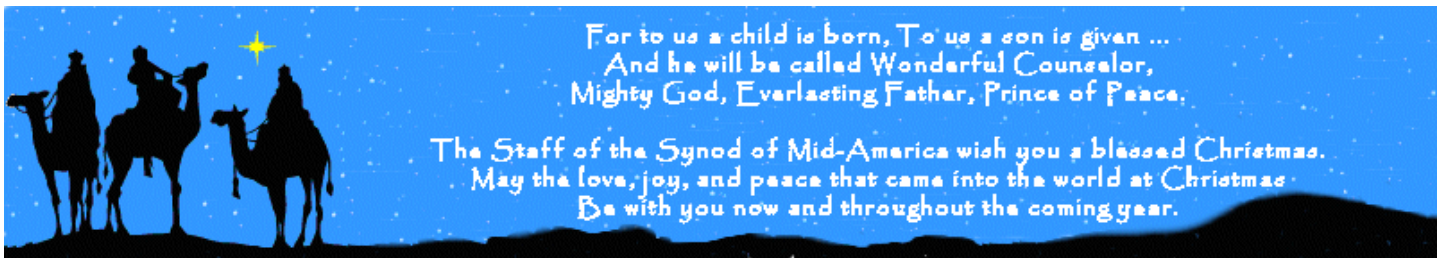

SYNOD OF MID-AMERICA
Reformed Church in America
NEWSLETTER - - - Volume 8, Number 24 - - - December 17, 2007
<http://www.midamericasynod.org>

“Healthy classes and congregations through revitalization and multiplication”



Synod Annual Session Equipping Event

The Executive Council of the Synod of Mid-America has decided that the Synod would expand its annual session time to include more than just the business of the Synod, and to include more than just the classis delegates to the Synod. A resource – motivation – equipping – inspiration time is being planned. The Synod looked to find a partner classis in the venture with the idea for it to be an event with the classis and held within the classis, with an invitation and welcome to all in the Synod of Mid-America. If the event is found to be useful for the Synod, it is the intention to rotate the event among the various classes of the Synod.

The Synod of Mid-America, in partnership with the Classis of Illiana, is announcing a synod-wide gathering and equipping event where the key-note speaker will be Dr. Paul Borden. Dr. Borden will be giving a presentation he titles: “Moving from Maintenance to Mission” in three sessions:

- Missional Leaders
- Missional Structures
- Missional Outreach

The gathering event is scheduled for **Friday-Saturday, April 4-5, 2008**. The Borden equipping portion will be Friday evening and Saturday morning. While the specific location for the event has not yet been chosen, it will be held within the bounds of the Classis of Illiana. The gathering event will be open to all in the Synod and will be especially appropriate and helpful for pastors, consistories, and all church leaders.

Many may already be familiar with Paul Borden. Two years ago he gave a similar presentation in the Synod of Great Lakes which was received very well. Paul is the Executive Minister for the American Baptist Churches of the West. He is a nationally known church consultant who helped initiate the “teaching church” movement, in which congregations learn from other congregations about excellence in ministry. Leith Anderson, the author of “Dying for a Change” writes this of Paul Borden: “The American Baptist Churches of the West have demonstrated that a plateaued and declining region of mainline congregations can become a model of healthy and growing congregations. They have overcome the usual excuses... They have followed a powerful formula of Biblical strategies, courageous leadership, and much hard work.” He has written two books: “Hit the Bullseye” and “Direct Hit”. Those who have heard him speak have found his remarks, at the very least, to be thought provoking.

All are encouraged to reserve April 4-5 on calendars. Inform your church leadership so they can also reserve these dates. More information will come as it is available.

Urban Ministry Asking

Congregations in the Synod of Mid-America are asked to share in the support of ministries in the urban areas of our synod by contributing an Urban Ministry Asking. Attached to this email newsletter is a PDF file that contains a letter addressed to the consistories of Synod of Mid-America churches. **Church pastors and/or support staff are requested to print this letter and bring it to the attention of each congregation consistory.** Congregations who have contributed to the Urban Ministry Asking are sincerely thanked for the support given to this work within our synod.

