

Submission Date: April 10, 2019

Proposal To: Director of CRCNA Ministries and Administration

Project Title: SEAPI CHURCH VISITING PROJECT 2019 (v.3)

BACKGROUND & RATIONALE

1. As a result of partnerships with Home Missions, World Missions, and Sustaining Pastoral Excellence (SPE), SEAPI CRCs were able to organize starting in 2006 into a self-functioning peer learning group. That time, with some 15-20 churches actively engaged in the peer learning process and interchurch fellowship, we gathered at least once a year for personal/family and ministry updates, encouragement, and training.
2. From the past few years however, we had become loosely connected and lesser intentional in developing our inter-church fellowship and mutual support. No longer were we aware of what's happening in our congregations. Notable also is the fact that most of our founding pastors are nearing or already past retirement age without adequate leadership transition plans. Add to these are the demographic, inter-cultural, and inter-generational changes that immigrant congregations normally experience as we live in North America. We now have more uncertainty about the continuity of our churches.
3. More saddening, we hear inaccurate information about some our emerging ethnic CRCs that had become pastor-less or closed because of non-growth and internal conflicts. These were churches that did not previously engage with SEAPI despite our attempts to encourage and invite them to the group. For us, supposedly a family of ethnic churches, this is a tragedy. If we knew what they were going through, some of us could have helped even in small ways. Bottomline: we do not want to hear anymore of any SEAPI church dying or even just coasting along mainly because nobody is helping them.
4. As SEAPI, though we are composed of some 12 different ethnic groups, we began our existence with a simple goal that we all shared despite our cultural differences. We believe we are called by God to help and support each other (pastors, their spouses, church leaders, and congregations) to grow from being 'survival-mode' first generation immigrant churches into thriving intergenerational perhaps intercultural CRCs.
5. In the mid-2000s, we started on a good path moving from being survival-mode churches. Helped by our beloved denomination, SEAPI now have pastors and leaders who had been trained and experienced in growing SEAPI churches. We still see a lot of challenges. Not all of us had been glowing successes in numerical terms. What we have maintained is a God-given heart and passion to continue helping our so-called immigrant churches become healthy and thriving CRCs for God's glory. Moved with a sense of urgency and asking God's favor, we humbly submit this proposal to request your prayers, financial support, and encouragement so we could like Paul realize the joy and shared mission-mindedness as partners in Christ's Gospel. (Philippians 1:3-11)

VISION

With the Lord's enabling in the next 12 months, we envision a revived and revitalized SEAPI group able to encourage and help our churches and leaders grow healthy and thriving, individually and collectively. As a result, we envision SEAPI able to effectively partner with and contribute to the rest of the CRCNA and the larger Church.

OBJECTIVES

1. **Visit and fellowship with purpose** – We want to know what's happening in each SEAPI church. (Would include formal and informal onsite conversations with the pastor, spouse/family, office-bearers, and other church leaders. Do a process of collegial conversational and structured "trying to see your ministry through the eyes of God." Would cover strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats to their ministry.)
2. **Connect with calling church and Classis** – We aim to establish good relationships with the SEAPI church's calling church and classis. (Would include formal and informal correspondence before the SEAPI visit and onsite meeting with calling/hosting church, regional pastor, church counselor, and/or classical missions chair.)
3. **Assess, report, respond** – We want to help and walk alongside the local church so they progress in its ministry. This will be beyond the fellowship and mutual edification that should happen during each church visit. Results of the church visit are to be summarized and shared in a report. Each church visit report will be shared with the SEAPI church, their calling Council and Classis. SEAPI will respond in modest ways we can and at the same time connect the local church to resources available in the CRC and elsewhere.
4. **Towards SEAPI 2.0** – After the round of church visits, we will know better how to revive and revitalize SEAPI. The plan is to complete the 2019 church visits within a 6-month period (May-Oct) and schedule a SEAPI retreat (revival gathering) in late November. We then will chart our path towards SEAPI 2.0 in the years ahead.

GUIDING PRINCIPLES

1. Follow the four aspects of church visiting (CRC Guide for Church Visiting, II.B, ca. 2015)
 - a. Ascertain—this involves data gathering, conversation, and listening
 - b. Admonish—a limited aspect, but occasionally required (and only to complement, not in any way to supplant the supervisory role by the calling church and Classis)
 - c. Advise—councils have questions that can be dealt with at the official visit or between visits. (As SEAPI visitors, we will share our recommendations on issues the SEAPI church raises based on our knowledge of the Church Order. But we will inform them how to discuss and resolve the issues with their calling church and Classis.)
 - d. To above, we add SEAPI-style Fellowship, Food, and lots of Catching Up!
2. Full correspondence and coordination with the SEAPI church's calling church and Classis. Additionally, with Resonate regional and local leader where the SEAPI church is located.

