



Minutes

1. Opening Devotions & Prayer (Wayne Van Regenmorter)

1. Wayne began with devotions on Ephesians 3 and led us in prayer.

2. Roll Call (sign-in), Announcements, Communications (Chad Schuitema)

1. Attendees: Earl VanderWall (alternate for Rich Schuler), Pedro Windsor, Christopher Poest, Jill Harmelink, Lyle Zumdahl, Bill Flavin, Keith DeBlaey, Glenn Sterret, Stu Swenson, Matt Waterstone, Troy Nanninga, Bob Hoffman, Ken Renkes, Dawn Bird; Guests: Larryl Humme, Philip Rose, Dave Izenbart, Jason DeVries; Ex-officio: Laura Vroom; Staff: Wayne Van Regenmorter, Chad Schuitema, Ben Ingebretson; Executive Team: Edie Lenz, Jimmie Stevenson, Bob Wierenga; Absent: Larry Bolt, Cary Winn, Aaron Klein.

3. President's Report - (Rev. Edie Lenz, [page 4](#))

1. Edie presented her president's report by beginning with Philippians 2:1-5. The report was previously given to members in written form. Edie gave highlights of her report and asked for questions.

4. Business Reports

1. Financial Reports ([page 8](#))
 1. Chad presented the 2015 budget and also the end of 2014 budget status. There were some questions about how long we can sustain running on a deficit budget.
2. Manitoqua Ministries ([page 10](#))
 1. Laura presented her written report and gave highlights of Camp Manitoqua and also took questions.
3. General Synod Council (oral report given by Jimmie Stevenson)
 1. As our representative to GSC, Jimmie shared some details about how General Synod will be structured this year and how that is different than in years past. He shared information on assessments and overtures as well.
4. Executive Team Report ([page 12](#))
 1. Chad offered the written report of the Executive Team for information and took a few questions. Some questions about Urban Ministry Grants were asked.
5. The Journey Report ([page 15](#))
6. Visionary Leader Report ([page 16](#))
 1. Wayne shared his report and took questions.
7. Church Multiplication Consultant Vision-Casting and Report ([page 32](#))

1. Ben Ingebretson's report including different planting models and Ben led a conversation on the church multiplication movement in the RSMA.

5. Vision Portion

1. Introduction (Wayne Van Regenmorter and Bob Wierenga)
2. Transformed and Transforming Question and Answering Sharing (questions were sent to delegates prior to the meeting and also classis executive teams - these responses will be shared around the tables and in the large group) (**page 37**)
 1. Large Group Responses from questions on page 37:
 1. **CHI:** a general sense of excitement and new awareness/energy for T&T; there are questions of how all this happens in terms of our structure and policy and governance. Tensions of existing structures that are ineffectual and dysfunctional have a very hard time in getting engaged around it. How will this work within this classis? A big unknown. There are some individual churches engaging but there has been no effort or conversation about how to get the classis as a whole engaged.
 2. **I-F:** Church by in large really don't know much about T&T yet - probably because the classis has been through a rough period with churches leaving and issues merging with Florida. The classis leadership have exhausted energy dealing with crisis. So there hasn't been opportunity to get involved. The few churches that have been involved it has been great, but overall there is an apathy about T&T because of it still being unknown. How do we get our already busy pastors and churches involved in this?
 3. **IL:** when the T&T stuff is read, it's personally excited to the pastor. Leaders and lay people in congregations don't know much about it and so they aren't excited, and are skeptical and apprehensive. Even though it may not be true it seems as this is a a top down thing. It's such a huge thing that there is a disconnect and even a fear about it. Maybe that is a process issue. Also there are a lot of IL churches that won't engage any of this because they are on life-support.
 4. **WI:** can be overwhelming because of the immensity and broadness. No assessment tool to help figure out where we should draw from T&T. Need to have individual conversations with pastors to help garner an understanding of where the classis can help churches engage T&T. Many churches are so focused on operational leadership and aren't willing or able to engage in the adaptive kind of leadership that is T&T. Churches afraid of trying.
 3. Storytelling
 1. Phillip Rose - Bethany, Sheboygan, WI involved in the Local Missional Engagement Leadership Network Learning Community
 2. Dave Izenbart - Living Springs, Glenwood, IL involved in the Holistic Discipleship Leadership Network Learning Community

4. Brainstorming Next Steps - Transformed & Transforming is an invitation from God to move into God's preferred future for the RCA. It is a call to change, which means it is about risk and loss on the way to God's preferred future.
 1. When in your life have you personally taken a risk, made a change, or allowed God to transform you?
 2. How does the above statement help you as you explore Transformed & Transforming and what it might mean for you now?
 3. What challenges our classis in regards to these stories?
 4. What seems to be especially important for us to hear and explore further in regards to our classis?
5. Giving Our Word
 1. Share what are you willing to give your word to after leaving here today that could impact your classis?
 2. What do you need in order to keep your word?

6. Closing Prayer and Adjournment

***The Synod Assembly is charged to spend significant time in these areas of responsibility:**

Be responsible to see that the Mission of the Synod is carried out, to establish policy to realize the Vision of the Synod, and to continually evaluate the progress towards realizing the Vision of the Synod.

Be responsible for long-range plans and goals of the Regional Synod.

Current Members:

Chicago Classis (3): Christopher Poest (M - 2015), Rich Schuler (E- 2016), Pedro Windsor (M - 2017),

Illiana-Florida Classis (5): Matt Waterstone (M - 2015), Aaron Klein (M - 2016), Stu Swenson (E - 2016), Troy Nanninga (M - 2017), Glenn Sterrett (E - 2017)

Illinois Classis (3): Bob Hoffman (M - 2015), Ken Renkes (E - 2016), Dawn Bird (E - 2017)

Wisconsin Classis (4): Keith DeBlaey (E - 2015), Lyle Zumdahl (M - 2016), Jill Harmelink (E - 2016), Bill Flavin (M - 2017)

Officers and Staff: Edie Lenz (P), Bob Wierenga (VP), Jimmie Stevenson (PP), Chad Schuitema (SC/T), Wayne Van Regenmorter (VL)

Ex-Officio Members/Representatives: Cary Winn (OBJ chair), Laura Vroom (Manitoqua Director), Jimmie Stevenson (GSC representative & already a Synod Assembly member)

President's Report

Rev. Edie Lenz

Our Synod is not an easy one to pinpoint or summarize. We serve cities, towns, and rural areas. We minister in communities where diversity is a beautiful gift and a challenge and in areas where it is difficult to find. We minister to those who have been a part of the same Reformed church their entire lives and are in their 90s and to people who do not really know what in the world you mean when you say Reformed Church in America. We are a varied group of Classes. We see the world in different ways. The challenges that we face are sometimes universal and sometimes very unique to us. The reports from our Classes serve to highlight just how different we are. Each of our Classis presidents in their address to the Classis sought to highlight some of the greatest challenges and opportunities in their particular region. If you want to know specifics about what each and every Classis is doing, struggling with, or encouraged by you need to read Wayne's report. I trust that many of you will have already done so, if you have not, you need to. There is so much going on in all of our Classes.

Chicago Classis continues to struggle with communication and unity of purpose. An increase in communication has helped but has not repaired the breaches and differences in their Classis and yet there are areas of new ministry as well. Illinois is facing a number of declining churches in rural communities, churches that seem to have lost a sense of mission and vision and merely exist. They also have a group of churches that are striving to look ahead, to follow the Spirit of God into the future, who are seeking new life. Illiana-Florida is certainly our most diverse classis. They have said good-bye to 5 churches who have chosen to withdraw from the RCA - this has a tremendous impact on the Classis and the leaving of the churches does not necessarily resolve the issues. But they are also engaged heavily in planting new churches and seeking new ways to reach those who do not know Jesus, more so than any other of our Classes. Almost half the churches in WI have engaged the Ridder Church Renewal (RCR) process - leading to a lot of really difficult work over the past few years and a lot of new ministries with a focus towards mission to the world.

With all of these challenges it is difficult not to become resigned about the future, to become cynical that there is any chance at all that anything could really make a difference. What is T&T, haven't we already tried some of this stuff? What is RCR; if only some churches engage in it what difference will it make anyway? We are planting churches but not quite as fast as we are closing others. What does it mean to say that we are a Synod? What is the Spirit saying to our Synod? We are so different what we face is so varied, our priorities, challenges and struggles all feel very unique to our particular churches and classes and yet there are some universal issues that I believe we as a Synod can take some time to look at.

I believe that we as a Synod have a particular focus and call for mission. Our statement of purpose says that we are to "Equip Classes to faithfully follow Christ in ministry and mission." What this means is that as a Synod we are to be particularly concerned not about the health of individual churches, although that matters deeply but our focus is to be on the Classes

themselves. What then are the mission and ministry of the Classes that we serve? I believe that we find ourselves at a crossroads, there is a lot happening in our churches and in our Classes – Things that make it difficult to remain focused specifically on ministry and mission to the world. I believe that we are in danger of becoming stuck – in division, cynicism, and suspicion. As Classes we often find ourselves trying to push, pull, or drag the church of the past into the future. Some of our churches are coming willingly, others are resisting with all of their being. I wonder however if we have taken the time to listen as a Synod, what is the Spirit saying to the churches? If we believe, really believe that the Spirit speaks, what exactly is the Spirit saying to us?

Our world is full of darkness and division. Our country is plagued with polarization. What we seem to have lost is our ability to seek common ground, common purpose and common humanity. We see this in our churches and communities as well. Deep and sometimes wide are the things that divide us. I wonder then if we have allowed the current state of reality in the rest of the country to bleed into our work together as well. We find ourselves overrun by judgment and the drawing of boundaries. We find that we compete far more than we collaborate. How many times have you listened to discussions about church planting and revitalization as if we much choose one or the other – as if God could not possibly want us to do both simultaneously? How often do we set ourselves up not as partners but as rivals? How often have we let our ideology stop us from offering love to another? Do we need to just learn to agree to disagree? How can we maintain our integrity as a body if we allow everyone to think what they want or do as they please? These are real and very difficult questions that we are facing.

