



- 1. The Regional Synod of Mid-America's Synod Assembly met for its Annual Session via Zoom on April 21, 2020. Roll call was done through Zoom. All members were present. Guests present were Ray Tilstra and Chad Farrand. A quorum was declared by President DeVries.**
- 2. President DeVries began with devotions from Mark 4:35 and opened the meeting with prayer.**
- 3. Guests were given the privilege of the floor by motion, second and carried vote.**
- 4. Minutes from the Annual Session of 2019 were approved by motion, second, and carried vote.**
- 5. President DeVries presented his State of Religion Report. The report was accepted by motion, second, and carried vote.**
- 6. Chad Schuitema presented the The Executive Team Report and the Administrative and Ministry Leader Report.**
 - 1. The Financial Report was approved by motion, second, and unanimous vote.**
 - 2. Each classis recommended that their classis' Executive Team members remain for another year.**
 - 3. Dale Buettner was nominated as Vice-President**
- 7. Bob Wierenga, liaison from the RSMA to the Manitoqua Ministries Board, gave the Manitoqua Ministries Report for information.**
- 8. Stephanie Doeschot, RSMA representative on the General Synod Council presented a written report for information. Wayne Van Regenmorter added to the report some information recently given from GSC to all Regional Synod Executives.**
- 9. Classis de las Naciones**
 1. The Synod Assembly heard a report from Wayne and guest Chad Farrand, who has been working as the Classis Leader in Florida for Illiana-Florida Classis.
 - 2. Recommendation 1:** That the Regional Synod of Mid-America recommend to its Annual Session on April 21, 2020 that Classis de las Naciones (aka Classis of the Nations) be formed per authority given to regional synods in the Book of Church Order Chapter 1, part 3, article 2, section 3. This new classis will begin with First Reformed Church, Tampa, FL; Rolling Hills Community Church, Zellwood, FL; Venice Community Church, Venice, FL; Christ Community Church, Pompano Beach, FL; Faith

and Joy Church, Miami, FL; Bayshore Gardens Community Church, Bradenton, FL; 12 Springs Church, Sarasota, FL; Global Ministries, Orlando, FL; CN Global Church, Plantation, FL; and Centro de Vida, West Palm Beach, FL as its anchor churches. Any unorganized church plants in Florida are also considered part of this new classis. **The Synod Assembly approved this recommendation by motion, second, and carried vote.**

1. **Recommendation 1.1:** That Illiana-Florida Classis complete the necessary steps to legally become Illiana Classis and update any documents to transfer those Florida churches listed in Recommendation 1 by June 30, 2020. **The Synod Assembly approved this recommendation by motion, second, and carried vote.**
2. **Recommendation 1.2:** That Illiana-Florida Classis work with the Reformed Church in America to complete any necessary steps to transfer churches and ministers of those Florida churches listed in Recommendation 1 by June 30, 2020. **The Synod Assembly approved this recommendation by motion, second, and carried vote.**
3. **Recommendation 2:** That Classis de las Naciones complete any and all necessary legal requirements to become a separate classis of the Regional Synod of Mid-America prior to June 30, 2020. **The Synod Assembly approved this recommendation by motion, second, and carried vote.**
4. **Recommendation 3:** That the Regional Synod of Mid-America recommend that Illiana-Florida Classis finalize the division of its assets and liabilities with the newly formed Classis de las Naciones on June 30, 2020. **The Synod Assembly approved this recommendation by motion, second, and carried vote.**
 1. **Recommendation 3.1:** That Illiana-Florida Classis transfer \$543,000 to Classis de las Naciones. (Originally this amount was \$550,000 but since the vote of affirmation by Illiana-Florida Classis a loan of \$7000 for Jose Rea was made prior to the formation of Classis de las Naciones resulting in a total cash transfer of \$543,000 from Illiana-Florida Classis. This loan and its repayment becomes the liability of Classis de las Naciones. **The Synod Assembly approved this recommendation by motion, second, and carried vote.**
 2. **Recommendation 3.2:** That Illiana-Florida Classis transfer the assets and liabilities of all churches in the state of Florida to Classis de las Naciones. This includes the current legal liabilities of Comunidad de Fe, West Palm Beach, FL, Korean Grace Way Church, Orlando, FL, and New Horizons of Deerfield Beach, Deerfield Beach, FL. **The Synod Assembly approved this recommendation by motion, second, and carried vote.**
5. **These Corporate Resolutions were approved by motion, second, and carried vote.**
 1. **BE IT HEREBY RESOLVED**, that on April 21st, 2020, THE PARTICULAR SYNOD OF MID-AMERICA R.C.A., held its annual meeting whereby a unanimous vote of the Synod Assembly and the affirmation of ILLIANA CLASSIS, REFORMED CHURCH IN AMERICA, INC. on March 12, 2020 in accordance with the provisions outlined in

- the Book of Church Order Chapter 1, Part 3, Article 2, Sec. 3 formed CLASSIS DE LAS NACIONES, also known as CLASSIS OF THE NATIONS. This formation is in accordance with the Constitution and Book of Church Order of the Reformed Church in America.
2. **BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED**, that the unanimous vote of the Synod Assembly created Classis de las Naciones with the following organized member churches: First Reformed Church, Tampa, FL; Bayshore Gardens Community Church, Bradenton, FL; Rolling Hills Community Church, Zellwood, FL; Christ Community Church, Pompano Beach, FL; Reformed Community Church, Venice, FL; Faith and Joy Church, Miami, FL; and Iglesia Christiana Dios Siempre Presente en Florida Inc. also known as CN Church, Sunrise, FL. Additionally, that ILLIANA CLASSIS, REFORMED CHURCH IN AMERICA, INC. release all assets and liabilities of these churches to be under the supervision of CLASSIS DE LAS NACIONES.
 3. **BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED**, that by affirmation of ILLIANA CLASSIS, REFORMED CHURCH IN AMERICA, INC. and unanimous vote of the Synod Assembly, the following adopted organizing new church plants are to be organized member churches of CLASSIS DE LAS NACIONES, pending their official organizational service: 12 Springs Church, Sarasota, FL; Global Ministries, Orlando, FL; Centro de Vida, West Palm Beach, FL.
 4. **BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED**, that the unanimous vote of the Synod Assembly approved the following unorganized church be under the supervision of CLASSIS DE LAS NACIONES: Good News Christian Fellowship, New Port Richey, FL.
 5. **BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED**, that the members of the ILLIANA CLASSIS, REFORMED CHURCH IN AMERICA, INC. held a special meeting on July 12, 2017, to dissolve the consistory and otherwise terminate the formal organization of COMUNIDAD DE FE, RCA, INC. in order to take such steps as necessary to bring COMUNIDAD DE FE RCA, INC., its ministry and property under the direct administration of the classis. Additionally, the members of ILLIANA CLASSIS, REFORMED CHURCH IN AMERICA, INC., designated Wayne Van Regenmorter, David Hubbart, Rich Hasselbach, and Eddy Aleman to exercise the functions of the consistory as necessary for the administration of the church. By unanimous vote the Synod Assembly approved that CLASSIS DE LAS NACIONES shall have supervision over the designated consistory within its bounds which also includes the ministry and property of COMUNIDAD DE FE, RCA, INC., Palm Springs, FL.
 6. **BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED**, that the members of the ILLIANA CLASSIS, REFORMED CHURCH IN AMERICA, INC. held a special meeting on December 8, 2016, to dissolve the consistory and otherwise terminate the formal organization of WEST COAST CHURCH OF THE CROSS, RCA, INC. in order to take such steps as necessary to bring WEST COAST CHURCH OF THE CROSS, RCA, INC. its ministry and property under the direct administration of the classis. Additionally, the members of ILLIANA CLASSIS, REFORMED CHURCH IN AMERICA, INC., designated Wayne Van Regenmorter, David Hubbart, and David Tellinghuisen to exercise the functions of the consistory as necessary for the administration of the

church. By unanimous vote the Synod Assembly approved that CLASSIS DE LAS NACIONES shall have supervision over the designated consistory within its bounds which also includes the ministry and property of WEST COAST CHURCH OF THE CROSS, RCA, INC., Sarasota, FL.

7. **BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED**, that the Settlement Agreement made on November 30, 2015, by and among New Horizons of Deerfield Beach, Inc., and Cross Community Church of South Florida, Inc., and ILLIANA CLASSIS, REFORMED CHURCH IN AMERICA, INC., be executed under the supervision and jurisdiction of CLASSIS DE LAS NACIONES.
8. **BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED**, that the PROMISSORY NOTE and MORTGAGE AND SECURITY AGREEMENT made on the 15th day of August 2019, by and between the Korean Grace Church in Orlando Inc, a Florida not for profit corporation in Orlando, FL., and the CLASSIS OF FLORIDA, REFORMED CHURCH IN AMERICA, INC., a Florida not for profit corporation, be executed under the supervision and jurisdiction of CLASSIS DE LAS NACIONES.
9. **BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED**, that members of the ILLIANA CLASSIS, REFORMED CHURCH IN AMERICA, INC voted to transfer cash assets of \$550,000 to CLASSIS DE LAS NACIONES on or before June 30, 2020. This \$550,000 includes a loan of \$7000 for Jose Rea that was made prior to the formation of CLASSIS DE LAS NACIONES resulting in a total cash transfer of \$543,000 from ILLIANA CLASSIS, REFORMED CHURCH IN AMERICA, INC. to CLASSIS DE LAS NACIONES. This loan and its repayment becomes the liability of CLASSIS DE LAS NACIONES.
6. The Bylaws Revisions contained in the agenda packet were approved by motion, second, and carried vote.

10. Wayne Van Regenmorter presented the Visionary Leader Report and was thanked for his work and passion for the church in the RSMA.

11. Dale Buettner was elected Vice-President.

12. President DeVries was thanked for his leadership and for continually moving the RSMA forward even in uncertain times.

13. Bob Wierenga was elected President.

14. President Wierenga closed the meeting in prayer.

Respectfully Submitted,



Rev. Chad R. Schuitema, Clerk

*The **vision** of the Regional Synod of Mid-America is healthy classes, congregations and leaders following Christ in mission. Our **mission** is to create and strengthen classes through relationships, mutual accountability, and equipping leaders. Our **values** are: casting vision, cultivating trust, building partnerships, sharing resources, demonstrating mutual accountability; all through open and honest communication, while exercising flexibility and creativity, and being available in crises.*

Agenda

- 1. Opening Devotions & Prayer Time** (President Jason DeVries)
- 2. Welcome, Roll Call, Seating of Guests, and Administrative Details** (Chad Schuitema)
- 3. Approval of Annual Session Minutes from 2019 (page 7)**
- 4. President's State of Religion Report (page 8)**
- 5. Executive Team/Administrative and Ministry Leader Report (page 10)**
 - 1. Financial Reports (page 14)**
 - 2. Executive Team Member Election within Classes (page 16)**
 - 3. Nomination of Vice-President (page 16)**
- 6. Manitoqua Ministries Report**
- 7. General Synod Council Report (page 17)**
- 8. Classis de las Naciones (page 19)**
 - 1. Supporting Documents**
 - 2. Recommendations (page 28)**
 - 3. Corporate Resolutions (page 29)**
 - 4. Bylaws Revisions (page 31)**
- 9. Visionary Leader Report (page 39)**
- 10. Election of Vice-President**
- 11. Election of President**
- 12. Adjournment and Closing Prayer**

Current Members:

Chicago Classis (3): Pedro Windsor (M-2020), Chad DeJager (M-2021), Rich VanSwol (E-2022). Beginning at close of session in 2020: Marge Vanderwagen (M-2023); Alternate for 2020: Edie Lenz (M - alternate for Pedro Windsor)

Illiana-Florida Classis (3): Dale Buettner (M-2020), Corey Buchanan (E-2021), Stu Swenson (E-2022); Beginning at close of session in 2020: Dale Buettner renewed until 2023

Illinois Classis (3): Scott Stephan (M-2020), Keith Hamstra (E-2021), Chelsea Lampen (M-2022); Beginning at close of session in 2020: Scott Stephan renewed until 2023

New Thing Classis (4): Aaron Klein (M-2020), Jason DeVries (E-2021), Glenn Sterrett (E-2021), John Jelderks (E - 2022); Beginning at close of session in 2020: Aaron Klein renewed until 2023

Wisconsin Classis (4): Bill Flavin (M-2020), Bob Wierenga (E-2021), Bill TeWinkle (M-2022), David Venard (E-2022); Beginning at close of session in 2020: Bill Flavin renewed until 2023

Officers and Staff: Jason DeVries (President), Bob Wierenga (Vice President), Dale Buettner (At-Large), Scott Stephan (At-Large), Chad DeJager (At-Large), Chad Schuitema (Stated Clerk/Treasurer/Administrative and Ministry Leader), Wayne Van Regenmorter (Visionary Leader/Synod Executive)

Ex-Officio Members/Representatives: Cary Winn (Overtures and Judicial Business), Laura Vroom (Manitowish Ministries Executive Director), Stephanie Doeschot (General Synod Council).

*Note terms run from the beginning of one Annual Session to the conclusion of the next.

Information and Instructions

Welcome to our Regional Synod Assembly annual meeting! 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. It is our practice to present you with reports prior to our annual session. Please read these reports and ask questions, as will not spend time restating that information within the meeting.

Meeting Format

Due to COVID-19 and the governmental actions that have been taken to limit to spread of the virus, we will be meeting via Zoom Online Video Conferencing. A link will be sent to you in an email. If you questions, contact Chad Schuitema - chad@rsmam.org, (765) 237-7678.



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Minutes

- 1. President Jason DeVries led an opening devotion from Joshua 1 highlighting how God's faithfulness allows us to continue to move forward even in uncertainty. President DeVries opened the meeting in prayer.**
- 2. Guests were recognized and given privilege of the floor. A quorum of delegates was present by roll call. (page 2)**
- 3. Minutes from the 2019 Annual Session were approved by M/S/C. (page 3)**
- 4. President's State of Religion Report & Classis Sharing (page 4)**
- 5. The Executive Team Report, Administrative and Ministry Leader Report, Financial Reports, and Vision Leader Reports (page 42) were approved without question. (page 6)**
- 6. Laura Vroom presented the Manitoqua Ministries Report and highlighted the ministry of Camp and also the ministry of the RSMA and the servants who have served a long time. She prayed for the RSMA and Camp. (page 12)**
- 7. Wayne Van Regenmorter gave a brief report of the General Synod Council (page 14)**
- 8. Amendments to the RSMA Bylaws were approved in entirety by M/S/C (page 15)**
- 9. Rev. Bob Grysen spoke on behalf of the the Request from The Cornerstone Church to Transfer from Illiana-Florida Classis to New Thing Classis. The recommendations from the Executive Team were approved by M/S/C (page 24)**
- 10. Guest from some of our new churches in Florida joined us via Zoom online video conferencing and highlighted their work in Florida among an increasingly diverse population. The supporting documents for the formation of a new Florida Classis (Classis de las Naciones) were presented for information (page 33)**
- 11. Bob Wierenga was elected Vice-President for a one year term. Each classis' members of the Executive Team were highlighted: Scott Stephan (IL), Jason DeVries (NT), Dale Buettner (I-F), Chad DeJager (CHI), Bill TeWinkle (WI)**
- 12. President Jason DeVries closed the meeting in prayer.**

President's State of Religion Report

Last year's theme of ministry continuing in the face of uncertainty carries on to this year. For the first time ever we are hosting our Annual Session via technology instead of in person with each other. And while that is not ideal for connection and relationship it does allow us to continue moving ministry forward with decisions we will make together.

Our churches, our nation, and our world are in the midst of a Coronavirus Pandemic. While all of us have been forced to swim in these uncharted waters, ministry is still happening. Churches have moved services online. Connections and meetings are happening through technology. Easter will still be celebrated, although much differently than ever before in our lifetimes. The Church is still reaching new people and making disciples just in new and different ways. This pandemic may also allow us to reach previously unreached people because they are now realizing their need for a savior since their life circumstances are beyond their capacity to handle them well.

The pandemic has piled onto the heaping uncertainty we were already carrying in regards to "Decision 2020." The future of our denomination is still only known to our God. We gather amongst reports of deep divides within the RCA and different factions making contingency plans based on what happens at General Synod 2020. Oh yeah, we do not even know when General Synod 2020 will happen, or if it can happen this year.

And while we carry the weight of that uncertainty ministry is still happening. We will wrestle together through the relaunching of the Florida Classis in a way that I do not think we even would have dreamed of a few years ago. Having a planning personality has had me asking, "Who even would want to join the RCA until her future is known?" But here is a large group who is saying, "Even in the uncertainty, we want in." And then, to see who these leaders are and the churches that could be added to our denomination, I believe we hear God say, "I am so much bigger than anything you dream or come up with on your own."

With this being my last "State of the Region" report I would be remiss to not specifically thank Wayne VanRegenmorter and Chad Schuitema for their leadership and calming presence in the midst of the unknown. Wayne and Chad willingly step in to help keep focus on moving ministry forward. They connect pastors, churches, and classes to resources which can help them thrive and not just survive. They lead well and the Region is blessed to have them serve us as staff.