Coaching Excellence Day

There have been many who have been trained in coaching in the Synod of Mid-America. A Coaching Excellence Day is a way to sharpen coaching skills and assess what skills may be improved. Coaching Excellence describes well the purpose of the event – it's about being the best coaches we can be. Specifically the event will be held on **Tuesday, February 12, 2008**, tentatively to be held at Camp Manitoqua. If you are a coach who has been actively using your skills, you are invited to attend this day. Reserve the date on your calendar and let the synod know your plans by contacting Randy Kooy (rkooy@rca.org or 815-464-9181).

Identifying Congregation Prayer Leaders

An email was sent a couple of weeks ago with a request from our synod's Prayer Leader, Diane Aardema, to identify the prayer leaders in our synod's congregations. Many replies were received – "Thank you" to those who have already responded. For those congregations who have not yet replied please respond with one of the following choices:

- (0) Our church does not have a prayer team leader, but we are in the process of obtaining one.
- (0) Our church does not have a prayer team leader. Please send me information about prayer teams so we can begin.
- (0) Our church prays corporately and we have no plans to form a specific prayer ministry at this time.
- (0) Our church has a prayer team leader. Name:_____, Phone number:_____, Email address:_____.

The goal is to get a response from every church so resources can be shared. If your congregation has not yet replied, please email your response as soon as possible to Randy Kooy (rkooy@rca.org).

Elder and/or Deacon Nomination Request

Do you know an elder or a deacon who is the type of person who can give input to our denomination in a conference setting? The RCA is making plans to bring together a special group of elders and deacons. This gathering, which will be about three-days to be held in April or May 2008, is being convened to discuss how the RCA should best increase the effectiveness of its elder and deacon leadership in the areas of revitalization, multiplication, leadership, discipleship, and mission.

The Synod of Mid-America is requesting nominations of persons who might be able to attend to help with this important task. Invitations will be given to potential participants from the pool of nominees received. While there is no single description of the ideal participant, some characteristics that might be displayed by a participant are:

- Ministry minded versus task oriented
- Congregation leadership an important priority
- Works well with others
- Special or high-level gifts and skills
- Implementer and innovator
- High integrity and widely respected
- Engages and contributes in discussions
- Embraces the principles of the conference

As persons come to mind that exhibit one or more of these characteristics, please nominate this person as a potential participant for this important conference. **The only way these special elders and/or deacons can be identified is by those in the local church bringing forth their names.** It is for the good of our denomination to have high-quality elder/deacon representatives from the Synod of Mid-America. Send the person's name along with a brief description of why, if chosen, you believe he or she could make a contribution to the RCA in this way. Send to Randy Kooy (rkooy@rca.org). The synod's deadline to submit nominations is Friday, December 21, 2007

Celebration Stories of Revitalization and Multiplication

This section of the newsletter is where we share stories of celebration. The story in this issue comes from Chad Schuitema, pastor at Community Reformed Church, Lafayette, IN:

"For two years now, Community Reformed Church has been supporting a struggling local church in the inner-city of Lafayette called Forerunners Ministry. We've designated them as a local mission we give to on a yearly basis. Forerunners Ministry is a predominantly African American church with about 40 members. They are a church that is doing ministry "in the trenches" of our city. They reach out to children of drug and alcohol addicted parents, they have a daycare ministry to help take care of children while single parents work, and they have been active in evangelizing their neighborhood.

"Over the past two years, we've simply given them money. But this year, we became convicted that we needed to do

more, we need to meet the people of this church we support, help them more than monetarily, and encourage them to continue the work for the Lord that they have been doing. On Sunday, December 2, we joined together for a worship service. It was truly a picture of heaven, with people coming together regardless of race or creed, worshipping our Great God. Their children sang, their pastor and our pastor preached a sermon together, and the atmosphere of joy was unbelievable. All generations and races blessed each other as we sang and prayed.

