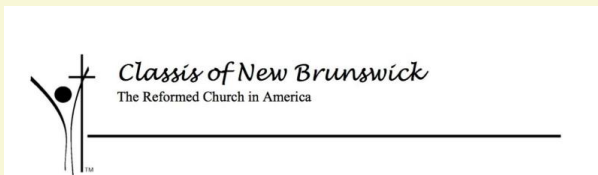




News from Room for All

April, 2014

To support, educate and advocate for the welcome and full affirmation of people of all sexual identities and gender expressions in the Reformed Church in America.



RfA Board Supports New Brunswick Classis Efforts

Members of the New Brunswick classis have asked RfA to assist in sharing a letter about an overture to the 2014 General Synod. For further information or to respond, please contact one of the two people listed as below:

Friends,

As the 2014 General Synod delegation from the classis of New Brunswick, we are deeply concerned about respectful speech about homosexuality in the RCA. We are uncomfortable with the General Synod 2012 reaffirmation that "homosexual behavior is a sin according to Holy Scripture." This has been repeated so often in our denomination, by so many voices, that we could begin to believe it is true. But according to the RCA's Commission on Theology, it is not true!

In 1978 the Commission on Theology wrote: "Scripture does not refer to the problem of homosexual acts which emerge in accord with one's conscious sexual orientation and not against it. As Jesus remains silent on the entire subject, so the biblical writers did not address the human condition now known as homosexual [orientation]."

Holy Scripture, the prophets, and Christ himself are silent when it comes to considering faithful, loving and committed same-sex relationships between people of homosexual orientation.



Christ in the LGBTQ Community: An Open Conversation

[The Reformed Church of Metuchen, NJ](#) has designed an ecumenical forum to engage neighbors in conversation about LGBTQ inclusiveness in faith communities.

Scheduled for Friday evening, April 25 (7-9 PM) and Saturday, April 26 (8 - 5), the event will feature speakers [Dr. James Brownson](#), author of *Bible, Gender, Sexuality: Reframing the Church's Debate on Same-Sex Relationships*, and [Dr. Michael La Sala](#), author of *Coming Out, Coming Home*.



RfA Celebrates 10 Years October 22 - 25, 2015

The RfA Board is beginning to make plans for marking our 10th year of ministry to support, educate and advocate full LGBTQ inclusiveness in the life and ministry of the Reformed Church in America. With prayer, determination and steady support, we've grown from a handful of like-minded individuals to a network of nearly 1,0000 RCA friends, a growing roster of welcoming congregations, and widening opportunities for graceful engagement across the RCA. Thanks be to God!

We envision a variety of opportunities to mark this milestone, but we'll concentrate our efforts on an expanded national conference which will include speakers and workshops, but also offer opportunities to celebrate and worship together on Sunday morning in a local RCA congregation. The conference site is to be determined, but we hope you'll mark your calendar!

As the RCA prepares for General Synod 2014 this June, we encourage RCA members to re-read the 1978 paper at www.rca.org/homosexuality to see how it dismisses every key Scripture passage in this debate as non-binding today. The theologians who wrote the 1978 paper explained that discerning God's role in sexual orientation is a matter of theology, not Scripture alone. That paper, however, concludes that because God endorses only heterosexual unions, God therefore condemns same-sex unions. We have a theological—and frankly, a philosophical — disagreement with this conclusion. (To us, heterosexuality and homosexuality are not logical opposites, so God's endorsement of heterosexual unions does not necessarily mean God condemns unions of loving, faithful couples of homosexual orientation.) Focusing the debate on theology, as opposed to Scripture, is an important step toward reconciliation and respectful speech in our denomination.

Our classis sent [an overture](#) asking General Synod 2014 to acknowledge these differences. We hope others will help encourage General Synod to state that the RCA has no official position on homosexual orientation and same-sex marriage. As Jesus and the prophets left discernment to later generations, so can we help General Synod leave discernment to the classes until such time as there is agreement on the constitutional level. We welcome friendly amendments and substitutes and would greatly appreciate hearing your thoughts and concerns. **Please email or call Liz and Pastor E. J. directly.**

Wishing you peace through reconciliation in this Lenten season, Elder Elizabeth Estes, E-mail: lizestes@mac.com, 732-331-2692,
Rev. E. J. Emerson, E-mail pastoreejay@gmail.com, 973-632-1305
[Also signed by delegates Elder Robin Suydam, and Rev. Doug Shepler]

Help us Reach our Development Goal

RfA would not be able to expand our ministry without the financial gifts that we receive from individuals, churches and foundations. For example, the Board is shaping a position description for a second RfA staff member! We're also beginning to make plans for our 10th anniversary celebration at "Making Room for All 2015". Your help will enable us to schedule more "Building an Inclusive Church" workshops, regional group activities, support networks and more. Your tax-deductible gift may be sent to Room for All, P.O. Box 11495, Albany NY 12211. If you prefer a PayPal donation, you can use the "Donate" link on our website. Stock transfers are also accepted. Please direct your questions to info@roomforall.com, or call us at (201) 364-4538. Thank you!

RfA Director Marilyn Paarlberg will offer a retrospective on the Welcoming Church Movement and its impact on the development of Room for All. She will also introduce and offer a small-group screening of the new RfA video resource, [Body and Soul: We Belong](#). RfA trainers Rev. Patty Fox and Robert Mutch will lead a module from the "Building an Inclusive Church" workshop model, offering participants the opportunity to develop and hone their personal stories of why they care about LGBTQ inclusiveness. Rev. Ursula Cargill will lead closing worship.

Saturday breakfast and lunch are included. There is no charge or preregistration for the event, but a free will offering will be taken to defray expenses. Questions may be directed to Rev. Peter Sanfilippo at The Reformed Church of Metuchen, 732-548-2463.

COMING EVENTS

April 25 & 26

Community Forum in Metuchen NJ (see article)

May 10, 4 PM

Northern NJ RfA Regional Group (contact rmutch@mutchassociates.com)

May 17

RfA Board meets

May 28

RfA brings greetings at New Brunswick classis meeting

June 12 - 17

RCA General Synod meets in Pella IA

Watch for info on RfA events during Synod.

WE INVITED LGBTQ CHRISTIANS IN RCA SETTINGS
TO SHARE THEIR STORIES

"Room for Me?"

In January, RfA released [a trailer for a short film project](#) that introduces LGBTQ people in RCA congregational or campus settings. Over 30 people have been interviewed, each responding to a set of four questions: *What's it like being you? How is the Gospel of Jesus Christ good news to you as an LGBTQ person? What do you wish the RCA/your church understood about you? Complete the statement, "I am _____."*

The creative director behind this project is Jeremy Bork, a recent graduate of Northwestern College in Orange City, IA and a youth ministry intern at The First Reformed Church of Schenectady, NY. Thanks to social media, Jeremy reports that the film trailer has been viewed by thousands of people around the world. We're excited to release the completed 15-minute film sometime in May.

