

# **MINUTES**

***The Regional Synod of Albany***

***Special Meeting***

**Reformed Church in America**

**Fort Herkimer Church**

**Mohawk, New York**

***October 25, 2025***

**2025 Minutes  
Special Meeting  
REGIONAL SYNOD OF ALBANY**

A special meeting of the Regional Synod of Albany was approved by the synod delegates on May 5, 2025 while meeting in the annual assembly at the Emmanuel Reformed Church in Castleton, New York.

The special meeting was held on October 25, 2025 at the Fort Herkimer Historic Church in Mohawk, New York. Rev. Dirk Gieser, president, presided.

**I. GATHERING**

President Gieser called the meeting to order at 10:00pm and welcomed the delegates and guests. The opening worship service was led by Revs. Dirk Gieser, Immanuel Van Tonder and Heather Kramer. Rev. Robert Hoffman, Synod Administrator and Stated Clerk preached.

**II. FORMATION**

Twenty (20) ministers and Nineteen (19) elders, including the President and Vice President, signed in as delegates making a total of Thirty Nine (39) voting delegates and officers in attendance.

**Delegate Roster**

**Minister Delegates**

**Elder Delegates**

ALBANY CLASSIS

Rev Greg Town  
Rev Jake Chipka  
Rev Jennifer Legg

Tina Bottini  
Jim Mastromarchi  
Christine Allen

COLUMBIA GREENE CLASSIS

Rev. Savitri Mark

Matthew Pirrone  
Bonnie Pflagl  
Patti Varga

MONTGOMERY CLASSIS

Rev. Matthew Draffen  
Rev. Jeff Mc Ilrath  
Rev. Brian Engel  
Rev. Betsy Westman

Emory Luck  
Penelope Harrison  
Randy Karcher  
Marian Engells

ROCHESTER CLASSIS

Rev. Rick Admiraal  
Rev. Chris Jacobsen

Mark Dutton  
Amy Burdett  
David Borland

#### SCHENECTADY CLASSIS

Rev. Brian Dykema  
Rev. Susan Kerr  
Rev. Mike Meyer-Veen  
Rev. Susan Huizenga

Warren Blaisdell  
Pieter Lansing  
Brad Lewis

#### SCHOHARIE CLASSIS

Rev. Rett Zabriskie  
Rev. Rich Dykstra  
Rev. Linda Gold  
Rev. Jeff Kelley

David Patterson  
Steve Mattice  
Kathy Saltsman

#### OFFICERS

Dirk Gieser, Vice President  
Immanuel Van Tonder, Vice President  
Bob Hoffman, Stated Clerk

Excused absences were requested from Rev. Paige Convis, Rev. Rudy Visser, Rev. Vanessa Funk, Rev. Eric Titus, Elder Ingrid Blydenburgh, Elder Deb McKee, and Past President, Noreen Fargione.

**MOTION: To approve the requested absences. (Carried)**

One elder delegate did not attend.

The following staff, board or committee members, and guests were welcomed:

**Synod Staff:** Sherri Meyer Veen and Lindsey DeKruif

**Fowler Staff:** Pat Kinne

**Albany Synod Board of Trustees and Executive Committee:** Gary Smith and Heather Kramer

**Transition Team Member:** Amy Katt

**Corresponding Delegate:** Rev. Steve Meyer, Classis of Rochester

**Guests:** Rev. Eddy Aleman, Rev. Sarah Palsma, and Robert Nysapany

**MOTION: To welcome the guests and grant them privilege of the floor. (CARRIED)**

### III. AGENDA

- 9:30 am Delegate Sign In (Fort Herkimer Church)
- 10:00am Call to Order  
Worship
- 10:45am Delegate and Guest Introductions (Community Center)  
Welcome to Guests and Privilege of the Floor  
Greetings from RCA General Secretary, Rev. Eddy Aleman  
Greetings from RCA President, Rev. Sarah Palsma
- 11:00am Agenda Review and Approval
- 11:15am Business Items

Actions from the Minutes of May 5, 2025 assembly regarding restructure and transition

