
SYNOD OF MID-AMERICA
Reformed Church in America
NEWSLETTER - - - Volume 10, Number 10 - - - May 26, 2009
<http://www.midamericasynod.org>

“Healthy classes and congregations through revitalization and multiplication”

Church, Classis, Pastor News

- Calvary Church of Orland Park, Illinois (Chicago Classis) is pleased to announce twenty-five years of pastoral ministry for Howard Hoekstra, Senior Pastor. In honor of this milestone the congregation and friends of the church will commemorate the event with an Open House Celebration on Saturday, May 30 at 4:30 at the church. Punch and hors d'oeuvres will be served with a “Service of Celebration” program following at 6 p.m. Desserts and coffee will be served immediately after the service.

Youth Worker Questionnaire

This is a reminder for those working with youth in synod churches to complete the Youth Worker Questionnaire. The Regional Synod of Mid-America is assessing its vision of youth ministry within this region of the Reformed Church. Several weeks ago a Youth Worker Questionnaire was distributed by email. The purpose of this questionnaire is for the Synod to gain a better understanding of the unique needs of each church, youth pastor, and youth volunteer within the region. The responses will provide a baseline for decision making concerning the future of youth ministry involvement on the regional synod level. If you are someone appropriate to complete the questionnaire and have not yet done so, please remember to do that now. If you still need to forward the questionnaire to the youth workers in your church, please do so. An on-line version of the questionnaire can be accessed here: <http://midamericasynod.org/tmp/YouthWorkQuest.htm> or there is a link to it from the synod's home page (www.midamericasynod.org).

Hospitality Contact People Needed

Do you know of someone in your church who is gifted in the art of hospitality, particularly an interest in hospitality to persons with disabilities? The RCA is trying to identify one person within each classis to be a representative who would assist churches in becoming welcoming places to persons with disabilities and their families. This person would coordinate communication and act as a liaison between the denomination and the churches of his/her classis, sharing resources from the RCA with the classis. The hope is that this person would be passionate and understand the need for hospitality and advocacy for persons and families in the local congregations. The person will be provided with the necessary resources. **Who can you suggest and recommend for a position such as this?** Further information will be sent to those you suggest. Names and contact information can be given to Randy Kooy (rkooy@rca.org or 815-464-9181) who will forward them to the RCA.

Prayer Resources, Requests, and Events:

New Prayer Resource: Why Pray With a Group

A new prayer resource is now available on the synod's website in the Prayer Resources section. This resource talks about the power of corporate prayer by answering the question: Why pray with a group? There are thirty-two biblical reasons given for praying in a group. To find the resource [Why Pray With a Group?](#) follow the link to the resource page on the synod website or you can go directly there: <http://midamericasynod.org/pdf2/PrayWithaGroup.pdf>

May Issue – Intercessors Unite – Focused Prayer within the Synod of Mid-America

The May issue of the Synod of Mid-America prayer focus tool, [Intercessors Unite](#), is now available on line. It is a tool to help us as a synod focus our prayers on common concerns. This month's issue will ask prayer partners to focus on Florida Classis churches and pastors as well as other happenings. You are asked to click on [Intercessors Unite](#) and pray the prayer agenda listed for the month of May. Follow this link: <http://midamericasynod.org/IntUnite/IntercessUnite200905.htm>. **Please forward this information to those in your church whose gift is praying.**

Prayer Guides

A couple of prayer guides were recently made available to aid prayer teams and others. [Partnering in Prayer for our Pastor](#) is a guide for praying for pastors and their families. [Praying for General Synod](#) is a tool to guide prayers for this year's 2009 General Synod. These can also be accessed through the synod website's [Resource](#) page. There is also a link to the Intercessors Unite prayer focus from the Resources page.

Addendum to the Synod of Mid-America Newsletter sent this week (addendum is this section emailed 5/27/2009):

New Staff Person in the Classis of Florida

The Classis of Florida established a new classis staff position at their October 2007 classis session. Apostolic Leader was the title given to this full-time position. Since that time the classis has been working on the details of the position and searching for the person who God was preparing to fill it.

The classis determined an understanding of apostolic as it relates to the position by naming apostolic characteristics using these words: visionary, initiator, prophetic, respected, authority, sent, and godly. A person was sought to help facilitate the classis mission: Leading Leaders to Develop Disciple-Making Congregations.

At its spring classis session the Florida Classis approved offering a contract to Arlan Ten Clay to fill the Apostolic Leader position. Recently Arlan announced to classis that he will accept the position. Arlan said, "I am excited to accept the opportunity to join with the people of the Classis of Florida as you continue growing God's Kingdom. God has been working through the RCA in Florida for more than half a century and I feel truly privileged to again be part of that exciting ministry/ mission."

Arlan and his wife, Sondra, hope to make the move to Florida in late July, moving there from Grandville, Michigan. Arlan has previously served RCA churches in New York, Indiana, and Michigan, plus a time with a church plant in Florida. Most recently he has been ministering as a Specialized Interim Minister helping churches turn around and gain new direction, life, and momentum.