3. SEAPI visitors and SEAPI as a whole will serve as an encourager and ministry peer/colleague alongside the pastor and church leaders. Pastoral and ministry supervision and accountability remain with the calling church and Classis.
4. Heart-to-heart storytelling and assessment of their church including the founding, blessings and challenges through the years, how they see their future, and their immediate needs and issues. These conversations and listening will be a mix of only-with-pastor/spouse, with Steering Committee or Council, with other key church leaders.
5. Establish channels for follow up conversations and correspondence after the visit.
6. Report highlights of the visit including actionable ideas and plans.

IMPLEMENTATION PROCEDURES

1. Form 2 teams of church visitors, each composed of at least 2-3 experienced pastors that will share the task of visiting. As available, Resonate regional/local leader would be requested to participate.
2. **Complete visits of 25 SEAPI churches within 6 months (June to November 2019).** Results of the visits will help us prepare well for the planned All-SEAPI retreat in late November.

3. APRIL-MAY PREPARATIONS

- a. Create project proposal and schedule. Map out and schedule church visits.
- b. Send letters to all SEAPI churches about the visit especially asking them to confirm the planned schedule.
- c. Establish connections with leaders of their calling church, classis, and Resonate regional/local leaders.
- d. Prepare **SEAPI Visiting Kit**. Conduct orientation and training via conference calls if face-to-face meeting could not be done and budgeted.
- e. Prepare **SEAPI Church Visit Info Packet** to prepare the SEAPI pastor and church leaders.
- f. Arrange travel and hotel bookings as early as possible to get low rates.

4. BEFORE the Visit (2-3 weeks)

- a. Correspond by letter and email to confirm the church visit with: the SEAPI pastor and his church Council/Steering Committee; the calling church, Classis, Resonate regional/local leader
- b. Finalize with the SEAPI pastor details of the visit including formal meetings and worship
- c. Send Visit Info Packet to SEAPI pastor to prepare him and church leaders for the meetings
- d. Re-confirm travel bookings with team members.

5. DURING the Visit

- a. Meet with calling church and classis leaders either before or after the SEAPI visit.
- b. Conduct separate and joint meetings with the SEAPI pastor, family, and church leaders. We will meet with key people among their youth/young adults groups.
- c. In all conversations, team members must listen well, aim to encourage, celebrate victories and blessings, offer honest feedback in case of difficult issues/challenges, urge fellowship with other SEAPI churches.
- d. End visit and meetings on a positive tone and hopeful spirit regardless of any ongoing church concern and situation.
- e. Be available for any fellowship opportunity the church will arrange.
- f. At least one or all members of the visiting team to worship with the SEAPI church.
- g. We will promote our new SEAPI website. We also will encourage the church to give us materials for posting on the website. Examples: church’s history, current leadership, their ministries and stories, and lots of photos past and present. We will be open to their suggestions how to make our website and coming Facebook group page our go to community portal on the web.

6. AFTER the Visit

- a. Send letters/emails of appreciation to all concerned during the visit: SEAPI pastor/family, church leadership, calling church and classis leaders, Resonate regional/local leaders.
- b. Request visited SEAPI church to give us feedback about the visit using a basic questionnaire/form.
- c. Write a summary report of visit highlights. Emphasize immediate needs and opportunities for church growth, training of leaders, compelling needs and ideas community outreach (as in ministry innovation and nontraditional ideas).
- d. Identify significant results from the visits which appear common to many SEAPI churches. These in turn could help in organizing content and activities as well as aim for desired outcomes during the planned All-SEAPI Retreat in late November.

SCHEDULE (see map where SEAPI CRCs are located)

**Asterisked churches are those that we barely have knowledge of their current status.*

Inclusive dates, 2019	Churches to visit	Status, Calling Church & Classis	Visiting Team	Estimated costs
April-May	Note: See APRIL-MAY PREPARATIONS in the preceding section.			
May 4-6	Fil-Am CRC (Filipino), Pearland, TX	Emerged: 2017 (calling church) Rocky Mountain	Fernando (coming from Calvin College BOT meeting in Grand Rapids, May 1-3)	\$200 HOU-OAK airfare/taxi
May...	Note: Pending approval by EDFT, SEAPI visitors will do	<i>To follow shortly</i>		

