

Exploring God's Preferred Future for the RCA

This document is a summary of conversations with a group of classis leaders, racial/ethnic leaders, and GSC staff who met in 2020 to dream about the future of the Reformed Church in America, to lay groundwork for recommendation 1 in the Vision 2020 Team's report. The seven guiding principles were provided by general secretary Eddy Aléman.

The global church and the local church are coming together in new and exciting ways to serve the cause of Jesus Christ around the world. We get to be a part of creating something new in harkening the church back to its missional call. Making disciples is at the heart of that call, along with multiplying leaders and ministries.

RCA Values

The Reformed Church in America recognizes this current moment as a strategic opportunity to faithfully discern and determine its call as a 21st century institution and beyond. As a part of this process, the GSC staff of the RCA faithfully commit to the following values as part of the expression of church and mission in our participation in the disruptive, redemptive, and transformative work of Jesus Christ here on earth:

- WE VALUE the multiplicative and generative work of the Holy Spirit, which is expressed through the practice of disciple making, apprenticeship and ministry multiplication.
- WE VALUE the body of Christ, composed of disciples and leaders of all races, abilities, and generations—men and women—who courageously contribute to God's kingdom mission here on earth.
- WE VALUE the participation of the Church in the practice of community renewal here and around the world, partnering with local and global leaders to see the restoration and flourishing of our communities.
- WE VALUE our local and global responsibility to bear much fruit and multiply as followers of Jesus—loving God, loving others and making disciples—from where we are to the ends of the earth.

RCA Priorities

As the RCA continues to serve, equip and support leaders and congregations, it will exemplify these values through four priorities: making disciples, multiplying leaders, ministry multiplication, and missional engagement. These priorities are cyclical: making disciples leads to multiplying leadership, which sets up ministry multiplication, which in

turn deepens missional engagement. Missional engagement brings new opportunities to make disciples, and the cycle begins again.

These priorities are lived out through key efforts in Global Mission, Church Multiplication, and equipping leaders through Transformed & Transforming.

Making Disciples

Key Markers: new and restored believers, participation in the local assembly, sacrificial service, authentic relationships, living and loving like Jesus, reproducing disciples

Approaches: Building relationships and sharing the gospel internationally through Global Mission and domestically through new church plants and by equipping leaders in existing churches to help congregants grow in faith and share their faith.



Multiplying Leaders

Key Markers: self-aware, demonstrated fruit of the Spirit, apprenticing (with authority), healthy churches/ministries, reproducing, alignment with RCA vision and values

Approaches: Missionaries and ministry partners apprentice new leaders and share authority with local leaders in fruitful partnership. Church planters initiate apprenticing relationships with emerging leaders in their plants, who then assist with the current planting work and sometimes become planters themselves down the road. Churches and pastors are equipped to improve leadership culture, grow in adaptive capacity, and mentor emerging multi-ethnic and multi-generational men and women leaders.

Ministry Multiplication

Key Markers: apprentices, new leaders, ministries and groups, multiplication as part of ministry goals, investment into multiplication efforts

Approaches: Church leaders are empowered to lead new expressions of mission and ministry as part of the core call of the church. Church plants begin with a posture of replication, consistently developing pathways to multiply disciples, leaders, groups, and ministries with good health and leadership. Missionaries and mission partners replicate missional leaders for ministry opportunities.

Missional Engagement

Key Markers: generosity, incarnational, mutual local partnership, service, witness, making disciples

Approaches: Missionaries exhibit the love and compassion of Jesus through faithful, respectful witness, community development, and graciously sharing and demonstrating the good news of Jesus Christ. Church plants participate in the leadership and fabric of their neighborhoods, expressing God's love through care, service, and witness. Transformed & Transforming helps churches share God's love in their communities and around the world through strategic alignment, missional processes for their members, and justice and compassion opportunities.

Guiding Principles for the Re-structure of the RCA

As followers of Jesus Christ and agents of transformation in the world, we must go back to the calling we have from God to be a blessing to our communities so that the people we serve can experience the transforming power of the gospels in their lives. We need to come together in love, which is Jesus' basic message, and to refocus all of our efforts and energy in the proclamation of the gospel and the making of new disciples of all ethnicities. In order to do that, the RCA needs to reorganize and restructure to maximize focus on the mission. These seven principles will guide the re-structuring vision for the future of the RCA:

1. Focus on the missional priorities of making disciples, multiplying leaders, ministry multiplication and missional engagement.
 - The making of disciples must be at the tip of the spear of RCA work in the future.
2. Reaffirm the historic RCA statements on human sexuality.
 - As a denomination we are not walking away from our historical understanding of sexuality and marriage.
3. Embrace covenantal relationships that reflect Hebrews 10:23-25 at the classis level.
 - Classes must embrace a covenantal relationship at the local level to support and encourage one another in love for mission, ministry and good deeds.
4. Accept the RCA polity regarding exercise of discipline.
 - RCA polity gives local classis the responsibility for the ordination and oversight of their pastors. If a pastor needs to be disciplined for any reason, his or her classis are responsible for the exercise of discipline and restoration.
5. Reorganize and streamline RCA structure to maximize focus on the mission.
 - The organizational structure of the denomination will be revised to allow for more flexibility and less bureaucracy.
6. Transition the General Synod meetings toward ministry equipping and celebration.

- General Synod meetings are too heavy on business. In the future we will include intentional time for leadership development and celebration of ministry.

7. Extend love and grace toward those who decide to leave.