

Report of the General Synod Council on Global Mission

Note: General Synod Council ministry reports contain updates and progress reported to the General Synod Council in March 2021 for the calendar year 2020. 2021 updates and progress will be reflected in next year's report.

POLICY WORDING

The Reformed Church in America (RCA) will connect and engage people to what God is doing in the world, through mission partners that cross boundaries in word and deed with the love of God revealed in Jesus Christ and enabled by the Holy Spirit.

GENERAL SECRETARY'S INTERPRETATION

Mission becomes a way of life when we reach out to people with the gospel, meeting needs in neighborhoods, countries, continents, and throughout the world. Empowered by the Holy Spirit, we boldly give witness to the hope within us and willingly serve others by becoming the hands and feet of Christ in every corner of the world. The RCA commitment is to respond with God's love to meet spiritual and material needs around the globe. We are excited to engage mission through our churches by equipping mission leaders to maximize the impact their mission investment can make around the world. We are eager to move into a future where RCA Global Mission is part of a mission movement—a movement that comes from within our congregations and is built on the passions of our members, and a future where we make connections through our history and expertise, where we connect you with faithful partners and help coordinate, inspire, and support you in mission.

Individuals and churches experience transformation as they open themselves to be used by God and reach out in giving and receiving, learning and sharing, and extending the kingdom of God through missional engagement. It means bringing the good news of God's grace in Jesus Christ to those who have never heard the message, mobilizing the RCA congregations to connect with global partners for greater kingdom impact, helping resource volunteers for expanding involvement in mission efforts, and extending compassion, mercy, and justice in places of discrimination, poverty, famine, disaster, and injustice. In a world of brokenness and need, we offer help, hope, and tangible expressions of God's love.

GLOBAL MISSION

Over the past 378 years, RCA Global Mission has impacted millions of people around the world with the love of God. And God's faithfulness continues. Our goal is to provide opportunities for RCA and Reformed churches to partner with global churches in ways that are collaborative and mutually meaningful, helping us all live and love like Jesus.

Today, RCA missionaries and partners are bringing hope through the light of Christ. All of this is made possible by the faithful generosity of churches and individuals as RCA Global Mission does not receive denominational assessments or covenant shares. It is because of your gifts that this work continues and enables the hope of Christ to reach even more people.

Progress

2020 was a year of pivoting how we do mission due to COVID-19, but that did not stop God's work. Instead, it created opportunities to come together and serve God's people globally in new ways. We worked closely with RCA missionaries and partners to provide COVID-19 relief to those on the margins.

In May 2020, generous churches and individuals gave over \$119,000 to provide immediate relief for people around the world impacted by COVID-19. These gifts helped individuals in several countries and contexts around the world—a few of those being church planter families in Nepal, community members in Peru, women and children in India, missionary families in Brazil, HIV-positive communities in South Africa, and theological education students in Cambodia.

We have seen the amazing ways missionaries and partners have quickly adapted using technology and creative measures to stay connected with their supporting congregations. They have also used this same vigor and passion to adapt the way they serve their respective local communities, even when the pandemic displaced a handful of missionaries from their homes in the field and made it increasingly difficult to follow God's call in mission in traditional ways. Out of adversity came a season of growth with new church plants, thousands of baptisms, and countless ways people have felt and seen the love of Christ in action.

Communication efforts increased in 2020 through a quarterly newsletter sent to individuals who support RCA missionaries, projects, and disaster relief, have been involved in short-term mission through the RCA, and are active RCA pastors. Through this piece, generous donors have received updates on how God is working through their gifts globally. To sign up to receive this publication, please visit www.rca.org/subscribe.

We are continuously grateful to God for the ways God provided in 2020 so more people could hear the good news and experience the love of Christ in word and deed. For more information on how RCA Global Mission is funded and for answers to frequently asked questions, please visit www.rca.org/mission/faq.

Current Goals

RCA Global Mission's current goals are derived from our commitment to strongly reflect and mobilize the passions and gifts of RCA congregations to serve. These goals include:

- Increase mutually beneficial collaboration between RCA Global Mission and all RCA congregations, including those that may want to move on from the RCA.
- Create new pathways and on-ramps for all congregations to get and stay involved in the life and ministry of RCA Global Mission.
- Recruit the next generation of missionaries and partners.
- Communicate our field stories to our constituents, creating relevance for North American congregations and offering opportunities to serve with us.
- Increase the financial commitment of churches by adding 33 newly funded partnership in mission shares.

GLOBAL MISSION

Working together to share God's love with the world

RCA Global Mission exists to strengthen and grow the global church by supporting ministries of compassion, developing leaders, and sharing the good news. Our goal is to provide engagement opportunities for RCA churches to partner with global churches in ways that are collaborative and mutually meaningful that help us all to live and love like Jesus.

