

Report of the General Synod Council Serving As the Executive Committee of the General Synod

The Son of God gathers, preserves, and protects the church by his Spirit and his Word (Heidelberg Catechism, Answer 54). The church exists to announce, teach, and proclaim the gospel of Jesus Christ. The church speaks and it acts. For those of us in the Reformed tradition, the church governs its life and it determines how best to carry out its mission through its assemblies.

God seeks certain characteristics, and the world also watches to see if those characteristics are evident in our life and work together. Our ability to go forth and preach the gospel is the work of our congregations and the denomination. Together we are a body of committed believers in covenant with one another. Christ's mission is enhanced when the Word of God and our love for each other is the foundation for order, discipline, and effectiveness. This Reformed understanding of the church and the manner through which we govern our life together is foundational to Our Call.

Our prayer throughout the year and as we meet as a General Synod body is that our unity and attention to governance will glorify God.

The General Synod Council is established by and responsible to the General Synod. It shall act as the executive committee of the General Synod and it shall administer the affairs of the Reformed Church in America between the sessions of the General Synod. It shall implement decisions, policies, and programs of the General Synod through proper channels and agencies. It shall support, strengthen, and coordinate the work of the several commissions, boards, institutions, and agencies of the Reformed Church in America, thus seeking to increase the effectiveness of the mission and witness of the church (*BCO*, Chapter 1, Part IV, Article 7, Section 1).

The General Synod Council serves “as the Executive Committee of the General Synod of the Reformed Church in America, as the Committee of Reference at meetings of the General Synod, and as the Board of Trustees of the General Synod as may be required by law” (*BCO*, Chapter 3, Part I, Article 3, Section 6a).

For a full listing of the responsibilities of the General Synod Council, delegates will want to refer to the Bylaws of the General Synod (*BCO*, Chapter 3, Part 1, Article 3, Section 6). These bylaws are reprinted in this Workbook behind the Index/Orientation tab.

The work of the General Synod Council, as directed by previous General Synods, is reported to this General Synod in two areas: 1) matters of governance—the work the General Synod Council (GSC) has done with respect to a) the meeting of the General Synod, b) matters of its own organization, including its oversight and stewardship of the financial resources given to it, c) its support and supervision of denominational staff and the general secretary, d) the work of its committees, teams, and racial and ethnic councils, and e) a general overview of the work of the church in its role as the General Synod Executive Committee; and 2) the work the GSC has done with regard to the oversight of the mission and ministry assigned to it by the General Synod under the rubric of Our Call, the General Synod's ten-year goal, which is reported by the GSC in its role as the General Synod's program agency. Referrals addressed to the GSC from previous General Synods are dealt with throughout this report.

Review of Regional Synod Minutes

The General Synod office received and read the 2008 minutes of the regional synods of Albany, Canada, the Far West, the Great Lakes, the Heartland, Mid-America, the Mid-Atlantic, and New York. The minutes were found to be in order.

Ad Interim Appointments

The following person served for one or more meetings on the body indicated, based on the ad interim approval of the General Synod Council:

To the Commission on Christian Action:

Mark Rich (observer from the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, Class of 2011)

If members are serving on an ongoing basis, their names are submitted for General Synod approval in the report of the Commission on Nominations.

R-1
To approve the ad interim appointment.

GENERAL SYNOD MEETING

Referral of Business

The business of General Synod was assigned to the appropriate committees as presented in the General Synod Workbook.

R-2
To approve the agenda and schedule of the General Synod as presented in the General Synod Workbook.

General Synod Offering

The General Synod will receive offerings at the opening worship on Thursday evening and at the closing worship on Tuesday afternoon. The offerings have been designated by General Synod president Carol Bechtel to initiate and fund a peace initiative among three Reformed bodies in Kenya. The objective of the program will be to help Reformed Church mission partners in Kenya to be prepared to mediate among various factions within their own churches prior to the start of the next national elections. Additional information will be available to delegates when they arrive at the meeting.

The Seating of Delegates

The Bylaws of the General Synod require that a classis be current in the payment of its General Synod assessments before its delegates may be seated as members of the General Synod (*BCO*, Chapter 3, Part I, Article 1, Section 1a). The general secretary will report on classes' payments of General Synod assessments and will report whether there are any delegates who cannot be seated because of irregularities.

Amendments to the *Book of Church Order*

The General Synod of 2008 adopted and referred to the classes for approval four amendments to the *Book of Church Order*. The amendments are recorded in the 2008 *Minutes of the General Synod* as noted.

	Approved	Disapproved
1. Judicial Procedures (<i>MGS 2008</i> , R-57, p. 245) (Chapter 2, Part II, Article 2, Section 5) (Chapter 2, Part III, Article 2, Section 5)	41	5
2. Disbanding/Dissolving Churches (<i>MGS 2008</i> , R-58, pp. 247-248) (Chapter 1, Part II, Article 7)	46	0
3. Supervisors in Churches without a Minister (<i>MGS 2008</i> , R-59, p. 249) (Chapter 1, Part II, Article 7, Section 3)	44	2
4. Occasional Use Liturgies (<i>MGS 2008</i> , R-56, p. 242) (Chapter 1, Part I, Article 2, Section 11c)	43	3

R-3
To declare amendments 1 through 4 to be approved and that they be incorporated into the 2009 edition of the *Book of Church Order*.

Appointment of the General Synod Treasurer and Assistant Secretary

In accordance with its corporate bylaws, the General Synod must annually appoint a treasurer of the General Synod corporation (Corporate Bylaws of the General Synod of the Reformed Church in America, Article VI).

R-4

To appoint Barbara Boers as treasurer of the General Synod of the Reformed Church in America.

In accordance with its corporate bylaws, the General Synod may elect or appoint such other officers as the needs of the corporation may from time to time require (Corporate Bylaws of the General Synod of the Reformed Church in America, Article VI). In order for Kenneth Bradsell, director of Operations and Support, to have authority to sign legal documents for the corporation of the General Synod, it is necessary to approve the following recommendation:

R-5

To appoint Kenneth Bradsell assistant secretary of the General Synod of the Reformed Church in America.

General Synod Planning

A General Synod planning team comprised of the General Synod president, current and former members of the GSC, delegates to former General Synod meetings, members of commissions, and staff works on behalf of the GSC annually to propose an agenda, schedule, worship, and special events and activities for the annual meeting. The team members this year were Mark Anderson, Carol Bechtel, Lynn Kammeraad, Tim TenClay, and staff members Kenneth Bradsell (facilitator), Jessica Bratt, Deborah Morris, and Rodger Price. The team reported to the GSC at its spring meeting. The meeting plan outlined below was reviewed and adopted.

The team understood from the beginning of its work on the 2009 synod that the meeting, including its worship, fellowship, and guest speaker, and the conduct of business, as in recent years, must be designed in ways that convey to all participants the commitment of the RCA to its stated mission and vision, and to accomplishing the General Synod's goals as described in Our Call.

The officers, the general secretary, and the members of many commissions urged the team to keep in mind as it planned the 2009 synod 1) to continue the practice begun in 2007 of making provision for all delegates to discuss and respond to issues that seem to have the widest impact on the life and mission of the church, 2) to make better use of time so that reports of all General Synod commissions and other entities get fuller consideration by the delegates, 3) to utilize the arrangement of delegates at round tables for discussion, discernment, and the formation of community, and 4) to give priority to the referrals to GSC from last year's synod encouraging the church to give priority within Our Call to its stated commitments to become fully racially and ethnically diverse, to encourage a multiracial future denominationally and in our congregations, and to address racism in the church and in the communities where we engage in ministry. The team has attempted to address these concerns in its plan for the meeting.

The team continues to understand that its ongoing task on behalf of the GSC is to offer ways to conduct the meeting of the synod so that the manner in which the church does its work as an assembly reflects the church's values—in essence, that we act with each other in ways that model the body of Christ in the world.

The planning team conducted its work according to the following values:

General Synod is a place where the church has the opportunity to live into its future. Hope is defined as God going before us and making all things new. The synod engages in transformational work when:

- It uses means that enable knowledge, understanding, and full insight...
...of issues.
...of the work of the larger church.
...of relationship/community.
- There is empowerment of everyone as a matter of faithfulness to the gospel (for example, for this year, emphasis on becoming a multiracial church).
- Delegates are affirmed in the knowledge that they are sons and daughters of Jesus Christ and recognize that identity in each other.
- Delegates trust and remember that the Spirit is working in and through local congregations; in and through the agencies, assemblies, and entities of the church; and in and through the General Synod.

- Delegates, guests, officers, and staff are hospitable to one another.
- The agenda for meeting integrates work, worship, fellowship, and prayer.

General Synod Meeting Locations

The proposed locations for annual meetings of the General Synod are listed below. The General Synod is able to respond to invitations from the assemblies of the church to meet in other locations. Planning for the meeting requires invitations to be submitted at least two years in advance of the proposed meeting.

- 2010 – If the meeting is held in 2010 it will be hosted by Northwestern College, Orange City, Iowa (June 3-8, 2010)
- 2011 – San Francisco, California
- 2012 – Northwestern College, Orange City, Iowa
- 2013 – Central College, Pella, Iowa

GENERAL SYNOD 2010—IS IT 1933 AGAIN?

In 1933, the worst year of the depression, the General Synod was called to order at Central Reformed Church in Grand Rapids, Michigan. The clerk reported that no quorum was present. The vice president declared the meeting adjourned until 1934.

Delegates had been appointed. Reports and statistical tables had been gathered and are all printed in the *Acts and Proceedings of the One-Hundred and Twenty-Seventh Regular Session of the General Synod*.

In a review of the archival documents it appears that the idea of not transacting business at the annual meeting in 1933 was first seriously discussed in February prior to the meeting. The decision was finally turned over to the classes. Two-thirds of the classes approved the plan to not hold General Synod in June of the same year.

In March 2009 the General Synod Council reviewed the historic record of 1933 along with a paper that states how a similar action could be taken regarding General Synod 2010. This action would be based on the same economic concerns that caused RCA leaders to act in 1933. The GSC determined this decision could be handled via direct recommendation(s) to the 2009 General Synod, where all of the classes are represented. However, out of respect for the precedent established by the RCA's leaders in 1933, the GSC believes it is wise to also ask the classes to vote on the matter not later than the fall of 2009 and provide notification to the Office of the General Synod.

Following its discussion, the General Synod Council, in its capacity as the General Synod Executive Committee, agreed to propose to this General Synod that, as in 1933, the 2010 General Synod be “convened” on the dates proposed. The meeting, as in 1933, would be called to order. Following a brief devotion (to satisfy the *BCO* requirement that each meeting be opened and closed with prayer and that the first meeting of each day begin with a worship service), the general secretary would inform the president that a quorum is not present. The meeting would be adjourned until 2011. Note that “if a quorum fails to appear at a regular or properly called meeting, the inability to transact business does not detract from the fact that the [General Synod’s] rules requiring the meeting to be held were complied with and the meeting was convened—even though it had to adjourn immediately” (*Robert’s Rules of Order*, p. 336, Tenth Edition).

Further, the GSC proposed that the 2009 General Synod allocate assessment funds for a 2010 General Synod sufficient only to bring together officers, to publish the *Acts and Proceedings* of annual reports and the statistical tables, and to hold aside 50 percent of the cost of the 2011 meeting. The GSC noted that delegates serving at this 2009 General Synod could remain delegates throughout 2010 and until their successors are elected by the various classes and regional synods. This fulfills the requirements of the *BCO* in Chapter 1, Part IV, Article 3.

The General Synod Council, acting in its capacity as the General Synod Executive Committee recommends to the 2009 General Synod the following actions:

R-6

To instruct the officers of the General Synod to convene the 2010 General Synod with the intention of transacting no business and declaring that a quorum is not present; and further;

if no quorum is present, the officers elected and installed at the 2009 General Synod shall continue as the officers of the General Synod until the next stated session;

to be approved by two-thirds of the classes submitting votes to the General Synod office by October 15, 2009.

If this is approved by classes, the general secretary will not allocate funds for planning, renting facilities, or making other arrangements for a meeting in 2010.

R-7

To reduce the proposed 2010 General Synod Council assessment by \$225,000 contingent upon approval of R-6 by two-thirds of the classes.

This amount represents 50 percent of the average cost of each annual meeting over the past five years less an amount sufficient to allow officers to meet and for essential annual reports and statistical tables to be received, edited, and printed for distribution to the churches.

R-8

To instruct the general secretary to “reserve” the remaining 50 percent of the assessment funds received and budgeted for the 2010 General Synod meeting and apply these funds to the cost of the 2011 General Synod meeting, contingent upon approval of R-6 by two-thirds of the classes.

R-9

To instruct the General Synod Council, acting in its capacity as the General Synod Executive Committee, contingent upon approval of R-6 by two-thirds of the classes, to:

- **Adopt not later than June 2010 a per-member assessment for calendar year 2011 that does not exceed the U.S. rate of inflation as reported in May 2010 in the Consumer Price Index provided by the United States Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics; and further, that the 2011 assessment include an amount sufficient to support 50 percent of the average cost of each General Synod meeting over the past five years, to be applied to the cost of the 2011 General Synod.**
- **On the advice and approval of the Commission on Nominations to appoint ad interim members of the various commissions, agencies, and institutions sufficient to address vacancies as per the *Book of Church Order*.**
- **Act on behalf of the General Synod in such other matters that cannot reasonably be delayed until the next stated session of the General Synod.**

GENERAL SYNOD 2011 AND LEADERSHIP EVENT

In June 2008 Bradley Lewis, past president of the 2007 General Synod and moderator of the GSC in 2008, brought to the GSC a concern regarding the current rotation schedule of synod meetings among the three RCA colleges. Brad rightly recalled that the decision to meet on each RCA campus for two years included a decision by the General Synod to meet periodically in other geographic locations of the church in order for synod delegates to experience the ministry and mission of the RCA in other contexts. The GSC requested the general secretary and staff to give further consideration to meeting locations with a focus on the 2010 General Synod and to discuss this further at the summer officers meeting.

The discussion continued at the annual officers meeting in August 2008. The officers reviewed the meeting locations of synod over the past several years noting that the General Synod had not met in the Synod of the Far West since 1986 when General Synod met on the campus of the Crystal Cathedral. The officers took the discussion to the fall 2008 GSC meeting with an accompanying proposal that the GSC consider an invitation to meet in the San Francisco Bay area hosted by the Center City Network Classis, Central California Classis, and the Synod of the Far West.

The GSC affirmed the idea but requested more information with particular focus on the financial viability of a meeting in the San Francisco area and the ability of RCA congregations in the area to assist with hosting.

A site visit in December 2008 considered possible meeting locations and a meeting plan with representatives of the two classes and City Church of San Francisco. Several potential venues that had provided prior positive response to the RCA's "request for proposal" were reviewed.

Site Visit Observations

San Francisco would offer the RCA an excellent venue for a leadership event similar to Mission 2000 or One Thing or some combination of these two former events because:

- San Francisco is a multiracial, multi-ethnic, and internationally focused global city—an obvious location for church leadership to observe, interact with, and reflect on being missionally engaged in the twenty-first century.
- The work of City Church and its connections with other congregations in the city and surrounding area representing several denominations—the RCA, the Christian Reformed Church, the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), and the Presbyterian Church in America, the denomination in which City Church has its roots—offer the RCA an “on-the-ground” strong working partner that is deeply committed to ministry in the city and in supporting ministry in cities worldwide. City Church is also deeply committed to Our Call and is already asking what directions the RCA may be considering beyond 2013 as an outgrowth of Our Call.
- The Central California Classis leadership is open and enthusiastic about the potential for the presence of RCA leaders and the possibility of leaders visiting many of the congregations in the area.
- The clear value of a meeting in San Francisco is contingent on holding a “leadership event,” not just a General Synod meeting, with a registration-required leadership conference delegated from RCA congregations. A combined meeting that is well planned could ensure that General Synod delegates and other church leaders spend time experiencing and reflecting on ministry and mission in the city.
- As with Mission 2000, the value added to the life and witness of the RCA by holding an event larger than a governance meeting would offer the RCA the opportunity to engage a broad and diverse range of its leaders in an event that could develop the themes for the church after the conclusion of the current ten-year goal.
- By bringing church leaders and synod delegates together the RCA can take advantage of shared leadership and reduced costs for constituent travel, and negotiate a better arrangement with a facility.

Plans to Hold the Event in 2011

The potential local sponsors of the event and partners in the design and implementation, City Church of San Francisco and Central California Classis, were unanimous in recommending a 2011 event. However, in considering when they could help host the event there were several considerations:

- Classis of Central California has many things on its plate at the moment that it needs to conclude before it can give serious attention to an RCA meeting in the area.
- In 2011 City Church of San Francisco will be further along with its formation of a collegiate organization of congregations in the Bay area and will also be ready to launch the Newbiggin Center, a post-master of divinity learning center for leaders committed to ministry in global cities.
- The state of the current world economy and its impact on our congregations and wider ministries will make planning, organizing, and promoting this type of meeting in 2010 at best a difficult task.
- While the various facilities considered on the initial site visit would all love to lock in a 2010 meeting, all are equally open to 2011. While San Francisco has a reputation for being an expensive location, the economic downturn has proven to be in the RCA's favor for this plan.

Values

Following the site visit the general secretary and staff developed proposed values for a 2011 event for consideration by the GSC.

- Main value: an experience in 2011 that shapes the RCA's conversation about God's future for the RCA beyond Our Call.

- A context that reflects both challenges and opportunities of future ministry and mission.
- A location that supports a theologically informed conversation.
- An urban area reflecting present and future diversity of those with and to whom we minister.
- A location west of the Rockies—in the Synod of the Far West.
- A venue that costs less than or equal to that of General Synods from the past four to five years (\$445,000 on average) for the General Synod meeting aspects of the event.
- Proximity/host capacity of RCA presence where missional engagement is active.
- A context/city with a global perspective and engagement.
- An event that can be done in conjunction with governance—not done apart from General Synod.
- A diverse range of participants and voices represented in addition to General Synod delegates.

General Synod Council Decisions

Following discussion at its March 2009 meeting the GSC affirmed continuing exploration and asked the General Synod office to develop a self-supporting registration event for church leaders to be integrated with the annual meeting of the General Synod (at a cost for the General Synod meeting not to exceed \$445,000). The GSC requested that the design provide leaders from across the RCA and General Synod delegates an experience that shapes the RCA's conversation about God's future for the RCA beyond Our Call.

In early April the General Synod office was able to confirm a contract with the Parc 55 Hotel in downtown San Francisco that includes a "no penalty for cancellation" clause for fifteen months (until July 2010) to allow the GSC and staff sufficient time to fully plan a conference and synod meeting based on the models of both Mission 2000 and the January 2008 One Thing leadership event in San Antonio, Texas. The General Synod Council affirmed this action and is able to announce that plans are now in place for 2011.

OVERVIEW OF THE GSC'S WORK ON MATTERS OF ITS INTERNAL GOVERNANCE AND ADMINISTRATION

During the past year the General Synod Council continue to operate internally according to its modifications of a not-for-profit governance practice known as "policy governance" developed by Dr. John and Miriam Carver. Policy governance has allowed the GSC to enhance its ability to monitor various "ends" and objectives established to fulfill the General Synod's directives regarding Our Call, the General Synod's ten-year goal for mission and ministry. Policy governance has also enhanced the GSC's ability to both support and monitor the work of its general secretary and staff through a series of "limitations" policies. The GSC has also established and holds itself accountable for its own work through policies concerning its own internal "governance" and its relationships with the general secretary and staff.

Other agencies and committees of the General Synod and the General Synod Council including the Ministerial Formation Certification Agency and the Board of Benefits Services have begun implementing this approach to their areas of responsibility. The GSC is able to provide advice to entities and assemblies of the church interested in learning more about policy governance. Contact should be made through the Office of the General Synod.

RCA Salary Structure for FY 2009

For many years prior to 2008 the RCA staff salary structure was based on the average clergy salary of full-time ministers serving in local congregations, which was determined by a survey. In 2006 the General Synod Council adopted policies to govern its own work and to establish clear guidelines for oversight of its staff. The policy pertaining to staff compensation states: "With respect to employment, compensation, and benefits and recognition of employees, consultants, contract workers, and volunteers, the general secretary will not cause or allow jeopardy to fiscal integrity or to public image or decisions that are unrelated to the relevant market" (GSC Policy EL-7).