**VOTED: That two middle assemblies be formed and two transition teams: One based on the request of Montgomery Classis to create an additional assembly and one based on a version of the Upstate New York Middle Assembly proposal. Both transition teams have the full support of the resources and staffing of the Regional Synod.**

**VOTED: That we call a special meeting of the Regional Synod of Albany in October 2025 for the purpose of completing unfinished business from the May meeting.**

1. Transition Team Reports
  - Abiding Middle Assembly
  - Northeastern Middle Assembly (NEMA)

- 12:15pm Lunch
- 1:00pm Gathering Prayer

1:15pm Business Items Continued

2. Report from the Committee on Accounts  
Proposed 2026 Budget:

**R-1 That the 2026 Albany Synod budget of \$256,219 be approved.**

Proposed 2026 Covenant Shares schedule:

**R-2 That the assessed portion of the 2026 Albany Synod budget (\$219,329) be supported by an assessment using the Covenant Shares percentage of 2% of the total congregational income (\$10,791,888) reported on the 2024 Consistorial Report Forms and applying the 10% increase or decrease variable for each congregation.**

3. Summary of Anticipated Timeline for the transition to Middle Assemblies - Information and direction for delegates to take back to their classis.

Adjournment  
Benediction

President Gieser reviewed the agenda for the day and outlined the process for sharing the transition team reports. The agenda was approved by consensus.

#### IV. BUSINESS

##### 1. Transition Team Reports

Dirk reminded the delegates of the actions taken at our May 5, 2025 synod meeting to form two middle assemblies from the six classes and regional synod. Two transition teams were formed to identify the vision, values, and mission of those middle assemblies. The transition teams have been working and are present to bring their individual reports. Dirk encouraged the synod to not fall into a win/lose environment when hearing the team reports, or to think of the teams as being in competition with one another for the churches of Albany Synod. He also reminded that by November 1, 2026 Albany Synod is to inform the General Synod Council of the composition of each middle assembly within its bounds.

##### **Northeastern Middle Assembly (NEMA) Report**

Rev. Rich Dykstra summarized the report of the NEMA transition team. He read their identity statement, **“By God’s grace, we are Reformed Disciples all gathered and connected at Christ’s Table to minister to the total life of all people.”** He pointed out that some of their key commitments are to **“Living Relationally; Flourishing; Faithful Adaptability; and Respect.”** Rich shared NEMA’s mission statement, **“The Northeastern Middle Assembly (NEMA) is a communion of Reformed congregations called together to support each other and foster relationships that encourages discipleship and equips the ministries of its congregations for the sake of the Gospel of Jesus Christ.”** He identified how NEMA would go about the tasks of equipping congregations, superintend called individuals, and administer the work of the middle assembly.

##### **The Abiding Assembly Report**

Rev. Brian Engel summarized the report of the Abiding Middle Assembly and thanked the team members for their participation in putting the report together. Brian shared a quote from Alan Janssen’s book, **“Gathered in Albany,”** about the work of a “classis” which now becomes a middle assembly. Janssen noted that the goal and purpose of a “middle assembly” is to be confessional, missional and relational. Brian stressed that this is what the Abiding Middle Assembly strives to be in valuing relationships and like mindedness. They intend to focus on, **“Deep Unity and Clarity of Belief; Strong, Supported Local Ministry; and Real Connection and Community.”** The five core values and goals of the Abiding Middle Assembly are: **“Biblical and Confessional Foundation; Relational Connectedness; Equipping for Mission-Oriented Local Ministry; Integrity, Accountability, and Faithfulness; and Clarity of Purpose and Identity with Joyful Spirit.”** The Abiding Middle Assembly believes these goals and values will help break down barriers and build up relationships.

