

General Synod Devotions: Healthy Missional Markers

In a 30-day season of preparation for General Synod 2022, we are going to be walking together through ten healthy missional markers. This framework comes to us courtesy of our sisters and brothers in the Evangelical Covenant Church. The ten markers have been circulating informally in the Reformed Church in America (RCA) for nearly a decade. They are not being used for any purpose other than to structure our shared time. Since January, they have been the framework of our monthly prayer gatherings for the RCA. They will also be the framework of our devotional and worship times at General Synod.

The healthy missional markers are ten characteristics uniquely expressed in every healthy missional disciple and ministry. By *healthy*, we mean pursuing Christ. By *missional*, we mean pursuing Christ's purposes in the world. As we reflect on them, our desire is that they will help us envision being a healthy missional denomination.

Our rhythm for these devotions will be focusing on one marker for three days, then moving to another marker, and so on. On the first day of each marker's focus, we will think about how the marker might apply to us personally. On the second day, we will consider how it might apply to our local church. On the third day, we will contemplate how the marker might apply to the RCA. These are not exclusive categories, and our hope is that they become magnificently interwoven as we read, reflect, and pray.

Many of us will be drawn to ask important questions like *Who decided these would be the ten?* and *What about prayer?* (Prayer undergirds each one.) We may be prone to question why specific words were chosen or others not chosen. Our invitation is that you let yourself move from *critical* to *curious*. If a word or a marker unsettles you, try asking why. Don't be afraid to rewrite or rephrase them to your journey or context. If necessary, set aside the thought for the day and move on to the next day. Come with an open heart and mind. Invite God to speak to you, to us, through this season of preparation for General Synod 2022.

Ten healthy missional markers

The full description of each healthy missional marker can be found below. The relevant line for each day—based on the focus on self, church, or denomination—is included at the beginning of each devotional.

Centrality of the Word of God

- We believe that the Bible is the only perfect rule for faith, doctrine, and conduct.
- Our preaching and teaching in all settings reflect careful preparation, relevance, and creativity.
- We are equipped and growing in our ability to study and apply biblical truth in ways that lead to a scripturally integrated life.

Life-transforming walk with Jesus

- We teach our people how to be attentive to Christ in all circumstances.
- We understand the radical nature of the message and mission of Jesus that continually deconstructs and reconstructs a person's life.
- We are equipped and growing in our ability to use a variety of spiritual growth resources, experiences, and settings.

Intentional faith sharing

- We are burdened for the spiritual condition of those who do not yet know Christ.
- We have identifiable pathways for faith sharing to take place in our ministries.
- We are equipped and growing in our ability to build spiritual friendships and know how to share our faith as God-given opportunities arise.

Compelling Christian community

- We understand that our love for one another is a powerful testimony to Jesus.
- We love each other as we are, not as we should be.
- We share life together beyond the worship service.

Transforming communities through active compassion, mercy, and justice ministries

- We are burdened for the hurting people in our community and beyond.
- We have identifiable pathways for compassion, mercy, and justice ministries to take place.
- We are equipped and growing in our ability to see and address the hurts and the causes of hurt in our community and beyond.

Global perspective and engagement

- We raise the sights of our members beyond our congregation and community by developing a biblical worldview; we often pray for and reference global matters.
- We have identifiable pathways to support the cause of Christ globally.
- We are equipped and growing in our ability to participate in the global dimensions of our ministry.

Heartfelt worship

- We exalt and celebrate God for who God is, what God has done, what God is doing, and what God will do.
- Worship reflects careful preparation to help give voice to many dimensions of response to God, such as adoration, praise, contrition, lament, and commitment.
- People leave worship knowing something more about the heart of God and about their own hearts.

Sacrificial and generous living and giving

- We help people discover, develop, and deploy their spiritual gifts.
- We regularly, graciously, and unapologetically teach on the importance of financial stewardship in the spiritual growth of the Christian.
- We have many examples of lifestyle choices being made on the basis of stewardship and the priority God plays in the lives of our members.

Culture of godly leadership

- Our leaders at all levels serve with character, competence, and conviction.
- A spirit of collegiality pervades, with our people trusting our leaders and our leaders trusting our people.
- We continually identify and train godly leaders for all dimensions of our ministry.

Fruitful organizational structures

- We can articulate a compelling, Christ-honoring vision for our church.

