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**SYNOD OF MID-AMERICA**  
**Reformed Church in America**  
**NEWSLETTER - - - Volume 11, Number 4 - - - February 22, 2010**  
<http://www.midamericasynd.org>  
<http://msyn.org>

**“Healthy classes and congregations through revitalization and multiplication”**

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**Creating and Weathering the Storm: Hope for Church Leadership – see <http://storm.msyn.org> for more information**

All church leadership is invited to attend **Creating and Weathering the Storm: Hope for Church Leadership**. This equipping event sponsored by the Synod of Mid-America and the Classis of Chicago is open to the entire region. Leadership teams will learn what it means to create a storm – why that is good – and to weather it. Through it all there is hope for leadership! This title seemed appropriate to the planning team as the members talked about the content being planned for leadership groups from congregations within our regional synod.



Jim Herrington and Trisha Taylor will be leading church leadership groups around the topics of:

*Creating continuing change, keeping your cool  
Calm and cool when it all goes crazy*

The sessions will be designed for congregation leadership groups to be better leaders within their congregations. Leaders will be able to take away information and resources to continue the process after the sessions. This can lead to new vision and vitality within churches – and hope for the church leadership!

Jim and Trisha are known to several within our regional synod as they are working extensively and intentionally with five churches in a momentum mobilization revitalization process within those congregations. They will share a healthy taste of this work with all those that participate in the Friday evening and Saturday morning event. One pastor who is involved in this revitalization process said ***“We need to start living as Jesus calls his followers to live. [This] process is helping us do that in new ways that call us to deeper levels of authenticity and integrity – and that lead to healing and new life through Jesus Christ.”*** The event will be most valuable if several leaders from each church can attend – and great if most of the church’s leadership is there. *Creating and Weathering the Storm* is designed for pastors, elders, deacons, staff, and all other key leaders in our congregations.

Here are some of the specifics:

- Invitation is for all church leadership of congregations within the Synod of Mid-America
- Dates: Friday evening, April 30, 2010 and Saturday morning, May 1, 2010
- Location: Christ Community Church, 13400 Bell Road, Lemont, IL 60439
- **Cost: \$10 per person if registered by April 1 - \$15 per person after April 1**
- **Online registration will begin in March**
- **More information at <http://storm.msyn.org>**



**Talk about this within your church’s leadership.** Reserve the dates. Ask your leadership to reserve the dates. Plan to make this a significant part of your leadership training this year. **A handout to give to your leadership is available at <http://storm.msyn.org/StormHandout.pdf>.** This event is co-sponsored by the Classis of Chicago and the Synod of Mid-America and is open to all. The synod’s

annual business session for delegates to the synod will be held on the Friday afternoon of the event. Watch for announcement regarding online registration.

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### **Manitoqua Now Taking Summer Reservations**

Camp Manitoqua is now accepting registrations for summer camp! Kids from preschool through high school can experience summer fun in day camps and overnight camps where they will form new friendships, learn more about Jesus, and have a spectacularly fun experience. Call the Manitoqua office at 815-469-2319 or visit the website [www.manitoqua.org](http://www.manitoqua.org) for more information.



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### **Online Teacher Training**

**Opening Doors to Discipleship** is a series of four courses in the Presbyterian/Reformed tradition to help teachers and leaders equip themselves to be faithful teachers and leaders. The four courses are:

1. Teaching Skills. For new and veteran teachers, includes twelve sessions that explore a variety of topics: the call to teach, faith and human development, learning styles, choosing materials, and more. Teachers and leaders completing this course will be better equipped to fulfill their call to the educational ministry of the church.
2. Bible Background. Provides an overview of Scripture from a Reformed faith perspective. This course can be used with teachers, new members, elders, and deacons. Completing this course allows learners to come away with a better understanding of the Bible and how to introduce its richness and power to others.
3. Presbyterian/Reformed Faith. Allows students to explore the basics of the Christian faith and practice in the Reformed tradition. Those who complete this course will have a foundation of what it means to be Christian and Reformed.
4. Discipleship. (Coming summer 2010)

The **Opening Doors to Discipleship** courses address questions like these:

- How can I tell a story and use activities in such a gripping way that my students long to be disciples of Christ?
- How can I communicate the broad sweep of biblical stories so that learners yearn to enter them?
- How can I speak with passion and enthusiasm about the particular "flavor" of Christianity which we identify as Presbyterian/Reformed?
- How do I grow in my understanding and experience of being a disciple of Christ?

Go to <http://openingdoorstodiscipleship.com> to get more information, to register, and to participate in the courses. You will need to have a denomination number to register. You can contact Randy Kooy ([rkooy@rca.org](mailto:rkooy@rca.org)) to obtain this number.

