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**SYNOD OF MID-AMERICA**  
**Reformed Church in America**  
**NEWSLETTER - - - Volume 11, Number 13 - - - July 12, 2010**  
<http://www.midamericasynod.org>  
<http://msyn.org>

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

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**Applications for Urban Ministry Assistance**

Urban ministries within the Synod of Mid-America with an assistance need are invited to apply for a support grant for 2011. Through the generous contributions of many of the churches of the synod there are some limited funds available for assistance for ministries to, in, and/or for the urban areas of the Synod of Mid-America. All those wishing to be considered for an assistance grant (including those currently receiving funding) need to submit an application to the synod by September 10, 2010. A part of the application process is receiving a recommendation statement from the appropriate classis – this recommendation deadline is also September 10. To receive a copy of the guidelines and the application form, contact Randy Kooy ([rkooy@msyn.org](mailto:rkooy@msyn.org) or 815-464-9181). A big “thank you” to those churches who contribute to this fund; it is because of your faithful contributions that ministries in urban settings can happen! This year ministries in Chicago, Milwaukee, Miami, and Sheboygan are being helped. The “asking” for contribution is \$4 per church member (also a \$2 per Sunday school member). Contributions can be sent to: Synod of Mid-America, 8122 W. Sauk Trail, Frankfort, IL 60423

**Classis, Church, Minister News**

Pastor Jim Olsen passed away on Friday, July 2, 2010. Pastor Olsen (age 80) was a Lutheran (ELCA) minister, who served faithfully at Raritan Reformed Church (Raritan, Illinois) for roughly 15 years or so and was a member of the Illinois Classis. Jim had a heart for that ministry, and served faithfully to both Raritan Reformed and Bethel Lutheran as a yoked ministry.

**Minutes of the 2010 Annual Session of the Synod of Mid-America**

The minutes of the 2010 annual session of the Synod of Mid-America that was held April 30 – May 1, 2010 have been placed on line for you to access. The internet address for the minutes is: <http://msyn.org/pdf1/SynodMidAmMin2010.pdf>. As has been the recent practice, no paper copy of the minutes will be mailed. A link to this is also available by going to the “Resources” page of the synod’s website (<http://midamericasynod.org/>). You might note that the minutes contain the recommended 2011 Minister’s Salary Schedule, Rules, and Guidelines (begins on page 16). This is what is recommended to the classes and does not become official until your classis approves it (or approves something different).

**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>.

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**Celebration Stories**

There is no story this issue. You are invited to submit stories from your church or classis so that we can all celebrate; contact Randy Kooy ([rkooy@msyn.org](mailto:rkooy@msyn.org))

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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 ministry and/or stories of the multiplication of ministries to Randy Kooy at [rkooy@msyn.org](mailto:rkooy@msyn.org).

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

### ***10 Reasons to Worship...***

Even though I worship regularly at a wonderful church, I have to be honest with you, sometimes during the summer I feel like doing something else rather than worship on the weekend. But when I read the Bible I begin to see the importance of regular and faithful worship of God and I find myself in church being blessed again by the worship of God. Well, why should someone worship?

1. **The Bible tells us to worship.** Hebrews 10:25 says: *"Let us not give up meeting together, as some as in the habit of doing..."*
2. **We meet Jesus in worship.** Matthew 18:20 says: *"For where two or three come together in my name, there am I with them."* When we gather to worship, Jesus joins us.
3. **It builds our faith.** Romans 10:17 tell us: *"Faith comes from hearing the message, and the message is heard through the Word of Christ."*
4. **Jesus wants to build His Church and we are called to be the building blocks. Absent building blocks won't build much of a Church.** In Matthew 16:18 Jesus says He desires to build His Church and build it so strong that the gates of Hades shall not overcome it.
5. **It encourages others.** Ephesians 4:12 speaks of the desire that the body of Christ be built up so people may become mature in faith.
6. **Jesus regularly worshipped.** Luke 4:16 tells us it was His custom. Our Lord is our model. We can do no better than to do as He did.
7. **Jesus wants us to come together to remember Him.** Luke 22:19 tells of Jesus instituting the Lord's Supper and saying: *"This is my body given for you; do this in remembrance of me."* He encourages us to come together to remember that He died for our sins.
8. **It demonstrates our priorities and that the lord is first in our lives.** In Matthew 6:33, Jesus said: *"Seek first His kingdom and His righteousness, and all these things will be given you as well."* It not only demonstrates priority, but putting God first is the secret of a faithful and fruitful life.
9. **It allows us to come to know and love and care for brothers and sisters in Christ.** We don't love those we don't get to know, and Jesus' command in John 15:12 is to: *"Love each other as I have loved you."*
10. **It helps me love God and helps demonstrate that love.** Deuteronomy 6:5 tells us that our highest calling is to: *"Love the Lord our God with all our heart and with all our soul and with all our strength."*

Well, these are ten reasons that I find helpful to be in worship with God's people. Perhaps they will encourage you as well.

