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**SYNOD OF MID-AMERICA**  
**Reformed Church in America**  
**NEWSLETTER - - - Volume 11, Number 14 - - - July 26, 2010**  
<http://www.midamericasynod.org>  
<http://msyn.org>

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

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**Classis, Church, Minister News**

**Calvary Church of Orland Park**, Illinois has planned a “Ground Breaking Celebration” for their new church building on Sunday, August 15, 2010 beginning with praise and worship at 1:45 PM followed by the ceremony at 2:00 PM. The celebration and future building location is just south of 159th Street on 104th Avenue in Orland Park. (If you attend, bring your lawn chairs.) The church is temporarily worshipping at Marcus Theaters on LaGrange Road in Orland Park.

**Regional Synod Staff Email Addresses**

The Synod of Mid-America staff persons are using different primary email addresses. The previous **rca.org** addresses **will** continue to work; however, for greater reliability the following addresses are suggested to be used:

Wayne Van Regenmorter: [wregen@msyn.org](mailto:wregen@msyn.org)

Randy Kooy: [rkooy@msyn.org](mailto:rkooy@msyn.org)

**Congregation Disability Policy Suggested and “Disability Advocates” Needed**

The RCA Office of Disability Concerns seeks to help RCA churches become more accessible, inclusive, and missional in the ways we engage people with disabilities. To that end it is offering a template for congregations to use when a consistory considers a church policy on disabilities. The template can be found at this location: <http://images.rca.org/docs/discipleship/ChurchPolicyOnDisabilities.pdf>. The Office of Disability Concerns is also seeking to identify a “Disability Advocate” in each RCA congregations. Disability Advocates will provide a personal connection to assist and resource congregations in ways that are most helpful and useful to their specific circumstances. A description of what this might look like can be found here: <http://images.rca.org/docs/discipleship/ChurchAdvocateForDisabilityConcerns.pdf>. The advocate for your church can be shared with the RCA coordinator, Terry DeYoung ([tdeyoung@rca.org](mailto:tdeyoung@rca.org) or 616-541-0855) who is also available for assistance for your congregation. More general information can be found at: <http://www.rca.org/disability>.

**HOPE Prayerline Still Available**

An earlier issue of this newsletter mentioned the discontinuation of the HOPE Prayerline monthly newsletter – that information was not correct. The July issue of the RCA HOPE Prayerline can be found at <https://www.rca.org/SSLPage.aspx?pid=6696>. “The exhilaration we feel watching fireworks is a lot like what we should feel when we see God working through our prayers. The Lord works in different designs and layers, and sometimes his work is accompanied by a “boom” that makes us jump.” The focus is growing in our dependence on God. Specific articles include:

- Celebrate Your Dependence!--Kathy Bruins reminds us to remember our dependence on God even during our Independence Day celebrations.
- A Prayer for the Gulf of Mexico--Mary Clark offers a plea for God to heal ecosystems damaged by the oil spill in the Gulf of Mexico.
- Lifeboat Prayers--Sharon Ruff shares a time when she turned to God out of fear and God protected her and her family.
- A Small Shining Revelation--Janice Fitzpatrick offers a Fourth of July poem.

The theme for August will be “Praying for Missionaries”.

**McCormick Seminary Workshop on Social Media in Ministry**

McCormick Theological Seminary in Chicago is sponsoring a two-day workshop titled “Blessings and Burdens: Practical Approaches and Postures for the Use of Social Media in Ministry” on October 15-16, 2010. The workshop will seek to answer questions like:

- What do pastoral care, social justice, administration, worship planning and evangelism look like via social media?
- How do I get started, when there are just so many things out there?
- How do I manage my time and how do I use these social media well?
- How do I avoid the pitfalls and ethical issues inherent in the use of social media?

Complete information about this workshop can be found at: <http://mccormick.edu/content/workshop-blessings-and-burdens-practical-approaches-and-postures-use-social-media-ministry>

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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 ([wregen@msyn.org](mailto:wregen@msyn.org)):**

### ***Trends for American Churches...***

Thom Rainer recently published an article entitled, "Five Major Trends for Churches in America". He admitted that discerning trends can be difficult and risky business, but ignoring them also means missing missional opportunities for the church. Much of his research is based on studies done by LifeWay research which gather's information and facts using today's realities. Rainer says the process to predicting trends is "analogous to weather forecasting. We can see all the ingredients that will likely cause a specific outcome. But those factors can change, so we can never say that we are 100 percent certain."

