
POLICY WORDING

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, in 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 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

Four initiative teams work within the Engaging in Christ’s Kingdom Mission strategic priority: Local Missional Engagement, which helps congregations express the gospel of Christ in transformational ways in their local community; Volunteer Engagement, which provides opportunities for volunteers of all ages to engage in service for Christ; Advocacy, focused on equipping congregations for cultural competency and empowering them to advocate on behalf of the marginalized; and Disability Concerns, which helps the RCA work toward being accessible, inclusive, and missional churches where everybody belongs and everybody serves.

LOCAL MISSIONAL ENGAGEMENT

Local Missional Engagement (LME) helps churches discern what God is doing in them and in their communities and helps explore ways to bring those things together. LME champions the work of reviving the church’s missional imagination. Local mission also seeks to equip the church to share the good news of the gospel, both as individuals and as a corporate body. The Local Missional Engagement initiative is led by Eliza Cortés Bast.

Year Six Goals (June 2018 to June 2019)

- To cultivate and create new partnerships—both internally and externally—in order to maximize the resourcing and initiation of LME work, equipping and networking for the RCA and for local congregations.
To continue and complete high level learning through the Transformed & Transforming delivery systems, including learning communities, leadership collaboratives, and connection events. In addition, LME hopes to foster a spirit of collaboration among Transformed & Transforming initiatives, embedding missional practice in the equipping of leaders and the discipleship process.

To create and develop new ways for congregations and members to be equipped for the practical sharing of the gospel that promote an incarnational practice that is rooted in both demonstration and proclamation.

The focus of this year was to continue collaboration by embedding local mission inside multiple initiatives. Collaborative efforts also include the development of platforms to help connect and support congregations and ministries. Additionally, the office is focusing on creating additional training and equipping around evangelism. LME is currently committed to five connection events, three learning communities, and an online training application for the 2018–2019 ministry year.

**Progress**

- **Partnerships**
  - In October 2018, members of the Transformed & Transforming staff met with key staff at New Brunswick Theological Seminary to begin exploring deeper collaboration with the seminary.
  - LME has created a partnership with Organic Outreach and the Billy Graham Evangelistic Association, crafting two learning communities that will launch in early summer 2019. Additional resourcing will be available to RCA churches from Organic Outreach.
  - LME, in connection with the Commission on Christian Action, will also contract with local, regional experts to develop resources for churches to address the rising opioid epidemic in communities where RCA churches are present.

- **Delivery Systems**
  - LME and Discipleship have continued their learning community with five churches in western Illinois.
  - LME and Church Multiplication completed the lakeshore Praxis Learning Community, providing support for church planters who desire a high local mission output.
  - LME has been spearheading efforts to create regional events that bring a more holistic presentation of Transformed & Transforming staff. Multiple staff presented at the first regional event in Central California in March 2019. This is a pilot to help integrate multiple initiatives in Transformed & Transforming in order to assist churches with high quality events combining multiple priority areas.
  - LME continues to assist in the We Are Speaking resources through Women’s Transformation and Leadership.
  - In March 2019, in cooperation with Earl James and the Advocacy initiative, LME began a pilot leadership collaborative with ministry leaders who want to pursue redemptive, social entrepreneurship practices in connection with ministry. This pilot is in conjunction with the African American Black Council. We hope to see how the denomination can resource and equip ministry leaders who choose to pursue unconventional forms of ministry and church.
  - LME will continue to support Disability Concerns in equipping and resourcing churches that wish to engage in further work around mental...
health issues and the community, with a third annual “Bearing Hope” connection event hosted in fall 2019, along with partnership with “be nice,” a mental health awareness foundation in West Michigan.

- LME is working alongside Next Generation Engagement to test an experiential connection event in New York City for a youth-led worship and prayer night for the city. The purpose for this event is to create space for next generation leadership in local mission for their communities, as well as to convene multiple groups of young people through the banner of the RCA. Should this model work, Local Mission and Next Generation Engagement would like to host more events like this throughout the U.S. and Canada.