We wish a blessing on Wayne as 2020 will be his final year in full time ministry for the Region. He will not be gone. He will still be involved. But at a much better pace, and a lot fewer miles on his car, which will allow him to enjoy more time with Linda and their family. Our loss is the state of Florida's gain. Blessings Wayne on your retirement from full time ministry! We know that with your heart, you aren't going to stop serving.

All-in-all, I think it is fitting to end this year's report the same way I concluded last year's: Friends, while a lot remains unknown, again our God is known. He goes before us. He already has a plan. The gates of Hell will not stand against his mission. May he bless us with the faith and strength to follow wherever he leads us for his honor and his glory!

Submitted in hope for what is yet to be!

Rev. Jason E. DeVries
President
Regional Synod of Mid-America
4/6/2020

Executive Team/Administrative and Ministry Leader Report to the 2020 Regional Synod Annual Assembly

Chad Schuitema

Regional Synod of Mid-America Administrative and Ministry Leader

The Regional Synod of Mid-America Executive Team is comprised of Jason DeVries (President), Bob Wierenga (Vice-President), Dale Buettner (At-Large), Scott Stephan (At-Large), Chad DeJager (At-Large), 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 Executive Team annually evaluates the staff of the RSMA, determines budget and oversees business and ministry. The Executive Team meets monthly through video/telephone communication methods and quarterly in person.

As has been the case for over a decade, the RSMA ran at a budget deficit for 2019. The income was \$300,194.51 Our expenditures were \$326,193 (vs. \$321,753 budget). A full 2019 financial status summary is found in this agenda along with a 2020 budget. We continue to try and work toward a budget that is fully funded by assessments and this year we cut our funding by \$10,000 to Camp Manitoqua and will have other savings due to Wayne moving his health insurance to Medicare. Our multi-year, scaled funding of the Illinois Classis Leader will also cease after April of 2020.

The AML works with the RCA Commission on Nominations to fill vacancies on denominational commissions and boards. Currently we are working with the CoN to fill a vacancy on that same Commission. We have suggested Dean Schramm, an elder from Ross Community Reformed Church in Gary, IN. The CoN is currently in the interview process of that appointment. The Executive Team also appoints a delegate from the RSMA Assembly to General Synod annually and this year Rev. Dale Buettner was again appointed to keep with the request of General Synod that we send the same delegates from 2019. Linda Roller and Barb Grevengoed were both appointed as Women Corresponding Delegates and were both our delegates in 2019 as well. We did not find a Young Adult Corresponding Delegate.

The Salary Committee of the RSMA is moderated by the Administrative and Ministry Leader. This committee is:

Chicago Classis:

Rich Van Swol - 2021 (1st)
Coleen Winterfeld - 2022 (2nd)

Illinois Classis:

Rich Huizenga - 2020 (1st)
Mike Senneff - 2021 (1st)

Illiana-Florida Classis:

Gary Summers - 2020 (1st)
Roger DeGraff - 2022 (1st)

New Thing Classis:

Justin Kats - 2020 (2nd)
Nate Simmons - 2022 (2nd)

Wisconsin Classis:

Anne Daane - 2020 (1st)
Lynette Peters - 2021 (2nd)

The action taken by the Salary Committee has been previously published and is available on our website: www.rsmam.org. These guidelines are submitted to each classis as recommended salary guidelines and each classis tends to adopt them. This year I also translated them into Spanish for use in our churches in Florida who only speak Spanish.

The Personnel Team of the RSMA is led by the President, Vice President, and one At-Large Member (Dale Buettner). This team met with the RSMA staff in December and recommended compensation adjustments in line with the RSMA Compensation Guidelines.

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, monthly newsletters, all communications, updating our directory of ministers and ministries, clerk requirements, treasurer responsibilities, tax filings, retirement, administrative duties, staff support, IT support, and many other daily activities comprise the administrative responsibilities of the AML. I am a member of the Thriving Leaders, Thriving Churches Guiding Coalition of the RCA.

I represent our region on the Commissioned Pastor Advisory Board. Commissioned Pastors continue to have an ever-increasing role in the RCA. Training continues to become more standardized. Both seminaries are involved on different levels as well as MFCA. RSGL and some of RSMAM are utilizing Coram Deo for training. Other synods have different processes. There are 2 synods that have no commissioned pastors (Canada and Albany).

I coach many pastors from our region and have led multiple online learning communities for our pastors (and we've had elders join as well). Since our last annual session we did a Small Church Essentials Learning Community and a Small Church on a Big Mission Learning Community. I lead both of these learning communities and prepare content, facilitate discussion, and help formulate action steps for the participants.

I oversee the Specialized Transitional Ministers in our region. I also meet quarterly with those STM's willing to work in our region as we share best practices, opportunities, and prayer requests. I work with congregations in hiring STM's as well as receive periodic performance evaluations of these ministers.

Churches Learning Change (formerly Ridder Church Renewal) is led by the AML. This transformational process has been impactful in our region for many years. This year we revamped the format of CLC focuses to be an all online learning community. We also changed the focus to be on the pastor leading his or her consistory through the process rather than a team of lay people. Each month we provide 30 minutes of impactful content online through video followed by 30 minutes of group coaching. The content portion is

recorded on video and sent to the pastors along with teaching notes and solitude/homework. The pastor can then use the video or teach their consistory on their own. Each pastor also receives monthly coaching by a trained coach. We have experts from all regions of CLC leading the content portions as well as members of our own team. Our team is made up of the AML, Vance Elzinga, Bill Flavin, and Brian Taylor. We are focusing more on learning and leading change in the church and will help you keep your focus on mission while navigating adaptive challenges. We have 8 churches currently participating. I currently provide leadership to the team overseeing CLC in our region and also am part of the bi-national leadership group. The bi-national group is looking closely at our process and we will be studying its efficacy for implementation in other regions.

While Wayne has been doing the lions share of work with the formation of Classis de las Naciones I have been working on the financial and administrative side to examine financial history, current reality, and the recommendations in forming the new classis. That work is also found in this packet.

Another role I serve is as a "clerk to the clerks" in our region and help many of them with projects, advice, and church order issues. I serve as a "go to" person for all sorts of questions from clerks and often churches email me directly with questions on procedure and order. I try to be someone who can either provide the answer directly (if appropriate - if not, I send them to their own classis clerk) or connect them to someone who can. I also work with classis treasurers on issues like assessments and other financial inquiries.

The RSMA, along with Wisconsin and Illinois Classes are the named trustees and beneficiaries of Kings Camp. Manitoqua Ministries has secured a buyer for the Kings Camp property. The trustees enlisted the services of attorney Russ Paarlberg to work through the details of this sale and our roles and responsibilities as trustees and beneficiaries. I have been the main contact and point person working with Russ on this issue. Understanding that each classis operates differently and knowing that we have to get assembly approval to for this sale, we have asked the clerks of each classis to proceed with discussions in their classes. The trustees need to have agreement in order for the sale to be finalized. I continue to facilitate this discussion.

I worked closely with multiple classes this year coordinating Emotional Maturity events related to Vision 2020 with Jim Herrington and Trisha Taylor. I have also worked with multiple classes regarding how to process the Vision 2020 decisions and will continue that work following General Synod.

With the onset of COVID-19 we are functioning in a different world. Many meetings have been changed to be online video conferences with Zoom and I have become even more of a resource for churches who are living in a heightened anxiety. I have tried to keep up on the

latest laws and government acts so as to assist our churches and pastors in a helpful way. I have worked with each classis as they have sought to find solutions for broadcasting worship, utilize online giving, and I have coached many pastors during these difficult times. Each classis has handled the question of churches paying assessments and financial shortfalls differently as each classis has a unique financial reality.

On April 6, 2020 the RSMA Executive Team met via Zoom and decided to reduce our second quarter assessments by 30%. This is a loss of income of \$22,124.82 which will be made up from our reserves. If any classes has an additional financial need they are welcome to contact the Executive Team.

This meeting sees the end of Jason DeVries' presidency of the RSMA. Jason has been a faithful servant and a forward-thinking leader of the RSMA. He has done an excellent job in fulfilling the duties of the president and we are grateful for his leadership and service. Per our bylaws, the Vice President, Bob Wierenga, becomes the sole candidate for President. Bob has been another faithful servant to the region and has fulfilled the president role effectively in the past. To fill the vacancy Bob will be leaving, the Executive Team has nominated Dale Buettner to be our next Vice President. Dale has served on our Executive Team as an at-large member for a few years, is currently the President of Illiana-Florida Classis, and pastor of Community Reformed Church in Lafayette, Indiana. Dale's term as president of the classis will be ending this fall and he is willing to serve our region in this role.

With the potential creation of Classis de las Naciones, we will need to update our bylaws. Currently, all five classes have a member from their classis on our Executive Team. These members serve as President, Vice President, and At-Large Members. We will need a fourth At-Large Member to accommodate a member from Classis de las Naciones. This is a small change in our bylaws and our Overtures and Judicial Business chairperson has indicated that this change is appropriate. We will also need to work with the newly formed classis to appoint a mixture of elders and ministers to our Regional Synod Assembly with one of those appointees becoming a member of our Executive Team. On April 6, 2020 the Overtures and Judicial Business chair, Cary Winn, notified me that there were no objections from that team regarding these changes.

I thank you for continuing to give me the opportunity to serve and use my gifting in this role.

– Chad Schuitema, Administrative and Ministry Leader

2019 RSMA Budget Status

As of 12/31/19 100% through year)

General Fund Income	Budget	Actual
Assessment Income	\$300,510.00	\$300,090.47
Interest Income	\$75.00	\$104.04
TOTAL	\$300,585.00	\$300,194.51

Fund Totals	01/01/2019	12/31/2019
RCA-CGF 3-yr Certificate #1	\$110,764.44	\$112,715.58
RCA-CGF 3-yr Certificate #2	\$110,764.44	\$112,715.58
RCA-CGF Demand Certificate	\$73,595.46	\$54,472.36
Providence Bank Checking	\$66,065.30	\$71,838.34
TOTAL	\$361,189.64	\$351,741.86

DISBURSEMENTS	BUDGET	CURRENT	PERCENTAGE
Visionary Leader			
Services	\$101,908	\$100,210	98.3%
Continuing Education	\$785	\$1,142	145.5%
Travel	\$17,000	\$17,708	104.2%
Admin & Ministry Leader			
Services	\$125,620	\$125,700	100.1%
Continuing Education	\$1,090	\$1,039	95.4%
Travel	\$7,000	\$9,210	131.6%
Administration Expenses			
Executive Team	\$1,000	\$487	48.7%
OJB	\$500	\$0	0.0%
Synod Annual Session	\$1,500	\$767	51.1%
Office Expenses			
Insurance	\$2,500	\$2,530	101.2%
Financial Review	\$900	\$900	100.0%
Utilities	\$4,700	\$5,157	109.7%
Office Supplies	\$2,000	\$2,286	114.3%
Office Equipment	\$2,000	\$3,200	160.0%
Miscellaneous	\$2,000	\$2,400	120.0%
Ministry Expenses			
Manitoqua Contribution	\$30,000	\$31,101	103.7%
Leadership Equipping	\$5,000	\$7534	150.7%
Ridder Church Renewal	\$6,000	\$6,030	100.5%
STM	\$3,000	\$1,483	49.4%
Illinois Class Leader	\$6,250	\$6,667	106.7%
Miscellaneous Ministry	\$1,000	\$643	64.3%
Total Expenses	\$321,753.00	\$326,193	101.4%

DISBURSEMENTS	2018	2019	2020	NOTES
Visionary Leader				
Salary + Housing	\$83,187	\$65,282	\$93,162	Schedule: \$62687 (full salary) +\$25075 (housing); includes \$5400 tax reimb.
Health Insurance	\$22,254	\$24,451	\$11,584	Medicare and RBA Vision/Dental/Life
RCA 403(b)	\$9,151	\$7,181	\$9,654	11% of Salary+Housing
SS Allowance	\$6,364	\$4,994	\$6,714	7.65% of Salary+Housing
Continuing Education	\$1,143	\$785	\$1,206	1/52 of salary
Travel	\$17,000	\$17,000	\$17,000	
VL Total	\$139,098	\$119,693	\$139,320	
Admin & Ministry Leader				
Salary + Housing	\$77,010	\$79,320	\$82,388	Schedule: \$58849 (salary)+\$23539 (housing)
Health Insurance	\$27,893	\$31,507	\$32,795	incl. \$5400 HSA Funding
RCA 403(b)	\$8,471	\$8,725	\$9,063	11% of Salary+Housing
SS Allowance	\$5,891	\$6,068	\$6,303	7.65% of Salary+Housing
Continuing Education	\$1,058	\$1,090	\$1,132	1/52 of salary
Travel	\$7,000	\$7,000	\$7,000	
AML Total	\$127,323	\$133,710	\$138,681	
Administration Expenses				
Executive Team	\$1,000	\$1,000	\$1,000	approx. \$250 x4 meetings per year
OJB	\$500	\$500	\$500	projected expense only if necessary
Synod Annual Session	\$1,500	\$1,500	\$1,500	
Office Expenses				
Insurance	\$2,500	\$2,500	\$2,500	
Financial Review	\$900	\$900	\$900	
Utilities	\$4,700	\$4,700	\$4,700	
Office Supplies	\$2,000	\$2,000	\$2,000	
Office Equipment	\$2,000	\$2,000	\$2,000	
Miscellaneous	\$2,000	\$2,000	\$2,000	
Admin/Office Total	\$17,100	\$17,100	\$17,100	
Ministry Expenses				
Manitowish Contribution	\$30,000	\$30,000	\$20,000	
Leadership Equipping	\$5,000	\$5,000	\$5,000	
Illinois Classis Leader	\$11,250	\$6,250	\$0	
Churches Learning Change	\$6,000	\$6,000	\$6,000	
STM	\$3,000	\$3,000	\$3,000	no cost unless we have to pay financial assistance to an STM
Miscellaneous Ministry	\$1,000	\$1,000	\$1,000	
Ministry Total	\$56,250	\$51,250	\$35,000	
Total Expenses	\$339,772	\$321,753	\$330,101	

Income	Projected
Assessment Income *RSMA Members 16,857; current assessment \$17.50	\$294,997.50 (@17.50)
Interest Income	\$75.00
Total:	\$295,072.50

Summary	Proposed
Personnel Expenses	\$278,001
Administration Expenses	\$17,100
Ministry Expenses	\$35,000
TOTAL	\$330,101

Elections

Per our bylaws, each classis elects from among its Regional Synod of Mid-America Synod Assembly members (delegates) a representative for the RSMA Executive Team. Currently those Executive Team members are Chicago: Chad DeJager, Illiana-Florida: Dale Buettner, Illinois: Scott Stephan, New Thing: Jason DeVries, Wisconsin: Bob Wierenga.

At the close of this years Synod Assembly, Jason DeVries' term as president will be completed. Jason has agreed to stay on the Executive Team (should the members of the Synod Assembly from New Thing Classis determine) as his term does not end until the close of the 2021 Annual Session. Chad DeJager and Scott Stephan have also agreed to stay on the Executive Team for another year should their respective members of the Synod Assembly so determine.

Bob Wierenga is currently the Vice President and per our bylaws he is the sole candidate for President but must be elected. We will be holding a vote during the Annual Session.

Dale Buettner has agreed to be nominated for Vice President. We will be holding a vote during the Annual Session.

Following the creation of Classis de las Naciones we will be asking that classis to appoint 3 members (at least one elder) to our Synod Assembly. From among those members, an Executive Team member at large will be chosen. This ensures all classes have representation on the Executive Team.

Report on General Synod Council Meeting (March 10-11, 2020) to Regional Synod Mid-America

The Spring General Synod Council of the RCA was held at the Michigan Regional Center in Grand Rapids, Michigan (with seven members participating by ZOOM in light of current conditions).

Following opening worship and the approval of prior minutes, GSC heard a report from Vision 2020 (and GSC) member Charlie Contreras. Discussion followed. GSC approved the recommendation from Vision 2020 to devote all of Friday and Saturday on the General Synod 2020 schedule for the process to be led by Vision 2020 for all delegates. Since Charlie is a member of RSMA, he can add information and field questions/comments at the RSMA Annual Meeting. Please continue to pray for the Holy Spirit to guide the work and discernment of Vision 2020 as it continues before and throughout General Synod this year.

Further discussion was held on General Synod scheduling. All commissions will be asked to submit only written reports in light of the majority of time needing to be spent on discernment of God's leading of the RCA into the future. Revs Judy Nelson and Jim Knoll will serve as General Synod chaplains.

Each year, GSC receives reports from any GSC member who has been able to attend a meeting of each of the commissions to increase communication and linkage. In addition, two commissions are reviewed by a committee of 3 GSC members each year. Reports were shared by the teams that reviewed the Commission on Theology and the Commission on Nominations. Each was recommended to be continued, with approval of those recommendations granted by GSC.