Here are the five major trends predicted as they relate to American demographics:

1. "Our nation will see the emergence of the largest generational mission field in over a century. According to our current research, the Millennial generation, those born between 1980 and 2000, will have a very low Christian representation. Our estimates now are that only 15 percent are Christian. With a huge population of nearly 80 million, that means that nearly 70 million young people are not Christians.
2. The dominant attitude of this huge generation toward Christianity will be largely indifferent. Only 13 percent of the Millennials rank any type of spiritual matter as important to their lives. They are not angry at churches and Christians. They simply ignore us because they do not deem us as meaningful or relevant.
3. Senior adult ministries in churches will experience steep declines. As the large Baby Boomer generation moves into their older years, they will resist any suggestion that they are senior adults, no matter how senior they may be. Unfortunately, many churches are slow to adapt to new realities. If they do senior adult ministry the way they've always done it, it will be headed for failure.
4. The large Boomer generation will become more receptive to the Gospel. Our data is anecdotal for now, but we are seeing indications that the Boomers may actually become more interested in spiritual matters in general, and Christianity specifically. If so, this trend will be counter to other trends where adults tend to become less receptive to the Gospel as they age. The Baby Boomers have tried it all and found no joy. They may likely turn to the hope of the Gospel.

5. Family will be a key value for both of the large generations. For the Millennials, family is their most important value. Nearly 8 out of 10 Millennials ranked family as the important issue in their lives. They told us that they had healthy relationships with their parents who, for the most part, are Baby Boomers. Some churches say they are family friendly, but few actually demonstrate that value. Churches that reach both of these generations will make significant changes to become the type of churches that foster healthy family relationships."

If these five trends are possible future realities, what opportunities the church has to respond to where God is leading congregations in their future. May we be challenged and alert to the new opportunities that are right at our doorstep; and may we respond in radical obedience in following where God is leading.

Wayne Van Regenmorter

### **Schedule**

- July 26: Meeting/Beecher, IL
- 27: New Wave Network conference call
- 28: Florida/Synod Task Force meeting/Orlando, FL
- 29: Office
- 30: Meeting/Orland Park, IL
- 31: Off
- August 1: Sunday worship
- 2: Leadership Team/Conference call
- 3: Church Multiplication Team meeting/Second Reformed Church/Fulton, IL
- 4: Office
- 5: Sustainability Retreat/Grand Rapids, MI
- 6: Office
- 7: Off
- 8: Sunday worship
- 9: Meeting/Chicago, IL
- 10: Office
- 11: Illiana Church Multiplication team  
Illiana Transition Team
- 12: Synod Executive Council Task Team/Stickney, IL
- 13: Office
- 14: 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.

### **Evangelism and the Under-Thirty Crowd** from The Alban Institute

<http://www.alban.org/conversation.aspx?id=9141>

[This is another voice that is similar to Wayne's piece in this newsletter.] A November 2009 issue of The Week featured a story, "Losing our Religion," that focused on the rapidly growing numbers of the religiously unaffiliated in the United States, the so called Nones, and asked if organized religion is fading. Younger than the general population, many Nones believe in God yet are skeptical about organized religion. The article quotes recent statistics suggesting that if this trend continues, cohorts of nonreligious young people will replace older religious people and account for one-quarter of the American population. Another recent article in USA Today concluded that young adults born in the 1980s and 1990s, approximately 72 million people, want to make an impact and are socially-conscious yet do not relate to traditional institutional structures. A decreasing number of these young adults view churches as places to make a difference or to develop their leadership skills.

**Revived [RCA] house of worship has much to celebrate** from Staten Island South Shore

[http://www.silive.com/southshore/index.ssf/2010/07/revived\\_house\\_of\\_worship\\_has\\_m.html](http://www.silive.com/southshore/index.ssf/2010/07/revived_house_of_worship_has_m.html)

Three years ago, with just a handful of parishioners remaining and little to be hopeful about, the Reformed Church of Prince's Bay was on the verge of closing. But with the help of Rev. Adolf A. Pagliarulo, his wife Jarene, and others, the Seguire Avenue house of worship has not only managed to survive; since July 1, 2007, it hasn't closed its doors. Literally. Now better known as The Church That Never Closes, the sanctuary celebrated its three-year anniversary last Thursday.

