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**SYNOD OF MID-AMERICA**  
**Reformed Church in America**  
**NEWSLETTER - - - Volume 11, Number 2 - - - January 25, 2010**  
<http://www.midamericasynod.org>  
<http://msyn.org>

**“Healthy classes and congregations through revitalization and multiplication”**

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**Creating and Weathering the Storm: Hope for Church Leadership**

The planning team for the classis and regional synod resource event has titled our event this year to be called: **Creating and Weathering the Storm: Hope for Church Leadership**. Undoubtedly all have experienced weathering a storm – both literally and figuratively – but creating the storm to weather may be another story. Obviously one cannot literally create a storm, but figuratively it is good to stir up some things to get them moving. This title seemed appropriate to the planning team as the members talked about the content being planned for leadership groups from congregations within our regional synod.

Jim Herrington and Trisha Taylor will be leading church leadership groups around the topics of:

*Creating continuing change, keeping your cool*  
*Calm and cool when it all goes crazy*

The sessions will be designed for congregation leadership groups to be better leaders within their congregations. Leaders will be able to take away information and resources to continue the process after the sessions. This can lead to new vision and vitality within churches – and hope for the church leadership!

Jim and Trisha are known to several within our regional synod as they are working extensively and intentionally with five churches in a momentum mobilization revitalization process within those congregations. They will share a healthy taste of this work with all those that participate in the Friday evening and Saturday morning event. This event will be most valuable if several leaders from each church can attend – and great if most of the church’s leadership is there. This event is designed for pastors, elders, deacons, staff, and all other key leaders in our congregations.

Here are some of the specifics:

- Invitation is for all church leadership of congregations within the Synod of Mid-America
- Dates: Friday evening, April 30, 2010 and Saturday morning, May 1, 2010
- Location: Christ Community Church, 13400 Bell Road, Lemont, IL 60439
- Cost: \$10 per person if registered by April 1 - \$15 per person after April 1

**Begin now to talk about this within your church’s leadership.** Reserve the dates. Ask your leadership to reserve the dates. Plan to make this a significant part of your leadership training this year. This event is co-sponsored by the Classis of Chicago and the Synod of Mid-America and is open to all. The synod’s annual business session for delegates to the synod will be held on the Friday afternoon of the event. Watch for additional details and registration information.

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**U-Turn Church Conference**

Faith Church of Dyer, Indiana will be hosting their U-Turn conference on February 24-25, 2010. Their goal is to use the key learnings acquired from Faith Church’s “U-Turn” and provide space for churches to process where the Lord is calling them. For more information including registration follow this link: <http://www.faithchurchonline.org/OUTREACH/Conferences/UTurnConference/tabid/171/Default.aspx>

**Women and Youth Delegates to General Synod Suggestions Needed**

Each year the regional synods of the RCA can send one youth corresponding delegate and two women corresponding delegates to General Synod. A corresponding delegate participates like a regular delegate with the exception of vote. Additionally the “youth” delegate (somewhere around traditional college age) will meet with the other “youth” delegates to experience the synod together; and it is anticipated that the youth delegates have given some thought about the possibility that God

may be calling him or her to be a pastor. That does not necessarily mean that a decision has been made rather it is the intention of the participation in General Synod as a youth delegate to help that person discern hearing the Holy Spirit's voice. Do you know someone who might be a candidate to be a youth delegate? Do you have suggestions for women who might be interested in learning more about the RCA and participating in General Synod? General Synod will meet on the campus of Northwestern College in Orange City, Iowa on June 10-15. Please get your suggestions along with contact information to Randy Kooy ([rkooy@rca.org](mailto:rkooy@rca.org)).

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**Prayer Section – please forward this information to those in your church whose gift is praying.**

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

The January issue of the Synod of Mid-America prayer focus tool, Intercessors Unite, is available on line. It is a tool to help us as a synod focus our prayers on our common concerns. **This issue requests prayer for our church planters, and lists prayer requests received from classes and congregations.** You are asked to click on [Intercessors Unite](#) and pray the prayer agenda listed for the month of January. To find **our regional synod's prayer tool** follow this link: <http://intunite.msyn.org/IU200912.htm>; there are also links from the synod's home page and resources page (<http://msyn.org>).

