

Reformation Church in East Africa: Strategic Plan
Vision, Mission, Values and Strategic Priorities
September 2020

Introduction: The RCEA seeks to be a Biblical church that worships, ministers and does all things in submission to Christ, in obedience to “Scripture alone”, and under the authority of God’s inspired, inerrant, and sufficient Word. We embrace the Westminster Confession of Faith and Catechisms (1647; WCF) as our doctrinal standard and accurate summary of the Bible’s teachings. We also honor other Reformation confessions that teach the same doctrines. We adopt the Book of Church Order (BCO) with its Form of Government, Rules of Discipline, and Directory for Worship as our “by-laws and operational manual.” The constitution of our church is therefore Scripture governing all things, the Westminster Standards and the BCO subject to and subordinate to Scripture (BCO Preface). The Bible cannot be amended, for it is God’s eternal Word; the Westminster Standards are seldom revised, because they are a faithful summary of Scripture; and the BCO is frequently modified because we constantly see better ways to execute and apply Biblical principles of government, discipline, and worship. Our teaching and ruling elders and deacons make vows of loyalty first to Scripture and then to the Westminster Standards and the BCO, as secondary and tertiary directives.

The RCEA has also adopted a document entitled, “Vision, Mission, Values and Strategic Priorities” (hereafter Strategic Plan). This is a fourth level of guideline and authority. This document serves seven important roles:

1. A profile to cast a vision for our elders, presbyteries and congregations for the mission, vision and values of the RCEA;
2. A standard to promote unity and cooperation among our elders, evangelists, deacons, presbyteries and congregations;
3. A model and guide to hold the RCEA and elders accountable to establish and maintain Biblical presbyteries, congregations and ministries;
4. A summary and outline for training and equipping teaching elders, church planters and evangelists in the basic principles of Biblical church life and ministry;
5. A series of Biblical benchmarks to plant new congregations and presbyteries and to revitalize existing congregations and existing presbyteries;
6. A profile to recruit teaching elders, evangelists and church planters and to attract transfer candidates;
7. A framework for church planter assessment and training programs.

This Strategic Plan is deliberately general and focuses on the broad Biblical principles and patterns taught in Scripture, the Westminster Standards and the BCO. It does not seek to elevate details, private opinions and personal preferences to become norms nor to dictate specifics for how to implement the Biblical directives. Rather, it is concerned about the big picture and primary Biblical matters. It is not intended to replace Scripture, the Westminster Standards or the BCO. It is not designed to establish new standards beyond our constitution. Neither is it devised to bind the conscience of our officers in the same manner that Scripture, the Standards and the BCO do. This Statement is envisioned to remind of biblical standards, to retell Biblical values, and to capsulize biblical goals in order to prompt the RCEA to establish ministry plans that accord with Scripture. This Plan instructs us how to do church and ministry under Scripture, the Standards and the BCO and thus to carry out our Biblical vision and mission.

This Strategic Plan may be reviewed and periodically amended by the Presbytery and the RCEA. This Statement may be considered in the same category as the Presbytery By-Laws and as such serves as an “operation manual” for Presbytery to promote cooperation in ministry.

Since the RCEA is in an African context where biblical and presbyterian standards for doctrine, government, discipline and worship are either non-existent or corrupt, the RCEA will ask each candidate for licensure, ordination, associate membership or transfer these questions:

1. Have you read the RCEA's Strategic Plan, and do you have any questions or concerns? 2. Are you substantially in agreement with the Strategic Plan? and 3. Are you willing to work with your brothers in the RCEA to accomplish our mission and vision as articulated in the Strategic Plan?

Vision Statement

We envision the spread of the Kingdom of God through healthy, Gospel-driven congregations and presbyteries in every country of East Africa, standing strong in unity for Gospel advance, for vibrant church planting and for biblical reformation in order to reach and impact East Africa, Africa and the world for Christ.

Mission Statement

For God's glory, the Reformation Church in East Africa exists to proclaim the Gospel of grace in word and deed, to reach and equip disciples to worship God and follow Christ with passion, by multiplying, through the Holy Spirit's power, healthy, Gospel-driven presbyterian congregations and presbyteries, in order to advance biblical reformation and to impact each country and its people groups in East Africa and also to impact Africa and the world for Christ.

Mission and Vision Motto

Biblical reformation for East Africa, Africa and the world through planting healthy Gospel-driven congregations and presbyteries.

Mission and Vision Explanation

The RCEA seeks to advance the Kingdom of God and to spread a passion for the worship and glory of God by a church and presbytery planting movement. Our goal is to establish and multiply healthy, Gospel-driven congregations and presbyteries in every country and in every major city in East Africa, beginning from Uganda. These congregations and presbyteries, empowered by the Holy Spirit, will then reach and disciple the burgeoning next generation, the population centers, the tribal groups, the refugee groups and the unreached and resistant groups within their regions and countries and thus advance the Gospel of grace and Biblical reformation in East Africa and beyond to Africa and the world.

