is a Korean-language CLLN with eight participating congregations.
○ Four are geographically based CLLNs (in New Jersey, Ontario, Central Iowa, and Central California) with a total of 27 participating congregations among them.

★ Leadership collaboratives:
○ 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 Alton, Bethel Reformed Church in Aplington, Cedar Hills Community Church in Cedar Rapids, Crossroads Church in Norwalk, Orchard Hills Reformed Church in Cedar Falls, and Trinity Reformed Church in Allison.
○ One Hispanic leadership collaborative launched in California in May 2017.
○ Emerging Leaders also launched a TUMI (The Urban Ministry Institute) site in fall 2016 in Los Angeles in collaboration with World Impact, where more than 20 emerging leaders are being equipped to minister in urban centers.

★ Two hundred fifteen RCA congregations have participated in 18 leadership development connection events in different regions.
★ Seven classis leaders worked with Eddy Alemán to develop a resource called Elder and Deacon Leadership Development Journey. This resource is designed to equip elders and deacons as leaders in the church. The seven classis leaders that worked together to develop this resource were Jeff Ludington and Eric Moreno from the Classis of California, Chris Godfredsen from the Classes of East and West Sioux, Fred Bates from the Classis of Southwest, Lyle Zumdahl from the Classis of Wisconsin, Dale Assink from the Classis of Central Plains, and Mike Gafa from the Classis of North Grand Rapids.

New Five-Year Goals (June 2018 to June 2023)

★ Four hundred fifty 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.
★ One hundred twenty congregations will have completed a two-year leadership development leadership community and are engaged in replicating the process with other RCA congregations.
★ Four hundred fifty pastors and church leaders of diverse gender, age, ethnicity, and contexts will have participated or will be participating in a leadership collaborative.
★ Six hundred congregations from different regions will have participated in a leadership development connection event.

THRIVING LEADERS, THRIVING CHURCHES

Andy Bossardet has been leading this as the coordinator for equipping thriving congregations since December 2016. Thriving Leaders, Thriving Churches is guided by a coalition of pastors, staff, and regional synod staff. 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 is delivered through high-impact coaching, learning communities focused on personal and corporate transformation, support systems for pastors and congregations in transition, and equipping in vision discernment.
Ridder: Churches Learning Change

Ridder: Churches Learning Change (formerly Ridder Church Renewal) is a partnership of Western Theological Seminary, the RCA, and the Christian Reformed Church in North America 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. Each module consists of five retreats, each about six months apart, with coaching and homework between retreats. Participating congregations choose a leadership team of four to six congregants plus the pastor. There are six regional centers in Ridder: Churches Learning Change supporting Modules 1 and 2. With the ending of the Lilly grant that funded the startup of Ridder: Churches Learning Change, the process has morphed into more regionally contextual expressions.

Maximizing First-Call Potential

To maximize their potential, pastors in their first call engage with a coach 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 through a combination of individual work with the pastors and a learning community involving a congregational team. This work is being done in partnership with the Lilly Endowment (Sustaining Pastoral Excellence grant). This year marked a new partnership in the Albany Synod Fellowship Program.

Pastors and Congregations in Transition

The Thriving Leaders, Thriving Churches team is developing new, more effective ways to serve churches and pastors that are in the midst of a ministry transition. This will include training 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 initiative is developing a catalytic coaching network that will be made up of all the coaches who are working with the various learning community pilots. A catalog of best practices has been developed, and a small cadre of catalytic coaches is in effect.

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 (the RCA’s database system) 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 with CVP are intended 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 would involve five pastors who would spend time with African American pastors in thriving ministries, learning personal, organizational, and multiplying leadership content over the course of a year. Ezra graduates would then become facilitators and teachers for the next cohort of Ezra pastors.

**Year Five Goals (June 2017 to June 2018)**

- Complete module of Ridder: Churches Learning Change.
- Complete phase one of the Ezra Project.
- Launch learning community for Congregational Vitality Pathways.
- Launch one leadership collaborative.
- Ten churches will utilize the Transformational Church Assessment Tool (TCAT).
- Launch one learning community for pastors in their first call.

**Progress**

- The most recent modules of Ridder: Churches Learning Change were completed as conversations ceased about continuing the movement after the end of the Lilly grant and central staff.
- Phase one of the Ezra Project was completed in January 2018, with current participants committing to quarterly virtual meetings.
- One Congregation Vitality Pathways learning community outside the Far West Region is happening, involving two churches in the Regional Synod of the Heartland.
- One leadership collaborative has been launched for specialized transitional ministers.
- Four churches have utilized the TCAT this year.
- In partnership with the Regional Synod of Albany, one learning community has launched involving six pastors in their first call.

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

- One hundred fifty churches will have engaged Ridder, either having completed both modules or 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 Congregational Vitality Pathways will have been launched with at least eight churches participating outside the Far West Region.
- Phase two of the Ezra Project will have been completed; the original six pastors will have completed the Ezra Project and ten more will have been recruited.
- Twenty congregations will have used the Transformational Church Assessment Tool as a connection event toward ongoing transformation and (potentially) another learning community.
Progress

- One hundred sixteen congregations have completed at least one module of Ridder: Churches Learning Change. Those congregations are split across six regions, representing 12 learning communities. Additionally, there is a team of RCA chaplains participating in Ridder in the Great Lakes (a first for Ridder). At the time of this report, each of the six regional centers for Ridder: Churches Learning Change are recruiting. Those recruiting efforts will have wrapped up by General Synod 2018, meaning that the goal of 150 is well within reach.

- First Call learning communities
  - The first learning community for first-call pastors wrapped up Albany in May 2017. A new learning community of six congregations launched in November 2017 for a two-year learning experience. Graduates of the first round are being employed as guides and content facilitators for the second round.
  - A second group of four first-call pastors are partnering with Thriving Leaders, Thriving Churches to create retreats and times of connection. These pastors are serving in multiple regional synods.

- Transitional ministry
  - 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. Response has been positive for the training videos—they have been viewed a total of 314 times (across five videos).
  - Seven transitional ministers and regional staff in the regional synods of the Far West, Heartland, and Mid-America have joined a leadership collaborative around specialized transitional ministry. That leadership collaborative launched in December 2017.

- Two churches are engaged with Congregational Vitality Pathways in the Regional Synod of the Heartland. Thriving Leaders, Thriving Churches is committed to partnering with these congregations through resourcing.

- The Ezra Project was significantly affected by the passing of GSC staff member Tony Campbell. The first leadership collaborative wrapped up in January 2018. With disrupted grant funding for phase two, the first leadership collaborative will continue to meet virtually for encouragement and support while we strategize how to recruit for a future collaborative.

- To date, ten churches from the Regional Synods of Mid-America, the Great Lakes, and Canada have utilized the Transformational Church Assessment Tool as a discernment tool. Pastors from those churches have reported positive results in their own strategic goals and ministry development.

- Catalytic coach training has been completed, and the coaching catalog has been given to every initiative leader for use with their learning and leadership communities. The coach training video was filmed during a live training and has been used in at least one classis training event. Further, catalytic coaching has been provided for learning communities in all three priority areas.

New Five-Year Goals (June 2018 to June 2023)

- A new system for ongoing support for new ministers will have helped 30 new pastors and their congregations.
- Ridder: Churches Learning Change will have impacted 90 additional churches (which will have graduated or are currently in the process).
- Leadership collaboratives will network specialized transitional ministers; 40 specialized transitional ministers will have participated in a network.
• The catalytic coaching network supporting other learning communities will include ten coaches with ongoing training opportunities and feedback loops.
• Forty additional congregations will have gone through a mission discernment process (with TCAT or another process).
• Phase two of the Ezra Project will have impacted ten churches in an ongoing leadership collaborative.

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 a vision for 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. Lorraine Parker serves as part-time administrative assistant and Lesley Mazzotta is the educational consultant and lead facilitator. A cross-sector group of RCA leaders serves as the guiding coalition for Women’s Transformation and Leadership, helping to champion the mission, create new processes, and provide critical insights and advisement.

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. An essential component of this mission is that we equip congregations to welcome the gifts that women bring and invest in healthy, flourishing ministry partnerships between men and women.

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, designing ways to equip women for ministry, and creating a healthy, thriving ministry environment where men and women can serve together.
• 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, past and present, through the Women’s Sankofa journeys, the “RCA Women: A Legacy of Leadership” booklet, and our She Is Called campaign.
• Being an innovation incubator for new ideas such as the Lenten devotional video series, the She Is Called social media campaign, and the We Are Speaking call to action statement.
• Encouraging and equipping women through transformational connection events and the Honoring Our Stories story-sharing process.
• Offering congregational learning communities to empower women to lead in ministry.
Developing a learning process that will help congregations to welcome the gifts women bring and to nurture healthy, thriving ministry partnerships between men and women.

Supporting established and emerging female leaders through leadership collaboratives, mentoring, clergy networks, and opportunities to connect and collaborate.

Offering an annual global experience for women. Trips to Oman, Israel/Palestine, and Italy have been offered so far. Bahrain/India, South Africa, and Scotland are being explored along with “multiplier” trips to the original three countries for 2018 through 2020.

Providing tuition assistance to female seminarians through the Beth E. Marcus Scholarship Fund.

Connecting women virtually through Facebook groups 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 RCA seminaries, the Commission for Women and other commissions, other Transformed & Transforming initiatives, and other GSC staff to empower women in ministry and intentionally include their gifts, influence, and leadership.

Helping to create lasting change via the We Are Speaking statement, a call to the church to end harassment, abuse, and sexual violence against women and girls (and others), in partnership with Local Missional Engagement.

Year Five Goals (June 2017 to June 2018)

- Hold three to five connection events that encourage, equip, and empower female RCA lay leaders and clergy to live into their God-given callings.
- Develop and pilot a learning process, curriculum, and resources focused on equipping congregations to more fully include women’s gifts and influence.
- Complete a learning community focused on strengthening and expanding women’s leadership in church and society.
- Continue the pilot of the women’s leadership collaborative 18-month process in English, Korean, and Spanish, and develop a “Train the Trainer” model in English and Spanish.
- Create global women’s experience trips for 2018–2019.
- Develop, along with other RCA and CRC partners, a year of celebration of women’s gifts and leadership in the RCA, including the She is Called campaign and special activities at General Synod 2018.

Progress

- Since March 2017, the following regional connection events have taken place, each customized for the local context and leadership needs:
  - The third annual Celebration of Women in Church Leadership at Western Theological Seminary.
  - Women on the Move in the Bronx, New York.
  - Women’s Connection Dinner at General Synod in Holland, Michigan.
  - Her Story in Artesia, California.
  - Women’s Stories Day at New Brunswick Theological Seminary.
  - Honoring our Stories in Monument, Colorado.
o Women’s Sankofa Journey through New York City and New Jersey.

For 2018, connection events are currently in development with local partners in Canada; the Mid-Atlantics; Orange City, Iowa; New York City; Midland, Michigan; and Mesa, Arizona.

- A delegation of coalition members attended 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. This has led to a comprehensive learning process called “Building God’s Church Together” that includes web resources, connection events, mini-leadership collaboratives, and learning communities to equip congregations to welcome the gifts women bring and develop healthy, thriving ministry partnerships between men and women.

