

RCA WOMEN

A LEGACY OF

LEADERSHIP

2021 EDITION



TRANSFORMED & Transforming

“RCA Women: A Legacy of Leadership” offers a sampling of the strong, faith-filled, trailblazing women in leadership throughout the history of the Reformed Church in America (RCA). We honor and celebrate all RCA women’s stories, told and yet untold, across the United States and Canada and well beyond.

These inspiring stories, with all their joys and challenges, are part of our past, present, and future legacy as God’s beloved daughters who have and will continue to make significant, transformative contributions in the church and in the world. We stand alongside our many ecumenical sisters who also have powerful stories of living into their unique, God-given gifts and callings.

“Let the redeemed of the Lord tell their story.” –Psalm 107:2a

To share your story or that of a woman you know, please contact:

Rev. Liz Testa, coordinator for Women’s Transformation and Leadership, at women@rca.org. You can also connect with us on Facebook (She Is Called page and RCA Women closed group) or online at www.rca.org/women.



Martha Amaro was born in Mexico City in July 1963 and was raised in the southeastern part of the country, deep in the jungles of Campeche, at a natural wildlife reserve. She later obtained her bachelor's degree in hotel management at the University of the Americas in Mexico and a master's degree in Divinity from the Presbyterian Theological Seminary of Mexico. She has been married for 34 years to Jaime

Amaro and has two sons. In the summer of 2001, she was sent with her husband to Mexico by her church in Holland, Michigan, for global mission. For the last 19 years, through a partnership with the National Presbyterian Church of Mexico, she has translated Children and Worship program materials and trainings into Spanish and trained more than 200 churches across Mexico, developing a network of 52 trainers nationwide. Since 2010, she has been developing programs to serve indigenous children at risk, providing basic education and evangelism. The Amaros currently live in Oaxaca, Mexico, serving as RCA missionaries. They are planting a church that originated through children's clubs.

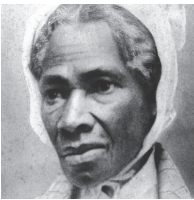


Rev. Sharon Atkins is pastor of Bethany Memorial Reformed Church in New York City, where she has joyfully served since 2013, and is the incoming president of the African American Black Council in the Reformed Church in America, adding to her rich legacy of service in roles of executive leadership in all denominational assemblies. She is a graduate of New Brunswick Theological Seminary and has been

active in the RCA for many years. A member of Grace Reformed Church in Brooklyn, New York, since her youth, she has held positions such as youth director, deacon, elder, and minister of Christian education. She also served as pastor of Mansion of God, a satellite worshipping community of Grace Reformed. On the classis level, she has been vice president and president of the Brooklyn Classis, as well as chairperson of mission and the Social Outreach Committee. In the New York Classis, she is the chairperson of the Congregation Relations Committee. Denominationally, Sharon spent two terms on the Commission on Christian Education, and she has served as a member of the discernment group for Mission 2000, as a workshop leader at various General Synods, and as a member of the RCA's African American Black Council. In addition, she participated in a three-year journey group on developing multi-racial congregations through Western Theological Seminary. Sharon continues to go forth, spreading the good news of Jesus Christ to all she meets, bringing a sense of hope and peace to a hurting and broken world, so loved by God.



Rev. Dr. Bernita Babb became the first African American woman to be ordained as minister of Word and sacrament in the RCA. In 1961, she served as teacher of consumer science in the New York City High School system. She graduated summa cum laude from New Brunswick Theological Seminary in 1985, received the Certificate of Fitness for Ministry, and fulfilled the biblical languages requirements prior to ordination in 1988. From 1992 to 1999, she served as senior pastor and teacher at Mott Haven Reformed Church in the South Bronx, New York, and simultaneously served as an urban strategist (associate for City Congregational Ministries) for the RCA's General Synod. In 1998, she obtained her Doctor of Ministry degree from Eastern Baptist Seminary (Palmer Theological Seminary). Presently, Rev. Dr. Babb is retired, occasionally preaching and teaching the Bible at various churches in the Maryland area.



Isabella Baumfree (Sojourner Truth, 1797-1883) was born a slave and grew up speaking Dutch in the Hudson Valley of New York. Her daughter belonged to the Dutch Reformed Church, which would later be renamed the Reformed Church in America. When Isabella escaped on her famous journey with her infant daughter, the Van Wagenen family took her in and paid \$20 for her freedom. She renamed herself Sojourner Truth, and her belief in God steeled her fierce dedication to truth and dignity. When she fought for the freedom of her son, she became the first person of color to win a suit in a court of law. Sojourner is remembered as a preacher of courage and tenacity and also for her speech "Ain't I a Woman?" She broke barriers on every level, and she continues to inspire people of every faith today.



Ana Bautista is the first Hispanic woman to become a commissioned pastor in the RCA. Pastor Ana and her husband, José, co-pastor Iglesia Cristiana Emmanuel in Sacramento, California. The Bautistas came to the United States after ministering for many years in their native El Salvador. Ana is a great encourager of others, and she has created a vibrant network of Hispanic women leaders from churches throughout the Central California region who gather annually for their "Conferencia de Mujeres." Ana's daughter Leah Bautista is continuing her mother's leadership legacy and serves as the minister of music at Iglesia Cristiana Emmanuel.

Frances Davis Beardslee (1887–1975) became engrafted into the RCA when she married John W. Beardslee Jr. in 1912. Not ethnically Dutch, nor raised in the Dutch Reformed church tradition, Frances graduated from Wellesley College and the University of Chicago. She was a classics scholar with a commitment to scholarship, family, and the RCA. She lived with her family in what came to be called “The President’s House” at New Brunswick Theological Seminary. From 1932–1942, Frances served as the Candidates Secretary for the Women’s Board of Foreign Missions. In that role, she interviewed and recommended all women candidates for foreign missionary service. In 1938, she became the first woman elected to the Hope College Board of Trustees. As an outspoken advocate for women and women’s leadership, it was Frances Beardslee who, at 82 years of age, led the women as they marched into the meeting of the 1969 General Synod with signed petitions advocating for the ordination of women to the offices of elder and deacon.



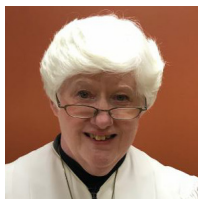
Rev. Dr. Carol M. Bechtel became the first woman to be ordained to the office of General Synod professor in 1998. Ten years later, she was elected General Synod president. Dr. Bechtel received her Ph.D. from Yale University, and she is now a long-standing, tenured professor of Old Testament at Western Theological Seminary. Dr. Bechtel has authored several books, including two devotionals, and has

been a contributor to Horizons Magazine and the Horizons Bible study series. She is also a gifted Celtic harpist.

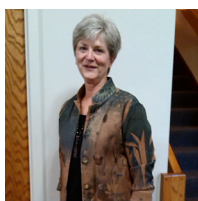


Rev. Wanzette Ann Bilbrew is leading God’s people at Living Springs Riverdale Ministry Center in Riverdale, Illinois, and serves as vice president of the RCA’s African American Black Council. She is also the founder and director of Circle Ministry. As part of a multi-site church family, Rev. Bilbrew is part of the pastoral team of Living Springs Community Church in Glenwood, Illinois. She additionally serves locally

and within the RCA on the Commission on Nominations, the Seminary Student Care team, and the Multi-Racial and Social Community Justice team. She holds the distinction of being the only African American woman and the only woman in pastoral leadership in the New Thing Classis. Rev. Bilbrew was a social worker for the Cook County court system, where she counseled people who needed help accessing and leveraging available resources. She retired in 2019. On May 11, 2009, Rev. Bilbrew became the first African American to graduate from Western Theological Seminary’s Distance Learners program. She is currently a doctoral student at Northern Baptist Theological Seminary in Lombard, Illinois. Rev. Bilbrew is also a proud graduate of Chicago State University and Illinois State University.



Rev. Kathy Jo Blaske is a trailblazer for RCA women in ministry. She graduated with her M.Div. from Western Theological Seminary in 1978 and was ordained in 1979 by the Classis of Holland. She has served the RCA as the minister of Christian education at Third Reformed Church in Holland, Michigan; as the Regional Synod of Albany's minister for leadership development; as an interim minister for several churches in New Jersey and New York; on the RCA youth team; and as part of Christian Educators, RCA (CERCA). Kathy Jo has also served on the RCA's Commission on Nominations, as the RCA representative to the board of the National Council of Churches of Christ, USA (NCCC), and two terms as classis president. She is currently a long-term care chaplain for the Christian Health Care Center in Wyckoff, New Jersey.