- We embrace evaluation as normal and natural, and we work through conflict constructively.
- Our organizational structures are designed to be efficient at making decisions while at the same time building congregational ownership for those decisions.

Daily devotions on the healthy missional markers

Day 1: May 10, 2022

Centrality of the Word in your own life

Healthy missional marker: We are equipped and growing in our ability to study and apply biblical truth in ways that lead to a scripturally integrated life.

Scripture: Hebrews 4:9-13

“So then, a sabbath rest still remains for the people of God; for those who enters God’s rest also cease from their labors as God did from his. Let us therefore make every effort to enter that rest, so that no one may fall through such disobedience as theirs.

Indeed, the word of God is living and active, sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing until it divides soul from spirit, joints from marrow; it is able to judge the thoughts and intentions of the heart. And before him no creature is hidden, but all are naked and laid bare to the eyes of the one to whom we must render an account.”

Reflect: How is God’s Word shaping your character and guiding your life? What does God seem to be saying to you right now?

Day 2: May 11, 2022

Centrality of the Word in your congregation

Healthy missional marker: Our preaching and teaching in all settings reflect careful preparation, relevance, and creativity.

Scripture: Psalm 119:169-176 (adapted for a congregational setting)

“Let our cry come before you, O Lord;
 give us understanding according to your word.
 Let our supplication come before you;
 deliver us according to your promise.
 Our lips will pour forth praise,
 because you teach us your statutes.
 Our tongues will sing of your promise,
 for all your commandments are right.
 Let your hand be ready to help us,
 for we have chosen your precepts.
 We long for your salvation, O Lord,
 and your law is our delight.
 Let us live that we may praise you,
 and let your ordinances help us.

We have gone astray like lost sheep; seek out your servants,
for we do not forget your commandments.”

Reflect: In what ways do you see God’s Word shaping the life of disciples and discipleship activity in your church?

Day 3: May 12, 2022

Centrality of the Word in the denomination

Healthy missional marker: We believe that the Bible is the only perfect rule for faith, doctrine, and conduct.

Scripture: Psalm 19:7-14

“The law of the Lord is perfect,
reviving the soul;
the decrees of the Lord are sure,
making wise the simple;
the precepts of the Lord are right,
rejoicing the heart;
the commandment of the Lord is clear,
enlightening the eyes;
the fear of the Lord is pure,
enduring forever;
the ordinances of the Lord are true
and righteous altogether.
More to be desired are they than gold,
even much fine gold;
sweeter also than honey,
and drippings of the honeycomb.

Moreover by them is your servant warned;
in keeping them there is great reward.
But who can detect their errors?
Clear me from hidden faults.
Keep back your servant also from the insolent;
do not let them have dominion over me.
Then I shall be blameless,
and innocent of great transgression.

Let the words of my mouth and the meditation of my heart
be acceptable to you,
O Lord, my rock and my redeemer.”

Reflect: In what ways do you see the Bible shaping the life of the Reformed Church in America?

Day 4: May 13, 2022

Life-transforming walk with Jesus in your own life

Healthy missional marker: We are equipped and growing in our ability to use a variety of spiritual growth resources, experiences, and settings.

Scripture: 1 Corinthians 13:1-8

“If I speak in the tongues of mortals and of angels, but do not have love, I am a noisy gong or a clanging cymbal. And if I have prophetic powers, and understand all mysteries and all knowledge, and if I have all faith, so as to remove mountains, but do not have love, I am nothing. If I give away all my possessions, and if I hand over my body so that I may boast, but do not have love, I gain nothing.

Love is patient; love is kind; love is not envious or boastful or arrogant or rude. It does not insist on its own way; it is not irritable or resentful; it does not rejoice in wrongdoing, but rejoices in the truth. It bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things.

Love never ends. But as for prophecies, they will come to an end; as for tongues, they will cease; as for knowledge, it will come to an end.”

Reflect: How is love growing in your life beyond your current knowledge and practice? Is there a specific relationship God seems to be asking you to be attentive to?

Day 5: May 14, 2022

Life-transforming walk with Jesus in your congregation

Healthy missional marker: We understand the radical nature of the message and mission of Jesus that continually deconstructs and reconstructs a person's life.

