

REPORT OF THE COUNCIL FOR PACIFIC AND ASIAN AMERICAN MINISTRIES

The *Book of Church Order* (Chapter 3, Part I, Article 3, Section 2b) 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.”

CPAAM Leadership During the Pandemic and Post-Pandemic

For the last two years of the COVID-19 pandemic, Council for Pacific and Asian American (CPAAM) churches and their pastors have been coping with the situation of lockdown, social distancing, and virtual services. Pastors, especially, have been working hard to go through an inevitable change and renewal for the mission and ministry and for member care. First of all, pastors and church leaders focused on equipping themselves with advanced technology for online worship services, small group prayer meetings, and Bible study sessions. As the strong restrictions were withdrawn and areas have begun to open up, churches have provided either in-person, socially distanced services or online services. Also, pastors needed to be creative in providing pastoral care that helps congregation members stay connected in the midst of isolation and a disconnecting environment. The use of online meeting tools, like Zoom meetings, for conducting consistory meetings and classis gatherings enabled churches and pastors to overcome the limitation of gospel ministries during the pandemic. It is by God’s amazing grace that the mission and ministry of CPAAM churches have not been distracted by the global pandemic. God’s unchanging love empowered our churches and leaders to advance the kingdom of God in new and unique ways.

Asian American Experiences of Racism

On February 3, 2022, Rev. Dr. James Brumm hosted a virtual webinar called “Asian American Experiences of Racism and Anti-Racism” through the Reformed Church Center at New Brunswick Theological Seminary. Three CPAAM speakers from three different Asian countries and generations shared their perspectives. Gerri Igarashi Yoshida is a third-generation Japanese American impacted by the World War II mass incarceration of her people group. Rev. Thomas Song is a first-generation Korean American minister at Steinway Reformed Church in Astoria, New York. Pastor Tiffany Fan is a 1.5-generation church leader from Taiwan at Grace Christian Church in the Bronx. Each individual shared their unique viewpoints on how racism impacts their daily lives and how it impacts their Asian American families, churches, and communities. Although they share certain cultural values from their home countries in Asia, many differences exist due to where and when their families came to America. They also shared positive ways to end racism by allying, cooperating, and collaborating with other racial/ethnic groups, educating and advocating, and getting to know one another on an individual basis. All three of them commented on how anti-Asian hate crimes have greatly increased during the COVID-19 pandemic as Asian Americans are targeted, scapegoated, and blamed for the current crisis.

A lively discussion followed in which audience members could share their insights, experiences, and opinions. A goal of webinars like this is to give Asian Americans an opportunity to openly speak out about what is true for them in a sacred, safe space where their voices can be heard, affirmed, and validated. This leads to greater understanding, cooperation, appreciation, and wholeness within the church, the denomination, and the communities where we live, work, and

worship. We invite other Asian Americans to boldly share their stories and for all of us to listen deeply to one another to promote love, peace, and unity in the body of Christ.

Joint Racial/Ethnic Council Virtual Gatherings

On August 26, 2021, the RCA's four racial/ethnic councils had a joint virtual gathering that consisted of worship, prayer, and storytelling. The meeting was long but well organized to keep the participants engaged. We are currently focusing on speaking with one voice to dismantle racism and to journey toward a truly multiracial future freed from racism within the RCA. Different members of the CPAAM community participated in various programs on dismantling racism offered by the Reformed Church Center at New Brunswick Theological Seminary.

New Officers Elected to the CPAAM Executive Committee

CPAAM was unable to hold its annual consultation in 2020 and 2021 due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Therefore, all executive committee members agreed to serve an extended term for the last two years. Since Rev. Kyunghoon Suh's term as chairperson ended in the fall of 2021, we elected new officers as follows: Rev. Fransisca Rumokoy as chair, Rev. Jae Hyun Ahn as vice chair, Mr. Kelvin Kong as secretary, and Mrs. Peihuang Chen as treasurer.

Update on CPAAM Pastors and Churches

Rev. Fransisca Rumokoy became the senior minister of the Reformed Church in Metuchen. There are two different language groups, English and Indonesian, under her leadership. The Classis of the Greater Palisades accepted Rev. Dong-Won Han as a new minister who leads a small mission church that will be an official RCA church after it is fully organized. Rev. Peter Chen was installed at Fair Lawn Reformed Church in New Jersey. The Taiwanese churches gathered for their annual retreat online, and Ms. Lynn Min was the keynote speaker for the English-speaking program. Mr. Kelvin Kong launched a new congregation for third culture young adults in January.

Conclusion

CPAAM continues to be a uniquely diverse group consisting of members from various different countries in Asia including China, India, Indonesia, Japan, Korea, Laos, Taiwan, Thailand, and more. Members all speak many different languages and dialects. Although many Americans tend to think that all Asians look alike, think alike, and sound alike, in fact, we are all different and our histories have often been in conflict, war, and rivalry. Today, the CPAAM churches have much to share and learn in terms of dealing with multiracial issues and breaking down the stereotypical barriers that have been dividing us. In Jesus's name and by the power of the Holy Spirit, we press onward toward the goal of racial unity and the oneness that is called for in the body of Christ. It has been an honor for CPAAM for the last 42 years to become an effective channel for connecting Asian churches and leaders and the larger denomination, including other racial/ethnic councils, in prayer and hope for moving forward toward our common goal of a multiracial future freed from racism.

Respectfully submitted by
Fransisca Rumokoy (chairperson)
Peihuang Chen, Kelvin Kong, Jae Hyun Ahn, Stephen Kim, Grace Rohrer,
Kyunghoon Suh (*ex officio*)