

**MINUTES
REGULAR SESSION
SYNOD OF MID-AMERICA, RCA
APRIL 24-25, 2009**

I. Introduction, Worship and Opening of Synod

The Regional Synod of Mid-America met in its regular session on Friday-Saturday, April 24-25, 2009 at New Life Community Church, Milwaukee, Wisconsin. The business meeting was held in conjunction with the Charting a Course to Missional Rebirth event. The entire synod was invited to the Charting a Course... event. The business meeting was held Friday afternoon beginning at 2:00 pm. While these minutes record the business of the Regional Synod, the Charting a Course... event continued Friday evening and Saturday ending at noon. The synod was led during this time by Reggie McNeal. The Charting a Course to Missional Rebirth event included significant time for worship, prayer, and small group discussions.

The business meeting began with a time of worship, prayer, and praise followed by the synod's Visionary Leader, Wayne Van Regenmorter, leading the Synod in God's Word from Numbers 13: living by faith or by fear.

II. Roll Call

Delegates to Regional Synod of Mid-America, RCA present at session:

Classis of Chicago

Pedro Windsor
2052 N. Sawyer Ave.
Chicago, IL 60647

Shane Sterk
905 Hilltop Ave.
West Chicago, IL 60185

Don Coutts
10201 S. 88th Ave.
Palos Hills, IL 60465

Ray Kraft
918 Walnut Dr.
Darien, IL 60561

Classis of Florida

Jay Sowers
West Broward Community
Church
17950 Griffin Rd.
Southwest Ranches, FL 33331

Newton Fairweather
North Dade Community Church
700 NW 175th St.
Miami, FL 33169

Al Wilson
757 White Ivey Ct.
Apopka, FL 32712

Classis of Florida continued

Judy Hazelton
4773 Independence Dr.
Bradenton, FL 34210-1915

Classis of Illiana

Ken Kuiper
929 Janet Place
Dyer, IN 46311

Dale Matthews
8824 Sandpiper Ct.
Fort Wayne, IN 46804

Warren Ouwenga
3070 Woodhaven Dr
Bourbonnais, IL 60914-4846

Classis of Illinois

Phil Doeschot
6930 Mexico Road
St. Peters, MO 63376

Scott Bonestroo
10960 Spring Valley Rd.
Fulton, IL 61252

Shannon Parrish
10465 Frog Pond Rd.
Erie, IL 61250

Classis of Illinois continued

Richard Houzenga
3187 IL Rte. 78
Thomson, IL 61285

Classis of Wisconsin

Luke Schouten
W2749 Huibregtse Ln
Oostburg, WI 53070

Wayne DeVrou
N2392 Cardinal Lane
Oostburg, WI 53070

Ron Cassie
W182 N5902 Spruce Lane
Menomonee Falls, WI 53051

Kent Vant Hul
434 S. 6th St.
Cedar Grove, WI 53013

Bob Wierenga
N5532 Johnson Rd.
Delavan, WI 53115

William TeWinkle
607 N. 8th St., 7th Floor
Sheboygan, WI 53081

Judith Irby
4231A South 26th Street
Milwaukee, WI 53221

Classis of Wisconsin cont.

Bob Pieters
711 Fox Street
Mukwonago, WI 53149

President

Elmer VanDrunen
17228 South Park Ave.
South Holland, IL 60473

Vice president

Chad Schuitema
2501 S. 18th St.
Lafayette, IN 47909

Ex officio members of synod

Stated Clerk/Treasurer
Coordinator/Administrator
Randy Kooy
524 West Division Rd.
DeMotte, IN 46319

Synod Staff and others:

Synod Visionary Leader
Wayne VanRegenmorter
10088 Prairie Ct.
St. John, IN 46373

Synod Staff and others cont.:

General Synod Council rep.
Christopher Poest
4006 S. Oak Park Ave.
Stickney, IL 60402

Manitowish Ministries

Laura Vroom
Manitowish Ministries
8122 West Sauk Trail
Frankfort, IL 60423

Other guests were present at the meeting. A quorum was present.

➔ **VOTED to give privilege of the floor to synod staff and guests present.**

III. Approval of minutes of previous session

The previous regional synod gave authority to the synod's Executive Committee to approve the minutes of the 2008 session of the Regional Synod of Mid-America as published. The Executive Committee reported that the 2008 minutes were approved as published.

➔ **VOTED to grant the authority to the Executive Committee to approve the minutes of this 2009 meeting of the Synod of Mid-America.**

IV. Communications

There were no written communications considered by the synod. Any received throughout the year were considered and processed by the Synod Executive Council or referred as appropriate.

V. State of Religion Report

Synod of Mid-America, RCA Annual Session – April 24, 2009

Mission:

The Mission of the Synod of Mid-America is to encourage and equip its classes so they may faithfully follow Christ in ministry and mission.

Vision:

The Vision of the Synod of Mid-America is classes and congregations made healthy through revitalization and multiplication.

Core Value:

We believe the Synod of Mid-America best serves congregations through its classes. The synod will accomplish this by focusing on:

- Casting vision
- Equipping leadership
- Building partnerships
- Sharing resources
- Sharing joys and pain

The core value will build on the foundations of discipleship, leadership, and mission all working in accordance with the Word of God.

It is hard to believe that two years have already passed since we began operating as a restructured synod. In light of the extensive changes in practice and philosophy that the synod has undergone, I am amazed how well things have progressed. I can assure you that the smooth transitions have come, in large part, as a result of our two dedicated staff persons - Randy and Wayne. Good things are happening. God is using Randy and Wayne in their roles. The "mission" is being realized. Eyes are more and more opening to capture a "vision" of revitalization and/or multiplication. There is much reason to rejoice - we give God thanks, and with the same breath say, there is still much work to be done.

Psalm 127:1 "Unless the Lord builds the house, they labor in vain who build it." The implication of this verse to me is a reminder of the fact that God is sovereign in sustaining and building His church. Alongside the truth of God's sovereignty is the mystery of God's response to our prayers. While we know and recognize that God is ultimately the builder, we need to remember that somehow He responds to our prayers. With this in mind, I wish to challenge each of us to commit to the "Houses of Prayer" movement. I am convinced we will experience God's blessing in direct proportion to our lifting petitions to Him. We need each of our churches to truly be "Houses of Prayer". A commitment and/or re-commitment by each of us to this cause could very well be the most important thing we can do these two days.

Annually it is the responsibility of the president, vice-president, and past-president to conduct a staff review. In the course of Wayne's interview with us he was asked - what is the source of his greatest satisfaction? And what is the source of his greatest frustration? He reported his greatest frustration came from "status-quo pastors." On the other hand, his greatest satisfaction comes from witnessing a moment when a pastor has a "light bulb" experience and, equally satisfying, is the miracle of transformed lives. These are not only Wayne's perspectives, but reflect those of the leadership of the Regional Synod.

Respectfully,
Elmer Van Drunen, President

VI. Executive Council Report

Executive Council of the Synod of Mid-America Report to the Annual Session of the Synod of Mid-America, RCA April 24, 2009

The duties of the Executive Council as stated in the Bylaws of the Regional Synod of Mid-America include that it will:

- a. Be responsible to carry out the Mission of the Synod, to establish policy to realize the Vision of the Synod, and to continually evaluate the progress towards realizing the Vision of the Synod.
- b. Act for Regional Synod between sessions, and on all matters referred to it by Regional Synod.
- c. Report annually to Regional Synod concerning its actions and deliberations.

Since the last annual session of the Synod the Executive Council has met on four different occasions.

We are into our third year with the Council functioning under a structure where the Council consists of delegates appointed by the classes of the Synod plus the officers of the Synod. The majority of the business of the synod funnels through the Executive Council between the sessions. Work is either initiated by the staff, by the Council, or is ongoing work. Classes are encouraged to provide some regular means for its delegates to the Council to regularly report to their appropriate classis.

Synod staff and ministries

The synod is staffed by two persons: a visionary leader, Wayne Van Regenmorter, and a coordinator/administrator, Randy Kooy. Wayne will report separately on his activities within the synod. My activities as the coordinator/administrator include the day-to-day running of the regional synod. Much of my work is reflected in this report.

The synod continues to be blessed with the volunteer work of Diane Aardema as the prayer leader for the Synod of Mid-America. Diane is gifted and called to this ministry. She has encouraged churches to establish prayer team leaders and worked to organize them at classis levels. She has organized a prayer team event for those leaders and is putting together resources for those leaders and for churches. A new prayer guide for our synod, *Intercessors Unite*, has begun; it is a tool to guided prayer for things within our synod.

Some of the other synod-wide ministry occurs through contract arrangements, namely Living Fire Leadership Ministries, Winterfest, and Leaders on the Horizon.

Living Fire Leadership Ministries

The leadership development program, Living Fire Leadership Ministries, has been a very valuable leadership tool in the churches that are utilizing it. The Synod has contracted with Larry Bolt to administer this program. Larry is the executive administrator of Faith Church in Dyer, Indiana. Faith Church was one of the original synod churches participating in Living Fire.

A person goes through a three-year intensive cycle within this program. Here is a short description of each of those three years as reported by Larry:

This is an exciting time in **year one** because the participants are telling their own stories and seeing how God has always been present in their lives. This can be a very emotional time but also a freeing time as they recognize that their story is a part of God's story. It is such an encouragement to see how God uses all the circumstances of our lives to draw us to Him.

In **year two** the participants are developing individual and corporate projects. One church collected food and personal supplies for a home for abused spouses. When they brought the goods to the home, there were so many that the home could hardly handle them all. These potential leaders are also studying direct lessons on how to be a leader.

The **year three** participants are discussing how to develop other Christians as leaders while continuing their own spiritual growth. Many of them are seeing themselves unleashed in a ministry of their church and are serving God in that way.

New brochures for Living Fire Leadership Ministries will be available at the meeting.

Winterfest

The every-two-year youth event, Winterfest, was sponsored by the Synod and was held this past December. A contract with Manitoqua Ministries provides the leadership for the event. Specifically, Nathan Phillips, the program director at Manitoqua, led the team that put together the Winterfest youth event. Nathan gave the following report:

"Winterfest was a great success, even though we saw less student attendance at the event we saw some real life change. Our speaker for the event, Dr. Dave Park has been traveling doing conferences like this one for years. On several occasions he expressed that he was impressed with the whole event of Winterfest, from how the theme was tied throughout the entire event to the detail of offering a youth worker focused perspective time (Breakout Session). It was great to hear such wonderful remarks from him about the event, and the design team gets all the credit for that. We had a team made up of youth workers from Wisconsin classis, Chicago classis, Illiana classis and Illinois classis who poured themselves into the process to pull off an amazing event!"