Scripture: Galatians 5:22-26

“By contrast, the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, generosity, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control. There is no law against such things. And those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires. If we live by the Spirit, let us also be guided by the Spirit. Let us not become conceited, competing against one another, envying one another.”

Reflect: Paul shares how death (deconstruction) of the flesh precedes resurrected (reconstructed) life in the Spirit. What in the culture of your church might God be deconstructing so the fruit of the Spirit can grow? Which fruit of the Spirit is most evident in your congregation? Which fruit of the Spirit is in most need of attention?

Day 6: May 15, 2022

Life-transforming walk with Jesus in the denomination

Healthy missional marker: We are learning how to be attentive to Christ in all circumstances.

Scripture: Isaiah 35:1-10

“The wilderness and the dry land shall be glad,
the desert shall rejoice and blossom;
like the crocus it shall blossom abundantly,
and rejoice with joy and singing.
The glory of Lebanon shall be given to it,
the majesty of Carmel and Sharon.
They shall see the glory of the Lord,
the majesty of our God.

Strengthen the weak hands,
and make firm the feeble knees.
Say to those who are of a fearful heart,
‘Be strong, do not fear!
Here is your God.
He will come with vengeance,
with terrible recompense.
He will come and save you.’

Then the eyes of the blind shall be opened,
and the ears of the deaf unstopped;
then the lame shall leap like a deer,
and the tongue of the speechless sing for joy.
For waters shall break forth in the wilderness,
and streams in the desert;
the burning sand shall become a pool,
and the thirsty ground springs of water;
the haunt of jackals shall become a swamp,
the grass shall become reeds and rushes.

A highway shall be there,
and it shall be called the Holy Way;
the unclean shall not travel on it,
but it shall be for God’s people;
no traveler, not even fools, shall go astray.
No lion shall be there,
nor shall any ravenous beast come up on it;
they shall not be found there,
but the redeemed shall walk there.
And the ransomed of the Lord shall return,
and come to Zion with singing;
everlasting joy shall be upon their heads;
they shall obtain joy and gladness,
and sorrow and sighing shall flee away.”

Reflect: What is a challenge facing the RCA that Jesus might be using to transform us? How might this inform your prayers for the RCA?

Day 7: May 16, 2022**Intentional faith sharing in your own life**

Healthy missional marker: We have identifiable pathways for faith sharing to take place in our ministries.

Scripture: Mark 2:1-11

“When he returned to Capernaum after some days, it was reported that he was at home. So many gathered around that there was no longer room for them, not even in front of the door; and he was speaking the word to them. Then some people came, bringing to him a paralyzed man, carried by four of them. And when they could not bring him to Jesus because of the crowd, they removed the roof above him; and after having dug through it, they let down the mat on which the paralytic lay. When Jesus saw their faith, he said to the paralytic, ‘Son, your sins are forgiven.’ Now some of the scribes were sitting there, questioning in their hearts, ‘Why does this fellow speak in this way? It is blasphemy! Who can forgive sins but God alone?’ At once Jesus perceived in his spirit that they were discussing these questions among themselves; and he said to them, ‘Why do you raise such questions in your hearts? Which is easier, to say to the paralytic, “Your sins are forgiven,” or to say, “Stand up and take your mat and walk”? But so that you may know that the Son of Man has authority on earth to forgive sins’—he said to the paralytic—‘I say to you, stand up, take your mat and go to your home.’”

Reflect: What gesture of compassion might you share that would help others see Jesus and his grace? What person or group could you be intentional about sharing your faith with? Whom are you “carrying” to Jesus?

Day 8: May 17, 2022**Intentional faith sharing in your congregation**

Healthy missional marker: We are equipped and growing in our ability to build spiritual friendships and know how to share our faith as God-given opportunities arise.

Scripture: Matthew 9:9-13

“As Jesus was walking along, he saw a man called Matthew sitting at the tax booth; and he said to him, ‘Follow me.’ And he got up and followed him.

And as he sat at dinner in the house, many tax collectors and sinners came and were sitting with him and his disciples. When the Pharisees saw this, they said to his disciples, ‘Why does your teacher eat with tax collectors and sinners?’ But when he heard this, he said, ‘Those who are well have no need of a physician, but those who are sick. Go and learn what this means, “I desire mercy, not sacrifice.” For I have come to call not the righteous but sinners.’”