The general secretary instructed the personnel office to begin a study of the RCA staff compensation methodology, a study begun in the fall of 2006 with the assistance of an external personnel consultant. The completed study led to a new system developed by The

Employers' Association, a Grand Rapids, Michigan, not-for-profit human resources support group incorporated in 1939. Two key factors were considered in the development of the new system. First, an evaluation system was utilized to ascertain that internal equity was reestablished for all positions based on their ultimate contribution to the RCA's mission and vision. Secondly, all internal positions were benchmarked against externally appropriate positions (by responsibility) through the use of salary compensation surveys in the private, non-profit, and church sectors, as well as relative comparison of jobs in national and regional areas. This new system is sensitive to regional differences in cost of living and takes into account the RCA's varied benefit package.

This new system incorporates a model that utilizes fourteen levels instead of the six levels in the previous classification system. The new levels span grades 10 to 23; Grade 10 represents the most junior clerical positions and Grade 23 represents the top executive position, general secretary. The following is a rough correlation between the old and new systems:

Classification VI A and B	=	Grade 10 and 11
Classification V	=	Grade 12 and 13
Classification IV	=	Grade 14
Classification IIIA and B	=	Grade 15, 16, 17
Classification II	=	Grade 18, 19, 20, 21, 22
Classification I	=	Grade 23

To further clarify, the new grades fall into the following categories of the GSC staff salary administration format:

Professional Associates, Executive Assistants, Administrative Assistants,
 Secretarial and Office Staff: Grades 14-10
 Executive Staff: Grades 22-15
 General Secretary: Grade 23

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The following tables represent the 2009 salary ranges by region:

REFORMED CHURCH IN AMERICA COMPENSATION STRUCTURE - MICHIGAN

GRADE	2009 HOURLY PAY RATE			2009 ANNUALIZED SALARY RATE			RANGE SPREAD
	LOW	POLICY	HIGH	LOW	POLICY	HIGH	
10	11.19	\$12.79	14.39	21,823	\$24,941	28,058	25%
11	12.59	\$14.39	16.19	24,553	\$28,061	31,568	25%
12	14.27	\$16.79	19.31	27,829	\$32,741	37,652	30%
13	16.99	\$19.99	22.99	33,133	\$38,981	44,828	30%
14	19.79	\$23.99	28.19	38,594	\$46,781	54,967	35%
15	23.08	\$27.97	32.86	44,997	\$54,542	64,086	35%
16	26.55	\$33.19	39.83	51,776	\$64,721	77,665	40%
17	31.37	\$39.21	47.05	61,168	\$76,460	91,751	40%
18	35.77	\$46.16	56.55	69,759	\$90,012	110,265	45%
19	41.52	\$53.58	65.64	80,973	\$104,481	127,989	45%
20	46.72	\$62.29	77.86	91,099	\$121,466	151,832	50%
21	53.45	\$71.27	89.09	104,232	\$138,977	173,721	50%
22	58.94	\$81.29	103.64	114,924	\$158,516	202,107	55%
23	66.59	\$91.85	117.11	129,853	\$179,108	228,362	55%

MICHIGAN USED AS BASE RATE OF PAY

REFORMED CHURCH IN AMERICA COMPENSATION STRUCTURE - NEW YORK

2009							
GRADE	HOURLY PAY RATE			ANNUALIZED SALARY RATE			RANGE SPREAD
	LOW	POLICY	HIGH	LOW	POLICY	HIGH	
10	12.64	\$14.45	16.26	24,655	\$28,178	31,700	25%
11	14.23	\$16.26	18.29	27,744	\$31,707	35,670	25%
12	16.12	\$18.97	21.82	31,443	\$36,992	42,540	30%
13	19.20	\$22.59	25.98	37,443	\$44,051	50,658	30%
14	22.36	\$27.10	31.84	43,597	\$52,845	62,093	35%
15	26.07	\$31.60	37.13	50,837	\$61,620	72,404	35%
16	30.01	\$37.51	45.01	58,516	\$73,145	87,773	40%
17	35.44	\$44.30	53.16	69,108	\$86,385	103,662	40%
18	40.42	\$52.16	63.90	78,827	\$101,712	124,597	45%
19	46.93	\$60.55	74.17	91,506	\$118,073	144,639	45%
20	52.79	\$70.39	87.99	102,945	\$137,261	171,576	50%
21	60.39	\$80.52	100.65	117,761	\$157,014	196,268	50%
22	66.60	\$91.86	117.12	129,867	\$179,127	228,387	55%
23	75.25	\$103.79	132.33	146,733	\$202,391	258,048	55%

REFORMED CHURCH IN AMERICA COMPENSATION STRUCTURE - IOWA

2009							
GRADE	HOURLY PAY RATE			ANNUALIZED SALARY RATE			RANGE SPREAD
	LOW	POLICY	HIGH	LOW	POLICY	HIGH	
10	10.97	\$12.54	14.11	21,396	\$24,453	27,510	25%
11	12.34	\$14.10	15.86	24,058	\$27,495	30,932	25%
12	13.99	\$16.46	18.93	27,282	\$32,097	36,912	30%
13	16.65	\$19.59	22.53	32,470	\$38,201	43,931	30%
14	19.39	\$23.50	27.61	37,806	\$45,825	53,844	35%
15	22.61	\$27.41	32.21	44,096	\$53,450	62,803	35%
16	26.02	\$32.53	39.04	50,747	\$63,434	76,120	40%
17	30.74	\$38.42	46.10	59,935	\$74,919	89,903	40%
18	35.06	\$45.24	55.42	68,369	\$88,218	108,067	45%
19	40.70	\$52.51	64.32	79,356	\$102,395	125,433	45%
20	45.78	\$61.04	76.30	89,271	\$119,028	148,785	50%
21	52.37	\$69.83	87.29	102,126	\$136,169	170,211	50%
22	57.75	\$79.66	101.57	112,619	\$155,337	198,055	55%
23	65.26	\$90.02	114.78	127,266	\$175,539	223,812	55%

REFORMED CHURCH IN AMERICA COMPENSATION STRUCTURE - CALIFORNIA

GRADE	2009 HOURLY PAY RATE			2009 ANNUALIZED SALARY RATE			RANGE SPREAD
	LOW	POLICY	HIGH	LOW	POLICY	HIGH	
10	12.31	\$14.07	15.83	24,007	\$27,437	30,866	25%
11	13.85	\$15.83	17.81	27,010	\$30,869	34,727	25%
12	15.70	\$18.47	21.24	30,614	\$36,017	41,419	30%
13	18.69	\$21.99	25.29	36,448	\$42,881	49,313	30%
14	21.77	\$26.39	31.01	42,455	\$51,461	60,466	35%
15	25.38	\$30.76	36.14	49,485	\$59,982	70,479	35%
16	29.22	\$36.52	43.82	56,971	\$71,214	85,457	40%
17	34.50	\$43.13	51.76	67,283	\$84,104	100,924	40%
18	39.35	\$50.78	62.21	76,741	\$99,021	121,301	45%
19	45.68	\$58.94	72.20	89,073	\$114,933	140,793	45%
20	51.39	\$68.52	85.65	100,211	\$133,614	167,018	50%
21	58.79	\$78.39	97.99	114,645	\$152,861	191,076	50%
22	64.83	\$89.42	114.01	126,418	\$174,369	222,320	55%
23	73.25	\$101.03	128.81	142,831	\$197,009	251,186	55%

REFORMED CHURCH IN AMERICA COMPENSATION STRUCTURE - ILLINOIS

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GRADE	2009 HOURLY PAY RATE			2009 ANNUALIZED SALARY RATE			RANGE SPREAD
	LOW	POLICY	HIGH	LOW	POLICY	HIGH	
10	12.08	\$13.81	15.54	23,563	\$26,930	30,296	25%
11	13.60	\$15.54	17.48	26,515	\$30,303	34,091	25%
12	15.42	\$18.14	20.86	30,067	\$35,373	40,679	30%
13	18.35	\$21.59	24.83	35,785	\$42,101	48,416	30%
14	21.37	\$25.90	30.43	41,667	\$50,505	59,343	35%
15	24.92	\$30.20	35.49	48,584	\$58,890	69,196	35%
16	28.68	\$35.85	43.02	55,926	\$69,908	83,889	40%
17	33.87	\$42.34	50.81	66,050	\$82,563	99,076	40%
18	38.63	\$49.85	61.07	75,336	\$97,208	119,079	45%
19	44.84	\$57.86	70.88	87,441	\$112,827	138,213	45%
20	50.45	\$67.27	84.09	98,382	\$131,177	163,971	50%
21	57.73	\$76.97	96.21	112,569	\$150,092	187,614	50%
22	63.65	\$87.79	111.93	124,113	\$171,191	218,268	55%
23	71.92	\$99.20	126.48	140,244	\$193,440	246,636	55%

The new classification system evaluates positions based on duties and tasks as identified by the position incumbent and as verified/validated by his or her manager. As positions change and duties are modified, the system allows for reevaluation and placement of employees into different appropriate ranges. It also provides management with objective criteria when informing employees what must be done to advance within both the organization and within his or her assigned pay range. The system, when reviewed and updated regularly based on competitive benchmark pay data (as opposed to applying across the board adjustments that may not reflect actual pay practices), will serve the church well as it seeks to advance God's kingdom.

General Secretary's Review

The General Synod Council has a Relationship and Review Committee appointed annually by the moderator. The committee is responsible for providing pastoral care, counsel, and support for the general secretary. In addition, the committee conducts an annual performance review based on expected job outputs, and a broader and more extensive performance review receiving input from the wider church every third year.

With the current governance structure, the general secretary is required to provide “monitoring reports” at each meeting of GSC. The monitoring reports detail strategies, outcomes, supporting data, progress, and compliance in the accomplishment of stated ends policies for seven strategic policy areas determined by GSC. In effect, the performance of the general secretary is evaluated every time GSC meets. This new monitoring report process makes public the effectiveness of the general secretary in carrying out requisite responsibilities.

In analyzing and reviewing the monitoring reports each provided action and progress in the realization of the stated ends policies. The general secretary should be commended for the effort and achievement in leading staff in the accomplishment of agreed upon ends.

The committee reports to the GSC at the fall and spring meetings in executive session. As part of this process the general secretary completes a “self-evaluation” instrument, an instrument also used in the annual evaluation process for all GSC personnel. The committee addresses with the general secretary goals in areas of personal and professional improvement.

Identified objectives for 2009 focused in three areas:

1. Change management—effectively navigating the important changes in the next years in nearing the completion of Our Call, and identifying next steps in moving past 2013; providing greater alignment of General Synod/regionalsynods/classes; strategic relationship building with constituencies within the RCA; funding priorities and key decision making and problem solving.
2. Communication—mastering new communication media and finding space to write and communicate across the denomination, using this strength as a positive influence within the denomination.
3. Team development—with key hires coming on board, working to develop cohesiveness and a sense of team with new cluster facilitators, and helping nurture new generation leaders both as GSC staff and with emerging pastors.

Developmental steps for 2009 in addition to the previous objectives include:

1. Strategic report to the Relationship and Review Team by August 2009 outlining the general secretary's positioning regarding time commitments beyond the RCA, especially with regard to ecumenical relationship priorities.
2. Sabbatical proposal to the Relationship and Review Team by August 2009 as recommended in the 2008 performance review for execution in 2010.
3. Review of general secretary position description in light of governance structure for greater future effectiveness.

Report of the General Synod Council on Finance

Financing the Denominational Programs of the Reformed Church in America

Congregational Giving

In 2007 the Reformed Church in America's 166,043 confessing members each contributed, on average, \$2,243 to their local congregations. Of that total, 88 percent was spent at the local level for minister salaries and benefits, supplies, utilities, construction and building improvements, and local benevolence programs. The funds that support the RCA's denominational programs and services come primarily from congregations and individuals in the form of voluntary contributions (such as Partnership-in-Mission shares) and assessments. General Synod agencies (including the General Synod Council, Board of Benefits Services, Ministerial Formation Certification Agency, Western Theological Seminary, and New Brunswick Theological Seminary) received 3.8 percent in the form of voluntary contributions and 1.8 percent of total congregational giving in the form of assessments.

Assessments imposed independently and paid to regional synods and classes were 1.6 percent of total congregational giving. The amount of the total assessment varies from one classis to another, based on classis and regional synod charges. However, the General Synod assessment is consistent for all classes. The total General Synod assessment for 2009 is \$39.91 per confessing member. It is comprised of a \$33.47 per member assessment for the General Synod Council, \$1.50 for the Board of Benefits Services Assistance Fund, \$4.71 for theological education, and \$0.23 for disability ministry. This General Synod will be asked to approve the 2010 assessment, which information is contained on page 69 of this section.

Funding Sources for Denominational Programs and Services

Financing for the programs and services provided by the denominational agencies listed above comes from a variety of sources. For the General Synod Council, 32.7 percent of the 2009 budget is projected to come from the General Synod assessment. In addition, it is projected that voluntary contributions from congregations and individuals will provide almost half of the denomination's total sources of revenue. These funds are primarily designated for specific programs within Global Missions, church multiplication, discipleship, leadership, and revitalization that support Our Call, the RCA's ten-year goal. Other sources of revenue include income from investments.

The Board of Benefits Services is primarily funded from fees paid by retirement and insurance plan participants. In addition, the Board of Benefits Services receives \$1.50 per member from assessments for the assistance grant program, which supports retirees and widows in severe financial difficulty.

The RCA Church Growth Fund is primarily funded from interest on church building loans and investments.

Financial Summary—Fiscal Year 2008

	Fiscal Year ending 9/30/08					
	Income	Expenses	Change in Net Assets	Assets	Liabilities	Net Assets
General Synod Council	\$16,867,245	\$19,452,746	\$(2,585,501)	\$64,673,771	\$44,669,930	\$20,003,841
BOBS-Retirement Program	\$(35,413,847)	\$15,739,376	\$(51,153,223)	\$303,584,377	\$245,584	\$303,338,793
BOBS-Insurance Fund	\$15,023,424	\$12,956,538	\$2,066,886	\$11,380,518	\$98,493	\$11,282,025
BOBS-General Fund	\$2,027,916	\$1,542,548	\$485,368	\$3,473,044	\$118,168	\$3,354,876
RCA Church Growth Fund	\$2,056,803	\$808,333	\$1,248,470	\$45,274,631	\$10,430,448	\$34,844,183

The General Synod Council financial results for 2008 include \$2 million in unrealized market losses in the Investment Program and third-party perpetual trusts and a \$450,000 draw on undesignated reserves for the transition of the finance office. Contribution income, including Partnership-in-Mission shares, decreased 6 percent over the previous year. Spending was maintained at levels that matched funds available from current year income or from reserves from prior years.

The Board of Benefits Services Insurance Fund showed positive financial results for the fiscal year with a reduction in medical claims mainly as a result of changing the third-party administrator mid-year. The Insurance Fund's reserve position has continued to improve allowing for incentives in fiscal 2009 for participants to focus on wellness and prevention. The Board of Benefits Services Retirement Program's assets were significantly impacted by the historic losses in the general market. Participant accounts lost \$66.6 million in market value in fiscal 2008. \$9.5 million was invested in the 403(b) Retirement Plan from individuals and organizations, which is slightly more than the previous year.

The RCA Church Growth Fund's financial performance continues to be strong. As of September 30, 2008, it had \$36.65 million in loans outstanding. The Church Growth Fund (CGF) continues to operate efficiently with low administrative costs when compared to other denominational church growth funds, and to offer favorable interest rates on loans to local churches. For further information regarding the work of the CGF (including its loan and investment note programs and the grant it provides to GSC for church multiplication work), see the more detailed report of the Church Growth Fund on page 114.

Annual Audit

The 2008 financial statements of the General Synod Council, Board of Benefits Services, and RCA Church Growth Fund were audited by Crowe Horwath LLP, Certified Public Accountants. Delegates are invited to visit the RCA website to download the complete set of audited financial statements. The statements, as well as a brief video with the stewardship report, are available at www.rca.org in "Finance Services" under the Leadership tab. The specific address is www.rca.org/Page.aspx?pid=2185. The GSC Audit Committee received and reviewed the audited financial statements and management letters for the corporations listed above. Each corporation received an unqualified audit opinion.

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The RCA's Investment Programs

The RCA's investments are managed by outside investment managers. The treasurer, the Investment Advisory Committee, and the various boards are responsible for ensuring that the RCA's funds are prudently invested, investment managers adhere to established investment policies, and performance of the funds is monitored on an ongoing basis. The following is a brief overview of the investments in the RCA Fund, the RCA Investment Program, the RCA Retirement Program, and the GSC Planned Giving Programs. Individual investments in the RCA Fund and RCA Investment Program are listed in each audited financial statement and can be found on the RCA website, www.rca.org, in "Finance Services" under the "Leadership" tab. The specific address is www.rca.org/Page.aspx?pid=2185.

The RCA Fund

In 1979 the trustees of the former General Program Council designed the RCA Fund (formerly the RCA Cash Program), primarily as a means for providing capital for the RCA Extension Foundation (now called the RCA Church Growth Fund). Up to 20 percent of the RCA Fund's Outside Depositor assets may be invested in RCA Church Growth Fund (RCACGF) investment notes; however, at present, none of the RCA Fund's investments are comprised of RCACGF investment notes. In addition to providing a vehicle for raising new capital for the building of churches, the RCA Fund makes it possible for local churches, classes, agencies, and regional synods to receive a competitive rate of return for the short term investment of surplus funds.

The Bank of New York/Mellon actively manages a portfolio of fixed income securities (including Corporate Bonds, U.S. Treasuries and Agencies, and mortgage backed securities), which comprises the bulk of the RCA Fund's assets. At September 30, 2008, 14.8 percent of its assets were held in two money market accounts to provide liquidity. The total rate of return (which includes unrealized gains and losses) of the assets managed by the Bank of New York/Mellon was 4.44 percent for fiscal 2008 versus a 4.45 percent return for the benchmark. RCA Fund participants receive distributions of earned income, i.e.,

cash earnings, on a quarterly basis. These distributions in fiscal 2008 were \$2,528,809 compared to \$1,604,702 for fiscal 2007. The average distribution to RCA Fund participants was 6.15 percent in fiscal 2008. At September 30, 2008, the RCA Fund held a reserve of \$1,209,810, which represents the accumulated unrealized gains in the fund.

The *Investment Objectives and Guidelines* for the RCA Fund marketable securities are as follows:

1. **Investment Objectives:** To preserve capital, maximize current return on investments consistent with safety of principal, and maintain a high degree of liquidity in accordance with anticipated needs. The portfolio is an aggregation of investments from denominational and affiliated agencies and at any time depositors may draw on the fund. Therefore, the fund should be structured so that 50 percent of the assets are easily liquidated.

2. **Investment Guidelines**

Maturity Restriction: The average duration of the fixed income portfolio shall remain within a 25 percent range versus the average duration of the Merrill Lynch U.S. Corporate & Government 1 to 5, A Rated and above Index. Individual investments may not exceed five years in maturity from the date of purchase.

Social Screening Constraints: The following are not permissible investments for issuers in the fixed income asset classes: alcoholic beverages, tobacco products, gambling devices, and other products or services which may be deemed unethical or in violation of biblical principles which would be determined by General Synod Council upon investigation and recommendation.