Linda Kay Bogaard has been an elder and a long-time lay leader at Peace Reformed Church in Eagan, Minnesota. She has been active there in a variety of roles, such as women's ministries officer, choir member, Sunday school class facilitator, mentor in Stephen's Ministry, and is currently on the Care Team. She has been a mentor for Kids Hope USA and is now the director of the program, which partners Peace Reformed and a local elementary school. Linda has served on the local and global mission field in places like New Mexico and Kenya, as well as serving as a volunteer preschool and kindergarten teacher at the RCA's Southern Normal School in Brewton, Alabama, from 1973-1975.



Regina Brannock started attending Apache Reformed Church when she was in ninth grade. Her home church, Cache Creek Presbyterian Mission, closed the year before. Regina has been a member of the RCA Education Council, served on the Native American Indian Ministries Council, and has attended the Women's Tri-Annual Conference, General Synod, and General Synod Council meetings. Regina is in the final process of being a commissioned pastor for her church, having already been in the pulpit many times in the past several years. She encourages women to remember that there are those watching you learn: bring up the young people to follow you when you are ready to rest so they will know what to do to lead.



Rev. Jane Becksfort Brown was first called to serve as an elder at Meredith Drive Reformed Church in Des Moines, Iowa, in 1984. In 1986, she began serving as lay associate in congregational care and family ministry. In 1996, she entered an approved alternate route to ordination through a new M.Div. distance learning program at Bethel Seminary. She was ordained as a minister of Word and sacrament in 2000. For the next

13 years, Rev. Brown served as pastor of congregational care and family ministries, overseeing pastoral care, teaching, elder leadership development, family ministry, and junior-high and children's staff. During her time of service on the Western Theological Seminary Board, Jane's daughter, Elizabeth Brown Hardeman, began attending the seminary, and Jane was able to be part of her daughter's learning, ordination, and installation. Following Rev. Brown's retirement from Meredith Drive, she served on her classis leadership team, restructuring and implementing a new way of relating and working together. She has been a part of RCA commission work, written for Words of Hope, and is currently a disability advocate for her classis.



Leonor Alexa Caballero, originally from Ecuador, has planted churches together with her husband, Richard Caballero, in Canada and in Phoenix, Arizona. She is now part of the administrative team at Emmanuel Reformed Church in Paramount, California, where her husband is the pastor for Spanish Ministries. Alexa studied computer science at DeVry University in Canada and graduated from the Arizona Reformed Theological

Training Center in 2014. She has served on the RCA's Commission for Women, the RCA Council for Spanish Ministries Executive Team, and many denominational task forces and teams. She is currently part of the Far West Regional Executive Team and is the stated clerk and treasurer of the Classis of the Americas. Alexa and her husband have traveled to various states and Latin American countries to train pastors and leaders in Reformed theology.



Ella Kikuno Campbell (1945–2020), an ordained elder at the First Church in Albany, New York, was a pioneer in the RCA. From 1986 until her retirement in 2008, she served as the executive for the Council for Pacific and Asian American Ministries, helping build bridges through her gifts of hospitality and passionate belief that “the church is not an authentic church until it is inclusive.”

Ella was a trained and certified spiritual director through the Shalem Institute for Spiritual Formation, and she continued to lead contemplative retreats and offer spiritual direction in her retirement. She earned a bachelor's degree in religion from Whittier College and a master of arts in education degree from New York University. With her first husband, Rev. Jack White, Ella served churches in New Jersey and the Reformed Church of St. Thomas (U.S. Virgin Islands.) from 1973–1989.



Rev. Kathleen Edwards Chase is the senior pastor of First Reformed Church in Pompton Plains, New Jersey, a congregation she has served since 2006. Previously, she was the pastor of Woodstock Reformed Church in New York for nearly nine years. Kathleen was the first female pastor at both congregations. Originally from Oklahoma, she has her M.Div. from Princeton

Theological Seminary and received a fellowship award to do post-master's work at the University of Utrecht in the Netherlands. Kathleen has a passion for helping the church find its greatest impact through community partnerships, justice endeavors, and missional engagement.



Mildred Cleghorn (1910–1997) was a Chiricahua Apache tribal leader and teacher devoted to cultural awareness and heritage appreciation. Her parents helped start the Apache Reformed Church in Apache, Oklahoma, and Mildred was the first woman to be elected as an elder there. Mildred was treasurer of the American Indian Council of the Reformed Church of America and served as a delegate on the General

Program Council. One of her favorite cultural projects was making dolls authentically clothed to represent the 40 diverse Native American tribes. This collection was exhibited in museums across the U.S., including the Smithsonian. Mildred was awarded an Ellis Island Medal of Honor in 1986 during the 100th anniversary celebration of the Statue of Liberty.



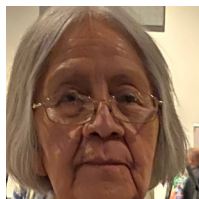
Sara M. Couch (1867–1946) from Schoharie, New York, was a foreign missionary called to Japan as a traveling evangelist and devoted girls' seminary teacher. With her friend Tomegawa Jun, she organized Sunday school, prayer groups, and Bible studies in Nagasaki's lower income neighborhoods. Their Japanese-language RCA newsletter, "Ochibo," was read worldwide. Because of her love for the people

and country of Japan, Sara refused to leave the country when World War II broke out. As a result, at 75 years old, she was arrested and confined to an internment camp. She was finally released at age 78 and carried on her mission in Japan until her death.



Rev. Frances "Fran" De Jong (1935–2017) was one of the first women ordained in the Reformed Church in America. She was ordained by the Classis of Queens. Fran graduated from Central College in 1957 and McCormick Theological Seminary with her master's degree in Christian education in 1960. She served as a director of Christian education in various ministry settings before becoming chaplain at Central College,

where she worked from 1977–1997. She was beloved by students for her encouragement and spiritual support.



June Denny is a member of the Mescalero Apache Tribe, located in Mescalero, New Mexico. She retired from the federal government after 36 years of service. June has been an active member and elder of the Mescalero Reformed Church for many years and has been instrumental in its success. She has served in many different roles as a lay leader and treasurer, and she has helped shape the church's growth through her role as an ordained elder. She was instrumental in reintroducing the singing of Apache hymns and saying the prayer in her language during regular Sunday services. (These aspects were missing from service for a brief time.) Among the many ways she has served at the denominational level, Elder Denny had the honor of serving on the RCA's Commission on Nominations. She has recently been re-nominated to the Commission on Race and Ethnicity.



Sarah DePeyster (1724–1802) was born to a wealthy family in the Netherlands. She came to America as a child and grew devoted to the Dutch Reformed Church (the RCA's original name). In 1804, Sarah became the first person—man or woman—to leave a legacy for the benefit of the church, which was used in the Synod of Albany to help provide ministers to small, often struggling congregations who desperately needed spiritual leaders to encourage and inspire them.



Rev. Joyce Borgman de Velder was the first woman to enter the Master of Divinity program at Western Theological Seminary in 1972. She graduated in 1976. After serving as an associate in ministry, she was ordained in 1979 by the Classis of Albany. A few years later, she became the pastor of Old Saratoga Reformed Church in Schuylerville, New York, where she has served since 1982.



Stephanie Durband Doeschot was ordained as minister of Word and sacrament in Holland Classis in 1994. Her calling has been enriched and deepened by John 15:4—“Abide in me as I abide in you”—both personally and in community with others seeking to discern God’s leading. She has served as a campus pastor at both Drake University in Des Moines, Iowa, and Hope College in Holland, Michigan. With her husband, Phil, Stephanie planted and co-pastored Christ’s Church in St. Peters, Missouri. Working with ELCA partners, Stephanie led Christ’s Church to plant and sustain a coffee house and fair trade ministry, The Bridge, in St. Charles, Missouri, which is a developing faith community. She continues to be actively involved with churches in the St. Louis community addressing structural racism. Through the racial reconciliation work of Christ’s Church, a church plant in Ferguson, Missouri, is being assisted. Stephanie has served as president of the Regional Synod of Mid-America and as an interim RCA coordinator of adult discipleship. She is currently serving her second term on the General Synod Council.