Reflect: If you threw a party for people to meet Jesus, whom would you invite? How does your congregation extend hospitality to people who do not regularly attend? What do the people who live near your church think about your church?

Day 9: May 18, 2022

Intentional faith sharing in the denomination

Healthy missional marker: We are burdened for the spiritual condition of those who do not yet know Christ.

Scripture: Luke 10:25-37

“Just then a lawyer stood up to test Jesus. ‘Teacher,’ he said, ‘what must I do to inherit eternal life?’ He said to him, ‘What is written in the law? What do you read there?’ He answered, ‘You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your strength, and with all your mind; and your neighbor as yourself.’ And he said to him, ‘You have given the right answer; do this, and you will live.’

But wanting to justify himself, he asked Jesus, ‘And who is my neighbor?’ Jesus replied, ‘A man was going down from Jerusalem to Jericho, and fell into the hands of robbers, who stripped him, beat him, and went away, leaving him half dead. Now by chance a priest was going down that road; and when he saw him, he passed by on the other side. So likewise a Levite, when he came to the place and saw him, passed by on the other side. But a Samaritan while traveling came near him; and when he saw him, he was moved with pity. He went to him and bandaged his wounds, having poured oil and wine on them. Then he put him on his own animal, brought him to an inn, and took care of him. The next day he took out two denarii, gave them to the innkeeper, and said, “Take care of him; and when I come back, I will repay you whatever more you spend.” Which of these three, do you think, was a neighbor to the man who fell into the hands of the robbers?’ He said, ‘The one who showed him mercy.’ Jesus said to him, ‘Go and do likewise.’”

Reflect: How does the RCA connect with those who do not know Christ? How are you informed of this work? How are you supporting it?

Day 10: May 19, 2022

Compelling Christian community in your own life

Healthy missional marker: We understand that our love for one another is a powerful testimony to Jesus.

Scripture: 1 John 4:9-11, 19-21

“God’s love was revealed among us in this way: God sent his only Son into the world so that we might live through him. In this is love, not that we loved God but that he loved us and sent his Son to be the atoning sacrifice for our sins. Beloved, since God loved us so much, we also ought to love one another. ...

We love because he first loved us. Those who say, ‘I love God,’ and hate their brothers or sisters, are liars; for those who do not love a brother or sister whom they have seen, cannot love God whom they have not seen. The commandment we have from him is this: those who love God must love their brothers and sisters also.”

Reflect: How does loving your neighbor function as a powerful testimony to Jesus? How is God shaping you to be more compassionate and loving?

Day 11: May 20, 2022

Compelling Christian community in your congregation

Healthy missional marker: We share life together beyond the worship service.

Scripture: 1 John 3:16-18

“We know love by this, that he laid down his life for us—and we ought to lay down our lives for one another. How does God’s love abide in anyone who has the world’s goods and sees a brother or sister in need and yet refuses help? Little children, let us love, not in word or speech, but in truth and action.”

Reflect: What is the value of people connecting beyond worship and other church meetings? Where do you connect with your church family beyond worship?

Day 12: May 21, 2022

Compelling Christian community in the denomination

Healthy missional marker: We love each other as we are, not as we should be.

Scripture: 1 Corinthians 12:12-20, 27

“For just as the body is one and has many members, and all the members of the body, though many, are one body, so it is with Christ. For in the one Spirit we were all baptized into one body—Jews or Greeks, slaves or free—and we were all made to drink of one Spirit.

Indeed, the body does not consist of one member but of many. If the foot would say, ‘Because I am not a hand, I do not belong to the body,’ that would not make it any less a part of the body. And if the ear would say, ‘Because I am not an eye, I do not belong to the body,’ that would not make it any less a part of the body. If the whole body were an eye, where would the hearing be? If the whole body were hearing, where would the sense of smell be? But as it is, God arranged the members in the body, each one of them, as he chose. If all were a single member, where would the body be? As it is, there are many members, yet one body. ... Now you are the body of Christ and individually members of it.”

Reflect: In what ways could you come to appreciate someone’s contribution to the life of the whole body even if you don’t see eye-to-eye on everything?

Day 13: May 22, 2022

Transforming communities through active compassion, mercy, and justice ministries in your own life

Healthy missional marker: We are burdened for the hurting people in our community and beyond.

