
SYNOD OF MID-AMERICA
Reformed Church in America
NEWSLETTER - - - Volume 13, Number 4 - - - February 20, 2012
<http://www.midamericasynod.org>
<http://msyn.org>

“Healthy classes and congregations through revitalization and multiplication”

Camp Manitouqua RCA Scholarships Available

A 2012 scholarship opportunity has been announced by Camp Manitouqua and Retreat Center. Manitouqua has allocated \$2000 to be used toward summer camper scholarships for RCA families. This will help kids experience camp who might otherwise not be able to do so. Accepted applicants will receive \$100 off or one session of overnight camp, or \$50 off one week of day-camp. Scholarship awards will be on a first-come, first serve basis and will favor:



- RCA church family members who have never attended summer camp at Manitouqua before
- Under-resourced RCA families in financial need

More complete information and an application for the scholarship can be found at: <http://msyn.org/pdf2/2012CampManitouquaRCAScholarship.pdf>. Questions can be addressed to Manitouqua's marketing coordinator, Eric Bailey (eric@manitouqua.org or 815-469-2319).

Classis Meetings in March

The **Classis of Chicago** met in its winter session on February 18. The other classes of the Synod of Mid-America will have their classis meetings as follows: **Wisconsin Classis** – March 13, 2012 at First Reformed, Cedar Grove; **Illinois Classis** – March 20, 2012 at Ebenezer Reformed, Morrison; **Illiana-Florida Classis** – March 27, 2012 at Living Springs Community, Glenwood.

2012 Youth Ministry Conference

Journey at Western Theological Seminary in partnership with the RCA Youth Team have announced this year's Youth Ministry Conference. The conference begins Thursday, May 3 at 3:00pm and ends on Friday, May 4, 2012 at 3:30pm. The main presenter this year will be Kara Powell, author of *Stickyfaith*, a guide that presents both a compelling rationale and a powerful strategy how to actively encourage young persons' spiritual growth so that it will stick to them into adulthood and empower them to develop a living, lasting faith. In addition to three main presentations there will be an opportunity to choose and attend two workshops. More information will be coming, but you can already see more by following this link: <http://www.westernsem.edu/journey/events/youth-ministry-conference/#3>. Those who work with the youth are encouraged to reserve these dates.



Celebration Stories

You can share your stories of celebration what is happening in your church in this section. The story in this issue comes to us from Aaron Klein. Aaron is a church planter at one of the Florida church plants, Current Community Church in the Lakewood Ranch area near Bradenton, Florida. Aaron said:

While our whole story has been filled with signs...literally and figuratively...of how we ended up in Florida, let me share with you something amazingly cool:

About 3 months ago I ended up having lunch with my kids at their elementary school. We only had one car at the time, so my wife dropped me off. Well when she came back to pick me up a couple hours later she said, "Did you see the sign on the Middle School?" I said, "No." Well, as we left the lot, I looked, and the sign said, "Space available for church lease, call..."

So I got home and called the school that Tuesday afternoon. On Friday when I went to tour the school, I asked, "Seriously, what possessed you to put that up on your school sign? Honestly, how many churches do you have moving into the area that would need a place to worship?"

The custodian responded, "We hadn't had a church meet here in awhile, so I said to the principal, 'We haven't had a church meet here in awhile; what should we do about it?'" She told him to put something on the sign, and so he did. He told us that we called to inquire about it an hour later...

That's just one example of how we have seen God at work here in our midst. Hope there are many more stories to come.

Keep Current Community Church (<http://www.currentcommunitychurch.org/>) in prayer, as well as the other church plants in Florida, in the other parts of the Synod of Mid-America, and throughout the RCA.

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

From Wayne Van Regenmorter, Synod Visionary Leader (wregen@msyn.org):

Why Consider Summer Camp...

It was years ago that I attended my first summer camp experience and what happened there changed my life. The first three days were filled hidden treasures--making new friends, having fun playing softball and volleyball, learning about God from others, playing pranks on counselors, eating s'mores around the camp fire, and of course meeting lots of new girls. It was a magical time being away from the normal routines of farm work and chores. Each day was an opportunity to be exposed to learning something new about myself and things in life that I really never thought much about. I learned that it didn't matter what circumstances I was up against or what I felt in the midst of difficulties, I still had the capacity to choose a positive path. At the end of the day I could choose how I would respond to God and how I would treat others.