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### **Lifelong Faith Articles**

Jane Schuyler, RCA coordinator for Children and Worship, recommends as a resource the articles that are found on the Lifelong Faith website. Lifelong Faith says "We are committed to helping congregations develop lifelong faith formation for all ages and generations, increasing the capacity of leaders and communities to nurture faith growth." You can access their website at <http://www.lifelongfaith.com> and then the articles at [Lifelong Faith Articles](#) from the menu. You will need register to access the articles.

Here are some recommendations from Jane:

Some people have said that it is a little dense, but I like "Best Practices in Children's Faith Formation." It's really based on some current research. Along with this, Karen Marie Yust's article, "Being a Child, Becoming Christian" [Faith Formation of Children] is very good (note: Godly Play is the educational model of Children and Worship). Karen Marie's other (brief) article, "Let Those Who Have Ears to Hear, Listen," is distributed widely when we emphasize that "the ability to sit quietly with God and listen for God's guidance is not only within their grasp but something they desire."

Similar to the one for children, "Best Practices in Adolescent Faith Formation" reveals some current research. However, the latest issue of *Lifelong Journal* is all about youth ministry and

based on the most up-to-date research. “Best Practices in Young Adult Faith Formation” helps to describe Gen X while “Cooking, Blogging, and Faith Formation” presents one model.

“Adult Faith Formation at a Crossroads” takes a look at a new paradigm and includes questions for reflection. “Best Practices in Adult Faith Formation” takes a look at research and congregational practice to help churches nurture adult faith and engage and involve adults.

“Intergenerational Learning for the Whole Community” is a great introduction to intergenerational faith formation especially for those who are unfamiliar with cross-generational experiences.

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**Prayer Section – please forward this information to those in your church whose gift is praying.**

**February Issue – Intercessors Unite – Focused Prayer within the Synod of Mid-America**

The February issue of the Synod of Mid-America prayer focus tool, Intercessors Unite, is available on line. It is a tool to help us as a synod focus our prayers on our common concerns.

**This issue requests prayer for Chicago Classis and its congregations; and lists prayer requests received from classes and congregations.** You are asked to click on [Intercessors Unite](#) and pray the prayer agenda listed for the month of February. To find **our regional synod’s prayer tool** follow this link: <http://intunite.msyn.org/IU201002.htm>; there are also links from the synod’s home page and resources page (<http://msyn.org>).

**Prayer Resources**

Resources for prayer leaders can be found on the Resources page of the Synod of Mid-America website: [http://msyn.org/index\\_files/resources.htm](http://msyn.org/index_files/resources.htm).

**H.O.P.E. Prayerline**

The Prayerline issue for February focuses on beginning Lent in prayer. “The time of Lent is quickly approaching, and it brings an opportunity for us to deepen our relationship with God through prayer and intentional closeness with the Savior. This issue offers some prompts on how to deepen the experience of the cross in your life as you live more for Christ.” This month’s issue of the [HOPE \(Houses of Prayer Equipping\) Prayerline](#) newsletter can be found at this link: <http://www.rca.org/Page.aspx?pid=6328>. Here are some articles in this month’s issue:



- Going Deeper--David Muyskens invites readers to find a deep, peaceful place in their souls.
- 40 Days of Discipline: A Journey to the Cross--Nola Boezeman shares how a study of spiritual disciplines can transform your life.
- Deeper Prayerful Lent--Scott Crane explores how humility is a vital part of understanding Lent.

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**Youth Ministry Information – please forward information to appropriate persons:**

**RCA 2010 Youth Ministry Conference**

The RCA, Western Seminary Journey, and others are sponsoring a conference on Relational Youth Ministry on April 29-30 at Western Theological Seminary in Holland, Michigan. The two-day conference features various workshops for youth workers. The featured speaker will be Andy Root who has authored books on relational youth ministry. Much more information can be found at <http://www.westernsem.edu/explore/programs/journey/calendar/youth2010#Schedule> including a place to register.

**Project Timothy 2010: Impact – Mission Trips for Youth**

God moves in powerful ways on mission trips. When God wanted to transform someone in the Bible, He moved them out of their comfort zone and took them on a trip. Experiences like Project Timothy don’t compete with a youth ministry program – they complete it. Maybe your church is not going to do a youth mission trip this year but you have one or two youth who are interested in participating in this type of experience. The Project Timothy trips can be a fit for these situations. To find out much more information, follow this link: <http://www.rca.org/projecttimothy>

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## **Celebration Stories**

The story in this issue comes to us from La Capilla del Barrio:

### La Capilla del Barrio Youth Gear Up For Anti-Violence Project

Although it may not feel like it at the moment, spring is on its way! Many young people are looking forward to outdoor parties, cruising with their friends, going to baseball and basketball games, and most importantly...the Senior Prom. It is a rite of passage and a night of enchantment, where high school kids get to dress up like movie stars and dance together to the melodious strains of the latest pop music tunes under glitter-spangled banners and gently waving crepe paper ornamentation.