This Gospel and reformation advance, begun through godly teaching and ruling elders, church planters and evangelists, will extend to congregations by means of faithful prayer, preaching of the Word, and worship and will equip and transform congregations and presbyteries to become holy in heart and conduct, to be obedient to Christ and His word, to pursue Gospel proclamation and deeds of love, justice, mercy and truth, and to work together to make disciples and to multiply congregation and presbytery planting and thus to impact East Africa, Africa and African society for Christ.

General Values

In pursuit of our vision and mission the RCEA holds the following general values.

1. Kingdom-focused prayer

Knowing that our vision and mission for Kingdom advance and Biblical reformation are humanly impossible, that we are in a spiritual war against powerful, relentless, always-attacking, never-resting, mortal enemies, the world, the flesh and the devil, we must look in dependence to God alone in earnest prayer, asking for the Spirit's outpouring, anointing and power to do the Lord's work in the Lord's way, and for the Lord's glory (Matthew 6:9-13; Ephesians 6:10-20).

2. The Gospel of Grace

The Gospel of grace is **first**, a message about God, His ownership rights, holiness and His perfect law, which humans are obligated to obey; **second**, a message about human sin, our guilty records, our corrupt hearts and the resulting inability to obey God, ruining us, destroying our fellowship with God and requiring God's judgment; **third**, a message about the person and work of Jesus Christ, who is true God and true man, who perfectly obeyed God's law, paid the penalty for sin

and absorbed God's wrath at the cross and then rose from the grave conquering sin, Satan and death, all on behalf of undeserving sinners; **fourthly**, the Gospel is a command to repent, turn from sin, lay down our rebel weapons, turn back to God, and to believe and trust Christ alone to save us; **fifthly**, the Gospel is a call to discipleship, holiness and obedience and to become followers of Christ; and **sixthly**, the Gospel is a message about powerful grace because only God's grace can overcome our bondage to sin and grant us the power to repent and believe and give the new hearts and the Spirit's power to enable us to live a life of new obedience to God's laws. (Modified from J.I. Packer. 1961. *Evangelism and the Sovereignty of God*. Chicago, Inter-Varsity Press, 57-73.)

The Gospel is a message about the Kingdom of God (God's rule/reign) which has come to earth through Jesus Christ (Mark 1:14-15). This Kingdom is advancing throughout the world as people are delivered from the domain of darkness and transferred into the Kingdom of God's beloved Son, enabling them to seek and obey God's will (Acts 26:18; Col. 1:13). The Kingdom belongs fully to Christ now after His resurrection (Dan 2:13-14; Matt 28:18; Phil 2:5-11), and is eternal. The Kingdom will grow throughout history (Isaiah 9:7; Dan 2:34-35, 44-45). The Kingdom is Christ's church and beyond to Christ's impact through His church on society and creation. The Kingdom will come to consummation after Christ has subdued His enemies (Psalm 2; 110; I Cor 15:20-28) and when Christ returns and judges all people. At that time, the world will thoroughly and perfectly become the Kingdom of our Lord and of his Christ, and He shall reign forever and ever. Through the Gospel, we look forward to an eternity of sinless joy and fellowship with God the Father, Son and Holy Spirit as we worship and reign in the New Heaven and New Earth, which is the final state of the Kingdom (Rev. 11:15; 22:3-5).

The Gospel saves by grace alone, through faith alone, in Christ alone, as revealed in Scripture alone, and to the glory of God alone (the "five alones" of the Reformation).

Every passage in the Bible ultimately points to Christ, to the Gospel and to His cross. The Gospel is God's instrument to bring new life to people who are dead in their sins and to renew the life of believers. The Gospel is the foundation, motivation and formation for the Christian life and for the worship, life, mission and work of the church.

3. Reformed and Covenantal Theology

Reformed theology is the God-centered, Christ-exalting, theology of the 16th century Reformation and its re-discovery of the Bible and the Gospel of grace. Reformed theology includes **1.** God's inspired, inerrant, and sufficient Word alone is our standard, rule, guide and authority for all doctrine, all ministry, all worship, all church practices, and all of life. **2.** God alone is supreme and sovereign over all things, including all history and salvation. **3.** God alone saves sinners. He chose, in His eternal plan (unconditional gracious election), to save an uncountable number of hell-deserving individuals, rebellious, God-hating, self and sin-loving, helpless, totally corrupt sinners (total radical corruption); and to save them by Christ's death on the cross (effective definite redemption), and to apply the benefits of Christ's life and death, through the Holy Spirit's work in regeneration, enabling these resistant sinners to repent and believe (irresistible effective application of grace) and to thus secure the certain salvation of these people, from beginning to end (preservation that enables the perseverance of the saints). These are the five Reformation doctrines of grace. **4.** The purpose of life is to glorify God, by worshipping and loving Him, keeping His commandments, and finding our treasure, joy and satisfaction in Him. **5.** God's Word alone interprets all of life and reality and is the only foundation for all understanding and all moral standards (Biblical worldview). Reformed theology is faithfully summarized in the Westminster Confession of Faith and Catechisms (1647), and is the RCEA's doctrinal standard.