As Nathan mentioned, there was a smaller attendance at this event than at similar past events. Winterfest is designed to be self-funding, but because of the smaller numbers and many of the fixed costs that remain the same, it lost significant money this year. More information about this will appear later in this report.

Leaders on the Horizon

A leadership movement for high school age youth is called Leaders on the Horizon. Again the Synod has contracted with Manitoqua to provide the leadership for this program. This program is still in the beginning stages in our synod. Nathan will work with one church who will be putting together a pilot program that could be used as a model for others.

Visioning Time at Council

Last year the council decided to spend significant time at its in-person meetings to examine a portion of the vision of the synod to determine direction for the synod as it relates to that vision. The first time this was utilized there was a general look at the direction of the synod with the idea for the synod's visionary leader to concentrate efforts in classes where there is openness for missional vision and direction.

At one visioning time this year the Council considered where we are as a synod in relation to the multiracial future for our church. Earl James, the RCA staff person responsible for this area, facilitated a discussion around a Five-Fold Multidimensional Test as an assessment tool for us. The five elements are:

- Population--We need to increase the diversity of our gatherings, teams, and committees. Some people might say that no people of color live near them. A closer look at community demographics might alter such a perception. People can also develop a diverse set of contacts through conferences and various Internet resources.
- Participation--Greater diversity, while positive, must lead to increases in working together.
- Power--Increases in working together, while necessary, must lead to increased power sharing and the ability for diverse groups to influence means and ends.
- Pace Setting--Increases in shared abilities to influence should also lead to increased group or team abilities to meet new challenges and strengthen existing ones.
- Purposeful Narrative--It is not enough to have a large river with several small tributaries. We must learn to blend our stories into one strong stream, moving forward together toward our multiracial future freed from racism.

The synod continues to be sensitive to these issues as we look to diversity within what we do as well as our classes.

The second visioning time concentrated on the vision of youth ministry within our regional synod. As previously mentioned, the Winterfest event had low participation. The Council spent time looking at what the vision of the synod should be as we consider youth ministry. What is needed by our classes and the youth workers within the various classes? Is there a future for an event like Winterfest? It was decided that more information needs to come from those actually doing the youth work. Manitouqua (in the person of Nathan) will be facilitating the gathering of information, attitudes and opinions of what is needed. Specific recommendations will come to the council out of that work. It is anticipated that direction will be set when the Council meets in early October.

The following are other actions, deliberations, and recommendations from the Executive Council from the past year:

1. The Council received regular reports from the synod staff concerning their activities and work on behalf of synod. Also regular reports were received from Manitouqua Ministries, the contract ministries, and the synod's representative on the General Synod Council.
2. The Council received reports from the Personnel Committee who reviewed synod staff performance. The Council set synod staff compensation for 2009.
3. The synod sponsored dialogue on the issue of classis configuration and boundaries with the classes of Chicago and Illiana. Previously it was determined that these are the two classes most affected with boundary issues because of the close proximity of the two classes. A meeting was held in August 2008 to discuss any possible changes. After sharing and discussion it was the consensus that no change needs to be made. However because of the close relationship – both shared ministry and geography – those who met found that the dialogue was good. The regional synod will continue to periodically host such meetings of the leadership of the two classes.
4. The 2008 annual session of the regional synod was the first attempt of the format of holding the annual session in conjunction with a synod-wide event for the whole synod. The 2008 event was held in partnership with Illiana Classis with the plan to rotate the meeting and event with other classes of the synod if it is determined to continue with this method of meeting. The council determined that we would continue with such an event/meeting format. The meeting this year in partnership with Wisconsin Classis is a result of that decision. Subsequently the council approved a budget limit considering the available speakers.

5. The Council considered a denomination encouraged and supported women's ministry coordinator. It was determined that this is probably not consistent with the direction of the synod's vision to take on any additional staff-type positions. Consideration of this concept was not further considered.
6. The Council approved a partnership group insurance proposal to allow Brotherhood Mutual Insurance Company (the insurance company of the synod) to contact our eligible churches (all but the Florida churches) to offer to quote insurance. There is the potential of a dividend if/when enough churches participate and there is a good loss experience.
7. The Council approved participation in a Mobilizing Leaders pilot program this includes a budget amount for it. This is a leadership initiative to equip congregation leaders (both pastors and lay leaders). It is planned that the effort will expand as the program develops. There are five congregations from our synod in this pilot program.
8. Bob Wierenga was appointed as the regional synod's delegate to General Synod.
9. The Council approved the re-nomination of General Synod positions that have official regional synod members. The two positions approved are:
 Christopher Poest – General Synod Council (previously served only a partial term)
 Cary Winn – Commission on Judicial Business (second term)
10. An open General Synod official nomination is a position on the Editorial Council of the Church Herald. The Council makes the following recommendation to the regional synod:

Recommendation EXEC-1: That the regional synod appoints William TeWinkle as our official General Synod nomination to the Editorial Council of the Church Herald.

→ VOTED to adopt Recommendation Exec-1.

11. As a continuation of the regional synod partnership with the Classis of Florida, the synod staff continues with some transition duties with the classis. Wayne has worked with several of the classis committees and regularly meets with the Executive Committee. I have facilitated the Apostolic Leader Task Force who was searching for a person to fill this new classis position.
12. Urban ministry funding assistance for 2009 was determined. The Urban Ministry Fund asking remains to provide opportunity for the congregations of the synod to share in urban ministry efforts. Urban ministry funding for 2009 is as follows:

**Ministry Funding - 2009
Urban Ministries**

Ministry	Type of Funding	Amount
La Capilla del Barrio, Chicago	Urban Ministry	10,000
Rolling Hills, Zellwood	Urban Ministry	5,000
North Dade Comm, Miami	Urban Ministry	15,000
Iglesia Trinidad, Milwaukee	Urban Ministry	15,000

13. Previously the regional synod had a Mission Fund Asking that funded various aspects of the mission work of the synod. Several years ago the asking was discontinued and the balance of the fund continued to be used to provide assistance for church planting and other special projects in multiplication or revitalization as determined by the council. Believing that church plant funding is a responsibility of the classes, and that requests for funding could not be fulfilled with the remaining funds, the council decided to end the assistance program by distributing proportionally to the classes the remaining money in the Mission Fund after first taking care of commitments coming from that fund. This distribution was completed earlier this year by the distribution of approximately \$121,000 to the classes.

One of the items funded before this distribution was the continuation of one additional year of assistance to the Chicago Classis to help with their church assessment process; this funding was in the amount of \$25,000 for 2009. The Council believes that this is a model for what can be done in other classes in the synod. The additional year is to follow up with the churches on the recommendations that came out of the church assessments.

14. Finances:

- a. The Council received regular financial reports including a budget status reports. The Council revised the budget as necessary. The president and vice president receive monthly financial reports.
- b. The Financial Report for 2008 was reviewed. The report and supporting documents are being reviewed by a CPA who will give a written report to the Council. **See the Financial Report for 2008 as shown as Appendix Exec-A.**
- c. The 2009 budget that is currently being used is presented to this Synod for information. **See the 2009 Budget as shown as Appendix Exec-B.**
- d. A budget for 2010 was approved for recommendation by the Council from input given by synod staff; it appears in this report as Appendix Exec-C. The budget as proposed does not reflect any significant changes in operation from what was approved for 2009. Due to the current economic situation, the council searched for ways where the budget could be cut. Most budget line items for 2010 were frozen at 2009 levels (including staff salaries) or were slightly lowered whenever possible. Due to the lower expenditures and the fact that the synod has a surplus of funds (albeit declining), the proposed budget reflects a decrease in the assessment rate from \$15.00 per member to \$14.50 per member. As has been the case in the last couple of years it continues to reflect as a deficit budget. It should be noted that the Synod can only operate with a deficit budget for a limited time before something must be changed.

Recommendation Exec-2: The Council recommends that the Synod approves the Budget for 2010 as proposed and shown as Appendix Exec-C.

→ **VOTED to adopt Recommendation Exec-2.**

15. Minister's Salary Committee: The Synod has a Minister's Salary Committee that is charged with the task of reviewing the Minister's Salary Schedule, Rules, and Guidelines for the coming year and to recommend it for recommendation to the classes of the Synod. That report follows as Appendix Exec-D. A summary of the changes in the guidelines can be found at the beginning of the report.

Recommendation Exec-3: That the synod approves the 2010 Minister's Salary Schedule, Rules, and Guidelines as it appears as Appendix Exec-D and to recommend it to the classes of synod for their adoption and implementation.

→ **VOTED to adopt Recommendation Exec-3.**

I would like to thank the members of the Executive Council for its work throughout the past year. The current members are: Elmer VanDrunen, Chad Schuitema, Randy Kooy, Cary Winn, Pedro Windsor, Don Coutts, Tom Slager, Jay Sowers, Drew Poppleton, Don MacDonald, Bill Tharnish, Phil Doeschot, Shannon Parrish, Bob Wierenga, Bill TeWinkle, and Luke Schouten. I would especially like to thank the officers for their leadership, work, time, and efforts for the synod.

Additionally I would like to thank Laura Vroom who represents Manitoqua Ministries and Christopher Poest who is our General Synod Representative; these two persons faithfully attend the council meetings and give valuable input.

Please pray for the synod staff and for the Executive Council as they lead our synod in the coming year and beyond.

