

## Albany Synod Ministries Summary

*“The origins of the Reformed churches within the bounds of our synod go back to the settlement of the territory of New Netherlands in 1614. There is little doubt that the first religious services of the Colony were held at Fort Orange (Albany) in the spring of 1624. Domine Johannes Megapolensis, the first pastor to serve within the synod, came to Rensselaerwyck (Albany) in 1642. Until 1771 these churches in the Mohawk, Hudson, Raritan, and Delaware valleys were an extension of the Classis of Amsterdam of the Netherlands Reformed Church. In 1771 a ‘provisional synod’ was called in New York; it adopted a plan whereby these churches gained independence and self-rule. By 1792 the new denomination was consolidated; it had a Constitution and Liturgy, and had established a college and a seminary.*

*From 1793 until 1800 there was an annual meeting of two ministers and two elders from each Classis, which was known as the Particular Synod. It served the whole church, and had among its duties the examination and ordination of candidates for the ministry. There was also a General Synod which met triennially as a conventional body i.e., every minister could attend, as well as one elder from each church.*

*In 1800 the Particular Synod was dissolved, and the Particular Synod of Albany and the Particular Synod of New York were formed. These Synods were to meet yearly, although the power of examination and ordination was now extended to the Classes. General Synod soon became a representative body, meeting annually, with delegates from each Classis of the several Particular Synods. As the denomination has grown, four additional Particular Synods have been formed: New Jersey, Chicago, Iowa, and Michigan.”*

(An Historical Statement from the 1961 Minutes of the Particular Synod of Albany)

A study of the Albany Synod minutes from 1933 to 2025 revealed a number of interesting facts about the various ministries coordinated by the synod and the individuals who played key leadership roles in them.

Minutes throughout the 1930s consisted of the President’s Report on the state of religion from the 8 classes of the synod. This was done by including the President’s report from each classis and having the synod president draw conclusions from them about the state of religion in the synod.

There were individual volunteers who coordinated various helpful activities for areas of need throughout the synod. For example, evangelism, mission, education, youth work, consistory oversight were some of those named. One ministry of particular interest was the coordination of two Youth Conferences (Burden Lake and Lake Canandaigua) each summer. These were under the leadership of an Executive Secretary for Young People’s Work. These were also part of nine other youth conferences conducted by the denomination.

The 1943 minutes shared a reference to the establishment of the Permanent Committee on Social Action. This was the first year of that ministry among the Albany Synod. Their report highlighted four issues of importance:

1. The Delinquent Child.
2. The Treatment of the Japanese Americans on the West Coast.
3. Alcoholism.
4. The Church and the Post-War World.

In 1947 the synod minutes reported on a reorganization of the synod to include Permanent Committees (Evangelism, Youth Work, Overtures and Judicial Business, Church Extension and Social Action) and Standing Committees (Synodical Minutes, Classis Minutes, Nominations, Accounts, Education, Missions, Leave of Absence, Resolutions) to offer reports at the synod meeting.

In 1948 the report of the Synod's Permanent Committee on Church Extension encouraged each classis to form their own Church Extension Committee which would, among other things, establish some system of annual church visitation.

In 1949 the committee recommended the appointment of a Synodical Supervisor, or Missionary. Rev. Raymond Van Zoeren was appointed. In 1951, after the three year trial period, the Synodical Supervisor position was extended but under the new title of Field Secretary. In the Field Secretary's report in 1952, Rev. Van Zoereen reported that three new churches had been started through the Church Extension Committee. This would continue over the years.

In the late 1940's and early 1950's, the work of the Synodical Counselor for Young People's Work continued to expand and more summer youth camps were held. During this time, a fund was established to support this ministry, and with the hope of someday purchasing a summer camp in the name of the Particular Synod of Albany. This was brought to fruition in 1954 with the purchase of the Olmstead camp on Sacandaga Lake, largely because of a donation in memory of Lewis M.. Fowler. The Synodical Youth Counselor for Young People's Work was expanded to include the summer conference program at the Lewis M. Fowler Memorial Camp which would become incorporated in 1954 and have its first Executive Director, Rev. Louis Chisman, appointed.