	conference calls to familiarize tasks and finalize church visits. Also, contact churches to be visited.			
June 15-25 (CO, UT, IA, IL)	John Kim, Aurora, CO Charlie Phim, Salt Lake City, UT *Keo Phommarath, Sioux City, IA Huu Nguyen, Winfield, IL	<i>To follow shortly</i>	Socheth Na Fatu Auau Fernando del Rosario	
July 13-22 (MN, WI)	Phohn Sinbondit, MN *Adam Nhotsavang, MN Kou Vang, Sheboygan, WI	<i>To follow shortly</i>	Socheth Na Fatu Auau Fernando del Rosario	
Aug 10-20 (MI)	*Hmong CRC, Lansing, MI *Vietnamese CRC, Kentwood MI *Chin CRC, Grand Rapids Lao CRC, Holland, MI Cambodian CRC, Holland, MI	<i>To follow shortly</i>	Kou Vang Socheth Na Matthew Le Fatu Auau Fernando del Rosario	
Sep 7-16 (NH, MD, NJ)	*Harold Lopian, Dover, NH *Indonesian CRC, MD Albert Sideco, Jersey City, NJ	<i>To follow shortly</i>	Jonas Tri Muljo Fatu Auau Fernando del Rosario	
Sep 21- Oct 5 (CA)	Leo Clemente, San Diego *Sysay Vilaylack, Moreno Valley *Lindley Miras, Bellflower Matthew Le, Westminster Fatu Auau, Fountain Valley *Daniel Moua, Fresno *Cambodian CRC, Stockton	<i>To follow shortly</i>	(2 teams) Fatu Auau Julius Umawing Socheth Na Kou Vang Fernando del Rosario	
Oct 12-15	Cambodian Fellowship, St Thomas, ONT, Canada	Emerged: 1980s First CRC, St Thomas Classis Chatham	Fernando (after attending COD meeting in Burlington, ONT Oct 9-11)	Toronto-SFO
Oct-Nov	Write report of all the visits			
Late Nov	All-SEAPI Revival Retreat!			

BUDGET

Notes:

- Each visit is planned for 2-3 days. Each visiting team will consist of up to 3 members. Exceptions are the visits at Fil-Am CRC in Pearland, TX and the Cambodian Fellowship in St. Thomas, ONT Canada. Fernando plans to do those visits right after attending the Calvin Board of Trustees and Council of Delegates meetings, May 1-3 in Grand Rapids and Oct 9-11 in Burlington, ONT.
- Transportation will be by plane and car. To obtain lowest possible plane fares, we will book flights as early as possible and not travel during holiday periods (May 27 Memorial Day, July 4 Independence Day, Sep 2 Labor Day).
- For church locations that are drivable up to 5-6 hours, we will travel by a rental car.
- Where available and to reduce hotel costs, we will book hotel suite-type rooms to maximize sharing in a single room by 3 persons.
- For meals on the road and not provided by churches, these will be priced at \$15 per meal/person.
- We will follow CRC travel policies and booking procedures to both stewardly manage costs and accomplish the goals of the church visits as planned.
- Overall, we will do due diligence to keep to the budget and reduce expenses whenever possible. The prices quoted here are taken from the Southwest and Expedia websites as of April 8-9. Due to volatile air and hotel rates especially during the peak summer travel season, we request funding flexibility or contingency allowance in case actual expenses exceed the budget estimates presented in this proposal.

May 4-6: Pearland, TX	= TBD
June 15-25: UT, CO, IA	= TBD
July 13-24: MN, WI, IL	= TBD
Aug 10-20: MI	= TBD
Sep 7-16: NH, NJ, MD	= TBD
Sep 21-Oct 5: CA	= TBD
Oct 12-15: St. Thomas	= TBD
Total travel, hotels, meals	= TBD
Add Printing of materials	= TBD

For details, see attachment Detailed Travel Cost Estimates (TBD).

REPORTING AND ASSESSMENT

We will develop our SEAPI church visiting materials guided by: a) best practices for interviewing, reporting, and assessment in conducting church visiting (CRC Pastoral Resources); and b) important intercultural sensitivities especially among first generation church leaders.

From April to May, we will work on the following materials:

1. SEAPI Visiting Team Guide and Kit: quick SEAPI church visiting tips; profile of each SEAPI church; interview questionnaire/form; CRC church visiting guides.
2. SEAPI Church Visit Info Packet: a brief guide to purpose of church visiting; important provisions from the Church Order; motivational guide on belonging in SEAPI.

3. Standard Intro letters to: SEAPI church, calling church, classis, Resonate regional/local leaders.
4. Standard after visit appreciation letter to: same as above.
5. After-Visit Feedback questionnaire/form, available as hard copy and Google form link.
6. In compiling and assessing the results of our church visiting, we will identify potentials, needs, and issues that are common across our SEAPI community. As appropriate, we will request CRC EDFT assistance and guidance how to address potential ministry opportunities that could be seen as innovative, nontraditional, GLOCAL ways of community outreach. Possible scenarios could include opportunities unique to a church, or to a cluster of SEAPI churches within a region or ethnic group, or SEAPI collectively.

