
SYNOD OF MID-AMERICA
Reformed Church in America
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<http://www.midamericasynod.org>
<http://msyn.org>

“Healthy classes and congregations through revitalization and multiplication”

Wisconsin Classis Search for Classis Leader Continues

At the March 2010 meeting of the Classis of Wisconsin, the classis approved moving ahead with a new classis structure. One key element of that new structure is the hiring of a full-time Classis Leader. A Search Team has been appointed and the search process is underway. The team is looking for suggestions of names of persons who might be a fit and have the gifts and skills for the position. More information about suggesting persons or applying, including a description of the position, can be found online at <http://wisc.msyn.org>.

RCA Discipleship Youth Team Developing Network

The RCA Discipleship Youth Team is developing a network called Youth LYNC (Linking Youth Networks across the Country). This network is meant to provide resources, support, training and relationships to youth pastors and workers across the country. Their hope is to have one youth pastor from each classis as a representative to a gathering in October 2010. Classes have been invited to recommend someone to be this representative. If you can either recommend someone to your classis for its recommendation, or if you feel called to network and communicate in this way, contact your classis stated clerk as soon as possible. Names will be submitted this month.

Sabbatical Grants for Pastoral Leaders

The Louisville Institute announces their 17th annual competition for Sabbatical Grants for Pastoral Leaders. Last year they awarded 39 grants to applicants from a pool numbering nearly 400; they anticipate a strong set of applicants again for this year's competition, which closes on September 1. In addition to the sabbatical grants, they also offer Pastoral Study Project grants; applications for those grants are due August 15. More information about the sabbatical grants can be found at <http://www.louisville-institute.org/Grants/programs/sgpldetail.aspx>

Summer Ecumenical Gatherings

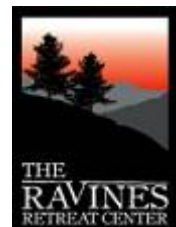
The Wisconsin Council of Churches is offering some summer ecumenical gatherings. Look [here](#) to check out their offerings: <http://msyn.org/tmp/WICCSummerEcumenicalGatherings.htm>

Celebration Stories

The Ravines is a ministry whose focus is the restoration, healing, and strengthening of the marriages of Christian couples. Recently Patti Jabaay, director of The Ravines, received this testimony from a couple that gives evidence of the work God is doing in the lives of couples who have attended The Ravines. With the couple's permission this story is shared:

We wanted to share our feelings with you regarding our experience at the Ravines a few months back. We were referred to the Ravines by a friend of mine who attends Faith Church, and who had some intimate knowledge of the structure of the Ravines. It also turned out that a Pastor from our Church had referred a couple there just a few months before we attended.

We have been having some marital issues for some time, and had been seeing a “traditional” marriage counselor, (prior to our Ravines stay) which helped, yet there was still something missing. From the time we made the initial call to you, the experience was extraordinary. You were non-judgmental, kind, understanding, and most importantly, very sincere and caring. It was obvious you were very concerned for our well being, and only interested in helping us heal our



marriage, and move forward. You worked hard logistically to make everything fit our schedule as well.

While we were admittedly nervous and a bit apprehensive about our Ravines experience (prior to our stay), we were made to feel comfortable and at ease within MINUTES of our arrival. The host couple could not have been more gracious, or made us feel more comfortable than they did. (In fact, the interaction between them during our stay was most inspiring!) Our counselor was just a total gem. He made it clear that we would dig very deeply during our stay, but at the same time there was no pressure, and he would work at OUR pace.

The Ravine's model of concentrated counseling is very therapeutic. More important than the concentration is the Christian based ministry that is at the core. The balance between "traditional" counseling by a VERY qualified and experienced individual, along with the Christian influence and references was just perfect. The setting – What can I say, it lends perfectly to a calming, nurturing, productive stay. The grounds are beautiful, and the home itself is set up so well, allowing for the perfect amount of interaction, along with adequate privacy.