In 1956, following Rev. Van Zoeren's resignation as Field Secretary, Rev. Cornelius Dykhuizen accepted the call to this ministry. New churches continued to be started in the synod. Also in 1956 a Permanent Extension Fund was established (with \$19,000) to provide aid for new church starts. Part of this fund was also used in "A pilot project in Rural Church Rehabilitation" specifically designed to help Prattsville become a self-supporting church under a resident pastor. Rev. Raymond Van Zoeren, was installed there in 1959.

United Synod Mission was begun to financially support three areas of synodical concern: Church Extension; Campus Ministry; and Camp Fowler. Each synod congregation was asked to support this fund.

The synod also participated with the other synods of the denomination in a United Synod Advance Fund from which funds were received to support specific congregational needs. This fund continued for several years and greatly helped the synod help congregations.

Beginning in 1960 the Education Committee raised the need for participation in the Campus Ministries of the various colleges in the synod's bounds. In 1965 synod approved the Education Committee's proposed "Charter for a Permanent Campus Ministry Committee," including funding to support Campus Ministry. In 1964 and 1965 the Education Committee also held preview sessions in each of the synod's classes on the Covenant Life Curriculum helping churches who intend to use CLC in their Sunday School ministries. Christian Action was very active in the late 1960s by offering guidance to address the problem of racism.

1968 Rev. Douglas Walrath was called to be the "Minister at Large and Field Secretary" to replace Rev. Dykhuizen.

In 1970, the Executive Committee received a report ("A Planning Process for the Particular Synod of Albany") which raised the need for the synod and its member judicatories to identify both appropriate mission goals and with each judicatory discover how to carry out their appropriate mission. Their report identified that the synod is not equipped to be a program body, but should remain a body which makes broad policy and keeps oversight of administrative concerns.

Further, they recommended that "the planning, development and carrying out of program ought to be the privilege and responsibility of broadly representative groups." They suggested these "Program Units" be made up of persons of various ages, offices, genders, etc., who would liaison between the denominational agency (General Program Council) and local (Classical and Congregational) entities. They identified the following Program Units: **Church Development; Vocational Development for Clergy; Christian Nurture; and Christian Outreach.** They recommended that  $\frac{2}{3}$  of the members of each Program Unit would be appointed by the classes and  $\frac{1}{3}$  would be elected by the synod. In addition, they recommended that each Program Unit would elect a chairperson and appoint another representative to come together to form the **Synod Program Council.** The synod would elect another person to serve as Chairperson of the Program Council.

Another substantial recommendation was presented and approved to employ part-time staff on a contract or per diem basis to meet the many and diverse needs of persons, churches, and classes within the synod. This recommendation came from the "Staff Task Force" which was appointed to review the probable implementation of "regional centers" of the RCA and bring recommendations in the event that one of those centers be located in Albany synod. In the end, Rev. Douglas Walrath was appointed to act as "Synod Coordinator and Center Director." A list of responsibilities was included in the recommendation as well as a chart outlining staff oversight and responsibilities.

The minutes of 1973 contain two substantial reports. One, from the Synod Program Council, tells about the formation of the Program Units and the work they've already begun, much of which is being done by gifted volunteers. Each Unit has its own budget for program and personnel and together they form the whole budget for the Program Council. The Council began conversation about forming a network of Program Resource People who could resource congregations in areas of giftedness.

The second substantial report was from the Synod Coordinator. Walrath outlines how his time was divided between the General Program Council and the Northeastern Center. In this part of his report, Walrath explains the cooperation experienced between the national staff and the regional staff. He informed of Pat Stere who was employed by the General Program Council but works in the Northeastern Center side by side with the staff there, Don Troost who was employed full time by Albany Synod. Other individuals he spoke about were Roland Ackerman and John Buteyn who work with the GPC but provide guidance in areas of finance and missions. Beyond Don Troost, he informed of other Field Associates who could be located in regions beyond the tri-cities area of the synod (in particular Montgomery and Rochester).

Over the years, the synod employed three individuals: Field Secretary, Fowler Director, and Fowler Manager. The synod continued their relationship with the GPC in utilizing the services of a number of GPC staff as consultants. The support staff at the Synod Center were actually considered GSC staff and were paid by them. This relationship between Albany Synod and the GPC continued until 1982 when GPC experienced a severe financial crisis resulting in some staff changes, particularly the reduction of GSC support at the Synod Centers. Barb Cullum, who volunteered on the SPC for more than a decade, was employed as an associate for Christian Nurture working three days a week.