- LME also hosted a connection event in the Mohawk Valley (New York) for four churches to see where collaboration and deeper missional engagement and impact is possible. These types of hands-on visioning workshops with pastors and laity provide spaces for Transformed & Transforming staff to facilitate fruitful work as well as provide opportunities for ongoing relationships.

- LME partnered with Advocacy to host a mass incarceration event in August 2018, providing equipping and networking for churches throughout the denomination. This was in response to the request of General Synod 2018.

- LME also partnered with Advocacy to address the General Synod 2018 request to respond to the separation of families at the southern U.S. border. LME and Advocacy worked with the general secretary’s office to provide an open letter to the denomination and public offices, as well as to provide resources and next steps online.

• New Methods of Learning

- In April 2019, Local Mission and Discipleship hosted their first four-week online class on evangelism and incarnational mission. This class provided a beta test for a new learning platform for churches to engage with Transformed & Transforming.

- LME was also part of the design sprint and beta test of Faithward, the RCA communication department’s experiential communication platform.

- LME is working with The Urban Ministry Institute (TUMI), the Billy Graham Center, and other learning institutions to create new pathways for learning around non-traditional expressions of church, specifically missional communities and outposts. LME’s hope is to provide networking, community, and learning processes that can benefit localized expressions of ministry around social entrepreneurship, bivocational practice, and non-traditional mission expressions. LME is on a faithful learning journey and in conversations with Church Multiplication, Global Mission, and Chad Farrand of Discipleship as we continue to explore how to plan for the church of tomorrow.

Five-Year Goals (June 2018 to June 2023)

- LME will identify a pre- and post-process for learning opportunities to allow participating churches to self-identify their current local impact.

- Each regional synod will have an identified and trained local missional engagement coach in its 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 and fifty RCA congregations will be equipped for increased local mission engagement with tangible missional impact, sacrificial service, authentic relationships, spiritual transformation, and sustained community partnerships.

**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 volunteers serve. We believe that as volunteers serve in the name of Christ, whether in their local community or around the world, that service can have long-term impact on all participants.

This team is focused on supporting congregations and equipping volunteers for service with RCA missionaries and mission partners. We work with volunteers throughout the planning process, provide support on the field, and help ensure effective debriefing and follow-through.

Volunteer Engagement is led by Stephanie Soderstrom.

*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. The Cultivate program, launched in 2018, provides individual opportunities for young people, ages 18–25, to serve alongside RCA missionaries and mission partners for either a summer or a year.

4. **Church Equipping**
   Working with RCA churches, we offer resources, training, and equipping processes to help them take their next step in volunteer engagement. These equipping resources are available to churches that serve through the RCA and those that do not.

Many RCA churches have been engaged in sending volunteers in mission for years. Our vision is to be a benefit for these churches and 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.
Year Six Goals (June 2018 to June 2019)

- Engage 1,725 volunteers in service with RCA missionaries and mission partners.
- Serve 30 new churches through equipping processes or mission opportunities, while maintaining previously established church relationships.
- Recruit and send out 15 Cultivate participants.
- Gain accreditation in Standards of Excellence in Short-Term Mission.

Progress

- As of February 2019, 1,205 volunteers engaged in service with RCA missionaries and mission partners.
- 34 new churches were served through equipping processes or mission opportunities.
- As of February 2019, six Cultivate participants have been recruited and placed for the 2019–2020 service year.
- The Cultivate program received Standards of Excellence in Short-Term Mission accreditation.
- Additionally, in the 2018 calendar year, the Next Generation Missional Engagement Fund awarded 97 scholarships, totaling $164,522 and benefitting 940 young people.

Five-Year Goals (June 2018 to June 2023)

Engage 11,500 volunteers in service with RCA missionaries and mission partners.

ADVOCACY
(formerly called Cultural Agility and Advocacy)

Advocacy focuses on helping congregations and people live more fully into the biblical vision of shalom and the human hope of the beloved community. This initiative is led by Earl James.

The ancient Hebrews spoke the word shalom both at greeting and at 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’s 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.

