

The Elim Waterfall

July – August – September 2026

From the Pastor:

Okay, forewarned is forearmed! ***IF*** I were you, I'd go ahead and skip 🚶 down to paragraph three. Paragraph two is a real yawner! Don't say I didn't warn you! 😊

I'm writing this part of my article the night before Julie and I leave for General Synod, the annual meeting of our denomination, the Reformed Church in America. I've probably attended 15 of these meetings with each one lasting a good six days. So, as I contemplate attending this one, I can't help but wonder...how much of my life has been spent in meetings? Consider the following. Let's begin with consistory meetings. Add to that Classis meetings. And with those Classis meetings come committee meetings...Pastoral Care and Church Supervision, Church Growth, Church Revitalization, Student Care, etc., and I've served on every one of them! And with a committee like Pastoral Care and Church Supervision, there comes additional meetings to help resolve the churches and pastors experiencing conflict. And then there's the pastoral supervision of vacant churches and I've served plenty of those...each one requiring my attendance at their consistory meetings. I have served on three Church Plant design teams...Aurora, IL, Rio Rancho, NM, and Surprise, AZ. Countless meetings! I have served as the Stated Clerk of the Classis of the Southwest and the President of the Regional Synod of the West. MORE meetings! Two of my churches ended up relocating and building new facilities. Another went through a major remodel. That meant weekly meetings with the building committee, architects, General Contractors, and the toughest bunch of all...City Hall! In both Arizona and Michigan, I was the Lead Pastor of a staff which also required weekly meetings. And if I thought my meeting days were over when I joined the Fishel Company to work with my son, Adam...***HA!*** I discovered that secular companies have even more meetings than the church! Bottom line? I have to believe...**CONSERVATIVELY SPEAKING**, that I have averaged at the very least, 4 hours a week in meetings. That means, that at my ripe old age of 76, I have spent a full year of my life with my "you know what" planted in a chair!

You didn't listen to me, did you? Even after my warning, you read it anyway. But maybe that's just as well because perhaps you can help me. Does anyone know if there is a return counter near here? I'd like to exchange all those old and used hours for new ones (Elim hours excluded, of course! 😊). Imagine! I'd have a year of my life back! Ah, meetings! The place where minutes are kept and hours are lost!

Well, with that as my introduction, you can probably understand why I'm not overly excited about attending another General Synod meeting. Making it even less appealing is my previous experience with them. There have been moments when I was convinced, I was seeing the church at its worst! Contentious, inefficient, sometimes even shameful.

Fast forward! I'm home now and I am delighted to tell you THIS meeting was different! What a refreshing joy! Hours were spent, but they were spent listening to all

the wonderful things God is doing around the world and in our denomination. This meeting was Spirit-filled and Spirit-led. It was purpose-driven, positive, harmonious, and inspiring! It was a meeting I wish all of you could have attended!

I regret that I cannot share with you the joyful spirit of the meeting. You had to be there. However, what I can share is just a brief update on the business side. And I thank Julie for helping me with this section of my article. So, this synod marked the last time delegates from regional synods and classes joined together to form the General Synod. After December 30, both entities will cease to exist and we will move to a middle assembly system. This will become the body responsible for sending delegates. Churches will be able to determine which middle assembly to become a part of as it will no longer be geographically based. At our July business meeting, the consistory will decide with which Middle Assembly we will partner. The most obvious choice for us will be the Middle Assembly of Mid-America. This middle assembly will potentially include churches from our current Classis of Illinois, as well as churches from the Classes of Illiana and Chicago with the Classis of Wisconsin still be a possibility. Julie Mann has been serving on the committee to form this middle assembly.

General Synod meetings will also move to an in-person meeting once every three years. The first virtual meeting of the General Synod will take place in **2028, our denomination's 400th anniversary year!** In the initial implementation of virtual meetings, General Synod will move to a biennial in-person rhythm, meeting in person in 2027 and 2029 and virtually in 2028 and 2030. In addition, in-person synods will be shortened by one day starting in 2027. Understandably, that will result in a huge savings as the General Synod continues to search for ways to be good stewards of our money .

The new formula for building the General Synod body allows one minister and one elder delegate for each 2,000 members or fraction thereof in a middle assembly. While this will mean fewer delegates, representation will continue to be fair and equal. It will also result in additional savings.

