

REPORT OF THE COUNCIL FOR PACIFIC AND ASIAN AMERICAN MINISTRIES

Introduction

The *Book of Church Order* Chapter 3, Part 1, 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.” To that end, the Council for Pacific and Asian American Ministries (CPAAM) shall continue to express the collective vision and voice of our constituents as well as advocate for the rights of our people while ensuring that we speak up and strategize together on positive strategies of resolving issues that separate us all as God’s people.

CPAAM Annual Consultation 2023 - “Learning Our Names”

CPAAM successfully held its annual consultation meeting on October 2-3, 2023, at New Brunswick Theological Seminary (NBTS). We are very grateful to NBTS for allowing CPAAM to use its facilities as a meeting place for the two-day duration of the annual consultation. The purpose of the annual consultation this year was to discuss concerns and needs as well as to encourage and support each other with a time of worship, fellowship, and networking.

The theme of this year’s consultation was “Learning Our Names,” based on a book by Sabrina Chan. This theme examines how young Asian American Christians view their identity, relationships, community, and careers as they live as an Asian here in America. We want to thank the leadership of Rev. Kelvin Kong and Mrs. Gerri Yoshida, who led the conversation and discussion of “Learning Our Names” in the annual consultation. We were able to share what it means to be Asian American, learn about the story of our names, cultures, churches, and communities based on our unique diversity, and discuss how we can bring the gospel and the pursuit of social justice in our churches and communities.

We also had Rev. Jeremy Simpson, the RCA’s director of diversity and belonging, as our keynote guest speaker, along with Rev. Young Na from the restructuring team to update us on the RCA’s restructuring plan.

The participants of this consultation meeting appreciated this opportunity to retreat from ministry, be refreshed and renewed, and return to ministry with new insights and resources.

CPAAM Executive Committee

New Officers Elected

As Rev. Fransisca Rumokoy’s term as chairperson ended in the fall of 2023, we elected the following new officers: Mr. Leo Poluan as chair, Mrs. Peihuang Chen as

vice-chair, Mr. Felix (Bo Yang) Fan as secretary, and Ms. Melanie Situmorang as treasurer.

We are so grateful to the following individuals who represented their language groups within the executive committee: Rev. Fransisca Rumokoy, Rev. Jai Hyun Ahn, and Rev. Kelvin Kong. These individuals played a pivotal role in enhancing the CPAAM ministries by offering thoughtful and wise guidance to the executive committee. We also welcome our new representatives of the Indonesian and Indian language groups: Rev. Jelty Ochotan and Rev. Narayana Das Rendla, respectively.

Joint Council Meeting

The CPAAM executive committee felt that the meeting between all the racial and ethnic groups and the joint council that took place on January 20, 2024, in Orlando, Florida, was valuable and productive. Each council learned much from hearing stories and experiences of other racial and ethnic groups. Many were especially touched by Ms. Nancy Gillis, the Native American representative, who shared the history of her people as well as the personal impact on individuals and tribes. We felt inspired that much more must be accomplished for all racial and ethnic groups to work together to dismantle racism within the RCA and to have a strong active presence in the RCA.

Asian American Experiences of Racism

In the ongoing pursuit of understanding and addressing racial dynamics within the church and the denomination, we want to shed some light on the Asian American experiences of racism in the church as part of our report for 2024. Asian American congregants continue to face persistence of racial disparities and are shedding light on instances of discrimination and prejudice within the church and denomination context.

Key highlights from the report include narratives shared by individuals who have faced various forms of racism ranging from microaggressions to overt acts of discrimination. We have faced this in the context of racism and hate crimes that exist in our very own General Synod and even in our local churches. These stories underscore the importance of acknowledging and rectifying the impact of racism on the Asian American community within the church setting.

Despite these challenges, we also capture instances of positive change and initiatives aimed at fostering inclusivity. Churches and ministries are increasingly recognizing the need for awareness, cultural sensitivity, and education to dismantle racial biases. Efforts to promote dialogue, understanding, and allyship have emerged as critical components in the ongoing journey toward a more inclusive and equitable church environment in prayer meetings, Bible studies, and more.

By amplifying the voices of those affected and offering practical solutions through our meetings and reports, we continue to fight for dismantling racism, fostering positive change, and fostering a more inclusive and supportive church community for all.

Ministry Updates in CPAAM

Japanese Ministry

The Japanese American United Church has had an interim pastor, Rev. Stanley Wayne, since August 2023. He is focusing on more outreach in the Japanese-speaking community in New York City, such as advertising in Japanese newspapers, better signage in front of the church, and participating in community events like the Japan Day parade. Mrs. Gerri Yoshida continues to be involved in Dismantling Racism Prayer Gatherings as the Asian leader—a representative voice fighting against racism.

Chinese Ministry

The Chinese members are coming back to in-person services. Preaching stations have been doing well and they are looking for a place of worship. They also celebrated the ordination of Rev. Tiffany Fan on June 25, 2023, as another Asian and female minister at Grace Christian Church in the Bronx! They continue to applaud her leadership and obedience to the call for the ministry of God.

Taiwanese Ministry

Mrs. Peihuang Chen also reported that the Taiwanese ministry in her church recently has a second-generation pastor who does double duty preaching in English and Taiwanese. They are hoping for him to not take on the load of preaching both the English and Taiwanese services, concerned that it might be too much for him to carry. She also said that the Taiwanese churches had their in-person annual joint retreat where everyone could connect and share resources together, and they had a great time of refreshing and renewal at the retreat.

Indonesian Ministry

We are happy to announce the First Reformed Church of New Hampshire, led by Rev. Jelty Ochotan. This is a new RCA Indonesian church plant in New Hampshire that began on September 10, 2023. This is not only the first Reformed Church in New Hampshire, but also in the New England region. Praise God!

The Reformed Church of Metuchen has also been growing under the leadership of Rev. Fransisca Rumokoy. Along with that, a new associate pastor, Rev. Ferani Wongkar, was also installed. Rev. Rumokoy continues to be involved in various ministries in the RCA as she is now also serving as the president of the Classis of New Brunswick, and she is assigned to help revive a dying church in the RCA along with all her other responsibilities.

Indian Ministry

The Indian ministry continues to be growing in the RCA. Rev. Savitri Mark from Columbia-Greene Classis was ordained as minister of Word and sacrament on

September 24, 2023, at First Reformed Church in Catskill, New York. She reports this with joy and gratitude.

Rev. Das Rendla continues to serve as the senior pastor at New Hope Community Church of Long Island, New York, as he looks forward to being ordained and installed in the coming months.

Korean Ministry

Ever since the global pandemic in 2020, many Asian churches, including the Korean ministries, are struggling for their members to hold in-person services. Gradually, attendance for in-person services is growing within most Korean churches. It is a huge change for many churches to provide both in-person and online worship services.

Conclusion

The Council for Pacific and Asian American Ministries (CPAAM) steadfastly upholds its mission to represent the collective vision and voice of its constituents within the Reformed Church in America, as emphasized in the 2024 report to the General Synod Council. CPAAM's unwavering dedication to advocating for racial and ethnic inclusion and economic and social justice and to fostering unity is evident in its diverse initiatives.

As CPAAM continues to amplify voices and provide practical solutions, it remains a beacon for positive change and inclusivity, embodying a steadfast commitment to dismantling racism within the RCA and representing Christ in the ministry of building his kingdom for his glory. Thank you and God bless you all.

Respectfully submitted,
Leo Poluan, chair of CPAAM