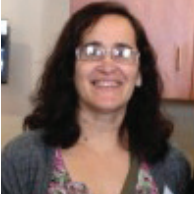
Captain Kim McDonald Donahue was ordained on Reformation Sunday 1988 in her home church, the First Reformed Church of Rocky Hill, New Jersey. She served in Bronxville, New York; Linden, New Jersey; and New Prospect Reformed Church in Pine Bush, New York. While there, she experienced a growing sense of call to those distant from the church that led her eventually to enter navy chaplaincy in 1998. Affectionately known as “battle chaps” and “big chaps,” her successful 22+ year career included four operational combat tours, three hospital tours, and two training command tours. Chaplain Donahue also did graduate study in ethics, earning a second master’s degree. While serving as command chaplain on the USS George Washington, she put her research into practice and transformed a mandatory training on sexual assault policy into a life-changing program, an act that was recognized across the Department of Defense (DOD) with the DOD innovation award. Captain Donahue has been the first female minister most of her parishioners have had, at sea or on land. About the inevitable physical toll of military service, Rev. Donahue says that the best antidote for pain is sharing love.



Sarah Doremus (1802-1877) is one of the most beloved and revered laywomen in Protestant history. As a philanthropist and missionary in the mid-nineteenth century, she started worship services in New York City prisons, opened a home for women being discharged from prison, founded a home and school for women living in poverty, organized societies to raise money for global mission work, and helped establish women’s and children’s hospitals. In 1875, Sarah founded the RCA Women’s Board of Foreign Missions, through which RCA women impacted millions of lives around the world.



Rev. Jill Fenske is a child of God, follower of Jesus, mother, expert listener, poet, musician, reader, deep thinker, and lifelong learner. She has been joyfully walking with God's people as a minister of Word and sacrament at Franklin Reformed Church in Nutley, New Jersey, since 1991. She also currently chairs the board of the RCA's Warwick Camp and Conference Center in Warwick, New York.



Rev. Marisol Ferrer-Malloy became the first Latina ordained as a minister of Word and sacrament in the RCA in 2007. Marisol currently pastors a congregational church in New Jersey, and she plays an active role in the RCA as the chairperson of the Multicultural Ministry Committee in the Regional Synod of the Mid-Atlantics. She belongs to the Delaware-Raritan Classis.



Rev. Joyce Stedje Fowler (1926–2010) was the first woman in the RCA to become a minister of Word and sacrament. In 1973, the Classis of Rockland-Westchester ordained her on the basis that she was a "person," as outlined in the RCA's Book of Church Order. This action led to several years of heated General Synod discussion that ultimately resulted in the judiciary body of the General Synod of 1979

voting that the definition of "persons" included both men and women. Joyce went on to pastor RCA and Presbyterian churches and work as a chaplain, clinical pastoral educator, and therapist.



Mary Geegh (1897–1999) served as an RCA missionary in India for 38 years. She authored the book *God Guides* based on her listening prayer experiences in India, which she chronicled in a journal. Book sales help support the Geegh Nursery School, a school in southern India that Mary founded in 1957. Mary's legacy continues through her great-niece Linn Gann, who established and runs Mission Partners India, an

organization dedicated to meeting the needs of children affected by poverty in southern India.



Anna Gonzales is both an ordained elder and deacon. She has been serving Park Hills Community Church in Los Angeles, California, and the RCA for over 50 years. Her denominational involvement began through the African American Black Council and continued in her classis, her regional synod, and the General Synod, including service on the General Synod Council and the Church Herald's editorial board. She represented

the denomination ecumenically on the governing board of the National Council of Churches (NCC). Anna continues her service to God in her local church in various capacities, including clerk of the consistory.



Carol Wenneis Hageman (1924–2011) married Howard Hageman—pastor and New Brunswick Theological Seminary president—in 1945. They served Newark's North Reformed Church for 28 years, during which time Carol became active in the Civil Rights Movement in Newark. She attended the last day of Martin Luther King Jr.'s voting rights march from Selma to Montgomery, Alabama, as well as his funeral.

She served the RCA on four different councils, was on the Women's Board of Domestic Missions, and was a member of both the Newark Board of Education and the executive committee of United Way.



Rev. Dr. Lisa A. Hansen was the first RCA woman to enter Air Force chaplaincy and obtain the rank of colonel. Lisa has held a variety of positions in the Air Force where she has served as senior pastor, ecumenical organization leader, hospital chaplain, and instructor at Air University. She has provided religious support to military members on missions to the South Pole, Rwanda, Mozambique, Oman, and Kuwait. As

the air education and training command chaplain, she oversees spiritual care to every airman entering the Air Force, as well as the recruitment, education, and training of all chaplains and religious affairs airmen.

Dinah Van Bergh Frelinghuysen Hardenbergh (1725–1807) found herself in a sinking ship while sailing to America from Holland. She prayed for God's deliverance, and soon a large swordfish became wedged in the hole in the ship's prow, saving all aboard. Dinah raised nine children, assisted in her husband's pastoral ministry, helped establish New Brunswick Theological Seminary, and counted George and Martha Washington as close friends. Her life inspired Dina's Dwellings, which offers affordable housing for female survivors of domestic abuse and their children. The ministry began in a reconfiguration of First Reformed Church of New Brunswick's sanctuary.



Charlotte Mae Heinen (1937–2014) was born on March 29, 1937, in Lima, Iowa, the daughter of Elmer and Christina (Huenink) Heinen. She graduated from Oostburg High School in 1954 and then received her bachelor of arts degree from Central College in Pella, Iowa. She taught home economics and French in Latimer, Iowa, for two years. Charlotte was the first woman to be admitted to Western Theological Seminary in Holland, Michigan, where she obtained her master's degree in Christian Education in 1965. She was ordained as a minister with the Reformed Church of America in 1982. Charlotte served churches as director of Christian education in Michigan, Iowa, and Florida. She was minister of children ministries at the Garden Grove Community Church, also known as the Crystal Cathedral, from 1969–1972, and at Trinity Church of the Nazarene in Lompoc, California. Charlotte received her Ph.D. from the Jesuit School of Theology in Berkeley, California, in 1984. From 1972–1985, she was a Christian education consultant for churches and organizations, including David C. Cook Publishing Company. Charlotte was a member of the Trinity Reformed Church in Waupun, Wisconsin. She was also a faithful supporter of the Central College Alumni Association. Charlotte enjoyed crafts, music, reading, gardening, flowers, and was a nursing home volunteer.



Rev. Dr. L'Anni Hill is the daughter and granddaughter of RCA missionaries. She was raised in Asia. Following college graduation, she taught English and Bible in Taiwan through an RCA-sponsored program. Called to ministry, L'Anni enrolled in New Brunswick Theological Seminary in 1974 and was among the first group of women to become RCA ministers, a historical moment in the life of the denomination. As she awaited the decision, she attended Rutgers Graduate School of Social Work, receiving her MSW degree in 1979. Her continuing interest in the emotional well-being of her parishioners led her to pursue a doctor of ministry degree at Drew University School of Theology, where she focused on pastoral care and graduated with distinction in 2000. Rev. Hill served churches in Vischer's Ferry, New York, and San Juan, Puerto Rico, before she became the senior pastor of Pompton Reformed Church in New Jersey. She then served in the Netherlands. Currently, she lives in Georgia, where she continues to serve others through her counseling practice, "integrating mind, body, heart, and soul."



Rev. Dr. Carolyn Holloway (1942–2007) was the lead pastor of DeWitt Reformed Church in New York City from 1995–2007. She was the first female and first African American woman to pastor DeWitt Reformed Church in its more than 100 years of history. Dr. Holloway received her bachelor's degree at the College of New Rochelle, her M.Div. at New York Theological Seminary, and a doctorate in urban ministry at New Brunswick Theological Seminary. Dr. Holloway served as president of the RCA's New York Classis, and, in 1999, became the first African American woman to preach during the RCA's General Synod. She served as a committee member of the RCA's Ministerial Formation Certification Agency and was later nominated and installed as chairperson of the RCA's African American Black Council.

