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**SYNOD OF MID-AMERICA**  
**Reformed Church in America**  
**NEWSLETTER - - - Volume 11, Number 15 - - - August 16, 2010**  
<http://www.midamericasynod.org>  
<http://msyn.org>

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

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**The Ravines Retreat Center Website**

A website for The Ravines Retreat Center is newly up and running. You can view it at <http://theravines.org>. The Ravines is a Christ-centered retreat center for marriages in crisis – where obstacles seem to be too much to bear. Plus it is for couples that are trying to strengthen their marriage or simply get back on the right path. More information can be found on their website.

**Christian Community Development Association Conference in Chicago**

The Christian Community Development Association (CCDA) is a national association of Christians who are committed to transforming their under-resourced communities to reflect more of the life, values, and power of the Kingdom of God on earth; in doing so, congregations transform and become more missional as well. They will be holding their conference in Chicago September 7-11. See the following internet location for details: <http://www.cdda.org/conference>. Workshops available include:

- Breaking the Cycles of Poverty
- Children
- Christian Community Development 101
- Christian Community Development 201/301
- Church-Based Community Development
- Critical Issues
- Economic Development
- Education
- Gentrification & Homelessness
- Housing
- Immigration
- Junior High and High School Youth
- Organizational Leadership
- Partnerships & Collaboration
- Personal & Family Development
- Resource Development

The RCA is encouraging people to participate in this conference and will offer stipend of \$600 if a congregation registers at least two people (\$900 for three or more). To apply for the stipend, contact Kenita Harris ([kharris@rca.org](mailto:kharris@rca.org)) of the RCA Multiracial Initiatives office. Participants will participate in two RCA network sessions at the conference and a report will be submitted of what is hoped to be implemented in communities from lessons learned at the conference.

**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)

**HOPE Prayerline**

The RCA HOPE Prayerline is a resource for prayer leaders and all who have the call to be prayer intercessors. The August issue of the RCA HOPE Prayerline can be found at <https://www.rca.org/SSLPage.aspx?pid=6709>. The theme this month is praying for missionaries. “Many missionaries have a special call on their lives to leave what is known and comfortable and go to an unfamiliar place. However, missionaries don’t have to travel to exotic lands--they can be local, too. The important thing is that we remember to keep them in prayer as they share the good news of Jesus.” “...consider becoming a prayer partner with a missionary.” Specific articles include:

- Praying for Missionaries--Kathy Bruins offers suggestions for praying for missionaries.
- Book Reviews--Christian Prayer for Today, by Martha Moore-Keish, and Holden Prayer around the Cross, by Susan Briehl

The theme for September will be "Laboring in Prayer".

### **Classis, Church, Minister News**

**Calvary Church of Orland Park**, Illinois had a "Ground Breaking Celebration" for their new church building on Sunday, August 15, 2010. It was a sunny day for the hundreds of their congregation and others that attended. They celebrated their history as well as looked forward to their future of ministry within the Orland Park community. The new building location is just south of 159th Street on 104th Avenue in Orland Park. The church is temporarily worshipping at Marcus Theaters on LaGrange Road in Orland Park.




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### **Celebration Stories**

The story in this issue comes to us via Paul Vroom who is serving as pastor of Missio Dei – a new church within Illiana Classis in Mokena, Illinois. Paul says, "One of the things that we encourage MDCers to do is to share their Gospel Stories, what God has been doing in and through their lives. **Here is Alisa's story.**"

This story comes as a long overdue attempt at addressing my own depravity and glorifying God for giving us constant unconditional love no matter where we are. When first posed the idea of sharing, I wasn't sure if a "God-turned-everything-upside-down-and inside-out-to-get-my attention" story was in order or just a daily Jesus moment. Seeing as how many do not know the 180-turnaround story, I have decided to share that with you all.



After I graduated high school, I went off into the college realm. Two and half years into my studies, I found myself in a position I never saw for myself. I indulged in the college party scene and everything that came with that. I had even found myself in a relationship with another woman. On top of all of this, I was walking further and further away from God as I began to believe that everything I was doing was okay as long as I believed in God. With much lower grades than I had wanted, living a lifestyle I never saw for myself, and certainly spending too much money on things that were clearly drawing me away from God, I hit a form of "rock-bottom" I had to return home.