It can also be an evening of teen romance. Unfortunately, not all of these romances are healthy. Many of them contain elements of emotional abuse. Some of them become physically abusive. In a 2003 survey by the Chicago Police Department of 269 youth ages 13-19, 11% of them had been or were currently in an abusive/violent relationship; 62% knew other teens who had been or were currently in abusive relationships. In '04 the City of Chicago Domestic Violence Helpline received 430 calls from teenagers experiencing relationship violence." In a world where younger and younger children are behaving in a manner far beyond their years, it is more important than ever that the issue of 'what can go wrong in a dating situation' be addressed.

Members of La Capilla's Youth Team at a prayer vigil for young victim of violence in their community



The Youth Team at La Capilla del Barrio wants to do just that, by going to local high schools during the week before prom to present skits, hand out t-shirts, distribute information packets, and answer questions about dating violence and its many forms. It's a terrific way to get involved with the community, and the Youth Team has recently received some pretty considerable help in their efforts.

The Illinois Violence Prevention Authority has pledged \$5,000 to help jump-start the project, which will take place over the course of the next two years. Surveys will be distributed to give the young people a better idea of how widespread the problem of teen dating violence has become within the community. Another, follow-up survey will be handed out for completion the following May to see whether or not the project has had the desired effect in reducing the instances of abuse within teen relationships.

The La Capilla del Barrio Youth Team believes that their approach will yield terrific results. "The kids (at the high schools) will listen to us because we're close to their age and we know what it's like to be in their situations," Alma Castillo, one of the Core Youth Members, said at a planning meeting, "We're from the neighborhood. We can share the message in a way they'll understand."

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We share stories with one another so that God's name is praised, first of all. These stories, though, have the added value of encouraging those who do God's work. Please send your stories of God's activity in the revitalization of people or of a whole ministry and stories of the multiplication of ministries to Randy Kooy at [rkooy@rca.org](mailto:rkooy@rca.org).

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From Wayne Van Regenmorter, Synod Visionary Leader ([wvanregenmorter@rca.org](mailto:wvanregenmorter@rca.org)):

***Your Congregation's Engagement Level...***

How often have you said as a pastor, “I wish I had more committed members?” Every congregation needs more members who are “committed” to the church’s mission, vision, values and ministries. So, why are some people “committed” and others are not? What do the “committed” have in common? How can we measure commitment? Is there a way to produce more commitment in members?

Dr. Bill Hoyt has written an interesting article on this subject entitled, “Measuring Congregational Engagement.” This is what he says: “The Gallup Organization has developed groundbreaking research on congregational engagement. Through their research they have identified some national “norms” for member commitment. Nationally, Gallup classifies 26% of church members as “engaged.” These members are more spiritually committed; more likely to invite friends, family members and co-workers to congregational events; and more generous in giving time and money to their church.

On the average, 56% are “not engaged” according to Gallup’s measure. These members’ connection is more social than spiritual. They donate money in moderate amounts but not sacrificially and if they volunteer at all, they give only minimal and intermittent time to the church. The remaining 18% are classified as “disengaged.” They are sporadic in attendance, psychologically disconnected, unhappy with the church and often share that unhappiness with others. How does Gallup arrive at these figures? Their survey contains twelve items whose scores provide a predictive indicator of a congregation’s engagement level. Member’s answers to these questions help to quantify their commitment level.

1. As a member of my congregation, I know what is expected of me.
2. In my congregation, my spiritual needs are met.
3. In my congregation, I regularly have the opportunity to do what I do best.
4. In the last month, I have received recognition or praise from someone in my congregation.
5. The spiritual leaders in my congregation seem to care about me as a person.
6. There is someone in my congregation who encourages my spiritual development.
7. As a member of my congregation, my opinions seem to count.
8. The mission or purpose of my congregation makes me feel my participation is important.
9. The other members of my congregation are committed to spiritual growth.
10. Aside from family members, I have a best friend in my congregation.
11. In the last six months, someone in my congregation has talked to me about the progress of my spiritual growth.
12. In my congregation, I have opportunities to learn and grow.”

Are you ready to do an honest assessment with grace and truth? Ever wonder how the church where you serve would “measure up?” Check out your church’s engagement level.

