



Traces of the Spirit

A Publication of the Classis of Rochester, RCA

May 2026

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CLASSIS HIGHLIGHTS



Classis met at New Hope Church in May. We thank them for their gracious hospitality—those who greeted us, those who provided food, and those who provided music for our worship service. Mark Dutton, preaching elder candidate, preached at the worship service. His sermon on Exodus reminded us that God took the time to teach and shape his people in the wilderness. Christine Loy, Director of Music Ministry, and Richi Gregory, Organist, provided music during the service.

Chris Jacobsen's brief report on New Hope's ministry included an initiative to develop deeper connections in relationships to God and one another, facilitated by Ken Eriks; their upcoming VBS program, which is expected to draw 160 children; and a new care ministry where elders walk alongside those aging and mentor adults to walk with others.

Highlights of the meeting included:

- ◆ Approval of the plan of merger of the classes of Albany, Columbia-Greene, Rochester, Schenectady and Schoharie to form the Northeastern Middle Assembly; and the reorganization of the synod into the Abiding Assembly (formerly the Classis of Montgomery). Churches must report their choice of Middle Assembly to the Stated Clerk no later than September 1.
- ◆ Approval to distribute remaining classis funds, 1/9 for each congregation, to their destination Middle Assembly, reserving \$3,000 for expenses for the Stated Clerk and the Treasurer, anticipated in the first quarter of 2027.
- ◆ A report that John Stratton was appointed elder supervisor for Clymer Hill Reformed Church.
- ◆ A reminder that 2027 contracts for ministers under contract will be reviewed at the October 2026 Congregational Care Committee meeting.
- ◆ A reminder that Boards of Elders minutes will be reviewed by the Congregational Care Committee at the October 2026 meeting.
- ◆ Approval to enthusiastically sustain Mark Dutton's preaching elder exams in Old Testament, New Testament, RCA Standards and Preaching. He was commissioned at the conclusion of the



(Classis continued on page 2)



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(Classis Continued from page 1)

- meeting.
- ◆ A report from the Synod Ministries Board [see article below].
- ◆ The formation of a committee to plan our final classis meeting on October 20, 2026, to be held at Lakeview Community Church.





Regional Synod News



WHAT'S NEXT FOR MIDDLE ASSEMBLIES?

The Regional Synod of Albany is forming two Middle Assemblies from the congregations in its bounds, the Abiding Assembly and the Northeastern Middle Assembly. Transition teams for each have presented at informational gatherings. Transition teams continue to do the necessary work to form the structure, governance, and programming of their respective assemblies. Once a minister or congregation decides to join a middle assembly and communicates that to their classis clerk, they may hear from transition team members inviting them to participate in this work. Anita needs to know which Middle Assembly your church will be joining **no later than September 1.**

There will be additional Zoom sessions by both Middle Assemblies sometime this summer to make presentations and answer questions. Churches are encouraged to participate. A date will be forthcoming. The Albany Synod Mediation Team has

created a guide to assist your consistory in navigating conversations about the RSA Restructure. You can access [this guide here](#) or find it on the Albany Synod Restructure webpage listed above. Further information on FAQs, timeline, statements of identity, and mission for both middle assemblies, and other items is available at [Albany Synod restructure](#). Video presentations from both Middle Assemblies are also available there.

Staff Changes and Continued Programming

With Rev. Abby Norton-Levering's departure from the Synod and the changes made to staff by the Regional Synod Executive Committee last year, our staff is shifting roles and still continuing many of the same excellent programs.

Rev. Bob Hoffman continues as Synod Administrator and Stated Clerk and provides support to both Middle Assembly (MA) Transition Teams in this role.

- ◆ Rev. Lindsey De Kruif, Synod Program Coordinator, continues to plan and organize Synod events (retreats, workshops, and more!) in coordination with the Synod Ministries Board and has also taken responsibility for Synod Communication (including the website and newsletter). She also provides support to the MA Transition Teams. She has stepped back from the role of School of Ministry Coordinator to fill the communications role.
- ◆ Albany Synod is pleased to welcome Rev. Elizabeth Moses as School of Ministry Administrator. In addition to the School of Ministry, she will also facilitate the Preaching Elders' Circle which meets monthly on Zoom.
- ◆ Rev. Dr. Sherri Meyer-Veen also continues on staff in a more part-time capacity. She continues to lead the work for Faithwalking and Churches Learning Change in the Synod and has taken leadership of the Synod Mediation Team.

Many of the Synod Programs continue. Check out the rest of our newsletter and the Synod website (www.albanysynod.org). And if you have questions about whether something is still happening, contact [our staff](#).

Update from the 2026 Albany Synod Meeting

Albany Synod held its annual assembly on May 3 and 4. Nearly 75 delegates and guests attended a celebration of the synod's ministries and staff on Sunday evening at the Helderberg Reformed Church.

The worship time included a litany of Remembrance, Communion and Hope for the Regional Synod of Albany, written by the Rev. Chris VandeBunte, music selections provided by the Lynnwood Reformed Church Music Team, and storytelling by the Rev. Kent Busman. Noreen Fargione shared greetings from former and current staff.

