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**SYNOD OF MID-AMERICA**  
**Reformed Church in America**  
**NEWSLETTER - - - Volume 11, Number 9 - - - May 3, 2010**  
<http://www.midamericasynod.org>  
<http://msyn.org>

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

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**Regional Synod and Chicago Classis Event: Creating and Weathering the Storm: Hope for Church Leadership**

Over 100 church leaders from across the Regional Synod of Mid-America gathered on Friday evening and Saturday morning (April 30-May 1) to worship and be led by Jim Herrington and Trisha Taylor toward personal and congregational transformation. Their presentation was unique and engaging as they *together* challenged those present in their leadership journeys. They started by saying, “If you keep doing what you’ve been doing, you will keep getting what you’ve been getting. Can you live with that?” The group was asked to pause and reflect on what storms are going on in their lives and the lives of their congregations.



They said that change needs to begin within one’s self – that is a place where one has control – personal transformation precedes corporate transformation. After teaching about what is a mental model, Jim and Trisha taught the mental model for discipleship: radical obedience, a reflective life, and authentic community on mission together. Read Wayne’s section later in this newsletter for more on what was taught by Jim and Trisha.

A few of the comments stated after the event include: “It is helpful to be reminded my personal roll in accepting God’s call for transformation – I am responsible.” “Totally applicable, but very challenging.” “Helped me think about anxiety in a totally different way.” “The ideas and skills I’ve learned today will not only benefit my church community but also family and work relationships.”

There are some photos of the event published at this internet location:  
<http://storm.msyn.org/StormPhotos.pdf>

**Annual session of the Synod of Mid-America**

Prior to the “Storm...” event the classis delegates to the annual session of the Synod of Mid-America met Friday afternoon. They heard reports from president of synod, Elmer Van Drunen, as well as the council, staff, ministries of the synod like Manitoqua Ministries, and representatives. The business session was punctuated with many stories about where God is working. The stories include those about: a group of folks that started worship in a barn using a video, a new style of an experiential worship service parented by a synod church, a “New Wave” network for planting churches in Florida, and how Manitoqua has affected the lives of both those to who they minister and those who are the staff. The synod paused often to offer prayers of thanksgiving and prayers for supplication for the ministries and the activities within the synod. Manitoqua asks that we “pray with zeal and confidence for the work of the spirit at Camp Manitoqua.”



In business matters, the synod approved the budget for 2011 that keeps level most expenses and lowered a few. The resulting assessment rate will remain at the current \$14.50 per member. A minister minimum salary schedule and minister salary rules and guidelines for 2011 were approved for recommendation to the classes of the regional synod. The minimum salary table and the rules all remain the same as what was recommended to and adopted by the classes of the regional synod for 2010. The

synod considered an overture to the General Synod asking for the Theological Commission to study the concept of service-as-worship, but it voted to not adopt the proposed overture.



Every two years the synod elects a new president and a new vice president; an election was held this year. The new president of the Synod of Mid-America is the Rev. Chad Schuitema. Chad was the vice president and a member of the synod's Executive Council. He is the minister at Community Reformed Church in Lafayette, Indiana. The new vice president of the Synod of Mid-America is Jimmie Stevenson. Jimmie is an elder at Pembroke Community Reformed Church, St. Anne, Illinois where he is serving as

vice president of the consistory. He is a member of the RCA Commission on Christian Action and he serves on the Executive Committee of the RCA African American Council. Elmer Van Drunen was thanked for his years of service first as vice president and for the last two years as the president of the Synod of Mid-America. He will continue to serve on the Executive Council of the synod in the position of immediate past president. The transfer of the officers took place at the end of the equipping event.

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

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

The May 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 has a request for prayer praise reports from our classes' churches – please give some input so we can celebrate together – just a line or two will be great.** You are asked to click on [Intercessors Unite](#) and pray the prayer agenda listed for the month of May. To find our **regional synod's prayer tool** follow this link: <http://intunite.msyn.org/IU201005.htm>; there are also links from the synod's home page and resources page (<http://msyn.org>).