Scripture: Isaiah 61:1-2; Isaiah 58:6-7

“The spirit of the Lord God is upon me,
because the Lord has anointed me;
he has sent me to bring good news to the oppressed,

to bind up the brokenhearted,
to proclaim liberty to the captives,
and release to the prisoners;
to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor,
and the day of vengeance of our God;
to comfort all who mourn."

"Is not this the fast that I choose:
to loose the bonds of injustice,
to undo the thongs of the yoke,
to let the oppressed go free,
and to break every yoke?
Is it not to share your bread with the hungry,
and bring the homeless poor into your house;
when you see the naked, to cover them,
and not to hide yourself from your own kin?"

Reflect: When we read passages like these, we often picture the spiritually poor and spiritual captives. What if we read these passages picturing people living in real economic poverty, trapped by unfair and unjust trade practices, or locked in prisons with cold iron and steel bars? How would that transform you personally? How might that transform your communities?

Day 14: May 23, 2022

Transforming communities through active compassion, mercy, and justice ministries in your congregation

Healthy missional marker: We are equipped and growing in our ability to see and address the hurts and the causes of hurt in our community and beyond.

Scripture: Matthew 25:34-40

"Then the king will say to those at his right hand, 'Come, you that are blessed by my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world; for I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you welcomed me, I was naked and you gave me clothing, I was sick and you took care of me, I was in prison and you visited me.' Then the righteous will answer him, 'Lord, when was it that we saw you hungry and gave you food, or thirsty and gave you something to drink? And when was it that we saw you a stranger and welcomed you, or naked and gave you clothing? And when was it that we saw you sick or in prison and visited you?' And the king will answer them, 'Truly I tell you, just as you did it to one of the least of these who are members of my family, you did it to me.'"

Reflect: Who are the "strangers, hungry, naked, and prisoners" in your neighborhood? How is your congregation welcoming, feeding, clothing, and caring for these people? What needs to be celebrated? What needs to be improved?

Day 15: May 24, 2022

Transforming communities through active compassion, mercy, and justice ministries in the denomination

Healthy missional marker: We have identifiable pathways for compassion, mercy, and justice ministries to take place.

Scripture: James 1:26-27

“If any think they are religious, and do not bridle their tongues but deceive their hearts, their religion is worthless. Religion that is pure and undefiled before God, the Father, is this: to care for orphans and widows in their distress, and to keep oneself unstained by the world.”

Reflect: How might compassion, mercy, and justice ministries be related to discipleship?

Explore these resources to find out more about what the RCA is doing in the world today. Pray for those involved and ask God how you might become involved in compassion, mercy, and justice ministries of the RCA.

- Commission on Christian Action: www.rca.org/about/government/general-synod/commissions/commission-on-christian-action
- Dismantling racism: www.rca.org/about/dismantling-racism
- Advocacy and race relations: www.rca.org/office-of-advocacy-and-race-relations

Day 16: May 25, 2022

Global perspective and engagement in your own life

Healthy missional marker: We raise the sights of our members beyond our congregation and community by developing a biblical worldview; we often pray for and reference global matters.

Scripture: John 1:9-14

“The true light, which enlightens everyone, was coming into the world.

He was in the world, and the world came into being through him; yet the world did not know him. He came to what was his own, and his own people did not accept him. But to all who received him, who believed in his name, he gave power to become children of God, who were born, not of blood or of the will of the flesh or of the will of man, but of God.

And the Word became flesh and lived among us, and we have seen his glory, the glory as of a father’s only son, full of grace and truth.”

Reflect: How has your faith enlarged your perspective of the world outside your local community?

Day 17: May 26, 2022

Global perspective and engagement in your congregation

Healthy missional marker: We are equipped and growing in our ability to participate in the global dimensions of our ministry.

Scripture: Acts 1:8

“But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.”

Reflect: What global missions does your congregation support? In what ways does your congregation reach across borders to share the gospel message?

Day 18: May 27, 2022

Global perspective and engagement in the denomination

Healthy missional marker: We have identifiable pathways to support the cause of Christ globally.

Scripture: Revelation 5:9-10

“They sing a new song:

‘You are worthy to take the scroll
and to open its seals,
for you were slaughtered and by your blood you ransomed for God
saints from every tribe and language and people and nation;
you have made them to be a kingdom and priests serving our God,
and they will reign on earth.’”

