



- 1. The Synod Assembly of the Regional Synod of Mid-America met on April 20, 2023 at 9am via Zoom. Roll call was taken with members present represented on page 2.**
- 2. President Chad DeJager began the meeting with the devotions from the Parable of the Seeds from Mark 4 and prayed following the devotion. A quorum was present.**
- 3. Chad Schuitema welcomed everyone with administrative details of the meeting and led introductions of our members.**
- 4. President DeJager highlighted his State of Religion Report (page 8)**
- 5. The minutes from our meeting last year 04/05/22 were approved by motion, second, and the vote carried unanimously. (page 3)**
- 6. Executive Team/Regional Synod Executive Report (page 6)**
 - 1. Executive Team Member Election within Classes will happen via email**
 - 2. Financial Reports (page 4)**
- 7. Both the Manitoqua Ministries Report (page 10) and General Synod Council Report (page 11) were presented for information.**
- 8. Classis Group Discussion/Breakout**
 1. Each delegate was asked to consider the question: "Where do you want your church to be in 3 years and what do you need to get there?" We will share these thoughts in breakout rooms on Zoom. These desires and needs may help set the course for our regional synod over this next year.
 1. Growing disciples who make disciples. We need young families, how to instill the value of church family/community
 2. We have churches in various stages of life. We need leaders, help from other churches that have been successful, ideas
 3. Models of helping people grow in faith and discipleship. We need mentors, we need to equip people in our church to lead and serve. Restructuring and resourcing.
- 9. M/S/C for Adjournment. President DeJager prayed to close the meeting.**

Respectfully Submitted,

Chad Schuitema, Executive, Clerk, Treasurer

Members Present:

Chicago Classis: Chad DeJager and Rich VanSwol. Marge Vanderwagen excused.

Illiana Classis: Stu Swenson, Corey Buchanan, Don MacDonald

Illinois Classis: Bill Reeher. Chelsea Lampen excused.

Classis de las Naciones: Chad Farrand and Lionel Rogers. Fredy Aviles absent.

Wisconsin Classis: Bob Wierenga and Ken Tebeest. Bill TeWinkle excused.

RSMA Staff: Chad Schuitema



1. **The Regional Synod of Mid-America Synod Assembly met for its annual session on April 5, 2022 at 10am Central Time via Zoom. Members present: (page 2)**
2. **President Bob Wierenga began the meeting by declaring a quorum and with devotions based on Ecclesiastes 3:1-4. He then presented his president's state of religion report and opened with prayer.**
3. **Minutes from the Annual Session and Special Session of 2021 were approved by Motion/Second/Carry (M/S/C) (page 3)**
4. **The Executive Team/Regional Synod Executive/Financial Reports were given by Chad Schuitema and questions answered. (page 6)**
 1. **Executive Team Member Election took place in breakout rooms of Zoom with each classis voting on their Executive Team member. The new Executive Team will be Chad De Jager (CHI), Chad Farrand (CdIN), Stu Swenson (ILA), Bill Reeher (IL), and Bob Wierenga (WI).**
 2. **Chad De Jager was nominated for president and Chad Farrand was nominated for Vice President by M/S/C.**
5. **A written report from Manitoqua Ministries was presented for information. (page 11)**
6. **A written report from our regional representative on the General Synod Council was presented for information. (page 13)**
7. **The Facilitator for Multi-Ethnic Church Partnerships Report was given by Wayne Van Regenmorter and questions answered. (page 15)**
8. **There was a motion to cast a joint ballot for Chad De Jager (President) and Chad Farrand (Vice President). M/S/C. Past President Bob Wierenga was thanked for his time as president of the RSMA.**
9. **There was a motion to adjourn following comments and closing prayer by new president Chad De Jager. M/S/C.**