Fixed Income Investments:

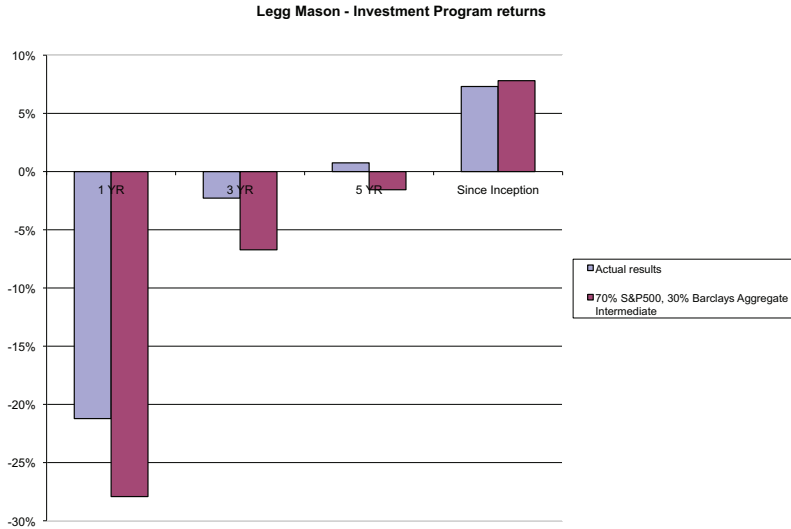
- The portfolio seeks to diversify risk by holding the securities of a variety of issuers.
- With the exception of U.S. Government and Agency securities, no single issuer will represent more than 5 percent of the overall value of the portfolio at the time of purchase.
- Individual issues shall be limited to a minimum rating of A by either Standard and Poor's or Moody's at the time of purchase. Downgrades in credit quality shall be reported to the client and sold at the discretion of the manager. The average quality of the portfolio shall be maintained at a minimum of AA, on a weighted-average basis.
- Eligible investments include U.S. Government obligations or deposits issued or guaranteed as to interest and principal by the government of the United States or any agency or instrumentality thereof. Corporate obligations, asset-backed securities, and mortgage-backed securities are allowable investments.
- Prohibited investments include instruments known as "structured notes" or instruments commonly considered "derivative" instruments (e.g., inverse floaters, leveraged floaters, equity-linked securities, options, futures, swaps, caps, floors, and collars).

RCA Investment Program

The 230 restricted and unrestricted endowment funds of the General Synod Council are managed through the RCA Investment Program. Legg Mason Investment Advisors serves as investment manager for the portfolio. The investment objective is to generate long-term preservation and growth of capital after inflation. Portfolio investments are diversified among high-quality companies and industry sectors to reduce risk. Individual stock positions are limited to 5 percent of the equity portion of the portfolio based on cost. Target asset allocation is 60 to 80 percent stocks and 20 to 40 percent bonds. As is the case with the RCA Fund, social screening constraints approved by the General Synod Council apply.

In order to preserve the corpus of the endowments, the RCA Investment Program's policy for the fiscal year 2008 was to pay out 5.2 percent of a five-year rolling average market value to be distributed in four equal quarterly installments. At December 31, 2008, the market value of the Legg Mason portfolio was \$10.4 million and the historic dollar value was \$9.8 million; twenty-seven endowments had market value below historic dollar value, eighteen of those are designated for GSC purposes and nine are for churches and other organizations related to the denomination. Performance summary statistics are highlighted below. Included are results through January 31, 2009, as reviewed by the Investment Advisory Committee.

RCA Investment Program - Performance Summary As of January 31, 2009



RCA Retirement Plan Investments

Since January 2001, Fidelity Investments has served as investment manager and record keeper for the 403(b) Retirement Plan and the Retirement Plan. Plan participants may select from a variety of Fidelity and socially screened mutual funds that have been approved by the Board of Benefits Services. Additionally, participants have the option of transferring their account balances from one fund to another within the guidelines established by the board.

A listing of funds available in the plan as of December 31, 2008, is included below. Plan participants receive quarterly information concerning performance versus benchmarks of all mutual funds that are part of these plans. Return information is available at www.fidelity.com.

Eighty-eight percent of participant assets in the Retirement Plan and 80 percent of participant assets in the 403(b) Plan are in the Freedom funds, which are aimed at automatically adjusting investment risk as a participant moves closer to retirement. Following are the funds currently available in the two retirement programs:

- Fidelity Freedom Income
- Fidelity Freedom 2000
- Fidelity Freedom 2005
- Fidelity Freedom 2010
- Fidelity Freedom 2015
- Fidelity Freedom 2020
- Fidelity Freedom 2025
- Fidelity Freedom 2030
- Fidelity Freedom 2035
- Fidelity Freedom 2040
- Fidelity Freedom 2045
- Fidelity Freedom 2050
- Fidelity Retirement Mmkt Port
- Fidelity US Bond Index Fund
- Fidelity Balanced Fund
- Fidelity Equity Income Fund
- Fidelity Disciplined Equity Fund
- Fidelity Growth Co. Fund
- Fidelity Value Fund
- Fidelity Mid-Cap Stock Fund
- Fidelity Small Cap Value Fund
- MSIF Sm Co Gr. Portfolio
- Calvert World Value Int'l Equity
- Fidelity Diversified Int'l Fund
- PIMCO Total Return Fund III-Adm

Pax World Balanced Fund – Indl Inv
NB Socially Responsive Fund – Tr
Calvert Lg Cap Gr Fund – CL A
Calvert Social Inv Fund Equity Port – CL A
Calvert Capital Accumulation Fund – CL A

Planned Giving Programs

The General Synod Council manages gift annuity and pooled income funds and acts as trustee for several charitable remainder trusts. State Street Global Advisors provides investment management and recordkeeping services for the RCA's planned giving programs. At December 31, 2008, State Street managed RCA planned giving assets totaling \$2,292,128. The primary investment objective is to provide for long-term growth of principal and income without undue exposure to risk. The portfolios are invested in equities, fixed income, and cash equivalents based upon an acceptable asset mix which is conducive to participation in rising markets, while permitting adequate protection in falling markets. The investment mix takes into consideration factors such as the type of life income vehicle, the payout requirements, beneficiary income requirements, and overall investment policy of the RCA.

The charitable gift annuity investments lost 24.8 percent during calendar 2008. The average payout rate to annuitants was between 12 percent and 14 percent. Ninety-seven percent of our annuity assets are managed under the laws of the State of New York, which has increased the asset to liability reserve requirement for the years 2008 through 2010. As a result, GSC injected \$300,000 into the charitable gift annuities account with State Street Global Advisors. These funds will be held in reserve in a money market account until such time as the market improves, or additional gift annuities are sold, providing an increase in the market value of the fund.

Mission Investments

In 1970 the General Synod Executive Committee (GSEC) established a mission investment policy that directed the General Program Council to make "available for mission investment purposes ten percent of the appropriated and unappropriated operating reserve" (GSEC Action 70-50). This policy continues in effect for the GSC. The main operating criteria for this policy was to assist projects owned and/or controlled by "minority" individuals, groups, or local organizations whose goal was to assist in building economic participation or growth in the community. Maximum returns on investments are not the main objective of mission investments. Rather, factors considered include social impact, need, geographic proximity to RCA mission endeavors, and investment participation by other denominations and institutions.

At September 30, 2008, mission investments in thirteen banks, credit unions, and other organizations totaled \$522,298. Mission investment monies are placed with organizations and community banks such as the NCC Minority Bail Bond Fund; the Shared Interest Group, which invests in South Africa's democratic development; Navigators-Kenya, which makes small business loans in impoverished parts of Kenya; Oikocredit USA, Inc. and Oikocredit, Ecumenical Development Cooperative Society (Netherlands), each of which makes small business loans in impoverished parts of the world; the Central Appalachian People Credit Union; Fonkoze USA, Inc., which makes microcredit loans in Haiti; the Wisconsin Coordinating Council on Nicaragua, which makes microcredit loans and encourages fair trade practices in Nicaragua; the Reformed Church in Mozambique; Union Settlement Credit Union (New York); City National Bank of New Jersey; United Bank of Philadelphia; and the Leviticus 25:23 Alternative Fund (Elmsford, New York).

A committee whose members are GSC staff meets regularly to analyze the portfolio.

United States Internal Revenue Service Group Tax Exemption

As the denomination's parent organization, the General Synod of the Reformed Church in America was granted a group tax exemption by the United States Internal Revenue Service (IRS) on January 17, 1986. The exemption recognizes as exempt from Federal income tax all churches, agencies, assemblies, and institutions within the RCA that have satisfied the requirements for inclusion in the group.

As a condition to the continuing effectiveness of the group exemption determination, the General Synod must file annually with the commissioner of the IRS a list of the churches,

agencies, assemblies, and institutions that are a part of the group for which the exemption has been granted. The report, filed in June of 2008, listed twelve newly formed churches to be added, eight name/address changes, three revised tax identification numbers assigned by the IRS, and four churches, agencies, assemblies, or institutions to be removed from the list.

Reactions to the Economic Downturn

The start of the 2009 fiscal year was met with an unprecedented downturn in the economy. In recognition of this significant occurrence, staff implemented adjustments to the 2009 budget. Projections of contribution and investment income led to \$800,000, or 4.5 percent, in reductions in budgeted expenses. These adjustments included reductions in staffing, program, and travel expenses including the cancellation of annual staff days, implementation of a salary and hiring freeze, and the addition of a premium copay for employee medical insurance. The GSC staff remains committed to reaching the goals of Our Call while also being wise stewards of the resources available and maintaining sufficient reserves.

FY 2010 PROPOSED GENERAL SYNOD COUNCIL BUDGET

The Fiscal 2010 budget for the General Synod Council has been developed with an understanding that the economy will remain unsettled for much, if not all, of the period. Focus continues on the Our Call initiatives, including the addition of the sixth element of Our Call: “a multiracial future freed from racism.”

General Framework and Assumptions

- Assessments are used to cover infrastructure costs as well as expenses related to Our Call. In response to the state of the economy, assessment income is budgeted to remain at the same per-member amount as 2009.
- The Global Mission budget is funded primarily by Partnership-in-Mission (PIM) share contributions and designated investment income. These amounts are expected to be negatively impacted in fiscal 2010.
- The GSC development office provides fundraising services for all areas of GSC, including Global Mission. Non-PIM-share contribution income used for all areas of Our Call is budgeted at \$206,000, which is the amount raised in 2008.
- Basic services costs are charged to the Board of Benefits Services and the RCA Church Growth Fund for services provided by GSC staff for administrative functions such as finance services and information technology support.
- Investment income is provided to budget areas based on designations. Undesignated investment income is allocated to program and infrastructure budget areas based on decisions made by the general secretary and cluster facilitators.
- A portion of the overall Global Mission budget will continue to be used to create a “Mission Is One” grant to support the work of church multiplication and discipleship. The amount is reduced by \$200,000 in FY 2010.
- Funding for the 2010 budget from restricted funds has been reduced by approximately \$37,000, allowing these funds to be available in case of an unanticipated emergency.

Major Assumptions and Strategies for the FY 2010 General Synod Council Budget

These are the major assumptions and principles supporting the proposed FY 2010 General Synod Council budget.

1. Resources are being allocated to support the ten-year goal of revitalizing existing congregations and starting new congregations. Of the \$206,000 that the GSC Development Office has committed to raise from individual donors, \$98,000 is targeted to fund programs in church multiplication and discipleship; \$98,000 to programs in leadership and revitalization; and \$10,000 to Operations and Support for the Dialogue on Homosexuality.
2. The program activities of Church Multiplication and Discipleship are supported not only by designated contributions and assessments, but also by funds transferred from Global Mission via the “Mission Is One” grant, designated investment income, transfers from temporarily restricted funds, 25 percent of the net income from the RCA Church Growth Fund to fund matching grants for new ministries, and GSC development office undesignated fundraising efforts.

3. The Leadership and Revitalization budget continues to be funded and resourced in order to meet the denominational priority of providing future pastoral leadership, which includes ministers of Word and sacrament and the offices of elder and deacon. The Lilly grant was renewed in the amount of \$1 million for the period February 1, 2009, to January 31, 2014. This grant supports the office of the coordinator of revitalization. The Ministerial Formation Certification Agency's budget continues to be administered as part of the leadership and revitalization budget. Note that the assessments received by MFCA are part of the assessment for theological education and are not part of the GSC assessment.
4. The Global Mission budget will continue to be supported by designated contributions and designated investment income. A major assumption is that it can spend to the level of anticipated contributions but must balance itself.
5. The "Mission Is One" grant will continue to provide funds for "local mission" through church multiplication and discipleship programs. The amount of funding provided will be reduced from \$317,000 in FY 2009 to \$117,000 in FY 2010.
6. The transition of the finance staff to Grand Rapids has been fully implemented. Budgeted 2010 expenses are \$450,000 less than the actual amount spent in fiscal 2007.

**REFORMED CHURCH IN AMERICA
Budget FY 2010**

GENERAL SYNOD COUNCIL									
Church Multiplication/ Discipleship	Global Mission	Leadership/ Revitalization	MFCA	Operations & Support	Office of General Secretary	IT	Finance	GSC	Subtotal
REVENUE:									
Contributions	142,500	6,772,813	22,500	24,000	0	0	0	0	6,961,813
Fundraising Income	98,000	0	98,000	0	10,000	0	0	0	206,000
Partner Income	7,000	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	7,000
Assessment Income - Theological Assessment	0	0	0	259,669	0	0	0	0	259,669
Assessment Income - Disability Ministry	38,500	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	38,500
Assessment Income	552,324	0	550,000	0	1,884,006	455,725	401,836	0	4,326,239
Legacy Income	0	70,000	0	0	0	0	0	0	70,000
Investment Income	20,000	80,000	30,000	24,000	7,000	0	0	0	161,000
Investment Income - Undesignated & Allocated	40,000	0	30,000	0	0	164,000	0	0	234,000
RCA Fund Earnings	65,000	100,000	2,000	13,400	2,000	7,000	900	0	190,300
Mission Is One	117,000	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	117,000
Fees Billed	0	0	6,000	0	0	0	0	0	6,000
Sales of Goods & Services	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Grants from Other Budget Areas	51,000	0	6,000	5,000	0	0	0	0	62,000
Transfer from Designated Funds	114,500	47,000	0	0	0	0	0	0	161,500
Other Income	50,000	200,100	0	100,600	29,180	0	83,508	0	463,388
Basic Service Cost Assigned	0	0	8,100	0	98,256	121,678	270,740	0	518,774
Total Revenue	1,295,824	7,269,913	752,600	426,669	2,030,442	577,403	756,984	13,783,183	
EXPENSES:									
Staff Costs	938,481	1,154,433	562,137	259,195	723,102	458,840	486,986	4,958,042	
Office Costs	139,892	151,959	82,638	36,174	158,020	44,313	86,073	736,949	
Staff Travel	91,000	95,200	66,000	20,000	52,800	15,750	10,000	410,750	
Program Costs (7XXX)	318,600	5,731,321	175,000	103,000	870,020	195,600	0	7,393,541	
Grants to Other Budget Areas	13,000	20,000	0	0	57,000	5,000	0	95,000	
Program Costs (8XXX)	10,000	0	6,000	8,300	169,500	58,500	173,925	426,225	
Mission Is One	0	117,000	0	0	0	0	0	117,000	
Total Expenses	1,510,973	7,269,913	891,775	426,669	2,030,442	577,403	756,984	14,137,507	
Net Revenue/(Expense)*	(215,149)	0	(139,175)	0	0	0	0	(354,324)	

* (Amount) represents funds in reserves to be used in 2010 fiscal year

**REFORMED CHURCH IN AMERICA
Budget FY 2010**

	GSC Subtotal	GSC Development	GSC Fundraising	Mailroom	Comm.	Production	Eliminations	GSC 2010
REVENUE:								
Contributions	6,961,813	0	0	0	0	0	0	6,961,813
Fundraising Income	206,000	0	206,000	0	0	0	(206,000)	206,000
Partner Income	7,000	0	0	0	0	0	0	7,000
Assessment Income - Theological Assessment	259,669	0	0	0	0	0	0	259,669
Assessment Income - Disability Ministry	38,500	0	0	0	0	0	0	38,500
Assessment Income	4,326,239	332,505	0	0	954,006	0	0	5,612,750
Legacy Income	70,000	0	0	0	0	0	0	70,000
Investment Income	161,000	0	0	0	0	0	0	161,000
Investment Income - Undesignated & Allocated	234,000	0	0	0	0	0	0	234,000
RCA Fund Earnings	190,300	10,000	0	0	2,000	0	0	202,300
Mission Is One	117,000	0	0	0	0	0	(117,000)	0
Fees Billed	6,000	32,000	0	0	0	0	0	38,000
Sales of Goods & Services	0	0	0	370,000	0	906,045	0	1,276,045
Grants from Other Budget Areas	62,000	90,000	0	24,000	0	36,000	0	212,000
Transfer from Designated Funds	161,500	102,983	0	0	0	0	0	264,483
Other Income	463,388	3,000	0	0	0	0	0	466,388
Basic Service Cost Assigned	518,774	0	0	0	26,000	0	0	544,774
Total Revenue	13,783,183	570,488	206,000	394,000	982,006	942,045	(323,000)	16,554,722
EXPENSES:								
Staff Costs	4,958,042	382,696	0	117,648	318,803	542,171	0	6,319,360
Office Costs	736,949	49,292	0	37,217	26,203	60,874	0	910,535
Staff Travel	410,750	50,000	0	2,000	17,000	8,000	0	487,750
Program Costs (7XXX)	7,393,541	0	0	200,000	620,000	327,000	0	8,540,541
Grants to Other Budget Areas	95,000	23,000	206,000	0	0	0	(206,000)	118,000
Program Costs (8XXX)	426,225	65,500	0	500	0	4,000	0	496,225
Mission Is One	117,000	0	0	0	0	0	(117,000)	0
Total Expenses	14,137,507	570,488	206,000	357,365	982,006	942,045	(323,000)	16,872,411
Net Revenue/(Expense)*	(354,324)	0	0	36,635	0	0	0	(317,689)

*(Amount) represents funds in reserves to be used in 2010 fiscal year

**REFORMED CHURCH IN AMERICA
Budget FY 2009**

GENERAL SYNOD COUNCIL									
Church	Global	Leadership/ Revitalization	MFCA	Operations & Support	Office of General Secretary	IT	Finance	GSC	
Multiplication/ Discipleship	Mission	Revitalization	MFCA	Support	General Secretary	IT	Finance	Subtotal	
Contributions	7,268,053	32,500	24,000	0	0	0	0	7,434,553	
Fundraising Income	0	200,000	0	45,000	98,000	0	0	593,000	
Partner Income	10,000	0	0	0	0	0	0	80,000	
Assessment Income - Theological Assessment	0	0	263,600	0	0	0	0	263,600	
Assessment Income	524,119	569,132	0	2,012,544	313,626	436,261	424,441	4,280,123	
Legacy Income	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	100,000	
Investment Income	170,000	25,000	9,000	12,000	0	0	0	241,000	
Investment Income - Undesignated & Allocated	35,000	0	0	0	260,000	0	0	295,000	
RCA Fund Earnings	40,000	6,000	10,000	3,000	2,000	0	0	121,000	
Lilly Interest	0	20,000	0	0	0	0	0	20,000	
Mission Is One	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	317,000	
Fees Billed	0	7,500	0	0	0	0	0	7,500	
Sales of Goods & Services	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	
Grants from Other Budget Areas	293,000	46,000	0	3,500	0	39,634	0	382,134	
Transfer from Designated Funds	40,000	20,000	10,000	0	0	0	0	240,000	
Other Income	65,500	15,000	133,800	12,500	0	0	95,000	493,800	
Basic Service Cost Assigned	0	8,100	0	63,738	18,000	122,282	379,754	591,874	
Total Revenue	7,950,053	949,232	450,400	2,152,282	691,626	598,177	899,195	15,460,584	
EXPENSES:									
Staff Costs	1,168,030	563,413	248,600	786,225	407,557	469,326	672,255	5,303,146	
Office Costs	112,579	262,140	47,000	151,157	51,569	46,210	80,360	829,834	
Staff Travel	120,000	146,050	26,000	56,800	56,000	17,500	16,000	509,350	
Program Costs (7XXX)	605,100	5,996,833	137,000	935,100	176,500	0	0	8,086,533	
Grants to Other Budget Areas	52,000	60,000	0	44,000	0	0	0	156,000	
Program Costs (8XXX)	6,200	0	12,150	177,000	0	65,141	130,580	391,071	
Mission Is One	0	317,000	0	0	0	0	0	317,000	
Total Expenses	1,881,619	7,950,053	470,750	2,152,282	691,626	598,177	899,195	15,592,934	
Net Revenue/(Expense)*	(112,000)	0	(20,350)	0	0	0	0	(132,350)	

*(Amount) represents funds in reserves to be used in 2009 fiscal year

**REFORMED CHURCH IN AMERICA
Budget FY 2009**

	GSC Subtotal	GSC Development	GSC Fundraising	Mallroom	Communications	Production	Eliminations	GSC Total
REVENUE:								
Contributions	7,434,553	0	0	0	0	0	0	7,434,553
Fundraising Income	593,000	7,000	600,000	0	0	0	(600,000)	600,000
Partner Income	80,000	0	0	0	0	0	0	80,000
Assessment Income - Theological Assessment	263,600	0	0	0	0	0	0	263,600
Assessment Income	4,280,123	403,018	0	0	954,609	0	0	5,637,750
Legacy Income	100,000	0	0	0	0	0	0	100,000
Investment Income	241,000	0	0	0	0	0	0	241,000
Investment Income - Undesignated & Allocated	295,000	40,000	0	0	0	0	0	335,000
RCA Fund Earnings	121,000	2,000	0	0	2,000	0	0	125,000
Lilly Interest	20,000	0	0	0	0	0	0	20,000
Mission Is One	317,000	0	0	0	0	0	(317,000)	0
Fees Billed	7,500	0	0	0	0	0	0	7,500
Sales of Goods & Services	0	0	0	370,000	0	912,000	0	1,282,000
Grants from Other Budget Areas	382,134	90,000	0	24,000	0	35,000	0	531,134
Transfer from Designated Funds	240,000	36,160	0	0	0	0	0	276,160
Other Income	493,800	3,000	0	0	0	0	0	496,800
Basic Service Cost Assigned	591,874	0	0	0	26,000	0	0	617,874
Total Revenue	15,460,584	581,178	600,000	394,000	982,609	947,000	(917,000)	18,048,371
EXPENSES:								
Staff Costs	5,303,146	412,081	0	126,000	339,400	547,948	0	6,728,575
Office Costs	829,834	55,097	0	49,686	33,104	62,910	0	1,030,631
Staff Travel	509,350	45,000	0	0	21,000	5,000	0	580,350
Program Costs (7XXX)	8,086,533	0	0	200,000	589,105	331,142	0	9,206,780
Grants to Other Budget Areas	156,000	23,000	600,000	0	0	0	(600,000)	179,000
Program Costs (8XXX)	391,071	46,000	0	500	0	0	0	437,571
Mission Is One	317,000	0	0	0	0	0	(317,000)	0
Total Expenses	15,592,934	581,178	600,000	376,186	982,609	947,000	(917,000)	18,162,907
Net Revenue/(Expense)*	(132,350)	0	0	17,814	0	0	0	(114,536)

*(Amount) represents funds in reserves to be used in 2009 fiscal year

2010 PROPOSED GENERAL SYNOD ASSESSMENT

The General Synod Council budget is based on a fiscal year ending September 30th, whereas the assessment budget approved by General Synod is on a calendar year basis. Therefore, in FY 2010, GSC will receive assessments based on the 2009 rate for the first quarter of the year (10/1/09 – 12/31/09) and assessments based on the 2010 rate for the last three quarters of the year (1/1/10 – 9/30/10).