Reflect: The RCA has a rich and fruitful tradition of global mission. Visit www.rca.org/mission to learn more about how RCA is sharing Christ globally. Pray about how you might become part of this mission.

Day 19: May 28, 2022

Heartfelt worship in your own life

Healthy missional marker: We exalt and celebrate God for who God is, what God has done, what God is doing, and what God will do.

Scripture: Romans 12:1

“I appeal to you therefore, brothers and sisters, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship.”

Reflect: Beyond prayer, song, and Scripture reading, how do you worship the Lord outside of Sunday morning?

Day 20: May 29, 2022

Heartfelt worship in your congregation

Healthy missional marker: People leave worship knowing something more about the heart of God and about their own hearts.

Scripture: Psalm 122:1; 1 Peter 2:4-6

“I was glad when they said to me,
‘Let us go to the house of the Lord!’”

“Come to him, a living stone, though rejected by mortals yet chosen and precious in God’s sight, and like living stones, let yourselves be built into a spiritual house, to be a holy priesthood, to offer spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ. For it stands in scripture:

‘See, I am laying in Zion a stone,
a cornerstone chosen and precious;
and whoever believes in him will not be put to shame.’”

Reflect: How does regularly meeting with others for worship impact your walk with Jesus?

Day 21: May 30, 2022

Heartfelt worship in the denomination

Healthy missional marker: Worship reflects careful preparation to help give voice to many dimensions of response to God, such as adoration, praise, contrition, lament, and commitment.

Scripture: Psalm 95:1-7

“O come, let us sing to the Lord;
let us make a joyful noise to the rock of our salvation!
Let us come into his presence with thanksgiving;
let us make a joyful noise to him with songs of praise!
For the Lord is a great God,
and a great King above all gods.
In his hand are the depths of the earth;
the heights of the mountains are his also.
The sea is his, for he made it,
and the dry land, which his hands have formed.

O come, let us worship and bow down,
let us kneel before the Lord, our Maker!
For he is our God,
and we are the people of his pasture,
and the sheep of his hand.”

Reflect: Which of the following aspects of worship are currently most meaningful to you: praise, thanksgiving, repentance, lament, or commitment?

Make a list of all those who help plan and lead in worship at your church. Don't forget custodians, administrators, and technicians in addition to people who are more visible. Take some time to pray for them and give them a special word of encouragement this week.

The RCA has resources to help churches prepare for worship at www.rca.org/rca-worship-resources.

Day 22: May 31, 2022

Sacrificial and generous living and giving in your own life

Healthy missional marker: We help people discover, develop, and deploy their spiritual gifts.

Scripture: 1 Corinthians 12:1, 4-11

"Now concerning spiritual gifts, brothers and sisters, I do not want you to be uninformed. ... Now there are varieties of gifts, but the same Spirit; and there are varieties of services, but the same Lord; and there are varieties of activities, but it is the same God who activates all of them in everyone. To each is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good. To one is given through the Spirit the utterance of wisdom, and to another the utterance of knowledge according to the same Spirit, to another faith by the same Spirit, to another gifts of healing by the one Spirit, to another the working of miracles, to another prophecy, to another the discernment of spirits, to another various kinds of tongues, to another the interpretation of tongues. All these are activated by one and the same Spirit, who allots to each one individually just as the Spirit chooses."

Reflect: Do you know your spiritual gifts? How are you using these gifts to serve Christ and the church? Who has helped you or could help you develop your spiritual gifts?

Day 23: June 1, 2022

Sacrificial and generous living and giving in your congregation

Healthy missional marker: We have many examples of lifestyle choices being made on the basis of stewardship and the priority God plays in the lives of our members.

Scripture: Acts 4:32-37

"Now the whole group of those who believed were of one heart and soul, and no one claimed private ownership of any possessions, but everything they owned was held in common. With great power the apostles gave their testimony to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus, and great grace was upon them all. There was not a needy person among them, for as many as owned lands or houses sold them and brought the proceeds of what was sold. They laid it at the apostles' feet, and it was distributed to each as any had need. There was a Levite, a native of Cyprus, Joseph, to whom the apostles gave the name Barnabas (which means 'son of encouragement'). He sold a field that belonged to him, then brought the money, and laid it at the apostles' feet."