Respectfully Submitted

Rev. Chad R. Schuitema

2023 RSMA Budget

DISBURSEMENTS	2021	2022	2023	NOTES
RSMA Executive/Clerk				
Salary + Housing	\$90,000	\$27,000	\$28,620	
Life Insurance	\$32,891	\$500	\$500	
Travel	\$12,000	\$6,000	\$6,000	
Total	\$134,891	\$33,500	\$35,120	
Administration Expenses				
Executive Team	\$3,000	\$1,000	\$1,000	
Office Expenses				
Insurance	\$2,500	\$2,700	\$2,700	
Financial Review	\$900	\$950	\$950	
Utilities	\$4,700	\$4,700	\$2,600	
Office Supplies	\$1,000	\$1,000	\$500	
Office Equipment	\$4,000	\$4,000	\$4,000	
Miscellaneous	\$2,000	\$2,000	\$2,000	
Admin/Office Total	\$18,100	\$16,350	\$13,750	
Ministry Expenses				
Manitoqua Contribution	\$20,000	\$20,000	\$20,000	
Leadership Equipping	\$5,000	\$5,000	\$5,000	
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	\$29,000	\$29,000	\$29,000	
Total Expenses	\$181,991	\$78,850	\$77,870	

Income	Projected
Assessment Income 2022 RSMA Members 7224; \$5 Assessment	\$36,120.00
Interest Income	\$35.00
Total:	\$36,155.00

Summary	Proposed
Personnel Expenses	\$35,120
Administration Expenses	\$13,750
Ministry Expenses	\$29,000
TOTAL	\$77,870

2022 RSMA Budget Status

As of 12/31/22 (100% through year)

General Fund Income	Budget	Actual
Assessment Income	\$43,820.00	\$60,019.75
Interest Income	\$35.00	\$144.01
TOTAL	\$43,855.00	\$60,163.76

Fund Totals	01/01/2022	12/31/2022
RCA-CGF Demand Certificate	\$318,472.77	\$320,724.55
Providence Bank Checking	\$92,082.34	\$70,547.34
TOTAL	\$410,555.11	\$391,271.89

DISBURSEMENTS	BUDGET	CURRENT	PERCENTAGE
Synod Executive			
Services	\$28,111	\$27,593	98.2%
Travel	\$6,000	\$3,408	56.8%
FMECP			
Services	\$23,690	\$14,004	59.1%
Travel	\$10,000	\$2,799	28.0%
Administration Expenses			
Executive Team	\$1,000	\$0	0.0%
Office Expenses			
Insurance	\$2,700	\$2,830	104.8%
Financial Review	\$950	\$980	103.2%
Utilities	\$4,700	\$3,053	65.0%
Office Supplies	\$1,000	\$1,104	110.4%
Office Equipment	\$2,000	\$1,969	98.4%
Miscellaneous	\$2,000	\$1,878	93.9%
Ministry Expenses			
Manitoba Contribution	\$20,000	\$20,185	100.9%
Leadership Equipping	\$5,000	\$1006	20.1%
STM	\$3,000	\$0	0.0%
Miscellaneous Ministry	\$1,000	\$319	31.9%
Total Expenses	\$111,151.00	\$81,127	73.0%

Executive Team/Regional Synod Executive Report to the 2023 Regional Synod Annual Assembly

Chad Schuitema
Regional Synod of Mid-America Executive

We continue to be in a time of great change in our denomination. Our regional synod is less than half the size we used to be and each classis is smaller than it was a year ago. More change is on the way: we are anticipating the Vision 2020 Restructure Team to return an effective plan for restructuring the Reformed Church in America and that will certainly affect regional synods.

However, even in the midst of this time of change there has been stability. Our Regional Synod Executive Team continues to be a stable body with purpose and the needs of our classes always on its mind. Most of the leadership in our classes has been in place long-term and have led well. Our General Secretary, Eddy Aleman, continues to be a stable force for our denomination. And the ultimate stability, our God, continues to call us to be a people of hope for the future and a people who trust in him.