**Prayer Resources**

Resources for prayer leaders can be found on the Resources page of the Synod of Mid-America website: [http://msyn.org/index\\_files/resources.htm](http://msyn.org/index_files/resources.htm).

**H.O.P.E. Prayerline**

The Prayerline issue for January focuses on renewing our commitment to prayer. "God has a perfect goal for 2010 in mind for each of us. This goal is attainable because God has set it into motion, even if it is just in your heart and mind. Pray that you will discover what God has planned for you in 2010." This month's issue of the [HOPE \(Houses of Prayer Equipping\) Prayerline](#) newsletter can be found at this link: <http://www.rca.org/Page.aspx?pid=6255>. Here are some articles in this month's issue:



- Whose Agenda?--David Muyskens offers a reminder about the importance of letting God set our agendas.
- Prayer Walk Stations--Kathy Yeckley describes a prayer walk held by her church.
- The Road to Purity--Dante Girolimon extends a 21-day challenge to bring your life closer to Christ.

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**Celebration Stories**

The story in this issue comes to us from Bruce VanDer Kolk, pastor at Rolling Hills Community Church in Zellwood, Florida:

At Rolling Hills Community Church we have taken on a private school as part of our mission outreach. The Little Red School House is a school that is owned by one of our church members. She started the school 15 or more years ago in her home and ran it there successfully until she was forced to move it by the fire marshal. Lottie Smith created her school for students who are at the end of their ropes. They have not been able to find success in the public school system whether it is because of a special educational need, a social or emotional need, or just the need for acceptance and love.

This year marks the 5th year that the Little Red School House has found its roots deep in the soil here at RHCC. The school is housed in our education building that had been vacant for a number of years prior to the school being established. Each year has brought us more and more students as well as their families looking for a safe place to begin a new season of change. We currently have 65 students enrolled from grades PK-12th. As our arms expand to embrace the families God is sending us, so too expands our blessings.

I would like to take this opportunity and share with you the story of a young man who has attended this school since it took root here at our church. His story is one of total

transformation and re-growth. For his privacy I will call him Max. Max came to LRSH having been terribly mistreated and misunderstood in his local public school. He had suffered bullying and abuse from other children in his neighborhood. He was angry, depressed, non-responsive to most communication and often had outbursts when asked to follow simple rules or instruction. He was on the verge of failing out.

His parents were scared for his future and had tried many other alternatives to try and help their son. Progress with Max was slow moving at first. It took time for him to gain trust in his teachers and peers. A brief moment of eye contact from him was a thing to be celebrated. Both his teachers and parents pressed on and prayer for him continued. He was assigned a mentor, a volunteer from the church who met with him on a weekly basis to offer love, guidance and educational support when it was needed. His parents joined the church and have become very active members.

Through the perseverance of his teachers and the outpouring of love and genuine acceptance Max found here, he began to turn a new leaf. He began to shed the old and tired leaves of rejection and failure he had carried around for so long. In their place buds of hope, newfound self-respect, love and grace began to sprout. He is now an active member of both the school and RHCC. He is in the Junior Bell Ensemble that plays during service, he is a strong leader in his high school classroom, he is respected by his peers and is on the "A" honor-roll.

The changes that have taken place in Max are truly remarkable. He is open, loving, and dedicated to his faith, all of which can be accredited to him finding a place in which he could be loved for who God intended him to be. What is truly awesome is that every day here at RHCC and LRSH we have the opportunity to open that window of hope for a child who is in need of a safe, loving environment to flourish in the way God has always desired for them. This Spring RHCC will also continue to sprout buds of hope as we follow our mission into the new year.

To see and hear some personal testimonies from the Little Red School House, follow this link:  
<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=W2oZSmYHrhc>

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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](mailto:rkooy@rca.org).

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

***Pray For Your Church Leaders...***

In most churches every year in January there is a turnover of Consistory leadership—some seasoned leaders are moving out while new leadership is cranking up. Often times a Consistory retreat is held for a day of planning, learning and building leadership teams. It is usually an important day for designing future ministry strategy but also a fun day for building relationships. One very important question to ask regarding church leaders is: "What can a church do to support their leadership?" Here are a few ideas about how to answer that question.