Earlier this year, I had met one of my friends from Olivet for coffee. A little less than halfway through the conversation about my life and what I had done, I realized it was no longer her talking to me, but now it was God talking through her. This was the point where I knew I could no longer continue the way I had been living if I was going to be a real Christian. The more I started to pray, the more joy rushed over me. The more I began to read my Bible, the more I knew God was with me. I have finally come to realize that Christ is the only constant in the rollercoaster rides we call our lives and what it means to really know that Christ died on a cross for my sins so that I could have eternal life regardless of what I have done.

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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)):**

**Your "To Be" List...**

I wonder, do you have a "to be" list? I know what a "to do" list is because I receive one from Linda often and it helps keep me on track doing what needs to be done in our family and home. But what about a "to be" list? Bill Easum says that over the years he has learned that a "to be" list is more important than a "to do" list. As the first-century church began to grow, it was impossible for the apostles to keep all the plates spinning and so they saw the need for a "to be" list. In Acts 6:1 it says, *"In those days when the number of disciples was increasing, the Grecian Jews among them complained against the Hebraic Jews because their widows were being overlooked in the daily distribution of food. So the Twelve gathered all the disciples together and said, 'It would not be right for us to neglect the ministry of the Word of God in order to wait on tables.'"* The apostles discovered the need for a "to be" list of broader leaders in the church so that the teaching of the Word was not neglected and other ministry could be carried out as well.

Easum says a "to be" list is a list of people you are mentoring to be more than they are at the moment. They are a group of people, 10 or less, with whom you intentionally spend time. You hang out with them, show them the way, modeling for them what it means to be a leader. The goal of a "to be" list is to move people along in their spiritual development. For example:

- a non-believer to a believer
- a visitor to a participant
- a participant to a servant
- a servant to a leader
- a leader to a coach
- a coach to a paid staff position

Another way to view it, says Easum, is to mentor people up the leadership path. It goes something like this:

- Visitors - do not overlook the fact that fewer people will be joining organizations in the future and that one of the best ways to disciple a person is to involve them in a ministry.
- Apprentices in training - this includes potentially everyone in the congregation.
- Leaders of committees - Almost anyone can lead a committee. All you have to do is call it to order, keep your mouth shut, and close it.
- Leaders of short term ministries like Sunday School or VBS. At this point people need to become scouts, looking for potential new leaders, but they are seldom coaches.
- Leaders of major, on-going ministries like a small group system - It is not uncommon from here on for leaders to become scouts and coaches.
- Leaders of leaders - usually staff
- Leader of leaders - lead pastor

The apostles had to choose people on their "to be" list so they could continue to do the two things they were best equipped to do: teach and pray. How do you go about mentoring new leaders for the future of the church?

Wayne Van Regenmorter

**Schedule:**

August 16: Off

17: Illinois Executive Committee Meeting/Emmanuel Reformed Church/Morrison, IL

18: Wisconsin Transition Team Conference Call

19: Meeting/Alto Reformed Church/Alto, WI  
20: Office  
21: Florida Classis Executive Council Conference Call  
22: Sunday worship  
23: Office  
24: Ridder Team Conference Call  
25: Meeting/Orland Park, IL  
26: Office  
27: Off  
28: Florida Executive Committee Conference Call  
29: Sunday worship  
30: Meeting/Christian Park Reformed Church/Indianapolis, IN  
31: Office

September 1: Illiana Transition Team Meeting/Bourbonnais, IL  
2-3: Vacation Days

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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.

**Welcoming Kids with Autism** from Kalamazoo Gazette

[http://www.mlive.com/living/kalamazoo/index.ssf/2010/08/welcoming\\_kids\\_with\\_autism\\_sou.html](http://www.mlive.com/living/kalamazoo/index.ssf/2010/08/welcoming_kids_with_autism_sou.html)

Stephanie Willoughby wanted her two boys to have a chance to enjoy vacation Bible school with other kids like them. So she's planning a VBS at her church (Southridge Reformed Church) for children with autism. "I wanted to get them incorporated into church life a little more," she said of her sons, Ben, 8, and Sam, 6. For parents of autistic children, "going to church is a little scary because you never know how your kids are going to act," said Willoughby.