One of the many tools that are taught during the RCR process is that of differentiation of self. In my opinion this is one of the most difficult tools in the Ridder process to learn; simply because what it requires is both great amounts of courage and great amounts of love. What this means is the ability to know what you believe, to say clearly and not defensively what you believe AND to remain connected to those around you. It takes great courage to define ourselves, to speak out in a group and say something that is not popular or that the majority does not agree with; it is a great risk to speak up not knowing what everyone in the room is thinking. But this is only one kind of courage. We all know people and groups who always speak their mind, people that you are always sure of what they think and where they stand. We also all know people that will sacrifice all that they believe for the sake of connection, those who never have an opinion, never speak out, and never have anything to say that isn't being said by someone else. If we look at each of these we can see the problems that arise – one is likely to end in conflict and cut off, the other is likely to result in never knowing where to make a stand or falling for anything that comes along.

The greatest maturity and courage is needed to both define your own understanding and beliefs AND to have the courage to stay connected to one another. THIS is an act of great love, an act of great faith, and it is not easy to do. I believe that we have hit a critical point in our history as a denomination; we are going to have to start defining ourselves AND seeking connection. We are going to have to be willing to be authentic enough with one another to

talk about the real struggles we have, not just the ones on the surface. We are going to have to admit when we are wrong and seek to clean up the messes that we have made. How will we revitalize our churches if we cannot at least see where we have been - the good and the bad? How will we plant new churches and share the good news of Christ if we can't begin by being honest about our own limitations and sins? The world can see us clearly - can we see ourselves? How can we have an honest conversation about the issues that are tearing apart so many of our churches and Classes? The courage of Wisconsin is something that we need to pay attention to - we need to listen to what they are saying to one another. How can we define our beliefs and be clear about our understanding of homosexuality and marriage AND learn to love and to reach out to the world around us?

As individuals and as churches we have a lot of growing up to do. Our culture is unable to maintain connection in the face of disagreement; all you need to do is watch a political debate to see this is true. Surely as Christ's disciples we can learn to do better. Surely we can grow up into Christ who is our head. If there was ever someone with the ability to be differentiated it was Jesus. Think of that moment when he spoke of his death and one of his very best friends said, "God forbid it, Lord." How easy would it have been for Jesus to just agree with Peter, how easy would it have been to say never mind, you don't understand, I will keep quiet about it. How easy would it have been to cut Peter off from the relationship, to just walk away from him? Instead Jesus speaks clearly and with great intent - he condemns Peter's words, but not Peter and we know from the rest of the gospel that this matter of rebuking Jesus didn't blackball Peter from the disciples, in fact he remains one of the closest to Jesus. We need to learn from Jesus' example. We need to clearly define ourselves and what we believe but we must also seek to remain connected, to continue to work on the relationships, to continue to pursue sinners, to continue to seek forgiveness and to forgive. Because we live in a world that is in desperate need of a Savior. The image of this that returns to me again and again is an experience from my years at Valparaiso University. As a theology major, I spent a lot of time in classes where we learned about Jesus and the Bible. One of my favorite professors was an adjunct professor, a local UCC pastor who served a multi-ethnic congregation in Valparaiso. Being a Lutheran school Valpo is a mixture of ELCA and Missouri Synod folks, in that particular class there were quite a few of each as well as those of us of other denominations mixed in and a few who were just trying to make it through their theology graduation requirements, imagine then the diversity of opinion and the variety of experiences that came to class each week.

Rev. Jones loved to rile up his students and get us debating things. He knew all the right buttons to push for a roaring debate. I honestly don't remember which of his classes I was in for this debate but I do remember that the debate was about women's roles in the church. At this point I had already applied to Western and was positive about my particular position about women in ministry and there were plenty of individuals who sat on the other side of that debate. It got ugly, there were names called, scripture was quoted in the best ways we know how and in the middle of raised voices and heated tempers, Rev. Jones stepped in. "This is all well and good," he said, "I can see where both sides are coming from. Are you a Christian he asked?" "Yes," I said. "How about you?" He asked one of the debaters on the other side, "Yes I am." "Well here is the thing, this guy over here - he hasn't eaten in a week,

he has no shelter and no job. As a Christian, do you believe that it is your responsibility to help him?" "Yes, absolutely." "What about you?" "Of course it is." "Ok," he said, "can you do it together?"

Can you do it together? The reality of our world is this - there is much that is darkness, sin, pain, and suffering. There is so much wrong we can't possibly do it alone. Not one of us has the answers, not one of our churches, not one of our Classes has all of the answers and yet - the world cries out for a Savior. The world cries out for healing. We - all of us - are a sent people. We - all of us - are given a commission to go to the world, baptizing and making disciples. If our divisions are helping us define who we are and helping us figure out how we can best reach the world then so be it. But if our debates, divisions, our inability to define ourselves clearly and stay connected to one another are getting in the way then we need to make a different decisions. The world is in need of the Body of Christ, the people of God have work to do. The harvest Jesus tells us is plenty, but the laborers, those willing to define themselves and stay connected to others, those willing to work together for the sake of the gospel are very few.

Yet Jesus prayed for us, and said, "That they may be all be one. As you, Father, are in me and I am in you, may they also be in us that the world may know that you have sent me." That they may all be one... those are hard words. It is difficult enough to remember that we each of us are to show the love and work of God through us - what is worse, Jesus prayed for us to be one. What then does unity look like in the face of our diversity, what does unity of the church look like across such different regions and areas? What does unity look like with so many interpretations of who we are to be, what is faithful? What does unity look like when revitalization and church planting compete for finite resources? What does unity look like when our churches see one another as competition or the enemy rather than brothers and sisters in Christ? What does unity look like when we still debate personal preferences in worship and try to make everyone happy?

Jesus prayed - that they may be one as we are one. It is time as a Synod, as Classes that we do the very hard work of learning to listen to one another. It is time as a Synod and as Classes that we do the hard work of listening to our churches and our ministries - what are the real struggles, what are the real hardships, what are we really afraid of? What churches have given up and need to be loved until they pass away? What congregations need to be encouraged and challenges to get outside of their doors? What new ministries have we nodded yes to but not prayed for or really supported? What conversations need to happen for our Classes to become healthier? What can we do to move toward God's preferred future? How will we define ourselves and remain connected? There is great suffering in the world around us - there is work to be done. Can we do it together?

2015 RSMA Budget

APPROVED 07/08/14

DISBURSEMENTS	2014	2015
Visionary Leader		
Salary + Housing	\$76,477	\$78,116
Health Insurance	\$18,114	\$20,972
RCA 403(b)	\$8,207	\$8,593
SS Allowance	\$5,850	\$5,976
Continuing Education	\$1,050	\$1,072
Travel	\$17,000	\$17,000
VL Total	\$126,698	\$131,729
Admin & Ministry Leader		
Salary	\$69,479	\$70,865
Health Insurance	\$22,545	\$23,221
RCA 403(b)	\$7,642	\$7,795
SS Allowance	\$5,315	\$5,421
Continuing Education	\$920	\$973
Travel	\$5,500	\$7,500
AML Total	\$111,401	\$115,775
Administration Expenses		
Executive Team	\$2,000	\$2,000
OJB	\$500	\$500
Minister Salary Commission	\$100	\$0
Synod Annual Session	\$4,000	\$3,000
Leadership Assemblies	\$8,000	\$5,000
Equipping Events	\$2,500	\$2,500
Office Expenses		
Insurance	\$3,000	\$2,500
Financial Review	\$1,000	\$900
Utilities	\$5,000	\$4,000
Rent Expense	\$500	\$200
Office Supplies	\$4,000	\$3,000
Office Equipment	\$2,500	\$2,000
Program Expense	\$500	\$0
Miscellaneous	\$2,000	\$2,000
Admin/Office Total	\$35,600	\$27,600
Ministry Expenses		
Manitowish Contribution	\$50,000	\$40,000
Manitowish Youth Contract	\$4,000	\$0
Journey Expenses	\$1,000	\$500
Journey Leader	\$3,000	\$3,000
Journey Leader Expenses	\$200	\$200
Ridder Church Renewal	\$6,000	\$6,000
RCR 2nd Group	\$2,000	\$2,000
STM	\$3,000	\$3,000
Miscellaneous Ministry	\$5,000	\$5,000
Multiplication Consultant	\$10,000	\$10,000
Multiplication Consultant Training	\$1,000	\$500
Commissioned Pastor	\$5,000	\$2,000
Ministry Total	\$90,200	\$72,200
Total Expenses	\$363,899.00	\$347,304

Summary	Proposed
Personnel Expenses	\$247,504
Ministry Expenses	\$87,200
Administration Expenses	\$27,600
TOTAL	\$362,304.00

Income	Projected
Assessment Income *2013 RSMA Members 19,495; Assessment set at \$15.25	\$297,298.75
Budget Deficit	-\$63,405.25

2014 RSMA Budget Status

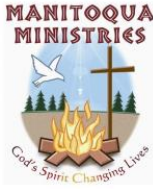
As of 12/31/14 (100% through year)

General Fund Income	Budget	Actual
Assessment Income	\$290,421.00	\$290,421
Interest Income	\$5,000.00	\$30.59
Miscellaneous Income		
TOTAL	\$295,421.00	\$290,451.13

Urban Ministry Income	Budget	Actual
Asking (\$4/member; \$2 SS)	\$32,000.00	\$28,081.49
TOTAL	\$32,000.00	\$28,081.49
Urban Ministry Disbursements	Budget	Actual
Assistance	\$42,000.00	\$37,830.82
TOTAL	\$42,000.00	\$37,830.82

Fund Totals	01/01/2014	12/31/2014
RCA-CGF 3-yr Certificate #1	\$100,000.00	\$102,269.07
RCA-CGF 3-yr Certificate #2	\$100,000.00	\$102,269.07
RCA-CGF Demand Certificate	\$315,643.91	\$258,418.49
Providence Bank Checking	\$113,000.50	\$89,622.54
Winterfest	\$8,785.45	\$0.00
TOTAL	\$637,429.86	\$552,579.17