In 1983, the synod assumed the full costs for staff (Admin and Office) and completed the purchase of the 1790 Grand Blvd building that had been purchased by the GPC a decade or so earlier. A Special Committee charged with studying the synod's structure, program and administration recommended expanding staff to meet the ever growing program needs and to compensate for the loss of GPC support. It noted that the 32 Program Resource People trained by the SPC filled an important void but additional staff were needed to meet the growing program needs.

In 2013, synod voted to split the position of Synod Executive into two independent positions. A Synod Ministries Coordinator who would work full-time on the ministries and programs of the synod. A Synod Administrator who would work part-time to manage the overall administration of the synod.

#### Program and Office Staff over the years:

Field Secretary/ Synod / Synod Executive

Raymond Van Zoeren; Cornelius Dykhuizen; Doug Walrath; Don Troost; James Neevel (Interim); Richard Otterness; Robert Hoffman (Interim); Harold Delhagen;

GPC employed individuals working in or with the Albany Regional Center  
Doug Walrath; Pat Stere; Roland Ackerman; John Buteyn  
Also support staff Jean Deere and Carol Barton

Program Coordinator/ Minister for Leadership Development  
Barb Cullum; KathyJo Blaske; Phyllis Palsma

Christian Education Consultant  
Nancy Mc Niven

Stewardship Consultant  
Dominic Passalacqua, Nolan Palsma

Minister for New Church Development, Evangelism, and Social Witness  
Don Baird; Nancy Mc Niven

Synod Administrator  
Robert Hoffman

Synod Ministries Coordinator  
Abby Norton Levering

Synod Communication Coordinator  
AC Reilly; Alisha Reipma; Abby Norton Levering; Lindsey De Kruijff

Synod Mediation Coordinator  
Becky Town; Janice Fitzgerald; Abby Norton Levering; Sherri Meyer Veen

CLC and Faithwalking Coordinator/ Minister for Renewal  
Sherri Meyer Veen

First Call Supervisor/ Fellowship Program Coordinator/ Program Coordinator  
Lindsey De Kruijff

School of Ministry Administrator  
Sandy Cornwell; Lindsey De Kruijff; Elizabeth Moses

Office Manager/ Synod Executive Assistant  
Jean Deere; Michelle Osswald; Karen Moak; Heather Johnson; Nicole Fargione

Part time Secretary  
Ruth Baxter; Alice Barrett; Linda Tracy; Laurie Sullivan; Barbara Dahlberg; Trudi Thun; Virginia Manning; Allison Stone

CLC Secretary

Allison Stone; Stacey Delaney

Synod Treasurer/ Finance Manager

George Cook; F. James Burnetter; Michelle Osswald; Jennifer Kenneally; Vicki Hayner; Scott Ebeling; Heather Johnson; Sandy Narusky; Allison Stone; Elif Ipek

Fowler Director

Lou Chisman; Bill Faulkner; Roger Roe; Jan Hoffman (Interim) Jim Ribbans; Kent Busman; Pat Kinne

Fowler Property Manager

Fred Belfance; Franz Brill; Sid Bush; Chris Hayes; Harv Zegstroo

Fowler Secretary/ Administrative Assistant/ Support Staff

Carol Barton; Debra Maloney; Debra Batcher; Lauren Cleworth; Josey Brady; Emily Smith

Fowler Bookkeeper/ Finance Manager

Roy Phillips; F. James Brunetter; Michelle Osswald; Jennifer Kenneally; Vicki Hayner; Scott Ebeling; Heather Johnson; Trevor Clark; Sandy Narusky; JoAnn Stanwyx; Elif Ipek

Synod Program Council Ministries  
1970s

Church Development Unit

- Picked up where the standing committee began work identifying locations for new church starts
- Continued collecting funds for the United Synod Mission Fund to support new starts
- The Five Church Cluster (New Scotland area) continues to advance with joint programs
- Research and planning for a Columbia Greene Classis cluster
- Completed the Columbia Greene Classis Renewal Project
- Supported 6 churches in the RCA Church Growth Project (grow membership by 50% in five years)

Vocational Development Unit for Clergy

- Seeking to place “highly trained Christian counselors” in various places of the synod to respond to crises that arise in clergy families
- Provide training for pastors to support them in their counseling ministry
- Reported an average of 25 visits per quarter to Clergy Consultation Centers