Since our last annual session, we had the tragic loss of our long-time partner and friend, Wayne Van Regenmorter. Wayne served the RSMA faithfully for nearly twenty years. He never tired trying to help churches follow God's leading. As many of you know, my full-time job is as the executive director of a hospice. A few months ago I hired a part-time chaplain, and as I met with him I found out that he began to attend an RCA church in his teens and came to Christ there. As we explored it more, I discovered that this church was in Sioux Falls, South Dakota. He then asked me if I knew Pastor Van Regenmorter, who was instrumental in leading this future minister to Christ. Wayne's legacy lives on in his family, with the many people he ministered to, in our region, and also in Classis de las Naciones where God used Wayne's passion in the last few years. Classis de las Naciones has named their clerk position the Wayne Van Regenmorter Clerk as a way to honor Wayne's significant work in the formation and flourishing of that classis. Personally, I think of him often and miss him.

In 2022 we reduced our assessment to \$5 per confessing member and have continued that this year. This is a significant savings to our churches and running this deficit budget will use up some of our reserves as we wait in limbo to see the recommendations of the restructuring team. This past year has seen us act as equippers and connectors. We have utilized some creative ministry stories and ideas from some of our churches to try and spark similar creativity in other churches. We have connected many ministers with similar foci together to try and learn from each other and spur each other on to greater impact. I also continue to act as the primary resource for many classis leaders for questions on polity and other RCA related questions as well as general ministry questions and advice.

As always, I like to highlight some of the annual work we do. We work with the RCA Commission on Nominations to fill vacancies on denominational commissions and boards. The CoN needed someone to fill a vacancy on their own commission and with the help of our classis leaders we were able to find Rev. Dylan Kallioinen to serve in that capacity.

The Salary Committee of the RSMA is moderated by the Chad Schuitema. This committee is:

Chicago Classis:

Rich Van Swol - 2024 (2nd)
Vacant

Illiana Classis:

Gary Summers - 2023 (2nd)
Roger DeGraff - 2025 (2nd)

Wisconsin Classis:

Anne Daane - 2024 (2nd)
Vacant

Illinois Classis:

Rich Huizenga - 2024 (2nd)
Carl Berg - 2025 (1st)

Classis de las Naciones

Paul Harold - 2023 (1st)
Lionel Rogers - 2025 (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. These guidelines are also translated into Spanish.

I continue to serve as our representative on the Council of Synod Executives (COSE) and have met multiple times with leaders from other regional synods and the RCA as we process issues in the RCA and work towards fruitful ministry in all of our regions. We have not met yet in 2023 but are planning a meeting prior to general synod.

I continue to maintain all communications to and from the regional synod including newsletters and our website. I recruit for denominational commissions and lead the teams of our regional synod. I maintain all financial records to ensure the financial health of the regional synod doing all bookkeeping. I also act as a connector within our region: connecting pastors and churches to resources they need and being a resources as I am able.

I am thankful for the opportunities to continue to use my gifts for the regional synod.

– Chad Schuitema, Regional Synod Executive, Clerk, Treasurer

April 1, 2023

State of Religion Report (Regional Synod of Mid-America)

Foolish! You would be a fool to believe in orthodox Christianity in our scientific age. You would be out of your mind to sacrifice for the church, when church scandals have revealed so much corruption done in the name of Christ. You must be out of touch if you profess the particular gospel of Jesus Christ in a time of generic inclusivity and self-spirituality. You are nuts if you identify as a Christian when “Christian nationalism” distorts the image and witness of Christianity. You would be a fool to believe in the future of the RCA in a time when 200+ churches have left our denomination to start their own tribes. Today, I write to you as a fool praying that you persist, with me in faith!

