

REPORT OF THE COUNCIL FOR PACIFIC AND ASIAN AMERICAN MINISTRIES

The *Book of Church Order*, Chapter 3, Part I, Article 3, Section 2b (2019 edition, p. 107), states that “the General Synod Council shall have racial/ethnic councils which express the collective vision and voice of racial and ethnic congregants and congregations as they develop ministries and advocate for policies of racial and ethnic inclusion, economic, social, and racial justice, both within the Reformed Church in America and ecumenically.”

Annual Consultation and the Coronavirus

Due to restrictions imposed by COVID-19 in 2020, the Council for Pacific and Asian American Ministries (CPAAM) could not hold its annual consultation, and all executive committee meetings were held virtually via Zoom. Since we were not able to convene the annual CPAAM consultation, all currently serving executive committee members agreed to continue serving their terms in 2020 with the hopes that there will be a consultation in 2021 where new representatives could be elected and appointed for the different language and ministry groups.

CPAAM ministers and churches were able to transition to online services. Some churches have begun to reopen following the Center for Disease Control’s guidelines to protect the health and safety of church members, pastors, and staff. We thank and praise God for the flexibility and creativity of ministers and the congregants’ capacity to pivot quickly to new styles of worshiping. However, this is an exhausting process to maintain for over a year. Many lament the losses and stresses due to the inability to meet in person. There are questions of how to balance self-care for ministry leaders who must also juggle family, financial, and other emotional burdens in addition to caring for the needs of their church members, plus maintaining regular Sunday worship and consistory meetings. Many are seeking to serve their community in meaningful ways and exploring how to share the gospel message in a time of social distancing.

Cooperation and Collaboration

The proliferation of online virtual meetings has made it easier for CPAAM to work closely with other agencies and staff in the RCA. CPAAM actively participated in meetings with the general secretary, Eddy Alemán, the Commission on Race and Ethnicity (CORE), and the other racial/ethnic councils. Together, plans are being made for a joint virtual meeting of the African American Black Council, the Hispanic Council, CPAAM, CORE, and the Native American Indigenous Ministries in August 2021. We are focusing on speaking with one voice to dismantle racism and speaking toward the concrete realization of a truly multiracial future freed from racism in the RCA.

Anna Radcliffe, the coordinator for Next Generation Engagement, spoke to the executive committee of how the RCA is equipping and empowering the next generation of young Christians in our churches and how CPAAM can partner in this process. We are also working with Eliza Cortés Bast, the coordinator for Local Missional Engagement, to recommend Asian American college students for the Robben Island Project and other programs to develop future Asian American and Pacific Islander (AAPI) leaders.

Different members of the CPAAM community participated in various programs on dismantling racism offered by the Reformed Church Center at New Brunswick Theological Seminary. Women’s Transformation and Leadership examined a number of issues and their impact on

racial/ethnic communities, such as domestic violence, mental health issues, Black Lives Matter, and dismantling racism in the RCA and in our communities.

CPAAM was greatly encouraged by the call to stand with Asians against racism put out by the Commission on Christian Action and the Commission on Race and Ethnicity in response to the increased hate crimes against Asians due to the coronavirus. This is increasing the visibility and voice of Asian Americans in the RCA. JJ TenClay, RCA Global Mission's coordinator for refugee ministries, is inviting Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders to share their stories, culture, and heritage so that all brothers and sisters in the RCA can welcome and embrace one another.

Vision 2020

Imos Wu, the General Synod Council representative and a member of the Vision 2020 team, gave regular updates to the executive committee. He and En Young Kim, the CPAAM coordinator, explained the basic scenarios, and the possible impact was discussed by the executive committee members. To date, no CPAAM church has expressed a desire to leave the denomination. Most members expressed a deep loyalty to the RCA and to their respective classes. Even though most first-generation immigrant churches hold firm to traditional views of marriage and human sexuality, they are waiting, praying, and discerning to see what are the final decisions and outcomes from General Synod in October.