Advocacy offers congregations two pathways as they strive for shalom and the beloved community:

- Increase their cultural agility.
- Advocate by addressing societal patterns, including influencing public policy.

Cultural agility begins with whatever culturally rooted style of relationship-building 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 societal patterns and 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 underlying societal patterns and public policy results in partnering with others to make tangible differences in everyday life challenges, locally or globally, for hundreds or thousands of people, and to add greater liveliness and focus to the shared life of participating congregations and people themselves.

Late in 2018, GSC’s implementation strategy for cultural agility markedly changed. Originally, the initiative was led by a single staff person. Currently, the GSC staff is in process of embedding cultural agility within all the Transformed & Transforming initiatives.

The embedding learning process has three goals:

1. Increasing the Transformed & Transforming staff’s understanding of cultural agility and their ability to enfold cultural agility within each respective initiative.
2. Increasing the demographic diversity of the people deeply trusted by the Transformed & Transforming staff, assisting them to grow in cultural agility personally and in their ministries.
3. Assessing the distribution of Transformed & Transforming resources and opportunities to ensure racial-ethnic congregations equitably benefit from the RCA’s strategic ministry plan.

As cultural agility is being embedded in all the Transformed & Transforming ministries, the staff person previously dedicated to it has been reassigned to serve as coordinator for the African American/Black Council (AABC) and Advocacy. As with the other racial-ethnic councils, the AABC will also benefit from accessing Transformed & Transforming services.

Year Six Goals (June 2018 to June 2019)

- 2 cultural agility connection events
- 1 cultural agility learning community
- 2 connection events for the AABC
- 2 leadership collaboratives for the AABC (discipleship/leadership and mission)
- 4 advocacy connection events

NOTE: The original goals for 2018–2019 were deeply revised as the coordinator was reassigned from a stand-alone cultural agility initiative to serving the AABC.
Progress

- 2 cultural agility connection events
  - Each October for the last 10 years, a connection event on cultural agility and leadership has been provided for all new GSC members, commission members, and GSC staff. In 2018, approximately 25 people participated in this high-level training that both taught about cultural agility and helped participants prepare to implement learnings in their denominational leadership positions, in their home congregations, and in their personal lives.
  - We held an anti-racism/poverty simulation in Queens, New York, that explored the effects of systemic racism on the everyday lives of church neighbors and on church ministries intended to serve them.

- 1 cultural agility learning community
  - We completed a 2-year learning community with Meredith Drive Reformed Church and The Bridge (RCA) in Iowa. The focuses were on race/ethnicity, nationality, and generation. A result was the hiring of a next generation church staff person.

- 2 connection events for the AABC
  - 2 connection events were held on how to assist congregations, families, and individuals to identify and develop their own Transformed & Transforming focuses. The primary tools were the 2013 General Synod–approved document that authorized Transformed & Transforming, the Bible, and a guided group discussion format.

- 2 leadership collaboratives for the AABC
  - A discipleship/leadership collaborative called “Inward/Outward Journey” is currently underway. 10 participants from 5 small, declining churches are learning ways in which they as leaders can live into a vision that small churches can be extremely vital, are not merely under-performing “large-church-want-to-bes” that need fixing, and can foster both exciting inward relationships with God and impactful outreach ministries. Participants visited a vibrant network of small churches in Washington, D.C., and Baltimore, Maryland, as well as a deeply impactful small church in Queens, New York. Participants shared changes in their ministries and lives inspired by their visits to these churches. This leadership collaborative will complete its work in 2019. The participants will determine if they want to continue with another Inward/Outward leadership collaborative with more expansive goals of leading change in their churches.
  - On March 15, 2019, a leadership collaborative launched, focusing on developing nonprofit corporations through which outreach ministries can thrive and be resourced. The coordinator of AABC co-developed and co-leads this leadership collaborative with the coordinator for Local Missional Engagement. At least 10 participants from 4 congregations are part of this collaborative. This collaborative might be a model to be offered widely throughout the RCA.