Both Julie and I feel blessed to have been a part of this latest General Synod. It offered us moments to grieve over recent losses and changes to our denomination but at the same time, anticipate a brighter future. The RCA is growing internationally! The largest growth is coming from Latin and South America. It was exciting to hear what God is doing in, with, and through RCA Hispanic congregations all around the world! Along with Julie, I am pleased to report that this year's meeting of the General Synod balanced deep theological and structural discussions with great moments of worship, fellowship, and yes, **EVEN** some fun! Without a doubt, this meeting set the stage for the RCA's next phase under the middle assembly system. Upcoming meetings will not only deal with the business of the larger church, it will also focus on equipping and supporting our individual churches to be Christ in the world! Stay tuned!

*This is what the Lord God showed me:
behold, a basket of summer fruit. Amos 8:1*



 RCA
Global
Mission
Update from
TOM JOHNSON

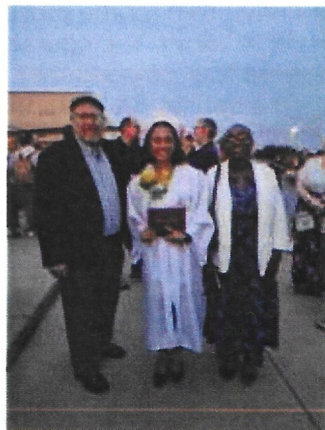


June 2026

Dear Friends,

This is the season of transitions to our family. Marie graduated from the University of Northwestern-St. Paul and Ellie finished Pella Christian High School in May. Thekla, too, had her moment in the sun, serving as a Tulip Time flower girl for three days.

In just a few weeks (July 11), Laurey will marry Ian and they will move to Boone, IA, from which the two of them will commute for their senior years at Iowa State University. Ellie starts ISU in August and Marie will live in Apple Valley, MN, a 15-minute drive to her music and Bible teaching job at United Christian Academy in Bloomington, MN. Soon, our family of six will shrink to the three of us (mom, dad and Thekla) in Pella with Ellie only coming home on her breaks.



Above left to right: Ellie with mom and dad at the Pella Christian High School graduation. Marie and her roommate both graduated with a Bachelor of Music Education degrees.



Thekla was on Pella's 2026 Tulip Court as a flower girl

Would you like to receive these updates digitally? Please email Kelli at kgilmore@rcg.org to be added to the email list. You will receive more timely updates from the missionary you support and help us be good stewards of our resources.

Likewise, the francophone ministry is transitioning from “start-up” mode to humming along with a full slate of pastoral candidates and faith workers pursuing Christian theological and leadership training in French. Not only am I working with immigrant pastors in the U.S., **but I’ve started** weekly sessions with three Young Life (an international youth ministry) staffers in Mali, three church leaders in Niger, and a dozen pastors or pastoral candidates in eastern Congo. Two of these are done with the Zoom video-conferencing platform, but in Congo WhatsApp works better with their internet.



Congolese pastors receive laptops to study with Coram Deo.

The Young Life staffers are full-time faith workers, but they are not currently interested in becoming ordained pastors. **Thus, we’re treating their training more like** continuing education, rather than having them pursue pastoral qualifications. The Nigerien church leaders are somewhat of a similar perspective, although at least one of them does intend to become a pastor after completing the Coram Deo program. For the Congolese candidates, most of them are now pastors in the Congo, but they are preparing for an alignment with certain Canadian RCA churches and want to be able to pass their commissioned pastor process in the future. Coram Deo was started to help RCA churches by providing the required commissioned pastor training, but this will be the first time that it is all done in French.

I still need to keep creating and adapting courses in French for these students. In a few cases, the courses already exist for free with another ministry, but I have to become more familiar with the content in order to lead discussions on the materials. In other cases, the course needs to be translated from English and into French. Finally, I have another three to four courses that must be created from scratch, having only a textbook to start. **I recently finished a course on “The Supernatural Kingdom and Biblical Spiritual Beings” using The Bible Project’s six videos on the topic, along with readings from the Book of Enoch and author Michael Heiser’s “Supernatural” book for the content.** The goal is for students to understand the Bible from a First Century perspective so that they can better explain the biblical texts when teaching and preaching.