Randy Kooy
Synod Coordinator, Administrator, Stated Clerk, Treasurer

SYNOD of Mid AMERICA - FINANCIAL REPORT

January 1, 2008 to December 31, 2008

GENERAL FUND 2008

<u>Opening Balance 1/1/2008</u>			263,842.15
	<u>Budget</u>	<u>Actual</u>	
<u>INCOME</u>			
Assessments	322,305	322,305.00	
Designated receipts		721.19	
Interest income		8,256.88	
NCD income		1,700.00	
Miscellaneous income	500	1,032.00	
TOTAL INCOME	<u>322,805</u>		334,015.07
<u>DISBURSEMENTS</u>			
Visionary Leader:			
Services	101,600	97,958.04	
Continuing Education	930	827.48	
Travel	13,000	17,217.78	
Coordinator/Administrator:			
Services	86,000	85,920.60	
Continuing Education	850	158.98	
Travel incl. Cont Ed.	5,000	4,173.64	
Committee Meetings:			
Executive Council	8,000	3,738.37	
OJB Committee	500		
Minister's Salary Committee	100	59.06	
Annual Session	5,000	7,279.02	*
Office Expenses:			
Insurance	3,500	2,986.16	
Financial review	1,000	850.00	
Telephone	5,000	5,337.96	
Rent	1,000	150.00	
Office expnse: supply, postage,etc	4,000	4,224.98	
Equipment/repairs	2,500	2,207.89	
Program expense	1,000	149.80	
Directory - minutes	2,500	1,653.18	
Miscellaneous	2,500	1,336.60	
Manitoqua:			
Contribution	50,000	50,715.92	
Partnership	20,000	4,000.00	
Winterfest:			
Contribution	4,000	24,000.00	**
Contract leader	8,000	8,000.00	
Living Fire Leadership Ministries			
Expenses		5,041.00	
Contract leader	3,000	3,000.00	
Leader expenses	1,000	-	
New church planter expenses	3,000	343.00	
New church plant events	6,000	1,336.00	
Specialized Interim Ministers	3,000	1,271.66	
Miscellaneous Ministry	5,000	2,263.65	
Church plant assistance	20,000	20,000.00	***
NCD expense		1,960.00	
Designated expense		721.19	
One Thing expense		4,862.76	
TOTAL DISBURSEMENTS	<u>366,980</u>		<u>363,744.72</u>
<u>INCOME/DISBURSEMENTS</u>	<u>(44,175)</u>		<u>(29,729.65)</u>
<u>Closing balance 12/31/2008</u>			<u>234,112.50</u>

* This amount offset by \$932 in miscellaneous income

** Over budget due to low Winterfest attendance; ~\$3500 will be returned in 2009

*** also see Mission Fund

MISSION FUND 2008

<u>Opening balance 1/1/2008</u>			211,280.28
	<u>Budget</u>	<u>Actual</u>	
<u>INCOME</u>			
Contributions received		4,781.00	
Miscellaneous income	7,500	<u>15,362.28</u>	
TOTAL INCOME	7,500		20,143.28
<u>DISBURSEMENTS</u>			
Florida Classis partnership	5,000	9,363.87	
Church plant assistance	50,000	50,000.00	
Chicago Classis assmt assistance	20,000	20,000.00	
Miscellaneous ministry		<u>1,000.00</u>	
TOTAL DISBURSEMENTS	75,000		<u>80,363.87</u>
<u>INCOME/DISBURSEMENTS</u>	-67,500		<u>(60,220.59)</u>
<u>Closing balance 12/31/2008</u>			<u>151,059.69</u>

URBAN MINISTRIES FUND 2008

<u>Opening Balance 1/1/2008</u>			97,724.32
	<u>Budget</u>	<u>Actual</u>	
<u>INCOME</u>			
Asking	45,000	45,001.42	
Sunday School asking	5,000	2,388.50	
Interest income		<u>1,882.34</u>	
TOTAL INCOME	50,000		49,272.26
<u>DISBURSEMENTS</u>			
Support/program aid	65,000	65,000.00	
TOTAL DISBURSEMENTS	65,000	<u>65,000.00</u>	
<u>INCOME/DISBURSEMENTS</u>	(15,000)		<u>(15,727.74)</u>
<u>Closing balance 12/31/2008</u>			<u>81,996.58</u>

SUMMARY - ALL RSMA FUNDS

<u>Opening balance 1/1/2008</u>			
General Fund	263,842.15		
Mission Fund	211,280.28		
Urban Ministries Fund	<u>97,724.32</u>		
TOTAL opening balance			572,846.75
<u>INCOME</u>			
General Fund		334,015.07	
Mission Fund		20,143.28	
Urban Ministries Fund		<u>49,272.26</u>	
TOTAL income			403,430.61
<u>DISBURSEMENTS</u>			
General Fund		363,744.72	
Mission Fund		80,363.87	
Urban Ministries Fund		<u>65,000.00</u>	
TOTAL disbursements			<u>509,108.59</u>
<u>INCOME/DISBURSEMENTS</u>			<u>(105,677.98)</u>
<u>Closing balance 12/31/2008</u>			
General Fund	234,112.50		
Mission Fund	151,059.69		
Urban Ministries Fund	<u>81,996.58</u>		
TOTAL closing balance			<u>467,168.77</u>

BANK ACCOUNTS 2008Providence Bank CHECKING

Balance 1/1/2008	134,955.04
Income	398,094.04
Transfer from RCA Cash 8236-P	17,235.52
Transfer from RCA Cash 2169-PP	30,000.00
Disbursements	(509,108.59)
Balance 12/31/2008	71,176.01

RCA Cash Fund - 002183-R

Balance 1/1/2008	332,500.00
Income (pd by check to checking)	-
Disbursements	-
Balance 12/31/2008	<u>332,500.00</u>

RCA Cash Fund - 008236-P

Balance 1/1/2008	16,553.52
Income	682.00
Transfer to Providence Bank checking	(17,235.52)
Disbursements	-
Balance 12/31/2008	<u>-</u>

RCA Cash Fund - 002169-PP

Balance 1/1/2008	88,838.19
Income	4,654.57
Transfer to Providence Bank checking	(30,000.00)
Disbursements	-
Balance 12/31/2008	<u>63,492.76</u>

ASSETS & LIABILITIES 2008ASSETSCash assets

Providence Bank checking account	71,176.01
RCA Cash Fund - 002183-R	332,500.00
RCA Cash Fund - 008236-P	-
RCA Cash Fund - 002169-PP	63,492.76
TOTAL cash	467,168.77

Estimated other assets

Furniture/fixtures/equipment (est)	8,000.00
------------------------------------	----------

TOTAL other assets	<u>8,000.00</u>
--------------------	-----------------

TOTAL ASSETS - 12/31/2008	<u><u>475,168.77</u></u>
---------------------------	--------------------------

LIABILITIES

TOTAL LIABILITIES - 12/31/2008	<u>0.00</u>
--------------------------------	-------------

2009 Budget - Regional Synod of Mid-America
Approved by synod - 4/5/08 - with adjustments by Exec Council

RECEIPTS				
	General Fund	Synod Mission	Urban Ministry	Total
General Fund Assessment @ \$15.00	322,845			322,845
Urban Min. Asking @ \$4.00			45,000	
Sunday School Asking @ \$2.00			2,000	
Miscellaneous and Int. Income	5,000	7,500		12,500
TOTAL RECEIPTS	327,845	7,500	47,000	382,345
TOTAL DISBURSEMENTS	372,330	30,000	45,000	447,330
SURPLUS (DEFICIT)	(44,485)	(22,500)	2,000	(64,985)
Actual Opening Balance 1/1/2009	234,112	151,060	81,997	467,169
Projected Closing Balance 12/31/2009	189,627	-	83,997	273,624

DISBURSEMENTS				
PERSONNEL SERVICES				
Visionary Leader:				
Salary, services, benefits & SSallow	102,000			
Continuing Education	980			
Travel & business expense	14,000			
Coordinator/Administrator:				
Salary, services, benefits & SStx	88,600			
Continuing Education	900			
Travel & business expense	6,000			
Florida partnership		5,000		
Total	212,480	5,000		
ADMINISTRATION EXPENSE				
Committee expense:				
Executive Council	7,000			
OJB Committee	500			
Minister's Salary Committee	100			
Annual Session	6,000			
Office Expenses:				
Insurance	3,500			
Financial review	1,000			
Telephone	5,000			
Rent	500			
Office expnse: supply, postage,etc	4,000			
Equipment/repairs	2,500			
Program expense	1,000			
Directory - minutes	2,500			
Miscellaneous	2,500			
Total	36,100			

Appendix Exec-B continued

	General Fund	Synod Mission	Urban Ministry	Total
MINISTRY EXPENSE				
Manitoqua:				
Contribution	50,000			
Partnership	20,000			
Winterfest:				
Contribution	4,000			
Contract leader	8,000			
Living Fire Leadership Ministries				
Expenses	3,000			
Contract leader	3,000			
Leader expenses	1,000			
New church planter expenses	3,000			
Mobilization Leaders	3,750			
Specialized Interim Ministers	3,000			
Miscellaneous Ministry	5,000			
Church plant assistance	20,000			
Chicago Classis assessment assist		25,000		
Urban assistance		*****	45,000	
Totals	123,750	25,000	45,000	
SUMMARY				
Personnel Services	212,480	5,000	-	217,480
Administration Expense	36,100	-	-	36,100
Ministry Expense	123,750	25,000	45,000	193,750
Totals	372,330	30,000	45,000	447,330

***** Council determined that Mission Fund will be distributed to classes in 2009 after distribution of \$25,000 for Chicago Classis assessment and other commitment payments.

2010 Budget - Regional Synod of Mid-America
Approved by synod - April 24, 2009

RECEIPTS			
	General Fund	Urban Ministry	Total
General Fund Assessment @ \$14.50	312,084		312,084
Urban Min. Asking @ \$4.00		45,000	
Sunday School Asking @ \$2.00		2,000	
Miscellaneous and Int. Income	5,000		5,000
TOTAL RECEIPTS	317,084	47,000	364,084
TOTAL DISBURSEMENTS	339,230	45,000	384,230
SURPLUS (DEFICIT)	(22,147)	2,000	(20,147)
Projected Opening Balance 1/1/2010	189,627	81,997	271,624
Projected Closing Balance 12/31/2010	167,481	83,997	251,478
DISBURSEMENTS			
PERSONNEL SERVICES			
Visionary Leader:			
Salary, services, benefits & SSallow	100,800		
Continuing Education	980		
Travel & business expense	17,000		
Coordinator/Administrator:			
Salary, services, benefits & SStx	87,700		
Continuing Education	900		
Travel & business expense	5,500		
Florida partnership			
Total	212,880		
ADMINISTRATION EXPENSE			
Committee expense:			
Executive Council	5,000		
OJB Committee	500		
Minister's Salary Committee	100		
Annual Session	6,000		
Office Expenses:			
Insurance	3,500		
Financial review	1,000		
Telephone	5,000		
Rent	500		
Office expnse: supply, postage,etc	4,000		
Equipment/repairs	2,500		
Program expense	500		
Directory - minutes	500		
Miscellaneous	2,000		
Total	31,100		

	General Fund	Urban Ministry	Total
MINISTRY EXPENSE			
Manitoqua:			
Contribution	50,000		
Partnership (LOH)	4,000		
Winterfest:			
Contribution	4,000		
Contract leader (Manitoqua)	8,000		
Living Fire Leadership Ministries			
Expenses	3,000		
Contract leader	3,000		
Leader expenses	500		
New church planter expenses	1,000		
Mobilization Leaders	3,750		
Specialized Interim Ministers	3,000		
Miscellaneous Ministry	5,000		
Church plant assistance	10,000		
Urban assistance (actual TBD)		45,000	
Totals	95,250	45,000	
SUMMARY			
Personnel Services	212,880	-	212,880
Administration Expense	31,100	-	31,100
Ministry Expense	95,250	45,000	140,250
Totals	339,230	45,000	384,230

**Minister's Salary Committee Report
To the Synod of Mid-America meeting on April 24, 2009**

The Minister's Salary Schedule Committee met on March 23, 2009 by conference call. The members of the committee are as follows: Mark Bensema, Rich Schuler, Tom Hubbell, Dale Huizenga, Phil Renkes, Vern Jurgens and Susan Kist. All members except Mark were present for the meeting. Staff support was provided by Randy Kooy who moderated the meeting.