DISBURSEMENTS	BUDGET	CURRENT	PERCENTAGE
Visionary Leader			
Services	\$108,364	\$109,034	100.6%
Continuing Education	\$1,050	\$1,063	101.2%
Travel	\$17,000	\$19,129	112.5%
Admin & Ministry Leader			
Services	\$101,477	\$101,975	100.5%
Continuing Education	\$955	\$874	91.6%
Travel	\$5,500	\$7,760	141.1%
Administration Expenses			
Executive Team	\$2,000	\$976	48.8%
OJB	\$500	\$0	0.0%
Minister Salary Commission	\$100	\$0	0.0%
Synod Annual Session	\$4,000	\$2,070	51.8%
Leadership Assemblies	\$8,000	\$1,792	22.4%
Equipping Events	\$2,500	\$0	0.0%
Office Expenses			
Insurance	\$3,000	\$2,473	82.4%
Financial Review	\$1,000	\$885	88.5%
Utilities	\$5,000	\$5,558	111.2%
Rent Expense	\$500	\$0	0.0%
Office Supplies	\$4,000	\$2,177	54.4%
Office Equipment	\$2,500	\$4,340	173.6%
Program Expense	\$500	\$0	0.0%
Miscellaneous	\$2,000	\$4,682	234.1%
Ministry Expenses			
Manitoqua Contribution	\$50,000	\$50,903	101.8%
Manitoqua Youth Contract	\$4,000	\$4,000	100.0%
Journey Expenses	\$1,000	\$0	0.0%
Journey Leader	\$3,000	\$3,000	100.0%
Journey Leader Expenses	\$200	\$0	0.0%
New Church Plant Expense	\$1,000	\$0	0.0%
Ridder Church Renewal	\$6,000	\$3,705	61.8%
RCR 2nd Group	\$6,000	\$6,000	100.0%
STM	\$3,000	\$323	10.8%
Miscellaneous Ministry	\$5,000	\$4,737	94.7%
Multiplication Consultant	\$25,000	\$24,293	97.2%
Commissioned Pastor	\$5,000	\$5,000	100.0%
Total Expenses	\$379,146.00	\$366,746	96.7%



SYNOD REPORT

TO: REGIONAL SYNOD GENERAL ASSEMBLY
FROM: LAURA VROOM, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR
DATE: MARCH 2015
BOARD MEMBERS: Tim Boonstra Ben Kappers
Kirk Kroese Joe Paglia
Mark Reinhout Dennis Colton
Kevin Kavanaugh Susan Lange
Ronald Sanford

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

Personally:

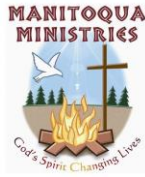
- This has been a growing year for me. The Board of Directors gave me a sabbatical last November and December. In that time my daughter and I went to Jos, Nigeria to support some of our friends who are Missionaries in that area. It was a great time of personal reflection and growth. As well as an opportunity for a renewed connection with God.

Denominational / Synod Activities:

- I continue my position as secretary of the Commission of Nominations to represent our Synod. Please encourage members to fill out profile forms on the RCA website.
- Manitoqua is in conversation with the Synod to brainstorm how the ministry can maintain its purpose within the RCA amidst a changing demographic among the participants of Manitoqua.

Property:

- We are in constant need to upgrade and change our facilities. At this time, the greatest need has been identified as replacing the heating systems in the Chapel and Dining Hall.
- We will be spending time this year to determine options for increasing indoor space for hard winters and rainy days. This increased space will help grow our year round program offerings.

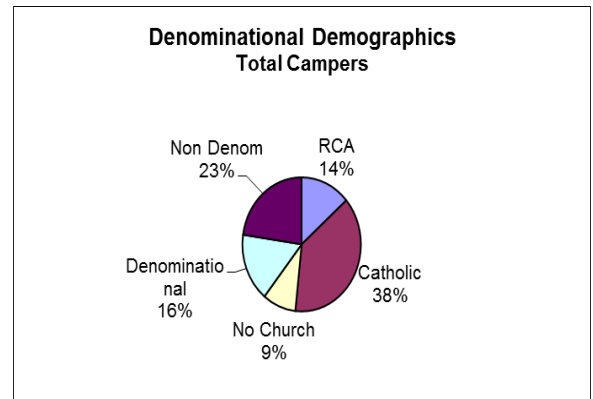


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Programs:

- Recap of 2014 Statistics:
 - 2,457 different children attended a summer camp session.
 - Those children filled 3,910 total camp sessions.
 - We served 57,668 meals.
 - We served 18,120 retreat and outdoor education guests.
- Joy Jenen has been hired as our new Program Coordinator, filling this position which has been vacant since August 2014.
- I am excited to report that 2015 summer camp registrations continue to pour in. At this time we are at 81% full compared to 78% full last year at this time, and we have increased the number of sessions available by 102 spots.
- We are working hard to continue to grow the programs that we have. As well as start new programs the last couple of years, we have done a father son retreat, women's retreat as well as a paintball retreat.
- We would be excited to program any retreat for you or your churches; please consider using camp for your programs.



Thank you:

The staff find it a privilege to be in partnership with Synod. We really want to take this time to say thank you. If we can serve you in any way please ask. We appreciate the Synod's support of this ministry and encourage the members to return to their congregations and promote Manitoqua to their members.

Respectfully submitted,

Laura Vroom
Executive Director

Executive Team Report to the Regional Synod Annual Assembly

Chad Schuitema

The Regional Synod of Mid-America **Executive Team** is comprised of Edie Lenz (President), Bob Wierenga (Vice-President), Jimmie Stevenson (Past-President), Wayne Van Regenmorter (Visionary Leader), and Chad Schuitema (Stated Clerk/Treasurer/Administrative and Ministry Leader). Per our bylaws, this team is responsible to carry out the will of the Synod Assembly and to act on behalf of the Synod Assembly between sessions. The ET annually evaluates the staff of the RSMA, determines budget and oversees business and ministry. The ET meets monthly through video/telephone communication methods and at least quarterly in person.

The ET updated the **Urban Ministry Grant** guidelines of the RSMA in 2015. The grant criteria now states: "Urban Ministry Grant assistance is for ministries to, in, and/or for areas considered urban in geography of our regional synod. The minimum criterion is that it is a ministry to, in, and/or for the urban area with a vision, plans, and goals for outreach into the community. Those ministries applying for a grant that aren't in a traditionally geographic urban setting should take into account that the ideal of the grant is that it be used for those living in geographically urban areas, multi-cultural areas, and lower socio-economic areas. The synod's goal is to see lives changed through the work of Christ and the Gospel." Grants also may not be applied for beyond 5 consecutive years and each year the recipient must reapply.

This year's requests totaled over \$103,000. Ultimately we awarded \$34,000 in grants to the following ministries:

Ministry	Executive Team Approved Funding
Hammond Arts Center	\$7,500.00
FRC South Holland - First Campus Ministries	\$3,000.00
Remedy - Coffee and Community Tuesdays	\$1,500.00
Living Springs Riverdale	\$2,500.00
Hope Sheboygan Kids' Hope, VBS, Community Meal	\$2,500.00
Faith Stickney Associate Pastor	\$3,000.00
Trinity Brown Deer, Kids' Hope, VBS, Community Night	\$2,500.00
North Ridge - Apopka, FL Church Plant	\$4,000.00
Well of Excellence	\$7,500.00
Total:	\$34,000.00

The ET also received **incorporation in Indiana** (as a “foreign” not-for-profit). Being incorporated in both Illinois and Indiana allows for the RSMA staff to not pay both Illinois and Indiana State Income Tax. The ET also closed the RSMA Manitouqua office in order to cut costs and better reflect the reality of the staff’s responsibilities. Both the VL and AML work out of home offices when not traveling and for the past several years the Manitouqua office was ultimately serving as a mailing address only. A Post Office Box was acquired in Valparaiso, IN which is the home of the AML. Utilities were cut by a over a third through this action.

The ET appoints individuals to serve on **RCA commissions**. This year Russ Paarlberg was appointed to the Commission on Judicial Business and Cary Winn will begin serving on the Commission on Nominations beginning in June. The ET would like to sincerely thank Laura Vroom for graciously and fruitfully working in this capacity for the last four years. The ET also appoints a delegate from the RSMA Assembly to General Synod annually and this year Lyle Zumdahl was appointed. Dawn Bird and Pat Wierenga were both appointed as Women Corresponding Delegates. Carmen VerVeld is our Young Adult Corresponding Delegate. Jimmie Stevenson and Bob Wierenga both serve on General Synod Council.

The **Salary Committee** of the RSMA is moderated by the AML. This committee is:

Chicago Classis:

Rich Schuler - 2017 (2nd Term)
Paul Tuuk - 2017 (2nd Term)

Illiana-Florida Classis:

Justin Kats - 2017 (1st Term)
Andy Shaver - 2017 (1st Term)

Wisconsin Classis:

Susan Kist - 2017 (2nd Term)
Dan Harmsen - 2017 (2nd Term)

Illinois Classis:

Rich Schultz - 2015 (2nd Term)
Don Kincaid - 2015 (1st Term)

The action taken by the Salary Committee has been previously published and is available on our website: www.rsmam.org

Financially, the RSMA ran at a budget deficit again in 2014. The income was \$290,451. Our expenditures were \$367,388 (vs. \$379,146 budget). We dispersed \$37,830 in Urban Ministry Grants while \$28,081 was given through the Urban Ministry askings. A full 2014 financial summary is found in this agenda along with a 2015 budget.

The ET has **partnerships** with Manitouqua Ministries and The Journey. Laura Vroom gives excellent leadership to Manitouqua Ministries and gives reports to the RSMA. A full report from Laura is found in this agenda. The RSMA ended it’s youth commission partnership with Manitouqua Ministries at the end of 2014 and sincerely thanked Nathan Philips for his work over the past several years in this capacity. Larry Bolt continues to provide excellent leadership to The Journey and a full report can also be found in this agenda.