**SUPPORT**

Every leader needs support. Leadership can be tough and it really helps to know that support is there. An encouraging note or word, a well placed thank you, a bit of grace and even some benefit of the doubt are keys to keeping leaders encouraged and activated. Remember the vast majority of leaders in the church are motivated not by a salary, but by the simple belief in God's call on their lives. That belief grows when people voice their support.

**PARTICIPATE**

No leader can do ministry alone. In fact the very definition of leadership means there are people who are participating. Every church needs people to give their time and their talents and their treasure to

the work of ministry. Each person has at least one spiritual gift and sharing that gift of gifts is vital in carrying out ministry for God's purposes in our world. Leadership is just ONE of those gifts. Without the rest – well every leader on the planet should just pack it in. But when everyone is in—when the team is whole—ministry is the most exciting thing there is. A church where leaders lead and everyone one uses their spiritual gifts is powerful.

## **PRAY**

Without a doubt, even though support and participation is so important, the most important thing we can do for our church leaders is to pray for them. Prayer releases God's power. Prayer creates protection from evil. Prayer softens hearts and magnifies abilities. Ministry is inept without prayer but with prayer it is undefeatable. I would suggest that you pray for the leadership of your church at least once a week and to pray for your church as a whole every single day. I know that the power of a prayer team is unmistakable. As the normal transitional process of a church goes on and new leaders assume their duties and seasoned leaders take a break, what can you do to sustain their leadership the best? You can support them. You can participate in ministry with them. But most of all you must pray for them. That's a powerful combination that will enable your leaders to be all God has called them to be.

***“First of all, then, I urge that supplications, prayers, intercessions, and thanksgivings be made for everyone, for kings and all who are in high positions, so that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and dignity. This is right and is acceptable in the sight of God our Savior, who desires everyone to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth.” (1 Timothy 2: 1-4)***

## **Schedule**

January 25: Conference call, Office  
26: Meeting/Faith Church/Dyer, IN  
27: RCE Network Planning Meeting/Holland, MI  
28-30: Ridder Leadership Initiative Event/Augusta, MI  
31: Sunday worship  
February 1: Off  
2: Office  
3: Meeting/Chicago, IL  
4: Meeting/American Reformed Church/DeMotte, IN  
5: Travel  
6: Special Florida Classis Meeting/Sebring, FL  
7: Sunday worship

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**From Randy Kooy, Coordinator-Administrator-Stated Clerk-Treasurer ([rkooy@rca.org](mailto:rkooy@rca.org)):**

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

**Starting with the architect** from The Christian Post

<http://www.christianpost.com/blogs/life/2010/01/starting-with-the-architect-13/index.html>

In any construction project, there is a specific order in which you have to do things. Obviously, you don't just start by having the carpenters show up and start putting up the building. There has to be a foundation laid first, but you can't lay the foundation or start building until you have the detailed plans for the building. It takes contractors, carpenters, electricians, plumbers, pavers, and heating and air conditioning people, but first you need the architect! Without his design, it would be mass confusion at the construction site. (Hint: This is not about building the church addition...)

**FCC order could prove costly to churches** from Pittsburgh Tribune-Review

[http://www.pittsburghlive.com/x/pittsburghtrib/business/s\\_662868.html](http://www.pittsburghlive.com/x/pittsburghtrib/business/s_662868.html)

The Federal Communications Commission has issued an order that could have far-reaching -- and very expensive -- consequences for organizations or individuals using wireless microphones. The commission said wireless microphone users have until June 12, to modify or replace equipment that operates on the 700-megahertz frequency. "We will have to explore our options concerning our cordless mikes," said Donald Immel, senior pastor at The New Stanton Assembly of God Church in Westmoreland County. He was aware of talk about new rules, but had not heard about the FCC's Jan. 15 order. The church uses two earpiece mikes and two hand-held microphones. (FCC site with list of affected microphones is here: <http://www.fcc.gov/cgb/wirelessmicrophones/manufacturers.html>)

**Video: Legally host a Super Bowl party** from Your Church

[http://blog.yourchurch.net/2010/01/legally\\_host\\_a\\_super\\_bowl\\_part\\_1.html](http://blog.yourchurch.net/2010/01/legally_host_a_super_bowl_part_1.html)

If your church is hosting a Super Bowl party this year, you will need to abide by three simple guidelines to avoid violating copyright law. Attorney David Middlebrook, who specializes in representing tax-exempt organizations and is a member of our Editorial Advisory Board, lays out the guidelines set by the NFL in this quick video clip.