On May 4 delegates gathered at the Lynnwood Reformed Church for the business meeting of the assembly. Reports were shared by synod staff on the various ministries of the synod, as well as partners of the synod (Camp Fowler, New York State Council of Churches, and the General Synod Council).

Worship was led by the Rev. Immanuel Van Tonder, Vice President, with accompaniment from the Lynnwood Reformed Church Music Team. Read more on the [Synod of Albany website](#) plus hear the report of Synod President Dirk Gieser and the sermon given by Synod Vice President Immanuel van Tonder.



News from Our Churches

Interlaken

Kitchen Cupboard gets new freezer

The Kitchen Cupboard received a grant to purchase a new freezer. They are very happy to be able to replace an old freezer with this much-needed piece of equipment. The Foodlink shopping list continues to be much better than it was last summer, and they have been able to get some much-needed items that were not available for a while. The Cupboard is also getting produce boxes twice a month through June. Having some fresh produce has been great!



Technical updates

Interlaken services are now available on live stream on YouTube, and they are updating their website.

Adult Bible study continues

The adult Bible study classes continue to meet on Sunday morning and Monday afternoon under the direction of Pastor Sulia.

Lakeview

Services now available on church website

Live services and recorded past services are now available on Lakeview's [website](#). This is a great opportunity for those who are homebound, recuperating from surgery or illness, or otherwise unable to be present. Check out the beautiful Easter service. Live stream is also available on [Facebook](#).

New members welcomed

Lakeview received three people into membership by profession of faith at the end of April. Also, three children were baptized in the last month. God has been good in creating a new and welcoming environment at Lakeview.



Pultneyville

New organist/choir director coming on board

Pultneyville is hiring a new organist/choir director to begin at the end of August!

Eric Titus to go on sabbatical

Eric Titus will be leaving on his annual sabbatical on June 14; he will return to the pulpit on August 30.

Upcoming Church Events

June 14

Interlaken honors graduates

Three high school graduates will be honored during the worship service and afterwards at coffee hour on June 14.



June 14 through the summer

Outdoor worship service in the pavilion, Pultneyville



Outdoor summer worship services will begin on June 14 at Pultneyville, with worship remaining at 10 am. At this first service of the summer, there will be a reception for their organist, Morgan, to say thank you, farewell, and to show their appreciation for everything she has brought to worship services over the last seven years.

June 18, 6:30 pm

Strawberries and Concert on the Lawn, Trinity

Bring your friends and join in for an evening of strawberries and good music!!! Music will be provided by 78 RPM, a local big band group which includes some of Trinity's members. Strawberries begin at 6:30 pm, and music begins at 7 pm. Remember to bring a lawn chair or a blanket with you!



September



Lakeview Community Church

Lakeview will be celebrating its 75th anniversary in September. A planning committee is being formed to make sure we have a wonderful celebration.

Stay tuned for more information.

To follow what's happening at General Synod in Nashville, go to [General Synod 2026](#).

(RSA Continued from page 3)



Preaching Elders Circle

Commissioned Preaching Elders and other non-clergy who preach are invited to join the Albany Synod Preaching Elder Circle for support, camaraderie; and opportunities to process experiences, learn new ideas, and practice mutual accountability. Regular and occasional participants are welcome. Contact [Elizabeth Moses](#) with any questions and receive Zoom info.

Synod Ministries Board (SMB) Report



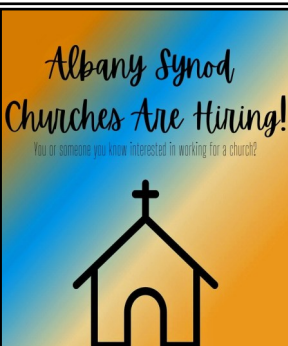
SMB resources have been significant to the life of our churches, and we do not want to lose them in the transition to middle assembly process. SMB has looked at the programs that have been particularly enriching for the churches in our Synod and has prepared a report to be shared with both middle assembly transition teams. They will offer support to the transition teams and will be available to help them discern what ministries should continue, where they should be housed, and how they could be staffed and funded going forward.

In the last year, SMB has made possible:

- ◆ The continuation of the work of the Mediation Team through 2026 by asking that Sherri Meyer-Veen be appointed as the staff person to lead the Team and that she be compensated for this work.
- ◆ A Beginnings and Beyond retreat and a Pastors and Families retreat.
- ◆ Faithwalking and Churches Learning Change events.
- ◆ The continuation of the School for Ministry under the leadership of Elizabeth Moses.
- ◆ Free resources for churches through Practical Resources for Churches (PRC) and a Collaborative Ministries Handbook.
- ◆ Restorative Circles Facilitator Training.
- ◆ Grants for participating churches in Care Portal.
- ◆ Continued partnering with Camp Fowler.



Grants to churches in the areas of revitalization, discipleship, and mission will be available in 2026. Grants are for up to \$1,000 and applications must come with support from both the local consistory and from the classis. Go to [grants](#) for guidelines and an application form.