Assessment Summary

Confessing Members as of 12/31/07 (used to calculate 2010 budget) **166,043**
Confessing Members as of 12/31/06 (used to calculate 2009 budget) **166,921**

	Total	Per-Member
2010 GSC Assessment	\$5,557,459	\$33.47
2009 GSC Assessment	\$5,586,510	\$33.47
Change	-\$29,051	\$ 0.00
Percent Change	-0.06%	0.00%
2010 BOBS and Theological Education Assessment	\$1,031,127	\$ 6.21
2009 BOBS and Theological Education Assessment	\$1,037,226	\$ 6.21
Change	-\$6,099	\$ 0.00
Percent Change	-0.06%	0.00%
2010 Total General Synod Assessment	\$6,588,586	\$39.68
2009 Total General Synod Assessment	\$6,623,736	\$39.68
Change	-\$35,150	\$ 0.00
Percent Change	-0.06%	0.00%

Explanation of Assessment Allocations

The dollar and percent change in the allocation of assessments to the general secretary is a result of the reduction in the amount of fundraising dollars available to this function. Budgeted expenses for the general secretary's programs are down 2.6 percent for 2010. Non-assessment revenues are projected to decrease 49.5 percent. As a result, even though overall assessment revenues show no increase for 2010, the portion allocated to the Office of the General Secretary shows a material increase.

R-10

To approve the General Synod Council 2010 assessment of \$33.47 per confessing member.

A continuation of this special assessment in 2010 will enable the GSC to establish a program at a scale and scope that is financially sustainable later in 2009 with funds from the current assessment and provide funding to continue the program into 2011. Staff and the GSC will continue efforts to bring the program fully into the regular budgeting process during this time.

R-11

To approve a special 2010 assessment for disability ministry in the amount of \$0.23 per confessing member.

REFORMED CHURCH IN AMERICA
PROPOSED 2010 GSC ASSESSMENT
FISCAL YEAR BASIS

Budget Area	Assessment Amount		Percent of Total	
	2009	2010	2009	2010
Leadership/Revitalization	569,132	550,000	10.1%	9.8%
Communications	954,609	954,006	17.0%	17.0%
Church Mult./Discipleship	524,119	552,324	9.3%	9.8%
Office of General Secretary	313,626	482,348	5.6%	8.6%
Operations & Support	2,012,544	1,884,006	35.9%	33.6%
Finance	424,441	401,836	7.6%	7.2%
Information Technologies	436,261	455,725	7.8%	8.1%
GSC Development	378,018	332,505	6.7%	5.9%
Total	5,612,750	5,612,750	100.0%	100.0%

Function	Assessment Amount		Percent of Total	
	2009	2010	2009	2010
Our Call				
Leadership/Revitalization	361,464	355,725	6.4%	6.3%
Communications	534,605	558,500	9.5%	10.0%
Church Mult./Discipleship	162,827	171,589	2.9%	3.1%
Total Our Call	1,058,896	1,085,814	18.9%	19.3%
RCA Communication Methods	420,004	395,506	7.5%	7.0%
Governance Structure				
Commissions	130,415	83,500	2.3%	1.5%
General Synod	549,500	483,000	9.8%	8.6%
General Synod Council	96,400	85,400	1.7%	1.5%
General Synod Operations	982,538	978,127	17.5%	17.4%
General Secretary	102,828	246,265	1.8%	4.4%
Ecumenical	187,798	177,983	3.3%	3.2%
Racial-Ethnic Councils	677,960	681,510	12.1%	12.1%
Total Governance	2,727,439	2,735,785	48.6%	48.7%
Finance Services	424,441	401,836	7.6%	7.2%
Information Technologies	436,261	455,725	7.8%	8.1%
Personnel	151,191	152,979	2.7%	2.7%
Planning & Development	394,518	385,105	7.0%	6.9%
Total	5,612,750	5,612,750	100.0%	100.0%

REFORMED CHURCH IN AMERICA
PROPOSED 2010 GSC ASSESSMENT
FISCAL YEAR BASIS

Budget Area	Assessment Amount		Percent Change
	2009	2010	2010 vs 2009
Leadership/Revitalization	569,132	550,000	-3.4%
Communications	954,609	954,006	-0.1%
Church Mult/Discipleship	524,119	552,324	5.4%
Office of General Secretary	313,626	482,348	53.8%
Operations & Support	2,012,544	1,884,006	-6.4%
Finance	424,441	401,836	-5.3%
Information Technologies	436,261	455,725	4.5%
GSC Development	378,018	332,505	-12.0%
Total	5,612,750	5,612,750	0.0%

Function	Assessment Amount		Percent Change
	2009	2010	2010 vs 2009
Our Call			
Leadership/Revitalization	361,464	355,725	-1.6%
Communications	534,605	558,500	4.5%
Church Mult./Discipleship	162,827	171,589	5.4%
Total Our Call	1,058,896	1,085,814	2.5%
RCA Communication Methods	420,004	395,506	-5.8%
Governance Structure			
Commissions	130,415	83,500	-36.0%
General Synod	549,500	483,000	-12.1%
General Synod Council	96,400	85,400	-11.4%
General Synod Operations	982,538	978,127	-0.4%
General Secretary	102,828	246,265	139.5%
Ecumenical	187,798	177,983	-5.2%
Racial-Ethnic Councils	677,960	681,510	0.5%
Total Governance	2,727,439.25	2,735,785.25	0.3%
Finance Services	424,441	401,836	-5.3%
Information Technologies	436,261	455,725	4.5%
Personnel	151,191	152,979	1.2%
Planning & Development	394,518	385,105	-2.4%
Total	5,612,750	5,612,750	0.0%

2010 General Synod Assessment for the BOBS Assistance Program

At least as far back as 1971, the Board of Benefits Services has been the recipient of a General Synod assessment that provides funding to help support retired participants, spouses, and widows who have not received adequate retirement benefits and who have demonstrated financial need. For FY 2009, the \$1.50 per member assessment totaled \$249,000 toward the assistance grant budget totaling \$545,145.

Typically, additional funds are transferred from the General Fund to the Assistance Fund to make up any shortfall that may occur after inclusion of donations and investment income. It is expected that approximately \$250,000 will need to be transferred from the General Fund in FY 2010.

Therefore, for 2010 the Board of Benefits Services recommends the continuation of the \$1.50 assessment to go to the assistance of pastors who have not received adequate retirement benefits and have demonstrated financial need.

R-12

To approve the \$1.50 per member assessment for the Board of Benefits Services to provide sufficient assistance funding for retired pastors who have a demonstrated need in 2010.

2010 General Synod Assessment for Theological Education

Until about 1960, the RCA provided theological education “tuition free” for its ministerial candidates as an expression of its deep and abiding commitment to raising up new generations of pastoral leaders. During the 1960s and 1970s, there was a slow but steady growth of tuition that remained modest in comparison to the tuition charged at colleges or graduate schools. In the 1980s, an assessment partially replaced the substantial subsidies the denomination had historically provided the seminaries, and the tuition charged by seminaries became comparable to that of many other graduate institutions, causing a financial burden for a number of our candidates.

In 1997, the theological assessment was set at 13.4 percent of the General Synod Council assessment plus the Board of Benefits Services assessment. Since 1997, the assessment for theological education has risen at the same rate as the denominational assessment and has been divided equally between Western Theological Seminary, New Brunswick Theological Seminary, and the Ministerial Formation Certification Agency.

The assessment for theological education clearly helps form and deploy new generations of pastoral leaders, especially in this time in which we are endeavoring to plant many new congregations as well as renew our present churches. The proposed assessment for 2010, unchanged from 2009, is \$4.71 per member.

R-13

To approve the \$4.71 per member assessment for theological education in 2010.

The total General Synod assessment per confessing member for 2010 is \$ ____.

REPORT OF THE GENERAL SYNOD COUNCIL ON DEVELOPMENT

The purpose of the GSC's development office is to connect people and their resources to the kingdom of God through the Reformed Church in America. Its focus is to provide opportunities for people to become involved in the following three programs: 1) RCA Global Mission, which has connections with over forty countries, 2) Our Call, which enables new congregations to be started, provides resources for existing congregations to grow, and enables children's, youth, and discipleship issues to be explored, and 3) the RCA Church Growth Fund, which has been in existence since 1861 and enables RCA churches to borrow money to build new or renovate existing buildings to carry out ministry to their communities. In the past ten years it has also given over \$2 million in grants for new congregations.

The Van Bunschooten Bequest

The RCA continues to recognize those who respond through membership in a giving society known as the Van Bunschooten Society.

The summary for use of the Van Bunschooten Bequest is as follows:

At a meeting of the General Synod in New York City on June 9, 1814, Dominie Elias Van Bunschooten, one of the advisory members, walked up the aisle and laid down on the table ten bonds amounting to \$13,800 and \$800 in cash and asked synod to accept the gift for the education of pious youth for ministry.

On January 10, 1815, in his seventy-seventh year, Dominie Van Bunschooten went home to his reward and was buried in the church yard of First Reformed Church in New Brunswick, New Jersey. In his last will and testament he added more than \$3,000 to his former donation, making a total of more than \$17,000—a princely sum for those days.

Dominie Van Bunschooten thus had the honor of making the first substantial contribution for assisting young students of theology. His example has been followed from time to time by others, thus realizing his desire as expressed in the bequest "that he might be a humble pattern for others to copy after."

It would be impossible to catalogue all the results that have flowed from these donations. For more than a century they have made possible the education of candidates for the ministry, for the work both at home and abroad. All honor to him and the other liberal donors who have followed his example (*MGS 2004*, pp. 187-188).

In honor of Dominie Elias Van Bunschooten, the Van Bunschooten Society was formed in the Reformed Church in America to honor those who have included the Reformed Church in America in their wills.

REPORT OF THE GENERAL SYNOD COUNCIL ON THE RCA ARCHIVES

The RCA Archives exists to serve as the memory of the church. The corporate memory of what we have done and who we have been constitutes our heritage as we seek to serve our Lord faithfully in mission throughout the world. The RCA Archives preserves records from congregations, classes, regional synods, the General Synod, and staff offices in order to document how we have followed the call to mission since a strong future is built upon a solid understanding of the past. The primary goal of the Archives in this process is to offer stability and relevance to the long term mission of the church.

The archivist has to make decisions about what should be kept and what may be disposed without serious consequence so a faithful record exists of who we are and what we have been about. In order to see where we can go, we must first understand where we have been. Researchers, synod committees and agencies, denominational staff offices, and others who seek to understand the rich heritage of the RCA as it grows into the future actively make use of this record. This past year, the archivist answered more than 175 queries for information about the RCA, research questions, and assistance with records management issues, including more than thirty individuals who visited the archives to undertake research.

Report of the African American Council

The African American Council (AAC) will celebrate forty years of ministry and work within the Reformed Church in America this year. Since its beginning in 1969 the council has been a voice for people of the African Diaspora within and without the denomination. It has challenged the RCA to reach out and be inclusive of blacks; and the council has provided leadership in the birth of other racial/ethnic councils, commissions, and task forces that continue to remind the denomination of its obligation to “make disciples of all nations.”

Due to the biblical and cultural significance of the time period of forty years, the AAC will have a “Forty Years” celebration at its Annual Caucus gathering, which will be held October 9-11, 2009, at the New York LaGuardia Airport Marriott Hotel. The theme for this event will be “Forty Years and Forward: Remembering, Reflecting, and Resourcing.” The council invites the rest of the denomination to join them in this celebration of a significant and unique ministry in the life of the RCA.

2008 Meetings and Events

The executive committee met continually throughout 2008 to do and assess the work and ministry of the council.

During the summer, council members gathered for a productive and successful retreat to discuss the future ministry and function of the council.

The Annual Caucus gathering took place in New York, with a record turnout. The theme was “Racism: What’s the Christian Solution?” The B. Moses James Colloquium, named for one the founders of the RCA’s African-American Council, was addressed by Baptist minister, politician, author, and public advocate DeForest “Buster” Soaries. He brought a stirring and challenging message commending the council for its ministry and urging the members to “still press on in the struggle for civil rights and justice.”

On Friday night of the caucus, participants viewed and reviewed the highly acclaimed MSNBC film *Meeting David Wilson*, a documentary about a young black man, David Wilson, who meets a white descendant of the same name whose forbears once owned his forbears. Members of the audience and the producer of the film engaged in a provocative discussion following the film. (Excerpts from this discussion are posted on the AAC webpage at <http://www.rca.org/Page.aspx?pid=2176>.)

In addition to other speakers, the caucus gathering featured workshops that focused on Our Call. First vice chairperson Jo Anna Lougin conducted a workshop entitled “Our Call/Our Scorecard,” and Daryl Griffin, senior pastor of Oakdale Covenant Church in Chicago, led a related session called “Transitioning Churches.” During the Saturday afternoon business session the four regions of the council reported on their work and ministries. In the evening, members of the caucus came together for the installation of new officers. The newly elected officers are Wilbur Jones, chairperson; Jo Anna Lougin, first vice chairperson; Jimmie Stevenson, second vice chairperson; Morine Thomas, secretary; C. J. Grier, treasurer; and Annie Lee Philips, immediate past chairperson. Caucus members also recognized outstanding leaders such as General Synod vice president James Seawood. This was followed by a Spirit-filled musical celebration. The caucus ended on Sunday with delegates from out of town visiting local AAC churches.

A Call for Vigilance and Action

While the AAC joins in jubilant celebration of praise and thanksgiving to Almighty God for the historic election and installation of Barack Obama as the first black president of the United States of America, it remains cognizant of the fact that this is not an indication that the end of racism is at hand. In fact, the council remains even more vigilant as it begins to hear of the resurgent acts of covert and overt racism that continue to plague this nation. It calls on the RCA to also be all the more proactive in its stance against these forms of evil as it addresses the issues of institutional and internalized racism, especially as they affect people of the African Diaspora. It urges the General Synod to be more proactive in seeing that all commissions, committees, General Synod delegates, and task forces include members of the AAC and its related churches, which have a track record in addressing these sins. Further, it calls on the General Synod Council to be inclusive of the AAC and its members as it seeks to carry out the new “sixth dimension” of Our Call voted on at General Synod 2008.

The AAC is deeply appreciative of the work of Glen C. Missick, director of African American/Black Ministries and staff to the council. Missick has been working tirelessly in helping to find and build up leadership in council-member churches. While he remains focused on Our Call, he also understands the importance of the black church and its ministry from a holistic context. Consequently, his commitment to the work of the council is extremely important as he seeks to help council-member churches grow spiritually and numerically and as prophetic voices, addressing issues of racism, injustice, and other ills that affect the black community.

The council feels a renewed sense of call to the missional and prophetic ministry of its founders and most importantly to Jesus, the Christ, who proclaimed, "The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to bring good news to the poor...to proclaim release to the captives" (Luke 4:18). With this prophetic stance in mind the council voted, at its Caucus 2008 business meeting, to urge the General Synod to approve the Belhar Confession at General Synod 2009 as an added confession of the RCA.

Finally, in the spirit of the newly elected attorney general of the United States of America, Eric Holder, who recently stated that our country has become a "nation of cowards" because it refuses to seriously engage in real conversations about race, the AAC, in light of its forty years of trying to do this, invites the General Synod Council to engage in a frank dialogue with them on this issue, so that the whole church can move toward radical surgery, instead of just putting Band-Aids on a cancer sore. The council requests a response from the General Synod Council, so that an exploratory committee can be set up by both entities to set a date and time for this timely dialogue.

Report of the Council for Pacific and Asian American Ministries

This year the Council for Pacific and Asian American Ministries (CPAAM) will celebrate its thirtieth annual consultation at New Brunswick Theological Seminary on May 8 and 9, 2009. In looking back over thirty years of work in the Reformed Church in America, council members can see that much has been accomplished since the first official meeting on March 14, 1980. CPAAM began with six RCA Asian churches, seven Asian congregations affiliated with the RCA, and two RCA Asian ministers not affiliated with RCA congregations. CPAAM has grown to forty-one organized RCA churches, twenty-one developing ministries, and thirty-eight additional Pacific Asian American RCA ministers not affiliated with congregations. CPAAM continues its work of advocating for the needs, gifts, and concerns of Pacific and Asian Americans within the RCA as well as advising the various governing bodies of the RCA as to how Pacific and Asian Americans can be fully integrated and included in the life of the church, its mission, and its ministry.

After a lengthy search and interview process, we welcomed En Young Kim as the new CPAAM coordinator effective October 1, 2008. She has stepped into the rather large shoes left by her predecessor, Ella Campbell, who retired in January 2008 after holding that position for twenty-one years. Kim is committed to leading CPAAM to fulfill the six areas of Our Call: revitalization, multiplication, discipleship, leadership, mission, and a multiracial future freed from racism. She will be CPAAM's voice and advocate as a General Synod Council staff member and she will assist the CPAAM Executive Committee in implementing the goals and activities of the council.

Discipleship

Chun Fa Mo, CPAAM's new youth representative, reports that discipleship of young people is occurring among four Chinese churches in Chicago that are joining together for praise and worship with teenagers who translate for immigrant parents. "2008 Jesus Youth Retreat" was held August 18 through 21, 2008, at Rosendale Retreat Center in New York. About 250 Korean students worshiped, prayed, and praised God together. Chinese churches in Queens held a prayer seminar in October and have started Bible study groups in the Bronx and Brooklyn. Shin Kwang Church started a new discipleship program called "Two Wings Nurturing System," which grew out of the church's involvement in the Natural Church Development church health process. Most church core members participated in the training session called "To Be a Disciple First and Then Go and Make Disciples."

Leadership

Salome Ryew, CPAAM's women's representative, has started an Asian woman pastors support network called "Living Epistles" to encourage Asian female leadership in the RCA. The Korean pastors met last summer in Las Vegas for a retreat. The New York and New Jersey Korean pastors also met for their sixth annual New Year's gathering to worship, pray, and fellowship.