- Four advocacy connection events
  - In February 2018, the Advocacy initiative launched a multi-year initiative on creation care. The ministry is based around Psalm 24:1 (“The earth is the Lord’s and all that is in it, the world, and those who live in it.”) and Genesis 2:15 (“The Lord God took the man and put him in the garden of Eden to till it and keep it.”). The initiative links creation care to 1) increased awareness and discussions about caring for God’s world; 2) deepened worship and spiritual experiences; 3) greater church building and home energy
efficiency; and 4) widened outreach and advocacy, including addressing climate change. Additionally, conversations among the three RCA colleges about environmental stewardship education have been facilitated. Between February and October 2018, 138 people from 39 churches and additional organizations participated. Three of those engagements were connection events that occurred between June 2018 and June 2019. These occurred in Portage, Michigan, Orange City, Iowa, and online.

- In August 2018, one mass incarceration connection event was held in Detroit, Michigan, with participants from around the RCA. Focuses were on specific ministries in the RCA that address mass incarceration.

Five-Year Goals (June 2018 to June 2023)

- 5 cultural agility connection events
- 9 AABC connection events
- 10 AABC leadership collaboratives
- 8 advocacy connection events
- 3 advocacy leadership collaboratives

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 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 the Christian Reformed Church in North America (CRCNA)—in place since 2009—has demonstrated a track record of multiplied effectiveness and continues to deepen ministry impact in both denominations.

Of particular note within the past year—the tenth anniversary of the Disability Concerns partnership—the two staff leaders of RCA and CRC Disability Concerns have collaborated to do the following:

- Write a grant proposal to explore the potential of resiliency and adverse childhood experiences in the church’s youth ministry.
- Offer a third Bearing Hope learning event to assist churches in West Michigan seeking to support people living with mental health challenges.
- Present a paper at the Wheaton Symposium on Faith and Disability on themes of hospitality, mutuality, and interdependence that both undergird the partnership of RCA and CRC Disability Concerns and support effective ministry by and with people with disabilities.
- Lead a workshop, “Disability Ministry in the Third Space,” at the upcoming CRC Inspire 2019 gathering that explores how the complementary concepts of mutuality and hospitality offer a model for moving into the proposed “third space” between our two denominations.

The RCA’s Disability Concerns initiative is led by Terry DeYoung.
Year Six Goals (June 2018 to June 2019)

- Hold 5 to 6 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 appoint a church disability advocate.
- Launch 1 disability learning community focused on Disability Concerns initiatives in the local church (with CRC Disability Concerns).
  - By 2020, at least 50 percent of the congregations involved will appoint a church disability advocate, 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.
- Through the leadership of church disability advocates, 10 churches will conduct an accessibility audit or adopt a church disability policy, with at least five removing barriers to full participation.
- Offer individualized onboarding and coaching to all church disability advocates and regional disability advocates.

Progress

- RCA-CRC Disability Concerns connection events have been or are scheduled to be held in Iowa, Michigan (two), New York, and Ontario.
- A yearlong mental health learning community with four West Michigan churches (two RCA and two CRC) seeking to improve their welcome and support of people living with mental health challenges was completed in February 2019. An RCA-CRC disability learning community for improving engagement of people with disabilities in northwest Iowa churches is anticipated to begin in fall 2019.
- 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. This survey will be repeated in 2019, with results of the 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.
- At least 90 churches have designated a church disability advocate who has submitted a signed covenant to RCA Disability Concerns so individual follow-up, resources, and support can be provided by Disability Concerns staff.
- In September 2018, RCA-CRC Disability Concerns hosted a three-day leadership conference in Grand Rapids, Michigan, that equipped 25 RCA disability advocates plus an equivalent number of CRC disability advocates. Much of the time was devoted to the theme of “Engaging Older Adults with Disabilities in Worship,” 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 2018 to June 2023*)

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

- 75 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.
- 200 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.
- 30 classes will have appointed a regional (classis) disability advocate.
- 40 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.
- 200 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.
- 5 RCA-CRC learning communities focused on Disability Concerns initiatives in the local church will have been established.
- 10 disability leadership training events will have equipped, supported, and resourced church disability advocates and regional disability advocates for their local ministry contexts.