Check out job openings in Synod churches at [Jobs.](#)

What is Practical Resources for Churches (PRC)?



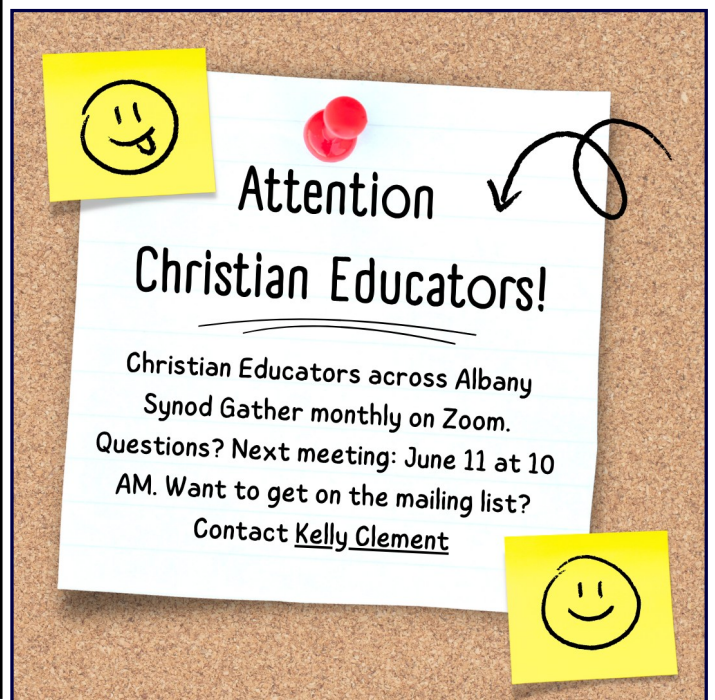
PRC is an independent non-profit that provides support and resources to its member churches and judicatories. Albany Synod is a top-tier member of PRC, so almost everything they offer is available without charge to our congregations. Check out the many resources available in the [PRC](#) store. These are available for free to Albany Synod churches with a discount code. Contact [Lindsey De Kruif](#) for the code. If you need help figuring something out, PRC is a great place to start looking for answers and resources.

PRC offers monthly online sexual harassment prevention training. This training is required annually for all employees in NY state. Upcoming sessions include

- [Wednesday, August 12, 2026](#) – 7:00 PM EDT
- [Tuesday, September 22, 2026](#) – 2:30 PM EDT

Click a link above to register for the session that best works for your schedule!

[Click here for more upcoming events from PRC!](#)



Update from JJ TenClay

An Excerpt from her March 2026 Letter

Dear Friends and Supporters,

I first want to take a moment to acknowledge the heaviness so many of us are feeling due to the brokenness of our world today, particularly places where wars and violent conflict are erupting or continuing without ceasing. Can we take a moment to breathe and pray together? Take a moment to close your eyes and calm your thoughts, then join me in a breathing prayer.



Breathe in and repeat these words (aloud or in your mind): **Jesus is the Light of the World.**

Breathe out and repeat these words: **The darkness can never extinguish the Light.**

Breathe in: **Jesus is the Prince of Peace.**

Breathe out: **May the peace of Christ prevail throughout the earth.**

Breathe in: **Jesus is the Great Reconciler.**

Breathe out: **May we live in right relationship with God, with one another, and with the earth.**

Lebanon Update

Some of you have reached out to me with great concern about Rev. Linda Macktaby and her beloved homeland of Lebanon in recent days, and I thank you for your care and concern. I've received almost daily updates from Pastor Linda since February 28, and the news is disturbing. Pastor Linda has reported airstrikes and explosions in Southern Lebanon, the Bekaa Valley (Eastern Lebanon) and in the suburbs of Beirut. She has even shared video footage of explosions happening near her home and the home of her parents. Some of these attacks are happening in Christian communities in Lebanon. Pastor Linda is, once again, doing everything she can to care for the thousands of people actively being displaced now, even as she continues to care for the thousands of people who have been displaced since October 2023. Please pray for her, her family, her beloved homeland of Lebanon, and the tens of thousands of people at risk of death or displacement due to the current conflict.

Afghanistan Update

The day before the Iran strikes occurred, Pakistan carried out airstrikes in 20 locations across Afghanistan, which was immediately met with retaliation by the Taliban. I've been connected with several Afghan individuals and families who either weren't able to flee Afghanistan in 2021, or who fled to Pakistan and have been stuck there without a safe and legal path to long-term refuge, and who have direct ties to individuals or churches in the RCA. This includes a family for whom I found a Canadian church to sponsor them for resettlement and whose resettlement application is currently pending. Will you please join me in prayer for this family? For their safety? That their refugee resettlement application will be approved quickly? That God will make a way for their safe arrival in Canada before the end of the year? For the church that has stepped out in faith to sponsor them?



Trip to Costa Rica

In February, I was blessed to travel to Costa Rica on a trip organized by Grace Newhouse (RCA missionary). The trip had two main objectives: 1) to spend time with Ruth & James Padilla DeBorst and learn more about their work with *A Rocha Costa Rica*, and 2) to participate in the *Oh, Healing River* conference (led by Dr. Ruth Padilla DeBorst and Rev. Dr. Sue Rozeboom, professors at Western Theological Seminary).