The **Multi-Racial Task Force** of the RSMA meets regularly and is facilitated by Alfonzo Surret. Both Jimmie Stevenson and Chad Schuitema are members of this task force. The MRTF has adopted as its value: *to empower and to encourage the region, its classes, and its churches to become multiracial freed from racism*. This team recently coordinated a celebration of Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. in Riverdale, IL.

Regional Synods are charged with oversight of the commissioned pastor program of the denomination. I sit on the **Commissioned Pastor Advisory Board** of the RCA and will be having a regional meeting by video conference this fall after the national meeting on October 6, 2015 . We have again partnered with Burt Braunius of the Church Leadership Center to help somewhat standardize our commissioned pastor process.

The AML has duties of 75% focus on administrating the business and details of the RSMA and 25% focus on Transformed and Transforming initiatives. Website design and maintenance, efficient accounting procedures, twice-monthly newsletters, all communications, clerk requirements, treasurer responsibilities, administrative duties, staff support, IT support, and many other daily activities comprise the administrative responsibilities of the AML. I am a member of the Local Missional Engagement Team and work in the areas of Transformational Experiences, Cultivating Redemptive Relationships in Christ, and Thriving Leaders/Thriving Churches. I also coach many pastors from our region as we try and live into Transformed and Transforming.

– Chad Schuitema, Regional Synod of Mid-America Administrative and Ministry Leader

Report to the Regional Synod of Mid-America

The Journey

As just a reminder, The Journey hopes to see:

Ordinary people deepened and ignited toward kingdom life and influence;

Walking alongside others becoming a way of life and ministry for Christian leaders;

Churches becoming vibrant places of learning - that is, communities where people are consistently mentored into a life of apprenticeship with Jesus.

To that end, VantagePoint3 has developed a third resource for learning entitled Walking with Others. This third study will help individuals learn how to guide other adults toward a deeper maturity in Christ. Adult learners only need to sign up for one year at a time but this is available for those who seek to learn more about disciplining others in their life.

During March, Dave Hubbartt, pastor at First Reformed Church of Tampa, Florida will be facilitating the first group at his church. This group will be made up Consistory members and other lay people from the church. Wayne Van Regenmorter brought this program to Dave's attention and Marilyn Miller from Faith Church and VantagePoint3 (see info about Marilyn in my last report) went there to help them understand the program. I have been in contact with Dave to answer questions he has and to guide him in the process.

Because Dave is embarking on The Journey, I have asked him to assist me in making a presentation to the Florida churches at the March 19 Illiana-Florida Classis meeting about The Journey. I will make the main presentation but Dave will talk about why he and his church are beginning the spiritual development program. First person testimonies about the program are always the best when seeking to have new churches take a serious look at this program. Dave is excited to begin and I am excited to see what God is going to do at First Tampa!

Plans are already in place for the training sessions for people who want to be facilitators for The Journey. Faith Church will be again be a site on August 14-15 and there will be a session in Indianapolis on July 24-25. I would again challenge the pastors who serve on the Synod Executive Team to consider becoming a part of this exciting ministry by coming for just a sample of the training or sending someone from your church for the sample or full training to become a facilitator. I believe God will do incredible things in your church as lay people are involved in this spiritual development program.

Larry Bolt

Report to the Regional Synod of Mid-America

Wayne Van Regenmorter, Visionary Leader

April 2015

JS Shaw asks the question: "What if Jesus had not given the Great Commission? Why is the Great Commission (Matthew 28:18-20) so noticeably absent from Acts and the apostolic letters? Would the Church still be responsible to go if she did not have the Great Commission?"

In his book, The Mission of God's People, missiologist Chris Wright answers the question of responsibility with a resounding "Yes!" He says even without Christ's particular words the early church still would have gone. Why? Because they knew the story they were in. They were good Jews who knew their Scriptures, and they "understood that the story had just reached a decisive moment in Jesus of Nazareth, and they knew what the rest of the story demanded." Wright points out that the New Testament writers never again mention the Great Commission in their letters to the churches, teaching them to live out the mission. Instead, the writers continually pointed back to the Old Testament to solve disputes and give direction for dealing with the realities of the New Covenant and the revelation of the mystery that Gentiles were now a part of the family. One example of this is specified in Acts 13:46-47. Paul and Barnabas had visited Pisidian Antioch and preached in the synagogue. Here Paul recounted the story of God's people to both Jews and God-fearers (Gentiles that feared God) gathered there, and proclaimed Christ as the Messiah. Many believed and asked them to speak again the following Sabbath. Crowds came and the Jewish leaders were jealous and angry. Paul and Barnabas responded to them, "It was necessary that the word of God be spoken first to you. Since you thrust it aside and judge yourselves unworthy of eternal life, behold, we are turning to the Gentiles. For so the Lord has commanded us, saying, 'I have made you a light for the Gentiles, that you may bring salvation to the ends of the earth.'" Do you see it there? Paul draws the attention of the Jews back to their own story, quotes Isaiah 49:6, and rests the responsibility for being a light to the nations firmly on their shoulders. He never mentions the Great Commission. He reminds them that their story is one filled with sending and bears the promise of blessing among all the nations by way of God's people. Knowing one's story prepared the early church for mission.

The people of God have always been a sent people. In the beginning in Genesis 1:26-28, God created Adam to fulfill His purposes. The earth needed caretakers, so Adam was created and charged with multiplying, filling the earth, and subduing it. But Adam chose sin and he was sent from the garden with Eve. At that same time in Genesis 3:15, God promised sending another - His Messiah would come to restore and renew all that was broken by sin. The sending didn't stop. Abraham, Noah, Joseph, Moses, Joshua, Jonah, Isaiah, and Daniel were all sent for the specific purposes of God's glory on display in the earth - some even against their will. Whether they wanted to go or not, God's people were sent people - exiles

and wanderers, but they held on to the hope of a King who would come to rescue them. This theme of being sent was picked up by Peter when writing to the early Church who had been dispersed by persecution. He reminded them not first of their task, but of their identity. "But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for his own possession, that you may proclaim the excellencies of him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light. Once you were not a people, but now you are God's people; once you had not received mercy, but now you have received mercy." (I Peter 2:9-10) Peter reminds the people of their identity - they already were sojourners and exiles, people that belonged to a different kingdom but were sent here for a purpose. They were God's people, and purposeful sent-ness was inherent in that identity. So what is in our identity as followers of Jesus where we see the stories in our churches, classes, and region of our sent-ness for God's purposes?

Sent to Plant New Churches

Jesus said to His disciples, "...the harvest is plentiful, but the laborer are few; therefore ask the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into His harvest." (Matthew 9:37-38) The starting of new churches has proved to be one of the most effective methods of reaching the harvest. New churches draw new people. The work of planting new churches is to reach people with the good news of Jesus Christ. The Illiana-Florida Classis has a vision to plant 40 churches between 2010 and 2020. This classis is currently in a fruit bearing season. What we celebrate is that currently there are 11 new plants in this classis seeking to follow God's call in reaching unchurched people. Approximately 1,800 people gather each week for worship in different plants and places to hear the good news of the Gospel, and ultimately bring glory to God. In addition, 4 new plants are in the process of gathering people to be launched into worship at a future date. Nate Bolt will begin consulting with the Illiana-Florida CMT as an advisor to new multi-ethnic plants.

Church planting is a high risk venture and requires great faith. Certain types of church plants are riskier than others. The following are some general types of church plants and the success rates involved. The first type of plant is a non-constituency (i.e. planting in areas with little or no denominational recognition) parachute plant (i.e. the planter alone or with few others). This type of plant is among the most risky with a success rate of 30%-40%. The second type plant is a constituency plant (i.e. planting in areas with denominational recognition and a large pool of core team joiners). The success rate for this type of plant is 60%-70%. The third type of plant is a campus plant (i.e. planting a new site from an "original" campus). Campus plants are among the least risky with a success rate of 70%-80%. The Illiana-Florida Classis is involved in planting all three types of plants with a heavy concentration of non-constituency plants in Florida and new site campus plants in Illiana. These new plants and those in process that need our prayers:

- DaRon Dixon - Well of Hope, Orlando, FL. (2010 - 2014)
- Charlie Contreras - Faith Church Hammond, Hammond, IN. (2010 - 2014)

- Aaron Lewis – Motion Church, Riverview, FL. (2011 - 2015)
- Aaron Klein – Current Community Church, Lakewood Ranch, FL. (2011 - 2015)
- Charlie Barclay – Cornerstone Manteno, Manteno, IL. (2011 - 2015)
- Nathan Prairie – Faith Church Beecher, Beecher, IN. (2012 - 2016)
- Jason DeVries – Faith Church Highland, Highland, IN. (2013 -2017)
- Ann Bilbrew - Living Springs Community Church, Riverdale, Riverdale, IL. (2014-2018)
- Brett Dood – Faith Church, Schererville, IN. (2014-2018)
- Eric Kingsley – Salt Life, Pembroke Pines, FL. (2014-2018)
- Jason Densberger – North Ridge, Apopka, FL. (2014-2018)
- In-Process: Aaron Clark - Cornerstone Kankakee, Kankakee, IL (2015-2019)
- In-Process: Bobby Blakely Jr. – Little Haiti, Miami, FL. (2015-2019)
- In-Process: Gianni Garcia – Miami, FL. (2015-2019)
- In-Process: Faith Dyer, Ind., Campus Plant (2015-2019)

There are other church plants in the classes of Chicago and Wisconsin that need our prayers as well:

- CrossRoads Community Church - Chicago, IL
- Remedy - Bob Abel - Sheboygan, WI
- River Rock Community Church - Jon Nienhuis - Sheboygan, WI

The Illiana-Florida Leadership Development Team has developed a Commissioned Pastor Training Program with Dr. Burt Braunius and Dr. Mark Veldt of the Church Leadership Center. Bob Grysen, the Director of the Illiana-Florida CMT, has designed an integrated process for training church planters to become Commissioned Pastors. There are several planters enrolled in the Commissioned Pastor training process.