REPORT OF RCA CHURCH MULTIPLICATION

With the goal of planting 1,000 new churches in the next 20 years, the Church Multiplication team has focused this year on defining that goal, breaking it down, and building capacity to reach it.

Our real goal is to fulfill the Great Commission and make new disciples of Jesus Christ. Planting churches has proven to be the most effective, measurable vehicle to accomplish that. Planting 1,000 churches is therefore the means to our higher mission: to guide 100,000 new disciples into God’s kingdom.

We anticipate the plants falling into one of the following four categories:

- 500 will be classic plants, launched by a full-time pastor, eventually having a permanent facility and providing a range of ministries.
- 100 will be additional worship sites of existing churches that reach new population groups but are governed under one common consistory.
- 200 will be plants outside of North America. Collaborating with our Global Mission team, we will help facilitate new congregations that are being launched in places where the RCA is engaged around the world. This will also allow us to learn from other cultures where the gospel is spreading rapidly. In January 2020, we will host a summit of planters from multiple continents for mutual learning, inspiration, and listening for God’s direction.
- 200 will be prototypes of new models of church. For the immediate future, we are concentrating on micro churches. These smaller congregations will be nimble, simple and inexpensive, led by a volunteer or a bi-vocational pastor. They will be small enough to meet in borrowed spaces with little overhead. They will be especially effective in smaller, rural villages; under-resourced urban centers; and among pockets of immigrant populations. In August 2019, we will partner with the Christian Reformed Church in North America (CRCNA) to convene a
group of practitioners to develop a strategy for advancing this model.

With this breadth of planting models, no longer can we prepare and support all our plants and planters in the same way. Therefore, different lanes are being developed for planter assessment, training, coaching, and funding that will be unique for each model of church plant.

In order to plant 50 churches per year, or one every week, we need to increase our capacity. We can no longer rely only on a staff of 2.5 multiplication catalysts in the field and 1.5 operational staff to reach these expanded expectations. Therefore, we are forming the following strategic partnerships.

- For classes that are willing and ready to become reproductive, our staff is coming alongside to help develop vision, resources, strategy, systems, and training. Grants are available to help a classis create this infrastructure and equip a champion to lead the local efforts.
- With the CRCNA, we are not only exploring micro churches and international planting, but also improving care for planters, spouses, and families on the front lines of planting, which is often a lonely, risky, isolating experience.
- We have formed an agreement with Stadia, a church planting organization in the U.S., to provide planter assessments, training, project management, and bookkeeping for those plants that have a high potential to start large or multiply rapidly.
- A partnership with Generosity by Lifeway has also been established to provide plants with training around stewardship as well as a powerful, inexpensive online giving platform.

While working on building capacity for future planting, God has already been blessing us during this current year, sometimes in surprising ways, as we take our first steps toward planting 1,000 churches. As of the writing of this report, 16 new congregation plans have been approved since last year’s General Synod. They range geographically from Edmonton to Montreal, Washington to Florida, and points in between, including South Dakota, California, Wisconsin, Michigan, Ohio, and New Jersey. They also represent a vast ethnic diversity, including Korean, Portuguese, Hispanic, Kenyan, and Vietnamese congregations.

Unforeseen has been the sudden interest of independent plants and some established congregations in joining the RCA. Approximately 20 such conversations are ongoing. In particular, there has been so much movement in the southeast U.S. that there is a proposal to reestablish the former Florida Classis as the Classis of the Nations.

We also celebrate this year the organizations of CenterPoint Hillard (Ohio), City Church Compton (California), and Light for the Nations (Quebec).

All of our goals are mere human designs if not empowered by the Lord of the church through the power of the Holy Spirit. To help nurture the prayer life of the denomination, Jim Harrison joined the GSC staff in March as the part-time coordinator of prayer mobilization. Jim joins us after 25 years on the mission field with his wife, Beth, in Estonia and Bahrain. He is available to train, resource, and inspire intercessors.