Then on Thursday evening an unexpected turn of events formed memories that will stay with me for a lifetime. It was dinner time and all the campers and counselors were eating together in this large rectangular hall. The evening sky was turning unusually dark with swirling clouds dancing and growing with intensity each passing moment. Suddenly the sirens blared, warning us of incoming danger. Our world had changed, our world was different now. Now we all filed downstairs and hovered against the wall or in my case under the corner of the pool table--it was dark without electricity. A tornado had been spotted on Lake Okoboji and was headed toward

the camp. What do you do in the midst of those circumstances? Some people were crying, some were singing, some were huddled in a circle, some were praying, some were watching out the doors, and I was talking to God. I said, "God, I am not ready for this. I'm too young to die." What came to me in that moment, believe it or not, was this question that my grandmother had drilled into me: "What is your only comfort, in life and in death?" "That I belong--body and soul, in life and death--not to myself but to my faithful Savior, Jesus Christ." What was strange about that was that I only knew about Jesus in my head. It took the circumstance of a tornado to begin to move Him into my heart. That's not the way I would have planned it, but it is how the Holy Spirit spoke to me and left a lasting life changing impression. Well, the tornado hit the camp, blew the windows out of the dining hall, uprooted massive trees, downed power lines, jettied a row boat inside a cabin, scattered clothes and blankets on tree limbs, and lifted picnic tables into the lake. It was a mess, but no one was hurt. Most people at summer camp have memories of counselors, cabins, camp food, camp fires, and special times with friends. I had all of that in addition to memories that shaped my character and relationship with God for a lifetime. For the next two days most people stayed at the camp as we cleaned up broken branches, cut down trees, repaired what we could, and all activities were cancelled except for wonderful times of storytelling, sharing and singing around a nightly camp fire.

So why consider summer camp? Because I believe summer camp is a place where someone can experience life with others and with God which shapes one's character and life for a lifetime. It's a place where kids meet new kids and interact face-to-face or sit around talking openly and leisurely. It's a time when kids and counselors form bonds that often grow deep and crucial conversations take place which are not the norm in everyday life. It's a place of happy memories, climbing ropes, spitting watermelon seeds long distance, winning the big game, and learning--about God and self, team work, handling disappointments and disagreements, frustrations and overcoming homesickness. It's about hanging out with friends and those who will become your friends. It's about building trust and confidence and accepting others for who they are.

We live in a day where there is much competition for children's time during the summer--baseball, soccer, sports camps, summer school, family vacations, and a host of other things. But I also think it is worth considering the value of summer camp. It is a gift that we give our children to help them grow spiritually, emotionally and socially, and they will benefit from it and remember it forever. If there was ever a time to teach our young people to learn, grow and live authentically in community together, now is the time. Consider Camp Manitoqua as a special place for children and young people this summer. Camp Manitoqua is offering an RCA scholarship particularly for those who meet the following criteria: 1) RCA church families who have never attended summer camp at Camp Manitoqua before; and 2) Under-resourced families in financial need. Check out the registration form. Happy summer camping!

Wayne Van Regenmorter

Schedule:

February 20: Office

21: Synod Executive Conference Call

22: Meeting/Hammond, IN

23: Meeting/Wheaton, IL

24: COSE Conference Call

25: Off

26: Sunday Worship

27: Office

28: Meeting/South Holland

29: Illiana Classis Executive Team Meeting/Dyer, IN

March 1: Office

2: Meeting/Lombard, IL

- 3: Off
- 4: 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: wregen@msyn.org

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

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

How do your service efforts introduce people to Jesus? – from Christianity Today

<http://www.christianitytoday.com/le/2012/winter/transforming-service/index.html>

Meeting physical needs is crucial, but it rarely leads to deep and lasting change. Integrating social action and evangelism is essential for reaching the whole person, physically and spiritually. Seven pastors and ministry leaders explain how they're serving their communities in ways that result in spiritual transformation. Follow links to read each of their stories on how acts of service can be transforming.

Possible new injunction may allow NY churches to remain in school buildings – from The Christian Post

<http://www.christianpost.com/news/possible-new-injunction-may-allow-ny-churches-to-remain-in-school-buildings-69610/>

Good news may be near for dozens of New York City churches currently out of a building to meet and worship in on Sundays following an "optimistic" hearing. Through the continued efforts of the Alliance Defense Fund, a new injunction may be granted by U.S. District Court Chief Justice Loretta A. Preska delaying the eviction of churches from city schools. A ban on churches using public school buildings for worship service in the weekends went into effect Sunday.