Paul, writing to encourage the Corinthian church said,

We are fools for Christ, but you are so wise in Christ! We are weak, but you are strong! You are honored, we are dishonored! To this very hour we go hungry and thirsty, we are in rags, we are brutally treated, we are homeless. We work hard with our own hands. When we are cursed, we bless; when we are persecuted, we endure it; when we are slandered, we answer kindly. We have become the scum of the earth, the garbage of the world—right up to this moment. - 1 Corinthians 4:10-13 (NIV)

The last few years have been incredibly difficult for our churches and our leaders. We have faced external and internal difficulties that have exposed the fault lines of our denomination and culture. It would be tempting to believe that these are the final pages in the final chapter of the RCA and its ministry in North America. We must remind each other that Christ is strong, and that Christ can use our difficulties for his glory. In fact, the greatest witness of the church has never been its power, it has always been its faithful, longsuffering love and our relentless trust in Christ alone for salvation.

From my view, I can see the beginnings of a new chapter:

- The churches that were the most anxious about the future of the RCA have either left or recommitted to a resurrection in the RCA. This leaves the remnant with the **freedom to focus on mission** and move away from denominational anxiety.
- Those who have remained in the region have found recent classis and regional meetings to be among the most refreshing and encouraging in years. There is a **new network of partnership** on the horizon.
- We are developing **roadmaps for our new future** by learning from the work of Classis de Las Nacionales and revitalizing churches.
- While our culture may not appear interested in church involvement, there is a **deep hunger for the hope** that only the gospel can provide. Our honest, authentic witness paired with our generous hospitality are the way forward.

There remains a great number of threats that we continue to face:

- **Apathy** is rampant in our culture and in our churches. Leaders have been increasingly unwilling to serve beyond their convenience and churches are suffering from a lack of leaders. We need to continue to pray for more harvest workers.
- Pastors are **fatigued** after a global pandemic, decades of denominational conflict and the daily challenges of ministry. Our pastors need to lean on the Lord for strength and ask for help from their brothers and sisters.
- The majority of our established churches are small and aging. Rather than leaving a legacy or imagining a new future, many churches are just trying to survive as long as possible. Our

emerging churches are growing with new life and energy but face new obstacles. In both cases, our **churches need a vision for their future**, and we can help them find it.

Like you, we are eagerly awaiting the coming restructuring of our denomination. As a region, we will spend the next 14 months present at classis meetings, checking in with classis leaders, making connections, being available to church leaders that need additional resources and praying for you. We will closely monitor recommendations made at the next General Synod to see if we can be on the front line of adaption and experimentation. This is a defining moment in the life of our denomination. It is a good time to be a fool for Christ.

I want to close this April Fools' Day report with a few reminders from Jesus:

- In this world you will have trouble, take heart, I have overcome the world (John 16:33).
- I will build my church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it. (Mark 16:18)
- The harvest is plentiful, but the laborers are few; therefore pray earnestly to the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into his harvest. (Matthew 9:37)

Looking Up,

Chad De Jager
Pastor with Christ Community Church, Lemont, Illinois

SYNOD REPORT

Board Members:

Joe Paglia	Toby Thomack
Joy Lavens	Don Spender
Christine Parker	
Susan Lange	
Joan Iwema	

God's Spirit Changing Lives

TO: REGIONAL SYNOD, Annual Session
FROM: LAURA VROOM, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR | Camp Manitouqua and Retreat Center

Manitouqua Ministries, a God-Centered organization, serves guests by providing a setting and programs for retreating, camping and outdoor education.

Programs:

- We continue to serve retreat groups.
- Our registration are higher for this summer Camp than last summer praise God!
- We are excited to report that we have 45 of the possible 70 summer staff hired which is way better than last year!

Property:

- We replaced the furnace in the Chapel and the Dining Hall (which cost camp over \$150,000)
- We are blessed to have a Alto Church come out and do a Mission Trip at camp to help us do some much needed projects
- We received the permit from the state of IL to build the Birchwood Cabin.

Prayer Requests:

- That campers, staff and families be changed by our work!
- That we could grow our donor list and find people who have a passion to help us in our ministry. That we can grow more church partnerships.
- That we can raise enough money to build new cabins.

Closing words:

- For more information about Manitouqua, please visit Manitouqua.org.