There is a real concern for raising up new leaders for the next generation of Asian Americans. More young people and women need to be encouraged to enter seminary training and to be mentored by seasoned pastors. There needs to be more training and support for elders and deacons in Pacific and Asian American churches so that the lay leaders can truly understand and embrace the Reformed tradition.

Church Multiplication

Many Korean churches on the West Coast and in the Midwest would like to join the RCA. Ministry to a new generation is increasing with church plants like Lamb of God Ministry in Tappan, New York, which holds healing and prayer services in Korean and English for the second generation. Grace Christian Church, which started in Staten Island, now has an active ministry in Flushing, New York, and that is now starting outreaches in Brooklyn and the Bronx. Andy Nakajima, a Japanese professor at Hope College, reports good progress in reaching Japanese-speaking people in the Grand Rapids and Holland, Michigan, areas. Chris Theodore, with the help of a grant from the Synod of New York, produced a music and praise CD in Tamil to reach the many Asian Indians living in metropolitan New York City.

The new CPAAM coordinator will be meeting with pastors, churches, and classes to enable more Asian churches to join the RCA. Often requirements for membership need to be explained to pastors and congregations in their native tongue, so it is hoped that the RCA will continue its valuable work of translation. It is hoped that in the future translating services will make denomination-wide events, RCA publications, and the RCA website more accessible to different ethnic groups. Also, requirements for newly organized churches need to be contextualized for immigrant churches. For example, pastor salaries may need to be adjusted to fit the economic realities of first generation communities.

Church Revitalization

Ed Yee reported that the Chinese Community Church of Sacramento, California, completed a three-year building project of a new fellowship hall and education center as part of their church revitalization. Other churches, such as the Chinese Congregational church in San Francisco, are going through strategic planning and evaluation. The Japanese American United Church in New York City continues to be stabilized through the efforts of Yugo Suzuki, who is teaching Japanese and bilingual classes as well as encouraging the growth of small groups.

Mission

Korean churches continue to be active in sending short-term missionaries to Kazakhstan, Haiti, and the Dominican Republic. Many church members also went to Illinois to deliver God's message to Native Americans. Hong-Jen Lin, CPAAM's Chinese representative, made presentations about Protestant business ethics at Xiamen University and Huaxia Vocational College in China in January 2009.

Multicultural Future Freed from Racism

Earl James, the RCA's coordinator for multicultural initiatives and social justice, attended CPAAM's 2008 Consultation and introduced himself and his work to the CPAAM community. Two members of the executive committee along with the coordinator attended the Multiracial Strategy Coalition Leadership Retreat in Grand Rapids in February 2009 to learn more about how racism can be eliminated in our churches. General secretary Wesley Granberg-Michaelson was invited to speak at the 2009 Consultation in May and address how CPAAM will be impacted by the new emphasis on a multiracial future freed from racism for the RCA and how CPAAM can help with the growth of ethnic churches and greater evangelism in rapidly growing Asian American communities.

Pastors like Young Ai Na in New York and Peter Bai in California are already pastoring

multicultural churches that reach into the community to serve unchurched people from many different backgrounds.

Many of CPAAM's first generation immigrant churches are now dealing with the transitional issues of the younger generation that is Americanized and no longer speaking the native language. Some 1.5-* and second-generation pastors are starting new church plants in order to better serve young people.

CPAAM is a uniquely diverse group of people who come from many countries in Asia (China, Japan, Korea, Taiwan, India, Thailand, Vietnam, et. al.) and who speak many different languages and dialects. Although many Americans tend to think that all Asians look alike, think alike, and sound alike, in fact they are quite different and their past histories have often involved conflict, war, and rivalry. CPAAM churches have much to share and much to learn in terms of dealing with multiracial issues and breaking down the stereotypical barriers that divide them. In Jesus' name and by the power of the Holy Spirit, they too must forgive what has gone on in the past and press ever onward to the goal of racial equality, unity, and oneness that is called for in the body of Christ.

*"1.5 generation" refers to people who immigrated before or during their early teens. Their lives combine elements of their birth country's and their adopted country's culture and traditions.

Report of the Council for Hispanic Ministries

The Hispanic Council, as Christ's ambassador, is following the RCA in its mission to be the very presence of Jesus Christ in the world. We believe God has called us as part of this great denomination to focus our efforts in the next ten years on starting new congregations. The Hispanic Council has accepted the challenge of starting fifty churches by the year 2013. We have the confidence that we will achieve this goal with the help and support of God and the denomination's Church Multiplication Team. We believe that with a strong emphasis on evangelism, discipleship, and leadership development we can work together to impact the denomination and the world. As we focus our efforts and resources on starting new congregations and revitalizing existing ones, we can empower faithful ministries for the glory of God.

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Evangelism, Church Growth, and Discipleship

The Council for Hispanic Ministries is experiencing a huge influx of Hispanics into its churches. Several ministries are experiencing rapid growth. La Senda Del Amor in Corona, California, continues to experience steady growth. Other ministries in Florida, Arizona, and New Jersey are also experiencing growth. Hispanics currently comprise 12 percent of the nation's population, and the Hispanic population is growing at a faster rate than other ethnic groups. Today Hispanics are the largest ethnic group in the United States. This poses a tremendous challenge for the Reformed Church. The church must realize that close to 89 percent of Hispanics learn to speak Spanish first. Congregations that worship in Spanish are essential if the RCA is to make an impact in evangelism. That is why training and discipling is a priority.

The Hispanic Council is convinced that mission starts with our neighbors, which is why the council emphasizes the preaching of the gospel. That is also why the Hispanic Council has undertaken a mission which is unprecedented—the establishment of the Reformed Church in the Dominican Republic. The Hispanic Council—in cooperation with Global Mission, the Synods of New York and the Mid-Atlantics, the general secretary, the Office the General Synod, and church leaders in the Dominican Republic—is working hard for this to become a reality. Trained coaches and leaders are helping to train pastors and lay leaders to establish a church that will be theologically and structurally sound. Our fellow pastors in the Dominican Republic are developing a vision that will unite our hearts for the purpose of reaching a world engulfed in sin.

The council hopes that this new model can be replicated in other areas where ministries can be started and be a dynamic force in the future.

With growth comes great responsibility and challenges. That is why the Hispanic Council

has made it a priority to train and disciple potential leaders by partnering with Miami International Seminary to give seminary-level courses in Spanish. Courses in Reformed theology, church polity, and history will help guide, train, and develop a greater understanding of the RCA's vision of establishing new churches in the next ten years.

The council hopes leaders who have a clear vision of this goal will be trained and developed. As was stated in last year's report, Western Theological Seminary, the Hispanic Council, and the Ministerial Formation Certification Agency have put together a program to train Hispanic leaders in RCA standards in their own language. This is just the beginning of a long-term program for the benefit of Hispanic leaders. The establishment of courses taught in Spanish is one great step toward having future Hispanic faculty in RCA seminaries who teach using Spanish curricula. To God be the glory!

The council can say that new leaders are emerging from within. Council members are also establishing relationships with other denominations to discuss the possibility of future joint ventures, enhancing council efforts to develop new relationships that will effectively help train potential leaders. Discussions have also included an exchange of theological points of views for study and dialogue.

The training currently taking place will help bring to fruition the Hispanic Council's goal of establishing fifty congregations in the next ten years. Many challenges lie ahead. But there is confidence that with the strides made this past year the council's efforts will not go unrewarded.

PASTORAL CARE COMMITTEE FOR THE REV. DR. NORMAN KANSFIELD

The GSC continues to have a pastoral care team for the Rev. Dr. Norman Kansfield, who continues to be under discipline by action of the 2005 General Synod. The committee has been charged with responsibility to:

- Provide ongoing pastoral care and oversight for the Rev. Dr. Norman Kansfield.
- Ascertain what steps might be taken, and by whom, to resolve the conflicted relationship that exists between the Classis of Orange and the Rev. Dr. Kansfield that has resulted in the Rev. Dr. Kansfield not signing the Declaration for Ministers and therefore not being properly received into the membership of the classis.
- Advise the GSC of what action it should take, or what action(s) the GSC should recommend the General Synod take, to move beyond the present impasse in establishing the ecclesiastical "home" for the Rev. Dr. Kansfield.

The committee members are George Brown, Barbara Fillette, and Tom DeVries. An oral report is provided to the GSC at each meeting. The team invites the General Synod members to keep Dr. Kansfield and his wife, Mary, in its prayers. In 2008 Dr. Kansfield and Mary were involved in a very serious automobile accident. Dr. Kansfield was hospitalized and in rehabilitation for several weeks.

REPORT ON A DISABILITIES MINISTRY INITIATIVE

General Synod 2008 adopted a recommendation to approve a special assessment in the amount of \$0.23 per confessing member for disability ministry. The General Synod adopted the recommendation in response to the GSC's Task Force on Disabilities which had recommended "[t]he establishment of an RCA ministry to, with, and for persons with disabilities and their families led by a new, part-time staff person and the concurrent establishment of a working partnership with the Office of Disability Concerns of the CRC" (*MGS 2008*, p. 100).

Following General Synod 2008 staff took steps to begin implementing the partnership with the Christian Reformed Church in North America (CRC) Office of Disability Concerns including the preparation and initial circulation of a position description. During this implementation phase it became clear to staff, and was reported to the GSC, that there were significant concerns about the financial constraints in the initial proposal and the uncertainty about the RCA's long-term ability to continue funding beyond one year. Staff raised concerns about the feasibility of the implementation plan as drafted, the wisdom of employing an individual without a secure long-range plan, and the effectiveness of an office without sufficient program funds. Staff proposed and GSC supported a delay in implementation until these matters could be resolved.

In early spring of 2009, following consultation with a staff implementation team, Marti Bultman, a member of the former GSC Disability Task Force, was asked to accept a part-time contract to serve as an RCA liaison to the Christian Reformed Church. Bultman agreed to serve; however, she insisted that her work be on a volunteer basis. She began her service on March 1 and will continue until June 2009. Bultman is working with her CRC colleagues to strengthen and make more feasible the original partnership plan so that the disability ministries of the CRC and RCA can work ensure improved support for congregations of both denominations to become hospitable, inclusive, and healthy communities.

As reported to General Synod in 2008 the plan is to enter into a partnership that will enhance the ability of the RCA and CRC to provide:

- *Resources:* Resources for congregations are urgent in this ministry, offering both the guidance and skills often necessary for congregational confidence and action. Resource development and communication will be essential to success. These resources, however, are not and need not be denominationally specific (even if they are now in current forms). For example, most of the content of the CRC Office of Disability Concern newsletter could be used in a newsletter directed to the RCA. It will be relatively simple for the offices, working in partnership, to develop a joint newsletter. Curriculum material can also be widely used and shared, along with the basic knowledge of people and programs.
- *Training:* Research clearly shows that a congregation with one or more persons who have received specific training in disability ministry will significantly increase the probability that this ministry will be both effective and long-term. Here again, cooperation could produce economies of scale. The possibility of joint training for congregational volunteers and advocates for this ministry could benefit the congregations of both denominations.
- *Networking:* There are many agencies and non-profits that provide opportunities and information regarding federal and state guidelines that will be beneficial to both denominations.

The funds currently being raised from the 2009 assessment have not yet been spent. A continuation of the assessment in 2010 will enable the GSC to establish a program at a scale and scope that is financially sustainable later in 2009 and provide secure funding to continue the program into 2011. Staff and the GSC will continue efforts to bring the program fully into the regular budgeting process during this time.

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GENERAL SYNOD COUNCIL'S RESPONSE TO GENERAL SYNOD 2008 REFERRALS

MGS 2008, R-11, pp. 81-82

REPORT OF THE GSC R-11 TASK FORCE

“Our General Synod does not look like our churches.” So noted general secretary Wesley Granberg-Michaelson in his report to General Synod last year.

In RCA congregations there is increased ethnic diversity, as well as both women and young people serving in leadership roles. Yet this is not well reflected in the representation of delegates at General Synod.

In light of the general secretary's proposal, P-1, the Committee of Reference, through the Special Advisory Committee on Inclusivity, developed R-11:

To instruct the moderator of the General Synod Council, in consultation with the general secretary and the president and vice president of General Synod, to appoint a GSC task force to study how to increase the participation of people from racial and ethnic backgrounds other than the majority in the life of General Synod, and to increase the participation of women and those of younger generations, so that these voices may be more fully heard and welcomed in the life of the General Synod; and further;

to instruct the task force to consider the feasibility of expanding the category of corresponding delegate to General Synod as means to accomplish this end, as well as other strategies; and further,

to instruct the task force to report and bring recommendations to the 2009 General Synod, including any possible changes in the Government of the Reformed Church in

America, and the Bylaws and Special Rules of Order of the General Synod (*MGS 2008*, R-11, pp. 81-82).

That task force consisted of Mary Clark, Kirsty DePree, Anna Gonzales, Earl James, Steve Mathonnet-VanderWell, Lizbeth Moss, and Phil Pratt and met in Grand Rapids, Michigan, on December 5 and 6, 2008.

As the general secretary noted last year, broadening the representation at General Synod is vital as we move forward with Our Call. Together we have committed to more than one-third of four hundred new congregations being racial-ethnic congregations different from the majority. Currently, this goal is being exceeded. Moreover, the addition of a sixth element—a multiracial future freed from racism—to Our Call by the 2008 General Synod now needs to be lived out and clearly reflected in the acts of General Synod. The provisional adoption of the Belhar Confession as a fourth confessional standard only adds to the urgency.

The Reformed Church needs to see and hear from these underrepresented people. In other words, no one should think that striving for greater inclusivity and representation is any sort of favor or concession by the majority. Rather it is recognition that for the good of the church and the integrity of the gospel we all need broader representation at General Synod.

The general secretary rightly pointed out that there are some legitimate and sound reasons for the differences between the face of General Synod and the face of our congregations. “A bedrock principle of Reformed polity is that decisions that govern the life of the church are made in assemblies by ministers of Word and sacrament and elders. We wisely entrust those called to these offices with this responsibility” (*MGS 2008*, p. 30). Honoring this wise tradition, while simultaneously stretching and seeking broader representation, requires some creative responses.

Voting Delegates: Of course, all voting delegates at General Synod must be ministers of Word and sacrament or elders. Most delegates are sent to General Synod as representatives of their home classis. However, the inclusion of chaplains and furloughing missionaries as voting delegates is somewhat of an anomaly. The presence of chaplains and missionaries as voting delegates at General Synod expresses the awareness that their voice is needed and that ways can be found within our polity to include these indispensable voices.

Similarly, the representation of racial and ethnic groups, women, and younger people is indispensable. Amending the *Book of Church Order* so that each of three underrepresented groups would have five delegates would be extremely helpful in increasing the diversity at General Synod. Like chaplains and furloughing missionaries and chaplains, these additional delegates would be sent by their home classis, in consultation with the appropriate constituent bodies: the Commission for Women, the Commission on Race and Ethnicity, and the Commission on Christian Education and Discipleship. Persons selected to serve as such delegates would be eligible for this particular delegate role only once in every five General Synods. Moreover, a rotation that would offer every classis the opportunity to send a delegate from these underrepresented groups would insure that all of the classes would receive equal representation.

Corresponding Delegates: These are delegates who have the privilege of the floor at General Synod but do not vote. They do not need to be ministers of Word and sacrament or elders. Among those currently listed as corresponding delegates according to the Bylaws of the General Synod are college students from the RCA colleges, seminary students, RCA members involved in women’s ministries, and two women and one young adult from each regional synod.

As R-11 noted, modifying and expanding corresponding delegates is another way to broaden representation at General Synod. The Commission for Women, the Commission on Race and Ethnicity, and the Commission on Christian Education and Discipleship would each name three corresponding delegates, persons who are not members of their commissions but would be people of racial or ethnic backgrounds other than the majority, women, and young people.

Expanding the number of delegates sent from regional synods to include two women, two young people of high school or college age (a young man and a young woman), and two people from non-majority racial-ethnic backgrounds would be another avenue for wider and more diverse representation at General Synod.

Of course, corresponding delegates do not vote. However, the ability of General Synod to better hear their voice and sample their thoughts could be a wonderful gift to the voting delegates of synod. With today's electronic voting, it would not be difficult to make some sort of arrangement where their opinion could be "polled"—an informal, non-binding vote intended for the information and guidance of the voting delegates as they consider their own upcoming vote. This privilege of polling is an innovation that does not significantly alter our form of government; instead it requires only a change in the Special Rules of General Synod. At any point, the president of synod could request any group or groups from the corresponding delegates to be polled for their views on the issue at hand. Similarly, a voting delegate could also move that all or some of corresponding delegates be polled, and if a majority of synod approved, this polling would occur.

Structural Issues: It is not difficult to wonder how the very structure, atmosphere, length, and location of General Synod also hinders broader representation. These, however, are large, complex issues that seemed beyond the scope of a task force gathered for one meeting. The efforts in recent years to make General Synod a more hospitable and understandable atmosphere are to be commended and further creativity should be encouraged. Might first-time delegates receive background and initiation through webinars? Perhaps a system of linking first-time delegates with mentors would be helpful? Pre-synod gatherings of underrepresented groups—racial-ethnic groups, women, and young people—to explain and familiarize them could possibly make these delegates feel more welcome and empowered. Would a shorter General Synod (Thursday through Sunday?) allow younger and working people more flexibility to attend? Would holding General Synod only every other year produce savings in both finances and staff resources that could allow for a General Synod to be coupled with a intergenerational nurturing event at an attractive destination? Would a General Synod lodged within a family-friendly and festive event help attract younger and working people to serve as delegates to General Synod? These sorts of questions should continue to be discussed among General Synod Council.

R-14

To adopt the following amendments to the *Book of Church Order*, Chapter 1, Part IV, Article 1 and Article 3, Section 7, and renumbering subsequent sections, for recommendation to the classes for approval (additions are underlined, deletions are stricken out):

Article 1. *General Synod Defined*

The General Synod is the highest assembly and judicatory of the Reformed Church in America. It consists of two minister delegates and two elder delegates from each of the classes having four thousand or fewer confessing members on the roll of its churches, and one minister delegate and one elder delegate for each two thousand confessing members, or fraction thereof, from each of the classes having more than four thousand confessing members on the roll of its churches as computed in accordance with the Bylaws of the General Synod; one elder or minister delegate from each of the regional synods; two General Synod professor of theology delegates from each of the theological seminaries of the Reformed Church; a number of furloughing missionary and chaplain delegates; five additional elder or minister delegates who are women, five additional elder or minister delegates who are racial/ethnic minorities, and five additional elder or minister delegates who are thirty years of age or younger; and corresponding delegates provided for in the Bylaws of the General Synod. Voting rights shall be limited to elder delegates and those minister delegates who are actively serving in ministries under the jurisdiction or with the approval of an assembly. The General Synod is a permanent, continuing body which functions between stated sessions through the General Synod Council, commissions, and agencies.

Article 3. *Delegates*

Sec. 7. The five additional delegates who are women, five additional delegates who are racial/ethnic minorities, and five additional delegates who are thirty years of age or younger shall be eligible for appointment as delegates to the General Synod from the classis of membership. A delegate shall be eligible once during each succeeding five year period as a representative of any of these categories. After a

delegate from any of these categories has been appointed by a classis, that classis shall not have a delegate from that same category until such time as all other classes have had the opportunity to appoint a delegate in that category.

Sec. 7 8. The General Synod shall pay travel expenses within Canada and the United States (exclusive of Alaska and Hawaii) to and from the synod's place of meeting.

R-15

To adopt the following amendments to the *Book of Church Order*, Chapter 3, Part I, Article 8, and new Part II, Article 3, Section 5 for approval by the synod and to be affirmed by the 2010 General Synod (additions are underlined, deletions stricken out):

Article 8. *Corresponding Delegates*

Sec. 1. Corresponding delegate privileges

Corresponding delegates fully participate in General Synod but cannot vote, make motions, or be elected to office. As part of any poll, the president may poll the opinion of any or all corresponding delegates on a matter before the assembly.

Sec. 2. General Synod Professors of Theology

A professor of either of the theological seminaries who is present at the session of the General Synod, but who is not a regular delegate from a seminary, shall be recognized as a corresponding delegate.