Ruth and James Padilla DeBorst will be joining RCA Global Mission as missionaries in June 2026, and part of their work with *A Rocha Costa Rica* is providing care for migrants and asylum seekers. You can learn more about their missionary work [here](#). I previously worked with James in a joint RCA/CRC working group for a program called Journeys into Friendship, which focused on calling and equipping the church to build intentional, authentic, and mutual friendships with people who come from different religious and cultural backgrounds. I'm thankful that the Padilla DeBorst will soon be joining the RCA Global Mission team! Please pray for Ruth and James as they make this transition.

The *Oh, Healing River* conference was a three-day event focused on how we—as Christ followers—are called to live in right relationships with God, with others, and with the cosmos (creation). I really appreciated the care and conviction both Ruth and

(TenClay Continued on page 9)



Camp Fowler

Camping Opportunities

Summer 2026 Camp Sessions

There are 16 summer camp selections to choose from for all school-aged groups and activity. Sessions are available from June 26 through August 7. Go to [Summer Camp](#) for more information or to register.

Family Camp

Family Camp is a summer camp experience designed for parents and children to enjoy spending time together without the distractions of other things. It runs from August 9 (2:30 pm) to 13 (1 pm). We offer activities based on the interests of the families that come to camp, including canoeing, kayaking, hiking, swimming, sailing, singing, crafting, or just relaxing. There's something for everyone and every age group! For more information or to register, go to [Family Camp](#).

Tag-a-long Camp

Volunteers may bring Tag-a-long campers. Tag-a-longs are campers who are too young to attend camp as a typical camper, but who may attend with an adult who knows them well. Sessions are available from June 28 through July 31. Go to [Tag-a-longs](#) for further information or to register.

SWiMs Program

Runs from June 28 through July 31

The Students Working in Ministry Program—or SWiM Program—provides a leadership development experience for high school students coming out of 10th, 11th, and 12th grades. It's an opportunity for long-time campers to experience Fowler in a dynamic and more intensive way while working on leadership skills. For more information about this program, go to [SWiM](#). To register for a week,

WE NEED YOU!

VOLUNTEER AT CAMP

WE ARE STILL LOOKING FOR VOLUNTEERS FOR A VARIETY OF CAMP WEEKS!

KITCHEN	CABIN COUNSELOR	MAINTENANCE
#1 Camp Kickoff #3 Una Tierra	FEMALE #5 Una Tierra #6 Triple A	MALE #3 Una Tierra #5 Una Tierra
		#1 Camp Kickoff #2 Una Tierra #3 Una Tierra #5 Una Tierra #6 Triple A

Volunteers make Fowler happen!
What gifts and talents may you be called to share this summer?
Learn more about being a volunteer and recruit your friends!
Summer 2026 is going to be a blast, and we hope you are part of it!

Listening Hearts Retreat



This contemplative retreat invites us to step outside our normal lives and to reflect on where we have been, and where we might be going; to catch a glimpse of how we might live differently, and to listen for the still-small voice of God. Together we will nurture our desire for prayer. Contemplative prayer practices will be introduced. Opportunity is provided to meet with a spiritual director. Times of silence, including some meals, will occur. Rest will be honored...Renewal encouraged...Fellowship fostered.

You have options in the tiered pricing to have your cost subsidized by the Ella Campbell fund. Pricing ranges from \$350 to \$540. Arrival is Monday after 4 pm, and the retreat will conclude Thursday after brunch.

Participants will be requested to wear masks when in close proximity to others. For more information or to register, go to [Listening Hearts](#).

Update from the Silvas and Fără Limite



Excerpt from their 2025 Year in Review

A glimpse at what your support made possible

Because of your generosity, young people like Raul are discovering the gifts God has placed within them.

This year, we've had the joy of watching Raul grow in our education, leatherworking, and climbing programs. One of the most significant transformations has been in his approach to school. In 2024, Raul was on the verge of failing history, a subject he struggled with and didn't see the value in pursuing. But Damaris, our education program employee, came alongside him. She helped him memorize what he needed to know and guided him through his end-of-year project. Against the odds, Raul passed. Without Damaris and our education program, he would have had to repeat an entire semester of school.

This year, the change in Raul is remarkable. He comes to the church twice a week for our education program and never misses his days. With Damaris' consistent support, he's become much more attentive to detail and far more willing to work hard at school, giving it an importance that his family doesn't reinforce. He still struggles with reading, but Damaris continues to help and motivate him, refusing to give up on him. The academic support your generosity provides is changing the trajectory of his life.

In our leatherworking classes, Raul is learning a craft that requires patience, precision, and creativity—the kind of discipline that shapes character and builds something lasting. Recently, he completed a project he was incredibly proud of: a leather chalk bag he made entirely with his own hands. But here's what made it truly special—Raul didn't just make it because it was required. He used that chalk bag in a climbing competition, bringing together both of his passions in one beautiful moment. You could see the confidence in his eyes, knowing he'd created something meaningful and was putting it to real use.

