

ADDITIONAL GLOBAL MISSION REPORTING

The purpose of RCA Global Mission is to support the growth of the kingdom of God on earth, to foster the presence of the living Christ deeply in the hearts of people, and to advance ministries of compassion, justice, reconciliation, education, economic development, and disaster relief.

The way that Global Mission engages God's mission in the world has changed. The gospel complements and grows in and with the cultures of the world. Rather than to impose a North American understanding of the church and of ministries of compassion onto other cultures and countries, RCA Global Mission seeks to partner with national churches, indigenous church planting movements, and local organizations. Its purpose is to build the capacity of in-country organizations to engage in God's mission in each place. The RCA is no longer exporting its definition of mission. Instead, the RCA is listening to people at the local level as they define God's mission in their context and is seeking to build capacity where in the places where the local people invite the RCA in.

Missionaries from North America are still urgently needed to conduct this capacity-building work. Rather than sending RCA missionaries out to provide direct services, they are sent out to come alongside, to equip, and to train local populations to lead.

Global Mission has also developed a new global mission consulting service for RCA congregations, including the following services:

- Training for mission committees and pastors to develop their own strategy for effective global mission programs.
- Helping RCA congregations evaluate potential mission partners. With the emerging marketplace of independent global mission agencies, there is a need to discern the effectiveness of these organizations. What percent of every dollar goes to their administrative overhead? Are they seeking to empower in-country leaders and movements? How effective are they in achieving their organizational goals?
- Helping congregations add value to and scale up their mission goals.

The Challenge

These are tough times for North American denominational mission programs. Denominational mission programs are experiencing a decline in funding. RCA Global Mission, too, has less income than it did a decade ago. There has been a decline in bequests and designated gifts for mission over the past ten years. As a result, Global Mission ended the 2016 fiscal year with a \$430,000 deficit (6.5 percent of the Global Mission budget). In order to balance the budget in 2017, several areas of the budget have needed to be cut, including the elimination of two and a half staff positions in Global Mission. Supervision and administrative overhead have been streamlined. Global Mission believes that it has been able to maintain its effectiveness.

The Vision

The exciting news is that we are living through the greatest growth of Christianity in human history. In parts of Asia, Africa, Europe, and South America, indigenous church planting movements are thriving and local capacity for mission is increasing. It is a joy that RCA churches are able to be a part of this tremendous global growth in the body of Christ. It is an inspiration to realize the incredible work we are supporting throughout the world.

PIM Shares

RCA Global Mission is grateful for the faithfulness of congregations and individuals in their support of the RCA's ministries overseas. PIM (Partnership-in-Mission) shares pledged by congregations and individuals are the major source of financial support for RCA missionaries and programs, providing mission personnel with adequate resources to fulfill their ministries. Global Mission staff give thanks to God for the faithfulness of RCA congregations and individual members.

General Synod 2016 set the value of a PIM share for 2017 at \$6,400; Global Mission is recommending an increase of \$300 in the value of a PIM share for 2018. It is also asking that all congregations consider increasing pledges to RCA missionaries by \$300 to address the increasing costs of doing ministry around the world. That 4.7 percent increase would add \$247,200 to the Global Mission budget, which would close the budget gap.

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To set the value of a Partnership-in-Mission (PIM) share for 2018 at \$6,700.

Global Mission Statistics

The RCA impacts the church of Jesus Christ around the world through the work and witness of 44 in-country workers employed by RCA global partners and 49 RCA missionaries, supported by RCA congregations through PIM shares. Together, these 93 mission personnel serve and relate to 81 national churches and Christian service agencies in 26 different countries. These mission personnel around the world are supported by the pledges of 460 RCA congregations.

Transitions in Mission Personnel: Retirements

Jhonny Alicia-Báez

Jhonny Alicea-Báez retired from RCA Global Mission on December 31, 2016. In 2001, Jhonny was hired by RCA Global Mission to serve as the supervisor for Latin America. Jhonny served on the board of Words of Hope and helped bring the RCA into new mission relationships. In 2007, Jhonny was appointed director of Global Mission, a position he held for many years.

Ken and Marcia Bradsell

After Ken retired from his service with the General Synod Council and the Board of Benefits Services, he and his wife, Marcia, followed God's call to serve the Protestant Church in Oman (PCO). Ken served the church with pastoral leadership of an expatriate congregation of more than 500 families in the capital city of Muscat. He also served as the liaison between the PCO and the Omani Minister of Awqaf and Religious Affairs and was a mentor and guide to other staff members.

Duncan Hanson

In 2002, Duncan joined RCA Global Mission staff as the supervisor for Europe, the Middle East, and India. Duncan led the RCA into a commitment with the Roma of Central Europe, with the

Kurds in the eastern Mediterranean, and with African, Syrian, and Iraqi refugees in Italy. He also introduced the RCA to a relationship with the Waldensian Church. Additionally, Duncan helped to resolve a number of serious conflicts and strengthen partnerships in his region.

Tom and Liz Stewart

Tom and Liz witnessed to and served international students on the Oklahoma State University campus from 1980 to 2016. They ministered through retreats, welcome socials, host-family events, evangelistic programs, Bible studies, pastoral guidance, one-to-one witnessing, and gatherings in their home. More than 80 percent of OSU's international students return to their home countries after graduation and, by the grace of God, many students to whom the Stewarts ministered received Christ and became influential witnesses to their own culture. The Stewarts served in partnership with Mission to Internationals, Inc.