The following are notes to or changes made in the guidelines as compared to the 2009 guidelines:

1. The committee considered the minimum salary table as published in the salary guidelines. Given the current economic situation the committee decided to not recommend any change in the 2010 table over the 2009 table. **Churches are reminded that these are minimum salaries so if they can afford to give an increase they are encouraged to do so.** No salary increase is tantamount to a salary decrease when inflation is considered.
2. The wording is changed in the sabbatical section of the guidelines to encourage churches "to grant pastors a six-week or more sabbatical at full salary after each seven year of service with that congregation." This wording shortens the timeframe for a minimum sabbatical from three months to six weeks. While there is value to the longer sabbatical, the committee believed that more ministers may be offered a sabbatical if the suggested minimum is a shorter time.
3. The committee reviewed the mileage rate reimbursement for church use that is currently set to the IRS standard mileage rate and decided that this is still the best method to use for determining the reimbursement for church use of a personal vehicle.
4. The committee updated the reimbursable expense telephone section to include wording about internet and cellular telephones.

2010 Minister's Salary Schedule, Rules, and Guidelines

Introduction and Recommendations

1. The call issued to a pastor has two main concepts which deal with the relationship between a pastor and people. Specifically, the pastor is to perform certain services in his/her ministry among the people and the people are to provide remuneration for the pastor to keep him/her from temporal concerns. The latter is an obligation clearly undertaken by the church.
2. Every church and consistory needs to be involved with their pastor(s) in setting specific goals for both the pastor(s) and the church in order to lead the church in mission for Jesus Christ. Financial considerations are part of this two-way accountability and communication.
3. In order that pastors in the RCA are adequately compensated, each classis sets a minimum standard that needs to be met. After this minimum is met there is a base for discussion between pastor and the church on how performance and needs should be recognized in the salary determination.
4. It is **recommended and expected** that each church appoint a personnel committee to work with the pastoral staff of the church. Further it is recommended that this same committee be utilized to work with all church staff, ordained or non-ordained. Realizing that there are differences from church to church, the details of the personnel committee would be left to the individual church. However, the following should be minimum guidelines of the committee:
 - a. Meet on a regular schedule with each pastor and staff person at least twice a year
 - b. Set and discuss goals for each position and how those goals fit into the vision of the church
 - c. Review the past performance of the pastor(s) and staff persons
 - d. Recognize superior achievements and extraordinary service
 - e. Discuss general concerns
 - f. Specifically discuss financial needs to include salary, housing, transportation reimbursement, insurance, continuing education, and retirement plan as applicable
 - g. Consider financial needs beyond the day-to-day living expenses such as medical bills, education costs, emergencies, and retirement
 - h. Discuss other needs such as family crises, illness, marital stress, depression, and ministerial frustration
 - i. Give support and encouragement
 - j. Discuss and facilitate good relationships between church staff
 - k. Act as the communication link between staff and the consistory

5. It is **recommended** that churches and pastors consult with appropriate tax professionals as they work out the details of compensation and the pastor's financial planning. Tax counsel is important to maximize pastor benefits, minimize church costs, and protect all parties from incurring penalties from poor practices.
6. It is **recommended** that churches and pastors consult Internal Revenue Service (IRS) publications for specific information and rules. The following two publications are especially helpful:
 - a. Publication 1828 – Tax Guide for Churches and Religious Organizations. Especially note the section titled *Special Rules for Compensation of Ministers*.
 - b. Publication 517 – Social Security and Other information for Members of the Clergy and Religious Workers. This publication includes examples of forms.
 These two publications can be obtained from the IRS website at the following address:
<http://www.irs.gov/formspubs/index.html>

Rules for Minimum Compensation and Benefits

There are *three* components to **minimum compensation** for pastors: **1. Salary, 2. Social Security & Medicare Allowance, and 3. Housing or a Housing Allowance** if applicable. Additionally there are **Reimbursable Expense Allowances** and **Other Provisions**. This represents minimum rules – a church may exceed any of them. If a church is not able to meet the minimum rules, it should contact the appropriate committee in the classis where these Guidelines and Rules are approved.

Minimum Compensation

1. Salary

Rule: The church shall pay the pastor a salary that is at or above the amounts according to the following chart:

MINIMUM SALARIES TABLE FOR 2010 (no increase over 2009)			
Years since ordination	Average Sunday Morning Attendance		
	0-200	201-400	401 & above
0-1	35,139	37,431	39,867
2	36,360	38,678	41,094
3	37,544	39,687	42,273
4	38,716	41,071	43,447
5	39,880	42,252	44,605
6	40,071	42,496	44,858
7	40,259	42,738	45,108
8	40,443	42,975	45,353
9	40,629	43,206	45,593
10	40,770	43,439	45,834
11	40,907	43,683	46,073
12	41,042	43,895	46,305
13	41,177	44,117	46,534
14	41,306	44,333	46,759
15	41,435	44,544	46,982
16	41,562	44,755	47,204
17	41,686	44,961	47,421
18	41,808	45,165	47,632
19	41,927	45,366	47,845
20 +	42,044	45,565	48,054

Chart instructions:

1. Determine the appropriate Sunday Morning attendance figure for your church. Adjustment should be made for multiple Sunday morning services and weekday services that are intended as a replacement for a Sunday morning service. Multiple attendance should only be counted once.
2. Determine the year's since ordination. If the pastor has had ministry experience prior to ordination it is recommended that the church give consideration for this experience.
3. The resulting figure is the minimum salary for the pastor. This amount can be increased based on the pastor's needs, performance, etc.
4. The effective date of this chart will be January 1 of the year for which these guidelines and rules are published. However a church may elect to use an earlier date

Recommendation: If the church is already compensating the pastor above the minimum salary for a given year, it is recommended that for the following year the church increase that salary.

2. Social Security & Medicare allowance

Pastors are considered self-employed for Social Security and Medicare tax. Therefore they must pay this tax as a self-employed person without the benefit of the employer payment of the employer portion of the tax. It is the intention of these rules to compensate the pastor for the employer portion of this tax. If a pastor has elected not to be a part of the Social Security system, an equal allowance should be made to another appropriate retirement plan.

Rule: The church shall reimburse the pastor for one-half of the self-employed social security taxes. This is calculated by taking 7.65% of the Salary plus Housing.

- If the pastor is furnished a home by the church, the Housing amount is calculated to be
 1. At least the fair rental value of a parsonage plus the cost of furnished utilities, or
 2. 40% of the Salary amount, unless 40% is less than the fair rental value plus utilities.
- If the pastor is given a Housing Allowance, the Housing amount is the actual amount paid.
- The allowance is considered to be additional income unless otherwise deferred.

3. Housing

Rule: The church shall provide the pastor with the free use of a parsonage including all utilities.

Alternately the church may provide a *cash Housing Allowance* for the pastor. The amount of the allowance must be adequate to reimburse the pastor for rental or purchase of adequate housing for the pastor and his or her family in the community where the church is located plus utilities.

The following are the proper steps to figure minimum compensation when a Housing Allowance is being offered to the pastor:

1. Determine the minimum salary using the chart as outlined above.
Note: If salary will be paid above the minimum it should be added at this time.
2. Determine the appropriate amount to reimburse for *adequate housing* in the community where the church is located, plus utilities. A guideline that can be used is the Social Security Administration' suggested amount of 40% of salary. Actual adequate housing could be more or less depending on a number of factors that would include the size of the pastor's family and the cost of housing in the community where the church is located.
3. The pastor may elect to voluntarily transfer a portion of his salary to housing for a possible tax advantage for the pastor. The church and the pastor should be careful to follow IRS guidelines including designating the housing allowance pursuant to official action taken in advance of the payment. It is recommended that the above mentioned IRS publications be consulted and professional tax advice obtained. *The church should not allow this voluntary transfer until steps 1 and 2 are completed. The salary and housing allowance should not be offered as a package amount.*
4. The Social Security and Medicare allowance is then figured on the sum of the Salary and the Housing Allowance.

Reimbursable Expense Allowances

1. **Vehicle expense reimbursement:** If the pastor uses his or her personal vehicle(s) for church business, the church shall reimburse the pastor for that church business use. The reimbursement shall be at the IRS standard mileage rate. IRS reporting rules for vehicle expense should be followed.

Alternately the church may purchase a vehicle for the pastor to use for church business. All church related expenses for such a vehicle shall be paid by the church.

2. **Telephone and internet:** The church shall provide the pastor with the necessary telephone and internet service to conduct church business. The pastor would be responsible for any additional charge for personal use. If the church expects the pastor to be available by cellular telephone, the necessary telephone service will include cellular phone service.

Other Provisions

1. **RCA Retirement Program:** The church shall make the entire contribution on behalf of the pastor to the RCA retirement program. The contribution shall follow the instructions given annually by the Board of Benefits Services and is based on salary and housing, and not on other benefits such as the Social Security and Medicare allowances, the vehicle allowance, or the continuing education allowance.
2. **RCA Insurance:** The church shall make the entire contribution for the RCA Major Medical (family plan if immediate family is not otherwise covered through a spouse's employer-sponsored group plan), Long Term Disability, and Group Life insurance premiums. It is recommended that churches consider paying all or part of the premium if the pastor decides to enroll in the denominational sponsored Dental Assistance Program.
3. **Disability:** Physical, emotional or mental disability is defined as the inability of the pastor to carry out the normal functions of his/her office. In such event, whether total or partial disability, the salary and benefits of the pastor shall be paid for a period of six months. Thereafter all benefits due the pastor are those provided by the Long Term Disability Insurance.
4. **Vacation:** The following schedule shall apply for amount of annual vacation for the pastor:

Years Since Ordination	Weeks of Vacation	Sundays included in vacation weeks
Less than 3 years	3	3
3 years - 19 years	4	4
20 years and over	5	5

While the vacation time is expressed in weeks it is understood that pastors do not have what are commonly considered usual workweek days or hours. Pastors and consistories should reach an understanding of appropriate time-off when less than full week segments are taken.