Sec. 3. Colleges

a. The presidents of the colleges officially related to the Reformed Church in America or other persons designated by the respective boards of trustees in place of the presidents shall be corresponding delegates.

b. Each college shall appoint two students as corresponding delegates.

Sec. 4. Church Herald

The editor of the *Church Herald* shall be a corresponding delegate. The Editorial Council may appoint one of its members, who shall also be a corresponding delegate.

Sec. 5. Seminary Students

The students of each RCA seminary shall appoint two of their members as corresponding delegates.

The Ministerial Formation Certification Agency (MFCA) shall appoint two students not enrolled in an RCA seminary as corresponding delegates.

~~*Sec. 5. Reformed Church Women's Ministries*~~

~~Reformed Church Women's Ministries shall appoint two of its members as corresponding delegates.~~

Sec. 6. General Secretary

The general secretary shall be a corresponding delegate.

Sec. 7. General Synod Council

The members of the General Synod Council shall be corresponding delegates.

Sec. 8. Commissions

Each General Synod commission shall appoint one of its members as a corresponding delegate.

Sec. 9. Seminary Presidents, Moderators, or Members of Boards of Trustees

The presidents of the seminaries and the moderator or another member of the respective boards of trustees for the seminaries and for the Ministerial Formation Certification Agency shall be corresponding delegates.

Sec. 10. Ecumenical Delegates

The Commission on Christian Unity may invite not more than eleven ecumenical delegates, who shall be corresponding delegates.

Sec. 11. Regional Synods

~~a. Two women shall be appointed corresponding delegates by each regional synod; said appointments may be made in consultation with the Commission for Women.~~

~~b. One young adult may be appointed as a corresponding delegate by each regional synod.~~

Regional synods shall appoint two women, one young man and one young woman in high school or college, and two racial/ethnic minority members, totaling six corresponding delegates; said appointments shall be made in consultation with appropriate constituent bodies.

Sec. 12. Board of Benefits Services President or Member

The president of the Board of Benefits Services, or another of its members designated by the Board of Benefits Services, shall be a corresponding delegate.

Sec. 13. Specific Commission Additional Appointments

The Commission for Women shall appoint three delegates who are women and are not members of the commission; the Commission on Race and Ethnicity shall appoint three delegates who are racial/ethnic minority members and are not members of the commission; the Commission on Christian Education and Discipleship shall appoint three delegates who are young adults and are not members of the commission.

Chapter 3, Part II, Article 3, Section 5

Sec. 5. Polling

Prior to a vote on a matter before the General Synod, the president may poll any group represented at the synod. A member of the General Synod shall have the right to make a subsidiary motion for the president to poll any group represented at the synod. A motion to poll takes precedence of the main motion and is not debatable. It must be supported and approved by a majority vote for the poll to occur. The president shall indicate that any such poll is informal and not binding on the vote of the voting delegates.

R-16

To encourage the General Synod Council and the staff to continue to discuss and study possible changes to the atmosphere, length, and location of General Synod that might make for broader representation, and to bring proposals to General Synod as appropriate.

Note: Adoption of R-14 and R-15 will result in an increased assessment of \$.18 (18 cents) per confessing member beginning in 2011 pending approval of the *BCO* changes by two-thirds of the classes on R-14 with a declarative act by the next General Synod, and the declarative act by the next General Synod after second reading for R-15.

Response to *MGS 2007*, R-16, p. 101-102 and *MGS 2008*, R-13, p. 94

CONTINUING THE REFORMED AND MISSIONAL CONVERSATION

The Reformed and Missional Implementation Team continues to carry out its work with joy and diligence, seeking to be faithful to the mandate as given in R-16 from the 2007 General Synod (*MGS 2007*, R-16, pp.101-102):

To...continue the denomination-wide dialogue and data collection with written survey and other means on the missional purpose and work of the Reformed Church in America, its assemblies and congregations; and further,

with all regional synods, all classes, consistories, and other bodies, to facilitate this conversation in order to gather wisdom, share ideas, and encourage experimentation, so that the RCA might discover new means by which to more effectively equip congregations for mission and ministry with measurable outcomes; and further,

to share the results of these actions with the General Synod no later than 2010, in order to determine what future steps, if any, might be undertaken.

DVD and Leader's Guide

The team is pleased with the final product of the Reformed and Missional DVD resource featuring 2008 General Synod speaker Dr. Richard Mouw and a panel of scholars, pastors, and missionaries in the RCA. The purpose of the DVD project is summarized in this way: **To provide a brief and inspiring resource that will (continue to) frame the discussion, guide the conversation, and nurture trust.** The DVD resource consists of six sessions and is designed to be flexible so as to help facilitate a conversation around what it means to be Reformed and missional in a variety of groups and settings. The DVD and accompanying study guide are available both online and as hard copies. Spanish and Korean translations of these resources are also available.

Feedback has been received from several classes throughout the denomination who have used the DVD in a classis gathering. Some feedback from consistories of local congregations who have used the material has also been received. The feedback has been both affirmative and constructive in nature, and it seems that it is serving its purpose to facilitate a lively conversation around the important issues at hand. The team knows of several classes who intend to engage the material in the near future, and both local congregations and classes are urged to utilize this resource and offer feedback in terms of both the value of the material as well as the kinds of conversations, learnings, and insights it spurred. This is one very important avenue by which individuals and congregations can engage the dialogue and “have a voice” in the denomination-wide discernment.

RCA Story Project

The team is also pleased with the continued development of the second part of the Reformed and missional initiative—the “RCA Story Project.” This project is modeled loosely on National Public Radio’s StoryCorps project and the book *Listening Is an Act of Love* (New York: Penguin Books, 2007). The purpose of the RCA Story Project is summarized in this way: **To help the RCA to share and to hear authentic and compelling stories of how God has worked and is working among us in our various missional contexts.**

The stories, hopes, and dreams of members from across the RCA have intentionally been collected. Two to three-minute edited snapshots of these stories can be heard on the RCA website (under the “Reformed and Missional” tab). Ways are being found to continue to urge members of the RCA to record their stories and submit them to the RCA website.

Beyond just collecting these stories to be shared on the website (and utilized in other mediums), the goal of the RCA Story Project is to equip and inspire local congregations to cultivate a culture of “story telling” and share their own stories with each other and the community into which they have been sent to join God in mission. We believe that the RCA Story Project can become a local catalyst for missional revitalization and discipleship at the congregational and classis levels. More information on how to be part of the RCA Story Project as well as a brief instructional guide for interviewers can be found on the RCA website.

Reformed and Missional Survey

Thirdly, the team has worked in partnership with Megan Mullins at the Frost Center in Holland, Michigan, to draft a written survey that was disseminated electronically this past spring via email. This survey has gone out to all RCA ordained pastors currently serving congregations; specialized ministers; retired ministers; elders and deacons currently serving or who have served since 2004; commission members; and task force, committee, or team members. The purpose of this survey, as mandated in R-16, is to **assess how the structures (committees, task forces, and teams) that support the work of the four assemblies (consistories, classes, regional synods, and General Synod) of the RCA can better equip congregations and churches to fulfill their purpose of joining God’s mission in the world. Additionally, we hope the survey adds to the wider, ongoing discussion with the RCA on what it means to be Reformed and missional.** Following General Synod 2009, the team will meet to begin the exciting work of discussing the findings and making recommendations, if necessary, to assist in the completion of the dialogue.

A final report with “future steps,” if any, will be presented at General Synod 2010. The team has been careful to avoid predetermined outcomes and instead trust the Holy Spirit’s guidance through good process. We have found our work to be both overwhelming and invigorating, and it has been a joy to cultivate deeper relationships with each other as team members and learn from each other’s differing perspectives. In the midst of our own diversity, we have named these particular values and practices that have guided us and we offer them as values and practices to guide us all as we engage in this dialogue:

- *Intentionality and commonality.* We need to be talking about the same subjects using the same parameters, while acknowledging that our contexts for ministry and the language we use to describe them might be very different.
- *Cooperation.* We need to live out this process together with our other assemblies and educational institutions. No one group “owns” this; it is “our” work, and through it, we hope that our trust for each other begins to grow as well.
- *Explicit feedback.* We’re not talking just to hear ourselves talk. We want to learn from each other and, from that, together chart a common missional future.
- *The importance of story, both story told and story heard.* There is much innovation and creative ministry happening throughout the church; we all need to hear and celebrate those stories.
- *Faithfulness.* We believe that the Holy Spirit is guiding our work, and must design any process with that expectation.

In closing, the team does believe that the Holy Spirit is guiding our work—our work both as a team and as a denomination. We believe more than ever that this conversation matters. We give God thanks for the fruit that has already come from this dialogue, and we are hopefully expectant of the fruit still to come.

Respectfully Submitted,
The Reformed and Missional Implementation Team:

Eddy Aleman (Synod of the Far West)
Carol Bechtel (Synod of the Great Lakes and president of General Synod)
Carson Culp (Synod of Canada)
Dan Eisnor (Synod of Mid-America)
Jan Hoffman (Synod of Albany)
Brian Keepers (Synod of the Great Lakes and team moderator)
Denise Kingdom Grier (Synod of the Great Lakes)
Marianne Lin (Synod of New York)
Gregg Mast (Synod of the Mid-Atlantic)
Curry Pikkaart (Synod of the Great Lakes)
Bob Rook (Synod of the Heartland)
Dennis TeBeest (Synod of the Mid-Atlantic)

REPORT ON THE FRESH WIND LETTER

To instruct the General Synod Council to send the Fresh Wind Letter to every consistory and assembly in the RCA, including the steering committees of congregations not yet organized, asking them to read the letter aloud in their congregations and assemblies and to be open to what the Spirit says to them through it; and further,

that the General Synod Council, in consultation with the general secretary, create a task force charged with the responsibility to propose ways for the Reformed Church in America to better select, equip, empower, encourage, and nurture growth in leaders throughout the RCA, with an update brought to the General Synod in 2009 (*MGS 2008*, R-16, p. 109).

The Fresh Wind Letter was sent to every congregation in the RCA, with an invitation to join a church-wide conversation about the vibrant future that might unfold when RCA elders, deacons, lay people, and pastors all work together as equal partners in ministry following Christ in mission. The mailing also included two litanies to introduce the Fresh Wind Letter in a Sunday morning worship service. Consistories were encouraged to schedule a time to discuss the Fresh Wind Letter and respond to the following questions:

- Based on your study of and reflection on the Fresh Wind Letter, what do the leaders of your congregation want to communicate to the members of the task force?
- What does it mean for each of us to look at the world with Christ's eyes?
- How do we see the Holy Spirit leading us to join him in mission?

Among the several responses received was this one:

I wanted to share with you the outcome of our using the Fresh Wind Letter as part of our congregational meeting on Sunday. First let me say that in 22 years of leading congregational meetings this was by far the most inspirational, energizing, and empowering one. The letter was distributed to the congregation two weeks prior to our meeting. The congregation clearly had read the letter. One response to the letter was that it has opened our eyes to what God is doing in our midst and has helped us feel the prompting of the spirit of God to come along side of God's work. In other words it encouraged us to look within and out with new eyes. At one point during the meeting as we met in small groups, the volume in the room was rising and all I could hear was 'babble' (it was during the Bible study piece) at the conclusion each small group had come up with leadership traits. I shared with them that it sounded and felt like Pentecost with all the Spirit of God coming upon us.

Another piece that surfaced was how important our prayer life together and separate will be to our working along side of God. We shared the need to use intercessory prayer for more than just the needs of specific people in need but also for our ministry, community, and how God will work with us and through us to accomplish much. (*Pastor Nancy Ryan, Fort Plain, New York*)

The task force met February 27 through March 1, 2009, at the Prince Conference Center in Grand Rapids, Michigan. Task force members included:

Mary Bechler, West Sioux Classis
Janet Benitez, Passaic Valley Classis
Steve DeYoung, Holland Classis
Cindy Heinen, Wisconsin Classis
Brad Lewis, Albany Classis
Curt Patterson, Central Iowa Classis
Bart Strong, Ontario Classis
Cora Taitt, New York Classis
Don Werkhoven, Central California Classis

Ellen Ratmeyer, coordinator of consistory training and Ministry Services, provided leadership for the task force. Kenneth Eriks, director of Congregational Mission, and Kirsty DePree, coordinator of discipleship, also assisted.

In reflecting on the responses received from congregations throughout the RCA, the task force listened to how the Spirit is calling forth the gifts of people in our congregations in

new and fresh ways. On Saturday, February 28, task force members participated in the Equipping God's People for Ministry training event sponsored by the Synod of the Great Lakes. With a focus on the Fresh Wind Letter, this event provided a firsthand look at ways church leaders are being equipped for ministry. Following Sunday morning worship at Ada Reformed Church and a meeting with pastor Julie VanderVeen Van Til and leaders from that church, the task force meeting concluded.

The task force will continue its work in the coming year and anticipates presenting a final report to the 2010 General Synod.

MGS 2008, R-28, p. 125

To direct the president of the General Synod to appoint a task force to review the constitutional inquiry questions (BCO 1.II.12.7.1) for their contemporary theological and ecclesiological relevance, practical usefulness, and missional focus, for report to the General Synod of 2010.

The president appointed a task force in the fall of 2008. Budget constraints (no additional funding was authorized for this team to meet) and limitations on staff time prevented the task force from meeting prior to the 2009 General Synod. The work will begin in the fall and a report will be ready for the next General Synod meeting.

MGS 2008, R-31 and 32, p. 127-128

To direct the General Synod Council to report its overall communication policy and strategy, together with the rationale and funding assumptions undergirding that policy and strategy, to the 2009 General Synod.

These reports can be found behind the tab titled "Communication" in this workbook.

MGS 2008, R-35, p. 130

To instruct the General Synod Council to appoint a study committee to work with the Houses of Prayer Equipping (HOPE) team to develop a proposal to be presented to General Synod 2009 that will ensure the continuation and funding for the team itself; and further, to explore the need for, and if appropriate propose a job description and funding for, a denominational minister for prayer.

The team appointed by the GSC concluded that given the current economic environment, cut backs, and hiring freeze, now is not the time to move ahead with R-35. That is not to say the issues raised in R-35 are not important. Continued funding for the HOPE team and assessment of the need for a denominational minister for prayer must stay on our agenda as we continue our emphasis on prayer and pray for more advantageous economic times. The Houses of Prayer Equipping (HOPE) team continues to offer effective ministry and support to the church (evidenced in part by their presence and leadership at this meeting of General Synod) through volunteer and part-time contracted leaders and staff coordination.

MGS 2008, R-37, p. 130

To encourage the General Synod Council to continue to find ways to explore alternative strategies for funding the church's work.

The General Synod Council discussed this topic at the October meeting by reviewing historic income trends from assessments, contributions, interest income, and outside sales, including an analysis of inflation adjustments. The discussion that followed included answering questions in small groups about the opportunities and threats around the two main sources of revenue, contributions and assessments, as well as opportunities to increase contribution revenue. As a result of the ideas generated through answering these questions, the GSC instructed the general secretary to have staff further the process of finding ways to explore alternative strategies for funding the church's work. Specific areas of discussion focused on the use of communication about financial needs and uses of the funds, the relationship between assessments and new church starts, and alternative calculation methods.

In light of the economic crisis between the time of the October GSC meeting and the writing of this report, the focus of staff has been on the immediate budget concerns for 2009 and preparing the budget for 2010. Both the GSC and the staff recognize the incredible value that the Reformed Church in America has with the assessment system because it is not only a source of income that allows the denomination to do the work we are called to do but, more importantly, because it aligns with our common under-

standing and acceptance of covenantal relationships as together we carry out the work of God's church in the world.

Staff will continue to move this topic forward through a review of the prior assessment studies and will address the specific ideas generated from the October GSC meeting to a future GSC meeting.

MGS 2008, R-44, p. 219

To commend the study guide "For You Were Once a Stranger: Immigration in the U.S. through the Lens of Faith," produced by Interfaith Worker Justice; and further, to instruct the General Synod Council to make it available on the RCA website.

*The study guide referred to has been made available on the RCA's website:
www.rca.org/Page.aspx?pid=4796.*

MGS 2008, R-45, p. 222

To direct the General Synod Council to collect data about RCA congregations that have church-based non-profit organizations, and to distribute that data through the RCA website.

In the summer of 2008 an online survey was conducted that included questions related to R-45. The survey results were compiled in a guide entitled "Church-Based Community Outreach Resource Guide," which is available on the RCA website at www.rca.org/Page.aspx?pid=1542.

MGS 2008, R-47, p. 223

To request that the General Synod Council assist congregations to form affinity groups across the RCA to talk together about starting non-profit organizations that will serve others.

Please see the above response to R-45, which represents the beginning steps regarding the formation of affinity groups. More work will follow.

MGS 2008, R-48, p. 225

To direct the General Synod Council 1) to make the paper "Pornography and the Internet" and the 1972, 1978, and 1987 reports on pornography readily available on the RCA website, and 2) to create a summary position statement; and further, to have a denominational pornography awareness day to alert RCA members about how pervasive this evil is in society and churches and how rapidly addiction can occur.

To read these papers and find a resource list go to www.rca.org/Page.aspx?pid=3843.

MGS 2008, R-49, p. 226

To direct the General Synod Council to advise RCA consistories on how to monitor online activities on computers within their churches.

This information was provided to all consistories through the RCA's leadership mailing in January 2009. To access this information on filtering Internet content go to <http://images.rca.org/docs/resources/0109-R49.pdf>.

MGS 2008, R-50, p. 227

To direct the General Synod Council to make the resource reference sites on human trafficking available on the RCA Social Witness website as well as to disseminate the information via the monthly mailing; and further, to encourage congregations to use the Hands That Heal curriculum to inform and inspire churches and individuals to engage in the battle against the injustice of human trafficking and to help equip them to provide transformational care to survivors.

This information was provided to congregations in 2008. Please see the following website for an extensive list of human trafficking resources as well as encouragement to use the curriculum entitled "Hands that Heal": www.rca.org/Page.aspx?pid=4812. Also, please see the following RCA website location for an article entitled "Have You Really Thought about Human Trafficking?": www.rca.org/Page.aspx?pid=5287.

MGS 2008, R-52, p. 229

To direct the General Synod Council to gather, share, develop, and distribute materials on the situations faced by Middle Eastern Christians to RCA agencies and congregations.

This information was provided to congregations in 2008. To access the information on this subject go to www.rca.org/Page.aspx?pid=5324.

MGS 2008, R-54, p. 230

To instruct the General Synod Council to make the Reformed Church in America a member denomination in the National Religious Campaign Against Torture (NRCAT) and to employ within the RCA the resources and materials that NRCAT provides.

Membership in NRCAT was established in July 2008. RCA churches will be made aware of resource materials via the RCA website and mailings.

MGS 2008, R-55, p. 232

To instruct the General Synod Council to work in collaboration with the Commission on Christian Education and Discipleship to design a denomination-wide Season of Discipleship for review by the Commission on Christian Education and Discipleship by its fall meeting in 2009.

See the report of the GSC on Discipleship in the General Synod Council section of this Workbook and the report of the Commission on Christian Education and Discipleship in the reports of commissions, also in this Workbook.

MGS 2008, R-62, p. 254

To incorporate into General Synod 2009 a celebration of the five hundredth anniversary of John Calvin's birth.

The General Synod celebrates this anniversary on Monday, June 8, 2009.

MGS 2008, R-66, p. 264

To instruct the General Synod Council and to strongly urge regional synods, classes, consistories, and RCA colleges and seminaries to study the "Progress Report on the Decade Freed from Racism" together with the original 1998 paper "Bringing Racism to Light for a Decade Freed from Racism," and to evaluate and, if necessary, revise their policies and practices to ensure that they are consistent with the denomination's goal of becoming a multiracial denomination freed from racism; and further, to instruct the General Synod Council to prepare guidelines to be distributed with the two papers named, and to request and receive responses from the assemblies and institutions named above, for report to the General Synod of 2010.

The Multiracial Strategy Coalition met in its first annual meeting to develop guides and expectations. Twenty-four recommendations resulted and most were placed in a strategic ministry plan for the sixth dimension of Our Call—A Multiracial Future Freed from Racism, which was forwarded to GSC in March 2009. The report, titled "Report of the General Synod Council on the RCA's Multiracial Future Freed from Racism," can be found in this Workbook behind the General Synod Council tab.