- Our year-long “Doing a New Thing” pilot learning community in New York City was completed in January 2018. Five congregations discovered the new ministries God is calling them to develop and invest in. The five congregations and their team leaders were Bethany Memorial Reformed Church (Sharon Atkins), Dewitt Reformed Church (Irma Williams), Church on the Hill (Blaine Crawford), Elmendorf Reformed Church (Patricia Singletery and Belinda Perry), and Middle Collegiate Church (Lynn Min and Marte Samuelson).

- Six women’s leadership collaboratives launched in February 2017 and will be completed in August 2018. Women meet virtually and at an in-person gathering for personal, organizational, and multiplying leadership development over the course of a year and a half. A trilingual, in-person gathering was held in Minneapolis, Minnesota, in July 2017. Among the six cohorts there are three languages (English, Spanish, and Korean), five facilitators, and 42 participants, involving 47 women total.
  - Of the six cohorts, one is composed of all clergy, three are elders, deacons, and lay women, and two are mixed groups.
  - The five facilitators are from three regions: two from New York, two from the Far West, and one from the Heartland. The facilitators are Lesley Mazzotta (lead facilitator), Marla Rotman, Susan Hetrick, Ock Kee Byun, and Karla Camacho.
  - The 42 participants are from seven regional synods: five from New York, two from Canada, four from Mid-America, three from the Mid-Atlantics, ten from the Far West, eleven from the Heartland, and seven from the Great Lakes (three participants are CRC-affiliated).

- Mini leadership collaboratives have been launched and are offered seasonally. These two-month, six-session virtual small groups gather women from across the denomination around a focused leadership topic, such as whole-hearted leadership or leadership in beloved community. Our last mini leadership collaborative was held in fall 2017, and another is planned for 2018.

- The 2017 women’s global experience to Italy has continued as a pilot leadership development process in which the travelers continue to meet and develop ways to bring what they learned about refugees and trafficked women back to their faith communities. One traveler, Patricia Johnson, was recently featured in RCA Today magazine explaining her experience with Nigerian women in Italy and how she is now fully engaged in her home church’s mission to help women in similar circumstances in the U.S.

- For the year of celebration of women’s gifts and leadership in the RCA:
  - The We Are Speaking call to action to end harassment, abuse, and sexual violence against women and girls was created as a godly, gracious response to the #metoo and #churchtoo social movements. This statement was
created in partnership with Local Missional Engagement and has proven to be a truly unifying statement that more than 750 leaders from across the RCA and beyond have signed. Monthly webinars, web resources, and ongoing discussions with ministry groups are examples of the ways we are continuing to lead change and encourage all our assemblies to create safe space for stories and concrete action steps toward ending the culture of silence and shame that has pervaded our faith communities.

- In celebration of the great diversity of women’s God-given gifts and callings, the She Is Called campaign launched in 2017. This multi-faceted campaign includes videos, a Facebook page, the #sheiscalled hashtag, “biblical women & me” t-shirts, and ongoing stories of the many ways God calls women and girls to serve in the church and beyond.

- The Women’s Transformation and Leadership guiding coalition has worked diligently together since its convening in November 2016. They were asked to present at the Transformed & Transforming summit held at Camp Geneva in August 2017 as a model of how a cross-sector group can champion the initiative’s mission and opportunities in their regions. This guiding coalition has been integral in the development of culture-shifting projects such as She Is Called, We Are Speaking, and Building God’s Church Together.

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.
- Eighty-five to one hundred 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.

Progress

- Between June 2014 and June 2018, at least 2,000 women will have been positively impacted by a variety of customized connection events across North America.
- Our year-long “Doing a New Thing” pilot learning community in New York City was completed in January 2018. Five congregations discovered the new ministries God is calling them to develop and invest in.
- The “Building God’s Church Together” learning process, which includes connection events, mini leadership collaboratives, and learning communities, is being developed and will launch in northwest Iowa in July 2018, impacting a minimum of ten to fifteen congregations.
- Seventy-five women have participated in a variety of long and shorter-term women’s leadership collaboratives. The eighteen-month, three-language pilot women’s leadership collaborative made up of six cohorts (four English, one Korean, and one Spanish) will be completed in August 2018. A multiplier model (training local facilitators) in English and Spanish is being developed and will be piloted in fall 2018, launching in Mesa, Arizona. Seasonal two-month mini leadership collaboratives are held at least twice annually.
Since 2015, Women’s Transformation and Leadership has offered three annual global experiences visiting mission partners in Oman, Israel/Palestine, and Italy, impacting more than 35 female travelers and their faith communities. Future women’s global experiences are being explored for South Africa, Bahrain/India, and Scotland. Since our first women’s trip to Oman, the goal has been to support the women traveling in their leadership and passion for mission as well as to create a learning community-type process before, during, and after the trip. Lesley Mazzotta, who served as the co-leader of that inaugural experience, has gone on to create four subsequent women’s trips with the Al Amana Centre in Oman. We are grateful for the collaboration of Volunteer Engagement and Global Mission as we continue to research and develop women-focused, safe, transformational experiences that equip and empower leaders from many different contexts.

New Five-Year Goals (June 2018 to June 2023)

Women’s Transformation and Leadership has experienced Spirit-led innovation, growth, and culture shifts since June 2014 when our ministry initiative was launched. Our new goals are a continuation of this movement, and our delivery systems will be customized to meet the unique needs of each region.

- Twenty-five to thirty connection events continue to provide an empowering space for thousands of women and girls to share stories, build relationships, and experience transformation.
- “Building God’s Church Together” congregational learning processes will create a deep culture shift as 75 faith communities gather to explore how to more fully welcome the ministry gifts of women and create space for those gifts to be developed as well as invest in developing healthy, thriving ministry partnerships between men and women.
- “Doing a New Thing” congregational learning communities will help 25 churches discover the “new thing” God is calling them to, in and through their women leaders.
- Multi-language, long- and short-term leadership collaboratives will strengthen and equip hundreds of diverse women leaders in all regions through virtual sessions and train-the-trainer events for local facilitators to be equipped to lead in their context.
- One to two annual women’s global experiences will have transformational, leadership, and missional components that ensure that the 75 individual female travelers and their faith communities experience lasting impact.
- Attention to Spirit-led opportunities for healing and unifying the body and participation in God’s reconciling work in the world will be actively sought through projects such as We Are Speaking and the She Is Called campaign.
RETIRED MINISTERS OF WORD AND SACRAMENT

During 2017, 46 ministers of Word and sacrament retired from active service. Those who retired were recognized by General Synod through its endorsement of appreciation for their years of faithful and dedicated ministry in the church.

L 18-1
To adopt the following resolution:

These individuals 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.

Paul Akers
Whiting, New Jersey

Barbara Alexander
Laurelton, New York

Jhonny Alicea-Báez
Benton, Arkansas

David Bast
Grand Rapids, Michigan

Nancy Beardslee
New Brunswick, New Jersey

Abram Blaak
Brantford, Ontario

Dawn Boelkins
Holland, Michigan

Stephen Breen
Orange City, Iowa

Nancy Ann Callender
Hastings-on-Hudson, New York

Gerald Davelaar
Seal Beach, California

Marcia Elders
Grandville, Michigan
Kenneth Eriks  
Holland, Michigan  

Newton Fairweather  
Tamarac, Florida  

Victor Folkert  
Conroe, Texas  

Robert Gram  
Rhinebeck, New York  

Shirley Heeg  
Shelby, Michigan  

Dennis Hietbrink  
Sheldon, Iowa  

Suzanne Hodges  
Springville, New York  

Hae Taik Kim  
Yaphank, New York  

Larry Klaaren  
New Lenox, Illinois  

Roger Krutz  
East Greenbush, New York  

George (Chung Chih) Lai  
Fair Lawn, New Jersey  

Thomas Larkin  
Pequannock, New Jersey  

Nyla Lewis  
Lakeville, Minnesota  

Sandra Masters  
Laredo, Texas  

Nancy McClure-Long  
Muskogee, Oklahoma  

Philip Noordmans  
Clovis, California  

Michael Otte  
Little Falls, New Jersey  

Richard Otterness  
Syracuse, New York
John Paarlberg
Loudonville, New York

Daniel Plasman
Grand Rapids, Michigan

Jack Ritsema
Dumont, Iowa

Carlos Rivera
Hempstead, New York

John Schmidt
Holland, Michigan

Peter Semeyn
Westmont, Illinois

Jacqueline Smallbones
Orange City, Iowa

David Su
Elmhurst, New York

Dean Ulmer
Emery, South Dakota

Patricia (Pacia) Vamvas
Savannah, Georgia

Steven Vander Molen
Holland, Michigan

Bruce Van Dusseldorp
Denver, Colorado

David Van Lant
Norwalk, California

Robert Vrooman
Alexandria Bay, New York

Charles Wiessner
Louisburg, North Carolina

Bruce Wilterdink
Beloit, Wisconsin

Mary Wisner
Holland, Michigan

(ADOPTED)
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John David Page, Jr.

John David Page, Jr. was born on November 7, 1933, in South Norfolk, Virginia. He studied at King College in Briston, Tennessee, from which he graduated in 1956. He received his theological education at Union Theological Seminary in Virginia, from which he graduated in 1960.
Mr. Page was licensed and ordained by the Presbytery of Norfolk in 1960. He pastored the following congregations: Broadmoor Presbyterian, Chesapeake, Virginia, from 1958 to 1961; Sunnyside Presbyterian, Winchester, Virginia, from 1961 to 1962; Burnt Presbyterian, Winchester, Virginia, from 1961 to 1965; Community, Feasterville, Pennsylvania, from 1965 to 1967; and First Reformed, Scotia, New York, from 1967 to 1992.

Mr. Page died on January 29, 2017, in Glenville, New York. He was 83 years old.

Paul Esbenshade Hostetter

Paul Esbenshade Hostetter was born on April 11, 1927, in Lancaster, Pennsylvania. He studied at Wheaton College, from which he graduated in 1950. He received his theological education at Western Theological Seminary, from which he graduated in 1954. He received an M.A. from Fuller Theological Seminary in 1973 and also studied at the Hartford Seminary Foundation from 1959 to 1960, Michigan State University from 1967 to 1968, and Fuller Theological Seminary from 1985 to 1986.

Mr. Hostetter was licensed and ordained by the Classis of Chicago in 1954. He served as a short-term missionary in Sudan from 1954 to 1958 and as the director of the Literacy Center in West Pakistan from 1960 to 1965. He also served as a missionary in Chiapas, Mexico, from 1973 to 1980. He pastored University Reformed in East Lansing, Michigan, from 1967 to 1968 and Midland Reformed in Michigan from 1968 to 1973. He then served as the minister of missions and evangelism at the Crystal Cathedral in Garden Grove, California, from 1981 to 1985. Mr. Hostetter was a professor of missiology at Reformed Bible College in Grand Rapids, Michigan, from 1985 to 1997 and an editor and writer at Words of Hope in Grand Rapids, Michigan, from 1996 to 2003. He also served as the president of the Regional Synod of the Great Lakes in 1996.

Mr. Hostetter died on February 3, 2017. He was 89 years old.

Jack D. Cooper

Jack D. Cooper was born on December 10, 1929, in Grand Rapids, 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. Cooper was licensed by the Classis of South Grand Rapids in 1966 and ordained by the Classis of Schoharie the same year. He pastored the following congregations: First, Amsterdam, New York, from 1966 to 1969; Glenmont, New York, from 1969 to 1983; and Fifth, Grand Rapids, Michigan, from 1988 to 1994.