Your faithful partnership made moments like these possible. The tutoring, the leather, the tools, the instructors, the



Raul making and using his chalk bag.



Raul enjoying after school programs and kedama activities.

climbing program—these are the resources helping Raul discover what he's capable of. What's especially encouraging is that Raul is also an active part of our youth group, benefiting from all three of our presences in the community: the climbing gym, the education program, and the church. This is the heart of our ministry—walking alongside children like Raul in many spheres of their lives, investing in their physical, practical, educational, and spiritual development.

Raul also participates in our biking club, kendama activities, and summer camp. He enjoys our hot lunch program every Friday, and this Christmas, he received a gift through Samaritan's Purse. Each of these touchpoints is an opportunity to pour into his life, showing him he's valued and that there's a community cheering him on. Through it all, Raul is hearing the gospel and learning about who God is and how deeply he is loved by his Creator. As he develops skills in academics, leatherworking, and climbing, he's learning about perseverance, taking pride in his work, and the deep satisfaction that comes from dedication and effort. We believe these are the building blocks that will serve him well wherever life takes him, and we're grateful you're investing in his future alongside us.

Sorin's Journey: From Crisis to Community

(Written by Ionut Bota, the Fără Limite climbing gym director for 7 years)

(Silvas Continued on page 10)

(TenClay Continued from page 6)

Sue expressed when teaching or leading reflection times about the connection between creation (specifically air, land, and water) and mass forced displacement of people worldwide. I want to thank Grace, Ruth, James, Sue, and everyone at *A Rocha Costa Rica* for sharing their time, talents, resources, and hospitality with me and other participants.



Italy Refugee Community Sponsorship Project

In my 2025 end of year missionary report, I shared the good news that we met our goal of raising \$50,000 to support the work of another RCA missionary (Hannah Kummer) and our mission partner (Mediterranean Hope) as they expand their



Humanitarian Corridor program through a new community sponsorship program for refugee resettlement. Thank you to everyone who supported this project through prayer and financial gifts! Today I leave you with [Giuseppe's story](#) of how sponsoring Afghan refugees for resettlement has made a world of difference for him and for his new Afghan friends.

An Excerpt from her May 2026 Letter

Dear Friends & Supporters,

In March and April, I attended gatherings where the song *Goodness of God* was sung in worship.

In March, it was during the classis meeting for the Great Lakes City Classis, where I was invited to share information with those gathered about the new partnership between the Reformed Church in America and World Relief for the RCA Churches of Welcome program. Through the program, the RCA is inviting up to 30 RCA congregations to embark on a year-

long missional and discipleship journey into learning more about God's love for refugees and other people on the move or living in diaspora, and equipping congregations to love immigrants and refugees better in the name of Christ. In April, it was at the World Relief National Church Gathering in Chicago during a worship time led by Jon Guerra and friends.



Above left to right: Pastor Sepa Nashale presenting at the March Great Lakes City Classis meeting. (Pastor Sepa is the pastor of True Vine Mission Church in Wyoming, MI—an RCA congregation that is participating in the RCA Churches of Welcome program); Jon Guerra and friends leading worship for the April World Relief National Church Gathering in Chicago, IL.

At both of these gatherings, as I was surrounded by Christ followers belting out the lyrics of this song with great enthusiasm, it struck me:

- ◆ God's goodness is running after me and every single individual in that room; and
- ◆ God's goodness is running after refugees and other people around the world at risk of death and forced displacement.

In many ways, this is a great summary of why I have been doing this work for the past 12 years: I believe that God's goodness is running after refugees, and I want to be a part of that good news. I want to see refugees through the eyes of Christ, remembering that they are so much more than the worst days of their lives or the labels we place on them. I want to learn to love them with the heart of Christ. I want to be an active participant in this sacred space of protecting the lives and liberties of refugees (and others at risk of death and forced displacement), and I want to invite others into this sacred space as well. I want to testify to the goodness of God—a God who sees every single refugee in our world, and whose goodness is running after every single person who has fled their home in search of refuge.

This is gospel work.

This is Kingdom work.

And I am so deeply grateful to be a part of it.

With Gratitude,

JJ TenClay
 Missionary
 Refugee Ministries Coordinator
 RCA Global Mission

To support JJ's work, go to [TenClay support](#).

(Silvas Continued from page 8)

Our relationship with Sorin and his family began in the midst of crisis. His father had been in a very serious car accident, and when Ruben and I heard about it on Facebook, we knew we had to help. The family lives in Dallas and desperately needed support during this difficult time. We mobilized some



Sorin at a climbing competition
(pictured in the green vest)

young people from Maranatha Church and went to visit the family—a large household with six or seven children. Over the following weeks and months, we continued visiting, helping with whatever they needed, praying with them, strengthening our faith together, and hoping for the father's recovery. During those visits, we invited the children to come to the climbing gym, but it would be another three to four years before they took us up on that invitation.