Please pray for
- Workers for the harvest (Matthew 9:37-38). Our greatest need will be an adequate number of church planters to launch these new congregations. Help us identify disciples who are visionary, are self-starters, empower others, connect with people far from God, build relationships, and have the support of their spouse, if married.
REPORT OF RCA GLOBAL MISSION

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 RCA who so generously support our mission programs. RCA mission is supported almost entirely by contributions and Partnership in Mission (PIM) shares; without you, there would be no RCA Global Mission.

The RCA has 89 active partnerships in 44 countries around the world. There are 45 mission personnel and 44 partner personnel (who are employed by the partner but supported through RCA PIM shares). These mission personnel are supported by 447 churches through PIM shares. There are more than 118 active projects, including disaster response and projects of compassion. In the past year, these projects were supported by gifts from 521 churches and 1,766 individual donors.

Global Mission is proposing that the value of a full Partnership in Mission share be raised from $6,700 to $6,800 in 2020. We are also asking that every RCA congregation that does not currently support an RCA missionary with a PIM share consider taking on a full or partial share of support.

GM 19-1
To increase the value of a Partnership in Mission (PIM) share to $6,800 for 2020. (ADOPTED)

Transitions in Mission Personnel

David and Char Alexander began working in Taiwan as RCA missionaries in 1982. Dave taught practical theology and ministry skills to ministerial trainees at Tainan Theological College and Seminary. Char taught English at Chang Jung Christian University. Both schools are associated with the Presbyterian Church in Taiwan. When they retired and left Taiwan, Dave and Char were awarded citizenship of that country by the government of Taiwan in gratitude for their years of service to the Taiwanese people.

Jim and Beth Harrison began mission service as RCA missionaries in Estonia, serving from 1995 to 2008. They left Estonia to serve the National Evangelical Church in Bahrain, where Jim was senior pastor. Jim left mission service to become the coordinator for prayer mobilization for the RCA in March 2019.

Jeffery and Chelsea Lampen served in Romania as a program/curriculum developer and intern supervisor with the New Horizons Foundation. Jeff and Chelsea have moved into full-time pastoral ministry in Illinois.
Harry and Pat Miersma served RCA Global Mission in Ethiopia starting in 1972. In 1980, they were seconded to Wycliffe. They used their gifts to counsel and support Wycliffe Bible translators around the world. Their work was aimed at encouraging and supporting those involved in Bible translation in more than 75 countries in the midst of highly stressful situations. Pat co-authored Healing the Wounds of Trauma: How the Church Can Help, along with three Wycliffe colleagues. This practical Scripture engagement tool has now been translated into more than 150 languages and is being used in more than 50 countries around the world. Harry and Pat are now retired.

GM 19-2
Let it be resolved that the 213th session of the General Synod of the Reformed Church in America, meeting on the campus of Hope College in Holland, Michigan, from June 6 through June 11, 2019, gives glory to God for the life and witness of David and Charlene Alexander, James and Beth Harrison, Jeffery and Chelsea Lampen, Harry and Pat Miersma, and Karen Bogerd, and offers a prayer of thanksgiving for their service to RCA Global Mission. (ADOPTED)

Deaths*

Harvey Hoekstra, who, along with his wife, Lavina, served the Reformed Church in America for 40 years in Sudan, Ethiopia, India, and Asia, died on February 10, 2018. While serving in Africa, Hoekstra translated the New Testament into the Anuak language. He made significant advancements of the gospel through Bible translation and the production of audio Bibles.

Raymond Weiss passed away on June 23, 2018. In 1957, Ray and his wife, Dorothy, became missionaries to the Middle East, living in Iraq, Beirut, Lebanon, and Manama, Bahrain. Ray was a teacher in Lebanon. In Bahrain, he served as pastor of the Arabic-speaking congregation as well as assisting with the English-language and several Indian-language congregations.

