

## **REFERRAL FROM GENERAL SYNOD 2019**

### **Response to *MGS 2019, DE 19-3, p. 217***

DE 19-3

That the RCA staff reconsider its decision regarding ending Children and Worship support and report its decision to the 2020 General Synod with reasons.

When this motion was proposed and adopted from the floor of General Synod in 2019, two reasons were given: “1. A thorough study of this ministry was not conducted prior to the decision” and “2. The end of support of the C&W ministry is impacting thousands of lives worldwide. To do so without a thorough review seems unjustifiable” (*MGS 2019, p. 217*). Based on the given reasons, the assumption behind this motion seemed to be that “end of support” meant that the decision would effectively end the Children and Worship program and congregations’ ability to use it and that it would affect both the domestic and global programs.

The staff decision referred to in DE 19-3 was actually a decision to stop providing GSC staff administration of collection of registration fees for domestic (U.S. and Canada) training events with RCA trainers and subsequent use of those fees to pay trainers. Trainers for workshops and trainings are paid out of an account that is funded by registration fees paid by workshop and training participants (a pass-through account); GSC staff involvement is limited to the administration of the fund (collecting registration fees and using those funds to pay the trainers). It was this administration that would have ceased.

The number of training events coordinated through the denomination had been decreasing over the past few years. In 2013, 15 Children and Worship training events coordinated through the denomination took place; by 2018, this number had dropped to three events, and in 2019, just one event took place. Because the demand for training events was decreasing significantly, RCA staff had decided to stop providing the administration of this fund in summer 2019. Remaining funds in the GSC account would have been redirected to other children’s discipleship work. None of the funds remaining in that account are donor-designated; although in the past, donations had been made to the account, the last donation received was in 2011 and all donation funds received have already been spent on Children and Worship according to the donor’s designation.

Children and Worship is a wonderful program with a long and rich history in the RCA. The staff decision referred to in this motion from the floor simply reflected the fact that the number of requested Children and Worship trainings and workshops had been dropping off in recent years and thus staff administration time would be redirected, not that the Children and Worship program could no longer be used by RCA congregations.

The global Children and Worship program is supported through Global Mission and through financial support for the mission personnel whose ministry is to teach the Children and Worship program in their global context. None of this would have been affected in any way by the intended end of GSC staff administration of the domestic Children and Worship trainings fund.

Following the adoption of DE 19-3 by General Synod 2019, arrangements were left as they were prior to summer 2019: GSC staff will continue to handle collection of event registration fees and subsequent payment of contracted RCA trainers, and no funds were redirected.

## REFERRAL FROM GENERAL SYNOD 2018

### Response to *MGS 2018, OV 18-23, pp. 152–153, Vision 2020 Team*

To appoint a 2020 Vision Group to work, in consultation with whatever staff, commissions, councils, agencies, and/or outside consultants the vision group deems necessary, to identify possible scenarios, strategies, and consequences for these future options for the Reformed Church in America:

- Staying together
- Radical reconstituting and reorganization
- Grace-filled separation

This should include, but not be limited to, consideration of one denomination with three or more affinity assemblies within it. Care should be given to the administrative, legal, financial, real estate, and emotional burdens of each option. Any potential new bodies should be identified by what they are “for” rather than what they are “against” and should be consistent with Reformed theology. This should be done in ways that affirm all parties. This must be bathed in denomination-wide, hope-filled prayer that God will show a way.

As the vision group engages these options, its work should include, but not be limited to:

- A commitment, as much as is possible, to the unity of the church in its being, spirit, covenantal relationship, mission, and kingdom witness in the world
- An understanding regarding the foundational role that biblical hermeneutics and Reformed exegesis play in the life and witness of the church, and a commitment to articulate how those methods are operative in the church’s way forward
- An analysis of the role that the RCA’s theology, Standards of Unity, and liturgies play in the present and future life of the church

The vision group will consist of 10–12 members named by the interim general secretary and general secretary, in consultation with GSC, and its makeup should reflect the wide diversity of the Reformed Church in America. The general secretary will serve as an ex-officio member without vote. Expenses for the vision group and any attendant costs, such as consulting or legal fees, will be taken out of GSC reserves, not to exceed \$250,000.

The vision group shall present semi-annual reports to the GSC, an interim report to the General Synod of 2019, and a final report with recommendations to the General Synod of 2020.

For the report of the Vision 2020 Team, please see [www.rca.org/synod/vision2020/reformed-church-in-america-vision-2020-team-final-report](http://www.rca.org/synod/vision2020/reformed-church-in-america-vision-2020-team-final-report).

*\*\*Note: Because the General Synod will not meet in 2020, it will not be able to act on any recommendations contained in reports to General Synod 2020. The report and recommendations of the Vision 2020 Team will be considered by the next session of General Synod.\*\**