Asian Women in Ministry

Lynn Min, the women's representative, has been holding meetings to provide a sacred space for CPAAM women to share their spiritual journey and struggles to find their identity and contributions in the Asian churches. The pandemic has increased the responsibilities of women in their roles as mothers, wives, homeschool teachers, ministry leaders, and pastors as well as working outside the home or working from home. Soul self care and supporting each other has increased in importance this year.

Youth Ministry Concerns

Those involved with youth, like Kelvin Kong, the youth minister at Grace Christian Church in Queens, New York, were challenged on how to connect to high school and college students while social distancing. Many young people were forced to spend hours online for schooling and were using social media to stay in touch with friends. Another church Zoom meeting lacked appeal when teenagers and youth in their 20s crave in-person contact for energy and outreach. Some parents were reluctant to allow their child to attend in-person gatherings that might risk infecting an older relative living in the home. The increased time at home has heightened tensions between generations, especially in the area of race. The first-and-a-half, second, and third generations may be responsive to movements like Black Lives Matter, while their parents and grandparents have trouble understanding their views on race and politics. There is a need to bridge the generation gap by breaking through communication barriers.

Chinese and Taiwanese Ministries

Grace Rohrer reported that some churches are combining services and fellowship, but they struggle to meet the spiritual and emotional needs, especially of older members who are isolated at home. These churches are successfully helping members get the COVID-19 vaccine. The main concern now is developing strategies for reopening.

Korean Churches

Kyunghoon Suh reported that besides online services, many Korean churches have been holding early morning services and weekday services and seeing an increased interest in Bible studies. An online gathering of Korean ministers provided much needed support and encouragement.

Disability Advocate

The Japanese American United Church (JAUC) in New York City invited Terry DeYoung, the coordinator for RCA Disability Concerns; Mark Stephenson, the director of CRC Disability Concerns; and Doug McClintic, RCA missionary in Hungary, as guest preachers to speak on various disability issues and to join a bilingual fellowship time after Sunday worship. Mana Hashimoto, the JAUC disability advocate, worked with visually impaired RCA and CRC advocates to develop guidelines for churches to be more aware and welcoming to people with visual disabilities.

Celebration

Some ministers, like Stephen Kim, who is planting a multiracial church in New Jersey, have been able to adapt to using social media to reach a wider audience. Others, like David Theonugraha, have been teaching online Bible classes locally in California and globally in Asia. We congratulate Francisca Rumokoy, who is now senior pastor at the Reformed Church in Metuchen after the retirement of the former minister. Besides leading a growing congregation of Indonesians, she is also caring for the Anglo members. We thank and praise God for Tiffany Fan's ministry at Grace Christian Church in the Bronx, New York, which is revitalizing a church that closed a few years ago. There is a thriving Chinese congregation there as well as outreach to the surrounding multiethnic neighborhood. John Chang is the senior minister and supervisor of this church plant. Shi Yang Lin will be retiring in August 2021 at the Taiwanese Church in Long Island.

Conclusion

For 41 years, CPAAM has been the voice to include Pacific and Asian American ministers and congregations within the life of the RCA. CPAAM churches and leaders lament the grief and loss of many members due to COVID, while rejoicing in the excitement of trying new things. The pandemic pause has been a time to assess what is truly important to the life of the individual and the church. We are absorbing the financial impact that some churches are able to stay open but are unable to pay the pastor's salary. CPAAM will continue to serve the Lord in our neighborhoods, do mission work in our home countries of Asia, and reach out to the younger generations with the life-giving message of the gospel.

To God alone be all praise and glory for sustaining CPAAM for 41 years.
Thanks be to the Lord!

Respectfully submitted by members of the CPAAM executive committee:
Kyunghoon Suh (chairperson), Gerri Yoshida (vice chairperson),
Lynn Min, Kelvin Kong, Shi Yang Lin, Stephen Kim, Grace Rohrer, Francisca Rumokoy, David Theonugraha (ex-officio), Imos Wu (GSC representative)