

Classis Iakota
AGENDA
March 4, 2025, 9:00 A.M.
Covenant CRC, Sioux Center, IA
Rev. Drew Hoekema, Chair Rev. Stanley Groothof, Vice-Chair

I. INITIAL BUSINESS

- A. Opening Devotions—led by the host church
- B. Welcome to delegates and other attendees
- C. Presentation of Credentials & Roll Call
 - Signing of the Covenant for Officebearers by all delegates, per the Classical Rules of Procedure (I. H. p. 2)
- D. Declaration that Classis is constituted.
- E. Adoption of time schedule: 9:00-12:15; lunch; 1:00-3:15; coffee time; 3:30-
- F. Appointment of Prayer Leader
- G. Tally Committee (provided by host church)

II. INSTRUCTIONS AND OVERTURES

- A. Instructions/Requests from Classical Credentials
- B. Overtures from First Rock Valley CRC
 - 1. End the 'In Communion' Relationship with the Reformed Church in America, the Pella Accord, and the 'Free Exchange of Ministers' in Church Order Articles 8 and 12 and its Supplements (pp. 2-3)
 - 2. Provide Actionable Steps of Accountability Towards Church and Classes Who are in Defiance and Open Rebellion (pp.3-5)
 - 3. Address the Timing and Location of Future Synods (pp. 5-6)
- C. Overture from Platte CRC: Send Communication to EIRC Regarding RCA Status (pp. 6-8)

III. STANDING COMMITTEE REPORTS

- A. Stated Clerk (p. 8)
- B. Interim Committee (p. 9)
- C. Ministerial Leadership Team
- D. Missions Team (p. 10)
 - New Roots Ministry (pp. 10-11)
- E. Finance Committee (pp. 11-12)
- F. Church Visitors (pp. 12-13)
- G. Church Counselors (p, 14)
- H. Regional Pastors (p. 14)
- I. Minn-I-Kota Youth
- J. Safe Church Team (pp. 14-15)
- K. Classical Treasurer

IV. ELECTIONS/NOMINATIONS

- A. Classical Finance Committee—Darrel Raih has completed his second 3-year term
- B. CMT Clergy—Gideon Wamala is retiring; Jack Gray can step in as the alternate
- C. CMT Clergy—Scott Van Voorst has completed his first 3-year term
- D. CMT Lay—Robyn Kelderman has resigned; there is currently no lay alternate
- E. CMLT Lay—Orlan Gulker has completed his first 3-year term
- F. Classical Safe Church Clergy—Henry Lengkeek has retired; there is no clergy alternate
- G. Classical Safe Church Lay—Heidi Van Roekel has completed her second 3-year term
- H. Classical Safe Church Lay Alternate—Heather Buys has completed her first 3-year term
- I. Election of delegates to Synod (per the decision made at the 9/20/22 classis meeting: "classis shall consider sending one or more delegates to synod for two consecutive years.")

V. CLASSICAL/REGIONAL REPRESENTATIVES TO SYNODICAL BOARDS

- A. Calvin University
- B. Calvin Theological Seminary
- C. Council of Delegates
- D. Resonate Global Mission
- E. World Renew (pp. 15-16)

VI. REPORTS FROM CLASSIS-APPOINTED TEAMS

- A. Care Team for Shalom CRC (p.17)
- B. Leftover Items (from “Instructions/Requests”)

VII. CLOSING BUSINESS

- A. Next Meeting – September 16, 2025 (New Holland CRC is next in line)
- B. Concluding Remarks (chairperson)
- C. Closing Prayer
- D. Adjournment

OVERTURE 1 from First Rock Valley CRC: End the ‘In Communion’ Relationship with the Reformed Church in America, The Pella Accord, and the ‘Free Exchange of Ministers’ in Church Order Articles 8 & 12 and its Supplements

I. Background

According to the 2014 Pella Accord we are to “act together in all matters except those in which deep differences of conviction compel [us] to act separately” (Acts of Synod 2014, p. 504). At that time, the accord naturally meant that ministers from the CRCNA and the RCA could pursue and accept calls in both denominations with a shorter and easier process and thus something like a “free exchange” of ministers was codified in Church Order articles 8 and 12 (see supplements).

However, in the last several years, it has become apparent that the CRCNA and the RCA are not as closely aligned in belief and practice as they might have been in 2014. The “presenting” doctrinal divide has to do with human sexuality. The RCA at present keeps as its official stance the traditional and more importantly biblical understanding of marriage as consisting of one man and one woman and that sexual activity belongs only within the boundaries of such marriage.

