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**SYNOD OF MID-AMERICA**  
**Reformed Church in America**  
**NEWSLETTER - - - Volume 11, Number 5 - - - March 8, 2010**  
<http://www.midamericasynod.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

[Online registration](#) is now available for ***Creating and Weathering the Storm: Hope for Church Leadership***. All are invited to attend this equipping event. Save money with early \$10 per person registration by April 1. Click on the [registration link](#) at <http://storm.msyn.org>.

Leadership teams that attend 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* - understanding how leaders can create and sustain healthy tension that creates positive change
- *Calm and cool when it all goes crazy* - managing your anxiety within that tension

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 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
- Times: 6:00 PM – 9:00 PM Friday; 8:00 AM – 12:00 noon Saturday – Friday evening meal included!
- Location: Christ Community Church, 13400 Bell Road, Lemont, IL 60439. ([Directions link.](#))
- **Cost: \$10 per person if registered by April 1 - \$15 per person after April 1**
- [Registration](#) now available on line. Alternate paper registration available on [Handout](#).
- **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.

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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.



### **Pastor News**

We extend sympathy to the Rev. Ralph Cordes family including his wife Gladys. Ralph, 88, passed away on February 27, 2010. He served two churches in Illinois Classis: Community, Freeport and Second, Pekin. The funeral was held at Second Reformed in Pekin on March 2, 2010.

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

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

The March 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 as churches and pastors prepare for Easter; 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/IU201003.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 March focuses on inviting intercessors and prayer leaders to grow in prayer. "Opportunities arise every day for us to stand in the gap for people, events, governments, and more. There is never a shortage of prayer needs, but we need not be overwhelmed with this need. Rather, we can be encouraged and strengthened." 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=6371>. Here are some articles in this month's issue:



- Loving Others through Prayer: Kathy Bruins explains how intercessory prayer is a way of showing God's love to others.
  - If My People: Don Pedal expresses the importance of intercessory prayer on behalf of your country.
  - Book Review: Becoming a Praying Congregation, by Rueben P. Job
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### **Celebration Stories**

The story this issue is a short one from First Reformed in Waupun, Wisconsin. They shared a paragraph and a photo. But the photo is "worth a 1000 words"!

"Just wanted to share with you that the Bible S.P.A.R.K'S Kids (Mid-week Program) from First Reformed Church, 422 W. Franklin St., Waupun, WI have been very busy. They took it upon

themselves to sponsor a "Hygiene Kit" Drive. These kids ages K-5th grade, have collected 222 hygiene kits to help out the earthquake victims in Haiti through Church World Service."



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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)):**

***A Costly Distraction...***

It was a blunder of Olympic proportions. Sven Kramer, the skating Dutchman, was a three times world champion, a four times European champion, so many World Cups and had already won Olympic gold in the 5,000 meters. In fact, he hadn't lost a 10,000 meter speed skating race for several years. But this time in the 10,000 meter race in spite of being the overwhelming favorite, he not only didn't win the gold, he never made it to the victory celebration podium. The problem was a coach getting distracted by doing too many things at the same time. The 10,000 meter is a 25 lap race, and on the backstretch of each lap, the skater must change lanes from inside to outside or vice versa. On about his seventeenth lap, Kramer complied with this rule as usual, moving from inside to outside, but apparently his coach, Gerard Kemkers, got distracted by writing down information, looking away from the ice for a few vital seconds. And so, shortly before the skater reached the cone at the end of the stretch, Kemkers furiously waved him to the inside. Thinking that perhaps he himself had become confused, Kramer heeded the adamant instruction of his coach. He moved to the inside, finished the race, and was disqualified for the improper move. It was an agonizing defeat—one that befuddled thousands of Dutch fans in the stands that their biggest star, the man who was to turn Vancouver in "Svencouver" with three gold metals, could miss out on his second title.