When Sorin finally came, everything changed. He's naturally passionate about sports, and he immediately found joy in both climbing and our community. We began to see him integrate deeply into our ministry, growing both spiritually and physically in remarkable ways. Then came a pivotal moment this past summer at our summer camp—Sorin had his first real experience with God. That encounter with the Holy Spirit changed everything. He wanted to know more, to understand more, to draw closer to the God he had met. He began coming to church and now rarely misses a Sunday. The transformation in his heart has been beautiful to witness.

This shift became especially evident during Christmas. Sorin has a tradition, like many in our community, of going caroling to earn money. But this year, he made a different choice—he chose to praise the Lord by caroling with Ancora Church instead of for profit. His values, desires, and intentions are changing before our eyes. Even more meaningful, this year we had the joy of going to carol at his family's apartment door—a beautiful full-circle moment, remembering how God first brought us to their doorstep through his father's accident years ago.

Sorin has also discovered a passion for climbing competitions, where he's found great joy and purpose. He's become determined to listen, to improve, and to become the best climber he can be. His determination is ironclad, and climbing has truly become part of who he is.

Watching Sorin's transformation from a child in a family facing crisis to a young man hearing about Jesus for the first time and



Sorin biking with the biking club (on the right side)

becoming curious about what it means to follow Him—this is what your partnership makes possible. You didn't just help us provide a climbing gym or summer camp. You helped us walk alongside a family through their darkest moment and stay faithful long enough to see a young man encounter Jesus and begin exploring faith. Thank you for making this patient, long-term ministry possible.

Our challenges in 2025

Space and Buildings

After ten years of faithfully serving young people like Raul through our climbing gym, we're facing a significant challenge: the building itself is in need of serious renovation. We're grateful that the city hall has provided this space with a minimal rental fee, which has been a tremendous blessing and has allowed us to invest more directly in the children we serve. However, this arrangement also presents a limitation—it's difficult to justify making major investments in renovating a building we don't own. We find ourselves in a position where the space that has served us so well for a decade now needs more than we can reasonably pour into it.

At the same time, we're also running out of space at the church. As our ministry has grown and more children like Raul are being reached through our various programs—leatherworking, biking club, education program, youth group, and our Friday hot lunch program—we're simply outgrowing the facilities we have. It's an encouraging problem in one sense, because it means God is blessing our work and drawing more young people to participate. But it's also a very real constraint that affects how we can expand and serve. These space limitations are forcing us to think creatively and prayerfully about the future. How do we maximize the church space we have? What does God want us to do next? We're seeking his wisdom and direction, knowing that he has provided faithfully for ten years and will continue to guide us forward. We will pursue our own building for the climbing gym and have already bought the land. The buildings may be a challenge, but the ministry happening inside them is thriving; and we're trusting God to make a way for continued growth.

(Silvas Continued on page 12)

News from David Ford

Excerpts from David’s March and May 2026 Newsletters

The Dime New Testament Project

Preparing the Rough Draft of the Dime New Testament



The four printed and bound copies of the Dime New Testament draft, just after completion

In my last regular issue of my newsletter, I shared about the start of my first major typesetting project, the Dime New Testament. In Fall 2025 I met with the Dime translation team to work on preprocessing their draft, finding and correcting thousands of errors in the text as well as preparing the peripheral items of biblical illustrations and maps. They needed to do some additional work on making their biblical terms consistent. At the beginning of the year, the team was ready for me to review their draft. I met with Simon, one of the translators, in February. On the whole most of the cleanup had already been accomplished during the first visit. Their draft was now ready for the second phase: producing the rough draft. The two primary goals of printing this imperfect draft are first, for the community to be able to see approximately how the text will look according to the settings they’ve chosen and decide if those settings are good or if they want something adjusted; and second, for the team to review the entire draft in print and have a final opportunity to catch mistakes. Even though it’s the same text, it looks a bit different on paper than on a computer screen, and you can catch errors that you just don’t see when using the latter format.



Typesetting Challenges and Solutions

I’m still very new at typesetting, and many details from last year’s training are easy to forget. I had a first draft prepared before Simon arrived so that we could talk about the appearance while he was with me. I thought my first draft looked good and was proud to show it off. Simon and I agreed, though, that the 11 pt Ethiopic text was still a bit hard to read, even though my training had recommended a general maximum of 11 pt font. I didn’t foresee a big problem with increasing to 12 pt. However, the increase in font size did create some problems, including the size of the finished product, large gaps in word spacing, and single-column format readability. I prepared three samples, showing a range of possible options to send to Simon.