Nominations Committee continues to ask for wider participation throughout the denomination in filling out Talent Bank profiles in order to facilitate its work in populating commissions with the right mix of talent needed.

Reports from the Investment Advisory Committee and the Audit and Risk Management Committee were received, with GSC expressing satisfaction at the work and transparency of each. Discussion was held on the potential financial impact of decisions made at General Synod 2020 and 2021.

General Secretary Eddy Aleman addressed plans for the anticipated decrease in donations to the RCA by reporting the 10% reduction in staff costs already undergoing implementation. He has since sent out a report to the denomination outlining details of this plan. Prayers are requested for Eddy, the GSC staff and the denomination in this regard.

At each GSC meeting, the Relationship and Review Team shares a report on non-confidential ways to support in prayer our general secretary during executive session. General Secretary Aleman is also given time to speak to GSC members only in this session on matters he wishes to convey. Prayer for him and his work concludes the session.

Monitoring reports were shared by the General Secretary with reported compliance in each. Transformed and Transforming updates were shared by Eddy, Jill Ver Steeg, JP Sundararajan

and Tricia Leistra reporting for Church Multiplication as Randy Weener is recuperating from surgery.

General Synod is scheduled to take place (a Plan B may be formed should health concerns warrant that) at Northwestern College in Orange City, IA from June 11-16 and the fall meeting of GSC and Commissions is to be held October 23-24 in Grand Rapids, Michigan.

Respectfully submitted,
RSMA Representative to GSC Rev. Stephanie J. Doeschot

Classis de las Naciones Formation

Formation Timeline:

- January 23, 2020: I-F CMT Report to I-F ET on current reality of Classis de las Naciones.
- January 31, 2020: Chad and Wayne met with Mike Ceratto to discern current reality of finances in I-F.
- February 3, 2020: Consistory Training of 3 Hispanic churches at Pompano Beach.
- February 13, 2020: Chad presented report based on meeting with Mike Ceratto; RSMA ET made recommendations regarding finances - RSMA ET suggests a starting point financial figure for 2/27 meeting of \$500,000.
- February 19, 2020: 9am Zoom Meeting of I-F ET heard report from I-F CMT for the process of adoption of 4 churches from Florida.
- February 27, 2020: Meeting with I-F ET and CdIN ET and RSMA ET. Facilitated financial discussion to formulate recommendations. I-F and CdIN approved a provisional amount of \$510,000 with a final figure coming at I-F Classis in March 2020.
- March 3-4, 2020: CP Exams at Rolling Hills Community Church, Zellwood, FL.
- March 12, 2020: Vote of Affirmation from I-F Classis at Spring Session to form Classis de las Naciones. Vote to receive 4 adopted church into the Illiana-Florida Classis. Final amount decided at \$550,000.
- March, 2020: Requests to form CdIN from Bayshore Gardens, First Tampa, Pompano Beach, and Rolling Hills received by RSMA.
- April 21, 2020: RSAM Annual Session
- June 30, 2020: CdIN proposed date for formation finalization.



Rolling Hills Community Church

October 1, 2019

Regional Synod Executive Team
Synod of Mid-America
2104 Campbell Street
Valparaiso, IN 46385

To Regional Synod Executive Team:

We, the Consistory for Rolling Hills Community Church (RHCC), believe that the time has come to re-establish our Classis in the Southeastern US because of a clear movement of God who is drawing people from many different nations to Florida, Georgia and beyond to build a new Classis of the Reformed Church in America. This new Classis will be 'Classis de la Naciones' or 'Classis of the Nations'. RHCC will be one of the anchor churches to form this Classis.

Along with the other anchor churches we are welcoming more and more churches both "adopted" and new church plants in Atlanta, GA, and all over Florida. We are thrilled to see God's mighty movement in this region and truly believe that we are now in a position to help lead our own Classis. We ask for an approximate transition time of one year in order to help ensure strong leadership with the assistance of our Illiana-Florida Classis brothers and sisters.

We have been meeting, not in secret, but in tandem with our Classis leaders to make sure that we are truly engaged in the right spirit and that we might together see a strong and multiplying movement of God's Kingdom here in the southeastern part of the US. We ask you to grant us this transfer as requested, to the new Classis of the Nations to further this fresh movement of God's Spirit.

Blessings,

Rolling Hills Community Church Consistory

Elder's

Thomas Regue
Daniel Eric Stapp
Edamir Silva
David Kemp
John [unclear]

Deacon's

James Wolfe
Susan Ambrose
Alvina R. Van Dinkle
Charles James
Bernice L. May
[Signature]

Rolling Hills Community Church

4407 W. Orange Blossom Trail PO Box 250 Zellwood, Fl. 32798

Phone 407-886-7664 --- www.wwid.org

OUR CALL IN CHRIST: To Know Him – To Love Him – To Share Him

December 9, 2019

Regional Synod Executive Team
Synod of Mid-America
2104 Campbell Street
Valparaiso, IN 46385

To Regional Synod Executive Team:

We, the Consistory for First Reformed Church of Tampa, FL believe that the time has come to re-establish a Classis in the Southeastern US because of a clear movement of God, who is drawing people from many different nations to Florida, Georgia and beyond. Having been an active member congregation of the former Florida Classis, we welcome the opportunity to be a member of this proposed new Classis to be called 'Classis de las Naciones' or 'Classis of the Nations'.

The *Book of Church Order, Part III, Article 2, Section 3*, it states that, "The regional synod shall form, combine, and disband classes, and may transfer churches from one classis to another within its bounds." Along with other anchor churches we are welcoming more and more both "adopted" and new church plants in Atlanta, GA, and other places in Florida. We are thrilled to see God's mighty hand at work in a movement in this region and truly believe that we are now in a position to lead our own Classis.

We have been meeting, not in secret, but in transparency with classis and regional leaders to be assured that we are truly engaged in the right spirit. We believe we are better together to witness a strong disciple making and church multiplying movement of God's Kingdom in the Southeastern part of the US. Therefore, we are requesting that the Synod of Mid-America form a new classis to further this fresh movement of God's Spirit. Our consistory has already met and voted to make this request of the regional synod.

Sincerely,

2019 First Reformed Church of Tampa, FL Consistory

Elders

David Abbott, PASTOR
Christine B. Vanput V Pres.
Agnesrieh
Jane Stulton
James Parker Deacon
SAH

Deacons

Samuel Harold Deacon Chair
Shirley Clerk of Consistory
Doug & Debra
Rosemarie Clamer
David & Lucretia S.

Christ Community Church

February 10, 2020

Regional Synod Executive Team
Synod of Mid-America
2104 Campbell Street
Valparaiso, IN 46385

To Regional Synod Executive Team:

We, the Consistory for Christ Community Church of Broward, believe that the time has come to reestablish our Classis in the Southeastern US because of a clear movement of God who is drawing people from many different nations to Florida, Georgia, and beyond to build a new Classis of the Reformed Church in America. This new Classis will be "Classis de la Naciones" or "Classis of the Nations". Christ Community Church of Broward will be one of the anchor churches to form this Classis.

Along with the other anchor churches we are welcoming more and more churches both "adopted" and new church plants in Atlanta, GA, and all over Florida. We are thrilled to see God's mighty movement in this region and truly believe that we are now in a position to help lead our own Classis.

We have been meeting, not in secret, but in tandem with our Classis leaders to make sure that we are truly engaged in the right spirit and that we might together see a strong and multiplying movement of God's Kingdom here in the southeastern part of the US. We ask you to grant us this transfer as requested, to the new Classis of the Nations to further this fresh movement of God's Spirit.

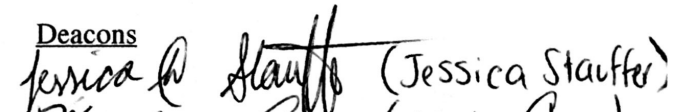
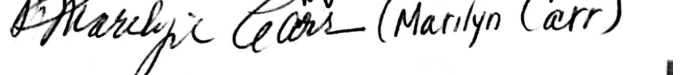
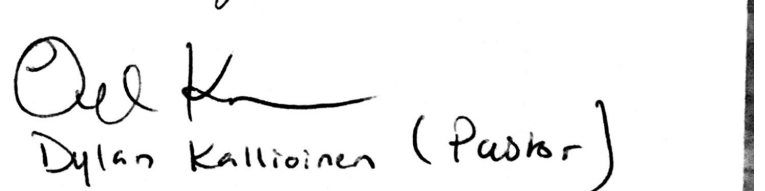
Blessings,

Christ Community Church of Broward's Consistory

Elders

 (Jeff Masters)
 (Mal Kreis)
 (Stephanie Fischer)
 (Deacon Harms)

Deacons

 (Jessica Stauffer)
 (Marilyn Carr)
 (Pastor)

Christ Community Church of Broward
901 E. McNab Road Pompano Beach, FL 33060
(954) 943-3866



Bayshore Gardens Community Church, RCA

6228 26th Street West; Bradenton, Florida 34207

Phone: 941-755-3503

Fax: 941-753-8617

Email: belltower3@verizon.net

March 10, 2010

Regional Synod Executive Team
Synod of Mid-America
2104 Campbell Street
Valparaiso, IN 46385

To Regional Synod Executive Team:

We, the Consistory for Bayshore Gardens Community Church (BGCC), believe that the time has come to re-establish our Classis in the Southeastern US because of a clear movement of God who is drawing people from many different nations to Florida, Georgia and beyond to build a new Classis of the Reformed Church in America. This new Classis will be "Classis de la Naciones" or 'Classis of the Nations'. BGCC will be one of the anchor churches to form this Classis.

Along with the other anchor churches we are welcoming more and more churches both "adopted" and new church plants in Atlanta, GA, and all over Florida. We are thrilled to see God's mighty movement in this region and truly believe that we are now in a position to help lead our own Classis. We ask for an approximate transition time of one year in order to help ensure strong leadership with the assistance of our Illiana-Florida Classis brothers and sisters.

We have been meeting, not in secret, but in tandem with our Classis leaders to make sure that we are truly engaged in the right spirit and that we might together see a strong and multiplying movement of God's Kingdom here in the southeastern part of the US. We ask you to grant us this transfer as requested, to the new Classis of the Nations to further this fresh movement of God's Spirit.

Blessings,

Bayshore Gardens Community Church

Elder's

Raymond D. ...
Alice Elder
...
...

Deacon's

Brenda ...
Charles ...
William ...

Illiana-Florida and Classis de las Naciones - A Financial Picture

For the RSMA Assembly, April 21, 2020
Regional Synod of Mid-America Executive Team

History: On December 16, 2010 the Florida Classis and the Illiana Classis were merged into Illiana-Florida Classis.

2010 Florida Classis Financial Picture: The Florida Classis had \$835,375 when it became part of Illiana Classis. It had \$696,737 in financial commitments to church plants and its classis leader and another \$87,818 in operations expenses for its classis leader and to the Illiana CMT to continue church plant operations. This left a balance of \$50,820 when it joined Illiana Classis.

Florida Cash Position		Net Cash	
RCA Fund New Hope Proceeds	\$90	Church Plants	\$665,000
RCA Fund New Church Starts	\$828	Apostolic Leader	\$30,530
RCA Fund Kingdom Growth Fund	\$600,000	Apostolic Leader Travel	\$23,125
Well of Hope check	\$65,027	Apostolic Leader Expenses	\$1,207
Apostolic Leader check	\$158,969	Illiana CMT Director	\$26,400
General Account check	\$10,461	Classis Operations Expenses	\$38,293
Total Net Cash:	\$835,375	Remaining Once All Paid:	\$50,820

2010 Illiana Classis Financial Picture: The closing balance for Illiana Classis as of December 31, 2010 was \$158,940. Total assets on hand were \$332,260.

2020 Financial Current Reality of Illiana-Florida Classis: The total assess of Illiana-Florida Classis as of December 31, 2019 were \$1,063,032.34.

As of 12/31/19	
Classis Operations First Trust	\$45,407
RCA Demand Certificate	\$517,625
RCA 2yr CD (matures 4/20)	\$250,000
RCA 2yr CD (matures 10/20)	\$250,000
Total Assets	\$1,063,032

Illiana-Florida has a projected income in 2020 (based on 2260 members) of \$233,548.40. There are 367 members in Florida Churches and 1893 members in the rest of Illiana-Florida Churches. \$162,268 of that income is General Synod and Regional Synod assessments, leaving a net income for the classis of \$71,280.40. Added to that \$71,280.40 is \$15,000 in interest income, \$30,000 in mortgage payments from the Korean Church of Orlando, and a grant from the RCA for Chad Farrand's position of \$15,000 (this money goes into the CMT budget so it will not be counted towards operation expenses). Total income for 2020 (without Farrand grant) is projected at \$116,280.40.

Illiana-Florida		\$116,280.40
Operating Expenses		
2020		
Basic Operations		\$54,250
Leadership Development Team		\$12,000
Church Health & Revitalization Team		\$22,100
Transition Team		\$5,000
Net Income in 2020		\$22,930

Illiana-Florida CMT	*spent from reserves
Expenses 2020	
Plants	\$192,000
Staff	\$109,000
Revitalization Grants	\$99,000
WCCC Expenses	\$20,000
Farrand Grant	-\$15,000
CMT Expenses	\$405,000

It has been requested that though Classis de las Naciones could be formed as early as the Regional Synod of Mid-America's Annual Session on April 21, 2020; that for ease of accounting the finances become separate on June 30, 2020 (halfway through the year). The following figures represent a projected financial picture on June 30, 2020. *However, in March 2020 Illiana-Florida Executive Team voted to waive all second quarter assessments.

Illiana-Florida		\$58,140.20
Operating Expenses		(half income)
Half Year		
Basic Operations		\$27,125
Leadership Development Team		\$6,000
Church Health & Revitalization Team		\$11,050
Transition Team		\$2,500
Net Income 06/20		\$11,465

Illiana-Florida CMT	*spent from reserves
Expenses Half Year	
Plants	\$96,000
Staff	\$54,500
Revitalization Grants	\$49,500
WCCC Expenses	\$19,100
Farrand Grant	-\$7,500
CMT Expenses 06/20	\$211,600

*David Tellinghuisen is paid \$250/mo to oversee the WCCC property. The project half year cost includes the septic system update costs and half a year for DT.

Projected Account Balances as of 06/30/2020:

Fund	As of 12/31/19	Half Year Income	Half Year Expenses	As of 06/30/20
Classis Operations First Trust	\$45,407	\$58,140	\$46,675	\$56,872
RCA Demand Certificate	\$517,625	\$7,500	\$212,500	\$312,625
RCA 2yr CD (matures 4/20)	\$250,000			\$250,000
RCA 2yr CD (matures 10/20)	\$250,000			\$250,000
Total Assets	\$1,063,032			\$869,498

*Note that out of that projected \$869,498; \$39,619 is earmarked for the Student Assistance Fund for the totality of 2020.

After 6/30/20, the Classis de las Naciones budget for the remainder of 2020 would be:

Classis de las Naciones Budget	
Plants	\$90,000
Staff	\$45,531
Operations	\$8,350
Pro. Fees/Contingcy.	\$12,500
Half Year Total:	\$156,381

Projected Budgets for 2021 for each classis:

Illiana Operating Expenses 2021	Assessment Income: \$59,705.22
Basic Operations	\$54,250
Leadership Development Team	\$12,000
CMT (estimate)	\$6,000
Church Health & Revitalization Team	\$17,300
Transition Team	\$5,000
Total Expenses:	\$94,550

Classis de las Naciones 2021	Income: \$54,924
Plants	\$180,000
Staff	\$91,000
Operations	\$16,500
Pro. Fees/Contingcy.	\$12,500
Total:	\$300,000

By the end of 2022, at their current rate of expenditures, Illiana Classis will have spent \$189,100 and taken in \$119,410 for a loss of \$69,681. *These numbers are approximates and Illiana Classis is planning on meeting to discuss future mission, vision, and financial considerations.

By the end of 2022, at their current rate of expenditures, Classis de las Naciones will have spent \$600,000 and taken in \$109,848 for a loss of \$490,152. *These numbers are approximates and will vary depending on assessment rate, adoption of churches, and other factors.

Some miscellaneous notes:

The General Synod will still bill Illiana Classis for the Florida churches through the end of 2020. It should be assumed that consideration be given to Illiana Classis for these expenses.

There are two pending legal situations in Florida that will require attorney and/or court fees. The attorney for these two situations is on retainer, but more than likely will require more money for services as these situations continue toward resolution. These will become the responsibility of Classis de las Naciones.

Classis de las Naciones will train all of its own pastors whether through the commissioning process or seminary education.

On March 4, an inquiry was made of the Illiana-Florida Classis treasurer as to the state of assessments in the classis. After review, it was discovered that \$223,244.45 is currently over 90 days outstanding in assessments in the classis. The classis has continued to pay General and Regional Synod assessments for these churches. Florida churches have a total of \$60,068.73 in outstanding assessments (this does not include superseded churches, which would add another \$40,000). Illiana churches have an outstanding assessment balance of \$123,985.57. These figures suggest that both Illiana and Classis de las Naciones need to develop a system of oversight in regards to assessments. Currently there is no system of accountability regarding payment of assessments nor any failsafe systems to inquire of churches when assessments are not paid on time. The RSMA would encourage each classis to not only establish a system of oversight but also decide what to do about this debt.