Reflect: What is a recent example of your congregation being generous? Where might you have the opportunity to practice generosity currently? Have you ever been challenged or

encouraged by your church to consider making a change in your lifestyle so that you could be more generous?

Day 24: June 2, 2022

Sacrificial and generous living and giving in the denomination

Healthy missional marker: We regularly, graciously, and unapologetically teach on the importance of financial stewardship in the spiritual growth of the Christian.

Scripture: 2 Corinthians 8:1-7

“We want you to know, brothers and sisters, about the grace of God that has been granted to the churches of Macedonia; for during a severe ordeal of affliction, their abundant joy and their extreme poverty have overflowed in a wealth of generosity on their part. For, as I can testify, they voluntarily gave according to their means, and even beyond their means, begging us earnestly for the privilege of sharing in this ministry to the saints—and this, not merely as we expected; they gave themselves first to the Lord and, by the will of God, to us, so that we might urge Titus that, as he had already made a beginning, so he should also complete this generous undertaking among you. Now as you excel in everything—in faith, in speech, in knowledge, in utmost eagerness, and in our love for you—so we want you to excel also in this generous undertaking.”

Reflect: Where do we see the grace of giving in the RCA? How might we become more generous? What could we do as a denomination to encourage growth in the grace of giving?

Day 25: June 3, 2022

Culture of godly leadership in your own life

Healthy missional marker: Our leaders at all levels serve with character, competence, and conviction.

Scripture: Hebrews 13:7

“Remember your leaders, those who spoke the word of God to you; consider the outcome of their way of life, and imitate their faith.”

Reflect: What leadership traits do you see in this verse? How is God developing leadership in your life?

Day 26: June 4, 2022

Culture of godly leadership in your congregation

Healthy missional marker: We continually identify and train godly leaders for all dimensions of our ministry.

Scripture: Philippians 2:19-22

“I hope in the Lord Jesus to send Timothy to you soon, so that I may be cheered by news of you. I have no one like him who will be genuinely concerned for your welfare. All of them are seeking their own interests, not those of Jesus Christ. But Timothy’s worth you know, how like a son with a father he has served with me in the work of the gospel.”

Reflect: How does your congregation identify, train, and encourage future leaders? Who in your church could be encouraged to take a greater leadership role? (Don’t overlook yourself.) Who, like Timothy, may be called to a wider service?

Day 27: June 5, 2022

Culture of godly leadership in the denomination

Healthy missional marker: A spirit of collegiality pervades, with our people trusting our leaders and our leaders trusting our people.

Scripture: 1 Peter 5:1-11

“Now as an elder myself and a witness of the sufferings of Christ, as well as one who shares in the glory to be revealed, I exhort the elders among you to tend the flock of God that is in your charge, exercising the oversight, not under compulsion but willingly, as God would have you do it—not for sordid gain but eagerly. Do not lord it over those in your charge, but be examples to the flock. And when the chief shepherd appears, you will win the crown of glory that never fades away. In the same way, you who are younger must accept the authority of the elders. And all of you must clothe yourselves with humility in your dealings with one another, for

‘God opposes the proud,
but gives grace to the humble.’

Humble yourselves therefore under the mighty hand of God, so that he may exalt you in due time. Cast all your anxiety on him, because he cares for you. Discipline yourselves, keep alert. Like a roaring lion your adversary the devil prowls around, looking for someone to devour. Resist him, steadfast in your faith, for you know that your brothers and sisters in all the world are undergoing the same kinds of suffering. And after you have suffered for a little while, the God of all grace, who has called you to his eternal glory in Christ, will himself restore, support, strengthen, and establish you. To him be the power forever and ever. Amen.”

Reflect: Make a list of people in the denomination who you consider to be leaders, both official and unofficial. Pray for these people and find an opportunity to encourage them.

Day 28: June 6, 2022

Fruitful organizational structures in your own life

Healthy missional marker: Our organizational structures are designed to be efficient at making decisions while at the same time building congregational ownership for those decisions.

Scripture: Acts 6:1-17

Note: This passage references choosing men as deacons. The passage is included for the organizational principles it represents, not to make a case for male-only leadership.