We came out of our weekend realizing that we had much work to do, but more importantly with a renewed sense of hope, and feeling closer than we had in "many moons"... Most of all, we were reminded that "with God, all things are possible".

We would recommend the Ravines to ANYONE who is trying to repair their marriage, strengthen it, or simply get back on the right path, the path which puts God at the center and each other at the forefront. Please feel free to contact us if we can be of help with any couple considering the Ravines – We would be glad to share our experience with them.

God be with you and your ministry!
In him, A Past Ravines couple

For more information about The Ravines you can contact Patti Jabaay at pjabaay@faithchurchonline.org

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 ministry and/or stories of the multiplication of ministries to Randy Kooy at rkooy@rca.org.

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

General Synod Reflections...

I had the opportunity to attend General Synod which was held at Northwestern College in Orange City, Iowa. The atmosphere in the gymnasium on the floor of the General Synod was very unusual from other years: It was quiet, reflective, peaceful, non-abrasive, much like roaming downtown Main Street on a summer night in Orange City. Historically, this General Synod will be remembered for officially declaring The Belhar Confession as the fourth doctrinal standard of the RCA.

I was intrigued by Wes Granberg-Michaelson's General Secretary's report when he described the relationship between the church in Jerusalem and the church in Antioch. When conflict arose as recorded in Acts, he said, "The church in Jerusalem—made up of those apostles and others who survived and maintained a presence as the "headquarters" of the church—is unsettled by what is happening in Antioch." He went on to describe the issues of conflict and the differences between these two church centers. And then he said, "It's this journey from Jerusalem to Antioch that defines the church's life today. The most critical challenge facing the Reformed Church in America today is making the transition from being a settled denomination to becoming a missional church....The journey between Jerusalem and Antioch was a two-way street. Those in Antioch knew that Jerusalem was the wellspring of their faith, the source from which the gospel message had first emerged. Those in Jerusalem affirmed what God's grace was doing and subsequently had to wrestle with how it changed their understanding of the gospel

message. Through sending Barnabas, Jerusalem began by asking the right questions: What is God doing in Antioch? Is this the work of the same Spirit? How can we listen, learn, and encourage, as well as guide and instruct?"

Since 2003, the RCA through Our Call has been on a journey to revitalize existing congregations and plant new congregations. The Holy Spirit is the one who leads the church into God's mission. We know what that looks like and so at this General Synod through All-Synod Advisory Committees the church took some time to reflect on what we are noticing, how we are doing and what wisdom have we gained with God's help. Here is what the writing team heard as they listened to the groups on church multiplication and revitalization:

Church Multiplication--

- Healthy revitalization encourages multiplication; conversely, multiplication often leads to revitalization.
- More effective mechanisms are needed to fully include new church starts within the assemblies of the church.
- Existing membership categories do not adequately reflect the current reality.
- Our assessment structure seems to be a disincentive to organizing.
- There is a need to foster a Reformed identity (worship, theology, polity, etc.) in our new church starts and leaders.
- There is a lack of diversity in age and gender among leaders in the multiplication process.

Church Revitalization

- Setting goals facilitates intentionality and focus, but numbers don't tell the whole story of love for God and love for neighbor.
- There is an acknowledgment that the three current revitalization strategies (coached networks, coaching, and NCD) have not been effective for some congregations, and there is a desire for other resources to be made more widely available (such as the Ridder Leadership Initiative, Appreciative Inquiry, spiritual direction, or mentoring).
- Given the varied size of classes, setting a goal based on a specific number of churches seems inappropriate (for instance, five churches is half of some classes); likewise, ministry, revitalization, and appropriate goals may look very different in various ministry settings.
- Revitalization has moved us toward embracing mission, but this has not necessarily had an impact on numbers.
- There is value in partnering with other churches, parachurch organizations, and ecumenical agencies, and it is up to each classis/congregation to engage these partnerships.
- Virtually every group acknowledged the value of sharing stories and knowledge, and some groups wanted to also facilitate opportunities for mutual learning (for instance, what worked, what didn't work, and lessons learned).