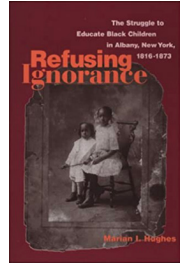


Rev. Dr. Renée House became the first female minister of the historic Old Dutch Church in Kingston, New York, in 2013. Before that, she worked in a variety of roles at New Brunswick Theological Seminary, including associate professor, director of the Sage Library, and dean of the seminary. Renée holds the distinction of being the first woman to preach at an RCA General Synod. Her writings include "Women Raising Women: The Urgent Work of The Mission Gleaner, 1885–1914," which appears in *Patterns and Portraits: Women in the History of the Reformed Church in America*, an important textbook for many RCA-affiliated history courses.



Gail Hughes has a family heritage that stems back to the 1600s in U.S. history with Methodist itinerant preachers and settlers establishing towns around churches and schools in the upper Midwest. Gail was born into a family culture of Christian faith as a way of life rather than a religion; she was nurtured in the Scriptures by an invalid grandmother who daily read Gail stories from the Bible. Service based on gender was never an issue since equality in leadership roles was both accepted and expected. Christian heritage and allegiance to serving in God's kingdom was passed on from generation to generation in Gail's family. Her leadership within the church started in junior and senior high school, teaching younger children in VBS and youth group roles, which then led to roles of leading adult Bible studies and youth groups. Gail has served as a choir member, Sunday school superintendent and teacher, retreat planner, women's ministry leader, and church planter. She is an ordained RCA elder and has served on the Board of Direction for Words of Hope, as president of the Regional Synod of Canada, as chair of the Ministry Care Team for the Classis of British Columbia, and as an elder representative at four General Synods.

Marian Hughes (1920–2005) was a member of the First Church in Albany, New York. Once the only African American teacher in Albany’s public school system, she wrote the book *Refusing Ignorance: The Struggle to Educate Black Children in Albany, New York*. Marian and her husband became missionaries in Nigeria, and she helped build the first high school for girls in Abeokuta.



LynnAnn Huizingh was the first woman to become a commissioned pastor in the Rocky Mountain Classis. Since May 2012, LynnAnn has been a leader in elevating the causes of homelessness in her community, and she helped form and launch the Severe Weather Shelter Network in February 2013. LynnAnn has served as the executive director for Severe Weather Shelter Network for

the last seven years. She recently joined the guiding coalition for RCA Local Missional Engagement, and she currently serves as the pastor of discipleship and care at Faith Community Church in Littleton, Colorado. LynnAnn seeks to live a fully integrated lifestyle of discipleship that brings God’s kingdom to every place she is sent. Every day is an opportunity to bring about the presence of the kingdom as we actively wait for our Lord’s return.



Rev. Anna Melissa Jackson is a native New Yorker and child of the RCA. She co-pastors Second Reformed Church of Hackensack with her husband, Dwayne Jackson. She is a past moderator of the board of trustees of New Brunswick Theological Seminary and a member of the graduating class of 2000 from the same institution. Rev. Jackson currently serves on the RCA’s General Synod Council. She served at the

Queens Reformed Church in Queens Village, New York, for over 17 years.

Dorothy Cox James (1921–1989) was a graduate of Western Michigan University who taught reading. In 1961, she and her husband, Rev. B. Moses James, joined the RCA family when he became pastor of North Community Reformed Church in Kalamazoo, Michigan. They were both committed to social justice and racial reconciliation, and Rev. James was elected the first chairperson of the African American Black Council, established in 1969. Dorothy served as a Midwest regional convener for the African American Black Council, as a member of the Board of Theological Education, on the Commission on Christian Unity, and on the RCA delegation to the North American and Caribbean Region of the World Alliance of Reformed Churches.



Rev. Dr. Lynn Japinga is professor of religion at Hope College. She received an M.Div. from Princeton Theological Seminary and a Ph.D. from Union Theological Seminary. She was ordained in 1984 and has served interim pastorates at Woodcliff Community in North Bergen, New Jersey; First Reformed in Union City, New Jersey; and Hope Church in Holland, Michigan. She is the author of

Feminism and Christianity: An Essential Guide; *Loyalty and Loss: The Reformed Church in America, 1945-1994*; and *Preaching the Women of the Old Testament*. She has also written two Bible study books on women in the Old and New Testaments, published in 2020. Lynn has served on numerous denominational committees, most recently the Commission on History.



Rev. Stephanie Kaper-Dale is co-senior pastor of the Reformed Church of Highland Park in New Jersey. She is a graduate of Hope College, Princeton Theological Seminary, and Rutgers University Graduate School of Social Work. She and her husband, Seth, have served the Reformed Church of Highland Park—a community committed to justice and inclusivity—since 2001. They have nurtured the congregation's gifts and

passions to create nearly a dozen community-based nonprofits and related ministries.

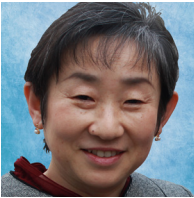


Rev. En Young Kim was born in South Korea, and she spent all of her childhood and young adulthood in Daegu, one of the country's largest cities. In 1995, she immigrated to the United States with her family and pursued her theological studies at New Brunswick Theological Seminary. She became a minister of the Word and sacrament in RCA and served as a pastor for her local congregation and as the Korean

coordinator within the Classis of the Palisades. Currently, Rev. En Young Kim is a GSC staff member, serving as the supervisor of RCA Mission in Asia and the Pacific as well as the coordinator for the Council for Pacific and Asian American ministries. She earned her bachelor's degree from Kyungpook National University in South Korea and her M.Div. and master of arts in theological studies degrees from New Brunswick Theological Seminary. She is currently a member of their board of trustees.



Rev. Dr. Denise Kingdom Grier has blazed the trail for African American women called to ministry. In 2005, she became the first African American woman to graduate from Western Theological Seminary with an M.Div. In 2009, she became the first African American woman to lead an RCA church in West Michigan. She made history again in 2017, becoming the first African American woman to earn a doctorate in ministry from Western Theological Seminary. Currently, Rev. Dr. Grier serves as lead pastor of Maple Avenue Ministries in Holland, Michigan, a vibrant, multicultural, multiracial congregation and the first union church of the RCA and the Christian Reformed Church in North America. She also serves RCA Global Mission as project leader in South Africa, working with Setshabelo Child and Family Services to keep vulnerable children in their own homes and to place orphans into loving foster or adoptive families.



Rev. Sayuri Kist-Okazaki is an RCA missionary in Japan. She and her husband, Abraham, provide training so that Japanese churches can more effectively reach out to non-Christians, who make up 99 percent of Japan's population. Sayuri also serves as an associate pastor of Kugahara Church in Tokyo. She is an executive member of the National Church Women's Guild, empowering women who serve Japanese churches faithfully. Sayuri, who is from Japan, is a graduate of both Western Theological Seminary and New Brunswick Theological Seminary.



Mary Lou Hemmes Koop (1924–2018) was a charter member of Haven Reformed Church in Hamilton, Michigan. She served faithfully for multiple terms as one of the first female elders, and she served Reformed Church Women's Ministries at local and denominational levels. She was a great encourager of people and was fondly called "Grandma Koop" by hundreds of young people. Mary Lou was a graduate of Hope College. She and her husband, Harvey, received the Hope College Distinguished Alumni Award in 1979.



Joyce Kuyper (1917–2018) was an active member of the Second Reformed Church in Pella, Iowa, where she was elected as both an elder and a deacon and served on many church committees. She was a beloved piano teacher and served as an organist and pianist for several churches. Joyce also played piano in a jazz band established by her husband, Hospers. She majored in music at Central College and graduated cum laude in 1939. A composer of some significance, Joyce's composition "A Hymn to Central Youth" was chosen to be and remains the official hymn of Central College. In 1973, Joyce and Hospers Kuyper were named Alumni of the Year by Central College and honored for their many musical and other contributions to the college. In 2012, the Joyce and Hospers Kuyper Music Scholarship was established in their honor.



Rev. Edie Lenz is part of the first ordained mother-daughter pair in the Reformed Church in America. Her mother, Rev. Barbara Pekich, was ordained in 1993 and served Heartside Ministries in Grand Rapids, Michigan, as pastor and executive director until her death in 2008. Edie has her B.A. in Theology from Valparaiso University and her M.Div. from Western Theological Seminary. She was ordained by the Classis of North Grand Rapids in 2002. She served the Church of the Good News in Chicago, Illinois, until 2008, then served as the first woman pastor of First Reformed Church in Fulton, Illinois, until 2019. She currently serves Hickory Hills Presbyterian Church in Hickory Hills, Illinois. Edie is also the communications coordinator for Churches Learning Change, a process of deeply personal and congregational transformation to develop spiritually and emotionally healthy churches that are working for God's shalom in their community, city, and throughout the world. She will be starting her Doctor of Ministry in Change Leadership at Fuller Theological Seminary in the summer of 2021.