Mr. Cooper died on February 23, 2017, in Grand Rapids, Michigan. He was 87 years old.

William J. Bouwer

William J. Bouwer was born on May 27, 1934, in Grand Rapids, Michigan. He studied at Hope College, from which he graduated in 1956. He received his theological education at Western Theological Seminary, from which he graduated in 1959.

Mr. Bouwer was licensed by the Classis of North Grand Rapids in 1959 and ordained by the Classis of Kalamazoo the same year. He pastored the following congregations: Lakeland, Kalamazoo, Michigan, from 1959 to 1965; West Side, Cicero, Illinois, from 1965 to 1973; First, Oostburg, Wisconsin, from 1973 to 1989; and First, Lansing, Illinois,
from 1989 to 1996. He also served as the stated clerk of the Particular Synod of Mid-America from 1966 to 1999.

Mr. Bouwer died on February 25, 2017. He was 82 years old.

Arvin Wilfred Roos

Arvin Wilfred Roos was born on September 25, 1921, in Rock Rapids, Iowa. He studied at Central College, from which he graduated in 1943. He received his theological education at New Brunswick Theological Seminary, from which he graduated in 1949.

Mr. Roos was licensed by the Classis of West Sioux in 1949 and ordained by the Classis of Montgomery the same year. He pastored the following congregations: Trinity, Amsterdam, New York, from 1949 to 1952; Princetown, Duanesburg, New York, from 1952 to 1958; First, Prairie City, Iowa, from 1958 to 1960; First, Irvington, New Jersey, from 1960 to 1964; and Perl-Mack, Denver, Colorado, from 1964 to 1969. He was dismissed to the Presbyterian church in 1971 and served Presbyterian congregations in Hazelton and Steele, North Dakota, from 1971 to 1977; Currie and Tracy, Minnesota, from 1977 to 1985; and Strasburg, North Dakota, from 1986 to 1993.

Mr. Roos died on February 26, 2017, in Minneapolis, Minnesota. He was 95 years old.

Jan Walter van Arsdale

Jan Walter van Arsdale was born on August 8, 1937, in Pottsville, Pennsylvania. He studied at Dickenson College and at Waynesburg College, from which he graduated in 1960. His theological education was received at New Brunswick Theological Seminary, from which he graduated in 1965.

He pastored the following congregations: Mamakating, Wurtsboro, and Cuddebackville, New York, from 1965 to 1966 and Trinity, Newark, New Jersey, from 1966 to 1971. He was dismissed to the Presbyterian church in 1971.

Mr. van Arsdale died on February 28, 2017, in Womelsdorf, Pennsylvania. He was 79 years old.

Earl L. Smith

Earl L. Smith was born on April 13, 1944, in Manitowoc, Wisconsin. He studied at Northwestern College, from which he graduated in 1976. He received his theological education at Western Theological Seminary, from which he graduated in 1981.

Mr. Smith was licensed by the Classis of Minnesota in 1977 and ordained by the same classis in 1981. He pastored the following congregations: Bussing, McKee, Kentucky, from 1982 to 1985; Immanuel, London, Ontario, from 1985 to 1992; Maranatha, Wainfleet, Ontario, from 1992 to 1995; Umonhon, Macy, Nebraska from 1995 to 2007; and Oneida United Methodist Church, Oneida, Wisconsin, until his retirement in 2013.

Mr. Smith died on March 11, 2017. He was 72 years old.

Gerald Gordon Dykstra

Gerald Gordon Dykstra was born on September 14, 1921, in Ashkum, Illinois. He studied
at the University of Illinois, from which he graduated in 1943. His theological education was received at Western Theological Seminary, from which he graduated in 1949.

Mr. Dykstra was licensed by the Classis of Illiana in 1949 and ordained by the Classis of Rochester the same year. He pastored the following congregations: Clymer Hill, New York, from 1949 to 1954; Owasco, New York, from 1954 to 1960; Mount Pleasant, Schenectady, New York, from 1960 to 1968; American, Primghar, Iowa, from 1968 to 1981; and Comanche, Lawton, Oklahoma, from 1981 to 1985.

Mr. Dykstra died on March 14, 2017, in Primghar, Iowa. He was 95 years old.

Leonard James DeBeer

Leonard James DeBeer was born on November 25, 1933, in Le Mars, Iowa. He studied at Central College, from which he graduated in 1955. His theological education was received at Western Theological Seminary, from which he graduated in 1958. He received an S.T.M. from New York Theological Seminary in 1974.

Mr. DeBeer was licensed by the Classis of West Sioux in 1958 and ordained by the Classis of West Central the same year. He pastored Perl-Mack Community Church in Denver, Colorado, from 1958 to 1964 and Faith Community in Detroit, Michigan, from 1964 to 1966. He served the RCA’s General Program Council as the secretary for professional development from 1968 to 1973. He did specialized ministry in pastoral counseling in New York City, New York, from 1973 to 1987 and in Rutland, Vermont, from 1987 to 1995.

Mr. DeBeer died on March 14, 2017, in Bend, Oregon. He was 83 years old.

Rodney James Koopmans

Rodney James Koopmans was born on October 22, 1945, in Beaver Dam, Wisconsin. He studied at Central College, from which he graduated in 1967. He began his theological education at Western Theological Seminary in 1967, later studied at New York Theological Seminary, and completed his education at New Brunswick Theological Seminary in 1971.

Mr. Koopmans was licensed and ordained by the Classis of Wisconsin in 1971. He pastored the following congregations: Gardiner, New York, from 1971 to 1977; Fishkill, New York, from 1982 to 1997; and St. Croix, Virgin Islands, from 1997 until his death. He also served the church in Oman from 1977 to 1982. In St. Croix, he was the director of My Brother’s Table, a soup kitchen in Frederiksted that served the homeless a noon meal.

Mr. Koopmans died on March 15, 2017, in St. Croix, Virgin Islands. He was 71 years old.

Robert “Bob” Wayne Barrowclough

Robert “Bob” Wayne Barrowclough was born on December 29, 1939, in Hawthorne, New Jersey. He studied at Princeton University, from which he graduated in 1961. His theological education was received at New Brunswick Theological Seminary, from which he graduated in 1965.

Mr. Barrowclough was licensed by the Classis of Paramus in 1965 and ordained by the Classis of Newark the same year. He completed a mission with the Jicarilla Apache tribe in New Mexico before pastoring North Reformed Church in Newark, New Jersey, as
associate pastor from 1965 to 1972 and as senior pastor from 1973 to 2005. He also ran Bessie Green Community, Inc. which provided food, shelter, and clothing to the poor. In retirement, he served as pastor at Cedar Crest Chapel, Pompton Plains, New Jersey, from 2007 to 2015.

Mr. Barrowclough died on March 19, 2017, in Wyckoff, New Jersey. He was 77 years old.

**John David Muyskens**

John David Muyskens was born on April 19, 1934, in Sheldon, Iowa. He studied at Northwestern Junior College and at Central College, from which he graduated in 1956. His theological education was received at Western Theological Seminary, from which he graduated in 1959. He earned a Th.M. in 1962 as well as a D.Min. in 1978 from Princeton Theological Seminary.

Mr. Muyskens was licensed by the Classis of Minnesota in 1959 and ordained by the Classis of Raritan the same year. He pastored the following congregations: Pottersville, New Jersey, from 1959 to 1967; First, Union City, New Jersey, from 1967 to 1975; and First, New Brunswick, New Jersey, from 1975 to 1999.

Mr. Muyskens died on April 1, 2017. He was 82 years old.

**John Edwin Brouwer**

John Edwin Brouwer was born on September 7, 1934, in Inwood, Iowa. He studied at Hope College, from which he graduated in 1959. His theological education was received at Western Theological Seminary, from which he graduated in 1962.

Mr. Brouwer was licensed by the Classis of Minnesota in 1962 and ordained by the Classis of Germania the same year. He pastored the following congregations: Logan, Dell Rapids, South Dakota, from 1962 to 1969; Grace, Corsica, South Dakota, from 1969 to 1977; and First, Randolph, Wisconsin, from 1977 to 1987. He was dismissed to the United Methodist Church in 1987.

Mr. Brouwer died on April 3, 2017, in St. Paul, Minnesota. He was 82 years old.

**Angeline Jennie Calsbeek (née Smit)**

Angeline Jennie Calsbeek was born on September 13, 1928, in Davis, South Dakota. She studied at Northwestern Junior College and at Hope College, from which she graduated in 1953. She served as an elementary school teacher in Inwood, Iowa, and in Holland, Michigan, before becoming a missionary for the RCA.

Ms. Calsbeek served in the mission field with her husband, Harvey, in Mescalero, New Mexico, from 1954 to 1962 and in Dulce, New Mexico, from 1962 to 1966.

Ms. Calsbeek died on April 21, 2017, in Balaton, Minnesota. She was 88 years old.

**Anne L. Guild-Donovan**

Anne L. Guild-Donovan was born on April 27, 1932, in Oradell, New Jersey. She studied at Rockland Community College and at Ramapo College, from which she graduated in 1976. Her theological education was received at Union Theological Seminary, New York
City, from which she graduated in 1979. She earned a D.Min. from Colgate Rochester Divinity School in 1987.

Ms. Guild-Donovan was licensed by the Classis of Rockland-Westchester in 1978 and ordained in 1979 by the same classis. She began her ministry as an administrative assistant at Spring Valley, New York, from 1970 to 1975 and as assistant pastor at the Presbyterian church in Palisades, New York. She then continued her ministry in a variety of chaplaincy positions: Central Islip Psychiatric Center, Central Islip, New York, from 1979 to 1980; interim, United Methodist Church, Islip, New York, 1980; administrative assistant, Christianity/Crisis, New York, New York, 1981; and Rochester Psychiatric Center, Rochester, New York, from 1982 to 1994.

Ms. Guild-Donovan died on April 26, 2017. She was 84 years old.

George Brown, Jr.

George Brown, Jr. was born on December 19, 1942, in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. He studied at Central College, from which he graduated in 1969. His theological education was received at Western Theological Seminary, from which he graduated in 1969. He earned a Th.M. from Princeton Theological Seminary in 1971 and a Ph.D. from Michigan State University in 1989.

Mr. Brown was licensed and ordained by the Classis of Philadelphia in 1969. He pastored an RCA church in Pottersville, New Jersey, from 1969 to 1973 and also served as minister of education at Peapack, Gladstone, New Jersey, from 1971 to 1973 and at Central, Grand Rapids, Michigan, from 1973 to 1988. He began his teaching career as an adjunct professor at Western Theological Seminary from 1975 to 1976 and from 1983 to 1988. He served as the dean of faculty at Western from 1988 to 1997 and as the G.W. & Eddie Haworth professor of Christian education and associate dean from 1997 to 2012. He was also a General Synod professor from 1997 to 2013.

Mr. Brown died on April 30, 2017, in Grand Rapids, Michigan. He was 74 years old.

Ruth Adene Fries Robbins (née Workman)

Ruth Fries Robbins was born on October 9, 1935, in Muskegon, Michigan. She studied at Rutgers University, from which she graduated in 1976. Her theological education was received at McCormick Theological Seminary, from which she graduated in 1983. She also earned a Th.M. from New Brunswick Theological Seminary in 1986.