Reformed theology is not a mere doctrinal position that the Bible is the inspired and true word of God. But it is a deep confidence and trust that the sovereign God will use the power of His Word, “living and active, sharper than any two-edged sword” (Heb 4:12), to bring His elect to Christ, to build up His sheep in Christ, and to establish and build up Christ’s churches in holiness and ministry. Therefore, teaching elders are called to preach and teach with full certainty and assurance, that when God’s Word is faithfully proclaimed, God will accomplish His purposes, call His elect, and form and shape His church, because He is “able to do far more abundantly than all that we ask or think, according to the power at work within us...” (Eph 3:20).

Covenant theology sees the Bible as one Book, with one story, from Genesis to Revelation, one Hero, the Lord Jesus Christ, who saves His people, one plan of salvation, unfolded over centuries, promised at creation and throughout the Old Testament, and fulfilled in the New Testament in Jesus’ life, death and resurrection. God’s Word reveals that God always relates to His human creatures by covenants, that entail God’s promises and human obligations. These covenants are always at God’s sovereign initiative and unilateral. At creation, God promised life to Adam, on the condition of his personal obedience. Adam sinned and made himself “incapable of life by that covenant” (WCF 7:3). But immediately, after the fall, God was “pleased to make a second covenant, commonly called the covenant of grace. In it God freely offers life and salvation by Jesus Christ to sinners, requiring of them faith in him, that they may be saved, and promising to give his Holy Spirit to all those who are ordained to eternal life, to make them willing and able to believe” (WCF 7:3). The covenant of grace should astound all humans. The ancient world would have expected the Bible’s story to end at the fall and for God to execute Adam and Eve for breaking His covenant. But God does the totally unexpected. Instead of executing, God redeems. Instead of punishment God provides mercy. Instead of condemnation God provides grace. In the covenant of grace, God, the King of His whole creation and Kingdom, does the astonishing. He forgives Adam and Eve, covers their guilt and promises a Savior-Redeemer, Who will restore God’s Kingdom on earth (Gen 3:15). The rest of the Bible unveils, through additional sub-covenants, with Noah (Gen 8:20-22; 9:9-17); Abraham (Gen 15, 17); Moses (the Book of Exodus and Deuteronomy); and David (II Sam 7) God’s preparation for the New Covenant, promised by the prophets (Jer 31; Ezek 36) and fulfilled by Christ. These covenants, all parts of the unified covenant of grace, reveal God’s plan to restore His Kingdom on earth by conquering the enemy of His Kingdom, Satan, and by redeeming a people for Himself and for His glory from every tribe, tongue, and nation, through the substitutionary death of His Son, the Mediator of the covenant of grace (Rev 5:9-10). Jesus is the promised Redeemer and the second Adam (Rom 5:12-14, 17-21; I Cor 15:21-28, 45-49), Who obeys God’s covenant, in contrast to the first Adam:

The Lord Jesus, by his perfect obedience and sacrifice of himself—which he through the eternal Spirit once offered up to God—has fully satisfied the justice of his Father. He purchased not only reconciliation but also an everlasting inheritance in the kingdom of heaven for all those whom the Father has given to him (WCF 8:5).

The Bible is thus a covenant book and the covenant of grace is the heart of the Bible’s story and the drama of redemption in which God restores, extends and completes His Kingdom through Christ. The Bible can only be properly interpreted, understood, and applied when it is seen as one Book, with its unified story, its one Redeemer, its one plan of redemption, the continuity between the Old and New Testaments, the Old being the foundation of the New, and the New being the fulfillment of the Old. J.I. Packer provides a fitting summary description of covenant theology:

The goal of God’s covenantal dealings is, as it always was, the gathering and sanctifying of the covenant people “from every nation, tribe, people and language” (Rev. 7:9), who will one day inhabit new Jerusalem in a renewed world order (21:1-2). Here the covenant relationship will find its fullest expression—they will be his people, and God himself will

be with them and be their God” (21:3). Toward this goal God’s shaping of world events still moves.

The covenant framework embraces the entire economy of God’s sovereign grace. Christ’s heavenly ministry continues to be that of the “mediator of a new covenant” (Heb. 12:24). Salvation is covenant salvation: justification and adoption, regeneration and sanctification are covenant mercies; election was God’s choice of future members of his covenant community, the church; baptism and the Lord’s Supper, corresponding to circumcision and Passover, are covenant ordinances; God’s law is covenant law, and keeping it is the truest expression of gratitude for covenant grace and of loyalty to our covenant God.

Covenanting with God in response to his covenanting with us should be a regular devotional exercise for all believers, both in private and at the Lord’s Table. An understanding of the covenant of grace guides us through, and helps us to appreciate all the wonders of God’s redeeming love (J.I. Packer 1993, *Concise Theology*, Wheaton, Tyndale House, 89-90; http://www.geocities.ws/gary_bee_z/packer/index.html).

