

## RCA History Self-Led Study Module

Do this reading and watch these videos at your own pace. Use the exercises to help you think through the materials.

### Required reading:

James Hart Brumm, ed., *An RCA Reader: Outlining the History of the Reformed Church in America in Seventy-Five Documents*, number 104 in *The Historical Series of the Reformed Church in America* (Reformed Church Press, 2022), ISBN: 978-1-950572-23-6 (available on Amazon)

Charles E. Van Engen, Sally Tapley, and Jean Van Engen, eds., *Called to Serve: Essays on RCA Global Mission*, number 102 in *The Historical Series of the Reformed Church in America* (Reformed Church Press, 2020), ISBN: 13-978-1-950572-13-7 (available from Amazon)

### Unit 1

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**Read:** *An RCA Reader*, Introduction, Part 1—The Colonial Period (pages xix-xxvi, 1-81)

**Watch:** [“The Pre-History of the RCA,”](#) [“The Colonial Period”](#)

**Questions to think about** (you don’t need to write anything down unless you wish to; these are to help your thinking):

- What element of the pre-history of the RCA seems most influential to the contemporary RCA?
- Do you see a pattern or behavior emerging in the life of the colonial Reformed Church that still shows up in the contemporary RCA? What is it?
- Look at any document in Part 1: Who is the author? Who is the intended audience? What is weighing on the author's mind, and what is the author trying to get the audience to do?
- What are one or two burning questions you have from this week's material that you would like to discuss more?

### Unit 2

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**Read:** *An RCA Reader*, Part 2—New Country, New Church (pages 83-193)

**Watch:** [“New Century, New Church,”](#) [“Slavery”](#)

**Questions to think about:**

- What other events in the life of the RCA are echoed in the True Dutch Reformed schism?
- John Coakley refers to the denomination's silence over slavery as the great compelling sin of the RCA. What does that mean to you?

- Look at documents 2-7d & g: What has changed in between the writing of these two documents? How do you think that accounts for the differences?
- Look at "Readington Negroes" (selection 2-7f) and imagine yourself as a listener in the congregation. How do you think you might react in their context, and why?
- What are one or two burning questions you have from this week's material that you would like to discuss more?

## Unit 3

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**Read:** *Called to Serve*

*An RCA Reader*, Part 3—Missions (pages 195-263)

**Questions to think about:**

- What changes do you see in the attitudes and expectations of missionaries over time?
- What are the strengths and weaknesses of the vision expressed in document 3-7a?
- From what you have read, how well has the RCA lived into its "Global Mission Principles" (document 3-7b)?
- What are one or two burning questions you have from this week's material that you would like us to discuss when we meet?

## Unit 4

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**Read:** *An RCA Reader*, Part 4—New Arrivals, Part 5—Denominationalism (pages 265-382)

**Watch:** ["New Arrivals,"](#) ["Denominationalism"](#)

**Questions to think about:**

- How do the events surrounding the second Dutch immigration end up shaping the modern RCA, and how might they simply be considered an extension of what was already happening?
- Look at document 5-1: How does what you read here agree or disagree with your understanding of RCA polity? Why would Cornelius Edgar describe things that way?
- What are one or two burning questions you have from this week's material that you would like to discuss more?

## Unit 5

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**Read:** *An RCA Reader*, Part 6—Broader Horizons, Part 7—Still Struggling (pages 381-545)

**Watch:** ["Broader Horizons,"](#) ["Still Struggling"](#)

**Questions to think about:**

- How does the report of the Commission on Race reflect what we have previously studied about the RCA and slavery?
- How do denominational concerns about women's ordination match concerns over race and ecumenism as reflected in the readings?

- Look at document 6-6: What do you think were the dynamics behind the writing of this pastoral letter and the way Wes Granberg-Michaelson presented the situation?
- What are one or two burning questions you have from this week's material that you would like to discuss more?