It's one thing to lose a race because others are better or faster, but it is really tough to lose when your coach gets distracted by the fact that he wants to coach a speed skater too perfectly. Apparently Kramer is so demanding on race information; he sometimes shouts questions at Kempers hoping to get answers on the next round. The lesson here is not to get distracted by all the information that you lose the one thing that is needed—to help a speed skater win the race.

I'm reminded of the story of Martha and Mary in Luke 10 where Jesus comes over to their home and Martha is distracted by all the preparations that need to be made. Martha was the perfectionist type—trying to get a meal ready, getting the house cleaned up, listening to spiritual teaching, and telling

everyone what to do all at the same time. And when Mary doesn't help her she complains to Jesus and He says: "Martha, Martha," the Lord answered, "you are worried and upset about many things, but only one thing is needed." That one thing is to hear God's Word and put it into practice and eventually win the race.

I wonder how many times in our churches we become like Coach Kemkers and get distracted—by economic issues, worry, counting the numbers, pleasing other people, when all Jesus asks of us is to hear His Word and do it. The secret to a life of following Jesus is learning to simply identify and obey one thing needed each moment. I just need to ask Him one question: "Lord, what's the one thing needed this moment for me to live as your disciple?" Then do it!

Wayne Van Regenmorter

### **Schedule:**

March 8: Office

9: Wisconsin Classis Meeting/Emmanuel Reformed Church, Clinton, WI

10: Meeting/Chicago, IL

11: Meeting/The Ravines

Staff Meeting/Camp Manitoqua

Illiana Classis Meeting/America Reformed Church/DeMotte, IN

12: Office

13: Off

14: Sunday Worship

15-16: Vacation days

17: New Wave Network Conference Call

18: Meeting/Oak Brook, IL

19: Office

20: Off

21: Sunday Worship

### **Wayne's contact information:**

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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:

**Failure to Thrive** from The Alban Institute

<http://www.alban.org/conversation.aspx?id=8954>

John and Brigetta were pastors of neighboring congregations. Even though they represented different denominations, their congregations were quite similar. Both had approximately 110 members attending Sunday worship, and both congregations had been stuck at that number for the past eight years. John and Brigetta knew each other well, as they belonged to the same clergy support group, yet their leadership styles differed greatly. Brigetta was a tough-thinking woman who made most of the decisions at Good Samaritan Church. She had a strong, driven, Type-A personality. John was laid-back and easygoing. He also had a natural proclivity to pursue peace at all costs. Here were two congregations going nowhere. In each case, there was no partnership between clergy and lay leaders. The congregations were stuck on alternate poles of this polarity, and both were experiencing more and more of the downside of their respective poles.

**Podcast: Do you believe in miracles? Most Americans do** from NPR

<http://www.npr.org/templates/story/story.php?storyId=124007551>

An extremely outstanding or unusual event, thing or accomplishment - that's Merriam Webster's definition of the word, miracle. But it goes on: An event manifesting divine intervention, a wonderful occurrence.

And from that alone, you might conclude that our understanding of miracles is murky at best. A new study

from Pew complicates things a bit further. The study shows that young adults, the so-called millennial generation, don't attend church services regularly, are less inclined to express religious preference or affiliation than their elders, but profess widespread belief in the afterlife, in heaven and hell and in miracles. Nearly 80 percent of all Americans, in fact, say they believe in miracles.

**Little ads that work** from Leadership Journal

<http://www.christianitytoday.com/le/communitylife/evangelism/littleadsthatwork.html>

"Couldn't you use more faith right now?" the ad asked. There wasn't room for much more than that question and the church's name. Despite its size, that Facebook ad is getting big credit in the launch of a new church near Chicago. Pastor Ryan Hall crafted a little ad for his church plant and scheduled a modest internet campaign in under 15 minutes. "I stumbled on Facebook advertising by accident," Hall says, "and I'm impressed at how well it worked."