Unused vacation time shall not carry over to another year. Pastors are encouraged to use the vacation in order that they may be personally refreshed. If the pastor has had ministry experience prior to ordination it is recommended that the church give consideration for this experience.

5. **Continuing Education:** The local churches and consistories are strongly encouraged to support professional development of the pastor for their mutual benefit. To that end, as provided by the RCA Book of Church Order, a minimum of one week including one Sunday shall be allowed plus an amount approximately equal to 1/52nd of only the annual salary shall be allowed towards actual expenses of the professional program such as travel, food, lodging and registration expenses.

Pastors are expected and encouraged to take advantage of this benefit on a yearly basis. However, by prior agreement between pastor and consistory this benefit may be accumulated to a maximum equivalent for 4 years of service. It is understood that professional development means a learning experience in a setting designed for skilled training in some aspects of pastoral work.

6. Sabbaticals: Churches are encouraged to grant pastors a six-week or more sabbatical at full salary after each seven year of service with that congregation. The agenda for such sabbatical should be submitted and approved by the consistory with the express intent that such sabbatical shall be an investment in the future to the benefit of the church.

After eight years of pastoral service without a sabbatical, churches, through its consistory or other appropriate committee, are **required** to annually review the Synod's sabbatical policy with its pastor(s).

For further information and a copy of synod approved sabbatical policy can be found on the Synod of Mid-America website at <http://midamericasynod.org/pdf1/SabbaticalPolicy.pdf> or contact the regional synod office.

7. Maternity leave: A reference for churches needing to look at maternity leave can be found at the following RCA website: <http://images.rca.org/docs/ministry/leavepolicy.rtf>

General Rules

1. Assistant or Associate Pastors: In the case of assistant or associate pastors, the Salary Schedule shall apply regarding the years since ordination, but such pastors may be paid according to the schedule for the next lower category size church regardless of the size church they serve.
2. Part-time Pastors: The salary schedule shall not apply to a part-time pastor. However these provisions should guide the church to appropriate minimum compensation for the part-time pastor.
3. Special Considerations: A pastor who is at least fifty-five (55) years of age and who wishes to serve a church having less responsibility and fewer demanding functions shall be entitled to special considerations.
 - a. A church may negotiate with such a pastor for his/her services at a salary not less than 70% of the appropriate salary schedule. All of the remaining provisions shall apply.
 - b. If a church wishes to utilize the services of such a pastor as an assistant or associate pastor, the salary negotiated shall be subject to approval of the appropriate committee in the classis where these Guidelines and Rules are approved.
4. Fees and Honorariums:
 - a. The pastor shall be entitled to retain fees and honorariums for his/her personal use, except the fees for classical appointments shall be delivered to his/her church treasurer.
 - b. Mileage reimbursement should not be considered as part of the classical appointment fee.
 - c. In order to maintain some consistency with pulpit supply payments, we **recommend** that a minimum honorarium of \$75.00 be given for the pulpit supply for a morning service (with appropriate adjustment for multiple services) and \$75.00 for an evening service. Also the church is to provide reimbursement of mileage at the IRS recommended rate. The primary purpose for this recommendation is for the benefit of retired pastors who use pulpit supply as a means of income.
 - d. It would be best if outside activities are kept to a minimum to prevent interfering with the pastor's ministry especially for the purpose of additional income. However, we do encourage pastors to have a reasonable degree of involvement in activities at the Classis, Regional Synod or General Synod level.

VI. Election of officers

Unless there is a vacancy, election of the president and vice-president occurs every two years given that those positions have two-year terms. No election occurs at the 2009 session of the Synod of Mid-America. Elmer Van Drunen continues as president of the Synod of Mid-America and Chad Schuitema continues as vice president.

VII. Staff Reports

A. Wayne Van Regenmorter – Visionary Leader

**Report to the Synod of Mid-America
Visionary Leader
Wayne Van Regenmorter
April 2009**

Over the last few days I've been praying, listening and discerning—trying to get a sense of where God is leading in the Synod of Mid-America; what He is doing in our five classes and the congregations ministering in local communities and neighborhoods. Without a doubt God has been at work shaping a new future for the Reformed Church in America which comes in many forms and shapes in multiplication and revitalization in our synod, classes and congregations. We've been seeking God's heart in our classes and congregations in the ministry areas of leadership, discipleship, mission and more recently a multi-racial future freed from racism. I believe that we are more eagerly with a unifying enthusiasm embracing the words of Our Call:

“Following Christ in mission together, led by the Holy Spirit, and working with all the partners God provides, we believe that God is calling the Reformed Church in America over the next ten years to focus its efforts and resources on starting new congregations and revitalizing existing congregations; thereby empowering fruitful and faithful ministries for the glory of God.”

We are just over the mid-point of this ten year goal that was adopted by the General Synod in 2003. God has opened many doors of opportunity for us to be engaged in mission. He continues to open doors as we journey with Him in sharing the message of the gospel which has the power to transform lives through Jesus Christ. I have learned to appreciate these words that Paul writes to the church at Colosse: *“Devote yourselves to prayer, being watchful and thankful; and pray for us too, that God may open a door for our message, so that we may proclaim the mystery of Christ for which I am in chains; pray that I may proclaim it clearly as I should.”* (Colossians 4:2-4)

There's a spirit of tenacity behind these words as Paul brings up this image of an open door. Remember when he writes this he is in chains. He's a prisoner of the Roman Empire. He is on a road that will lead to beating, suffering and death, and he knows it. He says, *“Pray for me.”* If I were in that prison, I would ask that I be set free. I would pray that the chains would be taken off. I would pray that the persecution would stop. Paul asks for none of this. He prays for open doors. That's a picture of opportunity; that the Gospel would be spread, that right now where a door is closed—in someone's heart, in some community, in some neighborhood—that the door would be open, and that people would boldly go through it. That through the gospel communities would be rebuilt, divisions would be healed, the under-resourced would be cared for and the hopeless would find hope. Paul prays that he may proclaim the gospel clearly when he's facing pressure—when he's under opposition—when he's got difficulties. He's saying: Pray that I won't lose my nerve, I won't water it down, I won't back away, I won't blur it, I won't lose the sense of urgency that drives me on. And that would be my prayer for all of us in our classes and congregations, that as God opens doors, and only God can open the door to the human heart, we will not shrink back in this time of missional engagement, even in these tougher economic times. Our classes and congregations are going through changes and transitions to become more healthy and to live with greater vitality as participants in God's mission. We must continue forward through open doors because God's Spirit beckons us to join Him in redeeming this lost and broken world which He loves so much.

From my perspective, I see several things happening in the life of our synod, our classes and congregations. As we embrace missional engagement, we are discovering challenges and great opportunities filled with blessing. We are learning to deal with our fears and acquire new lenses for hope. God is calling us to go places we have never been before.

Our Classis Structures are Changing

At our 2008 Annual Synod meeting, Paul Borden reminded us that vision means how we are changing the world. Paul asked us to imagine that the church that we are a part of is like a car going up the life cycle. He said that when the car is going up the life cycle the church is healthy, the church is growing. Vision is always in the driver's seat. That's what causes churches to grow. When vision is in the driver's seat, relationships are always in the passenger's seat navigating. And when vision and relationships are in the front seat of the car, ministries and structure are always in the back seat trying to catch up. This is what I see happening in the classes of the Synod of Mid America. God is raising up pastors and leaders who are investing time and energy in the classes because of a new sense of vision and mission. Vision is in the driver's seat and it is changing classis structures. Here are some examples of how new vision is changing classes' structures:

- The Illiana Classis adopted a new vision in October 2008: *"The vision of the Classis of Illiana, working cooperatively, is to have mission-focused, healthy, growing and multiplying congregations led by healthy pastors."* Four vision points were adopted:
 1. To assist existing churches in providing the resources for revitalizing their congregations
 2. To identify new church leaders and provide the resources and opportunities for leadership development for them and all church leaders
 3. To assist congregations in developing strategies and plans for planting new churches
 4. To deepen our relationship with one another as members of the body of Christ

Larry Bolt, who leads the Illiana Restructuring Team writes: *"This restructuring plan is not just a new way to do business as usual. If it is, it is not worth making the change."*

- The Wisconsin Classis adopted a new mission/vision in 2008: *"The Classis of Wisconsin exists for the purpose of bringing glory to God through the ministry of leadership development, relationship building, planting churches, revitalizing congregations, and caring accountability. Working in partnership with the regional and general synod of the R.C.A. our task is to equip and empower congregations for effective ministry."*

The vision of the Classis of Wisconsin is glorifying God through mission-focused, healthy, growing, and multiplying congregations; led by healthy pastors and leaders.

In the proposed new organizational structure the Wisconsin Task Team writes:

1. *Our current structure uses committee designations that do not blend with the new vision. Do we really want to put new wine in old wineskins? We believe that if we are really going to own this new vision, then we need to redefine committees as commissions and empower them to accomplish the ministry in their area of the vision.*
 2. *This proposal creates a structure that presupposes that each commission will be encouraged to be proactive by being empowered to act on behalf of classis between stated sessions in matters that pertain to the work of that specific commission.*
 3. *The new vision is intended to encourage the service of classis members according to spiritual gifts, natural abilities, acquired skills, and points of greatest interest and passions. This should lead to a greater level of motivation and higher quality of service.*
 4. *This new vision invites people to be a part of a commission's work through focus groups in order to gain grass root support for vital ministries....By inviting participation of many, ownership of the vision will be broadened.*
 5. *This vision encourages "proactive" leadership through the opportunity to develop tangible means of fleshing out the vision point which identifies its purpose for existence.*
- The Florida Classis is working on a restructure design that includes a Church Multiplication Team, a Church Revitalization Team, a Leadership Development Team, an Executive Team and a Vision Council. The classis had also divided the churches in the classis into two clusters for communication and building relationships—a Northwest and Southeast Clusters.

- The Illinois Classis has also adopted a new vision statement and has adopted a restructure organization that includes an Executive Team, a Church Multiplication Team, a Revitalization Team, a Leadership Team and a Relationship Team.
- The Chicago Classis worked their way through a restructure process a few years ago.