“Now during those days, when the disciples were increasing in number, the Hellenists complained against the Hebrews because their widows were being neglected in the daily distribution of food. And the twelve called together the whole community of the disciples and said, ‘It is not right that we should neglect the word of God in order to wait on tables. Therefore, friends, select from among yourselves seven men of good standing, full of the Spirit and of wisdom, whom we may appoint to this task, while we, for our part, will devote ourselves to prayer and to serving the word.’ What they said pleased the whole community, and they chose Stephen, a man full of faith and the Holy Spirit, together with Philip, Prochorus, Nicanor, Timon, Parmenas, and Nicolaus, a proselyte of Antioch. They had these men stand before the apostles, who prayed and laid their hands on them.

The word of God continued to spread; the number of the disciples increased greatly in Jerusalem, and a great many of the priests became obedient to the faith.”

Reflect: What is one ministry you are a part of that you feel is meaningful and fruitful? What helped to prepare you for that role? How are you supporting leaders in your church?

Day 29: June 7, 2022

Fruitful organizational structures in your congregation

Healthy missional marker: We can articulate a compelling, Christ-honoring vision for our church.

Scripture: Nehemiah 2:11-18

“So I came to Jerusalem and was there for three days. Then I got up during the night, I and a few men with me; I told no one what my God had put into my heart to do for Jerusalem. The only animal I took was the animal I rode. I went out by night by the Valley Gate past the Dragon’s Spring and to the Dung Gate, and I inspected the walls of Jerusalem that had been broken down and its gates that had been destroyed by fire. Then I went on to the Fountain Gate and to the King’s Pool; but there was no place for the animal I was riding to continue. So I went up by way of the valley by night and inspected the wall. Then I turned back and entered by the Valley Gate, and so returned. The officials did not know where I had gone or what I was doing; I had not yet told the Jews, the priests, the nobles, the officials, and the rest that were to do the work.

Then I said to them, ‘You see the trouble we are in, how Jerusalem lies in ruins with its gates burned. Come, let us rebuild the wall of Jerusalem, so that we may no longer suffer disgrace.’ I told them that the hand of my God had been gracious upon me, and also the words that the king had spoken to me. Then they said, ‘Let us start building!’ So they committed themselves to the common good.”

Reflect: What ministry or activity seems to unite people in your church? How would you articulate what God is calling your local congregation to be and do in your community?

Day 30: June 8, 2022

Fruitful organizational structures in the denomination

Healthy missional marker: We embrace evaluation as normal and natural, and we work through conflict constructively.

Scripture: Exodus 18:5, 13-26

Note: This passage references Moses choosing men as leaders. The passage is included for the organizational principles it represents, not to make a case for male-only leadership.

“Jethro, Moses’ father-in-law, came into the wilderness where Moses was encamped at the mountain of God, bringing Moses’ sons and wife to him. ... The next day Moses sat as judge for the people, while the people stood around him from morning until evening. When Moses’ father-in-law saw all that he was doing for the people, he said, ‘What is this that you are doing for the people? Why do you sit alone, while all the people stand around you from morning until evening?’ Moses said to his father-in-law, ‘Because the people come to me to inquire of God. When they have a dispute, they come to me and I decide between one person and another, and I make known to them the statutes and instructions of God.’ Moses’ father-in-law said to him, ‘What you are doing is not good. You will surely wear yourself out, both you and these people with you. For the task is too heavy for you; you cannot do it alone. Now listen to me. I will give you counsel, and God be with you! You should represent the people before God, and you should bring their cases before God; teach them the statutes and instructions and make known to them the way they are to go and the things they are to do. You should also look for able men among all the people, men who fear God, are trustworthy, and hate dishonest gain; set such men over them as officers over thousands, hundreds, fifties, and tens. Let them sit as judges for the people at all times; let them bring every important case to you, but decide every minor case themselves. So it will be easier for you, and they will bear the burden with you. If you do this, and God so commands you, then you will be able to endure, and all these people will go to their home in peace.’

So Moses listened to his father-in-law and did all that he had said. Moses chose able men from all Israel and appointed them as heads over the people, as officers over thousands, hundreds, fifties, and tens. And they judged the people at all times; hard cases they brought to Moses, but any minor case they decided themselves.”

Reflect: We are in the midst of a major structural evaluation in the RCA. What comes to your mind as you think about supporting and praying for the Implementation Team? How are you a person of peace in the midst of tension? What could you do to make a positive impact?