**RCA HOPE Prayerline**

The April issue of the RCA HOPE Prayerline is still available. It can be found at <http://www.rca.org/Page.aspx?pid=6525>. Its title this month is *Inviting Intercessors and Prayer Leaders to Grow in Prayer*. "The season of the resurrection of Jesus is a time of spiritual newness. In prayer, there are always new ways to relate to God. Our prayer time doesn't need to be stale and routine; it can be vibrant and alive. God loves to share these times with us. His Spirit will take whatever we offer God in quiet time or corporate prayer time and bring it to a new level where we will be changed as we are brought closer to the throne of grace." Specific articles include:

- Do I Love God?--David Muyskens tells how his knowledge of God's love helped deepen his own love for God.
- Restorative Healing Prayer Ministry--Kathy Seif shares how her church responds to prayer needs in the congregation.
- Prayer Experiences at Hagar Park--Sherwin Weener explains how a recent retreat led many members of his church to renew their commitment to Christ through prayer.

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**Job Opportunities at Manitoqua**

Camp Manitoqua & Retreat Center is currently hiring and accepting resumes for the following three full-time positions: **Program Coordinator, Outdoor Education Coordinator, and Food Service Coordinator.**

Resumes will be accepted until May 15, 2010. All three positions are full-time with benefits. The Program Coordinator is primarily responsible for the summer program. The Outdoor Education Coordinator oversees the ropes course and nature studies program. The Food Service Coordinator manages the dining experience of all guests and campers. Job descriptions are available on the Manitoqua website:

<http://www.manitoqua.org>, under the *Forms* link, specifically here:



<http://www.manitoqua.org/Brix?pageID=23552>. If interested, please prayerfully submit your resume to [leah@manitoqua.org](mailto:leah@manitoqua.org) or call the Manitoqua office with questions at 815-469-2319

### **Manitoqua Still Taking Summer Reservations**

Camp Manitoqua continues to accept 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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### **Celebration Stories**

The last issue of this newsletter highlighted four stories from the recently mailed [RCA Today](#) of things happening within the Synod of Mid-America. One additional celebration story from that issue that you do not want to miss is found in the main part of that issue. It is about Calvary Reformed Church in Orland Park working with folks who are struggling with addictions and other life struggles. If you did not read it, here is a taste:



#### **Illinois Church Embraces People in Recovery**

The eleven adults who were baptized at an Illinois church last October included formerly homeless people who are now working, former heroin addicts who had been hooked for up to 30 years, former crack addicts, and people who have been in prison.

The congregation applauded with enthusiasm as each person was fully immersed in a large tank of water that had been set up at the front of the sanctuary.

"All have come to a saving knowledge of Christ and had a desire to be baptized," says Ron Ovitt, who is the executive administrative pastor for Calvary Reformed Church in Orland Park, Illinois, the church where the baptisms took place.

"The baptisms represent a mini-revival going on in our outreach ministry to those who are struggling with addictions and other life struggles. We have between 60 and 100 people come every Monday night to our year-long program called Sozo. Sozo is a Greek word for salvation and wholeness that Jesus used. When the woman touched his garment that she might be made whole, the word translated 'whole' is sozo."

To read the rest of the story follow this link: <http://www.rca.org/Page.aspx?pid=6492>

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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)):**

#### ***Learning to Manage Anxiety...***

At the **Creating and Weathering the Storm: Hope for Church Leadership** training event this past weekend, one of the learning skills that Jim Herrington and Trisha Taylor talked about is how to see and manage one's own personal anxiety and the anxiety of a congregation. They described anxiety as "the brain's physiological reaction to a real or perceived threat." In a typical congregational setting there are many kinds of threats: a change in music style, a change in times of a worship service, a change of leadership, a change in how a room is used, almost any kind of change will cause someone to become anxious. We learned what happens when we become anxious:

- We can't think. As our feelings get stirred up, our thinking shuts down.
- We are unable to act according to our best intentions and our most deeply held values.