Christian Nurture Unit (Including Camp Fowler’s ministries)

- Work Camp projects continued for young people
- Planned event to train youth leaders

- Two events were held in the synod (Rochester and eastern end) to provide training for family ministries
- Continues to train "Resource People" all across the synod
- Nine Teacher Training Events held in 4 classes
- Three workshops for Youth Associate training
- Four Festivals of Learning (Two for Women in Leadership)

#### Christian Outreach Unit

- Lay Witness and Mission Event planning
- Faith in Action programs offered
- Continuing the Campus Ministry support
- Added Stewardship emphasis to the Unit's work

As a body, the Program Council sent our regular communications to the synod's churches via The Mailbag and later Centerline. These were valuable resources which included program and resource information for the local consistory.

In 1976 the Synod Program Council was reviewed and reorganized to include the following Program Units:

#### Church Development Unit (Building Up the Body of Christ)

- Schoharie Classis Renewal Project (clergy events)
- Four Incentive Fund Grants to support congregational ministries
- Continued funding for new church starts
- 8 pilot churches went through training to become part of the Reformed Church Growth Fund
- 12 other churches are investigating participation in RCGF
- Investigating Hispanic Ministry in Rochester
- Investigating a new church (non-traditional) start in Guilderland area

#### Stewardship Program Unit (working with Roland Ackerman of GSC staff)

- Organizational year as this is a new program unit
- Goal is to have stewardship training events in coming years
- Stewardship education Packet prepared and circulated

#### Vocational Development Unit

- Provided six Incentive Funding Grants for clergy to attend professional development events
- Program to help pastors and consistories contract/covenant together. Eleven pastors met for two four hour sessions of training. Individuals began working with churches and pastors
- Career Assessment grants available

#### Christian Nurture Program Unit

- Project ENABLE was begun and became a strong focus for the Unit
- Held Two Fall festivals "Time to Grow"
- Worship Life committee of the Unit held two workshops (choir directors and organists)
- Received funding for Migrant Ministry of Columbia Greene
- Single Parent Group meetings

- Incentive Funding grants given to 8 churches for ministries like: Libraries; evangelism training; youth and educational programs; resource centers
- Training for Program Associates
- Three New Day Festivals were held across the synod

#### Camp Fowler Program Unit

- Director and Manager work outlined
- Capital Improvement Fund Drive
- Summer guest ministers from across the synod for Sunday Chapel by the Lake services
- New Adult Ministry opportunity begun targeting adults with special needs and three institutions that provide residential care
- Retired Adult event held
- Two single parent retreats
- Two Youth Advisor Workshops held

1980s

#### Church Development Program Unit

- Studied 20 year demographic survey from among synod churches
- Pastors Retreats initiated
- Initiated the Small Membership Church Task Force with handbook with program ideas
- Energy Conservation Loans given out through the years
- Embarked on the "New Style Congregation" located in a Guilderland apartment complex
- Embarked with Iglesia Reformada Hispana new church start in Rochester Classis
- "Summary of Church Growth Learnings" was circulated through the Mailbag
- Southern Columbia County Small Church Cluster is actively working together
- Granted several churches with Incentive Funds over the years
- Participate with Schenectady Classis on Church Retention at Woodlawn
- Approved support for the Rochester Classis Taiwanese Project
- Concluded the "New Style Congregation" and the Rochester Hispanic church start
- Sponsored the Small Church Festival with Dr. Jackson Carroll as keynote speaker
- Shared "A Plan to Strengthen Congregations for Mission and Ministry" and "Vision for Tomorrow" resources to synod congregations
- Presented "Handbook for Pastoral Search"
- Sponsored a Pastorate Start Up Retreat
- Embarked on a five year Evangelism plan
- Held Evangelism Symposium at Roberts Wesleyan College
- Investigating possible new church start locations through the New Church Task Force

#### Vocational Development Program Unit

- Working on Guidelines for Church Supervisors
- Income Tax seminar for clergy
- Sponsored "Equipping the Local Church for Evangelism" event
- Sponsored "Crisis Counseling and Dealing with Unresolved Grief" event in concert with the Mid-Atlantic Association for Training Consultation (MATC)
- Provided grants for continuing education
- Sponsored a retreat with focus on small membership church ministry led by Carl Dudley