However, in practice many pastors and congregations teach to the contrary and promote same-sex marriage as a legitimate option for Christians. This is because the RCA has a constitutional system which limits the authority of synods. The CRCNA, on the other hand, not only declared same-sex sexual activity to be unchaste behavior, but that this understanding has always had confessional status in our denomination and thus officebearers and congregations who disagree are now placed on limited suspension until they repent of their errors or disaffiliate from the denomination. The CRCNA is enacting discipline on this matter and the RCA is not.

As evidence of this growing divide between the CRCNA and the RCA, same-sex-affirming CRC pastors and churches have left for the RCA.

RCA belief and practice is unique and therefore no longer in communion with the faith or life of the CRC. We expect that division to become more apparent in the years to come that the free (or expedited) exchange of ministers from both denominations will prove more and more problematic.

II. Overture

Therefore, Classis Iakota overtures Synod 2025 to begin the process to remove Article 8 b. (and other applicable sections. e.g. supplement Art. 12-c) from the Church Order and update the relevant rules, in order to treat the Reformed Church in America (RCA) ministers, ministries, and churches the same way that all ministers and ministries are treated from other denominations—thus ending the “free exchange” of ministers agreement, the Pella Accord (2014), and the status of being “In communion” with the RCA. Such transfers of ministers will now require the same labor that is required from any other denomination that is not currently in communion with the CRC. RCA ministers serving on loan to the CRC are

required to comply with synod's decisions by signing the Covenant for Officebearers (Church Order Article 38-h and supplement).

III. Grounds

1. Our covenantal polity and practiced faith no longer align with the RCA as much as they once did (see Overture 15, *Agenda for Synod 2024*, p. 450-454). The RCA has no provision that decisions of assemblies are considered settled and binding (Article 29).
2. Ending our fellowship and communion with the RCA, allows for a formal avenue to address and seek fellowship with the ARC, Kingdom Network, and other churches that have recently left the RCA.
3. If this overture is adopted in 2025 and implemented in 2026, ministers and congregations will have sufficient time to make adjustments.

The Council of First CRC Rock Valley

OVERTURE 2 from First Rock Valley CRC: Provide Actionable Steps of Accountability Towards Churches and Classes Who are in Defiance and Open Rebellion

I. Preamble

Classis lakota is concerned about the open rebellion that is taking place in the CRCNA. We believe steps are needed both in individual churches and classes—actionable steps of accountability that will help us to more deeply covenant together in our shared confessions.

II. Background

For many years the CRCNA, along with most other Christian denominations, was caught up in the debates about human sexuality. This debate, which had been publicly debated denomination-wide since 2013, centered particularly on the question of whether same-sex sexual activity was among the actions that constituted unchastity and thus prohibited as sinful according to question and answer 108 of the Heidelberg Catechism.

Synod launched two study committees to address these questions, and the second committee's *Human Sexuality Report* was "recommend ... to the churches as providing a useful summary of biblical teaching regarding human sexuality." Synod 2022 also "affirm[ed] that 'unchastity' in Heidelberg Catechism Q. and A. 108 encompasses adultery, premarital sex, extramarital sex, polyamory, pornography, and homosexual sex, all of which violate the seventh commandment. In so doing, synod declare[d] this affirmation 'an interpretation of [a] confession' (Acts of Synod 1975, p. 603). Therefore, this interpretation has confessional status." The whole *Human Sexuality Report* does not have confessional status, but the identification of same-sex sexual activity (whether in a so-called same-sex marriage or outside of one) as prohibited behavior does have confessional status as it is our denomination's understanding of HC Q&A 108. The only sexual activity that is permitted is between one man and one woman in the context of a Biblical marriage.

Following the decisions of Synods 2022-2024 the CRCNA has faithfully determined that it is vital for the communication of the true gospel of Jesus Christ that all in leadership positions of pastor, elder, deacon, teacher, board member, Trustee, staff, and standing committees, must submit to God's Word and our Three confessional forms of unity, by promoting and defending the denomination's position without exception by signing the Covenant for Officebearers.

Synod 2024 instructed all classes to re-sign the Covenant for Officebearers on a yearly basis (*Acts of Synod 2024*, article 89, p.928). Furthermore, synod decided that when an officebearer signs the Covenant for Officebearers, it is a statement that he or she has no difficulty or settled convictions contrary to any of the doctrines contained in the creeds and confessions and this includes what synod has declared to have confessional status (*Acts of Synod 2024*, article 69, p. 876). Thus as we go forward, every classis will be in agreement with the rest of the denomination and we can rebuild trust with one another as we are all in one accord as the church should be.

Regarding congregations and officebearers that have made public statements against what synod declared to be a confessional matter, Synod 2024 declared that such congregations and officebearers are to be placed on limited suspension after the conclusion of Synod 2024. This suspension includes a loss of ability to send delegates to classis, synod, the COD, or the CRCNA agencies. Officebearers under limited suspension may attend classis with the privilege of the floor but not as a seated delegate (*Acts of Synod 2024*, Article 76, p. 887).

