



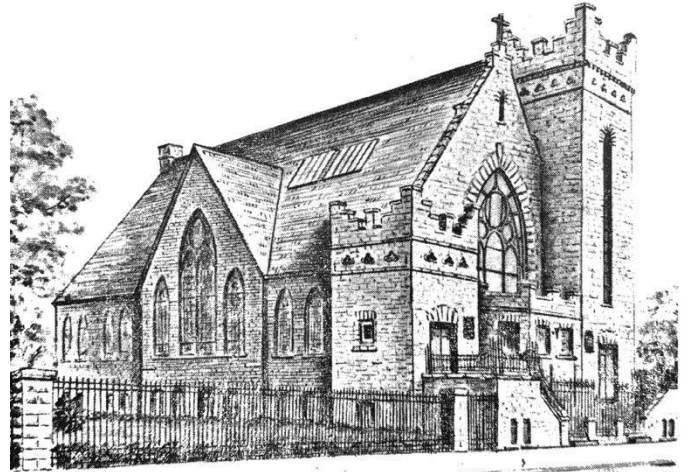
History of Heights Community Reformed Church

Heights Community Reformed Church, originally named, *The Second Protestant Dutch Reformed Church of Hudson County*, or more simply, *the 2nd Reformed Church of Jersey City*, can trace its origins to November 1856 with the gathering of a few Germans who had settled in the lower section of Jersey City. With the help of the First Reformed Church [Old Bergen Church], “the fledgling congregation received a stove, a chancel, a number of

benches, and the first 42 volumes for a Sunday School Library and by 1861, the congregation offered its first communion service.”

Over a century and a half later, members voted to rename the church in an effort to embrace and reflect the changes of its dynamic community. The consistory carefully deliberated for many months, and on July 3, 2022 the congregation officially recognized the historic name change.

The current building opened its doors on December 26, 1909. It was built and designed by Alfred Frederick Leicht, a young German immigrant architect who began his career in Jersey City, and later relocated to Los Angeles. Leicht emigrated in the late-19th century from Prussia and started an architecture practice in Bayonne, focusing primarily on stately residences and houses of worship. Between 1909-10 he designed a series of neo-gothic church buildings in Jersey City using the same “eclectic, battlement-like design, using similar stone facing as well as the dominance of a crenellated central tower.” The stained-glass windows were designed by the Henry Birckenstock Studios from Mt. Vernon, New York.



After 166 years, and by the Grace of God, Heights Community Reformed Church continues to serve its diverse community by sharing the message of Salvation by proclaiming faith in Jesus Christ and through the preaching and teaching of His Holy Word.

History of the Reformed Church in America



In the small colonial town of New Amsterdam, on a Sunday in 1628, about fifty people gathered around a crude table in a mill loft. Their celebration of the Lord’s Supper marks the birthdate of the Reformed Church in America. The congregation they founded still continues today as the Collegiate Reformed Church in New York City, the oldest evangelical church in North America with a continuous ministry.

The Reformed branch of Protestantism is rooted in the Reformation of the 1500s. Its primary leader was John Calvin of Switzerland, whose reform movement spread to Scotland, where it became the Presbyterian Church, and the Netherlands, where it became the Dutch Reformed Church.

In the 1600s, congregations of the Dutch Reformed Church in North America spread and expanded, even after the English took control of the region from the Dutch. The church sent its ministers to Holland to be ordained and did not hold services in the English language until 1764. When America became independent, the Dutch-founded church also cut its ties to its European mother country. Throughout the first half of the 1800s, the church's Dutch beginnings shifted from an everyday reality to a remembered heritage as Dutch-language worship began to fade. **The church, incorporated in the United States in 1819 as the Reformed Protestant Dutch Church, changed its name in 1867 to the Reformed Church in America.**

During the years following World War II and encompassing the tensest years of the Cold War, the Reformed Church in the United States underwent various changes. Americans moving to the cities and suburbs prompted the RCA to spend millions of dollars to organize 120 new churches between 1949 and 1958, and for the first time in the denomination's history, many were opened among people unfamiliar with Dutch heritage and the Dutch Reformed traditions.

To further welcome people from backgrounds other than Dutch, the RCA formed four racial/ethnic councils between 1969 and 1980. The councils helped the denomination face and address issues related to race and ethnicity, dealing particularly with people connected to the RCA through Pacific and Asian American congregations, Hispanic congregations, Native American Indian congregations, and African-American congregations.

Women have always played a vital role in the RCA. Their contributions began with such activities as initiating and supporting missions in North America and around the world, and serving as missionaries. Today they are missionaries, teachers, study leaders, volunteers, elders, deacons, and pastors. Denominational approval of the ordination of women as elders and deacons came in 1972, though women had been ordained to those offices beginning in 1970. **The first woman RCA minister was ordained in 1973, and ordination to the office of minister was opened to all women by an act of General Synod in 1979.**

Today women continue their involvement in the Reformed Church, in many kinds of ministries. Dozens of women are ordained ministers in the RCA, serving as pastors and specialized ministers, pursuing graduate work, and serving elsewhere without charge. Nearly 50 percent of the students in RCA seminaries are women, and many women have been sent as delegates to General Synod.

In 2000, the RCA assembled for Mission 2000, a whole-church event that aimed to discern and direct the denomination's role in mission into the twenty-first century. The RCA's Statement of Mission and Vision, introduced in 1997, spells out the calling of the church, and the Pentecost Letter, written at Mission 2000, **exhorts the many congregations of the RCA to go forth into their communities and make a difference there for Christ.** Emphasis on mission continues, at home as well as overseas. The "Discipling All Nations" paper talks about the need for and methods of ministering to people around the world in this new century. Urban ministries focus on churches and people who live in cities around North America, charged with the reminder that, as cities grow into population centers, the future of the church depends on how it touches the lives of people in the cities.

In 2003, General Synod adopted Our Call, a ten-year goal focused on planting new churches and revitalizing existing congregations. As Our Call drew to a conclusion, a denomination-wide discernment process took place, involving thousands of voices over two years. Conversations at the grassroots led to the adoption of **Transformed & Transforming** in 2013, a 15-year vision for discipleship, leadership, mission, and engaging the next generation. RCA staff work with churches and church leaders to equip them to take a next faithful step to follow God's call in their context. **Reformed and always reforming,** the RCA has moved into the twenty-first century, rooted, and established in careful theology and committed to grow as the Spirit leads.