- Even if we know the right thing to do, we are less likely to be able to do it.
- Our anxiety is contagious to others and their anxiety is contagious to us. Anxiety now ripples throughout the system.
- We react in predictable, patterned ways.

When someone get anxious, he/she will begin to **VIBRATE**--your heart gets pumping and stirs you up inside. There are some identifiable symptoms that are typically seen when you begin vibrating. Herrington asks it this way: "What do you do when you do what you do?" 1) You pull away from people, literally and emotionally; you shut down and put up walls--this is called **distancing**. This is one of the predictable ways that people react to anxiety. 2) Maybe you engage people more intensely, to persuade them to think or act differently and, failing that, to move to argument or **conflict**. People begin to reveal an all-or-nothing attitude and insist on having their own way. You identify a person or a group as the problem and try to change them. 3) Maybe you **overfunction** by taking more responsibility than is yours in a relationship or situation. Or maybe you **underfunction** by not taking enough responsibility for yourself and your relationships. If you're depressed, that's certainly a possibility. 4) Or maybe you create **triangles** with other people in your congregation, or your family, pulling them to bolster your position or getting in between two people who are experiencing anxiety in their relationship.

There are some characteristics that can be seen in anxious congregations as well. Again Herrington asks, "What does your congregation do when it does what it does?"

- Heightened reactivity
- Herding instinct
- Blame displacement
- Looking for a quick fix
- Poor leadership

Trisha Taylor says that "effective leaders are able to monitor their own anxiety in a given situation and manage it. They know when they are vibrating before they are so anxious they can't turn back. They are also keenly aware of their own predictable reactions and can intercept them before they become inevitable. Effective leaders also pay attention to the anxiety of others. Without absorbing or taking responsibility for the reactions of other people, these leaders are able to see anxiety as it develops in relationships and predict what is likely to happen. They are then able to introduce--through their own behavior--a measure of calmness and rationality."

When life begins to shake, the only thing that can restore peace and calmness in us is to grab hold of something solid, something unshakable. Jesus said in John 14:1, "Do not let your hearts be troubled." To quiet a troubled and anxious heart, He said, grab hold of God in faith: "Trust in God, trust also in me." When we grab hold of God or more accurately He grabs hold of us, then our anxious hearts begin to calm down. We begin to grow still and know He is God (Psalm 46:10).

Wayne Van Regenmorter

### **Schedule**

May 3: Office

- 4: New Wave Network Meeting/Hudsonville, MI
- 5: Conference Call/Parenting Team
- 6: Meeting/Chicago, IL
- 7: Office
- 8: Off
- 9: Sunday Worship
- 10: Meeting/Oak Brook, IL
- 11: Office
- 12-13: Ridder Integrative Leadership Retreat/Holland, MI
- 14: New Wave Network Conference Call
- 15: Chicago Classis Meeting/Faith Reformed Church/Stickney, IL
- 16: Sunday Worship
- 17: Off
- 18: Office/Conference Call/Coaching
- 19: Vacation day
- 20: Vacation day

- 21: Meeting/Dyer, IN
- 22: Florida Classis Administrative Council Conference Call
- 23: Preach/First Reformed Church/Waupun, WI

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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:

**Survey: 72 percent of Millennials 'more spiritual than religious'** from USA Today

[http://www.usatoday.com/news/religion/2010-04-27-1Amillfaith27\\_ST\\_N.htm?csp=34](http://www.usatoday.com/news/religion/2010-04-27-1Amillfaith27_ST_N.htm?csp=34)

Most young adults today don't pray, don't worship and don't read the Bible, a major survey by a Christian research firm shows. If the trends continue, "the Millennial generation will see churches closing as quickly as GM dealerships," says Thom Rainer, president of LifeWay Christian Resources. In the group's survey of 1,200 18- to 29-year-olds, 72 percent say they're "really more spiritual than religious."

