

REPORT OF THE GENERAL SYNOD COUNCIL ON COMMUNICATION

Since its origins in 1628, the Reformed Church in America (RCA) has given testimony to the goodness and faithfulness of God. Today, we continue to share stories of how God is at work among us. We also share ideas, goals, concerns, prayer needs, and other information and resources. This happens in a wide variety of ways, utilizing longstanding communication channels alongside new ones.

Supporting Denominational Priorities

In response to shrinking budgets over the past few years, the General Synod Council (GSC) communication staff have changed the way they work and pared down communication vehicles, focusing on the things that are most important and most valued. This includes communicating about and providing marketing support for key RCA initiatives, including RCA Global Mission and the Center for Church Multiplication and Ministry. Over the last two years, staff have also assisted with communication and updates from the restructuring team.

Faithward Serves a Growing Audience

A discipleship website the RCA launched in 2019 has reached more than 6.5 million users in its first five years.

Faithward.org, focused on moving faith forward, includes ideas for living out your faith, reflections on Scripture, and resources for your church. In its first year, Faithward helped church leaders connect with resources and spend time in thoughtful reflection about faith. It also engaged people asking big questions like “Who is God?” and “How do I know God’s listening when I pray?” and “How do I know what God wants for me?” Contributors come from across the RCA and sometimes outside it.

As Faithward’s reach grew, it began to shift from a blog site to a resourcing hub for the wider church. The website contains many resources for RCA leaders and church members, but it also serves a much wider audience. In the last year alone, Faithward has reached more than 3 million users, from pastors looking for tools to teens struggling with their faith. In the last year, people have visited Faithward from nearly every country in the world.

What began as a small, experimental ministry has become a digital space for discipleship, spiritual growth, transformation, and connection.

All Faithward content is now available in English and Spanish, and the number of Spanish-language visitors has grown to match site traffic in English. When the site was solely in English, traffic came primarily from North America, followed by Africa. Those continents continue to provide steady traffic, and site visits from South and Central America have skyrocketed.

Popular Faithward content posted in the last year includes a summer series on Sabbath-keeping as a spiritual practice, a discernment toolkit, and a year-long series on innovation that complements the Renovations learning process.

One Faithward visitor shared this comment: “Gracias por compartir tan importante material de mision. Es muy interesante ver la manera como obra de diferentes maneras atraves de las misiones transculturales...” (Thank you for sharing such important mission material. It is very interesting to see how it works in different ways through cross-cultural missions.)

Other Digital Communications Continue

The RCA website, www.rca.org, continues to resource RCA leaders with RCA-specific materials, including creeds and confessions in several languages, liturgies, and information about governance. The website is now fully available in Spanish, Portuguese, and Korean as well as English.

A News and Resources email newsletter provides provide dynamic, responsive resourcing to church leaders twice a month and keeps them connected to what is happening in the denomination. Other email newsletters provide updates related to particular topics or initiatives. Subscribe at www.rca.org/subscribe.

Translation Efforts Continue Across Platforms

As the RCA grows in diversity, the need for translated materials also grows. In addition to offering the 2023 *Book of Church Order* in Korean, Mandarin, Portuguese, and Spanish, a number of other resources have been translated. Recommendations from the General Synod workbook were translated into Spanish for Spanish-speaking delegates beginning in 2022; live English-to-Spanish interpretation is also available at General Synod. Other recent translation projects include updates from the restructuring team, the Pastoral Search Handbook, and welcome materials for new pastors.

Report on the RCA Store

The RCA Store operated as an online, print-on-demand website from 2020 to 2023. Creating the RCA Store and shifting from Faith Alive Christian Resources significantly reduced both production and fulfillment costs for the denomination.

Over the last year, resources housed on the RCA Store were migrated to Amazon.com to further reduce cost, improve customer service, and streamline staff time dedicated to the store.

As with the RCA Store, RCA resources on Amazon are print-on-demand, which requires no inventory. When an order comes in, each item is printed at that time and shipped to the purchaser.

Revenue from sales of resources supports the ministry of the Reformed Church in America.