“After worship we shared fellowship and a meal together, sitting around tables encouraging each other, laughing, and praising God for all the wonderful blessings He gives us. Many of the members of Forerunners church had tears in their eyes as they saw our church trying to live out what we believe, and our church was so blessed simply by being servants.

“We look to continue this partnership with Forerunners by joining them in worship, helping them with upgrade their building to be more efficient and accessible. And here is where God gets all the credit: our consistory voted and told our church that our entire offering from December 9th will be given to Forerunners in addition to the money we had already budgeted to give them this year. God put this idea in the mind of one of our elders. When the idea was first discussed it was almost unanimous that we would not be able to do that and still reach our budget goals for this year. But slowly, over the course of one week, God changed our minds and convinced us that we needed to take a step of faith and trust Him that this is what He wanted us to do. The very next day God blessed us with taking away a previous financial commitment that was more than equal to a double normal offering amount. God is good!”

Postscript: “A group of our people went and worshiped with the Forerunners Ministry church yesterday (12/16/2007) and we unassumingly dropped a check off in their offering basket for over \$8200. But the amount isn’t what is important to me, it’s that we listened to God and stepped out in faith!”

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.

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

The Light of God...

Warmest greetings to all this Christmas season as we celebrate God's greatest gift of His Son come down to us. I count it a special privilege to share the joy of Christmas with you, your loved ones and the congregations God called you to serve. This Christmas as you see beautiful lights all around you, may they remind you to thank God for that Great Light which dispels the darkness of our sin. May His light brighten your life and overcome any darkness.

Take time to consider the difference the light makes. Just imagine someone going out behind a house in the summer and picking up an old sheet of plywood that has been there a long time. You look upon an ugly scene. The bugs who love the darkness begin to scurry to get out of the light. The grass is yellowed or dead. The dampness makes the ground dank and smelly. You realize there is nothing beautiful because there has been no light. But allow the sunlight to permeate that same spot for a while and all will begin to change. The grass begins to sprout. Perhaps even some flowers begin to grow. Come back in a couple of months and everything has changed and become beautiful.

This season, let's pause and consider how dark our lives would be without Christ. Then let's give thanks for the Light as we each consider all the benefits and blessings we have because Christ has come into the world and into our lives. People instinctively know they need the light of God and are often open to an invitation to the special Christmas services in our congregations. Let's pray for those who are disconnected from God that they would return to Him; let's pray for the lost that they would encounter the Light of the world this Christmas. Let's pray that our churches would be full to overflowing this Christmas as we worship the Christ, the Light of the world.

Wishing you an abundantly joyful Christmas,

Wayne Van Regenmorter

Schedule:

December 17: Meeting/Miami, FL

18: Florida Restructure Team meeting/Comunidad de Fe/West Palm Beach, FL
19-January 1, 2008: Vacation

January 2: Office

3: Staff meeting/ Camp Manitoqua

4: Office

5: Off

6: Sunday worship

Wayne's contact information:

10088 Prairie Knoll Ct.

St. John, IN 46373

Cell phone: 941-302-1281

Home office phone: 219-365-9649

E-mail: wvanregenmorter@rca.org

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

Schedule:

December 17 – DeMotte office

18 – DeMotte office

19 – Manitoqua office

20 – DeMotte office

21 – Vacation day

24-25 – Christmas

26 – DeMotte office

27 – Manitoqua office

28 – DeMotte office

31-January 1 – New year's holiday

January 2 – DeMotte office

3 – Manitoqua office; Staff mtg

4 – 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:

Manitoqua office: 815-464-9181

DeMotte office: 219-987-6562

Cell phone: 219-730-4873

Email: rkooy@rca.org