MGS 2008, R-67, p. 267

To affirm that, in the spirit and intention of the "Decade Freed from Racism," the RCA's racism-free multicultural future is a critical and strategic component of the working out of Our Call, and further; to direct the General Synod Council, in collaboration with appropriate commissions and agencies of the RCA, to prepare a proposal to integrate, within the framework and language of Our Call, a commitment to the core values of the Belhar Confession: unity, reconciliation, and justice, for report to the 2009 General Synod; and further, to instruct the General Synod Council to suitably reflect that affirmation by adding to the five dimensions of Our Call the following as a sixth: "A Multiracial Future Freed from Racism," and to develop objectives, goals, and strategies for implementation and measuring outcomes.

The General Synod Council and the commissions of the General Synod devoted a major portion of their joint fall 2008 meeting to study and discussion of the Belhar Confession and to how GSC could best integrate within the framework and language of Our Call the core values of the Belhar Confession: unity, reconciliation, and justice. Based on advice from the commissions GSC moved forward in October to draft revised "ends statements." These are the policy statements adopted by GSC that are central to its oversight and evaluation of the fulfillment of the goals established from time to time by the General Synod. The ends statements provide guidance for the formation of measurable goals and strategies by the general secretary and staff that are then monitored by GSC at its fall and spring meetings. GSC heard a follow-up report at its spring 2009

meeting from a small writing team of its own membership and adopted a revised “global ends statement” and a specific end statement focused on “a multiracial future freed from racism.” The two statements are:

E-1 GLOBAL ENDS POLICY

Empowered by the Holy Spirit, grounded in Scripture, and in covenant with the general secretary and staff, the General Synod Council will carry out its responsibilities in order to ensure that the Reformed Church in America will be a faithful and fruitful denomination where congregations are following Christ in mission, equipped and empowered to embrace unity, reconciliation, and justice, which requires all we have and all we are to the glory of God.

Sub-End 1: Congregations and assemblies of the Reformed Church in America will reflect God’s vision of the kingdom: embracing complete unity; reaching all people (every race, tribe, people, and language, every disability and special need, including those living on the margins) with the love and grace of Jesus Christ; actively engaging in love, acceptance, forgiveness, and justice (John 17:23; Revelation 7:9).

E-7 MULTIRACIAL FUTURE POLICY

The RCA will be a fellowship of congregations resisting the sin of racism and committing to a multiracial future engaging all of God’s people in mission and ministry.

In February 2009 the general secretary invited a “Multiracial Strategy Coalition,” a group of RCA leaders representative of the RCA’s current multiracial and multicultural life, to a three-day meeting in Grand Rapids, Michigan. Twenty-four recommendations resulted and most were placed in a strategic ministry plan for the sixth dimension of Our Call—A Multiracial Future Freed from Racism (E-7 above). The report, titled “Report of the General Synod Council on the RCA’s Multiracial Future Freed from Racism,” can be found in this Workbook behind the General Synod Council tab.

GSC also directed staff to revise the promotional material used to communicate and support Our Call to include the new emphasis. The revised promotional material is being used at this meeting of the General Synod.

MGS 2008, R-68, p. 267-268

To instruct the General Synod Council to so revise the annual Consistorial Report to include the following questions: How does your church reflect the racial and cultural context in which you conduct your ministry? What are you doing to build bridges that develop and deepen mutual ministry that is multiracial or multicultural?

Staff has begun implementing these and other changes in the report. The 2009 report will reflect these changes.

MGS 2008, R-69, p. 277

To approve the paper “Spirituality and Hospitality” and make it available to congregations, agencies, and assemblies of the RCA; and further, to direct the General Synod Council to prepare a study guide to accompany the use of “Spirituality and Hospitality” in congregations; and further, to direct the General Synod Council to find ways to communicate, within the RCA, how congregations are growing in their ability to welcome persons with disabilities more fully into their life and witness.

The paper can be found online at www.rca.org/Page.aspx?pid=4994. The study guide will be written by the disabilities staff person once that person is hired.

MGS 2008, R-70, p. 280

To instruct the General Synod Council to develop and implement a process to recruit and train leaders who represent the array of ethnicities and races that make up God’s world, with particular attention to gender inclusion, so that in the future the pool of qualified candidates for denominational staff positions, particularly executive staff levels, better reflects the denomination’s commitment to a multicultural and multiracial future; and further, to instruct the General Synod Council to create a task force (to include representatives from the Commission for Women, the Commission on Race and Ethnicity, and its RCA Women’s Ministries Advisory Team) to develop a plan for greater inclusion of women and people of color at all levels of staffing within the RCA, and to develop leadership training opportunities consistent with this goal; and further, to have such processes ready for report to the 2009 General Synod and for implementation no later than 2010.

The report on the processes and training opportunities outlined above follows:

RECRUITING AND TRAINING LEADERS

Following the instructions of the 2008 General Synod, the R-70 Task Force was appointed by GSC to respond to the recommendation. Task force members were Mark Kellar and So Ae Lee-Heintzelman, representatives from the Commission on Race and Ethnicity; Lynn Japinga, a representative from the Commission for Women; Christina Labbé, a representative from the Women's Ministries Advisory Team; and David Smith, a consultant from The Employers' Association who helped develop a new salary grade system for the RCA. GSC personnel director Sharon Hayes also served the task force as a consultant.

GSC staffing statistics were distributed to the task force members identifying current staffing demographics showing gender count and racial/ethnic count by regional office, gender and ethnic make up of administrative staff by head count and percentage, and gender and ethnic make up of executive staff by head count and percentage.

Brainstorming Session I: Time was designated to brainstorm and share ideas on how the R-70 task assignment could be completed. The following ideas were suggested and discussed:

- Utilize a variety of recruitment resources: website, *Church Herald*, stated clerks within the geographic area of the position.
- Upcoming director of development position—consider locations.
- Network recommendations.
- Utilize racially diverse networks; a current challenge is that people sometimes don't "trust" reform.
- Utilize RCA racial and ethnic councils for recruitment.

At the request of the task force, the director of personnel outlined the current interview process:

- The personnel director distributes a job description, issues a job posting, screens resumes, schedules phone interviews, and completes initial phone interviews to help prioritize candidates. At this initial phase the candidate pool is screened down to four to six potential candidates depending on the size of the initial pool.
- Potential candidates participate in another phone interview with an interview panel of four to five people. (The panel focuses on specific questions related to the position.) At this second phase the candidate pool is screened down to two to three potential candidates.
- Candidates then meet with the interview panel face-to-face for executive positions. Administrative candidates usually meet face-to-face with the personnel director and the supervisor.
- The personnel director makes a final offer.

The director of personnel also indicated that performance evaluations can help identify people with leadership potential, abilities, relational skills, and other qualities that may make them good candidates for another position. The personnel director added that recommendations from current staff with regard to people they have relationships with are also valuable.

Recommendation 1: After much discussion it was agreed that the current hiring process needs to be formalized and communicated. Part of the formulation should include an appropriately diverse interviewing panel. The task force recommended to the general secretary that he communicate clearly to the church the current hiring process used to fill staff positions that support the General Synod Council and the other General Synod agencies, noting that candidate searches are open and that interviewing is conducted by panels appropriate for the position being filled and whose members have completed anti-racism training.

Brainstorming Session II: Time was designated to brainstorm and share ideas regarding leadership. The following ideas were suggested and discussed:

- RCA camps should be used as a resource for identifying and recruiting emerging leaders who may consider ministry or professions that are needed in the employed ministries of the church.
- Someone who has leadership qualities would be proactive, take initiative, and be a good role model.

- Support programs should be provided to help individuals acquire skills they may lack.
- Offer week-long seminars for women.
- Identify role models and mentors.
- Network.
- Current leaders should be promoting relationships that are intentional to help them identify the gifts and passions of others. To be successful at identifying potential future leaders, they need to be comfortable with those who are different.
- Hiring panelists should have anti-racism training.
- Perceptions of current jobs and hiring processes.
- RCA work ethics.

Recommendation 2: In order to proceed and accomplish the task given by the General Synod “throughout the remaining years of Our Call” (2008-2013), the task force recommends to the general secretary that he develop and implement a process to recruit and train leaders who represent the array of ethnicities and races that make up God’s world, with particular attention to gender inclusion, so that in the future the pool of qualified candidates for denomination staff positions, particularly at Classification I and II executive staff levels (Grades 18-23), better reflects the denomination’s commitment to a multicultural and multiracial future; and, further, that the general secretary ensure the following principles are included in the hiring process for all positions.

- Include the RCA’s racial and ethnic councils and other constituency groups including non-RCA racial and ethnic networks, universities, seminaries, community groups, and constituency groups in the recruitment process.
- Dissemination of job description should include the possibility of choice of RCA office location where this is feasible.
- Expand networking to include ethnic and racial networks, universities, seminaries, community groups, and constituency groups.
- Develop a three-phase interviewing process:
 - Personnel director screens resumes and completes phone interviews to help prioritize candidates.
 - Panelist phone interview utilizing specific, focused questions.
 - Following the in-person panelist interview the panelist and supervisor for the prospective position must reach consensus regarding the candidate to hire. The personnel director makes the offer following consultation with the supervisor and cluster director.
- When interviewing at the executive level, a psychological assessment will be given. The results will be “weighed” equally with other qualifiers.
- Qualifiers that the panelists should include are proven ability to perform the job, psychological assessment, other assessments, interview process, internal and external references, and background checks.
- Interviewing panelist should have completed training in racism/diversity.
- All new staff should complete racism/diversity training within six months of hire. (Note: current staff should complete training no later than January 2010.)

Recommendation 3: In order to proceed and accomplish the task given by the General Synod, the task force recommends to general secretary that he:

- Establish that the personnel director be responsible for the cultivation of staff leadership and that the director of congregational mission be responsible for the cultivation of non-staff leadership.
- Consider asking that the coordinator for leader renewal and the coordinator of church health and coaching be responsible for training trainers for external (non-staff) leadership.
- Ensure that the church develop a highly diverse pool of candidates and make sure they continue to grow and develop through programs such as (but not limited to) week-long seminars for women, role models and mentoring, networks of women and minorities, leadership classes.
- Internal leadership candidates should be identified through performance evaluations.
- External leadership candidates should be identified through internal recommendations and a written essay on leadership.

REFERRALS FROM PREVIOUS SYNODS

MGS 2005, R-94, p. 372

To immediately begin an honest and intentional denomination-wide dialogue on homosexuality; and further, to instruct the General Synod Council (GSC) to hire a facilitator to begin work no later than January 2006 and to continue for up to three and a half years in order to give direction to the dialogue; and further, to direct the GSC to provide an annual report to the General Synod, with a final report not later than General Synod 2009.

That report is as follows:

RCA DIALOGUE ON HOMOSEXUALITY

Overview

Dialogue is a form of human interaction which provides opportunities to hear the viewpoints and experiences of others and to understand how they, being different from ourselves, understand issues about which both of us care. Reciprocally, participants also enjoy the opportunity to be heard and understood. Dialogue differs from deliberation. Deliberation invites opposing speeches, and it settles issues by voting; the church's assemblies such as classes or General Synod engage in deliberation.

This is consequently not a position paper; it is a report on a process. The dialogue coordinator and steering committee designed and directed a dialogue program of several sessions for the purposes of listening and encounter within the RCA on the emotionally loaded subject of homosexuality and church life. The sessions brought about increased understanding of the issues involved and increased acceptance of differences among participants. In that sense, the dialogue sessions "worked."

When participants from conflicting views encountered each other in dialogue sessions, they often agreed to accept each other without insisting on changes of viewpoints. Their encounters with each other never resulted in a call that one or the other should leave the church. This suggests that more time and more encouragement for face-to-face dialogue may, in fact, enable us to continue to live together, pursuing the primary agenda of Our Call.

The dialogue also worked in the sense that it revealed the great complexity of RCA members' views on homosexuality. Widely scattered views emerged as the steering committee and coordinator listened to the ways in which RCA members talked about homosexuality and about their lives in the church. These many views were treated as "voices" within the RCA that are speaking, as it were, around a table, concerning homosexuality and church life.

Additionally, the dialogue succeeded in the sense that it equipped participants to engage each other more sensitively and charitably on future issues that may threaten to be divisive. A dialogue experience yields a set of skills that the church can use, perhaps primarily at the local-church level, whenever an emotionally loaded issue must be addressed.

In the matter of homosexuality, no consensus emerged among RCA members as a result of the dialogue program. Therefore no policy recommendations to the General Synod appear in this report. The church's ability to handle its deliberations regarding homosexuality has improved, at least among those who participated in the dialogue's events. This ability was among the purposes which the General Synod Council (GSC) specified when it authorized the program in 2005.¹

People, Their Cultures, and Their Voices

The dialogue was always, and ultimately will be, about people. The individuals, families, and congregations who constitute—and who will in the future constitute—the church face the issue of homosexuality in a variety of "up close and personal" ways. It will be helpful if, in considering this report, the reader will keep human faces in view, and not see this as an issue only in the abstract—as something clinical or institutional rather than something personal.

The reader is also reminded that the RCA finds itself in a hyper-sexualized society which fosters numerous exaggerations and distortions with regard to human sexuality. The church is called to witness to—and sometimes against—the hypersexualization and the twistedness of society's portrayals of sexuality. If the church of Jesus Christ treats sexual behavior as the *centerpiece* of its belief and practice, it will already have failed because it will have let society's exaggerations and distortions set the agenda. As master-devil Screwtape wrote to junior tempter-devil Wormwood, "The game is to have them all running about with fire extinguishers whenever there is a flood, and all crowding to that side of the boat which is already nearly gunwale under" (C.S. Lewis, *The Screwtape Letters*, Letter XXV). The RCA must address the issue of homosexuality carefully and well, but it must not make sexuality its consuming interest.

When the dialogue proposal was crafted, the church had just experienced a divisive trial at the 2005 General Synod. The trial and associated activities left the impression in many minds that two opposing, adversarial positions regarding homosexuality existed in the RCA and that most members could basically locate themselves at one of those two positions or on a line drawn directly between them.

That impression has proven to be an oversimplification, noted at the steering committee's initial meeting. Recognizing that the dialogue should acknowledge and include the diversity of voices in the church, the coordinator and members of the committee engaged in an intentional, year-long process of listening to the church—attending and participating in a variety of RCA events, raising the subject of homosexuality, and pooling their observations. The committee also listened in a more formal, structured fashion, designing and distributing a questionnaire on the issue to RCA members.²

Widely scattered views characterize RCA members' beliefs about homosexuality. In the secular media, and often in the church, it is often presumed that people's beliefs fall into two opposing camps. The committee's research found otherwise. It would be unfair to many RCA members to represent their positions as lying along a line that is drawn, for example, between "open and affirming" on the one hand and "hate the sin but love the sinner" on the other.

Inherent in the GSC's action was the intent that the Reformed Church in America continue vigorously to pursue Our Call, including the missional dimension of Our Call.³ This missional dimension makes it clear that the life of the RCA is not only about ministry to and with those who are currently part of the church. It is also about those who are *not yet* part of the church, but to whom Christ leads us to reach out.⁴

These "listening" activities, combined with an awareness of Our Call, resulted in a dozen, one-page characterizations of RCA "voices" with respect to homosexuality. We are a diverse church, expecting to become more diverse, with a variety of voices on the subject of homosexuality. Some of us use different vocabularies from others because it's not the same kind of issue for everyone.

Process: The Four-Session Design

As the coordinator and the steering committee became more familiar with the variety of views in the church and with the nature of dialogue, and as they envisioned implementing this program, a four-session design for dialogue emerged. The four sessions may be summarized as follows.

- I. Entering dialogue
 - a. The nature of dialogue
 - b. Entry points (What draws RCA members to care about this issue?)
- II. Theological understandings
 - a. Scripture
 - b. Tradition (What the church has taught on the subject)
 - c. Natural revelation (Scientific inquiry)
 - d. Personal experience
- III. Recognizing and hearing the "voices" in the church
- IV. Ministry and polity (Living in community as Christians)

Dialogue Facilitation, Locations, and Participants

The dialogue sessions have been facilitated by the coordinator, by members of the steering committee, and by a few associate facilitators who have been trained for the task.⁵ A standard script has assisted the facilitators in the conduct of each session.

As of January 1, 2009, dialogues had been conducted in ten locations.⁶ Attendance has ranged from 20 to 75. Most were classis-wide events, but some were regional. In general, the strategy was to offer the program first in the locations where there was the greatest expressed interest or apparent need. The stated clerks of the various classes and regional synods provided assistance in selecting the locations.

Returns from the questionnaire also guided the coordinator in scheduling dialogue events.

Large numbers of returns came from those geographic areas in which the Reformed Church has maintained educational institutions: New Jersey, southwest Michigan, and central and northwest Iowa. Those locations were among the first to participate in the dialogue, and attendance was strong.

The dialogue was more welcome in some places than in others. The coordinator learned that at least two classes had voted not to participate in the dialogue. Other resistance to the dialogue program took the more passive form of some classes neglecting to respond to the coordinator's correspondence. Some subpopulations of the RCA voiced strong opposition to the conduct of any dialogue on the subject. Additional dialogue events are planned for the winter and spring of 2009. By the time General Synod meets in June 2009, the dialogue will have been available within each of the RCA's eight regional synods. For those classes and regions that were not prepared to engage in the dialogue during the 2006-2009 time frame, the steering committee and coordinator suggest that the materials developed for this program be employed as the need and interest arise.

Evaluations

The GSC specified that the dialogue program include an evaluation of the program's effectiveness. For that purpose, the coordinator and steering committee designed an evaluation form that was completed by most participants at the close of each dialogue session. At every dialogue event, the evaluations were strongly positive, averaging six on a seven-point scale, indicating a very high approval level of the experience and a commendation of the dialogue process regarding this and conceivably other issues.

Recommendations

1. The dialogue coordinator and steering committee recommend that the General Synod postpone further policy deliberations regarding homosexuality and that the materials developed in this program be made available in appropriate form for future use by the church.

Wisdom suggests that it is wise to postpone further *Book of Church Order* proposals on this matter until additional local churches and classes become intentional about some form of dialogue. While some parts of the church were ready, even eager, for a dialogue on homosexuality, other areas were moderately to strongly resistant. The resources developed by the coordinator and the steering committee—all of which will now be available from the Office of the General Synod—can be used by interested parties in the future.

- 1a. The dialogue process is beneficial as a tool for helping participants understand and accept each other while simultaneously differing on emotionally loaded issues.

As noted earlier in the overview section, dialogue and deliberation are two distinctly different processes. The church's assemblies engage in deliberation. Many participants, although invited to a dialogue, arrived with a mentality of deliberation. Thus, the first portion of Session I was consistently directed at introducing the dialogue process and adopting norms for the group's interactions.

The dialogue coordinator directed a dialogue program for the purposes of listening and encounter. The steering committee and coordinator believe that some transformation took place in understanding. Dialogue facilitators also saw strongly held, persistent differences in beliefs. Beyond that, and distressingly, the RCA is a church that has not implemented the pastoral care and ministry recommendations that the General Synod commended in 1979 regarding homosexual persons.

Dialogue equips people to deliberate more sensitively and productively, but dialogue does not yield policy decisions—except in the instance in which a consensus emerges from the dialogue process. In the matter of homosexuality, no consensus emerged in the RCA as it engaged in the dialogue program.

- 1b. The dialogue program found no denominational consensus on the matter of homosexuality and ecclesiastical life.

Certainly, there is no consensus in the church regarding the antecedents of sexual orientation among humans, no consensus about whether same-sex unions can be faithful expressions of covenantal commitment, and no consensus about what ecclesiastical roles are appropriate for those who engage in homosexual practices. (Some participants in dialogue

events would even deny certain civil rights to celibate persons of same-sex orientation, in contravention of the 1978 Commission on Theology paper.⁷

2. The dialogue process regarding homosexuality should continue to be used on a locally initiated basis. It should also be employed regarding issues that may arise in the future, such as stem-cell research, genetic engineering, and others.
3. Future policy deliberations by the General Synod regarding homosexuality should recognize the ethnic diversity of the church today and of the increasingly non-Anglo membership that is likely in the future.

Respectfully submitted by John Stapert, dialogue coordinator, and steering committee members Philip Bakelaar, John “Jack” Buteyn, John Kapteyn, Mark Kellar, Robert Luidens, Tamara Schollaart, Marye Thomas (served for one year), and Fred Wezeman.