Ms. Robbins was licensed and ordained by the Classis of Raritan in 1983. She pastored the following congregations: First, Rocky Hill, New Jersey, from 1983 to 1993; Rocky Hill, New Jersey, from 1994 to 1996; interim, Harlingen, Belle Mead, New Jersey, from 1997 to 1999; and Staten Island, New York, in 1999.

Ms. Robbins died on May 5, 2017, in Rocky Hill, New Jersey. She was 81 years old.

Jared Van Wagenen IV

Jared Van Wagenen IV was born on November 16, 1936, in Cooperstown, New York. He studied at Middlebury College, from which he graduated in 1960. His theological education was received at New Brunswick Theological Seminary, from which he graduated in 1962.

Mr. Van Wagenen was licensed by the Classis of Schoharie in 1962 and ordained by the

Mr. Van Wagenen died on May 13, 2017, in Lawyersville, New York. He was 80 years old.

Frederick Mold Jr.

Frederick Mold Jr. was born on June 17, 1926, in Jersey City, New Jersey. He studied at Muhlenberg College, from which he graduated in 1950. His theological education was received at New Brunswick Theological Seminary, from which he graduated in 1955. He received a certificate in pastoral counseling from the Presbyterian Synod of New Jersey in 1974.

Mr. Mold was licensed by the Classis of South Bergen in 1955 and ordained by the Classis of New Brunswick the same year. He pastored the following congregations: Middletown, New Jersey, from 1955 to 1958; Freehold, New Jersey, from 1958 to 1979; and Tinton Falls, New Jersey, from 1986 to 1991. Mr. Mold served at New Brunswick Theological Seminary as vice president from 1979 to 1985 and as an adjunct professor in 1986 and from 2002 to 2009. He served as the stated clerk of the Classis of New Brunswick from 1957 to 1992 and as treasurer from 1957 to 2009. He also served as the stated clerk of the Synod of the Mid-Atlantics from 1990 to 2010.

Mr. Mold died on June 16, 2017, in Hamilton, New Jersey. He was 90 years old.

Jacob Dykstra

Jacob Dykstra was born on September 26, 1929, in Los Angeles, California. He studied at George Pepperdine College, from which he graduated in 1951. His theological education was received at Western Theological Seminary, from which he graduated in 1954.

Mr. Dykstra was licensed by the Classis of California in 1954 and ordained by the Classis of Rochester the same year. He pastored the following congregations: Emmanuel, Whitby, Ontario, from 1954 to 1957; First, Decatur, Michigan, from 1957 to 1959; First, Chatham, Ontario, from 1959 to 1964; Immanuel, London, Ontario, from 1964 to 1968; Steen, Minnesota, from 1968 to 1972; South Blendon, Hudsonville, Michigan, from 1972 to 1977; Mount Greenwood, Chicago, Illinois, from 1977 to 1984; and Unity, Muskegon, Michigan, from 1984 to 1994.

Mr. Dykstra died on June 29, 2017, in Dyer, Indiana. He was 87 years old.

Eric John Schulze

Eric John Schulze was born on June 17, 1927, in Edmonton, Alberta. He studied at Moravian College, from which he graduated in 1950. His theological education was received at Moravian Theological Seminary, from which he graduated in 1953. He also studied at St. Stephens College from 1950 to 1951, Vancouver School of Theology in 1969, and Fuller Theological Seminary from 1980 to 1981.

Mr. Schulze was ordained a deacon by the Moravian church in 1953 and a presbyter in 1961. He was received by the Classis of Cascades in 1972. He pastored the following congregations: Moravian, New Sarepta, Alberta, from 1953 to 1959; Heimtel Moravian, Edmonton, Alberta, from 1955 to 1959; Moravian, Calgary, Alberta, from 1959 to 1962;
Moravian, Bruderheim, Alberta, from 1962 to 1967; Spring Gardens Moravian, Antigua, West Indies, 1967; Fredericksted Moravian, St. Croix, Virgin Islands, from 1967 to 1968; Moravian, Vancouver, British Columbia, from 1968 to 1972; Calgary, Alberta, from 1972 to 1978; and Lincoln Ave, Pomona, California, from 1978 to 1982. He served as a chaplain at Marquardt Manor from 1982 to 1994 and as a contract pastor at First, Lynden, Washington, from 1994 to 2010. He was also a visiting pastor for the Board of Pensions from 1994 to 2005.

Mr. Schulze died on July 1, 2017. He was 90 years old.

**David Smith**

David Smith was born on June 25, 1968, in Morrison, Illinois. He studied at Saulk Valley Community College and at Trinity Christian College, from which he graduated in 1990. His theological education was started at Trinity Evangelical Divinity School, where he studied from 1992 to 1996, and completed at Western Theological Seminary, from which he graduated in 1998.

Mr. Smith was ordained by the Classis of Illinois in 1998. He began his ministry as associate pastor at First, Pella, Iowa, from 1998 to 2001 and at Faith, Dyer, Indiana, from 2001 to 2009. He then served as pastor at Crete, Illinois, from 2010 to 2015 when he transferred to the Presbyterian Church in America.

Mr. Smith died on July 2, 2017, in Crete, Illinois. He was 49 years old.

**Antoine “Tony” L. Campbell**

Antoine “Tony” L. Campbell was born on December 24, 1954, in Indianapolis, Indiana. He earned his bachelor’s degree at the United States Naval Academy. His theological education was received at Yale School of Divinity.

At the time of his death, Mr. Campbell was serving as the associate general secretary and director of missional engagement for the General Synod Council.

Mr. Campbell died on July 18, 2017, in Grand Rapids, Michigan. He was 62 years old.

**John “Jack” Edward Buteyn Jr.**

John “Jack” Edward Buteyn Jr. was born on July 18, 1944, in Harvey, Illinois. He studied at Hope College, from which he graduated in 1966. His theological education started at Princeton Theological Seminary and was completed at Western Theological Seminary, from which he graduated in 1970.

Mr. Buteyn was licensed and ordained by the Classis of Bergen in 1970. He pastored the following congregations: Immanuel Community, Lansing, Michigan, from 1970 to 1975; Abbe, Clymer, New York, from 1975 to 1978; and Plano, Texas, from 1978 to 2009. He also served the Protestant Church in Oman after his retirement.

Mr. Buteyn died on July 20, 2017, in Plano, Texas. He was 73 years old.

**Leonard Jones**

Leonard Jones was born on June 13, 1926, in Stafford Springs, Connecticut. He studied
at Rutgers University, from which he graduated in 1950. His theological education was received at New Brunswick Theological Seminary, from which he graduated in 1953.

Mr. Jones was licensed by the Classis of Paramus in 1953 and ordained by the Classis of New Brunswick the same year. He pastored the following congregations: Six Mile Run, Franklin Park, New Jersey, from 1953 to 1963 and Franklin, Nutley, New Jersey, from 1963 to 1981.

Mr. Jones died on July 25, 2017. He was 91 years old.

**Gordon S. Cook**

Gordon S. Cook was born on December 23, 1931, in Flushing, Queens, New York. He studied at Yale University, from which he graduated in 1953. His theological education was received at New Brunswick Theological Seminary, from which he graduated in 1960. He also earned a Th.M. from Princeton Theological Seminary in 1968 and a D.Min. from Andover Newton Theological Seminary in 1977.

Mr. Cook was licensed and ordained by the Classis of North Long Island in 1960. He began his ministry as a chaplain in the United States Navy and served from 1960 to 1981. He was director of education at the Marine Corps base at Camp Butler in Okinawa from 1987 to 1991. He then served as a lecturer in English at the university in Ryukyus and at Okinawa Christian Junior College from 1993 to 1999. He was also an instructor at Caldwell Community College in North Carolina following his retirement.

Mr. Cook died on July 27, 2017. He was 85 years old.

**Stanley Eldon Perea**

Stanley Eldon Perea was born on February 19, 1949, in Antonito, Colorado.

Mr. Perea was ordained by the Classis of Rocky Mountains in 1992. He served as pastor of the Church of the Rockies, Denver, Colorado, from 1991 to 1998 and as the coordinator of urban ministries in the RCA from 1998 to 2001. He also served as the director of HIS Ministries and the Asociación para la Educación Teológica Hispana (AETH: Hispanic Theological Education Association).

Mr. Perea died on July 29, 2017, in Bloomfield, Colorado. He was 68 years old.

**Julius Otto Brandt**

Julius Otto Brandt was born on June 30, 1922, in Holland, Michigan. He studied at Hope College, from which he graduated in 1954. His theological education was received at Western Theological Seminary, from which he graduated in 1975.

Mr. Brandt was licensed by the Classis of Holland in 1957 and ordained by the Classis of Pleasant Prairie the same year. He pastored Immanuel Reformed Church in Belmond, Iowa, from 1957 to 1961 and Faith Reformed Church in Lynden, Washington, from 1961 to 1977. He then served as a missionary in the RCA's mission at the National Evangelical Church in Kuwait from 1977 to 1987.

Mr. Brandt died on August 4, 2017, in Lynden, Washington. He was 95 years old.
Thomas Danney

Thomas Danney was born on March 25, 1944, in Buffalo, New York. He studied at the Buffalo Bible Institute from 1965 to 1966 and at Houghton College, from which he graduated in 1967. His theological education was received at New Brunswick Theological Seminary, from which he graduated in 1981. He also earned an M.S.W. at Fordham University in 1973.

Mr. Danney was ordained by the Classis of Palisades in 1981. He pastored the following congregations: Bergen Point Community, Bergen, New Jersey, from 1981 to 1989 and First, Nyack, New York, from 1989 to 2011.

Mr. Danney died on August 5, 2017. He was 73 years old.

Franklin Spoolstra

Franklin Spoolstra was born on August 2, 1932, in Chicago, Illinois. He studied at Hope College, from which he graduated in 1963. His theological education was received at Western Theological Seminary, from which he graduated in 1966. He also earned an M.A. from Governors State University in 1976 and an Ed.D. from the University of Sarasota in 1977.

Mr. Spoolstra was licensed by the Classis of Chicago in 1966 and ordained by the Classis of Kalamazoo the same year. He pastored the following congregations: Three Oaks, Michigan, from 1966 to 1969; Calvin, Cutlerville, Michigan, from 1969 to 1973; Mount Greenwood, Chicago, Illinois, from 1973 to 1977; Riverside Park, Hammond, Indiana, from 1977 to 1981; St. Stephens ELCA, Rockford, Michigan, from 1989 to 1990; Hope Community, Rockford, Michigan, from 1990 to 1992; St. Stephens, Rockford, Michigan, from 1992 to 1998; and Rockford Springs Orthodox Presbyterian in 1998. He also had a private practice in psychology from 1981 to 1986 and served as program director for the Salvation Army from 1989 to 1991; as clinical director for Tri County Hospital from 1991 to 1994; and as a director for Forest View Psychiatric Hospital.

Mr. Spoolstra died on August 21, 2017, in Rockford, Michigan. He was 85 years old.

Gerard De Loof

Gerard De Loof was born on December 6, 1921, in Kalamazoo, Michigan. He studied at Hope College, from which he graduated in 1949. His theological education was received at Western Theological Seminary, from which he graduated in 1952.