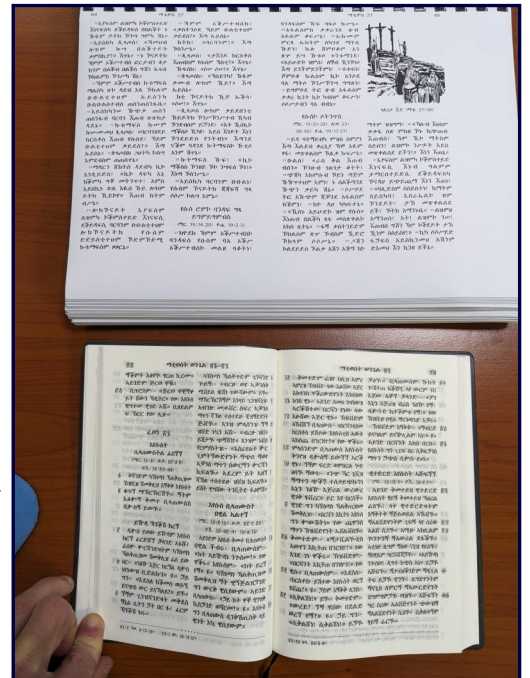
And with this tangible demonstration of formatting decisions being sent to the community, the decision for what layout gets chosen for the final draft could potentially involve the whole Dime community, not just the handful who make up the translation team. The rough draft—with those additional formatting samples—is now printed, bound, and delivered to the Dime. The translation team is to review the entire draft before the end of May, quite a rigorous task. My goal is to finish the final draft of the Dime New Testament and get it submitted to Korea for printing before I begin my next Home Assignment in August. I anticipate I’ll need most of June and July to prepare the final draft, relearn how to prepare the document to just the right specifications that the printer wants, and figure out how to get all those final details perfectly.

Tsamakko Typesetting Preprocessing

My second major typesetting project

Last month I started pre-processing work on my second major typesetting project, the Tsamakko New Testament. As I anticipated, this was a very different experience than when I worked with the Dime team on the same preprocessing work last fall.

In my October newsletter, I talked about the importance of translation advisors, and how they can make a big difference to the overall translation process. The Tsamakko team has a translation advisor (Fredrik) who came from Norway for this session. Since



The Dime formatting (shown at the top) was based on the Xamtanga New Testament (shown at the bottom) because the latter appeared to have the same basic formatting specifications that the Dime asked for. While the top draft is massive, it would be the same size as the book below when printed double-sided on the much thinner high-quality paper used for Bibles.

(Ford Continued on page 13)

(Silvas Continued from page 10)

Please pray

- ◆ Pray for our new climbing gym project. We are grateful for the progress on our new gym, which is part of a five-year project. We've already seen God's hand guiding each step, making what seemed impossible, possible. This new facility will allow us to continue reaching young people like Sorin and Raul without the limitations we currently face. Please pray for each step of this process—for the fundraising, the documents, and the staff who will make it happen. You can help support this work here.
- ◆ Pray for our team and organizational structure. This year we will focus on strengthening our team of five Romanian employees—Ionut, Ruben, Adi, Damaris, and Marian—along with us. These are the faithful servants walking alongside families, tutoring students, leading climbing sessions, and sharing the gospel day in and day out. Pray that God will lead us as we work to become more effective, more united, and more impactful in our ministry.
- ◆ Pray for the Dallas community. Many families, like Sorin's and Raul's, send their children to our programs but are not yet willing to come to church themselves. Pray for courage—that parents and community members will take that step through our doors. Pray that our presence in the community continues to meet real needs and serve people well, showing them the goodness of God and making them curious to "taste and see that the Lord is good." We long to see more entire families transformed, not just the children.

Thank you for your faithful partnership, your generous giving, and your prayers. You are making an eternal difference in the lives of many people in Romania.

To support Felipe's and Janelle's ministry, go to [Silva support](#).



An Excerpt from their May Update

May Missions Madness!

This year we celebrate arriving in Osijek, Croatia (Hrvatska) 17 years ago! So, every day we posted in our Facebook group (Horvat Fam) ways God has moved in Croatia during our 17 years and why you should still keep praying and partnering with us! Our goal is to raise the remainder of our budget this month so we don't have to leave the field! We still need \$9,000 in cash and \$800 in monthly commitments just for normal operating procedures! We must raise this quickly or we will be required to return to the USA.

Over the past 17 years, prices have skyrocketed in Croatia and our cost of living increased; the price of bread, milk, and gasoline have tripled! (If you met our son, you'll know that the price of milk increasing is hitting us the hardest-lol-he drinks a litre a day!) With gas prices at ridiculously high prices, we have started questioning every ministry opportunity; can we afford to drive to that village or pick up those teens or take students to a conference?

We are asking you to join with us to celebrate the wins! If you haven't joined our Facebook page, the handle is Horvat Fam. And if anyone feels inspired to partner with us for the future, we'd love to have you on our team! If you'd like to join our prayer and giving team, click [here](#).

Blessings,
Aaron, Winnie, Cameron Coleman-Horvat

A Note From Nick Dorland

Good Afternoon,

This is Nick Dorland, former RCA Pastor with the Classis of Rochester. I am reaching out to let you know that I am now venturing into work at a group private practice for therapy and am particularly interested in working with people in the Classis as long as it is not a conflict of interest. I am offering my services to all clergy, parishioners, or those who are on your contact lists but are struggling with attending churches because of past experiences.