The synod joins to welcome Arlan Ten Clay in this new ministry within the Classis of Florida. Remember him and his family in prayer as they are in this transition time. Also pray for God's blessing on this new relationship with the Classis as they begin a new stage of classis ministry.

Celebration Stories

This issue's story comes to us from Tom Merchant who is pastor of Trinity Reformed Church in Fulton, Illinois:

What Does Being Missional Look Like?

Fulton, Illinois is a small town of 3900 or so on the banks of the Mississippi River across from Clinton, Iowa. It is the home of five Reformed Churches: 3 RCA and 2 CRC as well as a Presbyterian congregation. There are eight RCA churches within twelve miles of Fulton and this is a good thing because it provides the opportunity for lots of synergy between the churches. It is also a bad thing because of the competition that goes on between us for members. Trinity Reformed is the smallest of the three RCA churches in Fulton. It is an older congregation and as I tell people: "We have more members over 90 than we do under 30."

Trinity has always been a church with a view towards missions. Over the course of the years, this church has generously supported missionaries and mission projects overseas and across the country but rarely here in our own area. In the spring of 2008, I became involved in a program for ex-offenders over at the Victory Center in Clinton. It is our local mission. I have a heart for ministering to men who are struggling to find their way and the Mighty-X-Men program, while aimed at ex-offenders, is open to all men.

One of the problems that the men in the Mighty-X-Men program are confronted with is the reality that they are not well accepted in polite society. Unfortunately, it is just as true in many churches

as well as in our culture as a whole. So how do we, as the church, open ourselves to minister to these men? In our case it began by inviting them to be a part of our Christmas Eve service. About fifteen men from the Victory Center showed up for the service. For some of them the clothes that they were wearing are the only clothes that they have. It was a good service and we closed by circling the sanctuary, lighting candles, turning off the lights, and singing the first verse of "Silent Night." As the last strains of the hymn died away, a voice called out: "One more time!" So we sang it again. We had a small reception following the service with coffee, cake, cookies, and other snacks. The men from the Victory Center stayed and the members of Trinity Church fellowshiped with them.

The Trinity Men's Bible League meets the third Tuesday of each month and we made a decision to invite the Mighty-X-Men to be a part of that monthly meeting. We are involved in a book study of *The Man in the Mirror* and they have contributed a good deal to the discussion. They also enjoy the fellowship time where we have sandwiches and just talk. As an outgrowth of those meetings, a decision was made to sponsor the men from the Victory Center to go to the Iron Sharpens Iron conference in Moline, Illinois. Iron Sharpens Iron is like a mini-Promise Keepers event featuring inspiring speakers, seminars, and powerful contemporary worship. The Consistory agreed to come up with scholarship money for the Mighty-X-Men and the net result was that we took twenty-nine men to Iron Sharpens Iron on Saturday, April 25. The good news is that 24 of them were not from our church and 20 of them went on scholarship. It was an awesome day and our hope is that the seed that has been planted in these men will grow and flourish as the result of this experience.

The truth is that most of these men that we took to Iron Sharpens Iron will probably not come to Trinity Church on a regular basis but this continuing effort to reach out to men that don't look like us is not about church growth, it is about Kingdom growth. Most of the men in the Mighty-X-Men program come from dysfunctional family situations and one of the things that we are attempting to do is to model what it looks like to be a mature Christian man.

We share stories with one another so that God's name is praised, first of all. These stories, though, have the added value of encouraging those who do God's work. Please send your stories of God's activity in the revitalization of people or of a whole ministry and stories of the multiplication of ministries to Randy Kooy at rkooy@rca.org.

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

Keeping Your Word...

As part of the Ridder Leadership Initiative, pastors and their leadership teams gathered together recently to learn more about personal and congregational transformation. The learning does not end with the training sessions led by Jim Herrington and Trisha Taylor. It continues as leaders seek to live reflective lives in the presence of God within communities of grace and truth. In a blog on May 16, Trisha Taylor highlights the necessity of a leader to keep her/his word. We know at its core, leadership is about influence. But the honesty and integrity of a leader is what makes her/him worth following. Trisha Taylor writes:

"It just happened again. A professional that I depend on failed to keep his word, much less honor it--for the third time this week. From his point of view, it's a failure of organization--he just got too busy, he lost track of his schedule, he couldn't be on this side of town, he forgot to let me know.

"For me, it's a failure of integrity. He said he would do something and then he didn't. Then, in an effort to look good or at least not look bad, he lied about it. He tried to make it right by saying that he would do it on Friday of this week. Then he called Friday morning to say that he wouldn't be able to get to it, again with a long list of reasons.

"He doesn't understand why I am upset. In his mind, his reasons are good reasons (and I agree, they probably are). He doesn't understand what happens to a relationship, even a professional one, when you give your word to something and then don't do what you said you would do--and then rely on fudging the

truth to look good.

"I mentioned our commitment on integrity to a man in my church over dinner this week. He manages a beautiful ranch down here in the Texas hill country. He talked about how much of his work depends on people keeping their word with him. We agreed that the gospel is often compromised by our failure of integrity. I said that sometimes ministers had trouble with this and he nodded vigorously.