Rev. Toni Macon was a pastor in RCA churches in Michigan and New York for many years. She is now retired after 30 years of ordained ministry. She has served on the General Synod Council, was the director of the General Synod Seminary Seminar from 1993 to 2006, and continues to lead workshops for classes and congregations in the areas of sexual abuse, harassment, boundaries, and power issues. She currently resides in Miami, Florida.



Beth E. Marcus (1920–2006) was director of Reformed Church Women's Ministries from 1973 to 1986. She was an ordained elder in the RCA and served in a variety of denominational staff positions. Beth was the first female General Synod president. The Beth Marcus Scholarship Fund, which supports women pursuing theological education, reflects her dedication to women's ministry.



Patricia Miersma is a Mental Health Nurse–Ethnic Clinical Specialist with a master’s in nursing from UCLA (1984). She earned a nursing diploma from Tacoma General Hospital School of Nursing (1969), a bachelor of science in nursing from Biola University (1981), and a graduate certificate in Bible from Multnomah School of the Bible (now Multnomah University) in Portland, Oregon (1972). From 1973–1976, as RCA missionaries,

she and her husband worked with the Majang people in southwest Ethiopia, making disciples to strengthen the new church and providing basic medical, educational, and community development services. In 1980, Pat and her husband were seconded by the RCA to Wycliffe Bible Translators to serve as counselors to Bible translators and other missionaries, which they did until their retirement from RCA missions in 2019. During those years, they worked in Papua New Guinea (3 years), in Africa (12 years), and internationally (15 years). While living in Africa, they helped establish Tumaini Counseling Center in Nairobi, Kenya, and Pat helped co-author a Scripture-use book, *Healing the Wounds of Trauma: How the Church Can Help*, which is now being used on all continents and is translated into 200 languages. Since 2005, Pat served as the SIL international trauma healing consultant; from 2008–2016, she served as SIL international counseling coordinator. She has served on the Trauma Healing Advisory Council at the American Bible Society since 2012. In addition, she has served on the board of directors for Wycliffe Bible Translators USA since 2013.



Mary E. Kidder Miller (1834–1910) served the RCA from 1869 to 1910 as the first single woman sent as a missionary to Japan. She had been a member of the Owasco Outlet Church in New York and taught Sunday school there. In 1870, Mary founded one of the first schools for women in Japan. Now called Ferris Women’s University, the school continues to educate women in Japan today. In 1873, Mary married

E. Rothsay Miller, a Presbyterian missionary in Japan. After their wedding, he joined the RCA mission. She partnered with him in evangelism work across Japan while writing articles for children and families to elevate the role of women in Japan.

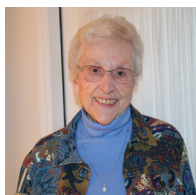


Carol L. Mutch was the 2000–2001 president of General Synod, the second woman and fifth elder elected to that position. She has also served as president of the Regional Synod of the Mid-Atlantics, president of the Classis of Passaic Valley, and moderator of the RCA’s Commission on Nominations. She was the first female vice president of the consistory at Wyckoff Reformed Church in New Jersey. One of her recommendations as president of the

General Synod was that the RCA establish the ministry designation and training of commissioned pastors. She is a retired commissioned pastor and currently serves on the RCA’s Commissioned Pastor Advisory Team, the Commission on Nominations, and the Pastoral Formation Oversight Board.

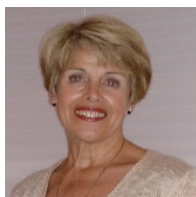


Rev. Dr. Young Na is the first Korean ordained minister in the Reformed Church in America. She has served both Korean- and English-speaking communities. Young is senior pastor of Forest Park Reformed Church in Woodhaven, New York, and teaches seminary courses on biblical languages. She has served the RCA as a member of the Commission on Theology and the general secretary search team.



Barb Neevel used her organizing gifts to serve the RCA as the coordinator of Reformed Church Women's Ministries and the chairperson of the RCA Women's Conference Planning Committee. Her husband, Jim, was an RCA pastor for many years. While Jim was pastor of Pitcher Hill Community Church in North Syracuse, New York, Barb co-founded the area's Meals on Wheels program. Now living in

West Michigan, Barb continues to follow God's call to hospitality and administration in retirement.

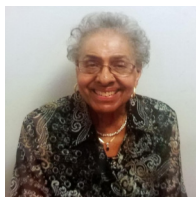


Rev. Judy Nelson has a deep history of missional engagement and church leadership stemming from her PC(USA) upbringing and formation. After retiring as a speech pathologist from the Michigan Public Schools, Judy attended Western Theological Seminary, graduating in 2014 and becoming ordained in the Holland Classis later that year. Judy has served as president of the Regional Synod of the Great Lakes

and is currently serving her second term as president of the Holland Classis. Judy was part of the original guiding coalition for RCA Women's Transformation and Leadership and is a sitting member of the RCA Commission on Nominations. Judy currently works full-time as a chaplain at Tyson Foods in Zeeland, Michigan, is active with the RCA Chaplains, and has served as chaplain for the General Synod.



Rev. Abby Norton-Levering is the Regional Synod of Albany's ministries coordinator, the first woman to serve in this position. She is a graduate of Vassar College and New Brunswick Theological Seminary. She has served as a chaplain in the Philadelphia area and in the Classis of Albany. Abby is passionate about congregational renewal, heartfelt worship, conflict mediation, and the creation of authentic community.



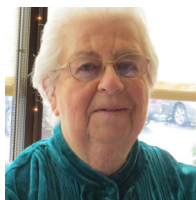
Dora S. Nottingham has been a member of the DeWitt Reformed Church in America for over 50 years. She has served as deacon and financial secretary and now sits on the Great Consistory. She has been involved in the pastor's support group, church development, the worship committee, the women's guild, the church choir, and Lunch Hour of Prayer. She has also served as a church school

teacher, a small group leader, an organizer for Women's Day, and a prayer warrior for Early Morning Prayer. Following the September 11, 2001, tragedy, Dora assisted in the preparation of meals for the local New York Fire Department-Fort Pitt, the PSA4 and 7th Precinct, the Rescue Worker Unit at N.Y.F.D located on South Street, and Clinton on the Lower East Side. Deacon Dora Nottingham also was the chairperson of DeWitt's Share program for seven years, serving the community.



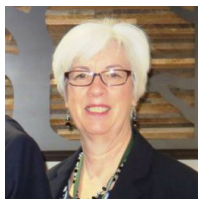
Rev. Dr. Amy Nyland is the first woman to be named executive minister for the Regional Synod of New York and is the first female to serve in an executive role for any regional synod. A trailblazer in the Midwest prior to coming to New York, Amy was also the first woman called to serve as an associate pastor in the Classis of Wisconsin, among other milestones. She currently serves as pastor of First Reformed

Church in Fishkill, New York.



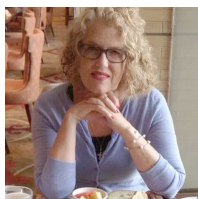
Dr. Corine Overkamp (1935–2020) was born in Chicago while her parents were attending Moody Bible Institute, and she grew up in New Jersey the oldest of four children. Corine was a good student and felt called to go into medicine. She decided if she had the ability to be a doctor, she wanted to use it on the mission field. After graduation from Woman's Medical College and residency, she was accepted

by the RCA as a mission doctor to the Arabian Mission. She arrived in Bahrain in February 1965. Corine served in Bahrain for most of her career. Most previous doctors had been surgeons; Dr. Overkamp was the first to have training in internal medicine. She is the author of a memoir, *Transitions*, in which she examines the transitions in the state of Bahrain, the state of medicine, and her own growth, both spiritually and medically. Corine retired from her work as a medical missionary in 1997.



Rev. Phyllis Palsma is the director of the pastoral care department at the Christian Health Care Center in Wyckoff, New Jersey. She graduated from Western Theological Seminary in 1978 and was ordained by the Classis of Pella in 1979—the first woman to be ordained by a classis west of the Mississippi River. She served congregations in Michigan, New York, and New Jersey and was on the leadership staff of the Regional

Synod of Albany. Phyllis served on the General Program Council, the General Synod Council, and numerous RCA task forces and boards. She authored educational resources for Reformed Church Women’s Ministries and other RCA groups, and she was a regular columnist for the *Church Herald* for ten years.