Wayne Van Regenmorter

### Schedule

July 12: Conference call/Office  
13: Meeting/Lansing, IL  
14: Office  
15: Staff Meeting  
Meeting/Illiana Restructure Team/Faith Church/Dyer, IN  
16: Office/Conference call  
17: Off  
18: Preach/Community Reformed Church/Lafayette, IN  
19: Office  
20: Meeting/Grand Rapids, MI  
21: Meeting/Orland Park, IL  
22: Office  
23: Meeting/Munster, IN  
24: Off  
25: Sunday worship

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

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

**Teens who Text** from Brotherhood Mutual Insurance Company – Deacon's Bench

<http://www.brotherhoodmutual.com/safetycentral/articles/documents/DB22-2.pdf>

*Churches can help teens learn to use technology responsibly by crafting policies that help prevent misconduct.* Writer and speaker David R. Smith says he'll never forget the Sunday when one of the guys in his youth ministry took an inappropriate photo of a teenage girl during worship. "He immediately sent it to two of his buddies, who sent it to their friends, who sent it to... you get the picture (no pun intended)," writes Smith, director of content development at TheSource4YM.com, a website offering youth ministry resources. "What followed was a lot of headache and heartache," Smith said.

**Why Blog?** from The Alban Institute

<http://www.alban.org/conversation.aspx?id=9107>

Blogs—originally called Web logs—are more like diaries than any other form of website is, and it is no accident that the country with the most blogs, Japan, has a long history of diary writing. A blog can be used like a diary for recording responses to specific events or issues on particular dates, but it can also be more like a weekly or monthly newsletter column, carefully crafted like a newsletter article would be. Blogs are a perfect medium to tell stories about what faith looks like in practice. Testimonies, stories about people whose lives are being changed because of their faith, and stories about those who are serving in the community or overseas are perfect for blogs. Because blog entries are always connected to specific dates, blogs provide the opportunity to discuss current events in the wider culture and their connection to faith. Upcoming congregational events and ministries can be described in order to encourage people to participate. Toward the end of each week, aspects of the upcoming worship service can be highlighted, with an encouragement to invite neighbors and friends. Recent events can be described as a way to talk about the significance of what happened or the way God was present in those events.

**Embody Christ Fellowship welcomes doubters, non-believers** from The Grand Rapids Press

[http://www.mlive.com/living/grand-rapids/index.ssf/2010/07/embody\\_christ\\_fellowship\\_welco.html](http://www.mlive.com/living/grand-rapids/index.ssf/2010/07/embody_christ_fellowship_welco.html)

The Rev. Jim Daniels doesn't bristle at the thought of people not believing in God. He just wants them to come to church. His new endeavor, Embody Christ Fellowship, on 66th Street near 146th Avenue, is not your ordinary church. It accepts all people, whether they believe or not, and encourages open discussion of doubts and disbeliefs. "It's such a welcoming atmosphere," said Michelle Boogaart, who has been with the church since its start. "There are people there who aren't believers and when they start questioning, you really have to look at things. Questioning our faith, our Bible, is OK there. And that's so freeing."

**Coming to your church Monday morning** from Baptist Press

<http://www.bpnews.net/BPFirstPerson.asp?ID=33292>

Guests attend your church for worship services, but additional dozens -- even hundreds -- walk in on weekdays each year. They come in for directions, weddings, benevolence or after-game fellowships. They attend scouts, daycare, support groups. There's the exterminator, repairman, roofer, delivery person ... and God brings them inside your building. Will they meet Jesus there? Intentionally impact each person who walks in your church doors.

**The power of our spoken words** from LifeWay

<http://www.lifeway.com/article/167814/>

There are many amazing statements that are made in the Bible. One is found in Proverbs 18:21. Here is what it says: "Death and life are in the power of the tongue." Most of us could give examples of the negative ways words can be used to damage the lives of others. It isn't difficult to see how criticism, false accusations, gossip, slander and conspiracy theories can literally destroy a person's reputation and bring great damage to one's life. As teachers of the Word, we have the responsibility to communicate in a way

that brings life to others. Here are five ways we can use our spoken words to strengthen our communication skills and bring life to our hearers.