**Church openings outpace closings, but support for church plants lacking** from PR Web

[http://www.prweb.com/releases/LifeWay\\_Research/Ed-Stetzer/prweb3909544.htm](http://www.prweb.com/releases/LifeWay_Research/Ed-Stetzer/prweb3909544.htm)

A newly released LifeWay Research survey of 1,004 Protestant pastors found only 3 percent of their churches served as the primary sponsor of a church plant (new congregation) during the previous 12 months, and only 14 percent gave financial support in partnership with other churches to help start new congregations. However, a second study completed in partnership with Leadership Network revealed more churches open than close yearly. Only in recent years has the annual number of new churches in the United States outpaced the annual number of churches closing their doors.

**Can you rehearse for church leadership?** from Church Central

<http://www.churchcentral.com/blog/Can-You-Rehearse-for-Church-Leadership?>

Leadership at church is like a live performance. Like performers, whether musical or theatrical, leaders can prepare and rehearse. But at the performance, we have to show up and live into the moment of performing as best we can. We can't pause, rewind or edit our performance. We can't fix it in post-production. How do you rehearse as a leader?

**Denver churches focus on being good neighbors** from Ministry Today

<http://www.ministrytodaymag.com/index.php/ministry-news/65/18890>

For more than a year, 20 Catholic and Protestant pastors in Denver have been partnering in an outreach program designed to encourage their congregations to take the commandment to "love your neighbor" as seriously as possible, according to the Denver Post. The program, named Building Blocks, has consisted of a series of 21 guest sermons throughout the year taught by the various pastors in the initiative, most of whom are located in the northwest areas of metropolitan Denver. The pastors preached their final sermons in the series on Sunday.

**Video: Ruling rings loud and clear for churches** from Christian Broadcasting Network

<http://www.cbn.com/cbnnews/us/2010/April/Arizona-Church-Can-Ring-Bells-Again/>

After months of silence, an Arizona church can begin its daily bell-rings again. A federal judge ruled that the Christ the King Cathedral in Phoenix has a constitutional right to ring its church bells, despite a city ordinance that prevented the pastor from doing so. "It brings the law really into line with all the other cities and jurisdictions we've looked at where you can't use a noise ordinance to suppress religious expression," church attorney Gary McCaleb said.

**Ministry impact is in the details** from Ministry Marketing Coach

<http://ministrymarketingcoach.com/2010/04/21/ministry-impact-is-always-in-the-details/>

How often do we monitor our ministries so we don't "compete," but rather, make an impact? Let's face it, the members and attendees of your congregation have a lot of distractions pulling at them. Are you doing everything you can to ensure that what they experience in your church doesn't simply become another

distraction, or even worse, a deterrent? This is hard stuff. As ministry leaders, we are challenged with balancing daily ministry with continuously planning for its future. So how can you develop the mindset and discipline of this intentional focus? Consider the three principles outlined in this article.

**How's your Sunday service?** from Ministry Today Magazine

<http://www.ministrytodaymag.com/index.php/ministry-life/worship/17086-hows-your-sunday-service>

Every pastor wants to raise up a group of people who God considers true worshipers. We have the chance to cultivate these kinds of worshipers every Sunday in our services by how we lead. Whether you are a senior pastor or a worship leader, you serve as a model for true worship. You play a key role in creating an environment that is conducive to the moving of God's Spirit. To excel at both of these requires some understanding of what I believe are fundamental principles of congregational worship.

**Schedule:**

**Please note that I will be on vacation May 7-17.**

May 3 – DeMotte office  
4 – DeMotte office  
5 – Manitoqua office  
6 – DeMotte office  
7-17 – **Vacation**  
18 – DeMotte office  
19 – Manitoqua office  
20 – Wisconsin Classis mtg, Trinity, Waupun  
21 – DeMotte office  
22 – Florida Classis Administrative Council conference call

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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