

RCA drops Church Herald as subscriptions fall off: An online successor to come

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Just as major mainstream print publications are struggling to forge a new path in the digital age, so will the flagship magazine of the 166,000-member Reformed Church in America.

Two years after scrapping a denominational subsidy for the *Church Herald*, the RCA General Synod, which met in Holland, Michigan, through June 9, voted 171-56 to cease publishing the monthly magazine, whose subscriptions have declined sharply.

Church and magazine leaders now will work within an existing \$240,000 budget to create a new publication that could be primarily online. An open blog and increased online social networking figure to be prominent aspects.

The *Herald*, prized by supporters for its editorial independence, in 1992 was given a subsidy to fund distribution to every RCA member household. But the denomination ended the subsidy to cut costs and used some of the money saved to start *RCA Today*, a new magazine published three times per year to promote the church's growth goals.

Since the *Herald* lost the subsidy, subscriptions have fallen below 20,000, and the magazine was forecast to go broke by the end of the year.

"The subscriptions tell a very powerful story that it's time to move forward," said Joel Plantinga, a pastor from California.

Also at the synod, the RCA voted to adopt provisionally the Belhar Confession as a "standard of unity," after 24 years of considering the measure. Two-thirds of the RCA's regional church groups must now ratify the General Synod vote. Written during apartheid in 1982 by the Dutch Reformed Mission Church, a black denomination in South Africa, the confession "affirms the truth of the gospel in the

face of terrible oppression.” -*Religion News Service*