Recommendations:

Recommendation 1: That the Regional Synod of Mid-America recommend to its Annual Session on April 21, 2020 that Classis de las Naciones (aka Classis of the Nations) be formed per authority given to regional synods in the Book of Church Order Chapter 1, part 3, article 2, section 3. This new classis will begin with First Reformed Church, Tampa, FL; Rolling Hills Community Church, Zellwood, FL; Venice Community Church, Venice, FL; Christ Community Church, Pompano Beach, FL; Faith and Joy Church, Miami, FL; Bayshore Gardens Community Church, Bradenton, FL; 12 Springs Church, Sarasota, FL; Global Ministries, Orlando, FL; CN Global Church, Plantation, FL; and Centro de Vida, West Palm Beach, FL as its anchor churches. Any unorganized church plants in Florida are also considered part of this new classis.

Recommendation 1.1: That Illiana-Florida Classis complete the necessary steps to legally become Illiana Classis and update any documents to transfer those Florida churches listed in Recommendation 1 by June 30, 2020.

Recommendation 1.2: That Illiana-Florida Classis work with the Reformed Church in America to complete any necessary steps to transfer churches and ministers of those Florida churches listed in Recommendation 1 by June 30, 2020.

Recommendation 2: That Classis de las Naciones complete any and all necessary legal requirements to become a separate classis of the Regional Synod of Mid-America prior to June 30, 2020.

Recommendation 3: That the Regional Synod of Mid-America recommend that Illiana-Florida Classis finalize the division of its assets and liabilities with the newly formed Classis de las Naciones on June 30, 2020.

Recommendation 3.1: That Illiana-Florida Classis transfer \$543,000 to Classis de las Naciones. (Originally this amount was \$550,000 but since the vote of affirmation by Illiana-Florida Classis a loan of \$7000 for Jose Rea was made prior to the formation of Classis de las Naciones resulting in a total cash transfer of \$543,000 from Illiana-Florida Classis. This loan and its repayment becomes the liability of Classis de las Naciones.

Recommendation 3.2: That Illiana-Florida Classis transfer the assets and liabilities of all churches in the state of Florida to Classis de las Naciones. This includes the current legal liabilities of Comunidad de Fe, West Palm Beach, FL, Grace Church, Orlando, FL, and New Horizons of Deerfield Beach, Deerfield Beach, FL.

**CORPORATE RESOLUTION OF THE PARTICULAR SYNOD OF MID-AMERICA R.C.A.,
REFORMED CHURCH IN AMERICA, INC.**

BE IT HEREBY RESOLVED, that on April 21st, 2020, THE PARTICULAR SYNOD OF MID-AMERICA R.C.A., held its annual meeting whereby a unanimous vote of the Synod Assembly and the affirmation of ILLIANA CLASSIS, REFORMED CHURCH IN AMERICA, INC. on March 12, 2020 in accordance with the provisions outlined in the Book of Church Order Chapter 1, Part 3, Article 2, Sec. 3 formed CLASSIS DE LAS NACIONES, also known as CLASSIS OF THE NATIONS. This formation is in accordance with the Constitution and Book of Church Order of the Reformed Church in America.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the unanimous vote of the Synod Assembly created Classis de las Naciones with the following organized member churches: First Reformed Church, Tampa, FL; Bayshore Gardens Community Church, Bradenton, FL; Rolling Hills Community Church, Zellwood, FL; Christ Community Church, Pompano Beach, FL; Reformed Community Church, Venice, FL; Faith and Joy Church, Miami, FL; and Iglesia Christiana Dios Seimore Presente en Florida Inc. also known as CN Church, Sunrise, FL. Additionally, that ILLIANA CLASSIS, REFORMED CHURCH IN AMERICA, INC. release all assets and liabilities of these churches to be under the supervision of CLASSIS DE LAS NACIONES.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that by affirmation of ILLIANA CLASSIS, REFORMED CHURCH IN AMERICA, INC. and unanimous vote of the Synod Assembly, the following adopted organizing new church plants are to be organized member churches of CLASSIS DE LAS NACIONES, pending their official organizational service: 12 Springs Church, Sarasota, FL; Global Ministries, Orlando, FL; Centro de Vida, West Palm Beach, FL.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the unanimous vote of the Synod Assembly approved the following unorganized church be under the supervision of CLASSIS DE LAS NACIONES: Good News Christian Fellowship, New Port Richey, FL.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the members of the ILLIANA CLASSIS, REFORMED CHURCH IN AMERICA, INC. held a special meeting on July 12, 2017, to dissolve the consistory and otherwise terminate the formal organization of COMUNIDAD DE FE, RCA, INC. in order to take such steps as necessary to bring COMUNIDAD DE FE RCA, INC., its ministry and property under the direct administration of the classis. Additionally, the members of ILLIANA CLASSIS, REFORMED CHURCH IN AMERICA, INC., designated Wayne Van Regenmorter, David Hubbartt, Rich Hasselbach, and Eddy Aleman to exercise the functions of the consistory as necessary for the administration of the church. By unanimous vote the Synod Assembly approved that CLASSIS DE LAS NACIONES shall have supervision over the designated consistory within its bounds which also includes the ministry and property of COMUNIDAD DE FE, RCA, INC., Palm Springs, FL.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the members of the ILLIANA CLASSIS, REFORMED CHURCH IN AMERICA, INC. held a special meeting on December 8, 2016, to dissolve the consistory and otherwise terminate the formal organization of WEST COAST CHURCH OF THE CROSS, RCA, INC. in order to take such steps as necessary to bring WEST COAST CHURCH OF THE CROSS, RCA, INC. its ministry and property under the direct administration of the classis. Additionally, the members of ILLIANA CLASSIS, REFORMED CHURCH IN AMERICA, INC., designated Wayne Van Regenmorter, David Hubbartt, and David Tellinghuisen to exercise the functions of the consistory as necessary for the administration of the church. By unanimous

vote the Synod Assembly approved that CLASSIS DE LAS NACIONES shall have supervision over the designated consistory within its bounds which also includes the ministry and property of WEST COAST CHURCH OF THE CROSS, RCA, INC., Sarasota, FL.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the Settlement Agreement made on November 30, 2015, by and among New Horizons of Deerfield Beach, Inc., and Cross Community Church of South Florida, Inc., and ILLIANA CLASSIS, REFORMED CHURCH IN AMERICA, INC., be executed under the supervision and jurisdiction of CLASSIS DE LAS NACIONES.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the PROMISSORY NOTE and MORTGAGE AND SECURITY AGREEMENT made on the 15th day of August 2019, by and between the Korean Grace Church in Orlando Inc, a Florida not for profit corporation in Orlando, FL., and the CLASSIS OF FLORIDA, REFORMED CHURCH IN AMERICA, INC., a Florida not for profit corporation, be executed under the supervision and jurisdiction of CLASSIS DE LAS NACIONES.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that members of the ILLIANA CLASSIS, REFORMED CHURCH IN AMERICA, INC voted to transfer cash assets of \$550,000 to CLASSIS DE LAS NACIONES on or before June 30, 2020. This \$550,000 includes a loan of \$7000 for Jose Rea that was made prior to the formation of CLASSIS DE LAS NACIONES resulting in a total cash transfer of \$543,000 from ILLIANA CLASSIS, REFORMED CHURCH IN AMERICA, INC. to CLASSIS DE LAS NACIONES. This loan and its repayment becomes the liability of CLASSIS DE LAS NACIONES.

CERTIFICATE

The undersigned hereby certifies that they are officers of THE PARTICULAR SYNOD OF MID-AMERICA R.C.A., a corporation organized and existing under the laws of the State of Illinois, and that the foregoing is a true and correct copy of a resolution duly adopted at a meeting of the members of the Synod Assembly of THE PARTICULAR SYNOD OF MID-AMERICA R.C.A., by unanimous vote of said members held on the 21st day of April at which meeting a quorum was at all times present and acting; that the passage of said resolution was in all respects legal and in compliance with the Constitution of this corporation; and that said resolution is in full force and effect.

IN TESTIMONY WHEREOF, I have set my hand to this corporation this 21st day of April, 2020.

(Corporate Seal)

Jason De Vries – President

Chad Schuitema – Stated Clerk, Treasurer

REGIONAL SYNOD OF MID-AMERICA
BYLAWS

Preamble

The Regional Synod of Mid-America, a constituent part of the Reformed Church in America, will be governed by these Bylaws and the Book of Church Order (BCO) of the Reformed Church in America.

Responsibilities of the Regional Synod per the BCO:

1. The regional synod shall exercise a general superintendence over the interests and concerns of the classes within its bounds.
2. The regional synod shall exercise an appellate supervisory power over the acts, proceedings, and decisions of its several classes.
3. The regional synod shall form, combine, and disband classes, and may transfer churches from one classis to another within its bounds.
4. The regional synod shall create whatever organization it desires for the furtherance of the work of the gospel within its bounds, provided such organization does not infringe upon the prerogatives of the several classes or churches.

The Regional Synod is a permanent continuing body which functions between Stated Session through committees. (BOOK OF CHURCH ORDER, Chap. 1, Part III, Art. 1, Sec. 3 and Chap. 1, Part III, Art. 2)

ARTICLE I - MEMBERSHIP

Sec. A - The Regional Synod will consist of the appointed minister and elder delegates, known as the Synod Assembly, from each of the classes within the bounds determined for it by the General Synod.

Sec. B – The delegates of the Synod Assembly:

1. They will be ministers and elders appointed by the classes of the Synod after considering those persons recommended by the Synod.
2. The number of ministers and elders from each classis will be set by the synod's Executive Team in proportion to the size of the classis. Each classis will have at least one minister and one elder delegate. Effort will be made to have a balance of minister and elder delegates.
3. The term of each delegate will be for three years without a limit on the number of terms. The classis may make delegate changes with appropriate notice to the synod.
4. Terms for oncoming delegates begin at the start of their first annual session and terms conclude for the delegates whose term is ending at the conclusion of that same annual session.
5. If a delegate is unable to attend a Synod Assembly meeting, the synod may recommend an alternate delegate and request that the classis appoint that person to take the place of the regular delegate for that particular meeting. The classis may appoint the recommended person or another person of the same office as the regular delegate to be its alternate delegate for that particular meeting.
6. The serving president, vice president, and at-large members of the Executive Team will be delegates to the Synod Assembly during their terms of office.

Sec. C - The stated clerk, the treasurer, and the synod executive will serve as ex-officio members of Regional Synod without vote and attend Synod Assembly meetings. The chairperson of the Overtures and Judicial Business (OJB) Committee, the regional synod representative to the General Synod Council, and the Executive Director of Manitoqua Ministries will be ex officio members of the regional synod without vote.

Sec D – Manitoqua Ministries is a partner in ministry with the Synod of Mid-America, both working together in mission to further the kingdom of God.

ARTICLE II - MEETINGS

Sec. A - Annual Sessions of Regional Synod will:

1. Convene annually in the month of March or April at the time and place determined by the Executive Team.
2. Have specific agendas, formats, and timetables that are determined by the Executive Team.
3. Include reports from the Executive Team and from other synod teams or committees if appropriate. The synod has ultimate authority over the actions of its teams and committees.
4. Spend significant time with the following duties of the Synod Assembly:
 - a. 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.
 - b. Be responsible for long-range plans and goals of the Regional Synod.
5. Begin with devotions including prayer and end with prayer.

Sec. B - Special Sessions of Regional Synod will:

Be called in accordance with the Book of Church Order, Chapter 1, Part III, Art. 4, Sec. 2.
Be held at the time and place determined by the Executive Team.

Sec. C - Quorums will at all sessions consist of a majority of the minister delegates and majority of the elder delegates. (BCO, 1, III, 4. 3.)

Sec. D - All sessions will be conducted in accordance with the Book of Church Order, the Bylaws of Regional Synod and also the Robert's Rules of Order. If there are any conflicts the Book of Church Order takes precedence over the Bylaws of the Regional Synod and Robert's Rules of Order; and the Bylaws of the Regional Synod takes precedence over Robert's Rules of Order.

Sec. E – Agenda

The business of Regional Synod will include the following elements when applicable:

1. Devotional service
2. Roll call and seating of guests
3. Receive a report of the approval of minutes of last session
4. State of Religion Report
5. Report of Executive Team and consideration of its actions
6. Staff reports
7. Election of officers
8. Special committee reports and consideration of their actions
9. Overtures and Judicial Business report
10. Other business
11. Roll call and reading of the journal
12. Seating of the new officers
13. Adjournment
14. Closing prayer

Sec. F - Reports

All items for consideration by the Regional Synod must be in the office of the Stated Clerk at least 3 weeks prior to the annual session each year.

Written reports with recommendations from the Executive Team, synod staff, and the synod's committees including special committees will be sent by the Stated Clerk to each delegate ten days prior to the annual meeting. The Overtures and Judicial Business Committee may delay its report until the annual meeting, if necessary. All reports may be communicated electronically.

Sec. G – Overtures

The Regional Synod may receive overtures from a classis. It shall not receive overtures which deal with matters under adjudication or which make either direct or implied charges against persons. Overtures shall be submitted to the Regional Synod office at least three weeks prior to the published date of the annual session to be considered at that session.

Sec. H – Methods to Hold Sessions

Synod Assembly sessions will usually be held in person. Upon the decision of the Executive Team, a Synod Assembly session may meet through the use of a conference telephone or interactive technology, including but not limited to electronic transmission, Internet usage, or remote communication, by means of which all persons participating in the meeting can communicate with each other. Participation in such meeting shall constitute attendance and presence in person at the meeting of the person or persons so participating.

ARTICLE III - OFFICERS AND PERSONNEL OF REGIONAL SYNOD

Sec. A - Officers of Regional Synod will be president, vice president, ~~three~~ four at-large members, stated clerk, and treasurer.

Sec. B – Election

An election for president and/or vice president will be held whenever there will be a vacancy in that office at the time of the close of a stated session.

The president will be elected as follows:

The current vice-president shall be the sole nominee on the first electing ballot. If the vote is affirmative, the current vice-president shall be declared elected.

If the vote is not affirmative, the election for president shall follow the process prescribed for election of vice-president, electing the president from among the at-large members of the Executive Team.

The vice-president will be elected by the Synod Assembly from among the at-large members of the Executive Team.

The stated clerk will be elected by the Executive Team, meeting in executive session without the stated clerk or treasurer, at its first meeting following the Synod's annual session. Election will occur in odd numbered years, except in case of vacancy where election will occur as soon as possible.

The treasurer will be elected by the Executive Team, meeting in executive session without the treasurer or stated clerk, at its first meeting following the Synod's annual session. Election will occur in odd numbered years, except in case of vacancy where election will occur as soon as possible.

In case of mid-year vacancy in the office of president, the vice president shall automatically assume the position of president and be eligible for reelection at the next Synod Assembly session to a full term.

In case of mid-year vacancy in the office of vice-president, the Executive Team shall endeavor to make an ad interim appointment to fill the office from the delegates of the Synod Assembly.

Sec. C - Terms of Office

1. The president will serve for two years and will assume that office at the close of the Synod Assembly session at which he or she was elected and serve to the close of the second annual Synod Assembly session after he or she was elected.
2. The vice president will serve for two years or until elected to the office of president, whichever occurs first, and will assume that office at the close of the Synod Assembly session at which he or she was elected and serve to the close of the second annual Synod Assembly session after he or she was elected.
3. The at-large members will serve a 1 year term and will be eligible for reappointment.
4. The stated clerk will serve a two year term and will be eligible for reelection.
5. The treasurer will serve a two year term and will be eligible for reelection.

Sec. D - Duties

The president will:

Begin each session at the appointed time and place with prayer.

Clearly state and explain, if necessary, the business to be transacted.

Enforce the Bylaws of Regional Synod.

Maintain the decorum and dignity becoming a judicatory of the church of Christ.

Present at the annual Synod Assembly session the State of Religion Report.
 Appoint subsequent to consultation with the stated clerk, temporary clerks and tellers for each annual Synod Assembly session.
 Be a member of and preside at all meetings of the Executive Team.
 Personally meet not less than twice per year with the synod executive and other staff as appropriate to inquire about his or her work in the terms of joys, frustrations, needs, and progress toward the achievement of goals. These meetings will take place seasonally, and are in addition to the official annual review of his or her work by the Personnel Committee of Regional Synod.
 Meet with other synod staff as necessary or when requested.
 Be a member of the personnel committee who will review the work and progress of Regional Synod staff.
 Have a desire to fulfill this office to the best of his/her ability and will provide leadership to the Regional Synod.

The vice president will:

Be a member of the Executive Team.
 Assume the duties of the presiding officer at the request of, or in the absence of, the president.
 Assume the responsibilities of the president upon the leaving of the incumbent president.
 Be a member of the Personnel Committee and will meet with the synod executive and other synod staff as appropriate or when requested.
 Have a desire to fulfill this office to the best of his/her ability and will provide leadership to the Regional Synod.