Why would we use our time and energy to restructure our Classes? Because God is calling us and continues to call us into a missional future. Because every person we see in our communities and neighborhoods is someone's son or daughter. Behind every door that we drive past lives a person for whom Jesus died—a person who faces an eternal destiny of Heaven or Hell—and the Crucified One that we serve still comes to every heart and says, *"Behold, I stand at the door and knock."* (Revelation 3:20) The missional adventure of an "open door" with God will drive us to more prayer, to greater dependence upon God, to deeper learning, to greater joy than living in the comfort zone ever will.

Our Classes are Assessing the Health and Vitality of Congregations

In June of 2007, the churches of the Chicago Classis began a courageously honest health assessment process. A report emerged with 10 recommendations on how the classis should clarify its vision, agree on goals, and change the structure of its meetings. In addition, hard and honest recommendations were shared for each of its 13 congregations at that time. Difficult decisions were made about holding congregations accountable to each other and God's call for intentionality in mission and ministry. As a result three different consistories were superseded and recently one church property was sold. In the President's Report Pastor Bud Pratt writes: *"The result of our 2 year effort to assess and gain health in the Chicago Classis is bearing fruit. Refocusing, revitalization, and strategic planning have been significant for many of you as you set your goals for the church's survival. We are embracing what it means to be a Missional church. It involves pain, but we are getting back on track with what God has called us to do. As I was thinking about what to say to you today, an image kept coming into my head. It was the image of a person sitting on a pile of rubble after a devastating tornado had visited her neighborhood. Chicago Classis has had a serious wake-up call. It may feel like we are sifting through the rubble right now, but in every case that you have ever known, rebuilding takes place after tornadoes. The determination of God's people will prevail, and the Classis will regain its health and vitality once again. We are already seeing movement in this direction as we embrace Jericho Road and seek God's blessing on the new Crossroads Ministry that we are about to launch."*

In the President's Report of Illiana Classis Warren Ouwenga writes: *"Over and over again we have heard and will continue to hear the term 'healthy' as we assess the condition of our pastors, churches and Classis. What does that mean? How do we recognize good health from poor health when it comes to organizations or churches? The dictionary defines health as the general condition of the body, mind, (and I'll add spirit) as these conditions relate to soundness and vigor."*

He goes on to say, *"Visiting worship services in nearly 2/3 of our Classis' churches has been a wonderful and enlightening experience. It has helped me to better understand the condition and state of our Classis. Some of us are in great health; some are in need of a little remedy or shot in the arm and some others in need of major care. In fact, some of us are at risk of extinction in a generation or less if we don't revolutionize our ministry. Overall we are in a declining trend and I know most of you already recognize this trend. I have also learned, however, that every single one of your churches are blessed with assets and resources that enable you to contribute toward improving Classis' health, your congregation's health and your pastor's health. Within our Classis we possess the resources we need to restore ourselves to a condition of soundness and vigor. It doesn't matter how big or small, young or old our people or building, wealthy or poor, rural or urban, or the makeups of our culture, we all have qualities with which to contribute and learn from one another. The challenge for us is to make full use of the collective strengths we possess."*

"We can begin the assessment by asking ourselves:

- *Who and what are we currently?*
- *Who and what are we called to be?*
- *Do both of these questions have the same answer?*
- *Does a person searching to understand Christianity or looking for a church home find your church to be the place where that person would come or stay?*
- *If not, what about us does not attract or repels that person?*
- *Are we physically in the wrong place?*

- *Can people find us; can they even find where they should come into the building?*
- *Are they able to understand what it is we're doing and why?*
- *Are we relevant to today's population?*
- *Do we retain the new believer and transform them into disciplined believers?"*

I believe it is a positive sign of health that classes are assessing the marks of health and vitality in the life of congregations and are asking how committed are you in following Jesus Christ in mission. Since we are a covenantal church, it compels us to share collegially how we can support each other to greater measures of health, fruit bearing, and being more outwardly focused in mission. As I am in contact with people in various classes and congregations, some of the concerns raised most often are: How do we help those in our congregation catch clearly the vision, mission and values to be more outwardly focused? How do we help those in our congregation look outside the walls of the church to engage the changing context of mission and ministry in our community? These are urgent questions as congregations try to identify the unique mission field in which God has placed them. I am thankful for pastors, leaders, congregations and classes who are asking the difficult questions. Healthy congregations are intentional about the people God has positioned and called them to reach. I often ask church leaders this question: If God were to have His way in the church and community where you serve Him, what would mission accomplished look like in the community where you live? The answer to that question is an indicator of an expanding heart to follow Christ in mission and ministry. The stories I hear are affirmations that God is at work changing lives and transforming communities through His grace and love.

Our Congregations are Multiplying

I serve on the Church Multiplication Team of the RCA where we try to be held accountable to the Great Commission and the movement of church multiplication. As I work in the area of church multiplication in the Synod, I am celebrating the fact that classes and congregations are discovering a fresh vision, new energy and a spiritual passion for planting new churches. It's beginning to change who we are and how we plan for the future in our classes. The Church Multiplication Team set a goal of planting 400 new churches by 2013. So far 128 congregations have submitted New Congregational Plans, and there are another 82 emerging congregations that have not yet to file their NCP's. In those 82 congregations about 6,500 people are worshipping weekly and thousands of others are worshipping God in the 128 congregations.

But numbers never tell the whole story. What's more impressive are the stories of how congregations in our classes are becoming radically attentive to the community outside their doors. They are looking through a missional lens at the communities where God has placed them. Many of the new congregations in our Synod are beginning by parent churches. There are currently 104 RCA congregations that have made specific commitments to plant one or more new churches as part of their missional outreach. Several of them are a part of the Synod. When a parent congregation or congregations reach out, it transforms a congregation's life. What makes reaching the harvest exciting is that it often involves crossing boundaries of culture, race, economics, or generation in order to participate in God's mission.

One such church is Missio Dei in Mokena, Illinois, who reaches mostly a post-modern generation of young families and singles in their 20's and 30's. Paul Vroom continues to help grow this church and develop leaders with a missional and Reformed understanding of serving the community in ministry and mission.

The Bridge, which meets in a new urban community in St Charles, IL, called New Town, was birthed with a concern for being a voice for biblical justice in the community and the world. They started with a Fair Trade store in New Town last June, with this mission statement: "*Doing justice, loving kindness, walking humbly with God*" from Micah 6:8. They sell coffees, teas and other food items, along with jewelry, sculptures, handbags, games and various gift and practical items for home use. Pastor Stephanie Doeschot says that people who shop regularly or even for the first time love the concept of buying gifts which "give twice." For example, a Kisii wedding knot sculpture is an elegant, inexpensive gift to give which blesses the recipients as well as the family that produced it with a living wage. That can make the difference between a whole family having to work just to have enough money to eat, and a family where adults can earn enough for the family, allowing the children to go to school which leads to a brighter future. Through this ministry, numerous relational connections are being formed and The Bridge is becoming a place where there is an ever-growing incarnational ministry, with people meeting Jesus

through relationships and conversation. It is one way of following Jesus to the local "well" and engaging people who are thirsty.

In our Synod we celebrate that there are 16 congregations worshipping weekly and reenergizing our classes and congregations because of stories of people whose lives are being touched by the love and grace of God.

- o Good News Christian Fellowship, New Port Richey, Florida, Pastor Jerry Hekhuis
- o Iglesia Comundad Cristiana, Orlando, Florida, Pastor Fernando Jensen
- o Living Stones, New Tampa, Florida, Pastors Steve and Hope Germoso
- o West Coast Church of the Cross, Sarasota, Florida, Pastor Kevin O'Hara
- o Rolling Hills Community Church, Zellwood, FL, Pastor Bruce VanDer Kolk
- o Chicago Grace Church, Chicago, Illinois, Pastor Bob Reid
- o Jericho Road, Wheaton, Illinois, Pastor Jeff Klein, Pastor Kevin Engel
- o Missio Dei, Mokena, Illinois, Paul Vroom
- o Faith Church/Dyer, IN multi-site in Cedar Lake, Indiana, Dave and Carla Weemhoff
- o Faith Church/Dyer, IN multi-site in Valpraiso, Indiana, Jason De Vries
- o Iglesia Cristiana San Pablo, Champaign, Illinois, Pastor Fernando Ossandon
- o The Bridge, New Town, Missouri, Pastor Stephanie Doeschot
- o The Crossing, Davis Junction, Illinois, Pastor Kurt Kruger
- o Hope Crossing Community Church, Madison, Wisconsin, Pastor Bob James
- o Sheboygan County Wisconsin plant, Pastor Jon Nienhuis
- o Bethany Reformed Church/Sheboygan, WI multi-site, Bob Abel

Our Congregations Catching the Vision for Congregational Revitalization

A major part of the vision of the Synod of Mid-America is classes and congregations made healthy through revitalization. In 2008, I served the Illiana Classis and their Congregational Revitalization Team by helping to write a Congregational Revitalization Manual. The core conviction of this team is that deep and lasting change requires courageous pastoral congregational leadership and thus, that congregational revitalization starts with revitalized leaders. To echo the RCA conviction: *"Personal renewal precedes corporate renewal; which leads to transformational congregational change; which results in gospel impact in the world."* Pastoral leaders must take the initiative to strengthen their personal walks as disciples of Jesus and focus their calling and priorities if they are to lead their congregations in mission. As pastors grow and renew their spiritual life and as the Holy Spirit clarifies and deepens their calling, they become equipped to help congregational leaders do the same thing. If pastors and other leaders within the classis are sure of their purpose, sharpened by collegial support, continuing to develop their leadership skills, and always renewed in their passion for Jesus and His Bride, then each church will be revitalized and revitalizing.

One of the key tools for sustaining pastoral excellence is Coached Revitalizing Networks. In the Synod we have over 50 people who have been trained as Coached Revitalizing Network Facilitators. Over 70 pastors and leaders have been trained in Foundational Coaching. Effective coaching is an essential part of the vision of "healthy classes and congregations through revitalization and multiplication." I know that a number of pastors in classes are involved in networks led by trained and supported facilitators. I have heard stories of how pastoral networks are making a difference in the lives of pastors and their congregations. There are some concerns, however, about local consistory support of pastoral networks. If our statistics follow the RCA national average, then fewer than 50% of the network participants have a clear covenant for revitalization with their consistories. I believe this disconnection is breaching a vital thrust of intentional renewal and revitalization in the congregations in our classes.

In the past year, several congregations have participated in the NCD survey to assess congregational health and identify those areas of ministry to focus on for congregational revitalization. Fewer congregations are now completing the NCD cycle.