Rev. Dr. Pamela Pater-Ennis is a pastoral therapist and the executive director of the Hudson River Care and Counseling Center in New Jersey. As an ordained RCA minister and licensed clinical social worker, she has been walking alongside women healing from sexual trauma and abuse for more than 30 years. Pamela holds an MSW from Rutgers University, an M.Div. from New Brunswick Theological Seminary, and a

Ph.D. in social work from the University at Albany, the State University of New York.

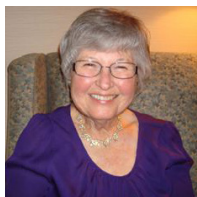


Ruth Stafford Peale (1906–2008) had unfailing energy for God’s work in the world. When her husband, Norman, threw out his only draft of *The Power of Positive Thinking*, she rescued it and brought it to a publisher. The rest is history. Together, the Peales brought the RCA to national attention. In 1955, Ruth became the first female president of the RCA Board of Domestic Missions.



Rev. Dr. Florence Pert (1930–2008) was the first woman to preach at Marble Collegiate Church’s Sunday service in 1978 and the first woman ordained in the collegiate churches of NYC in 1987. Florence was a trailblazer for the role of lay ministries, hospitality, and the gifts of others in the church. She championed the power of prayer and encouraged spiritual renewal throughout the RCA and other

denominations as a much-requested speaker and workshop leader.



Anna Assink Peterson, as a high school student, was the first member of her immediate family to become a follower of Jesus. After she and Gordon Assink were married in 1953, she became a member of the First Reformed Church (now East Valley Reformed Church) in Yakima, Washington, where she is still active. She has served as an elder, sung in the choir, helped with fundraisers, taught catechism and Sunday school,

been a Christian Endeavor sponsor for ten years, and helped in numerous other capacities. In addition, she has represented the Classis Cascades as a General Synod delegate. Many of the young people who were a part of the Christian Endeavor group are still faithfully serving; three became global missionaries, two became ordained ministers, one serves as a worship leader, and another is married to an ordained pastor. Anna has developed a quilting group at East Valley, donating numerous pieces and using her skills to create worship banners for the sanctuary. Her gifts of hospitality and engaging personality are natural bridge builders, helping everyone feel welcomed and cared about.

Margaret Hardenbroeck Philipse (1637-1690) supplied the capital that helped her husband, Frederick, buy the land for and construct The Old Dutch Church of Sleepy Hollow, the second oldest standing church in New York. The church was made famous by Washington Irving in “The Legend of Sleepy Hollow.”



Ellen Ratmeyer began her service with the RCA in 1988 as executive assistant to Al Poppen, who then served as human resources coordinator. Ellen is an ordained elder, a graduate of the Shalem Institute for Spiritual Formation, and a certified spiritual director. Throughout her ministry, she has grown into a variety of holy callings and vocations. In her RCA roles, she was responsible for pastoral placement services,

specialized interim ministry, and support for chaplain services. She also served as coordinator for consistory training and ministry services, providing leadership training and support; focusing ministers, elders, and deacons in their ministries; and leading the RCA in development of key resources such as *Companions on the Way* and *Deacons and Elders: Called to Serve*. In retirement, her continuing calling and legacy is to encourage the nurture of a listening heart through contemplative prayer retreats and spiritual direction.



Una Ratmeyer learned how to serve the community, both within the church and out, in the New York City Presbyterian congregation where she was confirmed, sang in the choir, and was married. The truths she learned there were expanded upon at New Brunswick Theological Seminary during her husband Roland's three years as a ministerial student; at Hope Community Church in Los Angeles, California, where

Roland served as an intern; and at McCormick Theological Seminary, where she audited classes while Roland earned his master of divinity. Commissioned as RCA Urban Missionaries, the couple spent 11 years ministering to people in a public housing project on Chicago's north side. Roland served as the first pastor of The Church of the Good News, the congregation that grew out of the Ratmeyers' missionary work. Una served the RCA for 22 years, first as secretarial staff for the Board of Women's Ministries and the Church Growth Fund, then as editor and writer with The Stewardship and Communications Office. She has authored two books, including *Hands, Hearts, and Voices: Women Who Followed God's Call*, and contributed to the LiFE curriculum and a variety of RCA and other religious publications.



Claudette Reid has been an elder at Brookdale Reformed Church in Bloomfield, New Jersey, for more than 20 years. As a trailblazing Caribbean American, she has helped her church and regional synod embrace racial and ethnic diversity. At Brookdale, she has served as liturgy coordinator and facilitator of training and development, and she started an annual community Caribbean Night. As chair for the

Crossroads Conference for Women since 2010, she has brought to life the committee's vision to welcome racially and ethnically diverse—as well as younger—women through innovative workshops and conversation space. At the denominational level, Claudette was the first Caribbean American woman to serve in an executive RCA position, serving as coordinator for women's ministries from 2010 to 2013 and facilitator for Global Mission from 2014 to 2016. In May 2019, Claudette was elected president of the Regional Synod of the Mid-Atlantics. In July 2020, she began serving on the RCA's Commission for Women.



Jane Richardson wandered into the Reformed Church on a fall day in the mid-1970s, guided to Grace Reformed Church in Brooklyn, New York, by Elder Beatrice Holiness, whom she met at a block association meeting in the Lefferts Gardens neighborhood. Jane worked at Grace as an educator and youth leader for nearly a decade, also serving part-time as an education associate for the

denomination (introducing congregations to the then-new Christian Education: Shared Approaches resources for education and leadership development) and for the Regional Synod of New York. She continued to work for both the synod and the RCA in a variety of ministry support and leadership development roles, including the RCA Council for Christian Education, the Youth Team, the Warwick Program Committee, the formation of CERCA (Christian Educators, Reformed Church in America), and the Association for Stewardship Education. Along the way, she completed an M.Div. at New Brunswick Theological Seminary. Jane always has been and still is passionate about ministry in the city (where she still lives in the Bronx) while also loving the country.



Gladys Martinez Rivera taught children in the South Bronx for 24 years and co-wrote a book on embracing diversity. She was the first Hispanic woman to be a trustee on the Hempstead Board of Education, worked with the Hispanic Council's Reformed Church Women's Ministries group, and was declared a Nassau County Trailblazer in 2010. For many years, Gladys was active in ministry alongside her husband, Carlos,

an RCA pastor. Now retired, they are part of a legacy of Puerto Rican pastors in the RCA.



Rev. Nancy (Clark) Ryan has served as the Regional Synod of Albany's president twice and fulfills classis roles on a regular basis. Her heart is with the small membership congregations. She presently serves as chaplain for the Fort Plain Fire Department and is part of the Montgomery County Critical Incident Stress Management Team. She and her husband, Will, live on a small farm with cows, sheep, chickens, and turkeys.

Their son, Eugene, is a student at Western Theological Seminary, set to graduate in 2021. From 1987 to 1998, Nancy served as pastor of Keyport Reformed Church (now Community Church of Keyport). She currently serves as pastor of Fort Plain Reformed Church. Nancy has also served as General Synod staff as the associate for Small Membership Churches from 1991 to 1994.



Arlene Schuiteman is a 95-year-old former missionary nurse. During her nursing career, she helped open a “dresser school” in the city of Mettu, Ethiopia, teaching wound care and other medical skills to Ethiopian health care workers. From 1966 to 1977, Arlene witnessed a spiritual revival that swept through Ethiopia—a revival that touched her personally and resulted in surprising gifts of the Holy Spirit in her own life. Arlene states, “It has been a very satisfying and full life with no regrets.”



Arvella De Haan Schuller (1929–2014) was known as the “first lady” of the Crystal Cathedral in California. Alongside her husband, who founded and pastored the church, she played a key role at the Crystal Cathedral for many years. Arvella helped to create and run the church’s “Hour of Power” television ministry, which reached millions of viewers across the globe at its peak. Arvella is credited with making the “Hour of Power” the first syndicated television show to have closed captioning, an accomplishment for which she was honored by the Carter Administration.