"I am watching myself more closely right now--am I keeping my word? When I can't keep my word, am I honoring my word? Am I more interested in looking good or at least not looking bad than I am in my basic integrity? How about you?"

That's a good question for all of us as pastors and leaders to ponder. At the end of the day if it is our intent that those who follow us also respect us, then keeping our word must be a priority. What you accomplish as a pastor or leader will make you known. How you live your life with integrity will give you a name.

Wayne Van Regenmorter

Schedule:

May 26: Illiana Executive Committee Meeting/American Reformed Church/DeMotte, IN
27: Leadership Meeting/Thorn Creek Reformed Church/South Holland, IL
28: Meeting/Naperville, IL
29: Office
30: Off
31: Sunday Worship
June 1: Office
2: Leadership Meeting/Thorn Creek Reformed Church/South Holland, IL
3-9: General Synod/Holland, Michigan
10: Office
11: Conference Call/Coaching
12: Office
13: Off
14: Sunday Worship

Wayne's contact information:

10088 Prairie Knoll Ct.
St. John, IN 46373
Cell phone: 941-302-1281
Home office phone: 219-365-9649
E-mail: wvanregenmorter@rca.org

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

Here are a few links to on-line articles that one may find interesting or helpful:

Starting a Nonprofit At Your Church: Drawing More Resources to Meet Increasing Community Needs from The Alban Institute

<http://www.alban.org/conversation.aspx?id=7788>

All around the country, church congregations are establishing separate 501(c)3 nonprofit organizations in order to draw new funding, new people, and new partnerships into the ministry of their church. In these difficult economic times when community needs have increased and the amount of money given through the Sunday offering has decreased for many churches, setting up a church-based nonprofit can be a creative way to bring more resources to your community ministry efforts when your congregation may be less able to underwrite the cost of those ministries.

How to Minister During a Personal Crisis from The Christian Post

<http://www.christianpost.com/article/20090507/how-to-minister-during-a-personal-crisis/index.html>

There are few more crucial times to step up our ministry efforts than when someone is going through a personal crisis. Whether it's a struggling marriage, a job loss, a death in the family, or something else, you

and your church family must be ready to meet the painful needs of those in crisis. That doesn't mean it's all on your shoulders, though.

Many Churchgoers and Faith Leaders Struggle to Define Spiritual Maturity from The Barna Group
<http://www.barna.org/barna-update/article/12-faithspirituality/264-many-churchgoers-and-faith-leaders-struggle-to-define-spiritual-maturity>

America may possess the world's largest infrastructure for nurturing human spirituality, complete with hundreds of thousands of houses of worship, thousands of parachurch organizations and schools, and seemingly unlimited products, resources and experts. Yet, a new study from the Barna Group identifies an underlying reason why there is little progress in helping people develop spiritually: many churchgoers and clergy struggle to articulate a basic understanding of spiritual maturity.

Be a Good Sport about Safe Recreation from Church Executive Magazine

<http://www.churchexecutive.com/article.asp?IndexID=1223>

Church is no longer just a place to gather and worship. It seems an increasing number of churches are finding new ways to involve young adults, teens and children in the church community. To accomplish this, some churches are sponsoring "extreme" sports activities by taking church groups to facilities that offer inline skating, BMX biking, skateboarding, rock climbing, paintball and more.

Understanding New Wireless Microphone Restrictions from Your Church

<http://www.christianitytoday.com/yc/2009/mayjun/understandingnewwirelessmics.html>

Regardless of how well your wireless devices work now, if they operate in the 700 MHz band (as many do), it's time to replace them. The FCC hasn't set an official date for when current users must stop using the 700 MHz band, meaning churches aren't required by law to make a change—yet. But that doesn't mean churches won't encounter problems with the way their equipment works in the near future.

The Feedback Void from Youth Worker

<http://www.youthworker.com/resources/ministry/11602704/>

If you teach a second-grade Sunday School class, you can tell by kids' participation how you're doing. If you volunteer in the parking lot ministry of your church, the cars either get parked or they don't. If you preach sermons in "big church," people always let you know what they think. Really, almost every other ministry area in the church provides natural feedback. Not so with middle-school ministry. When feedback is absent, we often look to unhelpful measuring sticks to gauge whether or not we're on the right track.

Schedule:

May 26 – Illiana Exex Comm mtg AM; DeMotte office PM

27 – DeMotte office

28 – Manitoqua office

29 – DeMotte office

June 1 – DeMotte office

2 – Manitoqua office; Manitoqua Board mtg PM

3-9 – General Synod and pre-synod meetings

10 – DeMotte office

11 – Manitoqua office; Illiana Classis mtg PM

12 – DeMotte office

The Manitoqua office phone number can more consistently reach me wherever I am as it is usually forwarded to my current location.

Randy's contact information:

Manitoqua office: **815-464-9181**

DeMotte office: 219-987-6562

Cell phone: 219-730-4873

Email: rkooy@rca.org

This email newsletter is sent to churches, ministers, and friends of the Synod of Mid-America. To [unsubscribe](#) to this newsletter click [here](#) and send email.