Marlin Vis

Marlin and Sally Vis have been leading educational tours in Israel and Palestine since 2005. In addition to tours of the Holy Land and the biblical history of the old city of Jerusalem, they have been leading tours of the Palestinian territories, helping groups of RCA leaders to understand the nature of the ongoing conflict in the region. Over the past several years, they have also supported programs for Israeli-Palestinian dialogue and summer camps designed to foster peace in the region. Marlin served on the board of directors of World Vision in Jerusalem, and they have supported a network of Christian organizations that provide aid and training to Palestinian Christians. Marlin and Sally's son, Josh, has replaced Marlin as an RCA missionary leading these initiatives. Sally currently is continuing her work with logistics and administration assistance for the study tours.

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Whereas the Rev. Jhonny Alicea-Báez has retired from the RCA Global Mission staff after more than 15 years of service, first as supervisor of Latin America and then as director of Global Mission; and

Whereas the Rev. Ken and Marcia Bradsell have retired from their service with the Protestant Church in Oman, following Ken's years of service on the General Synod Council and Board of Benefits Services staff; and

Whereas the Rev. Dr. Duncan Hanson has retired from the RCA Global Mission staff after more than 15 years supervising RCA Global Mission personnel and projects in Europe, the Middle East, and India; and

Whereas Tom and Liz Stewart have retired from the mission field after more than 35 years of ministering to international students at Oklahoma State University; and

Whereas Marlin Vis has retired from the mission field after 12 years of leading educational tours in Israel and Palestine with his wife, Sally;

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the 211th session of the General Synod of the Reformed Church in America, meeting June 8 through 13, 2017, on the campus of Hope College in Holland, Michigan, gives glory to God for the life and witness of Rev. Jhonny Alicea-Báez, Rev. Ken and Marcia Bradsell, Rev. Dr. Duncan Hanson, Tom and Liz Stewart, and Rev. Marlin Vis, and offers a prayer of thanksgiving for their service to RCA Global Mission.

New Mission Assignments

Larry Austin has been appointed to work in partnership with the Classis of Central California in the Inside-Out program in Oakland, California. Larry will be working with young men and boys as a chaplain at the Juvenile Justice Center and continuing those relationships after they are released back to their families and communities.

Michael and Carrie Johnson will partner with United World Mission to serve Christians in Scotland and to support church planters throughout Europe with mentoring, training, retreats, and workshops. Their work will include an internship program that will mentor and equip people to serve within the local community and across Europe.

Aaro Rytönen has been appointed as the new director of the Al Amana Centre in Oman. The Al Amana Centre is dedicated to hosting visiting groups, college and seminary-level educational programs, and dialogue between Christians and Muslims for the purpose of mutual understanding.

Filipe and Janelle Silva are serving with New Horizons Foundation in Romania, engaging youth through impact groups, camps, service in the community, and a climbing gym. Janelle is developing a ministry to women that will include a women's center.

Lois Wanyoike is the project leader for Setshabelo Family and Child Services in Botshabelo, South Africa, one of the RCA's new strategic impact areas. The goal of this strategic impact area is to reduce the number of orphans and vulnerable children and to strengthen families in Botshabelo.

Deaths

Eloise Bosch, former missionary in Oman, died on October 7, 2016. Eloise and her husband, Don, served in Oman from 1955 to 1985. Don was a surgeon at American Mission Hospital and Eloise was a teacher at Al Amana School. The Bosches were beloved by the Omani people. When the Bosches retired, Oman's ruler gave them Omani citizenship and provided them a home near Muscat. Eloise epitomized what a missionary should be: caring, committed, creative, and imaginative. For many decades, Eloise has been a model of what it can mean to follow Christ. The Reformed Church in America, the people of Oman, and indeed, the people of the whole world, are poorer that she is gone but richer that she was with us.

Elinor Heusinkveld Faber (Ellie) died on November 17, 2016. Ellie was born in St. Paul, Minnesota, on November 2, 1922, to Christian and Hilda Gran. After graduation from the University of Minnesota as a registered nurse in 1943, she married Dr. Maurice Heusinkveld. Maurice and Ellie were RCA missionaries to the Arabian Mission from 1946 to 1967, with assignments in Kuwait, Iraq, Bahrain, and Oman. After Maurice died in 1967, Ellie returned to America and settled in Holland, Michigan.

Marilyn Tanis Franken died in July 2016. Marilyn and her husband Darrell served as RCA missionaries in Bahrain for eight years from 1963 to 1968. Marilyn was a nurse at the American Mission Hospital and Darrell was pastor of the National Evangelical Church in Bahrain. The daughter of Edward Tanis, Marilyn graduated from Central College with a BS in 1954, having become a registered nurse at Iowa Methodist Hospital in Des Moines in 1953. She worked as a nurse and nursing instructor in Iowa before moving to Bahrain in 1955 to serve as a volunteer nurse at the American Mission Hospital. She returned to the United States in 1958, but her experience inspired a lifelong passion for mission service. During the first Gulf War in 1991, Marilyn served again as a Red Cross volunteer, this time in Kuwait. The Kuwait City Hospital had a staff of 300 before the war began, but only 24 staff members were left to treat the people of Kuwait during the war. Marilyn received a medal from the Department of Defense for her sacrificial service during that war.