The at-large members will:

Be a member of the Executive Team.
 Elect from among them one member to be a member of the Personnel Committee.
 Meet with the synod executive and other synod staff as appropriate or when requested.

The stated clerk will:

Be a member of the Executive Team.
 Notify each classis of place and date of the meeting for the Synod Assembly session.
 Notify all Synod Assembly delegates, 21 days prior to Regional Synod meeting, of the time, place and purpose of each Stated Session and Special Session.
 Maintain an accurate record of all acts and proceedings of Synod.
 In the order of the prescribed Order of Business.
 Signed by the officers of Regional Synod.
 Preserve, together with original papers.
 All Minutes of Regional Synod.
 All Actions of the Executive Team.
 Prepare and distribute copies of the Minutes of Regional Synod as directed by the Executive Team.
 Forward one copy of the Minutes of Regional Synod to:
 The General Secretary of the General Synod.
 Other persons or organizations when requested.
 Notify all members of the Executive Team, at least ten days prior to the meeting, of the time, place and purpose of the meeting.
 Forward to the respective committees of Regional Synod all pertinent documents and such materials which may pertain to their respective duties.
 Have available at all sessions on the president's table ample copies of the Bylaws and one copy of the Roberts Rules of Order.

The treasurer, either personally or through a designated person, will:

Be a member of the Executive Team.
 Receive and disburse all moneys from the several funds of Regional Synod.
 Pay salaries and all proper claims for expenses incurred in the performance of Regional Synod business.

Be authorized, in consultation with the Executive Team, to manage and invest Synodical funds.

Arrange for accurate record keeping of all accounts and their transactions.

Prepare a monthly financial report and distribute this monthly report to the Executive Team.

Prepare an annual report of all accounts of Regional Synod and present this report to the annual Synod Assembly session.

Sec. E - Additional Personnel (non-officers of Regional Synod)

Temporary clerks will:

- a. Serve under the direction of the officers of Regional Synod.
- b. Maintain an accurate journal of all Regional Synod acts and proceedings.

2. Tellers, will:

Serve the officers and delegates of Regional Synod in the distribution of materials.
Be responsible for all tabulation of votes and ballots.

Sec. F - Synod Staff

The Executive Team will determine the duties of, retain, and supervise a synod executive.

Executive Team business involving the synod executive will be done in executive session without the presence of any synod staff who may also be members of the Executive Team.

The synod executive may carry a title that is more descriptive of his/her function.

The Executive Team has sole authority to add or reduce staff. The Executive Team shall do the following for each staff person who is added:

- a. create or approve a position description;
- b. assign a person or team responsible for his or her hiring and firing;
- c. assign a person or team responsible for his or her supervision.

3. The synod executive and other synod staff will have authority in their respective areas of responsibilities as defined by their position descriptions. In undefined areas the synod executive will have responsibility and authority with the final authority resting in the Executive Team.

4. The Executive Director(s) of Manitoqua Ministries will be selected by the Manitoqua Ministries Board. One voting member of the search committee for an Executive Director will be appointed by the Regional Synod Executive Team.

ARTICLE IV - EXECUTIVE TEAM

Sec. A - Membership will consist of:

The president, vice president, stated clerk, treasurer, ~~three~~ four at-large members, and synod executive.

The ~~four~~ five at-large members (one of which will be chosen as vice-president) of the Executive Team will be appointed by the Synod Assembly at its annual session from among its regular delegates and may be either elders or ministers from classes not already represented on the Executive Team.

The chairperson of the Overtures and Judicial Business Committee, the regional synod representative to the General Synod Council, and the Executive Director of Manitoqua Ministries will not be members but periodically will be invited to attend and participate in specific meetings of the Executive Team as determined by the team.

Sec. B - Terms of office

1. Terms of office will be determined by the term of the respective office or position.

Sec. C - Meetings

Will be held at least monthly.

The method, time, and place of the meetings will be determined by the president, or in the absence of the president, the vice president. Provided there is full communication and no objection by any member of the Executive Team, meetings may be adjourned without meeting by the president, or in the absence of the president, the vice president.

Upon the decision of the president, or in the absence of the president, the vice president, meetings may be held utilizing conference telephone or interactive technology, including but not limited to electronic transmission, Internet usage, or remote communication, by means of which all persons participating in the meeting can communicate with each other.

Participation in such meeting shall constitute attendance and presence in person at the meeting of the person or persons so participating.

Discussion and decision on specific issues may be held by utilizing technology, including but not limited to email, provided that no objection is made by any member of the Executive Team.

Upon such objection, regular methods of meeting shall be employed.

Any two or more members may request a special meeting upon written request to the president allowing five days for the call of any special meeting.

A quorum is defined as at least four members.

Sec. D - Duties

The Executive Team will:

Be responsible to carry out the will of the Synod Assembly.

Act for Regional Synod between sessions, and on all matters referred to it by Regional Synod.

Report annually to Regional Synod Assembly concerning its actions and deliberations.

Make recommendations to Regional Synod Assembly on all matters that are not provided for elsewhere.

Act as trustee of synod funds, with authority to manage all synod finances including acceptance, investment, transfer, mortgaging, and disbursement of money, real estate, personal property, both tangible and intangible, and devises and bequests. It may borrow money, make loans, and hold title to real estate.

Make interim appointments for vacancies in synod positions.

Serve as program committee for each session of Regional Synod Assembly as appropriate.

Approve the president's appointments for special committees.

Appoint a temporary chairperson of Regional Synod Assembly meeting in case of vacancies in offices of Regional Synod.

Retain adequate staff, including contract positions, to carry out the mission and vision of the Synod and the will of the Synod Assembly.

Establish and maintain a relationship with Manitoqua Ministries.

Receive and review annually recommendations from the personnel committee regarding the synod staff.

Appoint annually the Regional Synod delegate to General Synod. The delegate will be from the membership of the Synod Assembly. The team should maintain a balance between appointing ministers and elders.

Approve and appoint all nominees for committee member replacements, with an effort to receive input from the classes and to maintain a balance of classes representatives on all permanent committees of Regional Synod.

Administer budgeted funds for congregational aid.

Make official Regional Synod nominations to General Synod commissions and agencies as necessary.

Receive and study the treasurer's monthly report.

Review and approve personally or through its representative all travel and expense vouchers relating to Regional Synod and her committees.

Review and approve the Ministers Salary Committee report and make recommendations of it to the classes of the Regional Synod.

Review personally or through its representative the minutes of classes within Regional Synod bounds and take action as might be necessary.

Review all requests for leaves of absence from Regional Synod Assembly meetings and take action as might be necessary.

Be responsible for the Synod's annual budgets. It will present the full annual budget to the Regional Synod.

Arrange for an annual review of the synod's prior year financial records to be completed by May 1. The results of the review will be reported to the Executive Team and made available upon request.–

Will act as a Nominating Committee for the purpose of presenting nominees to the synod for the office of vice-president and for president when necessary.
 Will have the authority to approve the minutes of the annual and special sessions of the Synod of Mid-America.

Sec. E – Personnel Committee

1. Members are the president, vice president, and one at-large member.
2. The purpose of the Personnel Committee of the Executive Team is to:
 - a. Facilitate communication between the synod staff and the Executive Team.
 - b. Review synod staff unless other provision or agreement is made.
 - c. Receive personnel reports on contract staff and support staff from the appropriate staff person and make appropriate recommendations.
 - d. Review overall synod direction as it relates to staff, making appropriate recommendations.
3. The Personnel Committee will:
 - a. Meet individually and/or as a committee with the synod staff.
 - b. Give an annual review of the work of the synod staff to the Executive Team at its last regular meeting of the calendar year.
 - c. Make recommendations to the Executive Team concerning the synod staff's compensation, benefits, job description, performance, goals and direction of synod, etc.
 - d. Consult with the appropriate staff person about contract staff and support staff concerning their performance, compensation, job description, etc.
 - e. Meet with contract and/or support staff at the discretion of the Personnel Committee or at the request of the contract/support staff person or other staff as appropriate and annually give recommendations to the Executive Team when appropriate.

ARTICLE V - PERMANENT COMMITTEES

Sec. A – Permanent Regular Committees of Regional Synod will be:

1. Overtures and Judicial Business
2. Minister's Salary

Sec. B - Membership

1. The Overtures and Judicial Business Committee will consist of three ministers and two elders. Skills, especially in law, and interest will be considered.
2. The Minister's Salary Committee will consist of two laypersons from each classis.
3. Members will be appointed by the Executive Team

Sec. C - Terms of Office

Terms of office will be three years.

Overtures and Judicial Business committee members are eligible for reappointment without limit of terms. Minister's Salary Committee members are eligible for reappointment to a second three-year term.

Initially terms will be staggered by lot.

Terms will begin when the member is appointed and will end after the last day of the Synod Assembly session of the Regional Synod in the last year of the member's term.

Sec. E - Specific Duties-

The Overtures and Judicial Business Committee will:

Have a chairperson as well as other officers if necessary that are appointed by the Executive Team.

Be present at each annual Regional Synod Stated Session as determined by the committee or if requested by the Executive Team.

Receive, consider and make recommendations on all referrals, appeals, complaints and overtures as referred by the stated clerk.

May initiate overtures for Regional Synod's consideration.

Upon recommendation of the Executive Team, formulate overtures for Regional Synod's consideration.

Consider all proposed amendments in the Regional Synod's Bylaws and make recommendations to Regional Synod.

2. The Minister Salary Committee will:
 - a. Study the salaries and perquisites of the ministers serving in Regional Synod.
 - b. Report annually by way of the Executive Team such recommendations it considers necessary.
 - c. Assist each classis in its responsibility for implementing Regional Synod's action on the recommendations in accordance with the BOOK OF CHURCH ORDER, Chapter 1, Part II, Art. 7, Sec. 1g.

ARTICLE VI - AMENDMENTS AND SUSPENSIONS

Sec. A - These Bylaws may be amended as follows:

1. When the proposed amendment originates with and is recommended by the Executive Team,
 - a. The proposed amendment must be included in the notice of meeting to all delegates,
 - b. The Overtures and Judicial Business Committee will give its recommendation to the synod, and
 - c. Adoption must be ratified by a two-thirds vote of the Synod Assembly.
2. When the proposed amendment originates from the floor of an annual Stated Session, The proposed amendment must first be approved in principle by a majority vote of Regional Synod and then be referred to the Executive Team for the specific incorporation into the Bylaws.
The Overtures and Judicial Business Committee will give its recommendation to the synod, and
At the next annual Stated Session the proposed amendment is presented for adoption by a two-thirds vote of the Synod Assembly.

Sec. B – These Bylaws may be suspended in whole or in part, for a whole session, part of a session or for another period of time not to exceed until the next annual session, by two-thirds vote of the synod assembly.

Report to the Regional Synod of Mid-America

Visionary Leader

Wayne Van Regenmorter

April 2020

In a few short months a whole new vocabulary has crept into our world, our country and into the life of the churches which are served so faithfully by our pastors. These new words and phrases include: coronavirus COVID-19, flattening the curve, stay-at-home orders, state, county and city curfews, panic buying of toilet paper, social distancing, exponential spread, shutting down businesses, sacrificing our daily routines, vulnerable people, new cases daily, the high cost of loss of lives, this will come to an end, and the church is a beacon of hope. This new genre has come at breakneck speed, disrupting cities and communities, healthcare systems and even world economies. Many people have experienced the elevation of fear and anxiety and we function daily with an increase in suicide rates, domestic violence and abuse, depression, and much more. For Christians, pastors and church leaders, the COVID-19 crises has brought us to our knees like never before as we listen for a word from God and cling to the promises in the Bible.

In a recent church survey of over 1,500 pastors and church leaders called “Churches Pivoting, Anxious, and Getting on Mission”, many churches and pastors are taking things day-by-day or one week at a time. Although not living in panic, many pastors are struggling with navigating new technological realities of moving online. Pastors and church leaders are discovering new ways to care for their congregations and reach out to their communities and even the world in the midst of lockdown and social distancing orders. To say that this is a challenging time for many churches is an understatement as pastors are carving out new routines for worship services, small groups, resources, and financial challenges.

On April 4, the soon to be formed Classis de las Naciones hosted a webinar on ideas of how to best use social media platforms and live streaming technology not only to communicate with their own church members but to reach more of the church’s community. Pastor Sebastian Giminez of Montreal Church in Miami, FL., has consistently seen over 50,000 weekly online hits for their Sunday worship service as people are watching or checking out worship in the church. Churches and pastors are learning to adapt to new technologies that were not on their radar a month ago. They are discovering that the format used for in person gatherings may not make connections well in online formats, so pastors are adapting to the way and time structure of how content is delivered. Pastors are expressing confidence that this new worship format might be a regular part of the foreseeable future of the church, especially in reaching a younger generation.

Many pastors are looking for practical help on how to do ministry in the midst of quarantine restrictions. They are asking, “What kinds of resources do you need to lead our church, staff, or organization in these challenging times? How can we be on mission as traditional avenues of face-to-face outreach and serving are no longer viable?” One of the most common requests is for practical tips on how to create engaging online conversations for small groups. Discerning how to best equip leaders to host engaging Bible studies and prayer time from their home is also challenging.

Finally, while pastors are confident about finances, the long-term rippling effects on church giving has not yet been realized. Churches are educating their members on online giving as they are recognizing that many members have never given online. The other unknown is the economic reality of people who have lost their jobs in the midst of an economic downturn.

Most churches and pastors remain optimistic in navigating the transitions through the COVID-19 crises. How pastors and church leaders adapt to how they care and minister to their people and community will shape the coming years for most churches and the RCA. Now is the time to think creatively, risk trying new innovations, and to work in partnership and collaboration with one another. Now is the time to remain focused on the mission that Jesus called us – to show and share the love of Christ in these challenging days and beyond to a new day coming.

Remember the promise of Scripture: *“The Lord himself goes before you and will be with you; he will never leave you nor forsake you. Do not be afraid; do not be discouraged.”* Deuteronomy 31:8 (NIV)

We are living these days where almost everything is in a virtual world. We have had more conversations by Zoom, Skype, conference calls, Facebook, Instagram or Tweets than we ever thought possible. We have had more worship services, classis meetings, consistory meetings, special services, small groups, face-to-face meetings cancelled than we ever imagined. But remember this: God’s unconditional love is never cancelled; God’s amazing grace is never cancelled; God’s enduring mercy is never cancelled; God’s forgiveness is never cancelled; God’s unending peace is never cancelled; God’s faithfulness is never cancelled; God’s abundance is never cancelled; God’s resurrection power is never cancelled; God’s glory in the church and in Christ Jesus is never cancelled. God’s mission in this world is never cancelled. So how has God been working in the Synod of Mid-America?

✓ **Churches Learning Change**

What was formally called the Ridder Church Renewal (RCR) process has morphed into more regionally contextual expressions and is now called Churches Learning Change (CLC). This process has emerged from over a decade of journeying together around personal and congregational transformation. Beginning in January 2020, besides some previous churches involved in Wisconsin Classis and Illinois Classis, six new churches in the region have engaged in the CLC process. A new format has been developed involving 12 monthly online community sessions for pastoral staff leaders – each with 20-30 minutes of content and 20-30 minutes of group coaching. Chad Schuitema and other classis leaders provide monthly leader contact as assigned personal catalyst/coaches to participating pastoral leaders. The pastoral staff of a church will share the content of CLC with their church leadership team (usually a Consistory), which will then look for opportunities to involve the congregation. The content from each online session is recorded and made available for use by participating congregations. Among the content covered are: Mastery and Personal Responsibility, Group Coaching Skills, A Path to Missional Living, Adaptive and Operational Leadership, A Mental Model of Discipleship, Understanding Living Systems, Congregation as System, Curiosity as a Leadership Value, The Honest Truth about Current Reality, Leading with Courage and Love, Discerning God’s Emerging Future, and Putting It All Together/Moving Forward. This new process was also designed to eliminate the obstacles of transportation, hotels and other costs that would prohibit churches from participating.

✓ **Discipleship**

Jesus’ clear command is to make disciples, which is the heartbeat of the church in helping people grow and deepen their faith, enabling them to live more and more like Jesus in everyday life. Church renewal happens when God’s people spend time reading and reflecting on God’s Word, praying and listening to the Holy Spirit, and then engaging their community as disciples of Jesus. So how are these growing disciples making an impact on the communities where they live and serve?

Churches in the Classis of Illinois are involved in the following discipleship ministries and service projects:

1) one church has a group of people entering into a discipleship program called the Journey; 2) another church has developed small groups that foster disciples by studying God's Word and sharing with each other where God is at work in their lives and serving their neighbors; 3) sponsoring a young person from their youth ministry who is now serving for 16 months as a missionary in Slovenia. 4) making rugs out of plastic bags and dialysis pillows for the homeless; 5) engaged in a backpack feeding program for children to provide food over the weekends; 6) providing funds and volunteers to help each week at a Food Pantry; 7) developing a small group ministry through their Discipleship staff person to grow into a future church plant campus in the area about 15 miles away from the current church; 8) working through a discipleship process with the Coordinator for Discipleship in the RCA; 9) supporting First responders with prayers and funds for their work; 10) feeding over 1,000 children each day during the summer with sack lunches; 11) hosting English as a Second Language program in their church facility; and 12) offering a summer a book study on Keep Christianity Weird by Michael Frost has expanded the discipleship opportunities to the congregation. Those who participated were pushed in their understanding of what it means to follow Jesus.