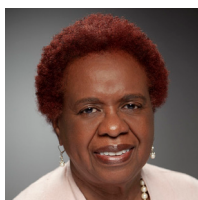


Jane (Carpenter) Schuyler joined the RCA staff after earning a master’s degree from Purdue University. Previously, she taught junior and senior high school mathematics. Throughout her 25 years of service with the RCA (along with CRCNA, PC(USA), ELCA, and other ecumenical partners), her titles changed, but her responsibilities were with TRAVARCA, the RCA Distribution Center, the RCA Helpline, the RCA Council for Christian Education, and Children and Worship. She wrote hundreds of resource lists and had a regular column in *Alert* and *Advocate*. With the RCA and CRCNA, she published various study guides and leader’s guides, including *Viewpoints: Exploring the Reformed Vision*. Following retirement, Jane served on the RCA Commission for Christian Discipleship and Education. She has also served on the boards for CERCA (Christian Educators, Reformed Church in America), APCE (Association of Presbyterian Church Educators), and the adult education team at Hope Church in Holland, Michigan. In 2002, she received the RCA Educator of the Year award.

Harriet Scudder (1794–1849) was the RCA’s first female foreign missionary. She left New York City for India with her husband, John, in 1819. John was the first American medical missionary in India. Together, Harriet and John began a legacy of mission in India that would carry on through their descendants for generations. Renowned medical missionary Ida Scudder was Harriet’s great-granddaughter.



Ida Scudder (1870–1960) was a third-generation medical missionary to India. She did not plan to follow in her parents' footsteps as a medical missionary in India. However, when she heard about three Indian women who died in childbirth because male doctors were not allowed to touch them, she changed her mind. Ida graduated from Cornell's medical school in the first graduating class open to women, and she returned to India as a medical missionary. In 1918, she established a college to train Indian women as doctors so that they could treat each other. She later worked with other missionaries to build a hospital that, during her lifetime, became one of the largest in Asia.



Rev. Dr. Patricia A. Sealy is the senior pastor of Mott Haven Reformed Church in the South Bronx, the CEO and founder of Children's Haven: A Place of Healing and Hope, Inc., and the lead organizer of the Mott Haven Initiative for Children of Incarcerated Parents. Since her pastorate began in 2010, the church has become known as "the church in the heart of the community, with the community in the heart of the church." Pastor Pat, as she is known, serves as the chair of the Regional Synod Human Support Committee and is a member of the executive committee for the Regional Synod of New York. She is also a member of the RCA's African American Black Council. She was moderator of the Commission on Christian Action for six years and was recently president of the New York Classis. Dr. Sealy is a member of the Mayor's Faith Leaders Council for re-opening New York City. She has completed academic requirements for the MS in Oncology Nursing and Administration, as well as M.Div., Ed.D., and D.Min. degrees. Her dissertation resulted in the development of a model for providing support and advocacy to children with parents in prison. The model disrupts intergenerational incarceration and the school-to-prison pipeline. Her social justice work is centered in providing healing and transformation for children, families, and communities impacted by incarceration through the power of the gospel.



Lorena Serrano met the Lord when she was 19 years old and has been dedicated to ministry ever since. She and her husband started Happy Day, a children's ministry through which 10,000 Caribbean and Latin American under-resourced children and families have been blessed. She is dedicated to mission, to building churches, and to the ministry of women. She currently pastors with her husband, Andrés, in Corona, California, at Iglesia La Senda. Lorena is also the executive director of Radio Impacto radio chains in California, Texas, and the Dominican Republic. She is also a commissioned pastor within the RCA.



Alice Shirey has been a member of the Orchard Hill Church teaching team for the past 20 years. Best known for her humorous, honest, and practical teaching style, Alice loves bringing biblical truth to Orchard Hill's congregation in Grand Rapids, Michigan. As leader of Orchard Hill's team of teachers, Alice is committed to helping the team grow in both passion and ability through teamwork, honest feedback,

and the apprenticing of new, young teachers. Aside from her preaching ministry, Alice leads in the areas of adult spiritual growth, leadership training, and pastoral counseling. She and her husband, Chuck, have been married for almost 34 years and have three grown children.



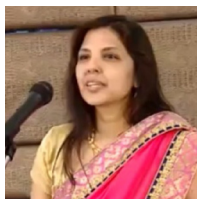
Louise Shumaker (1947-2016) was the director of disability services at Hope College and a past president of the Michigan Commission on Handicapper Higher Education. She received the 2012 Ability Award for her work mentoring over 500 students with disabilities. Born legally blind, Louise advocated statewide, promoting personal development, education, and accessibility. Louise

served as an elder at Trinity Reformed Church in Holland, Michigan, and was a longtime member of Calvary Reformed Church in Holland. She also chaired the RCA's Task Force on Disabilities from 2004 to 2008.



Rev. Dr. Patricia Singletary is the senior pastor of Elmendorf Reformed Church in Harlem, New York, and is the first female pastor in its 350-year history. She was born in Harlem and earned her M.Div. and doctorate from New Brunswick Theological Seminary. Her dissertation inspired the formation of the Harlem African Burial Ground Task Force, which successfully advocated for the church's burial ground for Harlem's

earliest African residents to be preserved and honored with a memorial and cultural museum. Under Dr. Singletary's leadership, Elmendorf Reformed Church has experienced revitalization and become a more relevant part of its community. The church now draws worshipers from around the world.



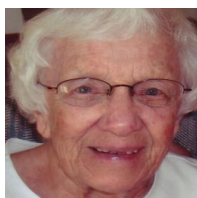
Deepika Srivastava is director of church relations at the Vellore Christian Medical College (CMC) Foundation and is a deacon at Bethany Memorial Reformed Church in New York City. The Vellore CMC Foundation promotes the legacy of Dr. Ida Scudder (founder of CMC and Hospital in India) by supporting CMC in its healing ministry of Christ. Deepika was born at CMC and was introduced to Christian

mission work at an early age. As a high school student, she served at an orphanage started by Mother Teresa in India. Deepika has a master's of Public Health from the University of Rochester, where she worked in the international medicine field. During that time, she met her husband, Rajeev, who studied medicine there. She served at the Christian Embassy (UN) and continues to serve at Bible Study Fellowship International where she can fulfill her passion for sharing God's Word, especially with the next generation.



Rev. Marijke Strong is the first female executive secretary for the Regional Synod of Canada. She has served as a camp director, intentional community planter, preacher, teacher, workshop leader, coach, writer, spiritual director, and pastoral care minister. She is passionate about spiritual formation, building community, creation care, expressing faith through art, and cultivating church renewal. Marijke has an

M.Div. from McMaster Divinity College in Hamilton, Ontario. She served at Fellowship Reformed Church in Holland, Michigan, and has been part of many denominational task forces and teams.

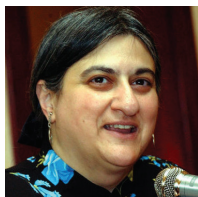


Morrell "Morrie" Swart (1921-2013) and her husband served as RCA missionaries in Ethiopia, Kenya, and Sudan for 40 years. Morrie continued her ministry when she returned to the United States by holding Bible studies in her home for 23 years. Morrie also authored *The Call of Africa*, a book about the RCA's mission in Sub-Saharan Africa.

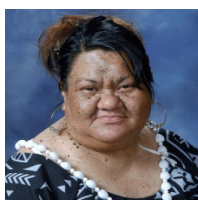


Rev. Cora Taitt currently serves as the senior pastor of Highbridge Community Church in the Bronx, New York. She was born and raised in Selma, Alabama, where, as a young teen, she participated in the Civil Rights Movement and the final march from Selma to Montgomery in 1965. She continues to serve as a community activist and advocate for social justice today, committed to improving the quality of life for

Bronx residents. Rev. Taitt is a member of Western Theological Seminary's board of trustees, and she currently serves the Classis of New York as a church supervisor.



Rev. Dr. Terry Troia has served at Project Hospitality, a community-based nonprofit agency, since 1985, first as executive director and currently as president and CEO. She is also the pastor of the Reformed Church of Huguenot Park in Staten Island, New York. Terry serves on countless city and county boards. Since Hurricane Sandy hit the shores of Staten Island in October 2012, Terry has been at the forefront of the relief efforts and is currently the president of the Staten Island Community and Interfaith Long Term Recovery Organization. In November 2019, Terry was appointed as a NYC commissioner for human rights. The commission is charged with creating the laws and policies that uphold the rights of all New Yorkers, regardless of race, ethnicity, color, national origin, religion, gender, sexual orientation, gender identity, disability, or immigration status. She is the only commissioner to represent Staten Island on the commission.