Religious and secular audiences require very different approaches – from Christianity Today

<http://www.christianitytoday.com/le/2012/winter/gospelcontexts.html>

A secular atmosphere presents challenges not only to living out one's faith but also to sharing the gospel. Reading Acts shows that different contexts require different approaches. Paul aimed to become "all things for all people," and Jesus himself employed different approaches to reach different people. Secular people do not stay away from church because the services or programs do not match their tastes. It's because many of them think Christianity is nonsense.

Want more visitors? It has to get personal – from Outreach Magazine

<http://www.outreachmagazine.com/features/4618-is-anybody-listening.html>

Have you ever had that nagging feeling that no one was really listening to you? Churches are no exception. They have a message for the community but wonder if anyone is listening. So what should they do? Often the only answer has seemed to be: talk louder. For an organization, that often means mass marketing. But do these strategies work for churches?

Measuring spiritual growth: Using objectives and doorposts – from Small Groups

<http://www.smallgroups.com/articles/2012/spiritualgrowth.html>

There's an old saying in business: "Measured performance is improved performance." It also appears to be true of ministry. In church we measure what is important to us. Measurable goals are simple when tracking tangible things like attendance and offerings, but how do we effectively measure spiritual growth?

Simple tips for hosting a safe youth retreat – from Church Safety

<http://www.churchsafety.com/topics/kids/youth/safeyouthretreat/hostingsafeyouthretreat.html>

Youth retreats can provide powerful, life-changing moments for students. If nothing else, retreats can be a lot of fun. But youth retreats can also expose a church (or even the students themselves) to unique risks that aren't typically part of youth ministry. Before hosting a youth retreat, it's important to understand the potential risks and to prepare accordingly.

Appeals court rejects clergy tax benefit – from The Wall Street Journal (blog)

<http://blogs.wsj.com/totalreturn/2012/02/10/appeals-court-rejects-clergy-tax-benefit/>

A three-judge panel of the federal Eleventh Circuit Court of Appeals in Atlanta overturned a U.S. Tax Court decision allowing clergy members to claim a tax exclusion for more than one home. The ruling reversed the Tax Court's decision in Driscoll v. Commissioner, which was made final in March 2011.

A **video report** on the same topic can be viewed here:

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=AAAnAfybv5c&feature=youtu.be>

Millennials, religion, and a reason for hope – from Christian Post

<http://www.christianpost.com/news/millennials-religion-and-a-reason-for-hope-68883/>

The millennial generation is considered the least religious generation in American history. Though small in number, the millennial Christians have a burning fire within them that can revolutionize churches to make a kingdom difference. How will churches in America respond? Will they embrace the energy and zeal of the millennials, or will they disregard this generation and force these young people to venues of ministry beyond existing churches? Check out the **Millennials Infographic** at: <http://artrainer.wordpress.com/2012/02/06/millennials-infographic/> to learn about this generation!



10 small church strategies in a big church world – from Outreach Magazine

<http://www.outreachmagazine.com/features/4109-10-small-church-strategies-in-a-big-church-world.html>

There are countless numbers of websites and blogs dedicated to helping churches realize the potential of developing a strategy for effective ministry. Unfortunately, there is a curious shortage of plans that can be easily implemented by a small church with limited resources. Here are 10 strategies for smaller churches looking to find a way to be more effective in their ability to minister.

Schedule:

February 20 – DeMotte office

21 – Executive Team meeting (conf call)

22 – DeMotte office

23 – Manitoqua office AM; Multiracial Initiatives Task Team, Calvary, S. Holland

24 – Tentative “off”

27 – DeMotte office

28 – Synod Assembly orientation mtg AM

29 – Illiana Exec Team mtg AM; Synod Assembly orientation mtg PM

March 1 – Manitoqua office

2 – DeMotte office

The Manitoqua office phone number can more consistently reach me wherever I am as it is usually forwarded to my current location. New cell phone number as of November 2011: 219-241-2375.

Randy's contact information:

Manitqua office: 815-464-9181
DeMotte office: 219-987-6562
Cell phone: 219-241-2375
Email: rkooy@msyn.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. Previous issues of the newsletter can be found at http://www.msyn.org/index_files/news.htm

© 2012 Synod of Mid-America, 8122 W. Sauk Trail, Frankfort, IL 60423 – 815-464-9181