Taking this feedback into account, the following recommendation was approved by the General Synod:

To urge each classis to:

- 1. Partner with its congregations to develop intentional revitalization goals appropriate to specific ministry contexts, grounded in the three dimensions of the Great Commandment and Great Commission: our love for God, our love for neighbor (missional impact), and our commitment to making and nurturing disciples;***
- 2. Engage and support at least 25 percent of its congregations in a specific commitment to become revitalizing churches;***
- 3. Share stories of revitalization and missional impact with the wider church through the General Synod Council;***

and further, to instruct the General Synod Council to provide opportunities for collaborative learning and to include information on the classes' progress toward these goals in RCA Today, the RCA website, and its annual report to General Synod during the last three years of Our Call, 2011, 2012, and 2013.

So....., how will we respond?

Wayne Van Regenmorter

Schedule:

June 21: Sustainability Team Conference Call
22: Synod Executive Council Conference Call
23: Meeting/American Reformed Church/DeMotte, IN
Meeting/Downers Grove Community Church/Downers Gove, IL
24: Ridder Meeting/Alto Reformed Church/Alto, WI
Revitalization Meeting/Christian Park Reformed Church/Indianapolis, IN
25: Coaching Conference Call
26: Off
27: Sunday Worship
28: Office
29: New Wave Network Conference Call
30: Office
July 1: Meeting/Lansing, IL
2: Office
3: Off
4: Sunday Worship
5: Independence Day
6: Conference Call, The Well of Hope/Orlando, FL
7: Ridder Meeting/Second Reformed Church/Fulton, IL
8: Office
9: Off
10: Florida Classis Administrative Council Conference Call
11: Sunday Worship

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

What follows below are a few links to on-line articles that one may find interesting or helpful.

Hot ideas for summer church fun from Baptist Press

<http://www.bpnews.net/BPFirstPerson.asp?ID=33085>

Did you realize that God's work doesn't take a sabbatical during summer months? How can your church seize the unique evangelism and fellowship opportunities of the season? Try some of these fresh summertime ideas.

Student ministers face challenges as age separates them from youth from Associated Baptist Press

<http://www.abpnews.com/content/view/5206/53/>

Age can influence the career direction a youth minister or campus minister takes. Family transitions may lead to a ministry change, or the minister may feel age has separated him or her from students. "There may be a time when you feel like you can't relate...You may think their world is so different than mine," said Don Mattingly, assistant to the president for strategic initiatives at Mercer University. Mattingly believes two major factors influence the direction a youth minister's career may take -- the individual's age when entering youth work and whether the minister earns a seminary degree.

Simple tips for hiring a vendor for your church from Church Safety

<http://www.churchsafety.com/topics/property/grounds/hirevendors/hiringvendor.html?tCode=AD0C889522&dCode=B6FEA151A1>

When you need a plumber to fix the restrooms, a repairman for the copier, or a supplier to satisfy your congregation's coffee craving, where do you turn? You could pull out the Yellow Pages and pick one, but how do you know that you're getting the best service at the best price? These simple tips can help you hire the best vendor for your next project.

Community service is the religion from Los Angeles Times

http://www.latimes.com/news/local/la-me-rockchurch-20100607_0,2688059.story

Estreanda Fulford, a social worker for San Diego County, is in daily contact with the homeless, the formerly homeless and the soon-to-be homeless. But this encounter was not part of her job — not her paying job, anyway. Fulford spends 30 to 40 hours a week volunteering as the leader of a ministry for homeless people for the Rock Church, a fundamentalist megachurch in Point Loma that is making its mark as a powerhouse of community service as well as evangelism. The Rock says it contributed 615,000 hours of service to the community last year, including 166,000 hours for the benefit of local government in San Diego.