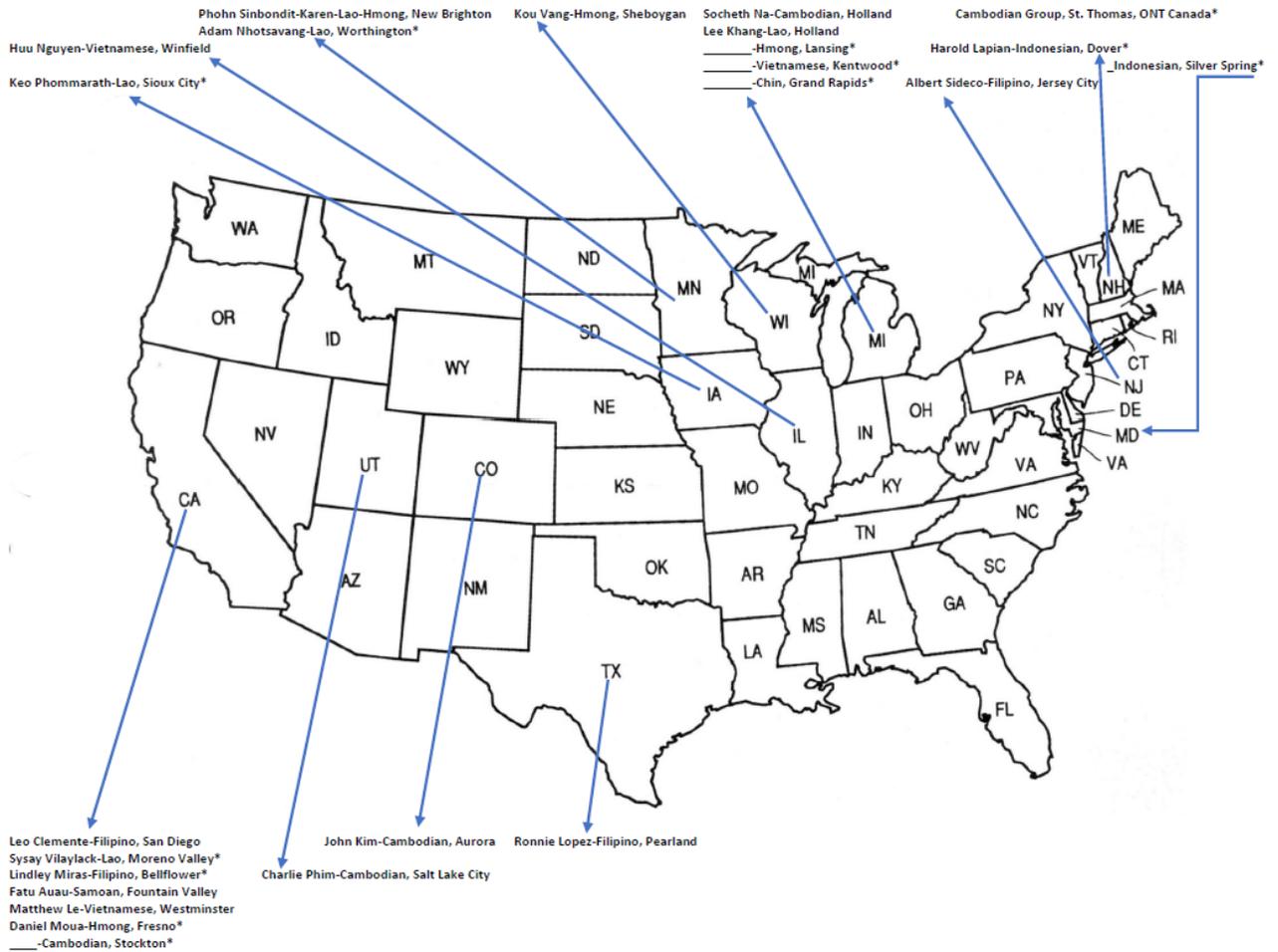
ATTACHMENTS

1. SEAPI Map Guide 2019 (attached)
2. Detailed Travel Cost Estimates (to follow)
3. SEAPI Visiting Team Kit (to follow)
4. SEAPI Church Visit Info Packet (to follow)
5. SEAPI Church Visitors Reporting Forms (to follow)
6. Standard Letters (to follow)

REFERENCES

1. Guide for Conducting Church Visiting, adopted by Synod and updated 2015 ([go to web page](#))
2. Brief Guide to Church Visiting by Pastor Church Resources ([go to web page](#))
3. A New Approach for Church Visiting (Process Guide) ([go to web page](#); [download Manual pdf](#))
4. Promising Practices: Church Visitors ([go to web page](#))

ATTACHMENT 1



Map of SEAPI CRCs, as of April 2019
**church status not updated*

Attachment 2

DETAILED TRAVEL COST ESTIMATES FOR SEAPI CHURCH VISITING PROJECT

TO BE DETERMINED