Mr. De Loof was licensed by the Classis of Kalamazoo in 1952 and ordained by the Classis of North Grand Rapids the same year. He pastored the following congregations: Casnovia, Michigan, from 1952 to 1956; Bethany, St. Petersburg, Florida, from 1956 to 1961; Southridge, Kalamazoo, Michigan, from 1961 to 1968; Chancellor, South Dakota, from 1968 to 1979; and Bethel, Ellsworth, Minnesota, from 1979 to 1986. He served as a senior pastor for the Board of Pensions from 1988 to 1993 and as contract pastor at First, Monroe, South Dakota, from 1992 to 1999.

Mr. De Loof died on September 19, 2017, in Sioux Falls, South Dakota. He was 95 years old.
James Stralow

James Stralow was born on July 7, 1943, in Morrison, Illinois. He studied at Central College, from which he graduated in 1965. His theological education was received at Western Theological Seminary, from which he graduated in 1968.

Mr. Stralow was licensed by the Classis of Illinois in 1968 and ordained by the Classis of Muskegon the same year. He pastored the following congregations: Ravenna, Michigan, from 1968 to 1975; Rehoboth, McBain, Michigan, from 1976 to 1982; and Forreston, Illinois, from 1982 to 2009.

Mr. Stralow died on September 21, 2017, in Freeport, Illinois. He was 74 years old.

John Itzen

John Itzen was born on November 19, 1924, in Herman, Minnesota. He studied at Central College, from which he graduated in 1950. His theological education was received at New Brunswick Theological Seminary, from which he graduated in 1953.

Mr. Itzen was licensed by the Classis of Germania in 1953 and ordained by the Classis of South Long Island the same year. He pastored the following congregations: Merillon Neighborhood, Garden City Park, Long Island, New York, from 1953 to 1957; Readington, New Jersey, from 1957 to 1966; Faith, Levittown, Pennsylvania, from 1966 to 1988.

Mr. Itzen died on September 29, 2017, in Levittown, Pennsylvania. He was 92 years old.

Francis A. De Jong

Francis A. De Jong was born on January 15, 1935, in Leighton, Iowa. She studied at Central College, from which she graduated in 1957. She received an M.A. from McCormick Theological Seminary in 1960.

Ms. De Jong was licensed by the Classis of Queens in 1979 and ordained by the same classis in 1980. She served as the director of Christian education at Spring Valley, New York, from 1960 to 1962 and at Wyckoff, New Jersey, from 1962 to 1970. She worked in campus ministry for United Ministry in Higher Education at Morehead State University from 1970 to 1973 and at the State University of New York at Fredonia, New York, from 1973 to 1977. She then served as the chaplain for Central College from 1977 to 1997.

Ms. De Jong died on October 11, 2017, in Pella, Iowa. She was 82 years old.

Allan M. Koller

Allan M. Koller was born on February 12, 1945, in London, England. He studied at the City College of New York, from which he graduated in 1965. His theological education was received at New Brunswick Theological Seminary, from which he graduated in 1973. He also earned a Ph.D. from Fordham University in 1977, an M.S. from Long Island University in 1984, and an M.S. in 1988, an M.Phil. in 1989, and an Ed.D. from Columbia University in 1990.

Mr. Koller was licensed and ordained by the Classis of Brooklyn in 1973. He pastored the following congregations: Crescent Place, Yonkers, New York, from 1973 to 1988; Williamsbridge Road, Bronx, New York, from 1981 to 1988; the Methodist church in
Walker Valley, New York, from 1989 to 1999; and the Presbyterian church in Florida, New York, after that. Mr. Koller also served as the director of pastoral care at City College of New York from 1985 to 1987; as assistant professor at Dominican College, Orangeburg, New York, from 1987 to 1992; as academic administrator at Chapel Field Christian High School, Pine Bush, New York, from 1992 to 1998; and as a math instructor at Orange County Community College, Middletown, New York. He was also a staff chaplain for the 77th Regiment at Fort Totten, New York.

Mr. Koller died on October 28, 2017, in Washingtonville, New York. He was 72 years old.

**Lewis Rousseau Scudder III**

Lewis Rousseau Scudder III was born on April 12, 1942, in Kuwait. He studied at Hope College, from which he graduated in 1963. His theological education was received at Western Theological Seminary, from which he graduated in 1966. He also received an M.A. from American University in Beirut, Lebanon, and did doctoral studies at McGill University Institute for Islamic Studies in Montreal, Quebec.

Mr. Scudder was licensed and ordained by the Classis of Holland in 1966. He served as a missionary for the RCA in the Middle East from 1966 to 1990. He pastored the Union Church of Istanbul, Turkey, from 1990 to 1994 and served with the Middle East Council of Churches on Cyprus from 1994 to 2008.

Mr. Scudder died on November 1, 2017, in Limassol, Cyprus. He was 76 years old.

**Philip Stephan Sickler**

Philip Stephan Sickler was born on June 5, 1947, in Kingston, New York. He studied at the University of Buffalo, from which he earned a B.A. and an M.Ed. His theological education was received at Westminster Theological Seminary.

Mr. Sickler taught social studies and English in the Buffalo public schools. He served as director of the Ontario Street Youth Center and organized “His Place,” a Christian coffee house ministry in Buffalo. He pastored the following congregations: Hope, Clifton, New Jersey, from 1978 to 1984 and Arlington, Poughkeepsie, New York, from 1998 to 2009.

Mr. Sickler died on November 4, 2017. He was 70 years old.

**Clarence Liang**

Clarence Liang was born on February 27, 1935, in Nong An, Jilin, China. He studied at King College, Bristol, Tennessee, from which he graduated in 1962. His theological education was received at Louisville Theological Seminary, from which he graduated in 1966.

Mr. Liang was licensed by the Presbytery of Louisville in 1963 and ordained by the Presbytery of Iron Mountain in 1966. He was received by the Classis of California in 1989. He began his ministry as student pastor at Patterson Memorial Presbyterian in Guston, Kentucky, First Presbyterian, Irvington, Kentucky, and First Presbyterian, Cloverport, Kentucky, from 1965 to 1966. He then pastored the following congregations: Presbyterian, Patton, Missouri, and Whitewater Presbyterian, Sedgewickville, Missouri, from 1966 to 1970; Presbyterian, Ashmore, Illinois, from 1970 to 1975; First Presbyterian, Edwardsburg, Michigan, from 1975 to 1980; Presbyterian, Maple Plain, Minnesota, from 1980 to 1988;

Mr. Liang died on November 7, 2017, in Holland, Michigan. He was 82 years old.

Antonio R. Lopez

Antonio R. Lopez was born on September 13, 1938, in the Bronx, New York. Mr. Lopez planted Iglesia de Cristo La Roca in Queens Village, New York, where he served as senior pastor and later merged the congregation with the Reformed Church in America under the care of the Hispanic Ministries Council.

Mr. Lopez died on November 7, 2017. He was 79 years old.

Peter Je Chul Ko

Peter Je Chul Ko was born on August 10, 1933, in Yeoju-si Gyeonggi-do, South Korea. His theological education was received at Chongshin Theological Seminary.

Mr. Ko was ordained by the Presbyterian Church in Korea (Hapdong) in 1968. He planted the Han Sung Reformed Church in Cresskill, New Jersey, in 1992 and served until his retirement in 2013.

Mr. Ko died on November 15, 2017. He was 84 years old.

Roy Wagoner

Roy Wagoner was born on November 3, 1928, in Rochelle Park, New Jersey. He studied at Central College, from which he graduated in 1953. His theological education was received at New Brunswick Theological Seminary, from which he graduated in 1956. He also earned an M.A. at Columbia University in 1967.

Mr. Wagoner was licensed by the Classis of Bergen in 1956 and ordained by the Classis of Poughkeepsie the same year. He pastored the following congregations: First, Poughkeepsie, New York, from 1956 to 1958; Fair Lawn, New Jersey, from 1958 to 1964; and Trinity, West New York, New Jersey, from 1964 to 1971. He served as the administrator of the Reformed Church Home in Irvington, New Jersey, from 1971 to 1985 and as executive director of Reformed Church Ministries to the Aging in Highland Park, New Jersey, from 1985 to 1989.

Mr. Wagoner died on December 2, 2017. He was 89 years old.

Paul J. Alderink

Paul J. Alderink was born on November 5, 1926, in Holland, Michigan. He began his undergraduate education at Grand Rapids Junior College and completed it at Hope College, from which he graduated in 1950. His theological education was received at Western Theological Seminary, from which he graduated in 1955.

Mr. Alderink was licensed by the Classis of North Grand Rapids in 1955 and ordained by the Classis of Zeeland the same year. He pastored the following congregations: Jamestown, Michigan, from 1955 to 1960; First, Sioux Falls, South Dakota, from 1960 to
1963; Annville, Kentucky, from 1963 to 1971; and First, Platte, South Dakota, from 1975 to 1986. He also served as the director for Annville Institute, Annville, Kentucky, from 1972 to 1975 and as the executive coordinator for Jackson County Ministries, Annville, Kentucky, from 1986 to 1990.

Mr. Alderink died on December 9, 2017, in Holland, Michigan. He was 91 years old.

Paul Colenbrander

Paul Colenbrander was born on March 25, 1924, in Rock Valley, Iowa. He began his undergraduate studies at Northwestern College and completed them at Westmar College, from which he graduated in 1948. He received an M.A. from Colorado State University in 1953. His theological education was received at Western Theological Seminary, from which he graduated in 1966.

Mr. Colenbrander was licensed by the Classis of East Sioux in 1966 and ordained by the Classis of Holland the same year. He pastored Maplewood Reformed Church in Holland, Michigan, from 1966 to 1977 and then served as a representative of the World Home Bible League until his retirement.

Mr. Colenbrander died on December 18, 2017, in Holland, Michigan. He was 93 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 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. It 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 Mission strategic priority: Local Missional Engagement, which helps congregations express the gospel of Christ in transformational ways in their local community; Global Mission 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 Cultural Agility and Advocacy, 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 Mission strategic priority.

LOCAL MISSIONAL ENGAGEMENT

Local Missional Engagement helps churches discern what God is doing in their church and in their communities and helps explore ways to bring those things together. Local Missional Engagement hopes to help churches unlock their missional imagination to see what is possible. 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 Cortés Bast.
Year Five Goals (June 2017 to June 2018)

- Develop one new guiding coalition/leadership community process with emerging leaders around race and social justice, in collaboration with our undergraduate institutions.
- Launch two local impact areas that mobilize at least three congregations for collective impact on their community.
- Hold six to eight connection events.