##### **Q/A Conversation**

President Gieser opened the question and answer conversation time and delegates responded with the following:

1. Both informational documents read very much alike. What are the differences that set apart the two middle assemblies in areas of doctrine, relationships, logistics, and mission? Some of the responses to this question included differences in areas of human sexuality and marriage, differences in the size of the middle assembly, and approaches to how relationships are made and kept. Both teams stressed a Reformed confessional foundation.
2. Have the teams had conversations about the structure of the middle assembly? In particular there was wondering about frequency of meetings and whether meetings would all be in person or all on line or some hybrid of them. The teams have not gotten that far in their conversation, but those are key items for the next meetings.
3. How does each team envision the middle assembly carrying on the current ministries of the Regional Synod? And how will new interests and initiatives be considered? Both teams acknowledged that there are some important ministries of the Regional Synod which should be carried on. They also understand that how this will be done is a matter of what kinds of staff and how much staff a middle assembly will need. As for new initiatives and new ministry interests, the teams noted that these will likely come from the congregations suggesting or introducing them.
4. How will the middle assembly address matters of Christian Education and Youth Ministries especially with those who are struggling with their sexual identity or are feeling a call to ministry? Each team reiterated their opening value statement on human sexuality.
5. How will each middle assembly codify such things as ordination of ministers, elders, and deacons and commissioning of preaching elders and pastors? The teams noted they have not yet gotten to that discussion but it is another key matter to be determined.
6. How would each middle assembly decide about ordinations from other middle assemblies - whether or not to receive a minister's transfer? The Book of Church Order has a well defined process which the middle assembly will follow.
7. How will each middle assembly work together and communicate with one another to diminish division or competition and build bridges for ministry? Both teams said they were committed to working together and sharing resources with the others.

President Gieser thanked the delegates for their important questions and invited them to continue sending their questions to the teams for their consideration.

Rev. Brian Dykema offered prayer as the synod recessed for lunch.

### **Lunch Recess**

### **Reconvening Prayer**

As the synod gathered again following lunch, the prayer was offered by President Gieser.

### **Additional Notes**

Dirk offered two additional notes carried over from the morning conversation about the middle assemblies.

1. **Assessments:** Each middle assembly will need to determine their own budget and the assessments needed to support it. General Synod will continue to assess the middle assemblies as they do the classes. Middle assembly budgets will be built according to program and staff needs as each assembly determines.
2. **Ongoing Relationships:** While there will be two middle assemblies, each can and should communicate with the other about program and ministry offerings and share resources as much as possible.

### Big Picture

Dirk asked Rev. Eddy Aleman, RCA General Secretary, if he could present the “Big Picture” of the restructure from the denominational perspective. Eddy shared the following:

1. **Unity:** YES, there will be tension and disagreement present while the transition happens, but we all will continue to work through that “messy middle” to find our step and rhythm with one another. Grace is needed and encouraged throughout.
2. **Connections:** Eddy plans that RCA staff will work to keep good connections with the middle assemblies. Currently we have about 46 classes and 8 regional synods. After the transition there may be 25 middle assemblies, more or less.
3. **Clarity:** The need for clarity in ByLaws and structure is important. We need to be clear with one another in creating and sharing our beliefs about ordination and other matters.
4. **Gatherings:** While General Synod will not meet in person every year, we will strive to keep some meetings in person. Eddy plans that in the future there will be an annual gathering of middle assembly staff with RCA staff and leaders much like the current Council of Synod Executives meetings.

### Business Continued

2. **Committee on Accounts Report:** Rev. Chris Jacobsen, chairperson of the Committee on Accounts, reminded that two items were carried over from the May 5, 2025 synod meeting. They are, consideration of the 2026 Proposed Budget and the 2026 Covenant Shares recommendation to support the budget. The Committee on Accounts recommends:

a. Proposed 2026 Budget:

**R-1 That the 2026 Albany Synod budget of \$256,219.00 be approved.**

#### Proposed 2026 Budget

##### INCOME

Description	2024 Actual	2025 Budget	2026 Proposed
Assessments	234,549.04	232,095.00	219,329.00

Cong. Giving	17,195.00	20,000.00	23,690.00
Indiv. Giving	11,200.00	7,500.00	3,000.00
SMB Events	2,480.00	3,500.00	3,000.00
School Ministry	6,591.00	7,200.00	7,200.00
Investments	105,000.00	136,419.00	
<b>TOTAL INCOME</b>	<b>377,015.04</b>	<b>406,714.00</b>	<b>256,219.00</b>