However, there are several instances in which synod's clear instruction has been disregarded (public meeting minutes can be provided to the advisory committee):

- Classis Alberta North seated delegates from churches that are in protest as voting delegates (October 18-19, 2024, minutes, Article 3).
- Classis Grand Rapids East said that "full delegations from all congregations shall conduct the ordinary business of classis, but for matters that clearly involve our denominational ties...the full delegations by majority vote appoint an *ad hoc* committee to make the necessary decisions during the classis meeting" (September 19, 2024, minutes, Article 1.3).
- Alger Park CRC has said that they "will not require those who wish to serve as elders and deacons to sign the Covenant for Officebearers if they cannot do so 'without reservation'" (Vimeo of congregational meeting, January 19, 2025).
- Classis Toronto adopted an overture from Heritage Fellowship CRC which calls for the seating of voting delegates who by synodical definition are under limited suspension and who by synodical decision may not vote at classical meetings. (Classis Toronto, October 9, 2024, minutes, article 7).
- Classis Toronto adopted an overture from Fellowship CRC and Willowdale CRC which in the name of protecting the original authority of the local council as well as honoring the authority of the Classis, asks Classis not to adopt or enact what they consider to be "overreaching decisions" by Synod 2024. To "not enact" here means (1) ongoing seating of delegates regardless of limited suspension status and (2) that there would be no requirement to sign the Covenant for Officebearers for the next two years (October 9, 2024 minutes, Article 8).
- The Council of Covenant Christian Reformed Church in Barrie, ON has appealed the decisions of Classis Toronto to Synod 2025, noting that their classis meeting was not duly constituted.

The argument of Classis Toronto is that since authority originates from the local council, neither Classis nor Synod have the authority to require officebearers to sign the Covenant for Officebearers if the sending council disagrees. If such is the case, then all classical and synodical decisions and instructions are regulated to advisory status only. And so we see that this argument goes beyond the debate about sexuality; it goes to the heart of what it is to be a confessional denomination. If the doctrines in our confessions may be publicly opposed in a way other than the gravamen process to amend those confessions, then we are not a confessional church since then our confessions are merely a statement of heritage. Similarly, if synodical decisions can be disregarded, then we are no longer a denomination, but rather something akin to a "network" or club.

III. Overture

Therefore, we overture Synod quickly and decisively to address the matter of congregations and classes in a state of defiance by:

1. declaring to Classes Alberta North, Grand Rapids East, Toronto, and any other churches and classes that has done similar actions in this past year that their decisions and actions constitute open and defiant rebellion.
2. inviting these churches and classes to repent from their rebellious action and be restored to a confessional understanding of faith and practice.
3. receiving overtures from these churches and classes as communications only.
4. Recognizing that absent of repentance that is communicated in writing by the date of Synod 2025, as law and covenant breakers, these churches and classes have cast themselves into the state of limited suspension and in need of special discipline. The goal of this special discipline is to bring them back into fellowship with the CRCNA following the outline of Church Order Art.84.
5. Synod 2026 will judge if special discipline has done its good work to bring these bodies back into fellowship.

IV. Grounds

1. It is the task of the local Classis to bring local churches and officebearers into compliance with our unified confessional ministry. That is not happening in all classes.
2. The principle of authority originating in the congregation does not negate synodical pronouncements.
3. Churches and classes similarly do not have the authority to ignore or change synodical instructions.
4. Titus 3:10-11 says “As for a person who stirs up division, after warning him once and then twice, have nothing more to do with him, knowing that such a person is warped and sinful; he is self-condemned.” Synods 2022-2024 have given more than two warnings.
5. These churches and classes have not followed all three aspects of Church Order Article 83, which instructs the church to apply special discipline when officebearers “violate the Covenant for Officebearers, are guilty of neglect or abuse of office, or in any way seriously deviate from sound doctrine and godly conduct.”

The Council of First CRC Rock Valley

OVERTURE 3 from First Rock Valley CRC: Address the Timing and Location of Future Synods

I. Overture

Classis lakota overtures Synod 2025 to move the gathering of Synod to a biennial meeting that occurs in January of odd years in Phoenix.

II. Grounds

1. Synod is costing over a million dollars annually using affiliated CRCNA universities to house, feed, and provide meeting space for less than 300 people.

2. It is becoming more difficult for our elders and deacons to be able to attend in the summer (a critical time for those working in agriculture) where a winter meeting in a warmer climate would be preferred.
3. There is a realization that with greater connectivity and more directed work occurring at the classis level that many synod decisions have little time to be implemented before the next year's Synod occurs.
4. Half of the CRCNA churches now exist west of the Mississippi, yet we have not had any synods west of the state of Iowa.
5. More than 50% of the growth in the denomination is happening outside of Dutch nationality which is moving from a family denomination to a confessional denomination. It is important to meet this trend for continued growth.