Progress

- Local Missional Engagement (LME) has begun conversations with our educational institutions and some of our next generation engagement partners to begin a learning process that would be launched in fall 2018.
- Staff from Local Missional Engagement are meeting with the city of Zeeland, Michigan, for a proposed impact area around business development and next generation development for social entrepreneurship.
- As LME has continued to find ways to integrate mission as a holistic approach with the other strategic priority areas of Transformed & Transforming, we have moved to curating learning opportunities that highlight that approach in conjunction with other initiatives. Connection events have been and will be held as a collaboration between Local Missional Engagement and Women’s Transformation and Leadership, Disability Concerns, Cultural Agility and Advocacy, Next Generation Engagement, etc. Events have been and will be held in Grand Rapids, Michigan; Fulton, Illinois; Portage, Michigan; Milwaukee, Wisconsin; Sioux Center, Iowa; and New York City, New York. We also created online connection events around the We Are Speaking movement in partnership with Women’s Transformation and Leadership, an advocacy movement for women and girls who have experienced violence and their allies. Cultural Agility and Advocacy and LME are also developing an online experience that addresses ministry concerns in post-industrial cities.
- One Local Missional Engagement learning community presented in conjunction with Church Multiplication is in progress. Four church planters are working together to explore a stronger local mission focus in their church plants.
- Local Missional Engagement is also launching a learning community in conjunction with Transformational Processes with six churches in in Fulton, Illinois. The goal of this learning community will be to help close the gap on discipleship and local missional pathways.
- Local Missional Engagement has also partnered with Disability Concerns to launch a learning community around mental health issues and the church. Five churches are participating in this learning community.
- Through the Local Missional Engagement initiative, the RCA was awarded an implementation grant from the state of Michigan to initiate 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 received the grant. However, due to transition in some of the Wyoming churches as well as internal RCA staffing transitions and losses, Local Missional Engagement asked the state of Michigan for a stay on the award for one year to see if agency could be moved to the local school system.
- Local Missional Engagement also partnered with Women’s Transformation and Leadership to bring forward the We Are Speaking initiative and its coordinated
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 after the process, 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.

Local Missional Engagement will actively work with the rest of the Mission strategic priority area staff to create integrated, holistic learning environments and processes for churches to best assist them in their self-selection process of their missional pathway.

Local Missional Engagement will develop and launch an experiment lab model for new approaches to local mission in learning and leadership communities.

Two hundred RCA congregations will be equipped for increased local missional engagement with tangible missional impact, reflecting sacrificial service, authentic relationships, and spiritual transformation that are holistically linked to discipleship (transformational engagement) and leadership development.

Fifty congregations will have engaged in substantial and quantifiable local missional engagement, with identified and sustained community partnerships.

In learning communities that were launched or completed from 2016 onward:
- At least 50 percent of congregations who have completed learning communities are adjusting ministry plans and have begun work or conversations with key community partners, such as schools.
- None of the Local Missional Engagement learning communities are yet 18 months out after the completion of their process.

In our first impact area (started in 2014), churches in the Wyoming area had identified the school system as their key community partner. Although the work has continued on with the schools, there have recently been some shifts in the existing churches in this area that have caused the impact to slow down. Local Missional Engagement is reevaluating the strength of this strategy in Wyoming. As we are continuing to test this model, we used our position as a convening agent for ecumenical conversations around affordable housing and are identifying two other churches in the Midwest to spearhead work around economic development as a means of community partnership. The conversation is slow, staggered work as we have capacity, but we are working to give churches better agency in leading the work to create the best chances for long-term sustainability.

Local Missional Engagement has been actively working in the Mission priority area to create joint learning opportunities to best integrate the work that is being done. We will complete our first learning community across the Mission area (jointly between Local Missional Engagement and Church Multiplication) this
summer. This learning community also joined with the Ezra Project 2.0 learning community for one of its shared learning opportunities. Local Missional Engagement is also working with RCA Disability Concerns, with whom we have launched an additional learning community combining advocacy and education around mental health issues, both inside and outside the church.

- In the past 18 months, Local Missional Engagement has participated in combined learning opportunities with Next Generation Engagement and Transformational Processes (in the Discipleship strategic priority area), along with the previously mentioned work with the Ezra Project and Women’s Transformation and Leadership. We are currently implementing a joint process between Global Mission and Volunteer Engagement that will provide an integrated methodology around a global visionary experience with one of our mission partners that can easily be translated into an ongoing local experience for a congregation. We hope that these integrated opportunities will become the new standard for Transformed & Transforming work, as we recognize that, in the healthiest churches, learning and work in the three strategic priority areas of Transformed & Transforming are linked.

- Local Missional Engagement has had more than 110 churches connected through one of our delivery systems in under three years. However, we have not yet found the best possible way to measure local impact for these churches.

New Five-Year Goals (June 2018 to June 2023)

- LME will identify a pre- and post-process for learning opportunities for churches that allows those churches to self-identify their current local impact.
- The Local Impact Area process will be finalized, and at least five bi-national areas will be identified, with churches taking primary agency in the local work.
- Each regional synod will have an identified and trained local missional engagement coach in their area who can help equip, resource, and coach the local work with a strong understanding of each region’s context.
- Local Missional Engagement will have a curated “toolbox” of resources that will be useful within all of the initiatives in the Mission strategic priority (all of the initiatives listed in this report). This toolbox will give RCA congregations access to the content of the best contemporary resources for local mission.
- Local Missional Engagement will have a clearly identified and integrated strategy for local churches that provides learning around justice, compassion and aid, and evangelism.
- One hundred fifty RCA congregations will be equipped for increased local mission engagement with tangible missional impact, reflecting sacrificial service, authentic relationships, and spiritual transformation.
- One hundred congregations will have engagement 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 in Transformed & Transforming 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.

The Global Mission team 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, expanding the work of RCA congregations around the world in quantity, quality, and impact.

2. **Global strategies:** Global Mission staff will develop strategic goals for RCA mission in Africa, Asia, the Americas, the Middle East, and Europe that have measurable outcomes in the next five years. These goals will lead to ministries of transformation that will bring congregations and indigenous populations closer to Christ.

3. **Restructuring:** Global Mission staff will continue to develop and identify missionaries and mission partners that will work with our congregations to achieve our strategic goals.

**Year Five Goals (June 2017 to June 2018)**

- Revise the church engagement process in order to implement it with current Global Mission and development staff as a consultation service following the departure of the coordinator of Global Missional Engagement from RCA staff.
- Continue expanding the two existing strategic impact areas—Nicaragua and South Africa—by engaging more RCA churches and continuing progress toward the measurable goals established for each area.
- Begin another strategic impact area in Brazil, which will include a medical mission, church planting, and missionary training.
- Increase RCA church engagement in the above strategic impact areas.

**Progress**

- New consulting tools and systems are being developed for Global Mission and other RCA staff to present to churches interested in expanding and deepening global mission involvement. The goal is to standardize the message presented by all those who engage churches and to keep the information that they need current.
- Existing strategic impact areas:
  - **Botshabelo, South Africa:**
    - Of the 12 target outputs identified in 2017, six significantly exceeded the goal numbers (foster care, church engagement, pastors’ training, life skills training, family preservation, fatherhood program, and family reunification).
  - **Nicaragua:**
    - Twelve local pastors in Nicaragua learned new preaching techniques, and 48 local church leaders studied together in six groups to learn about the Protestant Reformation and how to preach from biblical text.
• One hundred sixty children receive food and medical care at two feeding stations in Bluefields, enabling them to stay in school and hear the message of the gospel.

• New strategic impact area—Brazil:
  o A job description for a project leader has been widely circulated, and interviews took place this spring.
  o The strategic impact area leader will be introduced along with the Brazilian partner at General Synod where an invitation will be given to attendees to join in this new network.
  o Work is underway to develop a network of RCA and Christian Reformed Church in North America (CRCNA) church planters who will engage in a peer-to-peer partnership with church planters in Brazil.

• Increase RCA church engagement in strategic impact areas.
  o Church engagement in Nicaragua:
    • Forty-three RCA churches are connected with the ministry in Nicaragua.
    • Nine RCA groups visited the mission field—a total of 88 individuals.
    • Fourteen congregations participated in two regional gatherings in northwest Iowa and West Michigan.
  o Church engagement in South Africa:
    • Thirteen individuals representing four RCA churches visited Botshabelo in 2017.
    • Ten RCA churches are actively engaged in the Botshabelo network.
    • Four regional gatherings were held in New York and New Jersey in 2017.

Five-Year Goals (June 2013 to June 2018)

• Twenty-five 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 what they learned 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.

Progress

• The Re:Forming Missions process was put on hold with the departure of staff. New processes are being formed to continue the engagement process for RCA churches in global mission.

• Strategic impact areas have been formed in Nicaragua, South Africa, and Brazil, which are impacting these communities deeply in the areas of orphaned and vulnerable children, community development, sustainable food sources, and church planting.

• Two RCA-sponsored immersive global engagement experiences have been facilitated in the last year.
  o An immersive global mission experience in April 2017 gave RCA women an immersive look into the global mission work of missionaries JJ and
Tim TenClay in Italy. 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.

- A peer-to-peer learning immersion experience with the CRCNA/Resonate Global Mission and RCA pastors took place at the Al Amana Centre in Oman, as well as in Egypt and Bangladesh, to further Christian–Muslim relationship building. Participating pastors then brought what they learned back to their congregations and colleagues.

- Between 2013 and 2018, more than 20 RCA churches began supporting RCA mission personnel and projects through Partnership-in-Mission (PIM) shares. These churches did not previously support RCA missions through PIM shares. In addition, seven non-RCA churches began supporting RCA missions through PIM shares.

**New Five-Year Goals (June 2018 to June 2023)**

- Global Mission will initiate another strategic impact area for a total of four strategic impact areas around the world that are making a measurable impact in people’s lives.
- Global Missional Engagement will continue to develop tools and resources for RCA churches to deepen their mission involvement.
- Goals for current strategic impact areas:
  - Nicaragua: Increase the network to 50 churches; build the second feeding center in Bluefields; increase the number of children fed by 15 percent.
  - South Africa: Build a network of 30 RCA churches; facilitate 300 local adoptions for children in Botshabelo.
  - Brazil: Create a network of ten churches; hire an initiative leader missionary.

**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.

Preceded by prayer and Holy Spirit empowerment, 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.

We have been tracking seven strategic benchmarks that we believe will accomplish the multiplication vision and 15-year strategic plan. We are seeking to increase both the quantity and the quality of our church plants every year. 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. Finally, more than 50 percent of the growth of these congregations will come from new professions of faith, reaffirmations of faith, and/or adult baptisms.

In 2017–2018, we have added an eighth strategy: to develop fully-functioning church
multiplication teams in more of our classes. Today 55 percent of our church plants are coming from five classes; 14 classes are producing 82 percent of our plants. Since 1999, 30 classes have produced one or no plants. Our staff is coming alongside classes that are ready to become reproductive, helping them develop vision, systems, teams, resources, and strategies for church planting. With grants funded by the Church Growth Fund, we are currently working intently with two classes. We believe this will improve the quantity and quality of our plants through more local nurturing and engagement.

Planting churches to reach spiritually disconnected people requires constant adjusting and innovating. We are working with our partners within the RCA and CRCNA to explore new ways to reach our world. Presently we are exploring smaller plants led by bi-vocational pastors or supported by sustainable funding enterprises, particularly for rural small communities and under-resourced urban settings and among immigrant people groups where a full-time pastor, facility, and program are otherwise unattainable.

The Church Multiplication initiative is led by Mike Hayes, Tim Vink, and Randy Weener with operational assistance from Eduardo Rodriguez and Dawn Muller.

**Year Five Goals (June 2017 to June 2018)**

- Ten congregations will be activated for parenting that have not done so in the last five years.
- The cultures of two classes that had minimal church multiplication activity before this year are now shaped for multiplication, with a functioning Church Multiplication team, vision, budget, and staffing.
- Sixteen new RCA congregations will be planted.
- Eight congregations will be organized that are thriving, missional, and reproducing.
- Ten church plants will be started that are intentionally ethnic/multiethnic/multiracial or are congregations of color or are led by a female planter.
- Eight hundred new disciples of Jesus Christ will be engaged in new church plants.