The distinctive teachings of Reformed theology may be grasped and appreciated in its Biblical doctrines of Scripture, God’s supremacy over all things, salvation by sovereign grace, the covenant (and covenant theology), the moral law of God, the church and the kingdom of God.

4. Biblical Reformation

Biblical Reformation takes place when elders/shepherds in the church seek to remove and correct all errors and defects in the thinking and life of the church and to bring all teaching and practices to submit and conform to “Scripture Alone” so that the church is continually learning to submit to the Lordship of Christ in all areas of life. In this way, the church is positioned to spread the honor of Christ’s name and His Kingdom through faithful proclamation of the Biblical Gospel of grace, prayer, worship, evangelism, good works, church-planting and world missions and to equip church members to impact society and transform the culture through word and deed ministries. Reformation is closely connected to church health (see point 7 below).

Reformation is the duty and responsibility of the church. Every congregation and presbytery must pursue the five distinguishing marks of a true church articulated in the 16th century: (1) the preaching of the pure doctrine of the Gospel, (2) the pure administration of the sacraments instituted by Christ, (3) the exercise of church discipline in the punishing of sin and in the restoring of straying sheep, (4) all things managed in the congregation according to the pure Word of God as well as all things contrary to the Word being rejected and (5) Jesus Christ being acknowledged as the only Head of the Church (see the Belgic Confession, Article XXIX; this confession was written in 1561 and is one of the enduring confessions of the Reformation). Many churches include a sixth mark, the practice of the Great Commission to disciple the nations. Some see this implied in the first mark.

No church perfectly practices Biblical reformation. No church is pure and sinless. Every church needs continual forgiveness and grace. Even substantially pure churches have great weaknesses and imperfections. But a true church will always fight to preach the true Gospel and to practice the six marks in her church life. In her failures and sins, a true church will always take refuge in the Gospel and in the finished work of Christ in whom there is forgiveness and the power to walk in newness of life by grace through faith. Every “reformation” church must seek to be “reformed and always reforming;” i.e. to be Biblical and always seeking to be more Biblical, to be faithful to Scripture and yet to be continually recognizing that it is imperfectly and incompletely faithful to Scripture and seeking to be more faithful.

5. Biblical Worldview and Discipleship

God’s Word alone interprets all of life and reality. It enables us to comprehend God, ourselves and what God requires of us. The teachings of Scripture shape how we understand all aspects of

life and the world around us, and reveal that Christ is Lord over all things. The church's discipleship, making learners and followers of Christ, by the power of the Spirit, through the Word, worship and life of the church, must and will mentor and form believers, as we teach them to obey all that Christ has commanded. The fourfold ministry of Scripture, that of teaching, reproving, correcting and training in righteousness (II Timothy 3:16-17) will produce this Biblical worldview and will equip the church for transformation of families, schools, vocations, workplaces and public communities. The church will thus win, build, equip, mature and send believers to do Christ's mission and work in this world, fostering the reformation that glorifies God.

6. Presbyterian Church Government

The Biblical pattern for governing Christ's Church is through a plurality of Biblically qualified teaching and ruling elders, who together pray for, shepherd, feed, care for, protect, oversee and exercise rule in the congregations, presbyteries and general assembly (a council of elders for a country or large region).

Responsibilities of the Session Elders

The session (the congregation's council of elders, also called a church court) is composed of the ordained ruling and teaching elder(s), who carry out these responsibilities:

They oversee and shepherd the local church and all matters of her faith and practice including kingdom-focused prayer, worship, preaching, teaching, doctrine, body life, fellowship, cell groups, discipleship, discipline, marriages and family life, training, equipping, evangelism, world missions, mercy ministries, cultural mandate ministries, stewardship and outreach. The session preserves the peace, purity, health and unity of the congregation by keeping the Gospel as the foundation, motivation and formation for all her life and ministry, by examining and receiving new members, by overseeing the administration of the sacraments, by conducting nominations for elders and deacons, by training and examining candidates, by ordaining and installing officers elected by the congregation and by guarding the local church to be Gospel-driven, God-centered, grace-saturated, Bible-soaked and Christ-exalting as she carries out her mission to glorify God by winning and building disciples to worship God and to impact the world with the Gospel of grace.

How the Elders Oversee and Shepherd the Congregation

1. Prayer;
2. Consulting the Word;
3. Discussing and deliberating on how to faithfully shepherd the congregation addressing the needs of the flock, public worship, issues and policies, all church ministries and the loving application of church discipline. Session elders are to shepherd as a plurality of overseers, with joint (shared, mutual, collaborative) authority, mutual input and relying on the gifts, wisdom and perspective of each elder in order to avoid blind spots and tendencies toward sin;
4. Consult the Westminster Confession and Catechisms;
5. Consult the Book of Church Order;
6. Make decisions by deliberation and consensus (when possible); wait, pray, study the Word more when unity is absent;
7. Hold each other accountable to spiritual growth, purity in doctrine and purity in life;
8. Hold each other accountable to shepherding responsibilities;
9. Pray for, train, ordain and install new ruling elders and deacons nominated and elected by the congregation.