Are there dangers in being 'spiritual but not religious'? from CNN

<http://www.cnn.com/2010/LIVING/personal/06/03/spiritual.but.not.religious/index.html?hpt=Mid>

It's a trendy phrase people often use to describe their belief that they don't need organized religion to live a life of faith. But for Jesuit priest James Martin, the phrase also hints at something else: egotism. "Being spiritual but not religious can lead to complacency and self-centeredness," says Martin, an editor at America, a national Catholic magazine based in New York City. "If it's just you and God in your room, and a religious community makes no demands on you, why help the poor?"

Religious parents influence young adults from UMC.org

http://www.umc.org/site/apps/nlnet/content3.aspx?c=IwL4KnN1Lth&b=2789393&ct=8443847&utm_source=feedburner&utm_medium=feed&utm_campaign=Feed%3A+umnsheadlines+%28United+Methodist+News+Service+Headlines%29

Parents matter in the religious lives of America's youth. This finding was clear to sociologist Christian Smith as the principal investigator for the National Study of Youth and Religion in 2002-2003, the most detailed study ever done on teens and religion. And it was clear in a 2007-2008 study following teens into emerging adulthood. "What the best empirical evidence shows ... is that even as the formation of faith and life play out in the lives of 18- to 23-year-olds, when it comes to religion, parents are in fact hugely important," report Smith and Patricia Snell of the Center for the Study of Religion and Society at the University of Notre Dame.

How you can convert conflict into ministry opportunities from Church Executive Magazine

<http://churchexecutive.com/archives/how-you-can-convert-conflict-into-ministry-opportunities>

Church conflict is among the worst kinds, wrapped as it usually is in theological certainty about the rectitude of each side's views. Outsiders consider the conflict hypocritical. Insiders wind-up disillusioned and sometimes wash-out. Entire congregations vanish. What if more churches viewed conflict as itself a ministry opportunity?

The POWR of Planning Worship from The Alban Institute

<http://www.alban.org/conversation.aspx?id=9101>

Worship planning, whether it's led by a pastor, a musician, a planning team, or a worship committee, begins with this goal in mind: a well-thought-out liturgy that involves the assembly in authentic praise of God. In most congregations, regardless of the church's size or style of worship, elements of the service--music, prayer, sermon, movement to the table and out into the world--are placed in an established order that will guide the congregation in the worship hour. After the service, any reflection is usually an evaluation of particular elements of worship--this went well; this did not.

Are you working hard or overfunctioning at church? from Church Central

<http://www.churchcentral.com/blog/Are-You-Working-Hard-or-Overfunctioning-at-Church>

Are you working hard at church? I assume so. Does that mean you are overfunctioning? Not necessarily. Overfunctioning involves taking responsibility for others, especially for their problems and shortcomings. In the short term, helping others can be a good thing. But if it becomes chronic, it can contribute to sustaining the limitations of others, and burning us out. But let's recognize that ministry is truly hard work, as is accomplishing most things of value in this world. Working long hours may not necessarily be overfunctioning. If you can't take a break without feeling anxious, that's something to pay attention to, however.

Developing your women's ministry Dream Team from LifeWay

<http://www.lifeway.com/article/167006/>

Anyone who has ever achieved excellence or greatness started with a dream. Do you know God's dream for your women's ministry? Does your women's ministry need to be refreshed with a new vision? Consider gathering a group of women to help you dream His dream for your women.

Schedule:

June 21 – DeMotte office
22 – Synod Executive Council mtg (conf call); DeMotte office
23-27 – Vacation days
28 – DeMotte office
29 – Manitoqua office
30 – DeMotte office
July 1 – DeMotte office
2 – DeMotte office
5 – Independence Day holiday observed
6 – DeMotte office
7 – Manitoqua office
8 – DeMotte office
9 – DeMotte office
10 – Florida Classis Administrative Council mtg (conf 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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