Wayne Van Regenmorter

**Schedule:**

February 22: Off

23: Office

24: Network Meeting/Baileyville Reformed Church, Baileyville, IL

25: Coaching Conference Call

26: Ridley Assessment/Camp Manitoqua

27: Off

28: Sunday Worship

March 1: Office

2: Synod Executive Council Meeting/Camp Manitoqua

3: Annual Synod Planning Meeting/Lemont, IL

4: Commissioned Pastor Meeting/Faith Church, Dyer, IN  
Travel to Florida

5-6: Florida Classis Meeting/West Coast Church of the Cross/Sarasota, FL

7: Sunday Worship

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**From Randy Kooy, Coordinator-Administrator-Stated Clerk-Treasurer ([rkooy@rca.org](mailto:rkooy@rca.org)):**

Here are a few links to on-line articles that one may find interesting or helpful:

**Religion among the Millennials** from The Pew Forum on Religion & Public Life

<http://pewforum.org/docs/?DocID=510>

By some key measures, Americans ages 18 to 29 are considerably less religious than older Americans. Fewer young adults belong to any particular faith than older people do today. They also are less likely to be affiliated than their parents' and grandparents' generations were when they were young. Fully one-in-four members of the Millennial generation - so called because they were born after 1980 and began to come of age around the year 2000 - are unaffiliated with any particular faith. Indeed, Millennials are significantly more unaffiliated than members of Generation X were at a comparable point in their life cycle (20 percent in the late 1990s) and twice as unaffiliated as Baby Boomers were as young adults (13 percent in the late 1970s).

**Finding funds** from Your Church

<http://www.christianitytoday.com/yc/2009/novdec/findingfunds.html>

During tough economic times, many congregations look for new kinds of funding for ministry programs. The author of this article often runs into church staff members who are convinced there is a "magic grant" somewhere that can alleviate their congregation's financial worries--they just need to find it. Usually, though, there is no magic grant. Congregations who receive grants often work at securing the funding during a period of years because building relationships with funders takes time.

**Which of these six leadership styles works best?** from The Wall Street Journal

[http://online.wsj.com/article/SB10001424052748704041504575045163417674970.html?mod=WSJ\\_mgm t\\_LeftTopNews](http://online.wsj.com/article/SB10001424052748704041504575045163417674970.html?mod=WSJ_mgm t_LeftTopNews)

Leadership is a big, vague, amorphous topic. We can write about great leaders at great length. But practically speaking, how do you become one? A good start is to focus on leadership styles. Daniel Goleman, who popularized the notion of "emotional intelligence," has described six different styles that leaders use to motivate others.

**Women's ministry in smaller churches** from LifeWay

<http://www.lifeway.com/article/?id=161061>

One of the challenges of being a small church is perpetuating new ideas. Because of the lack of human resources and input, the pool of ideas may be shallow and drained more quickly. Here are some suggestions for renewing your creative energies.

**When the pastor brings the wife and kids on staff, how should a church respond?** from Church Executive Magazine

<http://www.churchexecutive.com/article.asp?IndexID=1331>

Many new church plants start out with several members of the family holding paid or volunteer positions. The wife heads up children's work, a brother might be in charge of small groups, and as years go by, and the congregation grows, these people might remain and children may be added to other positions in the church. All of this raises potential problems of supervision and management for the congregation and the elder board, if they are willing to give it a serious look. In examining the many issues involving family members on the staff and in paid positions of a congregation, Church Executive turned to Dr. Kent B. Rhodes, a consultant with The Family Business Consulting Group, LLC.

**Should your church have a target audience?** from Ministry Marketing Coach

<http://ministrymarketingcoach.com/2010/02/10/repost-should-your-church-have-a-target-audience/>

Have you spent much time thinking about who you want to reach in your ministry? To whom is your church trying to communicate? Ministers often overlook this basic question. The better you clarify your ministry's audience the more you will be able to meet their needs. A target audience represents your focal group--those you hope to communicate with and where you should focus your attention. Without focus, you won't be able to reach anyone effectively.

**10 sample questions you need to ask your congregants before your next worship service** from Church Central

<http://www.churchcentral.com/blog/People-decryption>

A helpful device for improving and making your worship services more meaningful is to ask questions of the people who sit through them. This must seem obvious, but, unless we know our people at a deeper level and understand them, we can't hope to speak to them in our worship experiences. So, here are some sample questions you need to ask your congregants before your next worship service.

**The 10 Most Redeeming Films of 2009** from Christianity Today

<http://www.christianitytoday.com/ct/movies/commentaries/2010/tenredeemingfilmsof2009.html>

The Oscars are still a few weeks away, but most publications and critics--not to mention The Golden Globes--have long since picked their top movies of 2009. Christianity Today is no exception. This week, the publication announced its 10 Most Redeeming Films of 2009. The selected movies include stories of redemption--sometimes blatantly, sometimes less so.

**Schedule:**

February 22-23 – Consultation on Classis Bounds, Holland, MI

24 – DeMotte office

25 – SIM network conf call; DeMotte office

26 – Off

March 1 – DeMotte office

2 – Exec Council mtg; Manitoqua office

3 – “Storm” planning team meeting, Lemont

4 – DeMotte office

5 – DeMotte office

6 – Manitoqua board mtg, Manitoqua

The Manitoqua office phone number can more consistently reach me wherever I am as it is usually forwarded to my current location.

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