The elders of the congregations, presbytery (larger region) and the general assembly oversee and shepherd the church, in similar ways in these different church courts, in all matters of her faith and practice.

Presbyterian church government nurtures connection, cooperation, accountability and discipline. It promotes servant leadership, withers pride, fights remaining sin and combats the sinful, “big man” leadership model, so prevalent in Africa, but a problem everywhere. When elders seek to practice self-denying, servant-leadership, discipline, accountability, submission to Christ in every detail of the Word and submission to one another, healthy congregations and presbyteries can be established and multiplied. When presbyteries and congregations pray together, work together and plant churches together, then they can be used by God to advance Biblical reformation, the Gospel of grace and the true worship of God to all peoples in East Africa and beyond.

7. Biblical Church Health

Church health is the application of Biblical principles of leadership, worship, church life and ministry to the congregation. Biblical reformation is closely connected to church health. When a congregation and presbytery are serious about obeying God’s Word, the church becomes strong, healthy, full of unity, purpose and motivation to serve Christ. A healthy church is able to maintain and increase health. When a congregation and presbytery stray from obedience, health is replaced by disunity, grumbling, conflicts, and stagnation, becoming ingrown and deformed. However, an unhealthy church, by repentance and renewed obedience to God’s Word, can by God’s grace, be revitalized and brought back to the strength, restored health, blessing and vitality of “first love” (Rev 2:5) to Christ and loyalty to His kingdom.

Reformation, health and revitalization are the duty and responsibility of all teaching and ruling elders, and of every congregation and presbytery. Each is responsible to apply the Scriptures and the means of grace (public worship, preaching, prayer, the sacraments, fellowship and obedience to the Great Commission) to the life of the church. No church can be Biblical and healthy in her own power. Apart from Christ the church can do nothing (John 15:5). A church must abide in Christ, in His Word and in prayer to be a faithful, fruitful, God-honoring, Christ-exalting and full of health. Every church is completely dependent on the Holy Spirit’s power and grace to become the healthy church God calls her to be. But there is hope. The Gospel of grace has transforming power. All who call upon the name of the Lord will be saved. Every church that asks, seeks and knocks will find abundant grace for health.

Every congregation in our presbytery and denomination must seek to maintain and strengthen church health. See the Uganda Presbytery and RCEA documents “28 Biblical Characteristics of a Healthy Congregation to Be Pursued with Intentional Passion” and “Pray for the Uganda Presbytery and the RCEA to Pursue and Promote Reformation, Church Health and Revival”, and the Shalom Network, “Church Health: A Key to Reaching Africa.” These documents will be reviewed and presented to Presbytery...

8. Biblical Public Worship

Biblical public worship will seek to be God-centered, Christ-exalting, Spirit-anointed, Gospel-driven and robust. Biblical public worship is a high priority for the church desiring Biblical reformation, God deserves and is pleased when we seek to worship Him as He directs in His Word, and displeased when we worship according to personal preferences, subjective impulse and unbiblical traditions. God is seeking true worshipers and true worship (John 4: 23-24). The elements of true and Biblical worship include prayer, congregational singing of praise, Scripture reading, humble confession of sin, joyful confession of the Gospel and the faith, preaching, giving of tithes and offerings, and the sacraments, baptism and the Lord’s Supper, being practiced seriously, soberly, regularly and viewed as gifts from Christ. This public worship will utilize the order and patterns learned from our Reformation forefathers, while seeking to create enthusiastic

congregational participation, a balance of gladness and gravity (John Piper) and a connection to our African context.

9. Intentional Local Evangelism

Since Christ has commissioned us to make disciples of all tribes and people groups, we must engage in planned and purposeful training and strategies to evangelize culturally near and far neighbors and to proclaim the Gospel of grace. Our elders and congregations must pray for a love for the lost, for evangelists and Gospel-seed sowers, for good deeds to accompany evangelism, for evangelism opportunities to open, for wise evangelism tactics, and for a “Great Commission” mindset to pervade all church ministries and life.

10. Vibrant Church and Presbytery Planting

Making disciples of people groups and tribes is inseparable from planting new congregations where biblical worship, government and ministry will be reproduced and in time, as congregations are multiplied, new presbyteries will also be planted. An important mark of healthy congregations and presbyteries is that they are reproducing. (See the Uganda Presbytery and RCEA working document “Pray for the Uganda Presbytery of the Reformation Church in East Africa and for a Reformational and Presbyterian Church Planting Movement for Uganda and to East Africa and Beyond.”)