**Congregations struggle in aging, decaying churches** from The Associated Press

<http://www.google.com/hostednews/ap/article/ALeqM5i7tADnxuR79MJPCf7h0C8jxGSMGQD9GV08K80>

Caring for old church facilities is an increasingly acute problem, particularly for mainline Protestant denominations. As membership declines and budgets shrink, the beautiful edifices of American Christianity can feel like weights dragging down churches that are forced to spend money on maintenance and repairs instead of ministry, charity and other Gospel-derived imperatives. "It's hard times in paradise," said the Rev. William Quick, pastor emeritus at Metropolitan United Methodist Church in Detroit.

**What is the appropriate level of debt for a church?** from Bank of the West

<http://www.multibriefs.com/briefs/nacba/bank7-16.htm>

The vast majority of banks have emerged from one of the most difficult periods in recent history somewhat battered and bruised, but fundamentally sound. Banks have plenty of capital to lend to credit worthy borrowers. For churches, credit worthiness is highly correlated to the "right size" of a new building project. In the past few years, historical norms for prudent loan amounts were set aside by both lenders and borrowers, with disastrous results. Banks and churches alike need to refocus now on long established metrics regarding appropriate loan amounts. Churches that are planning expansion projects based on what they can afford based on historical results versus what they hope to be able to afford in the future will find a number of lenders willing to provide financing.

**Should churches increase 2011 budgets?** from Christianity Today

<http://www.christianitytoday.com/ct/2010/july/6.16.html>

Financial advisers, researchers, and other observers weigh in on whether churches should increase their operating budgets next year.

**The principle of the leadership lid** from The Christian Post

<http://www.christianpost.com/article/20100714/the-principle-of-the-leadership-lid/index.html>

The principle of the leadership lid is simple, if not simplistic: An organization can move no higher than the leadership qualities of the leader. Like any so-called principle, the leadership lid certainly has exceptions. It is not an ironclad rule. But it does merit consideration. This principle does suggest, for example, if the leader has character deficiencies, the organization will suffer.

**Spiritual health surveys** from Building Church Leaders

<http://www.buildingchurchleaders.com/articles/2010/spiritualsurveys.html>

Somewhere along the line doctors realized that one of the best ways to prevent serious illness was to have health checkups. These routine doctor visits can have a dramatic impact in diagnosing and preventing health crises. We in the church who are leaders of leaders also need to have a checkup mechanism, a way in which we can monitor the spiritual health of those leaders we oversee and care for. One excellent way to provide checkups is through surveys. When done well, a spiritual health survey can give you the information you need to respond promptly to any serious issue in a leader's life or ministry

**Leading a church in prayer** from Leadership Journal

<http://www.christianitytoday.com/le/preachingworship/worship/leadingprayer.html>

Some traditions use set prayers. Others rely on extemporaneous prayers. Both have their place. But the author of this article believes what congregations need most are studied prayers, well prepared, well expressed. These prayers may or may not be read, but will be thought through ahead of time. Publicly leading a church in prayer deserves thoughtful preparation.

**Simple tips for creating an emotionally safe children's ministry** from ChurchSafety.com

<http://www.churchsafety.com/topics/kids/children/creatinganemotionallysafeministry/simpletipsforcreatinganemotionallysafechildrensministry.html>

None of us intend to cause or allow a child to get hurt emotionally. Ideally, when a child comes to our classroom, we want them to feel safe to make friends with other children and trust the leaders. Above all, we want to create a safe haven where children can come to explore the mysteries of God, and discover his goodness. Use these simple tips to help you create an emotionally safe environment in your children's and youth ministry.

**FRIEND, FOE, or FIASCO** from The Alban Institute

<http://www.alban.org/conversation.aspx?id=9142>

Face-to-face relationships characterize life in a small congregation, where truly "there is no place to run and no place to hide" for pastors, church musicians, or congregants. Over the years, we have observed the lively and creative synergy that occurs when pastors and church musicians work together in light of a common vision. Sadly, we have also observed the negative impact of poor communication and the lack of a common vision among church musicians and pastors. Alienation between a pastor and church musician can lead to disharmony and polarization in the life of a small congregation.

**Schedule:**

July 26 – DeMotte office

27 – Wisconsin Classis Search Team, Brown Deer PM

28 – Florida/Synod Task Force meeting/Orlando, FL

29 – DeMotte office

30 – Vacation day

August 2 – DeMotte office

3 – Manitoqua office; mtg Bourbonnais PM

4 – DeMotte office

5 – DeMotte office

6 – DeMotte office

9 – DeMotte office

10 – DeMotte office

11 – Manitoqua office AM; Illiana Transition Team, Dyer PM

12 – Task Force for Exec Council restructure, Stickney

13 – DeMotte office

15 – Calvary Church, Orland Park groundbreaking

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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