Respectfully submitted,

Laura Vroom
Executive Director

General Synod Council Representative Report - April, 2023

General Synod 2022 met at Central College in Pella Iowa June 9th - 14th. The Synod included many excellent times of worship led by the different ethnic councils of the RCA. An opportunity to review many Mission Partners of the RCA through video and prayer was part of each meeting. Business was conducted in an orderly and generally amicable manner. Some of the more notable decisions of the Synod are as follows:

1. The official relationship between Western Seminary and the RCA was changed from "an RCA seminary" to "officially related to the RCA." This is similar to the relationship that the colleges have long enjoyed. As such Western will have a separate board of directors and General Synod will appoint only up to a quarter of these. Western had made this request in 2021 but it was referred to the Commission on Church Order for further study. Synod did grant Western the opportunity to continue to grant a Certificate of Fitness for Ministry and recommend General Synod Professors for the next five years. However, later in the proceedings, the term "Certificate of Fitness for Ministry" was changed to "Certificate of Readiness for Examination" to emphasize the fact that ultimate responsibility for examination of candidates lies with each classis.
2. Implementation of the Covenant Shares process for raising General Synod budgets was approved for the second time. This process of developing budgets on the basis of congregational income rather than membership passed GS-2019 and was postponed in 2021. (There was no GS session in 2020.) Instructions will be given to classis clerks and congregation leaders for implementing the process in 2024.
3. General Synod adopted several recommendations of the Commission on Christian Action. One recommendation encouraged congregations to implement food pantry plans or offerings to deal with needs among local populations. Another recommendation encouraged congregations to survey barriers to participation in congregational life for persons with various disabilities. A third recommendation stimulated perhaps the longest debate and amendment process of the Synod and was finally adopted as follows:
"The RCA's General Synod, meeting at Central College in Pella, Iowa, on June 9-14, 2022, affirms the worth and human dignity of all persons, regardless of sexuality or gender, as beloved, shared image-bearers of God; and further,
"To lament the ways in which the RCA and church universal has failed to consistently recognize the equal worth of all persons and has resorted to fear or frustration when speaking about human lives in our midst, rather than speaking to all with love and compassion. Specifically, we acknowledge and lament the harms experienced by LGBTQ persons, whom we embrace as children of God who are welcome in the RCA."
Of course the unanswered question in the back of everyone's mind was what will the future RCA look like. A proposal to move the final report of the restructuring team up to General Synod of 2023 was defeated. For further, more current, information on restructuring team progress check the reports on the RCA website or participate in upcoming regional roundtables.

General Synod Council met in person in Grand Rapids, Michigan, October 21-22, 2022. Much of the meeting was given to hearing and approving the General Secretary's reports on the 5 Ends Policies and 13 Executive Limitations Policies in place for monitoring his responsibilities. These policies can be found on the RCA website at www.rca.org/gsc under a link called policy governance. Included in the limitations reports were financial reports of the various RCA

budgets and funds. An extended period was given to the GSC members in training on the Policy Governance model of structuring and evaluating the General Secretary's work. GSC has been following this model since 2006.

General Synod Council met again via Zoom March 21-22, 2023. Much of this meeting was also given to hearing and approving the General Secretary's reports on Ends and Limitations of the General Secretary's work using the Policy Governance model. GSC received a report on the five year review of the Commission on Christian Worship and recommended that the Commission be continued. GSC also reviewed reports from the various ethnic councils of the RCA. A working group was established to form by-laws for reestablishing the Native American Indigenous Ministries Council as approved by General Synod 2022.

Obviously there was much more that happened and was discussed in each of these meetings. If there are details or other issues you would like to know more about, feel free to contact me at rollerla@gmail.com or (262)745-8279. I will do my best to track down details of people, dates or procedures. It has been my pleasure to serve as your representative to GSC for almost two years now. I look forward with you to seeing what God has in store.

Respectfully submitted, Neale Roller, April 12, 2023