### EXPENSES

#### SALARY

Administrator	33,864.00	34,710.00	36,500.00
Finance Manager	8,362.00	8,571.00	8,828.00
Ministries Coord	88,477.00	90,689.00	0.00
Stated Clerk	7,965.00	8,165.00	8,410.00
SoM Admin	6,802.00	6,972.00	7,181.00
Program Coord	16,640.00	17,056.00	28,200.00
Min for Renewal	63,710.00	65,303.00	24,000.00
Contracted Services	0.00	.00	10,000.00
<b>Total</b>	<b>225,820.00</b>	<b>231,466.00</b>	<b>123,119.00</b>

#### Benefits

SMC (cell phone)	550.00	550.00	0.00
SMC (discretionary)	6,980.00	5,705.00	0.00
SMC (continuing ed)	1,125.00	1,772.00	0.00
SMC (expenses)	396.96	5,575.00	0.00
Admin (expenses)	350.00	1,500.00	1,500.00
Staff (expenses)	971.48	3,000.00	3,000.00
Discretionary	0.0	0.0	4,000.00
Professional Dvp	000.00	1,000.00	0.00
Insurance	32,116.51	30,000.00	28,000.00
<b>TOTAL BENEFITS</b>	<b>42,440.00</b>	<b>49,184.00</b>	<b>36,500.00</b>

#### Banking

Deferred Comp	24,982.46	26,000.00	11,000.00
FICA/ offset	9,812.48	15,000.00	4,550.00
Payroll processing	3,542.61	4,000.00	3,000.00
Audit	4,058.00	4,000.00	4,300.00
Bank Fees	58.70	0.00	0.00
<b>TOTAL BANKING</b>	<b>2,454.25</b>	<b>49,000.00</b>	<b>22,850.00</b>

#### Office

Equipment	2,316.00	2,500.00	2,500.00
Supplies	42.76	500.00	500.00
Printing	1,262.26	2,500.00	1,750.00
Telephone	1,286.24	2,500.00	1,500.00
Internet/Web	2,877.92	3,500.00	3,500.00
Postage	0.00	250.00	200.00
Payment Processing	287.64	150.00	350.00
<b>TOTAL OFFICE</b>	<b>8,072.82</b>	<b>11,900.00</b>	<b>10,300.00</b>

**Building**

Services	7,440.58	6,250.00	7,500.00
Utilities	3,584.77	4,750.00	4,750.00
Insurance/taxes	4,344.35	6,000.00	6,000.00
Supplies/Miscl	158.02	500.00	500.00
Maintenance	1,799.95	1,500.00	2,000.00
<b>TOTAL BUILDING</b>	<b>17,327.67</b>	<b>19,000.00</b>	<b>20,750.00</b>

**Meetings**

Committees	952.55	500.00	2,000.00
RSA assembly	4,466.39	6,000.00	8,000.00
Transition Teams	0.00	0.0	3,000.00
Legal Fees	0.00	0.0	3,000.00
Staff	62.47	500.00	0.00
Clerk	0.00	1,500.00	3,000.00
Miscl	150.00	500.00	0.00
COSE	000.00	500.00	0.00
NYSCC	1,600.00	1,650.00	1,700.00
<b>TOTAL MEETINGS</b>	<b>7,231.41</b>	<b>11,150.00</b>	<b>20,700.00</b>

<b>SMB Expenses</b>	<b>18,986.59</b>	<b>25,000.00</b>	<b>12,000.00</b>
<b>School of Ministry</b>	<b>8,750.00</b>	<b>10,000.00</b>	<b>10,000.00</b>
<b>Grants</b>	<b>13,925.00</b>	<b>0.00</b>	<b>0.00</b>

<b>TOTAL EXPENSES</b>	<b>387,246.74</b>	<b>406,714.00</b>	<b>256,219.00</b>
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**THE RECOMMENDATION WAS APPROVED.**

b. Proposed 2026 Covenant Shares schedule:

**R-2 That the assessed portion of the 2026 Albany Synod budget (\$219,329.00) be supported by an assessment using the Covenant Shares percentage of 2% of the total**

**congregational income (\$10,791,888) reported on the 2024 Consistorial Report Forms and applying the 10% increase or decrease variable for each congregation.**

Regional Synod of Albany  
2024 Statistics for Covenant Shares Assessments in 2026

Congregation	Line 21	2025 Payment	2.0%	+/- 10%
<b>Albany Classis</b>				
First Church	131,234	\$2,993	2,624.68	2,693.70
Third Reformed	0	1,058	0.00	0
Bethany	120,161	1,885	2,403.22	2,073.50
Castleton	212,940	4,466	4,258.80	4,258.80
Clarksville	57,211	1,803	1,144.22	1,622.70
Colonie	210,535	4,763	4,210.70	4,286.70
Coxsackie	38,905	1,479	778.10	1,331.10
Delmar	543,427	10,464	10,868.54	10,568.64
Unionville	74,089	1,806	1,481.78	1,625.40
East Berne	0	253	0.00	0
Greenbush	226,742	6,132	4,534.84	5,510.70
Onesquethaw	78,511	1,652	1,570.22	1,570.22
Jerusalem	26,360	974	527.20	876.60
Glenmont	13,319	372	266.38	334.80
Knox	56,055	1,803	1,121.10	1,622.70
New Baltimore	114,264	1,370	2,285.28	1,507.00
Blooming Grove	62,143	1,762	1,242.86	1,585.80
Selkirk	160,292	2,596	3,205.84	2,855.60
Westerlo	47,279	1,334	945.58	1,200.60
Wynantskill	179,848	3,800	3,596.96	3,596.96
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>2,353,315</b>	<b>52,765</b>	<b>47,066.30</b>	<b>49,121.52</b>

**Columbia Greene Classis**

Athens	\$ 43,356	\$1,121	867.12	1,008.90
Catskill	27,442	601	548.84	548.84
Kiskatom	48,223	979	964.46	964.46
Chatham	40,084	966	801.68	869.40
Claverack	201,751	3,041	4,035.02	3,345.10
Coxsackie	49,580	1,224	991.60	1,101.60
Germantown	51,814	783	1,036.28	861.30
Linlithgo	20,570	587	411.40	528.30
Ghent	65,925	1,566	1,318.50	1,409.40
Hudson	13,485	320	269.70	288.00
Mont Pleasant	72,694	609	1,453.88	669.90
Kinderhook	170,509	2,301	3,410.18	2,531.10
Livingston	23,196	842	463.92	757.80

Nassau	33,829	881	676.58	792.90
Philmont	0	400	0.00	360.00
Pine Plains	6,000	98	120.00	107.80
Schodack	46,284	1,602	925.68	1,441.80
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>914,742</b>	<b>17,921</b>	<b>18,294.62</b>	<b>17,586.60</b>

#### Montgomery Classis

Thousand Isles	\$330,781	\$6,168	6,615.62	6,615.62
Canajoharie	79,256	3,565	1,585.12	3,208.50
Herkimer	32,059	783	641.18	704.70
Ephratha	5,831	201	116.62	180.90
Mohawk	134,875	3,242	2,697.50	2,917.80
Owasco	159,392	2,741	3,187.84	3,015.10
Currytown	20,927	490	418.54	441.00
St. Johns	45,865	833	917.30	917.30
Syracuse	125,075	2,056	2,501.50	2,228.60
Pitcher Hill	70,749	1,602	1,414.98	1,441.80
West Leyden	18,235	521	364.70	468.90
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>1,023,045</b>	<b>22,202</b>	<b>20,460.90</b>	<b>22,140.22</b>