**Arts indispensable to evangelism and discipleship, says professor** from The Christian Post  
<http://www.christianpost.com/article/20100707/arts-indispensable-to-evangelism-and-discipleship-says-professor/index.html>

The use of arts will greatly impact the work of evangelism and discipleship, said an Arlington, Texas, professor. Stan Moore noted that a large majority of students in many of his seminary classes came to faith through music. This is because "the arts speak to the whole person – intellectually, emotionally, physically and of course spiritually reaching into the very depths of our minds and bodies and spirits," he said.

**The friendliness factor** from Church Central  
<http://www.churchcentral.com/blog/The-friendliness-factor>

Performance evaluations are commonplace in most companies. Employees are normally reviewed on an annual basis and a critique is done of their productivity, attitude and overall performance. It is very hard, if not impossible, to evaluate yourself and receive an honest appraisal. No matter the size, worship style, age, or location of the church, they tend to have one thing in common: They all believe they are friendly churches. Some believe they are the friendliest church in town. However, if they could see themselves through the eyes of a visitor, they may find that they are not perceived that way at all.

**Poll: Church attendance increasing in US** from Gallup  
<http://www.gallup.com/poll/141044/americans-church-attendance-inches-2010.aspx>

Americans' self-reported church attendance has continued to inch up in 2010, with 43.1 percent of Americans reporting weekly or almost weekly attendance. This is up slightly from 42.8 percent in 2009 and 42.1 percent in 2008. The increase comes as Americans' economic confidence has also risen, suggesting that, instead of church attendance rising when economic times get bad, as some theorize, the opposite pattern may be occurring.

**Benchmarks: Training group leaders** from SmallGroups.com  
<http://www.smallgroups.com/articles/2008/benchmarks.html>

Because it is difficult to get a handle on what is going on in other small groups outside of your own (or your own church), SmallGroups.com has conducted live surveys on a variety of small-group topics. The purpose of these surveys is to uncover a sense of what is going on in small groups around the world, and particularly in North America. These surveys are not intended to be a scientific sample of those involved in small groups. And benchmarking—or comparing your small group to other small groups—is not intended to be a substitute for the Holy Spirit's work and guidance in your group. However, knowing what other small groups are doing can be a helpful diagnostic tool, and can show what God is up to within the larger small-group movement. With that in mind, here are some results of SmallGroups.com surveys on the subject of training small-group leaders.

**Dads in ministry face challenge dual roles** from The Kansas City Star  
<http://www.kansascity.com/2010/06/18/2028030/dads-in-ministry-face-challenge.html>

Being a dad and a pastor is not easy. They say you do what you tell others to do, to walk what you talk. And another challenge is time management. Being a pastor is an around-the-clock job, and balancing blood family and spiritual family can be difficult.

**Refresh Sunday School** from Youth Worker  
<http://www.youthworker.com/youth-ministry-resources-ideas/youth-ministry/11633733/>

Low attendance. Boring lectures. Tired students. Unfortunately, this is the reality of most Sunday school classes for teenagers. Most teenagers either do not show up or are showing up very tired and reluctant about their involvement. There is good news. You can refresh Sunday school. You can reignite student excitement and involvement. You can change the ministry you dreaded most into one of the most refreshing meaningful ministries in your youth group. No matter where you are—you have what it takes. It is time to refresh Sunday school and the answer is simple. Stop doing "school" and start connecting with students.

**Incremental preaching** from Leadership Journal  
<http://www.christianitytoday.com/le/preachingworship/preaching/incrementalpreaching.html>

There isn't a preacher alive who isn't at once both energized and dismayed by the sermon's potential to effect change. Why aren't people more deeply transformed by their weekly encounters with God's Word?

The deficiency can't be with the Scriptures, obviously. And most of us manage to communicate biblical truth with a measure of clarity, relevance, and conviction. So why don't we see more real, lasting change?

**Schedule:**

July 12 – DeMotte office  
13 – DeMotte office  
14 – Manitoqua office  
15 – Staff mtg; Illiana Transition Team mtg, Fth-Dyer  
16 – DeMotte office  
19 – DeMotte office  
20 – Manitoqua office  
21 – DeMotte office  
22 – DeMotte office  
23 – DeMotte office

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

**Randy's contact information:**

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