11. Connect Mercy Ministry and Good Deeds to Evangelism

Good deeds, or works, of love, mercy and justice are an often-repeated mandate from Christ to His church. In Paul’s letter to Titus, the Holy Spirit tells us five times to be devoted to good works (Tit 2:7, 11-14; 3:1, 8, 14). We are to do good deeds to all people and to the church (Gal 6:10). We are commanded to love neighbor as self (Matthew 22:39). Jesus Himself established the pattern of uniting good deeds and the preaching of the Word (Acts 10:38). Jesus joins good works to evangelism when he says “...[L]et your light shine before others, so that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father who is in heaven” (Matthew 5:16). Charles Spurgeon has stated that good deeds are the needle that draws the Gospel thread. The whole church can and must join in doing good deeds to needy people before a watching world.

12. Every-Member Ministry

The church is a ministering body and every member of Christ has ministry and is a minister. We live for Christ, each other and for the lost, and not for ourselves. Every member of Christ’s Body has a gift or gift mix graciously given by the Holy Spirit. Gifts are given to serve the Body and extend Christ’s church and Kingdom, i.e. to build up believers, to reach the lost and to extend kingdom influence. Gifts must be put to use (I Pet 4:10). No believer can “sit and soak” in idleness and fail to employ what God has entrusted. Spiritual gifts bring us to depend on one another. We need each other. No one has all the gifts. No one can effectively solo. The gifts enable the body to function properly, to be properly connected and to grow together to maturity and Christ-likeness (Eph 4:11-16). The elders of the congregation do not monopolize and dominate ministry. One of their important roles is to help believers to discover their God-given gifts, to equip them for ministry and to deploy them to serve in the family, church and world, using their gifts.

13. The Cultural Mandate

The cultural mandate is God’s call, at creation (Genesis 1:26, 28), especially to husbands and wives, and continues to the church, to manage, care for and rule over all the earth in order to extend God’s kingdom to God’s glory (I Cor 10:31). Every sphere of life is to be brought under the influence of Christ’s rule and Lordship. Healthy families and congregations can become, by grace, servant-leadership “factories” to equip and send men and women to Gospel-driven impact on all of society and in the public sphere through the application of Biblical principles and worldview, laws of justice and God’s truth in education, business, industry, agriculture, care for

the environment, law, criminal justice, the prison system, government, politics, medical care, banking, finance, science, social ethics, entertainment, sports and the arts. These Biblical principles and laws are Christ's commands for benefitting all society, for restraining sin and promoting Biblical reformation and the glory of God.

14. Biblical View of Marriage and the Family

God is the author of human sexuality, of marriage between one man and one woman, of roles in marriage and in the family, and of the responsibility of parents to nurture the next generation for Christ's church and Kingdom. The importance of the family is difficult to exaggerate. The family is the foundation of the church and society. It is every human being's first church, first school, first state, and first vocation. In the family every child first learns about God, right and wrong, law and order, work and responsibility (R.J. Rushdoony 1973, *Institutes of Biblical Law*, Craig Press, 192). The church must instruct and coach those preparing for marriage as well as husbands and wives for biblical marriage and for complementarian, supportive, marriage roles that will model and outfit children to also follow God's plan for marriage and singleness. The church must likewise equip parents to practice biblical parental roles and to shepherd, lead and nurture their family and household through family worship, Bible instruction, catechizing, and evangelizing. Each father is a pastor and each mother is an "assistant pastor" in the "church in the home." Each Christian family, under its "team" of parental pastors, then has the calling to train, tutor, shepherd and discipline the next generation to serve Christ. The family is the foundation for the congregation to become a "leadership factory" and to produce developing servant-leaders for home, church, and state in the coming generation. Healthy churches require healthy families that will generate and supply mature disciples. Parents are the first agents and "responders" to Christ's call to the church to disciple the next generation and to "[T]ell to the coming generation the glorious deeds of the Lord..." (Psalm 78:4).

15. World Missions and Cross-Cultural Evangelism and Church Planting

The same zeal for global missions that brought the Gospel to the African continent from the west, in the 19th century, must now flow from Africa to the world and especially to the unreached 3 billion among Muslims, Buddhists and Hindus that the elect might hear and repent and believe. Christ, the slain Lamb, has already by "[His] blood...ransomed people for God from every tribe and language and people and nation, and [He has] have made them a kingdom and priests to our God... (Rev 5:9-10). The church must go to all these nations (clans, tribes and ethnic groups) and "make disciples" by evangelism and church planting. The elect will hear the Shepherd's voice and follow Him, because they are already ransomed. The African church, with its huge size and human resources, appears to be positioned by God for this task. The African church must disciple, equip and send its best laborers to the ends of the earth. The RCEA must take up its responsibility and role among the world church, to be a sending church. We must pray for laborers, win build and send disciples to reach the unreached "next generation" on the African continent (as it grows from 1.2 billion in 2016 to 2.4 billion in 2050). The RCEA must pray for, mentor and send thousands of church planters to plant thousands of needed churches among the people groups in East Africa, whose populations will also double in the next 30 years. We can also reach other African countries. In addition, the RCEA must embrace its part in obeying the mandate of our Lord to go and make learners and disciples of all nations beyond Africa, including the resistant and hard to reach among the 3 billion. The RCEA must engage in its world mission and "Attempt great things for God and expect great things from God" (William Carey, 1792), trusting the Lord of the harvest, confident that "The Lord's work, in the Lord's way, will never lack the Lord's supply (Hudson Taylor, 1832-1905). May all glory go to the Lord God and to the Lamb, who will empower by the Holy Spirit the RCEA, Christ's African churches and the world church to finish the Great Commission and bring home Christ's elect sheep to the Great Shepherd.