- Investigating a ministry to clergy spouses
- Pastoral start-up events assumed from Church Development Unit
- Sponsored Theological Reflection Days at Camp Fowler with NBTS faculty
- Sponsored “Reading the Bible on its Own Terms” retreat at Fowler
- Teamed up with the Clergy Support Consultation in sponsoring events for:
  - Single Clergy
  - Freedom in Ministry
  - Long Tenured Pastors

Contracted with the Utica Samaritan Counseling Center in addition to the current arrangement with the Consultation Center in Albany and the Pastoral Counseling Center in Rochester

- Planning several clergy retreats at Fowler as well as Clergy Days events regionally
- “Pastor as Professional Leader” event with Lyle Schaller
- Supported Classis breakfasts and lunches with clergy
- Held a retreat for clergy spouses at Camp Fowler
- Distributed a paper “A Sabbatical for the Minister”

#### Christian Nurture Program Unit

- Initiated the Senior Adult Pilot Project
- Continued Project ENABLE
- Enhanced communication through Mailbag and Centerline
- Evaluation of the Program Associates ministry
- Enhanced the Resource Center lending library
- Program Associate workshops across the synod (curriculum development; teacher training; mission; etc)
- Facilitated a 9 month in depth planning process for one congregation
- United Ministries in Higher Education (previously Campus Ministry) was reorganized
- Overseeing the AIM (Adventure in Mission) program
- Fall festivals planned and held each year
- Continued emphasis on Lay Leadership training
- With GPC will offer D3 seminars across the synod (Discovering Dynamic Discipleship) in Equipping Laity for Pastoral Care; Parenting for Effective Discipleship; Spiritual Gifts and the Vitalization of Worship
- Supported “The Friendship Series” a Christian education program for the mentally impaired
- Co-sponsored a workshop on Conflict management led by Speed Leas with Vocational Development
- Worship Resources Task Force distributed “For His Excellent Greatness” supplement
- WRTF also provided the Adventure in Worship (AWE) program
- Sponsored Classis Festivals in four classes
- Sponsored “Sing the Lord’s Song” events on music in worship
- Sponsored “Family Cluster Training” event for family cluster leaders
- Sponsored a Deep Sea Fishing Trip
- Sponsored an Adult Learner Workshop
- Participated with the RCA in PROJECT TIMOTHY

- Became a training center for the Children in Worship program
- Provided funding for CERCA (Christian Educators in the RCA) events
- Supported initial SPECTRUM - Tri-synod youth event

#### Stewardship Program Unit

- Initiated the "Lifestyle Stewardship Program"
- Held three regional Lifestyle Stewardship events
- With Vocational Development sponsored Income Tax Seminars
- Introduced an additional approach to stewardship ("Commitment Packet" (CommPac))
- Small membership church stewardship project in Schoharie Classis
- Sponsored a workshop on Planned Giving
- Sponsored a "Money Workshop" retreat at Camp Fowler
- Sent representatives to the North American Conference on Christian Philanthropy from which the unit developed a planning guide "Is This Your Will?"
- Participated with the RCA in "The Steward's Life" program

#### Camp Fowler Program Unit

- Initiated Camp Fowler Booster Association
- Continually addressing property needs
- Celebrated increased overall participation at Camp
- Introduced the Fowler Ambassador program for churches
- Recruitment of summer volunteers
- Advertising for use of Chi Rho and Pine Lodge for church groups
- Established a Long Range Planning Committee
- Began the Camp Fowler Fund Drive which raised \$350,000

In 1986 a recommendation was passed by the synod to have the Christian Action standing committee become part of the Synod Program Council and be the Social Witness Program Unit.

#### Social Witness Program Unit

- Social Witness Day held with Rev. Craig Biddle "How Christians Influence National Policy"
- Sent representatives to IMPACT in Washington DC and held IMPACT seminars throughout the synod
- Organized a seminar on AIDS from which came an "AIDS Congregational Resource Packet" and the "Gifts for Persons with AIDS" collection
- Sponsored "Domestic Violence: The Church Responds" event

In 1989 the Synod Executive introduced the Center for Parish Associates (an Albany Synod proposal for the RCA's Putting People in Mission fund drive. The "Center" envisions training lay people in specific areas of ministry (youth work, evangelism, music, etc). These highly trained individuals would then be employed under contract by their own congregation to carry forward the ministry for which they were trained.