**Progress**

- Ten new congregations have been activated for parenting and are in the process of developing a New Congregation Plan (NCP).
- Two classes are well on their way to developing fully-functioning Church Multiplication teams and are already identifying their first plant. In addition, exploratory conversations have started in four other classes.
- Four NCPs have been approved. Others are in the process of being approved.
- Three church plants have either organized or been started as additional sites of organized churches.
- Two of the four approved NCPs are ethnic church plants or are led by a female planter.
- It is too early to get accurate records on new disciples, but a safe estimate is 150 people among those four new plants.
- Four new Spanish-speaking planter coaches have been trained.
- We continue to meet annually with a strong Mission Catalyst Coalition (MC2) leadership community of 22 high-capacity parent churches from the RCA and CRCNA.
Five-Year Goals (June 2013 to June 2018)

- One hundred new RCA congregations will be planted in all eight regional synods, reflecting increased church multiplication momentum and effectiveness.
- Fifty congregations will have organized and be thriving, missional, and reproducing.
- Forty intentionally ethnic/multiethnic/multiracial church plants, congregations of color, or congregations led by a female planter will be started.
- Five thousand new disciples of Jesus Christ will be engaged in new church plants.

Progress

- Seventy-nine New Congregation Plans have been approved.
- Thirty-three congregations have organized.
- Forty-five percent of the new congregations are ethnic/multiethnic/multiracial church plants, congregations of color, or congregations led by a female planter.
- 4,791 new disciples of Jesus Christ have been engaged in new church plants, plus a conservative estimate of 1,400 from the 14 new multi-sites that have started.

New Five-Year Goals (June 2018 to June 2023)

- One hundred new RCA congregations will be planted.
- Twenty-five classes will have functioning Church Multiplication teams and will have planted at least one church in the previous 24 months.
- Fifty congregations that have not parented a church plant in the previous five years will become activated for parenting.
- Fifty ethnic/multiethnic/multiracial church plants, congregations of color, or congregations led by a female planter will have been started.
- Fifty congregations will have organized and are thriving, missional, and reproducing.
- Five thousand new disciples of Jesus Christ will have been engaged in new church plants.
- Twenty-five new congregations will be planted in Brazil by North American RCA 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 when 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 on the field and helping to ensure effective debriefing and follow-through.
Four Areas of Focus

1. 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.

2. 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.

3. 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.

4. 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 churches that serve through the RCA and to 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 for 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.

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

Year Five Goals (June 2017 to June 2018)

- Engage 1,500 volunteers in service with RCA missionaries and mission partners.
- Serve 150 churches through equipping processes or mission opportunities.
- Develop and pilot a mission gap year program to serve 20 young adults in year one.

Progress

- Engaged 1,455 volunteers in service with RCA missionaries and mission partners.
- Served 96 churches through equipping processes or mission opportunities.
- Developed the Cultivate program, a mission program to send young adults ages 18–25 to serve alongside RCA missionaries and mission partners. Recruited and trained 12 volunteers to participate in Cultivate during the 2018–19 year.
- A peer review process for Standards of Excellence in Short-term Mission is scheduled, and we anticipate that accreditation will be granted.
- Additionally, in the 2017 calendar year, the Next Generation Missional Engagement Fund awarded 56 scholarships—a total of $80,863 that has benefitted 321 young people.
Five-Year Goals (July 2013 to June 2018)

- Engage 5,000 volunteers with measurable impact on youth and adult participants, sending congregations, and partner communities.
- Support 200 congregations through volunteer equipping processes or mission volunteer opportunities.
- Become fully accredited with the Standards of Excellence in Short-term Missions and develop tools to help volunteers, congregations, and mission partners align with standards.

Progress

- Engaged 5,285 volunteers with measurable impact on youth and adult participants, sending congregations, and partner communities.
- Supported 226 churches through volunteer equipping processes or mission volunteer opportunities. Volunteer resourcing includes the Next Generation Missional Engagement Fund Scholarship and the SENT devotions. The SENT devotions are crafted by Volunteer Engagement to engage groups in growing discipleship while on short-term mission trips and are now being released annually.
- As referenced above, Volunteer Engagement has a peer review scheduled with the Standards of Excellence in Short-term Mission, with the expected outcome of full accreditation.
- As of February 2018, the Next Generation Missional Engagement Fund has awarded 187 scholarships—a total of $230,685 that has benefitted 992 young people.

New Five-Year Goals (June 2018 to June 2023)

- Engage 11,500 volunteers in service with RCA missionaries and mission partners.
- Support 150 new congregations through volunteer equipping processes or mission volunteer opportunities.
- Maintain full accreditation with the Standards of Excellence in Short-term Mission.

CULTURAL AGILITY AND ADVOCACY

Cultural Agility and Advocacy (formerly called 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.

Cultural Agility and Advocacy 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, discipleship, and worship.

In advocacy, congregations come to see and engage public policy matters and practices 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.

Staff coordination for the African American Black Council shifted to Cultural Agility and Advocacy in August after the untimely death of Antoine “Tony” Campbell, who coordinated that work for the past several years.

Year Five Goals (June 2017 to June 2018)

• Two cultural agility learning communities.
• Two cultural agility connection events.
• One advocacy learning community.
• Six advocacy connection events.

Progress

• Three cultural agility learning communities were engaged.
  o The learning community in the Synod of the Heartlands, which uses a repurposed Sankofa journey ministry model, continues with an anticipated positive conclusion in April 2018. The congregations and participants have worked well together, learning how cultural agility affects both race and ethnicity relations, as well as intergenerational living, leadership, and ministry.
  o The learning community in the Synod of the Great Lakes launched in October 2017. Over time, the congregation and participants have been engaged well on cultural agility within their congregation, families, and geographic communities. Interestingly, they are also acquiring new knowledge and skills around active listening, conflict management, and change theory as they grow as culturally agile people and leaders.
The learning community in the Synod of the Far West was closed due to low participation.

Additionally, the African American Black Council is developing a pilot learning community to be launched in the spring that will assist a congregation to become more open to intergenerational leadership and membership at cultural and influence-bearing levels.

- Three cultural agility connection events were successfully completed.
  - The October joint meeting of the GSC and commissions began with a cultural agility connection event for new members. Participants explored a biblical foundation for cultural agility, learned about culture and its various levels, change blindness, implicit bias, the dynamics of cultural agility, and several skills for cultural agility levels.
  - The African American Black Council’s fall gathering featured an impactful poverty simulation in which participants learned about engaging in-depth living and ministry across socioeconomic realities and cultural lines.
  - A group of three Great Lakes Synod male pastors who share a building have been working on their personal relationships and thinking through how their churches could relate better with one another. One pastor is Latino and leads a Latino church plant, one is Nepalese and leads a Nepalese church plant, and one is white and leads a white congregation. Together, they traveled on a re-purposed Sankofa journey to visit a pastor in the Regional Synod of the Mid-Atlantics who is a white woman. She has developed and grown a high level of church engagement with community that, coincidentally, led to a 350 percent growth in her worshipping community. The Great Lakes pastors learned much from that experience and are beginning to implement some lessons learned. They are also looking into some customized approaches to turn their landlord-tenant relationship into a true and deep ministry partnership with a possible learning community format as a guide.

- One hybrid learning/engagement community experience took place.
  - Following the March 2017 mass incarceration connection event, several participant congregations began new work. One church in the Regional Synod of New York formed a nonprofit to work with children who have incarcerated parents. A congregation in the Regional Synod of Mid-America formed innovative relationships with area judges and police and with their community behind a new approach of police-community relations. Another congregation in the Regional Synod of New York expanded its ministry to assist prisoners who are reentering their communities.

- By June 2018, eight advocacy connection events will have occurred.
  - Two Israel-Palestine connection events in the Regional Synods of the Great Lakes and the Heartlands were completed in partnership with Churches for Middle East Peace (CMEP), a nonprofit of which the RCA is a founding member. More than 30 percent of the participants signed up to engage with CMEP on an ongoing basis, and more signed up to engage with the redesigned RCA Israel-Palestine Ministries.
  - Two basic biblical advocacy connection events were held in the regional synods of the Far West and New York in partnership with PICO National Network (People Improving Communities through Organizing), a U.S.-based, church-rooted advocacy network. Two primary outcomes for participants were deeper understanding of the biblical roots of advocacy as an expression of love and an increase in active listening skills and disciplines for how people who serve others can “share presence” with others who need their presence and love.
  - Three care of creation connection events have taken place. One was held...
in the Regional Synod of Albany; by the end of March, two others will be held in the Regional Synod of the Great Lakes. These events are being conducted in partnership with the nonprofit Creation Justice Ministries of which the RCA is a founding member. Goals are to increase congregational discussions and awareness about care of creation, encourage periodic incorporation of caring for God’s creation in worship services, share ways for making church buildings and our homes more energy efficient, and identify pathways for making differences locally and nationally through public partnerships and advocacy. We are exploring how to open a similar customized care of creation initiative in Canada.

- In March, we will hold an advocacy connection event in partnership with Mission Year at Northwestern College. We are calling the event “Diversity–Justice–Solidarity: Centering God, Embodying Our Faith.” Students will explore their identities in Christ and map linkages through love, from who they are to how to stand with people where they live, work, and worship.

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.

- Thirty-five 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.

Progress

- Seven cultural agility and advocacy learning communities or advocacy impact teams have been launched, involving people from over 40 congregations.
  - We have not been able to chart long-term sustainable cultural agility change in terms of shifts in leadership, mission, or discipleship, but we have seen short- to intermediate-term shifts. From organizational development perspectives, long-term changes need to be guided for at least five years as opposed to the one to two years that learning communities normally last. To our knowledge, no churches have changed demographically enough to approximate their geographic communities.
  - The mass incarceration impact community has resulted in deep change in two congregations. One has formed a nonprofit to assist with its ministry to children of incarcerated parents and the other has formed innovative partnerships with local police and judges.

- Thirty-six cultural agility and connection events will have been completed by June 2018, involving more than 300 congregations and more than 600 people.
  - At least 26 of the connection events resulted in more than 40 percent of the participants engaging further in the topical area through the work
of the RCA’s partner organization, a denominational ministry, or a new congregational ministry effort.

New Five-Year Goals (June 2018 to June 2023)

(These goals assume the same or similar initiative configuration for the next five years.)

- **Cultural Agility**
  - Seven new learning communities and three new leadership collaboratives will launch. Eighty percent will show demonstrated increases in cultural agility knowledge and skill development, and 20 percent will have new fusions of cultural agility in leadership, mission, discipleship, and/or worship.
  - Twelve connection events will be held; 30 percent of participants will increase cultural agility knowledge, and 10 percent will engage in cultural agility learning communities or leadership collaboratives.

- **Advocacy**
  - Seven new advocacy engagement communities (a hybrid of learning communities but more focused on action) will begin.
  - Twenty-five connection events will be held; 50 percent of participants will partner with organizations that engage in advocacy work, and 10 percent will assist their congregations to launch a new advocacy ministry.