End Notes

- ¹ At its October 2005 meeting the GSC acted to initiate a dialogue process regarding homosexuality, and it articulated a purpose statement for that dialogue. That original purpose statement was slightly revised by the General Synod of 2006. The purposes included addressing this issue and also developing a dialogue process that might serve the church in dealing with future, emotionally loaded issues.
- ² Copies of the survey and other materials created by this program have been archived with the Office of the General Synod.
- ³ Our Call: “Following Christ in mission together, led by the Holy Spirit, and working with all the partners God provides, we believe that God is calling the Reformed Church in America over the next ten years to focus its efforts and resources on starting new congregations and revitalizing existing congregations, thereby empowering fruitful and faithful ministries for the glory of God” (*Minutes of General Synod 2003*, p. 66).
- ⁴ Mission becomes a way of life when we reach out to people with the gospel, meeting needs in our own neighborhoods and cities and through global partnerships. This is what the church has always been about—faithful congregations, inspiring worship, and loving relationships that flourish as the church builds community, nurtures the gifts of all its members, and reaches out in mission both locally and globally (from an explication of Our Call. See the RCA website, www.rca.org, for more.)
- ⁵ The coordinator and the steering committee thank Helen Monsees and Peg Luidens for their generous assistance in guiding this development of the program and in preparing a script for the facilitators.
- ⁶ A continuously updated list of locations, participants, and leadership of the dialogue events has been supplied to the Office of the General Synod.
- ⁷ Civil rights for homosexuals was addressed in 1978 when the Commission on Theology prepared a report on the biblical and theological appraisal of homosexuality in regard to the issue of human and civil rights. That report stated that approval of homosexuality is not a prerequisite to firm support of basic civil rights; denial of such rights is inconsistent with biblical witness and Reformed theology (*MGS 1978*, pp. 229-240). The commission again addressed similar issues in 1994 when it was following General Synod’s resolution of 1990 to prepare a report indicating that homosexuality is contrary to Scripture while still affirming love and sensitivity to homosexuals. That action called for repentance on the part of the church for its poor treatment of homosexuals in the past (*MGS 1994*, pp. 370-378).

MGS 2006, R-40, p. 144

To instruct the General Synod Council to provide an annual report of GSC staff, General Synod officers, and GSC members who have participated in anti-racism workshops, indicating the organization presenting the workshops.

General Synod Council staff employed through 2003 participated in anti-racism training provided by Lutheran Human Relations Association. GSC executive staff, members

of the General Synod commissions, and the GSC participated in the first annual anti-racism training in October 2008. Anti-racism training has been incorporated into the annual fall meeting of commissions, staff, and the GSC for all newly elected and appointed personnel and is open to all participants in the meetings.

MGS 2006, R-41, p. 144

To instruct the General Synod Council to specifically identify the persons or roles/positions that should participate in anti-racism workshops; to encourage minimally 80 percent participation of the identified list by 2010; and to report to the General Synod in 2011.

See the response to R-40 above.

MGS 2006, R-43, p. 144

To instruct the General Synod Council to make available ongoing anti-racism workshops for each regional synod beginning fall 2007.

Earl James, coordinator for multiracial initiatives and social justice, was hired in November 2007. Since then, three training programs have been developed to meet the instruction given to GSC: 1) Breakfast Club—a twelve-month, one-on-one discussion-based program where pairs explore race, faith, and personal life journey, 2) Understanding Racism: Joining the Journey—a close review of history that examines the formation of and resistance to race-based governmental actions, power analysis, and racialization of self- and Christian-images, and 3) Sankofa— an intense four-day bus trip through the deep South to explore past and present places of racial injustice, speak with people, and examine feelings, attitudes, and behaviors.

Since then, the three training programs above have been made available to each regional synod. Breakfast Clubs have been started in two synods; Understanding Racism: Joining the Journey has trained over 125 RCA leaders and members including GSC and commission members, and discussions are underway in two synods to sponsor two or three trainings; twenty-one RCA leaders and members have participated in Sankofa journeys as guests of the Evangelical Covenant Church. In April 2009 the RCA launched its inaugural Sankofa experience with leaders of regional synods, GSC staff, as well as church members participating. Discussions are underway for sponsoring at least eight Sankofa experiences over the next twelve months in three to four synods.

RESOLUTIONS

At its spring 2009 meeting the General Synod Council recognized the departure from staff of four dedicated servants of the church and adopted the following resolutions:

Be it resolved that the General Synod Council of the Reformed Church in America, meeting March 24-26, 2009, in Grand Rapids, Michigan, offers thanks to God for years of competent and faithful service to the ministries of the Reformed Church in America by Mary Clark, who began serving as coordinator of women's ministries for the RCA in April 2004. As coordinator she provided leadership and direction to the denominational commitment to encourage and support RCA women in carrying out ministry in the church and the world. Mary was instrumental in organizing the Triennial gathering of RCA women in 2004 and the RCA Women's Conference in 2007. She also worked creatively and passionately as an advocate for women. Mary organized and promoted Sister Share, a women's ministries initiative that helps fund five projects that assist women and children in need around the world; and,

be it further resolved that the General Synod Council invites its delegates and guests to join in expressing to Mary its gratitude, admiration, affection, and prayers for years of health and joy in continuing service to Christ and his church.

Be it resolved that the General Synod Council of the Reformed Church in America, meeting March 24-26, 2009, in Grand Rapids, Michigan, offers thanks to God for years of competent and faithful service to the ministries of the Reformed Church in America to Irene Delgado, who served on GSC staff for nineteen years. She joined the staff in December 1989 as an administrative assistant for the finance department. In 1999 she was promoted to investment accountant and began recording accounting transactions for investments and endowments, as well as working on the contribution management team. She carried out her responsibilities with dedication, detailed accuracy, deliberateness, and a strong sense of due diligence; and,

be it further resolved that the General Synod Council invites its delegates and guests to join in expressing to Irene its gratitude, admiration, affection, and prayers for years of health and joy in continuing service to Christ and his church.

Be it resolved that the General Synod Council of the Reformed Church in America, meeting March 24-26, 2009, in Grand Rapids, Michigan, offers thanks to God for years of competent and faithful service to the ministries of the Reformed Church in America to Bruce Menning, who joined the RCA's Global Mission program as director in 1996. Since then, he has built on the RCA's rich heritage of sharing the good news throughout the world. New mission areas have opened, and under Bruce's leadership, Global Mission has strengthened its connection to mission partners around the globe. Nearly half of RCA missionaries now work directly with partner organizations, aiding them in their ministries. Until his retirement in March, Bruce crafted new strategies for mission outreach, evaluated programs, raised funds, and interpreted the work of Global Mission to the church; and,

be it further resolved that the General Synod Council invites its delegates and guests to join in expressing to Bruce its gratitude, admiration, affection, and prayers for years of health and joy in continuing service to Christ and his church.

Be it resolved that the General Synod Council of the Reformed Church in America, meeting March 24-26, 2009, in Grand Rapids, Michigan, offers thanks to God for years of competent and faithful service to the ministries of the Reformed Church in America to Dick Welscott, who served the Reformed Church for over twenty years, including many years as director of congregational services and evangelism. He led the denomination's efforts in new church development and congregational revitalization and was instrumental in organizing the 98 by '98 campaign to plant RCA churches in the 1990s. The current success of the RCA church multiplication movement owes much to the foundation of church planting that Dick helped lay. Beginning in September 2007 and until his retirement in March, Dick served as director of the RCA's development office. His leadership helped communicate the denomination's increasing need for funds from individuals and organizations to support the ministries and mission of the Reformed Church in America; and,

be it further resolved that the General Synod Council invites its delegates and guests to join in expressing to Dick its gratitude, admiration, affection, and prayers for years of health and joy in continuing service to Christ and his church.

PRELIMINARY STATISTICAL REPORT

(The Preliminary Statistical Report will be a handout at General Synod.)

Report of the General Synod Task Force on General Synod Professors of Theology

Interim Report on R-86

A task force appointed in early 2008 by the president of General Synod has been attempting a thorough review of the way in which the office of General Synod professor functions in the life of the church, and the manner in which the office is addressed in the *Book of Church Order (BCO)*.¹ The full mandate is as follows:

1. to clarify the processes of accountability, appeal, and pastoral care for General Synod professors of theology currently outlined in the *Book of Church Order*, including any needed revisions to the *Book of Church Order*;
2. to coordinate the development of relevant policies and practices within the seminaries and/or commissions or agencies of the church that do not require changes to the *Book of Church Order*, but that relate to the role of General Synod professors within the seminaries and within the life of the church; and further,
3. to review the nature of the office of General Synod professor;
4. to review the criteria for eligibility to that office;
5. to clarify the responsibility of the office of General Synod professor of theology to the General Synod;
6. to examine means by which the General Synod professors could be established as an ongoing body within the order of the church.

Although the original mandate given to this task force requested a final report in 2009, for a variety of reasons, the task force intends to wait until 2010 for its final report. The task force has already met once by conference call, and three times face-to-face. Although our work is not yet finished, some broad principles are emerging. This report seeks to articulate some of these principles, in the hope of soliciting input, reactions, and advice from a variety of persons within the RCA who may have insights and/or concerns about the “fourth office.”

The task force began its work by seeking to define theologically and ecclesiologically exactly what a General Synod professor is or should be, from the perspective of Reformed theology and polity. Our first consideration focused upon the structural relationship between the seminaries and the General Synod. The task force believes that much of the current *BCO* language is a holdover from a time when the General Synod exercised much more direct oversight over the seminaries of the RCA.

This is reflected, for example, in the way the office is defined as a “full-time associate or full professor at one of the seminaries of the Reformed Church.”² Yet the operation or direct oversight of the seminaries is not explicitly granted to the General Synod by the *BCO*. In fact, since the dissolution of the old Board of Theological Education in 1993, General Synod’s constitutional oversight of the seminaries is restricted to the approval of appointments to their respective boards.³

On the other hand, the *BCO* does explicitly assign to the General Synod the oversight of the standards for the certificate of fitness for ministry, as well as “original authority over all matters pertaining to doctrine and denominational polity as they relate to the theological seminaries of the Reformed Church.”⁴ But if the General Synod no longer has direct oversight over the seminaries, then this new reality must be more fully reflected in the way in which General Synod professors are defined in the *BCO*. This led the task force to consider defining General Synod professors, not in terms of teaching at the seminaries, but rather in terms of the distinctive form of ministry which identifies this office. The task force recognizes, from the existing formulary for the appointment of a General Synod professor, that a General Synod professor is “a teacher of the church at large.”⁵ In addition, the task force notes the centrality of the involvement of General Synod professors in preparing candidates for ministry, and in the awarding of the certificate of fitness for ministry.

As a result, the task force is working with the following provisional definition of General Synod professors, for possible inclusion in the *BCO*:

The office of General Synod professor of theology is to offer the ministry of teaching within the RCA as a whole, and to represent the living tradition of the church in the preparation and certification of candidates for its ministry.

These changes would allow for the appointment of General Synod professors who are not

full-time teachers at one of the seminaries, but who play a major role in teaching the whole church and in preparing candidates for ministry and granting the certificate of fitness. It would also open the possibility of General Synod professors who are not in one of the RCA seminaries, but who exercise major teaching and oversight responsibilities within the Ministerial Formation Certification Agency.

A second major working assumption being developed by the task force focuses not so much on structural considerations (i.e., the relationship between the General Synod and the seminaries), but upon the theological and ecclesiological definition of the office of General Synod professor. The task force has come to the conclusion that, even though General Synod professors are not *ordained* to their office, their ministry does represent an office of the church, in the sense that they represent, in a special and focused way, the teaching ministry of Christ to the whole church.

In one sense, this teaching ministry is part of the ministry of Word and sacrament, and professors of theology are in fact peers and partners with other ministers of Word and sacrament. The professorate is thus not a separate *magisterium* with teaching authority over or apart from the ministry of Word and sacrament. Yet in both scope and focus, there is also a distinct nature to this office. General Synod professors are teachers of the *whole* church, who assist the whole church in its understanding of and obedience to Scripture as interpreted by our Standards. This broader scope is critical and essential to the office as it has been exercised in the RCA. Moreover, General Synod professors are devoted in a special and focused way to the ministry of teaching, and in this sense as well represent a distinct vocation and office in the life of the church.

It is particularly this wide *scope* of the office, as well as the distinctive role played by General Synod professors in preparing candidates for ministry and in recommending the certificate of fitness for ministry, that supplies the central rationale for their distinctive participation in the life of the General Synod. Currently General Synod professors are members of the General Synod. This membership in the General Synod exists for a specific purpose: to ensure that the preparation of candidates for ministry does not reflect a narrow theological or ecclesiological perspective of one region of the church, but rather is an expression of the unity, apostolicity, and catholicity of the whole church. They participate regularly in the life of the General Synod⁶ so that they may use their teaching gifts in the service of the whole church, and also because they are called to be agents of the General Synod in a critical task that can only be done at the General Synod level—preserving the unity, catholicity, and apostolicity of the whole church in its theological reflection and in its preparation and certification of candidates for ministry.

Yet problems have emerged in the ability of the General Synod to exercise appropriate pastoral care and discipline of those General Synod professors who are among its members. The *BCO* requires that the General Synod “shall be responsible for the pastoral care of each enrolled professor and the professor’s immediate family.”⁷ Yet the General Synod has struggled to fulfill this mandate, and currently has no process or structure in place to fulfill it. And pastoral care is not the only problem. In the 2005 Kansfield trial and its aftermath, the difficulties the church has experienced in exercising continuing pastoral care and discipline in this case have shown that the General Synod is ill-equipped to engage in direct oversight of individuals. Because the membership of the General Synod turns over almost completely each year, it is almost impossible to establish the continuity in relationships that exists, for example, at the classis level, where such discipline and pastoral care normally take place in our polity.⁸

Clearly this is one of the major concerns that led to the mandates given to this task force. One approach the task force considered to address these problems consisted of establishing new and ongoing structures to strengthen the ability of the General Synod to fulfill these responsibilities of oversight and discipline. Yet the task force has decided that it intends to pursue a different approach in solving these problems. We have instead decided to reconsider whether General Synod professors should continue to be *members* of the General Synod. As an alternative to membership in the General Synod for General Synod professors, we are considering the following approach:

- General Synod professors will be members of the classis in which they reside.
- General Synod professors will continue to be either regular or corresponding delegates to the General Synod as they have in the past, in order to allow them to continue their ministry of teaching to the whole church, and to keep them in close contact with the synod in their crucial tasks of preparing and certifying candidates for ministry in the RCA.

- General Synod professors will be solely amenable to the General Synod *only in matters of doctrine*, but in every other respect shall be amenable, as are all ministers of Word and sacrament, to the classis in which they hold membership (in this case, the classis of residence).
- In this more focused amenability to the General Synod, the only discipline that the synod will exercise will focus upon the office of professor of theology. Its disciplinary options include admonishment, rebuke, suspension from the office of General Synod professor, or removal from that office. Any other discipline that may be needed will be the responsibility of the classis, which will address the accused not as a General Synod professor but as a minister of Word and sacrament.

Why are we taking this approach? The task force believes that the essential reason General Synod professors have been members of the General Synod in the past has been to preserve the doctrinal unity of the church. Our current practice is (correctly) based on the assumption that the preparation and certification of candidates for ministry should reflect the doctrinal convictions and perspective of the whole church, and not just a particular region. Yet amenability to the synod in matters of doctrine does not inherently require *membership* in the General Synod.

Consequently, the task force believes that a better way forward is to posit a more focused amenability of General Synod professors in matters of doctrine to the General Synod, and to leave the rest of pastoral care and discipline in the hands of the classis, which is better equipped to carry out these tasks in an ongoing way. The General Synod is ill-equipped to exercise a wider range of discipline or pastoral care over its professors, and the attempt to do so may also create conflicts between the synod and the seminary boards. Therefore the task force is moving toward proposing that General Synod professors retain membership and some amenability in their classes of residence, while continuing their involvement with the General Synod, and their amenability to the synod in matters of doctrine.

This approach has the additional benefit of allowing part-time faculty who are teaching in the seminaries or in the Ministerial Formation Coordinating Agency, but who also function as ministers of Word and sacrament under the oversight of a classis, to be considered for nomination as General Synod professors.

Obviously, a host of details must be addressed if such an approach is to be fully articulated in our church order, particularly in clarifying this “division of labor” between the oversight of the General Synod in matters of doctrine, and the more general oversight exercised by the classis for General Synod professors. The task force is continuing to work on a comprehensive set of proposed changes to the *BCO* and related church order documents. The task force hopes to develop its initial draft of these changes by June 2009. It intends to circulate them widely in the church and to solicit input before it prepares a final report, including a set of proposed changes for submission to the 2010 General Synod.

The task force is also addressing the collegiality and corporate identity of General Synod professors. Because of the broad Reformed conviction that the Spirit’s work in guiding the church expresses itself most fully within the church corporately, and not just in individuals, the task force believes that it may be helpful to recognize in our church order a corporate role for General Synod professors within the life of the church. This role should first of all concern oversight of the standards for the certificate of fitness for ministry, and the professors should work together to receive referrals from the General Synod with respect to the standards, and to formulate periodic reports and recommendations to the synod regarding the standards.

Similarly, the professorate may be a useful resource to the General Synod from time to time, not replacing any of our existing commissions, but in some cases, receiving appropriate referrals from the General Synod, or offering reports to the synod on matters which touch upon the specific responsibilities granted to the professorate by the General Synod. The task force is still working on defining the specific channel through which such reports and referrals could be communicated between the professorate and the General Synod.

Finally, the task force is seeking ways to change the option of a *second trial* for General Synod professors⁹ into the option for an *appeal* to the next General Synod. This poses some challenging issues in terms of church order, but the task force believes it can be done, and will better serve the church.

The task force has done further work to begin to translate these principles into a full set of changes to the *BCO*, which involves many detailed considerations. Our work is not yet

complete. However, the task force invites feedback on the broad principles we have enumerated above, including the following:

- Clarifying that General Synod professors fill an office of the church, focused upon teaching the whole church, and preparing and certifying candidates for ministry on behalf of the General Synod.
- Clarifying that doctrinal amenability to the General Synod is necessary for General Synod professors for a theological reason: to preserve the unity, catholicity, and apostolicity of the church's teaching and more specifically of its preparation of candidates for the ministry of Word and sacrament.
- Defining the professorate in terms of serving as a teacher of the church, and in terms of teaching and oversight of candidates for ministry and the certificate of fitness for ministry, rather than in terms of teaching in RCA seminaries.
- Broadening the possible sources for appointment of General Synod professors to allow for part-time professors at the seminaries, as well as teachers under the supervision of the Ministerial Formation Coordinating Agency.
- Amenability of General Synod professors to the General Synod in matters of doctrine, but in all other cases, holding General Synod professors amenable to the classis in which they reside.
- Making provision in our order for the professorate to function as a body, with oversight over the standards for the certificate of fitness for ministry, including the ability to receive referrals from the General Synod and to make reports to the General Synod.
- Changing the option of a second trial for General Synod professors to the option to appeal a judicial case to the next General Synod.

The task force welcomes responses to this interim report. Please submit all comments and feedback to jim.brownson@westernsem.edu. Thanks in advance for helping the task force to do its work.

Endnotes

- ¹ For more details on the mandate of this task force, see R-86 in the *Minutes of General Synod, 2007*, pp. 300-301.
- ² See *BCO* 1.IV.8.3.
- ³ It must also be recognized that the General Synod is the "sole member" of the corporation that legally constitutes each of the seminaries. Yet this relationship between the seminaries and the General Synod is not to be confused with *oversight*, which the General Synod exercises only indirectly through approval of appointments to the seminary boards.
- ⁴ See *BCO*, 1.IV.2.7.
- ⁵ See Formulary 6: "Appointment of a General Synod Professor of Theology."
- ⁶ Each year, two General Synod professors from each seminary currently attend General Synod as regular delegates (1.IV.1), and all General Synod professors who are in attendance at General Synod are recognized as corresponding delegates (3.I.8.1).
- ⁷ See *BCO* 1.IV.8.6.
- ⁸ It is worth noting that many classes have also found it difficult to fulfill the mandate which the *BCO* gives them regarding the pastoral care of their enrolled ministers. (See *BCO* 1.II.12.3.)
- ⁹ See *BCO* 2.I.3.4.b.