#### Social Witness Unit

- Gifts for Persons with AIDS
- Support for Impact Briefings (NYS and DC)
- Christian - Muslim Forum
- Food Pantry Grants (from Putting People in Mission)
- Care for Creation Events
- Anti-Violence Task Force
- Diaconal Ministries Events
- New Church Start Supervision
- New Church Development

#### Church Support Unit (A new Unit that combines the work of Church Development and Stewardship Unit plus part of the Vocational Development Unit)

- Evangelism Seminars
- Strengthening Small Churches Events
- Pastor Start Up
- Stewardship - "Meeting Your Church's Financial Needs" seminar
- Grants to churches for Leadership Development/ Pastoral Support
- Clergy Support Events

#### New Church Unit (A new Unit created to focus on new church starts)

- New Life Church start (Rochester Classis)
- Living Springs start (Schenectady Classis)
- Widening the Circle I and II (financial support by Albany Synod congregations as well as PPIM funding)

#### Leadership Development Unit (A new Unit created from the Christian Nurture Unit plus part of the Vocational Development Unit)

- Children and Worship training and resources
- SPECTRUM Tri-synod youth events
- Ephesus Two
- Resource Center
- Clergy Days Events

#### Fowler Unit

- All of Fowler's usual programming

In 1995 the Synod Program Council officially came to an end after 20+ years of ministry. The new Synod Mission Council was established to help "...congregations serve as mission outposts to proclaim God's presence in their community..." This new Mission Council included deacons in its membership alongside ministers and elders. The Mission Council now included:

#### Teaching Commission

- Teacher training events
- STEP training events
- Children and Worship
- Ephesus Two
- Consistory workshops

- Older Adult Ministry Events
- Resource Center

#### Witness Commission

- Continuing the services of the previous Witness Unit
- Diaconal Ministry Workshops
- Evangelism
- New Church Start Supervision (including a study on the closure of the New Life Church in Rochester)

#### Congregational Services Commission

- Grants for Churches
- Stewardship
- Pastoral Search Handbook
- Intervention training (aka Mediation)
- Clergy Days
- Beginning and Beyond
- Worship Events
- Long Term Pastors Retreat
- Missional Church Event (held in Utica)
- Seminary Student Interview Weekend
- Recruitment visit to WTS
- CRTC conversations

#### Fowler Commission

- All the usual Fowler ministries

### 2000s

#### Congregational Services Commission

- Provided grants to churches for mission endeavors and new ministry initiatives
- Stewardship resources
- Small Membership Church support
- Worship Event with John Bell
- Missional Church Event with Walter Brueggemann
- Evangelism Events (five throughout the synod) partially funded by 9.8 by 98 denominational fund
- Ministerial Support and Assistance
  - WTS recruitment visit
  - Summer Teaching Opportunity with WTS
  - Student Weekend with seminary seniors visiting our synod
  - Beginning and Beyond

#### Conflict Mediation Training led by Lombard

- Church Revitalization Initiatives (Healthy Congregations; Natural Church Development)
- 2004 reported that 27 Churches are participating in NCD
- Catechumenate Orientation Event
- Continued conversation on the Pastoral Search Handbook
- Sponsored Supervisor Training events in Schoharie and Montgomery Classes

- Held workshops on Appreciative Inquiry
- Held Coach Training events for NCD and AI
- Sponsored Healthy Communication workshops as part of Conflict Mediation

#### Leadership Development Commission

- Several Educational opportunities were offered
  - Christian Educators Koffee Klatches
  - Christian Educators retreat with Bud Van Eck
  - Welcoming New Christians Event led by John Paarlberg
  - Learning for Life Event
- Living Stones replaced Ephesus Two
- Consistory Training Event led by various Key Note leaders
- Events to support ministers
  - Retreats for spiritual growth and enrichment
  - “What is the Gospel” event led by James Brownson
  - Clergy Days event led by Gordon Lathrop
  - Income Tax Seminar

Facilitated the formation of the Capital Region Theological Center (2002)

- Provided Grants to two churches for leadership development
- A Day for Elders event was planned
- Endorsed the Coached Revitalizing Networks for ministers
- Biblical Storytelling event was held
- Created a Youth Leader’s Team to support youth leaders
- Hold monthly gatherings of Christian Educators
- “Living Into God’s Word” introduced for synod churches to participate