16. A Church that is Self-Sustaining and Self-Propagating

In the past, the African church has been largely dependent on western funding. In the new 21st century world of a burgeoning African population, rapid change in world and African economies, the decline of the Western church and the susceptibility to world pandemics, this dependency must give way to self-sustenance and self-propagation. Congregations and presbyteries must be trained and tutored to embrace biblical financial stewardship in order to do the work of the church in evangelism, church planting mercy ministry and world missions. Congregations must support their pastors and free them to devote themselves to prayer and the ministry of the Word. The self-sustenance and propagation of the RCEA will be an important factor in its ability to embrace multiplying congregations, planting presbyteries and contributing to world missions.

Values for Teaching and Ruling Elders

In Biblical and presbyterian church government, the elders as shepherds, overseers, and examples to the flock (I Peter 5:1-3) have the greater responsibility for the health and ministries of the congregations and presbyteries. God has always held the shepherds as the most accountable and responsible for the worship and life of the church; see Ezekiel 34 and Acts 20:17-38. In pursuit of our vision and mission, and the indispensable role of the elders, the RCEA holds the following values for elders.

1. Kingdom-focused prayer
2. Personal holiness and godliness of character
3. Scripturally qualified elders (I Timothy 3 and Titus 1)
4. Scripture alone worship, life and ministry
5. Scripture alone preaching, teaching, counseling and discipleship
6. Expository preaching
7. Passion to preach and teach the Gospel of grace and Biblical and Reformed theology and to advance Biblical reformation
8. A plurality of elders in all church courts (session, presbytery and general assembly)
9. Teaching and ruling elders who jointly shepherd with hearts of love for the flock
10. Servant leadership and humility
11. Submission to fellow elders in session and presbytery and in the congregation
12. Teaching and ruling elders as examples and models for life and ministry
13. Teaching and ruling elders who continually train officers and leaders
14. Teaching and ruling elders who equip the believers for every-member ministry
15. Accountability among teaching and ruling elders
16. Equal authority for teaching and ruling elders
17. The special but not exclusive ministry of Biblical influence and persuasion for teaching elders
18. Teaching and ruling elders who together establish and foster the six marks of a true church
19. Elders who are aware of spiritual warfare against spiritual enemies and seek to faithfully use God's primary weapons of prayer and the Word

Church and Ministry Values

The Christian life involves four basic areas of relationship. These can be understood as priorities for the church and for each believer. These "major concerns" require continual growth, repentance, the putting off of sin and the putting on of obedience, all by grace. Using these four priorities as a structure, our elders seek to teach, equip and model the following values for congregations and presbyteries.

Priority 1: Relationship to God and Christ

Kingdom-focused prayer

The Gospel of grace

Holiness of life and obedience to God's commandments

Scripture alone worship, life and ministry

Reformed theology

Covenantal understanding of the Bible
Biblical worldview
Accountability to God in light of judgment and eternity

Priority 2: Relationship to family and household

Kingdom-focused prayer
Biblical view of marriage, sexuality and singleness
Sexual purity
Train those preparing for marriage and husbands and wives for Biblical marriage
Biblical view of the importance and role of the family in church and society
Biblical and complementarian marriage roles
Biblical family roles to promote Biblical family life
Biblical parenting
Train parents for family worship, catechizing and discipleship
Train families for mercy ministry to the community

Priority 3: Relationship to congregation and presbytery

Kingdom-focused prayer
Gospel-driven, Spirit-anointed public worship
The church as a community of care and love
Church health
Biblical and presbyterian church government
Congregational nomination and election of officers
Membership training
Intentional officer and leadership training
Equip women for effective church ministry
Every-member ministry through discovery and deployment of God's gifts
Every-member Biblical stewardship in time, talent and money
Equip congregations with vision to financially support their teaching elders
Train members to pray for, esteem, appreciate, respect, obey, honor and encourage their elders
(I Thes 5:12-13; Heb 13:17; I Pet 5:5)

Priority 4: Relationship to the work of Christ in the world.