About 50 congregational leaders have been trained in the Purposeful Living process in our Synod. Purposeful Living is a personal renewal process to allow a person to hear God speak into their life and bring focus to how that person lives. The purpose of the process is:

- To help someone discover God's unique shaping in their life
- To give someone a process for living more intentionally as a follower of Jesus Christ

- To help someone develop a plan to grow, develop, and serve as the person God designed them to be

The ultimate outcome of Purposeful Living is that a congregational leader will be more of a missional leader who will help the congregation to be more focused outward in mission and engaged in God's world from a kingdom perspective.

Our Congregational Leadership is Experiencing Ongoing Renewal

The Ridder Leadership Team, a partnership between Journey, the General Synod Council of the RCA and the Regional Synods of Mid-America and the Great Lakes, have launched "The Big Mo!", a multi-year leadership development and renewal initiative. "The Big MO!" is designed to seize upon momentum gained through church revitalization processes and to equip congregational leaders (pastors and laity) with important skills for going the distance in revitalization. About 35 congregational leaders and 5 pastors from our Synod, already engaged in congregational revitalization, are taking intentional steps to discern God's will for the future of their ministries. They are passionate about following Christ; they inspire others to become more like Jesus; and they empower members and visitors alike to live out their faith within and beyond the walls of their churches. The following congregations in the Synod of Mid-America have invited them to participate in this Big Mo revitalization process:

- Heartland Community Church, Lafayette, IN
- Christ's Community Church, Fishers, IN
- Christ's Church, St. Peters, MO
- Downers Grove Community Church, Downers Grove, IL
- Faith Community Reformed Church, Stickney, IL

I believe that this initiative will substantively increase the likelihood that the congregational change process will be sustainable and bear long-term fruit. Pastors and congregational leadership teams will be invited to meet regularly with Jim Herrington and Trisha Taylor to focus on: Developing Momentum: Productive Conflict in the Change Process; Maintaining Momentum: Tools for Getting Unstuck; Sustaining Momentum: Building Successful Leadership Teams. The Big Mo is a unique opportunity for several congregations in the Synod to be empowered and equipped in a leadership development process for sustainable change to make a kingdom impact in their respective communities and classes.

Our Prayer Mobilization is Growing

Diane Aardema has been a tremendous leader to help identify congregational prayer leaders and equip them with resources to build a vital prayer ministry in congregations they serve within our Synod. A Passionate for Prayer event was held in March at Faith Church in Dyer, Indiana. The purpose of this event was to encourage, fellowship together and share ideas and concerns with others who are involved in prayer ministries in their churches. A teaching on "Finding Freedom through Prayer" will be presented by Pam Gibson, Faith Church's prayer team leader.

Diane and Randy Kooy have developed a prayer focus tool for our Synod called "Intercessors Unite" which is now available online. The Synod Newsletter has a link to "Intercessors Unite". Prayer requests for people and events are updated every month to help people in congregations to keep focused on common prayer concerns within the Synod.

Our Hope is Alive and Well

In Philippians 3, Paul had just talked about wanting to know Christ and the power of His resurrection and the fellowship of sharing His sufferings. Then he says in verse 12: *"Not that I have already obtained all this, or have already been made perfect, but I press on to take hold of that for which Christ took hold of me."* Paul says, I press on to take hold of what Christ grabbed me for - and you. We are not to be spectators. He grabbed hold of you and me to join Him in His work to complete the work of ministry. We don't just come to church to get something, take something and walk away. We come to church because we are committed to Jesus Christ and we are committed to joining Him in His work, not our work. And His work revolves around change. Change is a constant reality in our classes, congregations and culture. I think one of the most painful things for all of us is change. If a person doesn't like change, he/she should not become a Christian then, because it is all about change. Here is the first thing that has changed. Our American culture is increasingly secular and pluralistic - religiously and ethnically. When I lived in Florida and traveled to the Miami area, it felt like a literal United Nations with Hispanics, Cubans, Portuguese, Jamaicans, African-Americans, Brazilians, Asians, Sudanese, Sikh

Indians and a minority Caucasians. People bring their religions with them. We don't have to send missionaries there anymore; people are coming here. We have to figure out how to do church in a more culturally relevant way. It is changing. It is not the pluralistic ethnicity that bothers me - I love that. But I am frightened by how secular we have become.

Another change is that a higher percentage of Americans no longer go to church. People are not rushing to walk through our doors. I'm not sure that's such a bad thing. I grew up in a culture and town where almost everybody went to church on Sunday. It was almost a given. I remember you had to look hard to figure out who didn't go. That's not true anymore. In the American culture, writers like Reggie McNeal are telling us that our culture is very much like the New Testament when the Holy Spirit came. Our culture is increasingly hostile towards Christianity. It is amazing how tolerant we are of other religions that are hostile towards Christianity. Do you know what that means? For the first time, we have to get out of our pews, into the world, and win them to Jesus Christ. We have to get out there and win them - in our workplaces, in our recreation places and in our schools.

We have become addicted to speed. Everything is moving faster. We define ourselves these days by speed. Here is how one writer puts it. "We have shifted from good food to fast food. But now we want good food fast. We left slow cook for a microwave cook. MTV has changed our visual capacity. We are a nation that is ADD and ADHD. What once was considered fast is now normal." Communication has gone through the journey from Pony Express to Federal Express, from telegraph to wireless communications, from post office to cyberspace. Everything is moving faster. Here is the painful point. I hope you will be patient with me and I hope you'll still love me after this. The church is painfully slow to change. What is that about? I think this is part of it. It is not surprising that in the whirlwind of fast-paced change and in a world that is, indeed, less safe, we want our churches to be the last bastion of safety. Secure. That is what it is supposed to be. God called us to be a refuge for the world, not from it. The Bible makes it clear that the only place to hide is in the arms of Jesus. There is no other safe place. "God is our refuge and strength," the Psalmist wrote, not our buildings or our churches. In fact, the church is a movement, not a shelter. As a movement, it becomes a place of refuge for an unbelieving world - a place where seekers find God; the God they were searching for all along. So, as Saint Paul, we must press on, brothers and sisters, to hold fast to Christ who holds us. We cling to our Lord whose speed and momentum is the power of the cross and the resurrection.

The way to avoid being overwhelmed by radical change and speed is to know who we are. The Heidelberg Catechism asks: "What is my only comfort in life and death? That I belong, body and soul, life and death, not to myself, but to my faithful Savior, Jesus Christ, who at the price of His blood, died for me." That's who I am. That's who you are. Jesus defines us. We belong to Him. We Christians need to stop fighting change. Guess what? The Bible, our faith, is about change. To become a Christian, call it what you will - conversion, redemption, being born again - what is it about? Change. Life-long transformation. We embrace the words *justification by faith* and *sanctification* where Jesus gives us our whole life to change and to become what He says we already are. It is about change. We must never forget that we are called to and committed to a changeless God of change. Seems like a paradox, doesn't it? God is never satisfied with status quo in our personal lives or in our classes or in our congregations. We serve a changeless God who loves change. Change is not our enemy. Change is our friend. Consider how thrilling it would be that every church, every classis becomes an agent of God-honoring change and the human embodiment of the wisdom of God without compromising either.

God wants to do more for us and through us than we can even dare to imagine. The next years in our classes and congregations, with the power of the Holy Spirit we can accomplish more for the kingdom than we dare to think. Our hopes and dreams can never be too big. Dreams and hopes require change. No change, no dreams; no dreams, no change; no change, no future. So I leave you with this anonymous quote: "Everywhere God moves, there is change. Everywhere God moves, He creates a future. Everywhere God moves, hope is alive and well." Hope is alive and well in our classes and in our Synod and in the Reformed Church in America. Fan it into full flame.

Together in His Purposes,

Wayne Van Regenmorter

B. Manitoqua Ministries Report

TO: SYNOD OF MID-AMERICA – ANNUAL SESSION

FROM: LAURA VROOM

SUBJECT: MANITOQUA MINISTRIES

DATE: APRIL 6, 2009

Manitoqua Ministries continues to serve the children, youth, and adults of the Regional Synod in a variety of ways. Through the work of the Holy Spirit we will continue to do so.

Program Report

Summer Staffing

This summer we received the most applications than we have ever received for summer camp counselors. Due to our registrations being down, we are freezing hiring at this time. We are always looking for volunteers to help serve in the summer. If you or any member of your church is interested, we would love to have you.

Summer Camp Registration

Registration is down over 400 at this point for camp. We believe that this is due to our economic position in America. The Board and staff have had to make some financial decisions that have been hard. We ask that you join us in praying that campers would come to hear the Great news about Our Savior

Retreats

In the last year we served 10,871 people from churches, schools, and not-for-profit organizations. The majority of our guest groups are repeat business and they continue to appreciate our beautiful setting and the excellent service they receive. It is very exciting to see people come and feel the presence of the Spirit of God here at Camp Manitoqua & Retreat Center.

Outdoor Education

One area of camp ministries that continues to grow is our Adventure Zone. The Outdoor Education program equips people to be a part of effective teams using experiential learning.

Volunteers

We have had the privilege of watching many people serve God here at Camp Manitoqua.

Our annual work day is April 25, 2009 at Camp Manitoqua and The Kings Camp. It is one of our priorities to take care of all the facilities that God has given us. We are blessed by many volunteer groups who are helping us do that. We would like to thank all the people who help and the churches that take special offerings to support these projects. **We are always in need of volunteers who have a heart for helping Manitoqua reach its full potential.**

Kings Camp

In Chana, Illinois, our new campground managers, Ed & Ginny, are excited about another year of ministry and are encouraged by the number of RCA members who are using this facility. We also are excited by the number of churches that are doing church campouts. It is a great way to grow community.

Board Members

At this time we are looking for 3 new board members.

Plea for Help and Support

Manitoqua Ministries has continued to reach out to many people in the last 53 years. We, the staff and Board of Directors, would like to see it continue to be a place where "God's Spirit Changes Lives". We covet prayers and financial support from churches and individuals to continue this ministry. Manitoqua has felt the struggles in our economy like many others, and we are in some struggling times for this

ministry and we need your help. At this time camp has a 3 million dollar loan and only Loan payments for 1 more year. So please pray for the sale of land or for some generous people that want to help.

Thank you

The staff finds it a privilege to serve the Synod. We really want to take this time to say thank you to all the Classis for their support. We appreciate the Synod's support of this ministry and encourage the members of the Synod to return to their congregations and promote Manitoqua to their members.