**More young adults going into ministry** from USA Today

[http://www.usatoday.com/news/religion/2010-08-09-youngseminarians09\\_ST\\_N.htm?loc=interstitialskip](http://www.usatoday.com/news/religion/2010-08-09-youngseminarians09_ST_N.htm?loc=interstitialskip)

For years, churches across the USA have prayed that more young people would explore careers in ministry as a wave of Baby Boomer pastors prepares to retire. Now it seems their prayers are being answered. For the past 10 years, the estimated median age of candidates for master of divinity degrees has fallen steadily, from 34.14 in 1999 to 32.19 in 2009, according to an analysis by the Center for the Study of Theological Education (CSTE) at Auburn Seminary. That marks a reversal: From 1989 to 1999, the estimated median age had climbed steadily from 31.4 to 34.14. Denominations hail this new pattern as a positive sign now, as churches increasingly depend on aging leaders and struggle to attract parishioners under age 30.

**Methodist study finds four marks of church vitality** from The Christian Century

<http://www.christiancentury.org/article.lasso?id=8679>

What is the key to a healthy church? United Methodists have paid big bucks to find out. As the sour economy and aging buildings wreak havoc on church budgets, United Methodists are trying to get ahead of the problem and assess the health of their congregations in a bid to reverse declining fortunes. The denomination recently concluded a study of more than 32,000 of its congregations across North America, seeking the "key factors impacting vital congregations." The study surveyed everybody from bishops to district superintendents to people in the pews.

**Your pastor needs time off and you can help** from LifeWay

<http://www.lifeway.com/article/162629/>

As a deacon, elder, or other church leader, you have an opportunity to encourage your pastor to get regular rest, refreshment, and spiritual renewal. A practical way to do this is to make certain your pastor

takes regular time off and ensure that he has a way to do it. As a personal mission, ensure that your pastor takes time-off in the following three areas

**Transform your parking lot** from Building for Ministry

[http://www.buildingforministry.com/2010/08/transform\\_your\\_parking\\_lot\\_1.html](http://www.buildingforministry.com/2010/08/transform_your_parking_lot_1.html)

A parking lot takes up a large percentage of church property, yet it seems to get the least attention.

"That's sad," says landscape architect Doug Rockne of Littleton, Colo. Even if you own a lot with ample space for parking, you shouldn't just slap down concrete or asphalt. If you own a small lot, you must get even more creative about parking for your members and guests.

**Don't take logs lightly** from Your Church

<http://www.christianitytoday.com/yc/2010/summer/donttakelogslightly.html>

It is important for church leaders to recognize that the tax code imposes strict limitations on the use of the standard mileage rate. In the absence of adequate records, a taxpayer "may alternatively establish an element by his own statement, whether written or oral, containing specific information in detail as to such element" and by "other corroborative evidence sufficient to establish such element." However, the tax code specifically precludes the deduction of automobile expenses on the basis of an approximation or a taxpayer's uncorroborated testimony.

**Faith and fitness: Exercise good until it becomes a false god** from Associated Baptist Press

<http://www.abpnews.com/content/view/5385/53/>

The sixth chapter of First Corinthians describes the body as "a temple of the Holy Spirit." For many Christians that means what they do with their body matters to God, including physical fitness. A few, however, caution that too much focus on "temple care" can itself become a sin. While it's easy to think about idols as statues in a temple somewhere, Tim Keller, pastor of Redeemer Presbyterian Church in New York City, says idols are everywhere. "Anything can serve as a counterfeit god, especially the good things in life," he contends.

**The missional heart: Developing a passion for service** from Youth Worker

<http://www.youthworker.com/youth-ministry-resources-ideas/youth-ministry/11634055/>

Mission work is simple. Seriously, think about it. Take a crummy place, add some overly privileged youth, throw in a Bible verse and a dash of awareness, and there you have it—a mission experience. The problem is that this is a canned, fast-food, Americanized version of kingdom living—where Jesus and missions fit into our lives only to accommodate a shallow Christian purpose.

**Schedule:**

August 16 – DeMotte office

17 – Manitoqua office; Illinois Classis Exec mtg Morrison PM

18 – DeMotte office

19-31 – Vacation

September 1 – DeMotte office; Illiana Transition Team mtg PM

2 – Manitoqua office (mtg at office AM)

3 – DeMotte office

6 – Labor Day

Note that I will be on vacation August 19-31. If there is an urgent issue you can email or leave a message on my cell phone voice mail. 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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