**The vanishing rural church** from St. Louis Today

<http://www.stltoday.com/stltoday/news/stories.nsf/religion/story/65D146F4BE076F07862576A50082704D?OpenDocument>

The story of the rural churches near WaKeeney, Kan. -- a mile-wide town of once-grand ambitions, which for 60 years has decked out its little downtown in lights, declaring itself "The Christmas City of the High Plains" -- is about more than how its places of worship are fading. It is about how they, like others in rural niches nationwide, are doing whatever they must, finding novel ways, to stay alight like single candles in a dark expanse.

**Love God, love your neighbor** from Faith & Leadership

<http://faithandleadership.com/features/articles/love-god-love-your-neighbor?page=0,0>

A new vision of a historic tradition: A Baptist church in Washington, D.C., with a history of commitment to social justice leverages its real estate assets to help revitalize the congregation and engage community partners. "If you want to be a Christian, you better get ready for life to be hard. This is not 'Put on your pretty hat and go to church.' Jesus Christ did some really hard things. Love your enemy? What could that mean in D.C. in 2009? What would Jesus expect us to do when feeling threatened or uncomfortable? Love God, love your neighbor. That's what we're doing here. That's the essence of gospel."

**Does your news spread?** from Your Church

<http://www.christianitytoday.com/yc/2009/novdec/doesyournewsspread.html>

One of the most frustrating sentences for a church leader to hear is, "I didn't know about it"-- particularly when the "it" was printed in the bulletin and announced during worship. That's why churches are exploring additional methods to broadcast information about their events. A bulletin blurb can be accentuated by listings on the church's Web site, targeted e-mails, messages on social networking sites, text messages, and recorded telephone reminders.

**How to raise expectations through a membership class** from LifeWay

<http://www.lifeway.com/article/?id=168406>

Raising expectations begins by clearly communicating the expectations associated with the discipleship process of your church. Certainly, the leadership of the church plays a major role in the information they communicate and the manner in which they communicate expectations.

**Church's youth ministry leader takes action to help city's homeless children** from Simi Valley Acorn

[http://www.simivalleyacorn.com/news/2010-01-08/Neighbors/Churchs\\_youth\\_ministry\\_leader\\_takes\\_action\\_to\\_help.html](http://www.simivalleyacorn.com/news/2010-01-08/Neighbors/Churchs_youth_ministry_leader_takes_action_to_help.html)

As director of the children's ministry at Simi Hills Christian Church, Shelly Freed routinely attends the city's Homeless Task Force meetings. Late last year, Freed became interested in what was being done to help disadvantaged children in the community. In November, Freed started an outreach program called Bare Essentials, and she began collecting items to fill backpacks for kids. "The needy children in our community weighed on my heart. I announced to my church what I wanted to do and had their full support," said Freed, who works in the church office and joined the 120-member congregation last year.

**Strategic Assimilation: Rethinking the goal of youth ministry** from Youth Worker Journal

<http://www.youthworker.com/youth-ministry-resources-ideas/youth-ministry/11624001/>

Traditionally, senior high youth ministry has been more concerned with getting kids to make an individual decision to follow Christ than where they go from there. As noble as this goal is, in many cases it has led to a generation of youth ministry orphans--involved youth group kids who, when they leave the nurture and family of their youth program, have no safe place to live out their faith.

**A church staff meeting covenant** from LifeWay

<http://www.lifeway.com/article/?id=169981>

Your weekly church staff meeting is the most important meeting of the week. It is an opportunity to gather key staff leaders to celebrate victories, identify missed opportunities, communicate dates and plans, and keep focused on your stated vision and purpose. Consider adopting a covenant with your staff about how you will handle your staff meetings week to week. Here are elements you may choose to include along with explanations and rationales.

**Schedule:**

January 25 – DeMotte office; Conference call AM

26 – DeMotte office

27 – Manitoqua office; Meeting AM

28 – DeMotte office

29 – DeMotte office

February 1 – DeMotte office

2 – Manitoqua office

3 – DeMotte office

4-6 – Commission on Church Order, Grand Rapids

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

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