The Illinois Classis is seeking to live into their new church planting vision of 10 new congregations by 2030. The Church Multiplication Team in partnership with the synod hosted a Spring Conference for pastors and lay leaders on "How to Start a Second Service" in April 2014. Second Service Plans and Resources were developed and are now available for churches seeking to start a second service. In addition, a Fall Multiplication Conference was held in October 2014 on "Small Town and Rural Church Planting". The classis is pursuing a cluster model of four/five churches in an area to start a new church. Prayer Clusters have been formed to pray specifically for new planting opportunities. A "West" Cluster is exploring the possibility of starting a new church plant in Camanche, IA. A "North" Cluster is in the process of gathering pastors for prayer. Some of the concerns around church planting that the Church Multiplication Team is discovering in the Illinois Classis center around: a unified purpose as a classis around planting, many small congregations within the classis, apathy of churches to get involved in the vision, and a need for processing the communication which is being shared.

The Multiplication Commission of the Wisconsin Classis is seeking to move forward with the classis goal of starting 15 new congregations in the next 15 years. This goal includes 5 new church plants and 10 new "second services" that have an intentional form of outreach to a new demographic. Currently the Wisconsin Classis has two church plants in process, neither one is self sustaining at this point. Remedy is a plant out of Bethany Reformed Church in Sheboygan which reaches the needs of people focusing on addictions, mental illness, and deliverance ministry. River Rock meets in a renovated building on the north side of Sheboygan and seeks to connect with the unchurched or de-churched people.

The Wisconsin Classis has not successfully planted a self sustaining congregation in over 50 years. The classis is seeking to learn how to plant new congregations in new ways, but the Church Multiplication Commission has much to learn. The leadership is encouraged by the demographics of planting into some small towns with the hope of moving into "*the next town over*" with new forms of ministry to reach the unchurched. The desire of the Multiplication Commission is to see the classis move forward boldly in a unified manner, with a unified vision. They desire healthy congregations and ministries led by healthy pastors and leaders. They desire to see an integrated work of the 5 classis commissions, each knowing their area or piece of the whole work of the classis which will move the planting vision forward together. A funding stream for new plants and second services is being developed through a "Mission Share" approach to seek shares from existing churches. A secondary funding stream will come from sales of church property. Different models for church planting are expected to be used, but most often a cluster of churches will work together for the purpose of design and development of new church plants. The leadership needed for these new plants will be recruited through a cooperative work with the Leadership Development Commission. All congregations will be encouraged to find appropriate on-ramps to be part of these new ventures so that there is ownership but also renewal and health that comes from involvement in what God is doing. Raising up disciples who make disciples is an integral part of this work. New forms and new leaders will be needed and will challenge the current "mental models" of how leaders function in the Wisconsin Classis. The Big Picture is to have the whole classis work together and the 5 Wisconsin Commissions integrate their work in a unified vision.

In the Chicago Classis, CrossRoads Community Church, a new church plant in Chicago, is worshiping with 42 in attendance on Sundays. *Thursday Night Alive* (kids program, adults Bible studies) is doing well averaging 20 to 25 in attendance. A community dinner program has been started to reach the community by offering a meal once a month and the opportunity to be a witness for Jesus. Rev. Maryteresa and Steve Orshonsky, and Rev. Walt Pickup continue to serve CrossRoads. The Mount Greenwood Community Church in Chicago is discerning their ministry and looking to partner with a Hispanic church who will use their facility. CityWave, a new church plant led by Jason Nelson, is scheduled to launch on Easter Sunday to begin worship. The leadership of CityWave comes from Third Reformed Church in

Pella, IA. Funding for this church plant comes from Third Reformed, the Central Iowa Classis, and private individuals. The Chicago Classis also voted to partner with CityWave and provide funding of \$25,000.00 for 2nd quarter of 2015, \$25,000.00 for 3rd quarter of 2015, and \$25,000.00 for 4th quarter of 2015, for a total of \$75,000.00 in 2015. The Church Care Committee will consider possible future funding for 2016 as well.

One of the concerns expressed in the Chicago Classis is reaching the unchurched in the multi-ethnic opportunities so prevalent in Chicago. Today there are 44 million immigrants living in the United States. Of those 44 million, a full 74% say they are followers of Jesus Christ. If this is true, there are Hispanics, sub-Saharan African, Korean, and dozens of other Christians coming to America fully expecting to worship and find a church for their people. North Chicago is currently home to nearly 30,000 sub-Saharan Africans. What an opportunity to discover Christians willing to be sent to reach the new immigrants coming to Chicagoland who may or may not be followers of Jesus.

Ben Ingebretson has added value and capacity to our region, classes, and churches as a consultant in church multiplication. He continues to serve the Synod of Mid-America under contract to resource and coach classes church multiplication teams. Here are some examples of sent-ness to work alongside classes in 2014:

- Helping the Illinois Church Multiplication Team plan, design, and resource the classis workshop on "How to Start a Second Service"
- Helping the Illinois Church Multiplication Team plan, design, and resource the classis workshop on "Small Town and Rural Church Planting"
- Coaching church planters in various classes
- Coming alongside classes multiplication teams to help further develop and clarify church multiplication vision, plans, and strategy
- Offering webinars on second service planning and training on next steps
- Offering CMT SKYPE training meetings for classis leaders
- Helping congregations and pastors interpret and understand the demographics of MissionInsite Reports
- Coming alongside the Wisconsin Church Multiplication Commission on current multiplication projects, clusters, and funding strategies
- Coaching communications every Monday with four planters in Chicago, Wisconsin and Illinois
- Helping the Wisconsin Multiplication Commission on refining benchmarks, governing team structure and function
- Hosting an all planters in the region conference call on evangelism with Brett Dood leading
- Recruiting leaders and planning a January 2014 Regional CMT event in Naperville, IL
- Prospecting for potential church planters and planting partners in Chicago
- Field supervisor for the new church plants in Florida

- Monthly supervision meetings in Illiana-Florida with new church planters discussing benchmarks, accountability, and prayer support
- Many other meetings with classis leaders involving resourcing and training

We celebrate this important work that God is doing in expanding the kingdom through the planting of new churches. But we also need to be mindful that church planting is a spiritual endeavor which Satan is eager to destroy. So pray for our classis leaders, our church planters and their families as they are sent. Pray that the Lord will protect them in this journey of faith and that they seek the power and presence of the Holy Spirit as they work in a spiritually charged environment.

Sent to Collaborate Together in Multiplication - Chicagoland Kingdom Enterprise Zone

The CRC/RCA Church Multiplication Initiative is focused on creating a collaborative and sustainable multiplication movement. One of the strategies to create multiplication is the development of Kingdom Enterprise Zones. The Chicagoland KEZ was birthed with a vision in 2012 and now has grown into an Active Zone. This ministry area is focused on developing a well-functioning KEZ leadership team, implementing start-up projects and programs related to church multiplication, and launching church plants. Currently the Chicagoland KEZ has an 11 person team representing the city and suburbs of both CRC/RCA denominations and 5 classes. In the KEZ we celebrate our oneness in Christ as described in Ephesians 2 along with the wins which include the following:

- The creation of a church planter residency system to generate a church planting movement and provide consistent support and a training process
- Looking to develop a unique funding stream for church plants by way of entrepreneurial Christian business leaders creating a business/franchise model to provide funding for church starts and employment for bi-vocational planters
- Developing an RCA/CRC recovery ministry system
- Hosted a Missional Cafe event in May 2014, attended by over 60 leaders for area churches learning about mission initiatives and the work of the KEZ
- A second Missional Cafe is being planned for the Fall 2015

The key focus points of the Chicagoland KEZ are:

- RCA and CRC churches and leadership share a common energy for mission and a common struggle to capitalize on area resources
- Getting pastors and area leaders from both denominations in the same room fuels creative energy for missional strategizing
- Ethnic diversity in church planting deserves greater consideration than given to date knowing the multicultural make-up of the city neighborhoods and suburbs

The challenges include:

- Stirring interest, involvement, and ownership to local churches - keeping the work of ministry "grassroots"
- Dealing with CRC/RCA distinctives in church planter coaching/training requirements and ecclesiastical processes for new church starts
- Creating synergy among 5 classes, inner city and suburban churches, and missional churches that are a part of other networks

Prayer is an important core value of the Chicagoland KEZ. Weekly communications and prayer requests are sent out by email to prayer partners who communicate with God and watch as He moves in miraculous ways. To learn more about Kingdom Enterprise Zones as it comes under the Church Multiplication Initiative between the RCA and the CRC, check out the website: www.cmi21.com.

Sent to Increase Congregational Cultural Competency - Missional Mosaic Learning Community

The Missional Mosaic Learning Community focuses on assisting congregations to live more fully into the Biblical vision of *shalom* and the human hope of the *beloved community*. The ancient Hebrews spoke the word *shalom* both at greeting and parting. The word meant "peace", but conveyed more, including life without discord and life with complete wholeness wherever one lived, worked and worshipped. The *beloved community* grows naturally out of Jesus' own hunger for the felt unity of his followers that mirrored the unity he shared with the Father (John 17:20-23). That unity expresses a readiness to engage everyday life at the levels of close friendship and for actively taking stands when life, including systems, place burdens that blocked access to the abundant life for people and places God created.

Three congregations in Mid-America - Calvary (South Holland, IL), Faith (Stickney, IL) and La Capilla del Barrio (Chicago, IL); Western Theological Seminary; and a regional synod person (19 people), attended the first two-day gathering. The purpose of the learning community is to increase the cultural competency of individuals and congregations. A bias awareness/cultural agility curriculum is used, and the gathering was facilitated by Earl James, RCA Coordinator of Congregational Missional Mosaic and Advocacy, and Tamber Bustance from the Woodrick Diversity Learning Center. This learning community will meet every other month in 2015 for a total of six sessions. The participants receive homework focused on increasing congregational cultural agility, and have coaching between sessions. A Facebook secret group has been established in an ongoing way for resourcing, networking, and serving this learning community. The hope is more fruitful relationships and impact in both missional outreach and cultural competency within congregations. The learning community participants openly speak about their need to be sent to share their learnings with others in their classes and the regional synod.