PRAYERS AND PRAISES

- 1) We praise God for Marie and Ellie graduating in May! Pray for their next steps in the fall, but also for their summer ministry jobs: Marie is working with kindergartners at a Brooklyn Park, MN, Christian school summer program and Ellie is a team leader for Child Evangelism Fellowship’s five-day clubs.
- 2) Pray for wedding preparations as we approach the July 11 marriage date for Laurey and Ian. Pray for those who are traveling for the event. Pray that God will bless their married lives together. **Sadly, because of visa restrictions, no one from Niger can attend the wedding, but Aichatou’s family from Ottawa and France will be present.**
- 3) **I’m very thankful for** the new candidates we have in the French Christian leader equipping program and that **we’ve begun to reap from the earlier seeds that were planted** in developing this unique program for francophones.
- 4) **I’m grateful for some of the new individual and church support that has come in during the past few months.** I still need another four to five churches or individuals to pledge mission shares to be fully funded. **I’d be glad to talk to anyone who might be willing to help.**

In Christ,

Tom and family

RCA Global Mission does not receive denominational assessments or covenant shares. We depend on the faithful generosity of churches and individuals.

dates to Remember

July

- 4 - INDEPENDENCE DAY
- 5 - King's Camp Service & Picnic
(9560 Lindenwood Rd., Chana)
*Bring One Dish to share, your own
Table Setting and Beverage*
Worship 10:00 a.m.
Picnic 11:15 a.m.
- 12 - Communion Sunday &
Benevolent Fund Offering taken

August

- 2 - Norm Shirk leads Worship
- 23 - Consistory 11:15 a.m.

September

- 7 - LABOR DAY
- 11 - Fall Potluck at Arlene Hansen's
(Details BELOW 📖)



Birthdays & Anniversaries (A)



JULY

- 19 - Meg Opoku Amofa
- 24 - Marsha Hepfer
- 25 - Bob Maas
- 26 - Harriet Lichty
- 30 - Linda Alderks

AUGUST

- 9 - Denny Alderks
- 10 - Dan Adamson
- 13 - Arlene Hansen
- 14 - Dan Mann
- 15 - Sharon Alderks
- 16 - Joe & Dawn Somers (A)

SEPTEMBER

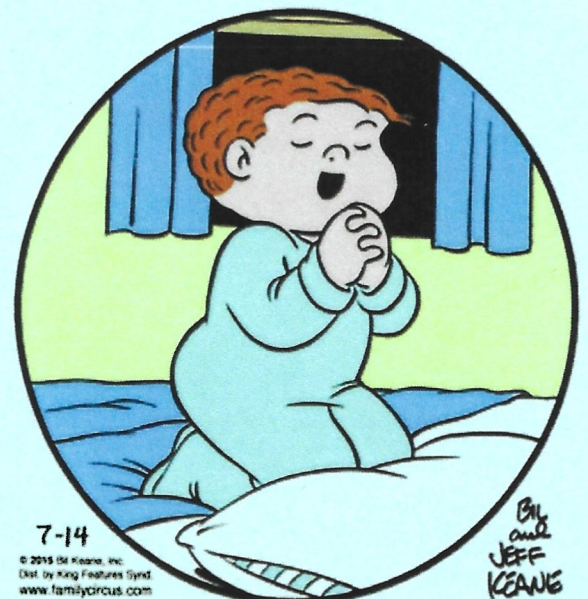
- 10 - Trevor Ashlin
- 20 - John & Norma Swanson (A)
- 25 - Owen Mann
- 27 - Gary & Marla Rozeboom (A)
- 30 - Cyndy Hayenga



ALL CHURCH FALL POTLUCK

at Arlene Hansen's (18410 Gillis Rd.,
rural Creston/Rochelle)
on Friday, September 11th, 2026 at 6:00 p.m.
Arlene will provide the main dish, drinks and
table service. She just asks that you bring a
side dish or snack to share.

It's always great fun with great food and friends!
EVERYONE IS INVITED!!!



7-14
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By
and
JEFF
KEANE

"...and just so you know, I had a
very good day today, so I'd like
more of the same tomorrow."