A cluster of churches in Illinois Classis have completed a discipleship learning community. These events have been led by Rod Tucker, Eliza Cortes Bast, and others, a team of RCA practitioners in the field of discipleship who are passionate about changing lives and communities for greater kingdom impact. They have offered teaching, resourcing, and coaching for pastors and church leaders to initiate discipleship goals and pathways that are unique to their own environment and church settings to grow disciples who make disciples for deeper transformation impact.

Ray Tilstra, the Illinois Classis Leader has played a significant role in giving a focus to discipleship and church renewal and revitalization in the Illinois Classis. He has worked with church leaders in the daunting task of encouraging them to continue to look outward in making disciples and utilize resources and leadership training to bring renewal to churches and their communities

Some churches in Wisconsin Classis are involved in a discipleship process with Jeff Allen to identify "what is", to consider "what could be," and then to develop objectives, strategies, and tactics to move forward into "what will be" in their particular church context. One of the resources being used is: "Being a Small Church on a BIG Mission". Coaching relationships are also a part of this learning community.

✓ **Revitalization and Church Health**

Chad Schuitema continues to lead the Illiana-Florida Classis Church Health and Revitalization Team. In June 2019, two learning communities with eight pastors wrapped up their learning experience with a focus on small church leadership. Communities of learning are undoubtedly the most effective pathway for igniting adaptive change in a church family system.

Currently I am a part of a learning community consisting of members of the Illinois Classis Revitalization and Multiplication Team. We are reading and discussing the book, Transforming Church in Rural America. This book is challenging the assumptions that pastors and church leaders tend to make regarding small, rural churches. Shannon O'Dell wonders: what would happen if every man or woman of God in a rural community would light up, ignite, and catch a fire from God? What would happen if there was a gasping moment when we realized that God was up to something instead of waddling in a sea of resignation and cynicism in serving a rural church?

The classis liaison ministry is functioning well in the Illiana-Florida Classis as pastors are visited quarterly to offer care, prayer support, and encouragement. Consistories are visited once a year. This is a proactive approach which is bearing fruit in connecting churches to the classis, working in crises situations, providing care, sharing needs and concerns, and improving relationships. A prayer rotation for classis churches and pastors is also used. I am currently serving as a classis liaison to four churches in Florida.

The Chicago Classis Congregational Care Team leader writes: *“Life requires care. Neglect (the lack of care) endangers the present and threatens the future. This is true of congregations as well. The ministries within Chicago Classis require consistent, individualized, and compassionate care.”* Chicago Classis currently has five unique congregations and are working to plant a sixth one. To connect with each other and to promote church health the Congregational Care Team offers the following resources:

- Free Congregational Assessment through NL Moore and Associates
- One free pulpit supply per year
- Network – we might not have an answer to your situation or question, but we might know someone who does. Don’t hesitate to ask.
- Crises Management Support – if you suddenly find yourself in a crises and need a safe, confidential leader to strategize next steps with contact...
- One hour Leadership Seminars for your Consistory or staff on:
 - ✓ Defining current reality – Tool: SWOT
 - ✓ Understanding our problems – Tool: Adaptive vs Technical Leadership
 - ✓ Simple transformational discipleship – Tool: Triangle
 - ✓ Forgiveness – Tools: Desmond Tutu’s “The Book of Forgiving”
 - ✓ Leading beyond conflict – Tool: Anxiety Management
 - ✓ What’s next? – Tool: God’s Preferred Future Tool
- Transitions – Navigating leadership transitions or adjusting your ministry to reach your community

The Chicago Classis has developed a bi-monthly check-in opportunity for pastors. These events include a “Pastor’s and Spouses (Guests) Night Out” intended to be a time of fellowship and encouragement for pastors. The purpose is to offer events of self-care for the pastor and their family with the idea that only a healthy pastor can provide the tools and resources needed for a healthy church.

In the President’s Report to the Illiana-Florida Classis, Dale Buettner expresses the need for pastoring pastors in order sustain healthy pastors and healthy churches in the classis. He writes: *“I spend a fair amount of time with pastors, both locally and beyond, in the RCA as well as a myriad of other denominations. I listen to them, I pray with them, I hang out and drink coffee with them, I try my best to get to know them in their context. I am convinced now more than ever that Pastors need Pastoring. Not simply from books or seminars and sermons and such, but direct relational, compassionate Pastoral care. I really do believe strategy is important. I strongly believe coaching is important. I believe church consultants are invaluable resources for ministry. And I wholeheartedly believe the RCA offers some of the best resources available for these things. I feel that we are lacking, however, in the area of directly caring for our Pastors. I won’t give you the usual dreaded statistics. We’ve all heard them. Suffice it to say, ministry is hard. Pastors often suffer silently, and their families pay a high price for it. Some of you have experienced this personally in recent days due to church conflicts and other stresses. It is for these reasons that I believe we need a Classis staff position along the lines of a Pastor to the Pastors, and I hope this is something that can happen by January 2021.”*

Pastor Dale goes on to write: *“I wish to affirm the following motion from the Consistories of Faith, Kankakee, IL, Wichert, St Anne, IL, Danforth Reformed Church, Danforth, IL, and Ross Community Reformed Church, Gary, IN: ‘To advise the Illiana-Florida Executive Team to host an open discussion on the floor of the Spring Session of Illiana-Florida Classis concerning the future of the classis once the Classis of the Nations is formed.*

Central to this discussion should be the formation of an ad hoc team to review the present and potential vision, structuring, and staffing (including Team Leaders) of Illiana Classis in order to bring a recommendation to the Fall 2020 Illiana Classis meeting, with an implementation goal of no later than January 2021.”

Pastoring pastors is an urgent cry within the Illiana-Florida Classis as a pathway to help pastors and congregations to move faster in bringing about church renewal and healthy pastors and churches.

✓ **Revitalization and Outreach Grants**

The Revitalization/Multiplication Team of the Classis of Illinois offers churches the opportunity to apply for grant money to help fund activities that foster revitalization and church renewal. Such a grant was offered to Christ’s Church in St Peters, MO to hire a consultant to lead them through a process of looking at their past history which was affecting their vision for the future. Changing a culture of a church takes time. Building a vision framework for implementing a strategic plan for staffing, finances, volunteers, outreach, church planting, and more takes significant buy-in for igniting adaptive change.

In 2019, the Illiana-Florida Church Health & Revitalization Team gave out \$102,300 in revitalization grants to classis churches. These grants were designed for adding new church staff, creating a digital presence across cultures, community meals, outreach events, creating a more welcoming space for visitor, a community sports ministry, and much more. Every church in the classis is encouraged to dream with God, and to pray for creative ideas to either begin anew or enhance existing ministries that not only reach out to their community, but also bear fruit within the life of their church’s ministry.

The Wisconsin Classis through their Revitalization/Multiplication Commission has a designated Outreach Grant Fund of \$50,000 to be available for churches to use for outreach in their community. This Commission also has a Revitalization Grant which churches can apply for to be used for revitalization work such as leadership training, beginning new ministries, vision and a mission discernment process, or other efforts to bring new energy and focus to a ministry. Outreach Grants are designed to help congregations connect, serve, and ultimately share the gospel with unbelievers. Churches can apply for up to \$5,000.

Here are some of the unique and creative ways that churches have utilized these funds for outreach ministry:

- Trinity Community Church in Brown Deer, WI, hosted a Bible-based sports camp instead of the traditional VBS over the summer. At this daily camp, not only did students learn teamwork and sport-specific skills, but they also learned Bible lessons, participated in small groups, and worshipped together. The church was blessed with a connection with the public school district as it offered to host this week-long event. In addition, the church is located in a residential neighborhood where there are streams of kids riding their bikes, playing sports on the church lawn, and sitting on church benches. A basketball hoop was installed in the church parking lot as another opportunity for connection and conversation with neighborhood kids.
- Bethel Reformed Church in Brandon, WI, hosts a Wednesday Night Praise & Worship Service to reach those in their community such as unchurched parents of their youth group attendees,

community members looking for an alternative worship service or for church members who couldn't attend Sunday morning services. Foster care families were invited to participate in this ministry opportunity.

- Emmanuel Reformed Church in Waupun, WI, hosted an evening of music and worship with the band Mass Anthem, from Nashville, Tennessee. They were able to connect with their community and build relationships through food, music, block parties, and future events.
- Hope Reformed Church in Sheboygan, WI, also received a grant to begin a new ministry called Hope Café. This is an "open house" for homeless and poor residents of the downtown Sheboygan area. The purpose is to offer coffee and a warm place in the winter and cool in the summer for people, and to have the opportunity for congregation members to share life and stories with those who come. The plan is to offer shelter to the homeless, drink to the thirsty, food for the hungry, companionship for the lonely, and Christ's direction to the lost.
- Alto Reformed Church in Waupun, WI, along with several other congregations hosted an outdoorsman/sportman's banquet. The event was an opportunity for outdoor enthusiasts, especially men, to have fellowship together and share stories. A. J. Dudek, a pastor with a passion for the outdoors was the guest speaker. He incorporated a Gospel message in his presentation. This was an opportunity for church members to invite their unchurched friends.

✓ **Faithwalking**

Churches in Wisconsin and Illinois Classes continue to engage in Faithwalking which is the personal transformation component of Ridder: Churches Learning Change. A church in Illinois is making plans to become engaged in Faithwalking 101. People engaged Faithwalking have discovered that the practical living out of their faith becomes a means of discipleship. Faithwalking is also in the process of preparing an online process for content the first week, then coaching the second week. This model is scheduled to run for 10 weeks, then take a break, and begin again for another 10 weeks.

✓ **Wisconsin Classis Assessment Process**

In October 2018, the Wisconsin Classis hired a consultant to complete a classis church assessment process along with a structure assessment process. After numerous meetings with Servant Team leaders, pastors, churches and network groups, Gary Harrison reported to the classis in September 2019. His findings involve the creation of a vision frame identifying the classis vision as **"Making Disciples and Starting New Churches Throughout Wisconsin"**. He also identified the "big rocks" that the classis needed to tackle to make the vision happen – Organization, Health, Leadership, and Mission. He then began work on developing a strategy to implement the vision. He advised the classis to cast a classis-wide vision for both church expansion and church renewal that was compelling to classis churches. What does the vision encompass?

- **A church planting strategy involving the pastor networks answering the questions of why, where, when, and how.**
 - ✓ Rethinking the form of church planting shifting the paradigm from a "seeker" orientated approach to more micro churches, missional churches, satellite churches and other models.
 - ✓ Rethinking the training and recruitment of seminary trained pastors to more bi-vocational and co-vocational planters.
 - ✓ Rethinking partnering with those who live and breathe church planting. Rethinking the use of pastor networks to move church planting down to the church level and building ownership there.
- **A church health strategy built on the principle that "like begets like", so healthy, strong churches are needed to expand the kingdom of God.**
 - ✓ Developing comprehensive vision and a workable strategy to implement the vision.

- ✓ Developing a comprehensive strategy to discipleship.
- ✓ Developing a comprehensive leadership development program
- ✓ Developing a workable conflict support system.
- **Classis staffing**
 - ✓ A classis staff person will be necessary if the objectives of the classis are to be accomplished.
 - ✓ This person is not to be a fix it all person but more of a primary vision caster for the classis and a connector of resources.

➤ **Equipping Leaders of Today and Tomorrow**

“Remember your leaders, those who spoke the Word of God to you; consider the outcome of their life, and imitate their faith” (Hebrews 13:7).

God is calling leaders – men, women, youth, young adults – to be used by Him to transform the world. Leaders respond in obedience to passionately live out their calling and giftedness to passionately accomplish the mission of bringing the gospel of grace and hope to a lost and broken world. To be an effective and fruitful leader one must see the leadership potential in all followers of Jesus Christ. Effective leaders empower others who have been called and gifted by God to serve boldly in ministry and mission.

Coaching and mentoring are the two most important steps that a leader can take in their journey of discipleship. In order to have someone follow you to a place where they have never been before a leader must demonstrate the qualities of humility and understanding. Coaching can best be understood as having a Barnabas-like encourager walking along side another person to ignite the competencies and spiritual gifts inside him/her. Chad Schuitema and several pastors in our region are trained coaches in the Churches Learning Change process. They are doing an excellent job. There are several other pastors who coach church planters throughout our region and other regions as well. Chad Farrand and I coach and resource a significant number of church planters, especially in the newly forming Classis de las Naciones.

By the end of April 2020, the Classis of Illinois will have benefited from the leadership gifts and services of Ray Tilstra for three years. The regional synod made a three-year commitment in partnership with the Illinois Classis to help fund this classis leader position. 2020 marks the end of the funding partnership of the regional synod and the Illinois Classis. In the President’s Report for the Illinois Classis, Mike Senneff writes: *“I would simply acknowledge and thank Pastor Ray for the hours, miles and thoughts that he puts into his position as Classis Leader on a daily basis. It is clear to me that the churches and pastors of the Classis are benefitting from Pastor Ray’s advice, counsel and encouragement. Pastor Ray has been an invaluable addition to the Classis organization, and in particular an advisor and counselor to me while I serve in the role of Classis President.”*

Last year the Classis of Wisconsin appointed Kent Vant Hul as their new part-time Classis Coordinator. Kent was doing some great work for the classis and putting in many more hours than his part-time status would reflect. After some time of discernment for his own personal health, Kent made the decision in December 2019 to resign as the Classis Coordinator. The regional synod would like to thank Kent for all the work he has done in helping, resourcing and encouraging the pastors and churches of the Wisconsin Classis.

✓ **Leadership Development**

The raising up of godly leaders who demonstrate God-honoring character, emotional maturity, and uniquely skilled competencies is the focus within the classes, especially with a large influx of

Commissioned Pastors. The Illiana-Florida Classis and the New Thing Classis are working together in collaboration to assure that quality leaders are being trained and developed for churches and multi-site campuses. The Illiana-Florida Classis, the soon to be formed Classis de las Naciones and Classis of Americas have also partnered together in the training of pastors in the nine RCA competencies required of Commissioned Pastors in the BCO. Over the past six months 11 Spanish-speaking pastors planting Hispanic churches in Florida and Georgia have completed their training with the help of Andres Serrano. He led intensives to aid these candidates in their work toward becoming Commissioned Pastors in the RCA. Chad Farrand and I helped with Elder and Deacon training and classis function training. These candidates were examined on March 3 and 4 by the Illiana-Florida Leadership Team and they passed the Commissioned Pastor exams with high marks.

Jim Lankeet, who leads Coram Deo, also assesses and trains pastors through a Commissioned Pastor Training Program to prepare them to pass the RCA requirements for Commissioned Pastors.

Chicago Classis has worked with Jebasingh Jebamony, a pastor from South India, to complete his studies at Western Theological Seminary. The classis has taken him under care and is also working with him to acquire the final documents needed to be submitted to the U.S. government for his citizenship. The Mt Greenwood congregation has been exceptional in helping Jebasingh in housing, car repairs and financial counseling. In the future he would like a contract with the Chicago Classis to plant multi-ethnic communities throughout Chicagoland.

The Wisconsin Classis is working with Angel Pagan, the pastor of a Hispanic church plant at Hope Reformed Church in Sheboygan, WI, desiring to become a part of the RCA.

The future of leadership development within our classes will need to be adaptive to develop church planters and church leaders who possess unique gifts and competencies that fit their local vision, calling, and context. We thank God for these new pastors and church planters that are becoming a part of the RCA. The regional synod is so excited to celebrate how God is using their gifts and leadership skills to expand His Kingdom.

The RCA has developed an Elder and Deacon Leadership Resource which is a downloadable on the RCA website. This guide is to be used to further enhance a church's ministry as Elders and Deacons can be trained to be active leaders in a congregation, rather than simply act as a board of managers. This comprehensive resource is available to help congregations develop and equip their Elders and Deacons for effective church leadership.

✓ **Next Generation Engagement**

According to the RCA, the purpose of Next Generation Engagement is to empower young adults, ministry teams, and congregations to create a culture of intergenerational ministry – that is, all people of all ages serving in leadership positions at the church, classis, and denominational levels. The goal of intergenerational ministry is to reframe the mental model of seeking to “keep” young people in our congregations, but to empower young leaders and congregations to serve one another in future ministry endeavors.

Silver Creek Reformed Church in German Valley, IL, is a congregation in the Illinois Classis participating in a Growing Young Cohort which meets about every 3 months in Grand Rapids, MI. This cohort is a valuable partnership between the RCA and Fuller Youth Institute. The new learning from the cohort has led to building a stronger bond with junior high and high school students through a prayer

partners ministry. The congregation has been actively connecting with college students through care packages. As a part of working toward a multigenerational discipleship pathway, college students are involved in leading worship. The youth pastor and pastor are both intentional talking to one of the young students in the church about seeing the potential of him being called to ministry. Another young person is learning how to bring his faith into the military as he prepares to leave for the Marines. A former student from Silver Creek's youth ministry is now serving overseas for 16 months in Slovenia as a missionary. The church is excited to come alongside her in financial support.