Sent to Increase Church Health and Engage in Renewal

It is a well known fact that overall church membership of the churches in our classes and average worship attendance at worship services has been on a long and slow decline for a number of years. From my perspective, it's not all about numbers but every person counts and matters to God, so every person ought to matter to us. Some congregations have decided to take some faith risks and try some new things to help people increase personal spiritual growth and missional capacity. In the Wisconsin Classis President's Report, Ken Hoogstra writes: *"It is readily apparent that the churches within our Classis are making significant efforts to provide opportunities for spiritual growth for their members and leaders. Many churches are having their members share their stories of spiritual transformation, building up the body by showing how God is actively at work in their lives in very tangible ways. About half of the churches within the Classis are engaged in the Ridder Church Renewal process, and many churches are actively engaged in identifying and training the next generation of Christian leaders."* Part of the Wisconsin Classis vision is to have congregations led by healthy pastors and leaders, and I believe Ridder is helping the classis live into that vision. Retool is another resource used in the Wisconsin Classis to assist in congregational renewal. *The Retool Kit Pathway* is designed to help churches become vital, Christ centered, community focused congregations that will transform lives for eternity. Lyle Zumdahl, the Wisconsin Classis Leader, is helping churches engage in this process.

Overall, Ridder Church Renewal (RCR) continues to be a major renewal process to accelerate the journey of personal transformation among pastors, congregation leadership teams, and other church leaders. RCR is one of the most impactful revitalization and transformational processes of which I am aware and it has reproduced now into six regional synods of the RCA. A number of pastors (and spouses) have grown deeper in their spiritual journey as they have engaged in Faithwalking 201, Leadership 301, and a Missional Marriage Retreat. Congregations have had to look at themselves in the mirror as current reality reports have been written, owned, and shared. Intentional discipleship practices have become a vital part of renewal in congregations in the Illinois Classis. Scott Stephan, the president of the Illinois Classis, reports: *"We have churches that are engaging in very intentional discipleship practices. Several of our churches have banded together in this regard believing that we are better together: Emmanuel, Community in Clinton, First and Second in Fulton currently offer a yearly Faithwalking retreat to introduce members to this discipleship content and to walk with them in their journey as followers of Christ."*

In the Illiana-Florida Classis, several churches have banded together to plan Faithwalking retreats. Christ's Community in Fishers, American Reformed in DeMotte, Heartland Community in Lafayette, and Community Reformed in Lafayette have all hosted Faithwalking retreats in their own churches as a way of building discipleship. The Faithwalking retreat model is being reproduced as pastors who are trained in this disciple-making process are

willing to help other pastors and churches explore hosting a Faithwalking Retreat in their own contexts. Congregations in the Illiana-Florida Classis continue to engage in Ridder Church Renewal as three congregations are planning to participate in the Ridder Church Renewal Introductory Event in Muskegon, Michigan, April 24-25.

Thorn Creek Reformed Church engaged a catalytic 12-week process of Rethinking Outreach and Discipleship led by Jason Perry. This discipleship process can be done in multiple formats like a weekend workshop or a small group experience. The next workshop will be held in Florida. A leadership development process called The Journey continues to bear much fruit in Illiana-Florida Classis. Pastor Dave Hubbartt, the Pastor of First Reformed Church in Tampa, FL, has recently been trained and plans to implement the training of leaders in that congregation. In addition, Dave is being coached by the Congregation Revitalization Team of the classis.

In an effort to build community, equip, and help facilitate revitalization in Illiana-Florida Classis a new group will be forming to be a learning community. They will be meeting twice monthly (online through Google Hangout) in study and engagement of one of four books: *Slow Church* (Smith), *The Leader's Journey* (Herrington, Creech, & Taylor), *A Failure of Nerve* (Friedman), or *Crucial Conversations - Tools for Talking When Stakes Are High* (Patterson). This learning community will be built on reading the information in the book, committing to a personalized choice of practice, and reflecting in an authentic community of grace and truth. Chad Schuitema is leading this community building effort.

Despite all the good things happening in terms of personal and congregational transformation in the lives of pastors and church leaders in our region, it is important that we are not blinded to the challenges facing classes and congregations. Pastor Scott Stephan, the president of the Illinois Classis, is quite transparent and authentic about many churches in the classis. He reports that there are churches losing members yearly and there are more empty spaces in the pews year to year. Then he says this: *These churches see the trends. These churches see the proverbial writing on the wall and yet they don't seem to be willing to try anything new.... These are churches where there exists a silent resignation, perhaps even a complacency. These are the churches who year after year fill out the consistorial report indicating their finances for the year, they fill out the report indicating their membership statistics, but they leave all the questions regarding vision and goals unanswered: What are your goals for discipleship? What are your goals for leadership? What are your goals for mission?*

Nothing. No answer. If it happened once we might assume it was an oversight but year after year this portion of the annual report is left blank and all I can conclude is - no vision. No adaptive leadership, no asking the bigger questions, "where are we going and how are we going to get there?" Just operational leadership, doing what we've always done. I also

observe a spirit of cynicism that pops up here and there in our churches. ...I believe the Spirit would confront us all with a tendency we have to cast blame regarding things for which we are responsible. When we fail to do what we have said we would do, when we do not live fully into our design as pastors and leaders, I understand the human nature side of us that wants to raise the defensive walls and shift our integrity gap to someone else for their lack of keeping their word or doing what they should have done. It's human nature but it's not what God has for us. Instead of constantly looking for any of the 1000's of rationalizations that we might come up with, let's have the courage to say, "that's on me," and then make it right."

I appreciate Pastor Scott's honesty and challenge for pastors, church leaders, and congregations to take personal responsibility and to have courage. Those who have been in the Ridder process remember that by its very nature, leadership requires courage. Real leadership stirs up anxiety and invites sabotage--and then responds courageously to each. Most of us can trace our failures in leadership to our failures in courage. These are familiar Ridder questions: 1) What is waiting for each of us in our ministry setting that requires us to lead courageously? 2) What has been stopping us? 3) Where is the resistance? Each of us must answer those questions for ourselves. Just imagine the courage God demonstrates by sending each of us to the places He has designed for us to fulfill His purposes and proclaim His glory. WOW! We worship and serve a courageous God.

Sent to Build Relationships Through the Florida Partnership - Classis Care Liaison in Illiana-Florida Classis

A liaison is someone who provides communication that facilitates a close working relationship between people or an organization. This can also be a person who helps organizations to work together and provide information to each other. Because of the distance between Florida and the Illiana in the Illiana-Florida Classis, it is important to the classis and the synod that there is a close working relationship between each church and the classis. The Synod of Mid-America has a good working relationship with the Illiana-Florida Classis and is proactively in partnership with this classis to provide better communication and relational integrity. This idea of a classis liaison has been working well in Florida, and now the Executive Team and Relationship Team of the classis recognize that improvement is also needed in the northern half of the classis (Illiana), and the RT is planning to follow the liaison program that was implemented in Florida by the classis last year. Liaisons are now being recruited to maintain contact with the churches in Illinois, Indiana, and Ohio. These individuals will begin their work in April 2015. They will be asked to meet quarterly with the pastors in each church, have one visit with the Consistory each year, and telephone the pastor on the months when there is no in-person visit. These individuals will be the first-line communicators with the pastors and churches. They will hear the joys and celebrations the church is experiencing as well as concerns and issues - including financial issues. To build the relationships between the churches and classis takes extra effort and cooperation, but the RT of the Illiana-Florida Classis believes the end result will be a stronger relational classis. Aaron Klein, Rich

Hasselbach, and I continue to serve as the liaison for the West Coast Church of the Cross in Sarasota, FL and the Reformed Community Church in Venice, FL. I am also the classis supervisor of the Venice church. The synod continues to be invested on the Florida side of this partnership with the Illiana-Florida Classis.

Send to Seek Grace and Truth on the Homosexuality Issue

The tensions, frustrations, and challenges over the issue of homosexuality continue to be evident in the dialogue and action steps within the classes in the Synod of Mid-America. In October 2014, the Wisconsin Classis made a public statement reaffirming the RCA's official position that homosexual behavior is a sin. President Ken Hoogstra reports: *"The meeting at which that motion passed was filled with emotions, including anxiety, fear, and anger. After the meeting, Lyle Zumdahl took the courageous step of sending an e-mail to the pastors within the Classis asking to continue the conversation by focusing on how we can both speak the truth on this issue and still show the love of Christ, who ate with sinners. The dialogue that followed was tremendous, and it was personally a blessing to me to see so many pastors share their hearts as they wrestled with this thorny issue. Pastor Tim Ehrhardt offered to lead a gathering so that we can learn from each other in conversation about how we can better reach those with same-sex desires and engage them in a meaningful and more gentle manner. I believe that Lyle captured the essence of the opportunity presented by this issue by writing, 'Would it not be great if we could be known as the Classis that not only leads by passing a motion to take a stand on the issue, but also leads in how we minister to people with this issue with the love of God!?'"*

In the Illiana-Florida Classis, there have been healthy discussions and disagreements over homosexuality and frustrations about how RCA polity makes it difficult for churches and classes to address disciplinary procedures when RCA churches and classes disregard the RCA's official position. Additional concerns addressed this past year have revolved around complementarians feeling like they have been squeezed out of the denomination and elevating the Belhar Confession to a position of being a standard in the RCA. As a result of these long term issues and frustration, five churches of the Illiana-Florida Classis filed applications to leave the RCA and affiliate with the Presbyterian Church in America (PCA). These five churches were:

1. Crete Reformed Church in Crete, IL
2. Peace Community Church in Frankfort, IL
3. First Reformed Church in Lansing, IL
4. Grace Reformed Church in Lansing, IL
5. Missio Dei Church in Mokena, IL

While the churches of the Illiana-Florida Classis all agree about the challenges facing the classis, not all agree on how to respond to the challenges. Some churches have felt the call to leave and serve elsewhere, while others feel the call to stay and face the challenges in the

RCA. In October 2014, the Illiana-Florida Classis approved the applications of all five churches to leave to withdraw from the Reformed Church in America (RCA) for the purpose of affiliating with the Presbyterian Church in America (PCA) together with their real and personal property, and to grant the request of the pastors to transfer to the Presbyterian Church in America as ministers in good and regular standing. It was also agreed that the churches would pay the Illiana-Florida Classis, the Regional Synod of Mid America, and the RCA General Synod the 2015 assessments, and pay the 2016, 2017, 2018 and 2019 classis assessment to the Classis of Illiana-Florida (paid based on the approved classis assessment rate for that current year or a onetime upfront lump sum payment based on the prevailing classis assessment rate). The Illiana-Florida Classis blessed the pastors and the churches and challenged them to continue to reach the world with the good news of God's love and forgiveness.