#### Rochester Classis

Clymer Hill	\$ 66,509	\$ 1,425	1,330.18	1,330.18
Interlaken	107,314	2,547	2,146.28	2,292.30
Woodlane	99,711	1,224	1,994.22	1,346.40
Pultneyville	179,557	4,308	3,591.14	3,877.20
Lakeview	174,121	3,685	3,482.42	3,482.42
Trinity	112,388	3,004	2,247.76	2,703.60
Sodus	25,491	681	509.82	612.90
Tyre	15,937	681	318.74	612.90
New Hope	1,379,920	28,685	27,598.40	27,598.40
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>2,160,948</b>	<b>\$46,240</b>	<b>43,218.96</b>	<b>43,856.30</b>

#### Schenectady Classis

Altamont	\$145,984	\$4,406	2,919.68	3,965.40
West Glenville	134,180	4,147	2,683.60	3,732.30
Clifton Park	478,689	8,076	9,573.78	8,883.60
Fort Miller	66,239	930	1,324.78	1,023.00
Fort Plain	117,020	2,350	2,340.40	2,340.40
Helderberg	122,436	2,740	2,448.72	2,466.00
Amity	114,912	2,202	2,298.24	2,298.24
Woestina	100,479	2,043	2,009.58	2,009.58
Bellevue	419,011	2,920	8,380.22	3,212.00

First, Schenectady	524,324	13,176	10,486.48	11,858.40
Lisha Kill	154,497	2,937	3,089.94	3,089.94
Lynnwood	267,245	5,607	5,344.90	5,334.90
Niskayuna	330,594	7,809	6,611.88	7,028.10
Cobblestone	22,341	1,161	446.82	1,044.90
Bacon Hill	151,459	3,284	3,029.18	3,029.18
Old Saratoga	56,682	1,595	1,133.64	1,435.50
First, Scotia	258,209	6,848	5,164.18	6,163.20
Sprakers	32,926	734	658.52	660.60
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>3,497,227</b>	<b>\$72,965</b>	<b>69,944.54</b>	<b>69,585.24</b>

**Schoharie Classis**

Cranesville	\$ 20,345	\$ 761	406.90	684.90
Florida	17,784	721	355.68	648.90
First, Berne	103,024	1,811	2,060.48	1,992.10
Lawyersville	58,466	1,616	1,169.32	1,454.40
Fonda	114,788	3,204	2,295.76	2,883.60
Glen	41,807	1,202	836.14	1,081.80
Hagaman	21,657	721	433.14	684.90
Johnstown	57,415	1,643	1,148.30	1,478.70
Middleburgh	137,543	1,860	2,750.86	2,046.00
Prattsville	32,409	685	648.18	648.18
Roxbury	93,927	2,202	1,878.54	1,981.80
Schoharie	143,446	1,322	2,868.92	1,454.20
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>\$842,611</b>	<b>\$17,748</b>	<b>16,852.22</b>	<b>17,039.48</b>

<b>TOTALS</b>	<b>10,791,888</b>	<b>229,841</b>	<b>215,837.54</b>	<b>219,329.36</b>
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**THE RECOMMENDATION WAS APPROVED.**

3. **Timeline:** President Gieser reminded the delegates of the anticipated timeline we are working with for the transition to middle assemblies. The time between **November and April** will be spent with the transition teams adding structure and substance to the work already done on their values, vision, and mission. Structure and substance includes such things as middle assembly officers and possible staff, programs to support churches and committees to oversee individuals and ministries, and all the other essentials middle assemblies are required to have and do.

In **May** of 2026, Albany Synod will meet again and will provide more middle assembly updates and information. Undoubtedly, information will be shared with classes and congregations before the May meeting.

By **October 1, 2026**, we hope to hear from each consistory about their choice of the middle assembly they want to join. On **November 1, 2026**, we must report the middle assembly membership to the General Synod Council.

Delegates were once again encouraged to send their questions and comments to the synod officers who will share them with the transition teams.

**MOTION: To adjourn the meeting with the closing benediction. (Carried)**

Rev. Heather Kramer led the responsive benediction.

Respectfully Submitted,

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Rev. Robert Hoffman, clerk

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Rev. Dirk Gieser, President