Heartland Community Church in Lafayette, IN, also participated in the Growing Young Cohort. Trinity Community Church in Brown Deer, WI, is engaged in implementing ideas in the book Growing Young, seeking to empower young people in the life of the congregation.

Churches in our region share this excitement: 1) *"We have college graduates serving in ministry in Michigan and Iowa. We have folks who have never served in church leadership thriving in new roles on consistory."* 2) *"As a leader, I am always looking in my congregation for people who might be the next leaders of the church. Specifically, I have found ways to incorporate the younger people of our congregation in leadership roles when possible, and right now all the people in our sound booth are 25 and younger, with some of them on our worship committee as well that help share our worship services. We have also chosen some new younger people to sit on the consistory as well this year, knowing we need new younger leaders in the church."*

Other churches in our region express concerns like this: *"We are looking at the low attendance of the younger generations. As we look ahead what is our future? We cannot help but wonder if they are vested in the future of the church and what can we do to nurture those in that age group."*

These are a few of the stories of equipping leaders of today and tomorrow in our churches and classes. Mobilizing young leaders is critical to turning church leadership over to future generations.

✓ **Local Missional Engagement**

Churches in our region are intentionally discerning what God is doing in their church and in their community and exploring ways to work with different partners to transform their communities. Many churches are supporting their local communities through such programs as Love INC., Kids Hope, food pantries, and prayer.

Churches in the Illinois Classis serve their communities and others by: 1) serving the homeless at the Rockford Rescue Mission multiple times a year; 2) going on a mission trip to Ferguson, MO and serving the church and community at Renewing Life Church; 3) sponsoring an adult mission trip in Michigan; 4) hosting a mission trip for 40 people on a mission trip to Annville, KY in July; 5) developing a strong network of prayer; 6) tutoring students at Boys and Girls Club in Freeport, IL.; 7) opening a bakery that supplies take home meals for those who are hungry in the community; and 8) another church has engaged churched and unchurched youth in a summer program called UNITE which is a local mission project to paint houses for under-resourced and needy people in their community.

Churches in the Chicago Classis serve their communities and others by: 1) Over 40 people running the Chicago Marathon to raise money to provide clean water in third world countries through World Vision; 2) Strong financial support for local and international missions; 3) Hosting a Caring Community Kitchen weekly to feed approximately 100 + people; 4) Supporting ministries such as Hopes Front Door, Rapha Ministries, and Building Bridges through worship music events; 5) Preparing meals and snacks for

homeless school children; 6) Providing clothing for distressed families and individuals; 7) Participating with other churches and community agencies in the quest to end the gun violence in Chicago; 8) Partnering with Pastor Jeb and hosting a Spanish-speaking congregation in the church facility. 9) “Building Bridges” within the Chicago metropolitan area with ethnically and culturally diverse churches, including those that are Taiwanese, African American, Hispanic, South Indian, and South Asian; 10) Offering an “Emotional Resilience” class taught by Pastor Ron Ovitt for about 35 to 40 people in the community.

During 2019, a group of members of Silver Creek did some learning through the Growing Young Cohort which was done in partnership between the RCA and Fuller Youth Institute. That learning was valuable. This led to building stronger bond were built with our junior high and high school students through the prayer partners ministry. We have also been actively connecting with our college students through care packages. Through the learning a college aged ministry started as well as a Sunday School class for young families. This had built a deeper connection between the families.

The regional synod celebrates the collaboration efforts of churches connecting with other organizations and agencies to support the needs of their communities and expanding the kingdom of God through missional engagement. I celebrate the ways that churches are more intentionally discovering the needs of their local communities and then seeking to embrace the totality of the Great Commission by offering hope, bringing reconciliation, blessing, and help to individuals and families.

✓ **Church Multiplication**

The classes and churches within the Regional Synod of Mid-America are seeing the hands of God at work in the planting and adopting of new Hispanic churches, African-American churches, Anglo churches, and others in Florida, Georgia, North Carolina, Illinois, Indiana, Missouri, and Wisconsin. These new church plants which reach a diversity of all people require constant adjusting, innovating, and adapting to the context of the church planter and the location. Larger churches in our region are continuing to launch new campuses or will enfold/merge an existing church to form a new campus. The regional staff are coming alongside classes and actively involved in these multiplying and reproductive efforts, helping classes develop vision, teams, resources, and strategies for church planting. I continue to help facilitate the coaching of church planters in Illiana-Florida, Illinois and Wisconsin Classes.

In March 2020, I attended the annual Hispanic Summit held in Orlando, FL. Over 80 people were in attendance including many of the new Hispanic church planters in Florida. The summit addressed the needs and opportunities for church planting within the Hispanic culture. Chad Farrand and I had the opportunity to meet with a number of Hispanic church planters who are exploring adoption into Classis de las Naciones.

The Illiana-Florida Classis Church Multiplication Team is currently led by Al VanDer Meer and a team of people consisting of Chad Farrand and myself. I am working alongside Grant Mulder, director of the Illinois Church Multiplication Team. I am working with Brent Madsen, leader of the Church Multiplication Team in Wisconsin. I am working with Ron Citlau, the leader of the Church Multiplication Team in new Thing Classis. Here is the current list of church plants and adoptions within the region:

- 1) 12 Springs Church in Sarasota, FL, led by Pastor Ryan McBride, with about 75-90 in worship. An NCP was approved, and the church was adopted into the Illiana-Florida Classis. The organization service is pending the COVID-19 restrictions.
- 2) Centro de Vida in West Palm Beach, FL, led by Commissioned Pastor Fredy Avelis – Commissioned Pastor, with about 90 in worship. An NCP was approved, and the church was adopted into the Illiana-Florida Classis. The organization service is pending the COVID-19 restrictions.

- 3) CN Global Church in Sunrise, FL, led by Commissioned Pastor Daniel Davila Sr and Commissioned Pastor Daniel Davila Jr, with about 150 in worship. An NCP was approved, and the church was adopted into the Illiana-Florida Classis. The organization service was held on March 15, 2020.
- 4) Global Ministries in Orlando, FL, led by Commissioned Pastor Jose Rea, with 150+ in worship. An NCP was approved, and the church was adopted into the Illiana-Florida Classis. The organization service is pending the COVID-19 restrictions.
- 5) El Olivo Church in West Palm Beach, FL, led by Pastor Andre Sancho, launched Sunday service with 20-30 in worship.
- 6) IPM Brazil in Pompano Beach, FL, led by Pastor Fabricio Silva, preparing to plant a Brazilian congregation.
- 7) Fredy Gutierrez (Commissioned Pastor) plants, planting in West Palm Beach, FL. He currently managing two churches he planted in his native Columbia
- 8) HISstory Makers Church in Pembroke Pines, FL, led by Pastors Terrence and Emma Mullins, currently with 60 people in small groups, but preparing to launch a 200-member church and grow through discipleship groups.
- 9) El Buen Pastor in Fort Worth, FL, led by Dr. German Moreno. About 40-45 people in worship. An NCP approved.
- 10) Montreal Church in Miami, FL, led by Commissioned Pastor Sebastian Gimenez, with 175+ in worship. An NCP approved. Will be adopted when Classis de las Naciones is organized.
- 11) Regalo de Dios in Orlando, FL, led by Commissioned Pastor Joe Martinez, with 50 in worship.
- 12) Vision Familiar Corp Church in Miami, FL, led by Commissioned Pastor Gustavo Azar, with about 60 in worship.
- 13) Lugar Alto Church in Duluth, GA, led by Commissioned Pastor Alexis Principal and Esther Susana Velasco Principal, with 125+ in worship. Will be adopted after Classis de las Naciones is organized.
- 14) Vida y Esperanza in Miami, led by Pastor Gianni Garcia, with 70 in worship.
- 15) Overflow Worship Center led by Walt & Theresa Price in Orlando, FL. Worship with a group of 30 people. Walt is pursuing a Commissioned Pastor route with Coram Deo.

The Illiana-Florida CMT continues to be surprised by the number of unsolicited inquiries by Hispanic Church plants that want to join the RCA or explore joining the RCA. Courting conversations are also happening in the southeastern part of the United States like places such as Georgia, North Carolina, and Tennessee. Here are the churches in conversation seeking to be a part of the RCA:

- 1) Bishop Jerry Hutchins and an additional 8 church plants in Atlanta area and one in Nashville are exploring the process of being adopted into the Illiana-Florida Classis.
- 2) Sam Torres is gathering a group of people in Miami desiring to plant a new Hispanic congregation and become a part of the RCA.
- 3) Pastor Angel Gastou, is leading a Portuguese-speaking congregation of about 40 people in the former West Coast Church of the Cross in Sarasota, FL. He is interested in going through the Commissioned Pastor process and having the church where he serves adopted into the Illiana-Florida Classis.
- 4) Renacer Christian Church in Miami, FL, led by Pastor Jesus Perez, with about 150 in worship. He is exploring being adopted into the RCA.
- 5) Igl Ministerio Impacto y Liberacion in Sheboygan, WI, led by Angel and Maria Pagan, with about 40 in worship. He is entering the Commissioned Pastor process and the church is in the adoption process.
- 6) There is a UCC church in North Carolina exploring the adoption process into the Illiana-Florida Classis.

These campus plants in the New Thing Classis:

- Ann Bilbrew – Living Springs Riverdale Ministry Center, Riverdale, IL.
- Vacant – Faith Church Beecher, Beecher, IL.
- Jason DeVries – Faith Church Highland, Highland, IN.
- Vacant – Faith Church Schererville, Schererville, IN.
- Dave Weemhoff – Faith Church Cedar Lake, Cedar Lake, IN.
- Charlie Contreras, Faith Church Munster, Munster, IN.
- John Hines – Cornerstone Manteno Campus, Manteno, IL.
- Daniel Stedham – launched a new campus in Oak Lawn, IL, out of Calvary Reformed Church in Orland Park, IL.
- First Reformed Church in Wheatfield, IN, will soon be launching a new campus in Hebron, IN.
- First Reformed Church in Wheatfield, IN, also launched a Jail Campus. In the past 6 months there have been 22 baptisms. The jail guards report that they have seen a marked decrease in violence as a result of this ministry.

The church plants in the Chicago Classis are:

- Jebasingh Jebamony is currently completing a PhD program and hoping to plant a Hispanic church in the Chicago area. The classis has given a pastoral care grant to Jebamony.
- Iglesia Cristiana Esperan Za Viva Church, Chicago, IL. Led by Pastor Uriel, a Hispanic church plant desiring to transfer from the Assemblies of God Church into the RCA, worshipping at the Mt Greenwood Church facility.

The church plant in the Illinois Classis is:

- Renewing Life Church, Ferguson, MO, led by Terry Tyson, with about 25-30 in worship. This church was launched in August 2018, and it has added a piece onto their building for children's and youth ministry. I serve on the Oversight Team of the Illinois Classis for Renewing Life Church.

The following church plants were closed:

- Salt Life Church in Pembroke Pines, FL, led by Pastor Eric Kingsley.
- Iglesia Betel de Dios in Sterling, IL, led by Pastor Felipe Rios.

The RCA Church Multiplication Team wants to come alongside classes and churches to empower exponential growth and impact in a deep and permanent way. One of the ways this is done is through a classis capacity grant. The Wisconsin Classis Revitalization and Multiplication Commission has applied for this grant, approved classis funds, and appointed Brent Matzen to be the church planting champion for the Wisconsin Classis. As the classis champion, he will develop a church multiplication team, establish a vision, secure resources, recruit and prepare parent churches, create oversight teams, conduct risk analysis, and develop systems for assessment, training, and coaching. A classis with an approved classis champion can receive an RCA church planting grant for \$25,000 at one time without applying for the numerous micro-church planting grants now available.

Classis de las Naciones has adopted a classis multiplication strategy. One will find each one of these models in the new classis. Here is a brief overview of the plans for building a church multiplication movement in the classis. There are three "lanes" of church planting:

- 1) Micro Church – a “micro” church doesn’t seek to build a large worship gathering as the focal point of the congregation but seeks an organic group of small, disciple making based cells that rapidly multiply.
- 2) Macro Church – a “macro” church is a more traditional model that aims to form a church at one place for gathered worship, and builds disciples in and around that center.
- 3) Multi-site Church – a ‘multi-site” church will launch at over 200 people and aims to have many other churches that exist as site churches in a network.

✓ **Formation of a New Classis in Florida, Georgia, and North Carolina – Classis de las Naciones**

In January 2018, at an MC2 Conference there was a meeting between Al Vander Meer, Chad Farrand and I about the beginnings of a vision to plant mostly new Hispanic church plants in Florida. The dream was incubated because Chad was beginning to network with a number of Hispanic church planters that he had met through Jose Duran. I attended a Hispanic Summit in Orlando, FL, in February 2018 and spoke with Ricky Velazquez, the stated clerk of Classis of Americas, and with Eduardo Rodriguez about the possibility of exploring of a renewed Classis of Florida with the planting of Hispanic churches in Florida. We agreed to pray about new possibilities of seeing more clearly where God was at work.

In the summer of 2018, I received a phone call from Ricky about the real possibility of partnering with Classis of Americas to plant Hispanic churches in Florida. We agreed to meet in Grand Rapids, MI, to talk more about planting Hispanic churches and also involve Chad Farrand who was sensing a call from God to plant a church in Florida. It was during this meeting that more clarity began to develop around reconstitution of the old Florida Classis with an infusion of new Hispanic church plants. Assignments were given: 1) I was to write up the initial vision for the new classis and send it to Chad Farrand for more additions and refinement – it became a document called – “Seeing the Possibilities: Reconstituting Florida Classis”; 2) I was to write another document what became known as, “Current Reality of Florida Churches”, 3) Chad Farrand was assigned to do a demographic study of Florida and wrote a document called – “Lay of the Land”. 4) We also adopted a document being explored in the Illiana-Florida Classis called “Classis Clusters”.

After a couple of meetings in the summer and early Fall, Chad, Ricky and I decided to host a day-long meeting on November 8, 2018, in Fort Lauderdale, FL, calling together some old Florida Classis leaders, some new Florida church planters, leaders from Classis of the Americas and Jose Duran, a Hispanic Summit leader, as well as being a Hispanic pastor in Holland, MI. A PowerPoint presentation of each of the documents was presented. After each presentation people broke into small groups for questions and discussion on: 1) What is intriguing about the vision presented? 2) Where is the resistance? 3) How would you participate in the vision? 4) What is the function of a new classis? 5) Are you willing to serve on a vision team to move towards the reality of a new classis? All the responses were collected and there was an overwhelming consensus to move forward. Wayne and Chad would plan a larger vision gathering early in 2019 in Sarasota, FL, inviting all Florida pastors and key leaders, new church planters, as well as existing and potential new adoption Hispanic church planters.

Following this meeting Chad Farrand and I drove to Stone Mountain Georgia to meet and worship with Jerry Hutchins. Jerry had reached out to the RCA earlier and expressed an interest in joining the RCA.

Chad Farrand was officially received by transfer into the Illiana-Florida Classis and became a member of the Illiana-Florida Church Multiplication team with Al VanDer Meer and I in January 2019.

On January 31, 2019 (the coldest day of the year in 2019), Chad and I lead a vision meeting at West Coast Church of the Cross in Sarasota FL. There were about 40 people in attendance including Florida pastors and Elders, new Hispanic church planters, potential adoption church planters, and Andres Serrano of Classis of Americas. Eddy Aleman and other regional leaders could not attend the meeting because flights were cancelled and planes were grounded. At the gathering new church planters told their personal and church planting stories. We rejoiced together; we cried together; we prayed together and there was a movement of God's Spirit in that place. Like in the November meeting, the new classis vision was shared and discussed, the lay of the land was presented, the functionality of a classis was explained and discussed. People gathered in small groups to have conversations and to discuss what was presented. The group that met decided to form a smaller vision team of volunteers who would be willing to meet again in March to work toward forming a leadership team who would lead in the process of the formation of a new classis.

The leadership team met together at Cypress Pointe Resort in Orlando, FL, on March 3, 2019. Chad and Wayne planned the agenda for the meeting. During the meeting the vision of the new classis was discussed and clarified. Details of how a classis functions were discussed. Prepared descriptions of key team ministries within a classis were distributed, discussed and clarified. The idea of classis clusters was presented and discussed. The group that gathered decided that the new classis would function with five teams: the Executive Team composed of Gianni Garcia serving as President; Lionel Rogers, an Elder from Rolling Hills Community Church in Zellwood, FL, as Vice President; Fredy Avelis as Leadership Development leader; David Hubbart and Fredy Gutierrez as Pastoral Health leaders; Ryan McBride as Church Health leader; and Jose Rea as the Church Multiplication leader with assistance from Chad Farrand. Chad Farrand was chosen to serve as the Classis Executive. Wayne Van Regenmorter was chosen as the classis clerk and treasurer. The discussion began about changing the role of Chad Farrand from planting a church in Orlando, FL, to take on a leadership role to more effectively move forward the vision of the new classis. This would require that Chad would have to move to Florida.