The President of the Illinois Classis reported that there is a concern among the churches in the Illinois Classis about the churches who have withdrawn from the RCA. He reports: *"My concern is whether or not there are a lot of churches who are sitting in the wings watching how this unfolds and that soon we might have a groundswell of churches leaving the RCA for similar reasons. From my perspective, the time may come for that. For me, that time would be when the official position of the RCA is in blatant disregard to Scripture. But that time is not here and I believe the need of the hour is to work at figuring out a path forward. The issue of homosexuality is here to stay. You can run from the RCA to the PCA, but as long as you are in the USA, churches that hope to minister to the members of their community will have to wrestle with this issue."* God sends us out to faithfully live out the Gospel in lives as we seek to follow Jesus. We are challenged to continue to dialogue about this difficult subject in healthy, Biblical, and personal ways.

Sent to Make the Most of Every Opportunity and Listen to the Concerns of Classes:

In Ephesians 5:16, the Apostle Paul instructs the church in Ephesus to *"...make the most of every opportunity"*. Reading through the President's Reports of various classes, I'd like to share how churches and classes are making the most of the opportunities to be missional in their context of ministry. And then also to be prayerful about those areas where there is hardship, struggle, and disappointment.

Illinois Classis

- Fairview Reformed Church, Fairview, IL, is doing what they call the 1-2-3 plan. Every member is encouraged to invite one person to church in one month and then 2 the next month and then 3 the next month.
- Bethel Reformed Church, Sterling, IL, is exploring an opportunity for a Spanish speaking worship service and looking to partner with a Hispanic intern this summer.
- First Reformed Church, Fulton, IL, is serving the community not only by supporting their local food pantry, but they initiated a program titled, "Lets feed our children," where they

make lunches and distribute them to families in the summer when they don't have the free and reduced lunches available at school.

- Ebenezer Reformed Church , Morrison, IL, is ministering to the youth of the church and community in their Wednesday Night Aftershock program where 85 youth are attending weekly, mostly unchurched.
- Ebenezer Reformed church, Oregon, IL, is embracing change and challenge doing VBS this summer in a local park as opposed to the church premises in hopes of casting a wider net.
- Christ's Family Church, Davenport, IA, has adopted a three-year vision of inspiring outreach, growing fellowship, and serving her community. They are now in the process of developing strategic initiatives to live into that vision.
- Community Reformed Church, Clinton, IA, is doing a major building renovation to better minister to the needs of the community.
- North Ridge Community Church, Eldridge, IA, is taking on the financial risk of hiring a children's ministry director with the vision if you want to change the world, work with children.
- Declining numbers concern - from 2000-2012 the Illinois Classis declined by 27% in confessing membership.
- Average worship attendance today in Illinois Classis is down, 300 people - 14% less than last year.
- The classis president, Scott Stephan, says, *"We cannot continue with a business as usual approach. We must dare to take some risks; we must dare to venture into some new approaches to ministry and mission. We cannot go gently into the good night. Dare to dream. Dare to vision. Dare to lead. Dare to make decisions that are going to offend a significant portion of your congregation. Dare to risk losing a few people if it means changing so that you might reach many more people."*

Wisconsin Classis

- Multiple churches help support food pantries or engage with their local schools through Kids Hope or other programs.
- Several churches in the Sheboygan, Wisconsin area have joined forces to organize Love In the Name of Christ (or "Love INC."), which is designed to bring churches together to meet needs in Jesus' name.
- First Reformed Church, Sheboygan Falls, WI, started a clothing ministry.
- Trinity Reformed Church, Waupun, WI, started a new outreach to veterans who suffer from PTSD.
- New Hope Community Church, Wausau, WI, is planning four specific outreach events in 2015, including adopting a local school and having a service to recognize public employees.
- Several churches in The Wisconsin Classis have found creative ways to use their facilities to welcome non-church groups: Creek Road Community Church, Delavan, WI, hosts the Walworth County Homeless Shelter; Trinity Community Church, Brown Deer, WI, is a polling

place for all local, state, and national elections; and Hope Reformed Church, Sheboygan, WI, hosts community meals on a regular basis.

- Other churches have looked for opportunities to build relationships with other Christians and Christian communities: Calvary Community Church, New Berlin, WI, shares a building with an Orthodox Presbyterian Church and has engaged in joint fellowship events with that church; Creek Road Community Church, Delavan, WI, has opened its facility for use by an interracial church; Remedy, Sheboygan, WI, hosted a children's community block party for a local neighborhood; Trinity Reformed Church, Waupun, WI, is planning to hold a kids carnival on their lot to reach young families in the area.
- A prayerful concern is that many churches are experiencing a decline in a small number of young families and children.
- In 2014, the overall membership and average attendance within Wisconsin Classis declined.
- Iglesia Trinidad Church was closed.

Chicago Classis

- Downers Grove Community Church, Downers Grove, IL, hosts Caring Community Kitchen which is a place where individuals and families who are struggling to pay their bills can come and share a meal and experience genuine care.
- Faith Community Reformed Church, Stickney, IL, distributed thousands of pencils and markers to local schools in their area.
- Faith Community Church, West Chicago, IL, hosts a Hispanic group in the church.
- Membership numbers in Chicago Classis churches slowly decline.
- Unity within the Chicago Classis remains elusive. in the Chicago Classis President's Report, Lou Bury challenged the classis to seek unity within the body because God desires it.

The synod staff continue to walk alongside and partner with classes and congregations to look for new opportunities where God is already at work. Together with classis leaders and ministry directors, my prayer is that we continue to expand our vision to offer hope to our lost and broken world so loved by God. We must continue to be on mission to encourage and equip classes and congregations to faithfully follow Christ in ministry and mission.

Sent to Live and Love Like Jesus - Transformed and Transforming

I am personally energized by the new 15-year vision of the RCA - Transformed and Transforming. I am beginning to understand more clearly the complexities of the vision and the three strategic priorities of: 1) Cultivating transformation in Christ; 2) Equipping emerging leaders of today and tomorrow; and 3) Engaging in Christ's kingdom mission. I am convinced that the most effective way for classes and congregations, pastors, and lay persons to grasp the vision of T & T is to personally experience it and then to tell stories of transformation where the Holy Spirit is at work. As Reformed Christians we know very well that transformation is not our work but the work of God. We did not bring the world into

being. We did not determine the orbit of the planets. We do not know the future. We do not save ourselves. Only God does that work and continues to transform us and then use us as transformed people to assist Him in His divine work of transforming others, our classes, our congregations, our communities, and ultimately the whole world.

As we enter this journey of Transformed and Transforming, my observation is that our pastors and churches and classes are receiving a boatload of information on T & T but are struggling to process that information into reality in local contexts. Already busy pastors on the operational side of ministry are searching for ways to engage the adaptive side of ministry where the strategy and implementation of T & T resides. T & T has the potential to bring a unified focus to our region as congregations and classes discover God's unique assignment in their context. T & T has the potential to incubate learning communities where leaders can share best practices for ministry and mission, learn from each other to better equip individuals and congregations for mission to follow God in new ways. T & T has the potential to engage a movement of God's people to be engaged in missional living so that disconnected and broken people can see what it means to live and love like Jesus. Churches and classes are already doing many important ministries described in the T & T initiatives, but they can become more effective and intentional in their ongoing efforts to participate in Christ's transforming work.

As we have begun this journey of Transformed and Transforming in our region, we have engaged in the following:

- Chad Schuitema has developed a process for individuals and congregations to navigate the various initiatives of T & T on the Synod of Mid-America's website.
- Chad and I have cast vision and distributed brochures of T & T at all classis meetings.
- Tony Campbell, the RCA Director of Missional Engagement and Global Mission, has cast vision for T & T at the Chicago Classis and the Illiana-Florida Classis
- Lyle Zumdahl led the Wisconsin Classis through a reflection and discussion time on T & T.
- I invited Scott Stephan, Lyle Zumdahl, Rich Schuler and Chad Schuitema to participate in a two-day gathering of RCA T & T initiative leaders in Grand Rapids, MI.
- I recruited and invited a group of Wisconsin pastors to meet with Blaine Newhouse, the RCA Coordinator for Local Mission Engagement, in Brown Deer, WI, to cast vision for developing a learning community.
- I recruited and invited a group of Illinois pastors to meet with Blaine Newhouse, the RCA Coordinator for Local Mission Engagement, in Fulton, IL, to cast vision for developing a learning community.
- Three congregations - Calvary (South Holland, IL), Faith (Stickney, IL) and La Capilla del Barrio (Chicago, IL) are engaged in the Missional Mosaic learning community to increase the cultural competency of individuals and congregations.

- Two congregations - Faith Church (Dyer, IN), Living Springs (Glenwood, IL) are a part of a Holistic Discipleship Learning Community which meets in Dallas, Texas, every six months and practices the learning in between gatherings.
- One church - Bethany (Sheboygan, WI) is presently involved in the Leadership Development Leadership Community (Leadership Network in Dallas).
- A Florida pastors event: "Leading a Missional Movement: Working Together as a Catalyst for Change" was held on February 27 at First Reformed Church, Tampa, FL. This event focused on helping equip leaders for making the shift toward mission in their congregations. Follow up coaching and Google Hangouts are scheduled.
- Transformational Encounters with congregations needing help on mission teams or mission orientated issues: Christ Community (Lemont, IL), North Dade Community Church (Miami, FL)

What will it mean as Transformed and Transforming becomes a more normative vision in the Synod of Mid-America? Will it mean taking a new look at the mission and vision and core values statements of the synod? Will it mean looking at new and creative ways in which we work to equip and empower classes and congregations to live and love like Jesus? Will it mean being open minded to structural changes and classis boundary configurations to meet the opportunities to explore new ways to follow God's call in mission? Imagine what it means to be transformed in Christ and to live out that life-changing faith to be a blessing to our communities and our world.