Kingdom-focused prayer
Congregations and presbyteries with a "Great Commission" and missional mindset
Reformed evangelism: faithfully communicating the Biblical message using Biblical methods
Intentional training of the congregation for strategic evangelism
Connect mercy ministry and good deeds to evangelism
The cultural mandate and culture transformation
Evangelism and social responsibility (a presbytery statement on the relationship and where the UP stands on the Prioritism-Holism debate among evangelicals over the last 60 years)
Vibrant, purposeful church planting
Intentional prayer for Gospel officers: shepherds, evangelists and church planters
Strategic assessment of church planting candidates
Strategic training for Presbytery-approved church planters
Strategic evaluation of church plants and mission churches in progress
Presbytery communications and vision-building among congregations for evangelism and church planting
Intentional planning and organization for global missions including prayer, mission opportunities, recruitment of laborers, training, financing and deployment

Strategic Priorities

1. Mobilize Presbytery and congregations to pray for the Uganda Presbytery, the RCEA and for a Biblical reformation movement
2. Distribute and teach to congregations the UP/RCEA Strategic Plan
3. Pray for the Lord to raise up elders and deacons for our two mission church (COR and NCMC) and encourage these mission congregations to submit a plan
4. Define church health and the essential characteristics of a healthy Presbyterian congregation to use as an assessment tool in our churches [28 characteristics; Shalom White Paper]
5. Define Biblical worship standards and parameters for the Ugandan/African context
6. Define biblical and reformed evangelism and discipleship
7. Presbytery to discuss and develop strategies to encourage prayer, evangelism, mercy ministry and good deeds among our churches
8. Contextualize our Book of Church Order (BCO)
9. Define a **membership** training curriculum with presbytery approved topics and possible methods to implement training
10. Encourage congregations to implement membership training
11. Develop a curriculum for training officer candidates
12. Train congregations in the process of congregational nomination, training and examination (by REs and TE), and congregational election of officers
13. Develop pastoral leadership by providing pathways for theology students to get involved in our churches and gain experience in ministry
14. Develop an assessment program for church planting candidates
15. Develop training for church planters
16. Identify target communities for church planting
17. Develop a plan for working with those who want to come under care, candidates, teaching elders who desire to transfer or be received as associate members, and existing congregations that want to join the UP and the RCEA
18. Develop financial standards and policies for congregations and church planting
19. Develop plan for partnerships in funding church plants and other Presbytery initiatives
20. Identify missionary or national recruitment needs and begin recruiting processes (e.g. Campus ministry, Pastoral/church planting assessment, training and mentoring, etc.) and working with some 30 potential candidates in Uganda
21. Plan for [ongoing communication and encouragement to elders and congregations to continue in] united prayer for the Lord to fulfill the vision
22. Encourage, discuss and develop strategies for community-impacting ministries in and across our churches
23. Plan for developing relationships and unity among members across congregations
24. Encourage, strategize, and equip our pastors and churches to engage with the pressing issues (moral, political, social, economic, etc.) that the society is facing from a biblical perspective.

RCEA Position Statements on Doctrine and Ministry (this list will need additional topics)

1. Abortion
2. Homosexuality
3. Sexual promiscuity
4. Sexual purity
5. Transgenderism
6. Polygamy
7. Biblical Marriage: God's Design
8. Biblical marriage and the role of the church
9. Divorce and remarriage
10. Marriage and the bride price
11. The health, wealth and prosperity false Gospel
12. The completion of Scripture and the cessation of extra-Scriptural revelation
13. Revelatory and miraculous gifts
14. African traditional religion
15. Women and ordination to church office
16. Women's Ministry in the Church
17. Women and Diaconal Ministry
18. The relationship between Gospel Proclamation and Good Deeds
19. How to Battle Gospel Enemies: Atheism, ignorance, idolatry, and secularism
20. Spiritual Warfare
21. The relationship between evangelism and social responsibility (and the Prioritism-Holism debate among evangelicals over the last 60 years)
22. RCEA Church Planters Assessment and Training Program
23. RCEA Church Planters Training Manual
24. The Cultural Mandate: The Role of the Church in Society

The Target Area: Reformation Church in East Africa

Six East African Countries

The member countries of the East Africa Community include Uganda, Burundi, Rwanda, Kenya, Tanzania, and South Sudan. These six countries have a combined population of _____ among _____ tribes or nations.

Five Additional Countries

In its target countries, the RCEA will include Eastern Congo (DRC), Djibouti and Somalia, and as secondary targets also Ethiopia and Eritrea.

The RCEA's Church Planting and Presbytery Planting Goal

The RCEA has the goal of planting healthy congregations and at least one viable presbytery among every major tribal group in each of these eleven nations of East Africa.

A Strategy for Djibouti, Somalia, Ethiopia and Eritrea

Reach these needy nations through the large refugee and immigrant populations that God, in His providence, has brought to Uganda and especially to Kampala. This is also true to some degree, of other EAC countries with large refugee groups in Uganda. The simple strategy is to plant a church among refugees in Kampala (or other population centers) in order to equip this congregation to reach national refugees and eventually to plant churches in the home countries through these congregations. We also have the opportunity to partner with the developing presbyterian churches and presbyteries in Ethiopia that we have relationships with through partners like Mission to the World (MTW).