Partnership in mission shares

The mission personnel and staff of RCA Global Mission would like to express appreciation to the churches and individuals of the Reformed Church in America (RCA) who so generously support our mission programs. The RCA mission program is supported almost entirely by contributions and partnership in mission (PIM) shares. Without you, there would be no RCA Global Mission.

The RCA has 82 active partnerships in 45 countries around the world. There are 45 mission personnel and 47 partner personnel (who are employed by the partner but supported through RCA partnership in mission shares). These mission personnel are supported by 443 churches and 102 individual donors through partnership in mission shares. There are over 120 active projects, including disaster response and projects of compassion. These projects were supported by gifts from 176 churches and 521 individual donors.

Global Mission proposes that the value of a full partnership in mission share be raised from \$6,800 to \$6,900 in 2022. We are also asking that every RCA congregation that does not currently support an RCA missionary with a partnership in mission share consider taking on a full or partial share of support.

GM 21-1
To increase the value of a partnership in mission (PIM) share for 2022 to \$6,900.

Transitions in Mission Personnel

Bob Oliveira served as a bridge-builder between the Presbyterian Church of Manaus (IPM) and partner churches in North America, donors, and project staff. Since 2018, Bob led initiatives to connect local passions to global partnerships and cultivate generational impact. His work helped Christians in Brazil and North America to grow mission partnerships that have ignited church multiplication and transformed communities along the Amazon through word and deed. Bob retired from mission service on August 31, 2020.

Barbara Kapenga began mission service in 1981. Barbara was instrumental in training thousands of pastors, evangelists, and church leaders in Sudan, Niger, Ethiopia, Malawi, and neighboring countries. She served the Presbyterian Church of Sudan, Giffen Theological Institute, and Nile Theological College in Sudan; Dogon Gao Bible School in Niger; Mekane Yesus Seminary in Ethiopia; and Josophat Mwale Theological Institute (JMTI) of Nkhoma University in Malawi. Barbara retired from mission service on December 31, 2020.

GM 21-2

Let it be resolved that the 214th session of the General Synod of the Reformed Church in America, meeting at the Westin La Paloma in Tucson, Arizona, from October 14 through October 19, 2021, gives glory to God for the life and witness of Barbara Kapenga and Bob Oliveira and offers a prayer of thanksgiving for their service to RCA Global Mission.

New Mission Assignments

Blaine Newhouse will serve as the senior pastor of the English Language Congregation (ELC) of the National Evangelical Church of the Kingdom of Bahrain, a church planted by the RCA in 1893. His wife, Kathleen, teaches at Al Raja School. They have the unique opportunity to be the very presence of Christ in a part of the world where Christianity is often misunderstood.

Gretchen Schoon Tanis will pastor the Reformed English Language International Service of Hannover (RELISH). Gretchen will lead a community of English-speaking international students and expat working individuals and families in worship, in addition to a weekly Bible study for young adults. Her goal is to offer a dynamic worship experience where families and young adults can find a place to call home and can grow in their relationship with God.

Hannah Kummer will serve as a case manager for Mediterranean Hope, a ministry program of the Federation of Protestant Churches in Italy that mobilizes the church and community to welcome sojourners in their midst. Hannah will help with safe travel, legal avenues of entry, and successful integration of refugees who are settling in Italy. She will also help coordinate legal aid and resources for displaced asylum seekers in Rome.

Nicole Opgenorth will serve as a cultural and language translator for visiting groups at the Council of Protestant Churches of Nicaragua (CEPAD), an RCA partner. She enters homes, farmlands, and churches to listen to what God is doing. In turn, she shares with RCA supporters how their gifts are empowering rural communities to lift themselves out of poverty through pastoral training, leadership development, economic empowerment, food security, and environmental care.

Deaths

George Magee passed away on October 30, 2020. He, along his wife, Joyce, served the RCA as missionaries in the northern island of Hokkaido, Japan, for 42 years. George and Joyce were involved in evangelism and church planting. The majority of Japan's postwar career missionaries left after one or two terms. Of the few missionaries who stayed, such as the Magees, it is impossible to measure the impact they had in small churches, remote rural preaching stations, and house churches.

Carolyn Otterness passed away on November 22, 2020. Carolyn and her husband, Dick, served in Hungary among the Roma people in many development areas: helping the Roma people start their own congregations, establish relationships with existing congregations, access health care, go to school, find work, and start their own businesses. The Otternesses also served in Ukraine and Rwanda in areas of reconciliation for historically estranged ethnic groups.