Respectfully submitted,

Laura Vroom
Executive Director

C. General Synod Council Report

Report from GENERAL SYNOD COUNCIL

The General Synod Council (GSC) met for its spring meeting in Grand Rapids, Michigan, March 24-26.

The agenda included a number of items that will be brought to this summer's meeting of the General Synod, as well as progress reports on fulfilling the ends established by the General Synod in its 10-year goal, Our Call.

Following are some of the significant accomplishments that came out of the three-day meeting.

- **General Secretary and GSC Staff Reduce 2009 Budget by \$800,000**

The GSC reviewed the actions taken by Wesley Granberg-Michaelson and GSC staff to reduce the 2009 budget by \$800,000. That is a reduction of about 4.5 percent and the reductions affect each budget area in the form of cost efficiencies, limited travel, and a continuous review of potential costs. Several other significant actions that will affect nearly all staff include a cancellation of an annual staff training event, a hiring freeze (with the exception of the director of development due to the retirement of Richard Welscott), a salary freeze, and an increase to 20 percent in the contribution employees pay for their personal health care premium. Due to provisions in the *Book of Church Order*, ordained staff will not pay the 20 percent benefit premium, but will instead see an equivalent reduction in other benefits that will amount to \$1,265. This change will take effect on April 1.

Several staff positions were affected by these reductions, including two full-time positions that were eliminated, one full-time position that became a part-time position, and three part-time positions where hours were reduced.

The general secretary informed the GSC that staff is continuing to monitor carefully the impact of the economic downturn on the church's financial condition and will be prepared to implement additional cost savings as necessary.

- **GSC Affirms Zero Increase Assessment Recommendation to General Synod**

The GSC reviewed the assessment recommendations to General Synod for operations, theological education, and the retirement assistance grant program through Benefits Services. The assessment proposed to General Synod will be identical to the 2009 assessment, with a 0 percent per-member increase.

- **Ends Policy Monitoring Reports Reviewed and Progress Assessed**

Reports reviewed by the GSC in the five ends areas form the basis of its report to the General Synod in June. Detailed reports with measurable data were provided according to the ends statements in the five ends areas as follows:

- **Church Multiplication Policy**

The RCA will foster a sustainable movement of church multiplication through starting new congregations.

- **Church Revitalization Policy**

The RCA will be a fellowship of externally focused congregations where lives are being transformed and communicates are being renewed.

- **Discipleship Policy**
The RCA will be a fellowship of congregations filled with disciples, nurtured inwardly, focused outwardly, becoming like Jesus in all they think, say, and do in order to show the love of God in all circumstances to all people.
RCA congregations will be equipped to welcome and fully include all persons with disabilities and their families, so that persons with disabilities can become professing and active followers of Jesus and serve God to the best of their abilities.

- **Leadership Policy**
The RCA will be a fellowship of congregations that are building a healthy, growing future by renewing existing leadership and identifying, calling forth, and training people with gifts for leadership.
- **Mission Policy**
The RCA will be a fellowship of congregations intentionally crossing boundaries in word and deed with the love of God known in Jesus Christ resulting in:
 - *Evangelizing unreached peoples*
 - *Empowering global partners*
 - *Equipping RCA churches for mission*
 - *Embracing compassion and justice*

- **Ends Policy Created for Sixth Element of Our Call, a Multiracial Future Freed from Racism**
 In response to an action of the 2008 General Synod the GSC revised its "global ends policy" and added an element of Our Call, "a Multiracial Future Freed from Racism."
 - **Global Ends Policy:**
Empowered by the Holy Spirit, grounded in Scripture, and in covenant with the General Secretary and staff, the General Synod Council will carry out its responsibilities in order to ensure that the Reformed Church in America will be a denomination where: congregations are following Christ in mission, being equipped and empowered for faithful and fruitful ministry; embracing and displaying unity, justice, and reconciliation among all people so that we may reflect God's vision of the kingdom; engaging in reaching all people with the love, grace, and forgiveness of Jesus Christ; which requires all we have and all we are to the glory of God.

 - **Multi-racial Future Policy:**
The RCA will be a fellowship of congregations resisting the sin of racism and committing to a multi-racial future engaging all of God's people in mission and ministry.

- **Executive Limitations Monitoring Holds General Secretary and Staff Accountable**
 One of the significant General Synod Council responsibilities in policy governance is to review detailed reports from the general secretary and staff around the RCA's mission, vision, and day-to-day operations. These monitoring reports are reviewed in-depth at both the fall and spring meetings. They provide the single best mechanism for the GSC to evaluate performance in all areas of responsibility of the general secretary and staff. The general secretary and staff reported compliance or progress in all policy areas.

- **General Synod President Carol Bechtel Named Moderator of GSC**
 Carol Bechtel, the current General Synod president, was appointed moderator of GSC beginning July 2009. She will preside as president of the 2009 General Synod.

- **GSC Reviews Proposal to Not Gather for General Synod in 2010**
 In an action parallel to one that occurred in 1933 during the worst depression of the twentieth century, the GSC reviewed a proposal that would allow the General Synod to not meet in 2010 in order to reduce costs in these critical economic times. This proposal will be presented to General Synod as an option that would reduce costs for the denomination, with savings shared with congregations through an assessment reduction. If the proposal is adopted by the General Synod, the classes would be asked to approve the action at their fall meetings. This would be a one-time cancellation of General Synod and would allow for a reduction in 2010 assessments of 50 percent of the cost of the annual meeting, a savings that would be repeated in 2011; the costs for the 2011 synod would be paid from funds collected over two years.

- **Options Considered for 2011 General Synod and Church-Wide Leadership Event in San Francisco**

The GSC authorized staff to continue to investigate the possibility of holding a combined leadership event and General Synod in 2011 that could be held in San Francisco. This would be held in cooperation with City Center Network Classis, City Church of San Francisco, the Classis of Central California, and the Regional Synod of the Far West. Staff will continue to investigate the potential costs of such an event to ensure that the synod meeting can operate within the current annual budget and the leadership event can be accomplished in a fiscally responsible fashion. A plan for this event and budget will be presented for consideration at the June meeting of the GSC immediately following the General Synod meeting.

- **Women's Ministries Update**

The GSC reviewed the process around the decision to eliminate the position of coordinator of Women's Ministries for the 2010 budget year. The GSC affirmed the difficult decision and emphasized the importance of continuing to keep the office of Women's Ministries in place as the RCA discerns how to staff and fund this position in the future. A wide variety of individuals with differing perspectives will gather this fall to help discern the most effective strategies, models, and revenue sources for this work in the future. A small group of individuals from the denomination will meet this spring to clarify the goals of the consultative process, and to begin to identify those whose participation in it would be most valuable.

- **GSC Affirms General Secretary's Leadership of the RCA**

The GSC affirmed the leadership of Wesley Granberg-Michaelson as general secretary. The session included an opportunity for direct conversation with Wes and concluded with a time of prayer. The GSC's responsibility in this regard is to evaluate the general secretary's performance in all areas of his work as well as his performance within the General Synod Council. GSC commended the work of the general secretary in continuing momentum toward fulfillment of the denomination's 10-year goal and carrying out General Synod business.

- **2009 General Synod Schedule and Agenda Reviewed and Approved**

The GSC discussed the report from its General Synod 2009 planning group and reviewed the proposed meeting schedule. Final decisions concerning the prioritization of agenda items, use of plenary and advisory time blocks, and the order of reporting will be made in consultation with the officers later in April once all reports, overtures, and recommendations have been received by the General Synod office. General Synod will meet June 4 to 9 on the campuses of Hope College and Western Theological Seminary in Holland, Michigan.

- **Coordinated Communication Efforts of the GSC and *Church Herald* Editorial Council**

The GSC heard a report from three of its members, John Ornee, Ned Beadel, and Ron Vande Bunte, along with general secretary Wesley Granberg-Michaelson, who met with three members of the *Church Herald* Editorial Council to discuss and work on an overall communication policy and strategy to report to the 2009 General Synod.

The GSC reviewed a recommended report that was initially drafted by the six GSC and *Church Herald* Editorial Council members and was edited slightly and approved by the *Church Herald* Editorial Council. The report calls for a communication resource that combines elements of the RCA denominational communication *RCA Today* and the *Church Herald*. The GSC believes this report offers the opportunity to create a coordinated communication strategy but emphasized that the report needs specifics around budget and business plan before it can be approved.

The GSC believes this can best be accomplished by working with the *Church Herald* Editorial Council to build a series of options for General Synod delegates to consider. These options would include specifics around budget and assessment costs, as well as number of issues, staff, etc. in order to give delegates the information they need to make an informed decision and ensure that the funding for this potential communication piece will be intact.

- **Recognition of the Ministries of Bruce Menning and Richard Welscott**

Bruce Menning and Richard Welscott were recognized by the GSC for their faithful work for the RCA. Both Bruce and Richard are retiring this spring. Bruce served as director of Global Mission and

Richard has most recently served as director of development. Heartfelt gratitude was expressed by the GSC for the leadership that they have shared generously with colleagues and the RCA throughout their ministry.

▪ **Other GSC Business**

In other business, GSC: heard reports from the officers; approved requests for assessment relief for the Classis of Mid-Hudson and the Classis of Northern Michigan; received and reviewed reports from task forces and agreed to forward these to General Synod.

Respectfully submitted,
Christopher Poest

VIII. Other business

The Book of Church Order calls for a "copy of the minutes of every session of the several classes held since the last regular session of the regional synod shall be produced for inspection at the synod's annual meeting." The bylaws of the synod gives the responsibility of inspection of these minutes to the synod's Executive Council or its representative. The Council authorized the Stated Clerk to inspect the minutes on its behalf and to report any issues or concerns. The inspection has occurred with the exception of the Florida Classis because that classis did not submit minutes. Communication regarding concerns will be shared with the various clerks of the classes.

IX. Closing roll call and reading of the journal

→ **VOTED to omit the closing roll call.**

→ **VOTED to read the journal by title.**

The journal of the 2009 Annual session of the Synod of Mid-America was read by title.

→ **VOTED to approve the journal as read by title**

X. Adjournment to Equipping Event

The synod adjourned from the business meeting with prayer offered by Chad Schuitema. The delegates then participated as a part of the Charting a Course to Missional Rebirth event.

XI. Seating of new officers and adjournment

No new officers needed to be seated at the 2009 session

The Synod session ended with prayer offered by Wayne Van Regenmorter.

The 2010 annual session of the Synod of Mid-America will be scheduled and announced by the Executive Council as soon as possible.

Elmer Van Druenen
President

Randy Kooy
Stated Clerk