LaVerne Sikkema passed away on July 13, 2018. Verne and his wife, Lorraine, served in Kenya, Ethiopia, and Sudan for 40 years. Verne served as a pilot, working alongside Mission Aviation Fellowship to bring missionaries and needed supplies to remote mission sites. Lorraine assisted with radio stand-by work that connected the pilots while in the air.

Al Schreuder passed away on July 31, 2018. He, along with his wife, Sue, served in Chiapas, Mexico, from 1980 to 2015. Serving among the Tzotzil people, Al and Sue were involved in leadership training and development and women’s empowerment in partnership with the National Presbyterian Church of Mexico.

Sam Noordhoff passed away on December 3, 2018. Sam and his wife, Lucille, served in Taiwan from 1959 through 1992. During his service, Noordhoff laid the foundation of many forms of medical treatment, while serving successively as the president of Mackay Memorial Hospital and Chang Gung Memorial Hospital. He not only worked in treating patients with cleft lips and palates, but also created many “firsts” in Taiwan, including the first polio rehabilitation center, the first suicide prevention center, the first burn center, the first intensive care unit, and the first craniofacial treatment center in the country.

*RCA Global Mission apologizes if other deceased missionaries are not included in this list. Any omissions are inadvertent.
Report of Words of Hope

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

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

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

Some notable highlights from Words of Hope’s ministry in the past year include the development and launch of our audio devotional podcast, the continued expansion of digital media outreach in Iran, and exciting answers to prayer in Uganda.

Last September, we launched the audio version of the Words of Hope daily devotional. In some ways, this new initiative was actually a return to our roots, as years ago, a two-minute version of the devotional was broadcast on several radio stations. By creating this new audio version as a podcast, however, we have been able to incorporate an introduction, the full Scripture text of the day, and prompts for prayer that help people engage with Scripture in our on-the-go society.

Adam Navis is the host and producer of this program. “People are listening to podcasts in their car, at the gym, when they are cooking dinner, or vacuuming the house,” explains Adam. “Why not offer a podcast that draws them deeper into Scripture? We believe there is shaping power in regular biblical engagement that goes beyond any single day’s wisdom or insight. This audio devotional will be successful if it helps people establish the habit of spending time in Scripture each and every day.”

In the first month, just over 2,000 listens were tallied as people tuned in to the program. Since then, we have grown to 3,500 listens. We hope to see this number double by 2020. To listen to the programs yourself, search for “Words of Hope Daily Devotional” on iTunes or Stitcher. Your listens, likes, and comments will help more people discover the devotionals!

As we develop the ways we interact with our North American audience online, the Internet is continuing to help us reach more Iranians with the gospel as well. Internet radio broadcasts in Persian were launched last year. The online service allows Words of Hope to broadcast programming 24 hours per day, but even more importantly, it provides important listenership metrics. Currently, our Persian audience is approximately 14,000 listeners distributed across 33 different countries.

In addition to online radio, Words of Hope is actively expanding its presence on other social media networks to connect with Iranian listeners. New videos that Words of Hope
is creating for Iranians are being posted on apps like Telegram and are already getting as many as 2,700 views per video.

Words of Hope Uganda continues to reach new tribal languages and regions of the country. In one area where broadcasting has been active since 2015, the dangerous practice of female genital mutilation (FGM) was a known social problem. Local Words of Hope radio programming has focused on telling the stories of women who regret having undergone the procedure, as well as addressing other social changes that can help to protect young women. We are thankful to report that in the last 20 years, rates of FGM have dropped in Uganda from 71.4 percent down to 8 percent. More than 1,000 people have called the radio station since 2015, asking for counseling, prayers, and advice, and more than 100 of those people have made the decision to give their lives to Christ!

Words of Hope is deeply grateful for the support of RCA churches that continues to allow this outreach ministry to grow. In 2018, contributions from RCA congregations totaled $494,901. We celebrate this generosity, knowing that these dollars are allowing people to be introduced to Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior. Thank you for proclaiming hope to the refugee, the orphan, the oppressed, the impoverished, and the imprisoned. Thank you for sending the gospel out to the ends of the earth.