I am happy to incorporate faith or religion into counseling sessions as this can aid and expand the important work of therapy. I am also happy to process with people who feel hurt, pain, or mistreatment has occurred for them within faith communities. I firmly believe that everyone can benefit from therapy, and I do offer a free 15-minute consultation to determine whether it would be the right next step for people. Please know that at the time I am only able to offer a sliding scale rate but I hope to be able to begin accepting insurances within the next 6-9 months. Go to [Nick Dorland](#) to see my *Psychology Today* profile, and please pass along to any and all whom you think could benefit.



Thanks,
Nick Dorland

(Ford Continued from page 11)

Fredrik also knows how to run all the checks in Paratext, the project came to me quite clean, and therefore we didn't have to spend much time on the error checking portion. Fredrik was also able to assume responsibility for follow-up work, such as going through the wordlist to approve soft breaks for hyphenation or verify spellings. Once I introduced these concepts to the team, I did not have to personally spend time helping them finish these tasks; they could do that on their own. Finally, the two Tsamakko translators, Yonas and Hailu, are conversant in English. All these factors meant that we finished our work in just three days. Since I had budgeted for five days, this gave me extra time to generate the translated maps and review them live with the team.



Because of my schedule, this will actually be the only work I do on Tsamakko this year. I hope to begin the Tsamakko rough draft in February, and by the end of 2027 we expect that it should be finalized, printed, and delivered. I had been worried that they would balk at the long delay, but their team is actually quite eager to forge ahead with Old Testament translation, and they seem content with the timeline we have set for the NT.

Translation Anecdote: Compass Directions

When working with the Tsamakko team to translate Bible maps, I learned that they have no concise term for north or south. They have a single word for east, which I believe means direction of sunrise, but to say north requires a complex phrase meaning approximately the direction one faces after turning left from looking at where the sun rises. Quite a mouthful! Why is this important? Well, if you've got a Tsamakko Bible map with a compass rose and an arrow pointing to and labeled North, it's not easy to fit that label! So, I simply rotated the compass 90° clockwise, so that I could instead use the much simpler label for East. The team agreed that this was much more sensible than trying to conform to a north-centric western map convention.

Praise and Prayer Requests

Praises

- ◆ For the progress made on the Tsamakko New Testament, and that the team is fine with the extended timeline to finish its publication.
- ◆ That I can move ahead with working on finalizing the typesetting my first New Testament publication with the Dime. I will be meeting with them the third week of May, and then proceed with the long task producing the final document for publication.
- ◆ I recently received an offer from an SIL typesetter in South Africa to serve as my mentor when needed. I have for months been dearly wishing for a mentor who can help guide me through some technical problems and help me ensure that the final draft of the Dime New Testament is as perfect as possible.

Prayers

- ◆ That, without rushing or skipping anything, the Dime New Testament would be able to have typesetting completed before I leave for Home Assignment in August.
- ◆ That my idea of providing format samples would help enable the Dime community to make informed choices about how they want their New Testament to be formatted that will result in a satisfying appearance and readability.
- ◆ That the Tsamakko will be able to complete the remaining work on their New Testament draft as they also focus on translating the Old Testament, so that typesetting of the NT could proceed quickly at the beginning of next year.
- ◆ Due to both global and local factors, Ethiopia is facing a severe shortage of diesel fuel, affecting public transport, goods transport and generator availability. Please pray that this could be resolved soon.
- ◆ For my Home Assignment travel plans, especially those involved in my road trip. This requires early planning because of its many sequential stops. But it's been slow going thus far, since several churches and individuals find it difficult to plan that far ahead.

To support David's ministry, go to [Ford support](#).

CIVIL RIGHTS SANKOFA JOURNEY 2026



Join the RCA's Revelation 7:9 ministry for a meaningful journey beginning in Atlanta, Georgia, continuing to Selma and Montgomery, Alabama, and returning to Atlanta. This experience is designed to inspire reflection, deepen understanding, and cultivate justice-oriented heart transformation.

ON THIS JOURNEY, YOU WILL:

- Visit historic sites in Atlanta and Selma, including the Edmund Pettus Bridge.
- Engage Bryan Stevenson's Legacy Sites, Rosa Parks Bus Stop, and other important locations in Montgomery.
- Worship with a local congregation in Montgomery.
- Build authentic community, guided by reflections and discussions led by Rev. Dr. Denise Kingdom.

TRIP AND REGISTRATION DETAILS:

- This Sankofa is designed for individuals 15 years or older. Minors are welcome if a trusted guardian is also attending.
- Registration includes lodging, most meals, and ground transportation during the journey.
- Scholarships may be available to supplement a portion of the cost.
- Registration closes June 30, 2026.

SANKOFA LEADERSHIP:



Rev. Dr. Denise Kingdom
Founder of the 1Cor13Project and RCA mission liaison with Setshabelo Family and Child Services in South Africa.



Rev. Cora Taitt
Pastor of Highbridge Community Church in the Bronx and participant in the historic walk across the Pettus Bridge.



Rev. Sharon Atkins
Pastor of Bethany Memorial Reformed Church in New York City and past chairperson of the RCA's African American Black Council (AABC).



**AUGUST
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LEARN MORE AND REGISTER:
<https://www.rca.org/revelation-7-9/sankofa-journeys/>