Being Sent Into the Future

In John 20:21, we see God the Son sending people in the same way He Himself had been sent - "Peace be with you. As the Father has sent me, even so I am sending you." Had Jesus come, lived a sinless life, died in our place, risen from the dead, ascended into Heaven, and sent the Holy Spirit but not given the Great Commission, we as Christians would still be God's people sent here to fulfill the specific purpose of His glory among the nations.

That reality matters. It matters for the mission. When mission springs from understanding who we are, it is powerful, (super)natural, worshipful, living, and faith-filled. Remembering the cost of redemption and restoration, that we are God's people, and that God's people are inherently sent-well for God's purposes, it is easy to see how our entire lives are shaped on mission. I am still thankful that Jesus did give the Great Commission. He did so, it seems to me, in light of the story; in light of His own identity as One who was sent, He commanded His followers to go in the same way. Where is God sending each of us into His preferred future?

Sent for His Purposes,
Wayne Van Regenmorter

Church Multiplication Consultant Report

Ben Ingebretson

1. Current Reality:

- a. 18 plants including new sites, unorganized plants and pre-launch initiatives.
- b. Many of our Classis Teams have a clear planting goal. 10X2030 (Illinois); 40X2020 (Illiana/Florida); 15X15 (Wisconsin 5 new plants 10 second services).

2. Field Lessons:

- a. Classis of Illiana/Florida CMT is teaching us that an aggressive planting strategy is possible with solid results. The two latest "parachutes" in Apopka and Miami are 100 or more. These can be launched in a "low risk" model that protects planter and classis assets.
- b. "Nesting" new ethnic churches within Anglo congregations can be a positive and low risk way churches can participate in church planting. Several SMA congregations are doing this or considering it.

3. Emerging Opportunities:

- a. Bi-vocational planters give us options. We can create low risk models for them to test their capacity in ways that build partnership. Doug Evenhouse is currently using an organic strategy at Northridge CC. *See attached.*
- b. Second or "New Service" training is now available through the RCA and SMA. Using church planting methods to start a new service is low risk high reward. Follow up if you are interested. *A group training with individual coaching is being scheduled. Follow up for details.*
- c. Learning from Illiana/Florida CMT. Developing models, pursuing planting projects, regular meetings to track and develop progress. *Follow up for details*
- d. Adoption opportunities will come to us if our processes can be streamlined and simplified. Relational trust, ministry compatibility and good process.
- e. Immigrant church planting holds great potential. Approximately 75% of immigrants claim Christian faith and could become potential planting partners. Equipping "nesting" congregations with best practice methods is key.
 1. Cultural agility training is available for local congregations.
 2. Local demographic studies are available.
 3. Ethnic leadership support is available.
 4. Resources on "best practice host" congregations.

Further Information? Ben Ingebretson beningebretson@gmail.com 616-481-7566

ORGANIC/BIVOCATIONAL CHURCH PLANTING MODEL

Core Values: Spirit/grassroots led, results oriented, low risk, high empowering, fail fast.

Basic Idea: The planter is compensated only after they produce measureable results until the ministry is ready to enter a launch strategy phase with 30 core working adults.

Stage ONE:

- a. Planter prospect presents and completes application via website. Includes CPP assessment
- b. Initial applicant interview: RCA compatibility, call to ministry, organic model, background check
- c. Approval and set up of training/coaching and accountability plan. Introduce C. Pastor possibility.
- d. Signing of a covenant of agreement between Classis and Planter.

Stage TWO:

6 committed working adults recruited + lead planter who have worked through and completed....

- * establishment of one small group study meeting weekly
- * dedicated banking source opened.
- * monthly coaching and accountability meeting
- * Initial organization stipend issued

Stage THREE:

12 committed working adults + lead planter who have worked through

- * establishment of two small group studies meeting weekly
- * discipling 2 leaders (small group)
- * development of fund raising strategy with case for support and 100 contact list.
- * \$500 raised and deposited
- * monthly accountability and coaching

Stage FOUR:

18 committed working adults + lead planter who have worked through

- * establishment of three small group studies meeting weekly
- * discipling 3 leaders (small group)
- * completed THRIVE training with planter and team.
- * monthly accountability and coaching
- * 2:1 matching grant up to \$5,000

Stage FIVE:

24 committed working adults + lead planter who have worked through

- * establishment of four small group studies meeting weekly
- * discipling 4 leaders (small group)
- * completed launch plan.

- * monthly accountability and coaching
- * 1:1 matching grant up to \$6,000

Stage SIX:

30 working adults + lead planter who have worked through

- * establishment of 5 small group studies meeting weekly
 - * discipling 5 leaders (small group)
 - * development of launch plan with critical teams, location, promotion etc.
- 1.1 matching grant up to \$7,500.

So the total funding for the first year is under 25,000, or whenever the metrics for a strong core group gets established.

Details at: beningebretson@gmail.com

ETHNIC IMMIGRANT CHURCH MULTIPLICATION MODEL

Core Values: Biblical hospitality, Kingdom partnerships, mutual respect and missional support.

Basic Idea: Leveraging existing worship space and other assets to partner with immigrant groups in helping them start their churches.

RESOURCES:

1. Teaching or preaching on biblical hospitality.
2. Local demographic studies to discern opportunity using MissionInsite.
3. Cultural Intelligence, agility and competency training provided for partner churches by the RCA and Regional Synod of Mid America.
4. RCA Ethnic Council leadership consultation including Tony Campbell, Eddy Aleman, En Young Kim, Earl James and Jose Duran.
5. Best practice wisdom gained from churches across the RCA who are already engaged in biblical hospitality and immigrant church planting. Available upon request.
6. Training in immigration best practice and social justice partnering with the CRC office of Social Justice.
7. Church World Service and their resettlement offices assisting in mapping immigrant groups and immigrant pastors.
8. Church planting best practice coaching and support for those seeking support in the training and resources of the RCA.

Details: beningebretson@gmail.com 616-481-7566

CLUSTER CHURCH MULTIPLICATION MODEL

Core Values: Shared risk, low cost, peer learning and support, shared experience and collaboration for greater impact.

Basic Idea: Cluster planting engages 2-5 churches in the process of church planting under the guidance of an experienced directive coach.

Time Frame: 36 months

PHASE ONE Months 1-12

Foundations for Planting 7 cluster meetings 90 minutes each.

Tasks for phase one: Field research, asset mapping, resource development, prayer cultivation and values development.

PHASE TWO Months 13-18

Critical Decisions for Planting 6 cluster meetings 90 minutes each

Tasks for phase two: Target audience confirmation, asset development, plant model design, planter assessment, selection and boot camp.

PHASE THREE Months 19-30

Pre-Launch Development 6 cluster meetings 90 minutes each.

Tasks for phase three: Planter hire, field orientation, core group development, preview services and promotions.

PHASE FOUR Months 31-36

Plant Launch 2 cluster meetings 90 minutes each.

Tasks for phase four: Support the planter and launch team, pray, evaluation and develop key learning from the project.

Funding for the cluster model depends on the number of partners in the project. **The assumption is that funding is not in place before the cluster launches.** Funding is developed over the 36 month period in partnership between the cluster members, the classis CMT and the RCA.

Details: beningebretson@gmail.com 616-481-7566

NEW SERVICE MULTIPLICATION MODEL

Core Values: Efficient, missional, low risk high reward, both/and, church growth oriented.

Basic Idea: Launch an additional worship service using all your existing assets and resources using best practice church planting principles.

Time Frame: 9 to 12 month design and deploy

STAGE ONE

Foundations Training 4 hour workshop.

Making the case for a second service, assessing congregational readiness, lead team, values and motives, counting the cost, gaining support from key leaders, framing and mapping out your new service project, schedule a second service in your existing church culture.

Two coaching sessions designed to help the leadership with action areas prescribed in Foundations training.

STAGE TWO

Internal Readiness to Launch Training 4 hour workshop

Community study and refining your target, working the lead team, clarifying style, methods, refining a budget, staffing needs, community impact strategy, launch team identification.

Two coaching sessions designed to help leadership with action areas covered in Internal Readiness training.

STAGE THREE

External Readiness to Launch Training 3 hour workshop

Development of launch team, pre-launch community marketing, refinement of style and methods, forming ministry teams, spiritual readiness, preview events, assimilation strategies, evaluation

Two coaching sessions designed to help leadership with action areas covered in External Readiness training.

Details at: beningebretson@gmail.com 616-481-7566

We are asking you, a delegate to the Regional Synod Annual Session, to answer the following questions with 3 other people from your congregation prior to our April 8, 2015 meeting. We believe the Holy Spirit (whispering to 1000's of people) has challenged the RCA to embrace this vision and we need to hear clearly from classes what it means, in your context, to hear God's call to radically follow Christ in mission together. We ask for you to spend approximately 30 minutes prayerfully answering these questions. Please bring a copy with you to our meeting.

1. As we enter the Transformed and Transforming journey, I personally feel...
2. The biggest benefit that could come from Transformed and Transforming in our congregation/classis is...
3. The biggest fear regarding Transformed and Transforming within our congregation/classis is...
4. As we enter the Transformed and Transforming journey, our congregation/classis feels...
5. As we enter the Transformed and Transforming journey, our lay leaders/pastor(s) feel...
6. In what ways do you believe God has blessed your congregation to be able to share insights learned in ministry with other congregations?
7. In what areas do you believe that God would encourage your congregation to seek assistance and learn from other congregations how to do a particular area of ministry better?
8. Here are the steps we've taken as a classis to engage in Transformed and Transforming thus far...