REPORT OF THE NATIVE AMERICAN INDIGENOUS MINISTRIES COUNCIL

From a Native American perspective, all of humanity is connected to each other and to the rest of creation. We are each unique, and we each have a unique gift to bring. As 1 Corinthians 12:12 affirms: "Just as a body, though one, has many parts, but all its many parts form one body, so it is with Christ" (NIV). Each part is different, and each part is important to the life and health of the body. But it is only when the parts are all connected to each other that the body is whole and well.

This year, one of the Native American Indigenous Ministries (NAIM) Council's primary goals has been to tend to the connections between members of Christ's body. Our vision is to strengthen the connections between individuals and congregations within the NAIM constituency, and to strengthen the connections between the NAIM Council and the wider RCA. Life cannot flourish without connections, and genuine connection requires mutual understanding, which is why it is necessary for NAIM and the other racial and ethnic councils to "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" (*Book of Church Order*, Chapter 3, Part I, Article 3).

In order to strengthen connections within the NAIM Council, NAIM has been strategically coordinating opportunities for NAIM members to connect with each other. In April 2025, members of all six NAIM churches gathered in Oklahoma City for a time of connection and encouragement. New and old relationships were established and strengthened through fellowship, worship, prayer, and sharing meals together. A trip to the First Americans Museum invited participants to reflect together on the history of North America's First Nations and how that history continues to impact our lives today.

In November 2025, NAIM president Clara Rice led a group from Mescalero Reformed Church in a visit to Comanche Reformed Church and Apache Reformed Church in Oklahoma. This was a powerful time of unity as representatives from these three churches spent time worshiping together, getting to know each other, hearing about each other's ministry, and considering how the NAIM churches can move forward together.

In February 2026, a group from Mescalero spent time with Jicarilla Apache Reformed Church in Dulce, New Mexico. They attended the worship service, spent time with the consistory, and shared encouraging words around NAIM's vision of unity between churches.

Our goal in the coming year is to continue to strengthen these connections within NAIM, and also to strengthen the connection between NAIM and the wider RCA through increased opportunities for communication leading to mutual understanding. In August 2025, NAIM co-hosted (alongside Women's Transformation and Leadership) a Sankofa journey on the Mescalero Apache Reservation that included representatives from 25 different churches (see www.faithward.org/how-a-cross-

cultural-trip-brought-revelation-79-to-life). This was a powerful time of connection and fellowship between people who would not ordinarily have had the opportunity to connect. It was a beautiful step toward increased understanding and connection, with many ripple effects, but there is still a long way to go.

One of the challenges faced by congregations within the NAIM Council is a widespread feeling of disconnection and isolation from the wider RCA body of believers. This is not a new concern but has been ongoing for many years. A concrete example of this disconnection is the low number of NAIM applicants submitting profile forms to the Commission on Nominations. This year, the NAIM Council has identified a specific issue that is both a cause and an effect of this disconnection: many of the individuals represented by NAIM have had relatively little (if any) opportunity to interact with the wider RCA body and therefore have minimal experience with or understanding of RCA polity, structure, and governance. The NAIM Council is taking steps to increase NAIM constituents' understanding of RCA structure, but it is also critical for greater numbers of NAIM members to experience the workings of the wider RCA through participation at the middle assembly and General Synod level. Giving more NAIM members the opportunity to experience General Synod will build increased understanding of RCA governance at the congregational level, which will facilitate a deeper connection between NAIM churches and the wider RCA.

Over the past ten General Synods, only eight Indigenous members of NAIM churches have attended General Synod as delegates. Some of these individuals have attended more than once, but only once in the past decade (2018) has there been more than two Indigenous NAIM representatives at any given General Synod. In 2017, 2021, 2022, and 2023 there was only one Indigenous NAIM representative at each General Synod, and in 2016 there were none.

Providing opportunity for increased NAIM participation at General Synod is a concrete step that can be taken to significantly increase the connection between the NAIM Council members and the wider RCA.

Therefore, we support the joint recommendation from the four racial and ethnic councils (see page 85 of this workbook).