The Transformed & Transforming team will gather in September 2019 with each initiative’s
guiding coalition for equipping, dreaming, and collaborating toward the next faithful steps
of Transformed & Transforming 2.0.

Report of the General Synod Council on Discipleship

POLICY WORDING

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’s command to make disciples is the church’s mandate to help all people grow and
depth 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, and our willingness to influence our world for the gospel. Transformation
will also be manifest in 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.

DISCIPLESHIP
(formerly called Transformational Processes)

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

The Discipleship guiding coalition, led by Chad Farrand (co-led by Rod Tucker through
March 2019), is a team of people who are passionate about changing lives and communities
for greater kingdom impact. This is a team of 15 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 Discipleship guiding coalition is focusing on the following nine 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 that 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 around discipleship and to invite churches to take a next faithful step toward that future.

**Discipleship Workshops**

The purpose of a discipleship workshop is to provide intentional, focused training and facilitation to move a congregation forward in specific discipleship initiatives. It involves a group of 5 to 20 churches who are geographically close to one another. These workshops include integration with other Transformed & Transforming initiatives, such as Volunteer Engagement, Leadership Development, and Local Missional Engagement. One unique discipleship workshop is centered on children/youth and family. Workshops provide “taste and see” experiences and, at the same time, give congregations enough content to continue on their own with limited follow-up if desired.

**Discipleship Pathway Learning Communities**

A discipleship pathway learning community is a cluster of eight to ten RCA congregations in relatively close geographical proximity. Each congregation gathers 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) in 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. The latest discipleship leadership community finished its two-year process in April 2018. Reports from all eight congregations were extremely positive. Since then, discipleship leadership communities have continued to evolve and have provided excellent learning experiences for RCA congregations.

*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 is to expand Faithwalking to non-Ridder congregations through the development of learning communities.

*3DM Learning Communities*

3DM learning communities consist of 10 to 12 RCA, CRC, and 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 has partnered with Jeff Allen of 3DM and is currently engaged with 15 churches at various stages of the process.

*Discipleship Training at the Classis Level*

Queens, Great Lakes City, Wisconsin, and Illinois Classes have opened themselves to discipleship training in 2019. The purpose of these trainings is to connect RCA churches with the support Transformed & Transforming initiatives have to offer and also provide churches with practical steps to establish a discipleship culture in their specific contexts. These trainings are designed to lead RCA churches to coaching, workshops, connection events, and learning communities. We hope to be able to offer discipleship training at meetings of every classis across the United States and Canada.

*Online Learning Platform*

An online learning platform is being developed across all of Transformed & Transforming in order to engage churches in effective ways that will cause their congregations to flourish in discipleship, leadership, and mission. The purpose of this platform is to disseminate best practices to RCA churches in order to grow thriving congregations.

*Year Six Goals (June 2018 to June 2019)*

- Launch 10 to 12 coaching relationships.
- Train 5 to 7 guiding coalition members for leadership in 3DM and deploy them to do coaching.
- Engage 20 to 25 RCA churches in 3DM discipleship through Jeff Allen.
- Launch 5 to 7 children/youth and family ministry workshops, followed up with optional intentional coaching.
- Engage 5 different classes in discipleship training during classis meetings. These will be used as on-ramps for further discipleship engagement through discipleship learning communities.
Progress

- In the past 2 months, 4 RCA pastors have been or are currently in the process of being set up with coaching.
- 15 guiding coalition members are being trained for coaching and facilitation of 3DM discipleship processes.
- Discipleship learning communities:
  - 15 churches are engaged with 3DM discipleship through Jeff Allen.
  - Learning communities from 2018 (Syracuse, New York; George, Iowa; Fulton, Illinois) continue into the latter parts of the transformational experiences.
- 2 children/youth and family ministry workshops have been or are being organized in Grand Rapids and Canada and will provide an on-ramp to discipleship learning communities.
- 4 classis leaders have agreed to hold discipleship training at their classis meetings in 2019. These trainings will provide an on-ramp to discipleship learning communities.

Five-Year Goals (June 2018 to June 2023)

- The beginning of another discipleship leadership community in 2020. By the end of 2019, 20 to 25 RCA congregations will have completed a 2-year discipleship leadership community and will be providing other congregations with resources for discipleship.
- 40 to 50 RCA congregations participating in a discipleship learning community and implementing their own unique disciple-making pathway in their congregation.
- 65 to 75 RCA congregations engaging in Faithwalking as a core process for cultivating transformation in Christ.
- 25 to 35 RCA congregations participating in a joint RCA and 3DM learning community and launching missional communities focused on discipleship, leadership, and missional living.
- 85 to 100 RCA congregations participating in a discipleship connection (“taste and see”) event.
- 10 to 15 RCA congregations participating in the discipleship/leadership/mission pilot in the Far West Region.
- 15 to 20 RCA congregations participating in Organic Outreach as a core process for cultivating transformation in Christ.
- 75 to 100 RCA pastors and/or ministry leaders in discipleship coaching.
- 10 Creating Congregational Cultures of Generosity learning communities being facilitated from 2018 to 2023.