**10 ways to maximize your ministry or church anniversary celebrations** from Ministry Marketing Coach

<http://ministrymarketingcoach.com/2010/02/22/maximizing-your-ministry-or-church-anniversary-celebrations/>

Anniversaries represent a significant opportunity for you and your constituents or members to pause, reflect and celebrate God's activity in and through your ministry historically. But, they also represent a great opportunity for you to help others see the vision God has burned in your heart and to open a window for them to peer into the ministry's future. A celebration that's done well can help open minds and prepare hearts for further Kingdom impact. Here are several ways to maximize your ministry or church anniversary.

**Are you dreaming big enough?** from Ministry Today Magazine

<http://www.ministrytodaymag.com/index.php/ministry-leadership/vision/10649-are-you-dreaming-big-enough>

Dreams are not merely the nightly thoughts you experience as the brain sorts out the day's events. They are the goals and visions that fire your heart and saturate your soul with joy at the very thought of them. They are those continuing visions of what you want your life to be at its highest level of fulfillment--what you want to do, how you want to do it, what kind of person you want to become in the process.

**Puppets and the pulpit** from Clarion Ledger

<http://www.clarionledger.com/article/20100220/FEAT04/2200315/1022/feat/Puppets-&-the-pulpit>

John Coen has a buddy with bulging frog eyes and skinny arms. His other friends include whale named Ralph, who swallows Jonah and spits him out; a sun named Ray; and a group of lightening bugs, candles and stars that sing This Little Light of Mine. They are puppets he uses to spread the Gospel. Influenced by Jim Henson's Muppets, Coen started a puppet ministry at First United Methodist Church of Lancaster in Ohio in the mid-1990s.

**A Time to Die: How do -- and should -- churches die?** from Associated Baptist Press

<http://www.abpnews.com/content/view/4888/53/>

Churches close their doors every day. But is a church's death inevitable? Who can give congregations permission to die? Should church members feel guilty for closing their facility's doors? Peter Bush, author of *In Dying We are Born: The Challenge and the Hope for Congregations*, believes every church must "be prepared to die" because each will die in one of two ways. Each church must die to "deeply held understandings of life and the purpose of the congregation" or it will close its doors.

**10 ways pastors and leaders can inspire generosity and increase church giving in any economy**

from Church Central

<http://www.churchcentral.com/blog/10-Ways-Pastors-and-Leaders-Can-Inspire-Generosity-and-Increase-Church-Giving-in-ANY-Economy>

In the most recent State of the Plate survey research among churches, it was discovered that giving is declining in 37 percent of the churches and is flat-lined in another 24 percent of churches. In this new economic climate, here are 10 ways that a church pastor and leaders can inspire generosity and increase giving so their church can focus on thriving instead of just surviving.

**Status of youth pastors rises as kids' lives get more complicated** from Wicked Local

<http://www.wickedlocal.com/capecod/lifestyle/faith/x925450497/Status-of-youth-pastors-rises-as-kids-lives-get-more-complicated>

Long the bottom rung of church ministers, youth pastors and ministers are getting their day. And with the rise of social networking on Web sites such as Facebook and Twitter, the way youth pastors approach their job has changed significantly -- leading some to think that the field needs experts who specialize in the needs of young congregants.

**Caught in-between: Developing a preteen ministry** from LifeWay

<http://www.lifeway.com/article/166353/>

Churches have become increasingly diverse in their methods of handling the middle school ministry issue. When we were younger, we anxiously looked forward to the day when we would be in seventh grade. Then we could finally be in the youth group. Today, some churches put their fifth graders in the youth department, while others are still following the traditional model of waiting until seventh grade. So what's the solution?

**Schedule:**

March 8 – DeMotte office

9 – Wisconsin Classis, Clinton

10 – DeMotte office

11 – Meeting – The Ravines; Staff mtg, Manitoqua office; Illiana Classis, PM

12 – DeMotte office

15 – DeMotte office

16 – Illinois Classis, Second- Pekin

17 – DeMotte office

18 – Manitoqua office

19 – DeMotte office

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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