Sancho Vaimauga is a member of Trinity Community Church in Kent, Washington, where she is part of the first Samoan language congregation in the RCA. Sancho has faithfully served as an elder since 2012 and carries out many ministries, including Sunday school director, co-leader in the Women's Ministry, and advisor for youth ministry. Sancho also assists as a cook in Trinity's weekly community meal and is a member of the fabulous Samoan choir. She serves as Trinity's clerk and is the church's office manager, which entails managing the campus needs and negotiating and managing seven rental agreements with non-RCA churches. Needless to say, Sancho has a servant's heart. In the Samoan culture, the woman's role is to help others find harmonious solutions to the problems the group is facing. Sancho's ability to blend tough love with compassion has provided her with a unique ability to handle the most difficult of issues. Sancho believes it is her cultural upbringing and her unwavering faith in God that has allowed her to be the strong woman she is today.



Rev. Dr. Lisa Vander Wal pastors Lisha's Kill Reformed Church in Schenectady, New York. In 2011, she served as the fourth female General Synod president. She was the planning committee chair for the 26th General Council of the World Communion of Reformed Churches (WCRC) in Leipzig, Germany (2017), and currently serves on the Evangelical Lutheran (ELCA) Church Council and on the WCRC executive committee. Lisa has an M.Div. from Calvin Theological Seminary and a D.Min. from New Brunswick Theological Seminary.



Rev. Suzanne Vogel was commissioned as a pastor at Meredith Drive Reformed Church in Des Moines, Iowa, in 2014. She later received her M.Div. from University of Dubuque Theological Seminary. She was ordained in 2015 and subsequently called as the first female to serve as lead pastor of Meredith Drive's multi-campus congregation. She became the clerk of Classis of Central Iowa in 2010 and co-led a two-year restructuring process.



Arlene Walters Waldorf was ordained as an elder in the PC(USA) when the RCA was just beginning to open the office to women. Arlene was a graduate of Hope College. She earned her master's degree at Western Michigan University and attended De Paul University in Chicago, Illinois, and New Brunswick Theological Seminary in New Jersey. Arlene served three different churches, both RCA and PC(USA), as a Christian educator. She served as vice president of Christian Educators in the RCA (CERCA) and represented the RCA on the Association of Presbyterian Church Educators (APCE) cabinet for six years. She was secretary and a member of the Annual Events Committee while serving on the cabinet. Arlene was program director, then executive director of the Warwick Center—the first female to hold that position at an RCA camp or conference center. She later became executive director of Reformed Church Women's Ministries. Throughout her career, she has advocated for women as leaders and pastors, practiced inclusivity, and modeled for many young adult counselors and students a cooperative way of working together and finding themselves. She has planned conferences, written newsletter columns, and edited resources. In 2004, she received the Lifetime Achievement Award from the Association of Presbyterian Church Educators.



Diana Paulsen Walker served as executive director of Reformed Church Women (RCW) from 1986 to 1994, recognizing and addressing the transition of women entering the workforce as well as into expanded leadership roles within the RCA. While RCW continued its rich history of mission support, meaningful Bible studies, and regional and national gatherings, Diana introduced innovative opportunities for women such as The Footsteps Program, which invited women to travel to the far corners of the RCA to “serve the Lord with gladness.” A highlight of her tenure was leading a mission trip to Africa, resulting in the establishment of a library and dormitory for students in Kenya. Diana was honored at the 1986 General Synod for her work and for her unwavering respect for laywomen and the gifts they selflessly gave to the RCA throughout the centuries. Diana returned to college at the age of 55 and is a graduate of Marymount Manhattan College, magna cum laude, class of 2006.



Dr. Didi Watts leads the women's ministry at the R.O.C.K. Church in Los Angeles, California, where she serves alongside her husband and pastor, Peter Watts. Didi has been actively involved in the African American Black Council (AABC) and RCA guiding coalitions. She is co-leading training for the AABC leadership cohort. Didi is a lifelong educator and has spent over 20 years

working to improve educational outcomes for Black students and the most vulnerable student populations, including students with special needs, foster kids, and low-income youth. She has recently returned to public education serving as chief of staff to a board member in the second largest school district in the nation. Didi is a champion for families at risk for involvement with the Department of Child and Family Services; she serves as point person for CarePortal and the Global Orphan Project in her church.



Colleen Aalsburg Wiessner (1954–2009) served faithfully on the RCA Council for Christian Education for many years. Many RCA churches have used the creative resources she produced. She was a staff member of the Regional Synod of the Mid-Atlantics, a member of the RCA Youth Team, and one of the original Children and Worship trainers. After earning her doctorate from Teachers College at Columbia

University (New York) in transformative learning, Colleen served as assistant professor of Adult and Higher Education at North Carolina State University. She had previously earned a master's degree from Columbia University, a master's from S.U.N.Y at New Paltz, New York, and her bachelor's at Kalamazoo College in Kalamazoo, Michigan. Colleen was a prolific writer of curricula and books; among them was *Hand in Hand: Helping Children Celebrate Diversity*, *Singing Mountains and Clapping Trees*, *Fabric of Faith*, and many others with Phyllis Vos Wezeman. Colleen represented the RCA on the APCE cabinet for several years and served on design teams for RCA General Synod functions and for the first Spectrum event for eastern youth in the RCA. Colleen's colleagues loved working with this truly gifted, creative, fun, innovative, welcoming, brilliant educator.



Rev. Arlene Wilhelm is a retired RCA minister of Word and sacrament. She is a graduate of New Brunswick Theological Seminary and was ordained in 1985. She has served Reformed churches in Massapequa, Port Ewen, and New Paltz, New York, and at the United Methodist Church of Hyde Park in New York. For about ten years, she served as part of a contemplative retreat team along with elders Ellen Ratmeyer and Ella

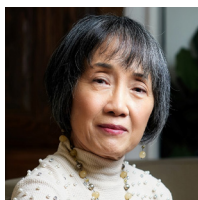
Campbell. She has also served as president of the Classis of Mid-Hudson twice. Arlene has been a certified spiritual director since 2002. Currently, she teaches spiritual practices at area churches and at Lifetime Learning Institute in New Paltz, New York, and also does pulpit supply for RCA, ELCA, PC(USA), and UMC churches.



Connie Wilkerson gave her life over to God when she was seven years old. Since then, she has been deeply involved in church life and service. She served as an interim pastor of DeWitt Reformed Church in New York from 1993-1995. She also served as deacon and now sits on the Great Consistory. Deacon Wilkerson has been involved in the Pastor's Aid, the worship committee, the senior committee, prayer services, and the women's guild (28 years). She has served DeWitt as an usher, a prayer warrior for Early Morning Prayer, and as president of the women's guild for 20 years. She also coordinated the spiritual teaching of the church. She visited the sick and shut-in, fed the hungry, and participated in spiritual retreats and many fundraising events to support the church in building God's kingdom. Deacon Wilkerson served as a member of the Christian Education program and as a chaplain for 50 years. She's also been a Sunday school teacher in a Baptist church in Campbellton, Florida, as well as PC(USA) and UMC churches.



Rev. Clara Moore Woodson received the 2011 Christian Educators RCA Lifetime Achievement Award. She was the second African American woman to be ordained in the RCA in 1992. "Mother Clara" became the minister for education of the Reformed Protestant Dutch Church of Flatbush, New York, and taught in the New York City public school system and in church school. She was a tireless minister for the Classes of Brooklyn, New York, and Rockland-Westchester until her retirement at age 84. She continues to be a great source of encouragement and inspiration to generations of RCA members.



Gerri Yoshida has been a member of the Japanese American United Church in New York City for 34 years and is a past chairperson of their Board of Directors. Gerri is the administrative assistant for the Pastoral Formation and Transitions Committee of the Classis of New York. She is also the Japanese representative to the Executive Committee of the Council for Pacific and Asian American Ministries, and she served for five years on the Commission on Race and Ethnicity. She is now involved in disability ministry and advocacy.

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For further reading about RCA Women through history:

- *By Grace Alone* by Donald J. Bruggink and Kim N. Baker
- *Hands, Hearts, and Voices* by Una Ratmeyer
- *Letters to Hazel* by Mary Kansfield
- *Patterns and Portraits* by Renée S. House and John W. Coakley



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