On March 20, 2019, the Illiana-Florida Church Multiplication Team met to review the progress of the current church plants in Florida and to prepare a CMT budget for 2020. Throughout April, Chad Farrand continued to meet and network with church planters mostly via Zoom. On May 15, 2019, Chad and his family flew to Sarasota, FL, and signed a lease for their apartment. On June 27-28, 2019, Chad and his wife Melody moved into their apartment in Sarasota.

On July 20, 2019, the Illiana-Florida Church Multiplication Team met at West Coast Church of the Cross to discuss plans and goals for 2020 and plan the budget for the new year. The new Classis de las Naciones Multiplication Strategy was discussed and the "Three Lanes of Planting" adopted. Throughout July and August Chad continued to connect with the new church planters. I met with the consistories of the existing churches in Florida and explained the new Classis de las Naciones vision, led discussion and answered questions. If the existing churches desired to be a part of the new vision, each consistory was to write a letter to the regional synod requesting the formation of Classis de las Naciones.

On August 19, 2019, the Classis de las Naciones Executive Team began to meet bi-weekly to build teamwork, recruit team members, and continue the formation of the classis. Each meeting begins with personal sharing and ministry updates which builds a sense of teamwork and unity among team members. Praying for each other, encouraging each other, supporting each other, has become an important part of the Executive Team meetings. This has become particularly valuable during this COVID-19 crises.

I drafted the Articles of Incorporation and Bylaws for the new classis. The Executive Team asked questions, discussed, edited and approved the new Articles and Bylaws. The Executive Team has been reading and discussing chapter by chapter Tod Bolsinger's Book, Canoeing the Mountains, which has been a great book on adaptive leadership and moving forward into uncharted territory as we follow God's mission for Classis de las Naciones.

On October 29, 2019, Chad and I traveled to Fort Lauderdale to meet with Greg Light, an attorney to discuss developing a corporate resolution for Classis de las Naciones and discuss the status of Comunidad de Fe and other pending legal matters.

In November 2019, I wrote the job description for the Classis Executive which was discussed, edited and approved by the Executive team.

In January and February 2020, Chad and I met with four different church consistories to do training on the BCO of the function of Elders, Deacons, the Consistory, and the classis. Andres Serrano worked with 12 pastors biweekly for two months preparing them for Commissioned Pastor exams.

On March 3-4, 2020, the Rolling Hills Community Church hosted the Commissioned Pastor exams for 12 pastors. Three examiners from the Leadership Team of the Illiana-Florida Classis spend two days examining the candidates in the 9 competencies of the BCO. All the candidates did an excellent job in responding to the exam questions and were passed with commendation.

On March 5, 2020, Chad and I along with the Florida Hispanic church planters attended the Hispanic Summit in Orlando, FL, with about 80 other Hispanic church planters through the US and Canada.

On March 12, 2020, the Illiana-Florida Classis Leadership Team moved and supported to sustain the exams of Jose Rea, Joe Martinez, Alexis Principal, Esther Susana Velasco Principal, Fredy Avelis, Fredy Gutierrez, Daniel Davila Jr, Daniel Davila, Sr, Gustavo Azar, and Lissette Azar. Six Commissioned Pastors read the Declaration for Commissioned Pastors

On the same day the Illiana-Florida Classis adopted the following four organizing new church plants: 12 Springs Church in Sarasota, FL; Centro de Vida in West Palm beach, FL; CN Church in Sunrise, FL; and Global Ministries in Orlando, FL. The Illiana-Florida Classis also affirmed the formation of Classis de las Naciones as recommended by the Synod of Mid-America.

On March 15, 2020, we celebrated the organization service of CN Global Church in Sunrise, FL. Pastor Daniel Davila Jr also read and signed the Declaration for Commissioned Pastors. The other three church organization services have been postponed due to the stay-at home orders as a result of COVID-19. The services will be rescheduled as soon as it is safe to do so.

In the President's Report to the Illiana-Florida Classis, Dale Buettner writes: *"Every time I think about the soon-to-be-formed Classis de las Naciones and all that has taken place in Florida in the past couple of years, my initial response is to do nothing but celebrate! Jesus remains faithful to his promise to build his church, and for that we give him thanks and praise....My prayer is that this will be a living testimony to General Synod 2020 and to the RCA as a whole that it actually IS possible to move forward with ministry in creative and fruitful ways while in the midst of denominational disagreements, theological differences, and uncertainties about the future. This Classis made an intentional decision to keep doing ministry rather than put things on hold and wait to see what happens at General Synod 2020."*

I, the pastors and the church leaders of Classis de las Naciones, as well as the Classis of Illiana-Florida express gratitude to God for all the great things He is doing in Florida, Georgia and other places in the Synod of Mid-America.

✓ **Disability Concerns**

Raising awareness and making churches accessible to people with disabilities is the beginning of embracing the love and grace of Jesus Christ to reach all people. But our attitude requires an even greater transformation, so that ministries to and for people with disabilities may be grounded in compassion; yet grow into ministries recognizing that people with disabilities have gifts to serve the purpose of God's kingdom mission.

On July 31 - August 2, 2019, an RCA/CRCNA Disability Concerns Leadership Team Annual Training & CRCNA *Inspire!* Conference was held at Faith Church in Dyer, IN. The conference was filled with learning and networking for classis, regional and church leaders across the US and Canada. Here are some of the highlights of the meeting:

- There were about 70 people who participated in this gathering.
- Caelie Vander Velde of Calvary Reformed Church in Orland Park, IL and Gwen Bolhus of Calvary Reformed Church, Oak Lawn Campus stepped into Church Advocate roles for their congregations.
- People participated in an exercise centered around 7 key word/phrases in disability advocacy: ableism, social ramps, advocacy, belonging, person-first language, removing barriers, and universal design.
- Heard incredible testimonies of service via people of diverse abilities from Destination Church in St Thomas, ON.
- Mary Hulst presented a plenary centered around millennials – what questions they are asking, and why the church should be excited about the next generation.
- Ed Stetzer did a plenary focused on the tasks we have as a church toward reconciliation.
- Break out sessions included: Creating an Atmosphere of belonging; Universal Design for Money; and Better Together.

Downers Grove Community Church in Downers Grove, IL, is exploring ways to minister to the intellectually and physically handicapped in their community through partnership with the Ray Graham Association. Churches in our region are increasingly finding people to step into church disability advocate roles. In the RCA about 100 churches have designated a church disability advocate who has submitted a signed covenant to RCA Disability Concerns so that individual follow-up, resources, and support can be provided by Disability Concerns staff.

✓ **Crisis in Churches Within the Region**

I continue to serve on the Crisis Transition Team of the Illiana-Florida Classis with Dave Hubbartt, the pastor of First Reformed Church in Tamp, FL. Over the years the number of crisis situations in existing churches in Florida has been significant. This past year has been a somewhat calmer year, but there still are ongoing situations. Among them are:

1) Dave Hubbartt, David Tellinghuisen, and I continue as classis-appointed trustees, overseeing the property of West Coast Church of the Cross (WCCC). A new lease agreement for 2020 with Casa de Adoración and Pastor Angel Gastou. David Tellinghuisen provides regular oversight of the property, working with Pastor Gastou to address any campus issues. In February 2020, work began to connect the church up to the public sanitation system as required by Sarasota County.

2) Dave Hubbartt and I continue to work with attorney, Greg Light, regarding legal proceedings to securing the property Comunidad de Fe for the classis. We attended a mediation meeting between the Illiana-Florida Classis and Comunidad de Fe in West Palm Beach to see if a settlement could be worked out in order to prevent a trial. At the end of 2 ½ hours, Alex and Patricia Meza of Comunidad de Fe offered the Classis \$50,000 to walk away from the property which was declined. The classis representatives countered with an offer of \$60,000 (covering mortgage payments Comunidad de Fe made since 2015—the year they claim to have left the denomination—and \$10,000 to cover 5 years of non-ad velorem taxes) which was also rejected. The attorney reported that a court date would be determined sometime at the end of January with a 2-day trial to happen sometime in February or March 2020. Greg Light suggests that Pastor Dave Hubbartt and I both attend the trial. With the interruptions of COVID-19 we are still waiting on a word from the attorney.

3) On November 30, 2018, Cross Community Church of Deerfield Beach, FL, listed the property for sale at \$10,000,000.00. This price far exceeds the perceived value of the property as was determined in the settlement agreement which is thought to be around \$1,500,000. Therefore, this action of the church is viewed as a stalling technique in coming to a settlement with the Illiana-Florida Classis. We continue to wait on the sale of the property by Cross Community Church (PCA). Our attorney, Greg Light, has sent them a letter but has not received a response.

✓ **Women’s Transformation and Leadership**

Women’s Transformation and Leadership has been established as part of transformed and Transforming to help the Reformed Church in America pursue a vision for the full inclusion of women’s gifts and influence in all areas of the church and beyond.

On October 5, 2019, the Regional Synod of Mid-America, the Chicago Classis, and Christ Community Church in Lemont, IL, hosted an “Honoring Our Stories Regional Women’s Retreat.” Women across the region were invited for a day of spiritual refreshment, story sharing, and meaningful fellowship with other sisters in Christ. In this retreat there was a time of worship and prayer, an interactive Bible study, workshops, reflections, and plenty of time for connection and conversation. Local retreat leaders were Rev. Jewel Willis Thomas, Rev. Caryn Baham, Pastor Pam Otten, and Rev. Marge Vander Wagen.

Other churches in Illinois Classis have also hosted a women’s retreat called Rooted which draws many women from churches and surrounding communities.

✓ **Engaging in Difficult Conversations**

The Regional Synod of Mid-America hosted three workshops on engaging in difficult conversations in healthy ways – in American Reformed Church in DeMotte, IN; Ebenezer Reformed Church in Morrison, IL; and Bethany Reformed Church in Sheboygan, WI. These workshops were facilitated by either Jim Herrington or Trisha Taylor. Participants were invited to learn:

- Principles and practices for managing themselves as the tension around them rises.
- A different way of listening to those with whom you disagree
- Everyone contributes to the results we are getting in conflict, even me. “You’re not stuck in traffic, you are the traffic.”
- How to engage in conflict in a healthy way. Often we engage in destructive conflict where we make things worse or walk away, resigned and cynical.
- How can you hold on to what you believe and also stay connected to those who see things differently.

- The ability to act out of our deeply held values despite the pressure to do otherwise.
- How do we stay calm and thoughtful when emotions in and around us are so powerful.
- How God will help you grow in your own emotional maturity in the face of conflict in ways that help you to be healthier and more effective in your congregation, the classis, the workplace, our families and in our marriages.

The RCA finds itself in the middle of a need to have a difficult conversation about issues that tend to divide us. These workshops were designed to help individuals, churches, and classes make God honoring decisions and to learn a bit about having healthy conversations.

✓ Churches Petitioning to Leave the RCA

The President of Wisconsin Classis, Ken Hoogstra writes in the state or religion report: *“We live in a time of tension, both from societal pressures and from events taking place within. At present, the tension is driven by issues of human sexual identity, women holding church offices, the Formula of Agreement, the state of our seminaries, and our church polity. However, over the centuries that the Reformed Church in America has existed, there has frequently, perhaps always, been a level of tension and anxiety in our churches due to internal and external pressures. While we should not ignore the tensions or the issues that cause them to exist, we also should not, and we cannot, allow these tensions to prevent us from moving forward in ministry.*

I truly believe that our churches are, for the most part, continuing to pursue ministry to the best of their ability, through vibrant worship, caring for those who are hurting, and reaching out to their communities. However, there is no question that our Classis has suffered due in large part to the internal struggles in the RCA. It truly saddened me to open the website for the CRFs from churches in the Wisconsin Classis and realize that through departures and closures, we have gone from 26 to 18 churches in just a few years. We no longer support a full-time Classis leader, and our Classis officers and commission moderators are taking on more tasks with less help.” He goes on to write: *“Yet despite all of the negativity and division, I continue to have hope for the future of the Wisconsin Classis and the RCA.”*

The Chicago Classis has also been dealing with this tension regarding CrossRoads Church in Chicago, IL. At a special classis meeting held on March 28, 2020, the Executive team of the Classis recommended, in accordance with the BCO, that CrossRoads church,(including both campuses), be released to the Evangelical Covenant Order (ECO) without financial penalty, effective immediately, while retaining all current assets, including all real property.

These are difficult decisions in a mixture of blessing and sadness, grief and loss, but overall in our classes these decisions are rooted and grounded in grace and love, so that all people may be filled with the fullness of God.

✓ Vision 202 Team

For the past 18 months, a Vision 2020 Team of 14 people have been working, discerning and researching the implications of three future scenarios for the RCA: 1) staying together, 2) radical reorganization, and 3) grace-filled separation. The denomination has struggled for long years now about the issue of human sexuality and the theological matter that marriage is between one man and one woman. In their deliberations a fourth scenario has been emerging and at the January 2020 meeting a consensus was reached that brings together some of the best elements of the previous 3 scenarios. The final recommendation to be presented at General Synod 2020. Although the recommendation is still taking shape, it will account for the RCA’s current mode of being “defined and connected” – namely

because of RCA polity there is variation in how theological matters are lived out in the RCA. The recommendation will provide a pathway for a mutually generous exit for those who can't live within this diversity. The team is also exploring how to restructure the denomination to better support a 21st century church.

The Vision 2020 Team is asking for the guidance of the Holy Spirit and pray as they continue their work.

✓ **Do It Again, Lord**

I close with this prayer by Max Lucado. This prayer was written by Max Lucado and first used during the 9/11 crises. It has been adapted by Max Lucado in the midst of the fear and anxiety of coronavirus COVID-19. I pray this prayer for myself personally, but also for our churches our communities, our country and our world.

"Dear Lord,

"We're still hoping we'll wake up. We're still hoping we'll open a sleepy eye and think, "What a horrible dream. How could this have happened?"

Just a moment ago moms were packing school lunches. Just a moment ago chefs were planning the day's menu. Just a moment ago arenas were noisy, brides were walking down the aisle and neighbors were discussing the weather.

In just a moment, everything changed. A phantom disease invaded our peace, our plans, and our security. In a heartbeat, our language and behaviors were upended. Even young children understand the term "social distancing," "quarantine," and "Covid-19."

Grandma isn't allowed visitors in her nursing home. Workers are telecommuting, Zooming, and Skyping in their baseball caps and slippers. Handshakes and hugs have been put on indefinite hold.

This strange season has introduced a level of fear we haven't seen since 9/11. Fear of what might come. Fear of touching. Fear of exposure. Fear of what we can't see.

We are anxious, Father. And so we come to you. We don't ask you for help; we beg you for it. We don't request; we implore. We know what you can do. We've read the accounts. We've pondered the stories and now we plead, "Do it again, Lord. Do it again."

Remember Joseph? You rescued him from the pit. You can do the same for us. Do it again, Lord.

Remember the Hebrews in Egypt? You protected their children from the angel of death. We have children, too, Lord. Do it again.

And Sarah? Remember her prayers? You heard them. Joshua? Remember his fears? You inspired him. The women at the tomb? You resurrected their hope. The doubts of Thomas? You took them away. Do it again, Lord. Do it again.

You changed Daniel from a captive into a king's counselor. You took Peter the fisherman and made him Peter an apostle. Because of you, David went from leading sheep to leading armies. Do it again, Lord, for we need counselors today, Lord. We need apostles. We need leaders. Do it again, dear Lord.

What we're seeing on the news, you saw on that Friday so long ago. Innocence interrupted. Goodness suffering. Mothers weeping. Just as the darkness fell on your Son, we fear the darkness falling on our friends, our family, our world. Just as our world has been shaken by a disease, our world was shaken the day the very child of Eternity was pierced.

You saw it. But you did not waver, O Lord. You did not waver. After your Son's three days in a dark hole, you rolled the rock and rumbled the earth and turned the darkest Friday into the brightest Sunday. Do it again, Lord. Grant us another Easter.

We thank you, dear Father, for these hours of unity. Selfless acts of service and kindness warm our hearts. Strangers see opportunities to share with others. Our medical warriors are working together, at personal risk, to care for the rest of us. We thank you for their remarkable commitment.

And we see the world turning to you, Father. People encouraging people with scriptures and reminders of your sovereignty. We read posts urging us to respect each other, care for each other, and look up. We confess we have been anxious, but because of you, we have hope.

We ask, Father: let your mercy be upon all who suffer. Grant to those who lead us wisdom beyond their years and experience. Have mercy upon the souls who have been hurt by this disease. Give us grace to help each other and faith that we might believe.

And look kindly upon your church. For two thousand years, you've used her to heal a hurting world.

Do it again, Lord. Do it again.

Through Christ,

Amen.

Wayne Van Regenmorter
Visionary Leader/Regional Synod Executive
of the Synod of Mid-America