#### Witness Commission

- Grants provided for Food Pantry support (14 congregations)
- Gifts for Persons With AIDS
- Care for Creation Events
- Diaconal Ministries Resource materials compiled by Nancy McNiven
- Simple Living, Compassionate Life Retreat
- Ongoing focus on current social issues (Gambling, Death Penalty; etc.)
- Grants to send individuals to Ecumenical Advocacy Days in DC
- Encouraged Energy Audits on church buildings and parsonages
- Coordinated support for relief of Hurricane Katrina
- Organized Bread for the World offering of letters
- Sponsored Earth Day event

2004 Note: Synod formed an Ad Hoc Committee on Synod Structure

2005 Note: The Fowler Master Plan began

2006 Note: Appointed a Restructure Task Force

2008 Note: Approved the recommendation of the Restructure Task Force to implement the Synod Ministry Board structure in place of the Synod Mission Council (a minister, elder and deacon from each classis)

**“The mission of the Albany Synod Mission Council is to serve Jesus Christ in partnership with congregations and classes through the proclamation of the gospel, helping each other to call persons to repentance from sin, to faith in Jesus Christ, to membership in the Church and to service in God’s world.”**

2010s

2010 Note: Changed the name to Classis Ministries Board

**“The overall goal of the Classis Ministries Board is to promote nurture and promote healing in classes and congregations in the Regional Synod of Albany so they may be empowered to live our faithful and fruitful mission in God’s world.”**

In this decade there were a lot of changes happening in the synod and with its ministries. One of the first changes was that the Classis Ministries Board moved away from the dedicated commissions that had made up the board in recent years and became organized around “Working Groups.” While these working groups had similar names as the commissions did (Discipleship, Mission and Revitalization), the planning and work was done by the whole board. The 2011 Minutes reported the following ministries and events planned by the board:

- Gifts for Persons With AIDS
- Theology course for Preaching Elders
- Consistory Training Events in Montgomery and Rochester Classes
- Preaching and Worship retreats (Advent and Lent) at Fowler
- Beginning and Beyond
- Cluster Workshops in Columbia Greene Classis
- Revitalization Working Group
- Stewardship Event led by Norm Tellier
- Preaching Elder Training (for new candidates)
- Church Supervision Training
- Safe Sanctuaries Workshop led by Emery & Webb Insurance
- Healthy Communications Workshops
- Appreciative Inquiry
- Participation with CRTC
- Flood Recovery Efforts
- Mediation: Moved to establish a dedicated Mediation Team made up of trained and gifted individuals from across the synod
- Initiated the Ridder Leadership Initiative for synod congregations
- Affirmed a proposal for a Pastoral Residency Program which would place seminary graduates in Albany Synod congregations
- Held a variety of Discipleship Events to foster consistory enrichment, leadership development, stewardship and other ministry needs.

2013 Notes:

1. Synod voted to split the position of Synod Executive into two independent positions. A Synod Ministries Coordinator who would work full-time on the ministries and programs of

the synod. A Synod Administrator who would work part-time to manage the overall administration of the synod.

2. The Classis Ministries Board was reorganized to become the Synod Ministries Board consisting of two members from each classis, one of which could be a minister.
3. Synod established a "Boundaries Task Force" which would examine how the individual classes are doing and identify areas where they might be able to work together.

Beginning in 2014 the Synod Ministries Coordinator and the Synod Ministries Board presented reports for the Synod to review. Highlights include:

- Established a synod motto: IN THIS TOGETHER FOR GOOD
- Ongoing participation in the Ridder Church Renewal Process (combined with the Synods of New York and Mid-Atlantics)
- Established a Grant program to support churches looking to expand ministries in Revitalization, Discipleship and Mission
- Ongoing work with CRTC and Preaching Elder training
- Coordinated a number of Stop Hunger Now events across the synod
- Beginning and Beyond continues as an annual retreat
- Hosted a "Sacraments Day" workshop and celebration of the sacraments
- CREDO retreat at Fowler for youth preparing to make confession of faith
- "Feasting by the River" event
- Retreat for pastors nearing retirement
- A Pastors and Families Retreat was held at Fowler
- Faithwalking 101 Event was held
- Psalms Retreat
- Safe Church and Abuse Prevention event for elders and deacons
- Israel and Palestine conversation event was held
- A large number of grants have been given to congregations over the years
- Held "Creating Congregational Cultures of Generosity" event on Stewardship
- Endorsed a second round of Ridder Church Renewal Process (which was reworked to become "Churches Learning Change" in 2017)
- Initiated the "Albany Synod Fellowship Program" for seminary graduates to work in Albany Synod congregations (Three Fellows working in 9 Albany Synod congregations - three ministry sites) 2017
- "Conflict Happens" event on healthy communication was held
- Sponsored a workshop on the Enneagram with Ian Cron as keynote speaker
- Sponsored a Creation and Care event utilizing Albany Synod and RCA leaders
- Clergy Finance Webinars with Connie Buskohl
- Initiated the "First Call Project" for ministers in their first call
- Sponsored the first Albany Synod Ministry Fair preceding the 2018 Synod meeting
- Sponsored "Boundary Awareness" Training Events
- Held a Worship Symposium for synod churches and leaders
- Encouraged all churches and leaders to participate in a Sexual Harassment Prevention events and to establish policies for congregational use

Moving deeper into technology, the synod created a website and hired a communication coordinator for managing the website and sending out a monthly newsletter.

2015 Note: The “In This Together for Good” task force continued the work of the Boundaries Task Force in planning an Executive Committee Summit for January 2016. Four Areas of interest and activity were named at the Summit:

1. Supervising consistories that have no installed pastor.
2. Training, supervision and support of preaching elders
3. Care for Candidates for Ministry
4. Helping Churches Transition Well

## 2020s

COVID happened in the late winter/early spring in 2020 so some programs had to transition to zoom events and activities. Some of them were:

1. Sexual Harassment Prevention training
2. Christian Educator’s monthly meeting and Summit
3. Boundary Awareness Training
4. Clergy Tax Seminars
5. Churches Learning Change/ Faithwalking seminars
6. First Call support meetings

Beginning and Beyond happened before COVID hit

The Fellowship Program continued but with the same restraints others experienced

The School of Ministry continued offering their scheduled courses but did so online instead of in person.

Church Supervision training events were put on hold for the time being

The Church Supervision Handbook was still available

In 2021 many of the synod’s ministries slowly returned to in person meetings

- The “Adaptive Change Task Force” was constituted
- The SMB began evaluating its structure and offerings
- Grants continue to be provided to synod congregations
- A Preaching Elder’s Circle was started as continuing education for already commissioned preaching elders
- Paused the Fellowship Program following conclusion of the 2023 year
- Sponsored a “Women in Ministry” Retreat
- Sponsored a “Pastors and Families” Retreat
- CLC and Faithwalking continued to resource synod congregations

2022 new mission statement for the Synod Ministries Board

***The SMB empowers classes and congregations for revitalization, discipleship, and mission, through clear communication and relevant resourcing. We are in this***

***together...for good.***

- Mediation Team sponsored two Healthy Communication seminars across the synod
- Christian Educator meetings monthly
- Regular retreats at Fowler
- Two online consistory training events were held
- CLC and Faithwalking continue to resource churches in two synods

2023 Synod approved two recommendations from the Adaptive Change Task Force.

1. A Rest and Renewal Program for small churches (20 members in worship or less) that would provide pulpit supply a couple times a month with a leadership team to focus on their ministry.
  2. A Collaborative Ministry Learning Community that would create a manual for collaborative ministries.
- Partnered with Practical Resources for Churches - ALL Albany Synod congregations can tap into their resources at little or no cost
  - Similar ministry endeavors as in previous years
    - Retreats
    - CLC/ Faithwalking
    - Christian Educators meetings
    - Grants
    - School of Ministry/ PE Circle support

2024 began the year(s) of transition within the RCA and Albany Synod. At the May 2024 synod meeting approval was given for ASEC to begin studying the kind of restructure was needed in Albany Synod REGARDLESS of what happens within the RCA  
Restructure Surveys were sent to each classis for response  
Ministries continued as the same rate and pace as previous years

2025 Important Events

- Executive Committees Summit in January to discuss survey results and consider restructure options
- SMB sponsored a Youth Retreat for those in local church confirmation programs
- SMB sponsored a "Worship: The Work of the People" Event
- Global Grace Cafe book study on ministry to immigrants
- Restorative Circle training event sponsored by the Mediation Team
- NBTS Conversation Event on "Navigating the Challenges and Opportunities of the Moment"
- Regular ministries as above