- **New synergies are developing between the Cultural Agility and Advocacy and Local Missional Engagement initiatives. We anticipate some fresh approaches to ministry will result from how those two initiatives work together. Other potentials might be realized as Cultural Agility and Advocacy develops new work with other Transformed & Transforming initiatives.**

**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. A covenant with CRC Disability Concerns between the governing boards of the RCA and Christian Reformed Church (CRC)—in place since 2009—has demonstrated a track record of multiplied effectiveness and continues to deepen ministry impact in both denominations.

The RCA’s Disability Concerns initiative is led by Terry DeYoung.

Year Five Goals (June 2017 to June 2018)

- **Launch two learning communities focused on Disability Concerns initiatives in the local church (a mental health focus in west Michigan and an adult foster care/group homes focus in New York and New Jersey).**
  - 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 five to six connection events designed to raise awareness about advocacy**
with people with disabilities, provide equipping resources, 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, ten churches will conduct an accessibility audit or adopt a church disability policy, with at least five removing barriers to full participation.

Progress

- A mental health learning community was launched in January 2018 with four West Michigan churches (two RCA, one CRC, and one RCA-CRC) seeking to improve their welcome and support of people living with mental health challenges. A learning community focused on deepening relationships with adult foster care/group homes remains on the horizon.
- RCA-CRC Disability Concerns connection events have been held in Michigan (two), New Jersey, Iowa, British Columbia, and Ontario.
- All church disability advocates identified 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. Typically these are lengthy undertakings, particularly an accessibility audit. Further, in November 2016, RCA Disability Concerns initiated a brief accessibility survey of all RCA churches to assist in evaluating physical barriers, communication barriers, and inclusive programming; more than 200 churches participated. The goal was for results of this yearly survey to 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—but staffing challenges have delayed implementation of this project.
- In September 2017, RCA-CRC Disability Concerns hosted a three-day leadership conference in Grand Rapids, Michigan, that equipped 21 RCA disability advocates plus an equivalent number of CRC disability advocates. Much of the time was devoted to the theme of “Creating Communities of Belonging,” but advocates also engaged in networking, meeting with other advocates in their region, learning about opportunities and resources in their church and regional settings, and setting personal ministry goals for the coming year.

Five-Year Goals (June 2013 to June 2018)

- Forty 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.
- One hundred 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.
- Fifteen churches will have engaged in local mission efforts, volunteer engagement, 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.
- One hundred twenty five 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.

Progress

• At least 23 churches have conducted an accessibility audit or adopted a church disability policy.
• At least 86 churches have identified a church disability advocate.
• At least 19 churches have engaged in local mission efforts, volunteer engagements, or public advocacy campaigns so that people with disabilities can flourish as active community members.
• One hundred four churches have participated in disability connection events.
• Two RCA-CRC learning communities focused on Disability Concerns initiatives in the local church have been established.
• Five disability leadership training events have equipped, supported, and resourced church disability advocates and regional disability advocates for their local ministry contexts.

New Five-Year Goals (June 2018 to June 2023*)

*Projections are inclusive of outcomes already reported for 2013 to 2018.

• Seventy-five 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.
• Two hundred 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.
• Thirty classes will have appointed a regional (classis) disability advocate.
• Forty 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.
• Two hundred 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.
• Five RCA-CRC learning communities focused on Disability Concerns initiatives in the local church will have been established.
• Ten disability leadership training events will have equipped, supported, and resourced church disability advocates and regional disability advocates for their local ministry contexts.

ADDITIONAL GLOBAL MISSION REPORTING

Working together to share God's love with the world

RCA Global Mission exists to strengthen and grow the global church by supporting ministries of compassion, developing leaders, and sharing the good news. Our goal is to provide engagement opportunities for RCA churches to partner with global churches in ways that are collaborative and mutually meaningful that help us all to live and love like Jesus.
Partnership in Mission Shares

The mission personnel and staff of RCA Global Mission would like to express appreciation to the churches and individuals of the Reformed Church in America who so generously support our mission programs. The RCA mission program is supported almost entirely from contributions and Partnership in Mission shares. Without you, there would be no RCA Global Mission.

The Reformed Church in America has 78 active partnerships in 43 countries around the world. There are 48 mission personnel and 41 partner personnel (who are employed by the partner but supported through RCA Partnership in Mission shares). These mission personnel are supported by 449 churches through Partnership in Mission shares. There are more than 93 active projects, including disaster response and projects of compassion. These projects were supported by gifts from 630 churches and more than 2,500 individual donors.

General Synod 2017 set the value of a full Partnership in Mission share for 2018 at $6,700; we are recommending that the value remain the same for 2019. We are also asking that each RCA congregation that does not currently support an RCA missionary with Partnership in Mission support consider taking on a full or partial share of support.

**GM 18-1**

*To keep the value of a Partnership in Mission (PIM) share for 2019 at $6,700. (ADOPTED)*

Transitions in Mission Personnel

Richard and Carolyn Otterness were appointed as RCA missionaries in 2005 to reach out to the Roma people in both rural and urban areas of central Europe in partnership with the Reformed Church in Hungary. They worked together with church leaders and Roma congregations to build bridges between the church and secular society. They also worked to improve health care and education among the Roma. Before accepting this call to mission, Dick served as a pastor and administrator for 27 years and Carolyn worked as a nurse and a nurse practitioner. Richard and Carolyn are now retiring from mission service after 13 years in the field.

Richard and Donna Swart were appointed as RCA missionaries to Kenya in August of 1985. After serving in Kenya, Dick and Donna returned to Ethiopia where they had both spent much of their childhood and where the Daasanech people still remembered Dick’s parents, Bob and Morrie Swart. Dick and Donna worked alongside the Kale Hiwot National Church to reach out to and disciple the Daasanech people. They ministered in Ethiopia through the windmill project that enabled the people to irrigate their fields and create a sustainable food source. Donna, a registered nurse, provided for health needs through immunizations and prenatal care. Through the work of Dick and Donna, the Lord has established a viable, self-sustaining church among the Daasanech where 300 worship each week. They are now retiring from mission service after more than 30 years in Africa.

Caleb and Joanna Swart have served the Reformed Church in America as mission personnel stationed in Ethiopia and Tanzania. They started mission service in 2006. In Ethiopia, Caleb and Joanna served alongside Caleb’s parents, Dick and Donna. Caleb was a welder for the Windmill Project, which attained national recognition by the government and news media for providing agricultural development, food security, and better health for the Daasanech people. Joanna served as a nurse in the area of health treatment and
teaching. In 2014, Caleb and Joanna, along with their children, moved to Tanzania to serve with Training in Mission Outreach (TIMO), which trains future missionaries in cross cultural ministry. Caleb and Joanna are pursuing a new business-as-mission opportunity in Ethiopia that involves working for a beef company that will provide income generation for the Daasanach and other pastoralist people groups in Ethiopia.

**GM 18-2**

**BE IT RESOLVED that** the 212th session of the General Synod of the Reformed Church in America, meeting on the campus of Calvin College in Grand Rapids, Michigan, from June 7 through June 12, 2018, gives glory to God for the life and witness of Dick and Carolyn Otterness, Dick and Donna Swart, and Caleb and Joanna Swart and offers a prayer of thanksgiving for their service to RCA Global Mission. (ADOPTED)

**New Mission Assignments**

The following new mission personnel are all currently in the fundraising stage and will be deployed when fully funded.

Robert and Amy Abel will work with new RCA partner Remember Nhu, an organization that works to end child sex slavery in 13 countries. Bob serves as director of staff care, providing pastoral care, discipleship support, and leadership development to its international and indigenous mission staff. His initial focus is working with Remember Nhu’s Southeast Asian locations to develop a global care strategy for all of the organization’s mission personnel as well as preparing new mission workers to enter the field.

Christopher and Renae Briggs will be partnering with the Caribbean Christian Centre for the Deaf (CCCD). As much as 99 percent of the world’s Deaf population has never been exposed to the gospel, making it one of the largest unreached people groups. In Jamaica alone, tens of thousands of people are Deaf. Many of them have no access to language or education, so there is little hope for employment, inclusion in community life, or understanding God’s love for them. CCCD provides the Deaf community in Jamaica with a language, education, mentoring, and an opportunity to encounter the gospel. Chris serves as campus manager at the Jamaica Deaf Village.

Joshua and Erica Bode will serve at the Protestant Church in Oman. Josh will serve as the pastor of this diverse international congregation in cooperation with an Anglican and a Methodist pastor. He will lead the English-speaking congregation as well as provide support to the PCO’s relationship with the Omani ministry of religious affairs. The PCO church consists of members who belong to the expatriate Christian communities of varied and diverse nationalities, bringing with them a deep commitment to Christ and a passion to serve and follow Christ’s precepts.

Andrew Smothers will serve as the associate pastor for the English Language Congregation (ELC) of the National Evangelical Church of Bahrain, a church planted by the RCA in 1893. He will serve alongside lead pastor Jim Harrison and will be leading the discipleship program for the church, including Christian education programs and Bible studies. The ELC is a vibrant, multicultural expatriate community in a difficult part of the world where political tensions are high.
Deaths
Paul Alderink served as the director of Annville Institute and Jackson County Ministries (now known as Grace Covenant Ministries) in Kentucky for 16 years. He went into mission service along with his wife, Doris, in 1963 after serving in the Navy during World War II and teaching and serving four RCA congregations. Paul died on December 9, 2017.

Jack Buteyn, former RCA missionary in Oman, died on July 20, 2017. After serving for 30 years as pastor of the Reformed Church in Plano, Texas, Jack and his wife, Linda, traveled to Oman to serve as RCA missionaries. Jack served as minister of the Protestant Church of Oman.

Ronald Korver, RCA missionary to Japan, died on May 8, 2018, in Green Bay, Wisconsin. He is survived by his wife, Ruby, who served alongside Ron in Japan from 1948 through 1992. Ron and Ruby both taught English and shared the love of Jesus with students at Meiji Gakuin School in Tokyo as well as at other schools in Japan.

Lew Scudder, longtime RCA missionary in the Middle East, died on November 1, 2017. Lew and his wife, Nancy, served in Lebanon, Kuwait, Bahrain, Turkey, and Cyprus from 1996 until their retirement in 2008. Lew was the fifth generation within the Scudder family to serve as an RCA missionary. The son of Lewis and Dorothy Scudder, Lew was born while his parents were serving on the mission field in Kuwait. He attended Hope College and Western Theological Seminary. Lew also authored *The Arabian Mission’s Story*, which is part of the RCA Historical Series.

Earl Smith, former RCA missionary serving among the Omaha people in Macy, Nebraska, died on March 11, 2017. Earl and his wife, Sarah, served Umonhon Reformed Church from 1995 to 2007. Earl’s Native American heritage—he was from the Oneida Nation of Wisconsin—helped prepare him for ministry with Native Americans. Earl and Sarah also served at Comanche Reformed Church in Lawton, Oklahoma; Bussing Reformed Church in McKee, Kentucky; Immanuel Reformed Church in London, Ontario; and Maranatha Reformed Church in Wainfleet, Ontario.

David Wyma, former RCA missionary in Taiwan, died on February 14, 2018. Dave, together with his late wife Barbara, served with the Protestant Church in Taiwan from 1978 through 1990, first with Student Campus Ministries based in Taichung and later with Mackay Memorial Hospital in Taipei.