The Council of First CRC Rock Valley

OVERTURE from Platte CRC: Send Communication to EIRC Regarding RCA Status

Background

In 2024, Classis Iakota overtured Synod (Overture 15) to re-examine our ecumenical relationship to the Reformed Church in America (RCA). In response, Synod directed the Ecumenical and Interfaith Relations Committee to have a conversation with representatives from the RCA, and to bring a recommendation to Synod 2025 regarding their official status as “church-in-communion,” the closest relationship among the categories used by the CRC.

In response to Overture 15, the EIRC sent a ‘right-of-comment’ memo to Synod 2024, defending the current arrangement. The memo stated that any change would be going against the CRC Ecumenical Charter, citing a portion of its Preface which states that requiring biblical, theological and confessional uniformity among our ecumenical relationships is “no longer a meaningful option.” Thus, the committee argued, any change in our relationship with the RCA would be forcing the committee to go against its mandate in Church Order Article 49-a.

Rationale

Since Classis Iakota initiated this current work of the EIRC through its overture to Synod 2024, it is fitting to address this significant point made in response. As the committee considers its recommendations to Synod 2025, the council of Platte CRC thought it worthwhile to continue a dialog with this committee through the means of an official communication from Classis.

Overture

Platte CRC overtures Classis Iakota to send the following communication to the CRC Ecumenical and Interfaith Relations Committee:

Dear Dr. Roels and EIRC Members,

Greetings in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ! Last year, our classis submitted Overture 15 to Synod 2024 regarding the Reformed Church in America [RCA]. In response to that overture, Synod directed your committee to dialogue with the RCA and bring forth a recommendation to Synod 2025 concerning

its status as 'church-in-communion.' We are grateful for your committee's work toward that end and write to you now concerning it.

We took note of several concerns mentioned in your evaluation of our overture to Synod 2024, but wanted to continue this important conversation by addressing the first. Your claim was that a change in our relationship with the RCA would cause the EIRC to violate Church Order Article 49-a, since the Ecumenical Charter states that requiring ecumenical partners to "think biblically, theologically, and confessionally like the CRC" is "no longer a meaningful option."

We wanted to raise several concerns in response. First, the point raised cites not the Ecumenical Charter itself, but its Preface. But more importantly, we wonder about applying such a broad principle on "ecumenical relationships," generally speaking, to what you have called our "closest ecumenical partner" (*Agenda for Synod 2024*, p. 317). Does such an interpretation and application of our Ecumenical Charter mean that there are no longer any faith and practice expectations defining our closest partners? If that is the case, where is our unity grounded?

To observe that we are no longer in alignment on significant confessional matters of faith and practice, and to then change the status of a partnership to accurately reflect that reality, is not a matter of policing or holding accountable, but of honesty. The interpretation and application of our Ecumenical Charter offered by your committee's memo to Synod 2024 would lead us to wonder what another church could do, if anything, that would lead to a change in their status. Such an application of the Charter (or to be specific, its Prelude) seems untenable.

We deeply lament the hurdles and consequences that would come out of a growing separation from the RCA. Consequences, however, arise out of actions. Where there is no longer a deep alignment on matters of faith, unity – especially to the extent of 'church-in-communion' – no longer truly exists. We in Iowa and South Dakota no longer recognize the RCA of 2025. Most of the brothers and sisters who we work together with in our local communities have left the RCA, and they have done so specifically because of commitments on human sexuality and biblical interpretation that we share.

As you consider your recommendations to Synod, we hope that you will bear these concerns in mind. The RCA of 2025 is not the RCA with whom we formed the so-called 'Pella Accord' in 2014. We urge you to let this reality, lamentable as it may be, be reflected in your decisions.

Appendix – Relevant Portion of EIRC 'Right-of-Comment' Memo to Synod 2024 Regarding Classis Iakota Overture 15

1. If the overture were adopted, the CRC would be going against its Ecumenical Charter

The preface to the CRC's 2019 Ecumenical Charter reads, in part, as follows:

Historically, ecumenical contacts of the CRC were exclusively with denominations in the Reformed tradition who shared the viewpoint that ecumenical partners assume responsibility for keeping each other confessionally Reformed. Not only did synods consult each other on important theological issues, but the one partner could hold the other partner accountable for deviations or practices that were considered to be objectionable.

The CRC has learned that requiring such uniformity for ecumenical relationships is no longer a meaningful option. The requirement that ecumenical partners think biblically, theologically, and confessionally like the CRC can soon make the circle of ecumenical relationships very small. Furthermore, such a demand for similar perspectives exposes the risk of being perceived as being theologically arrogant...

These changes in ecumenical relationships prompted Synod 2006 to revise its Ecumenical Charter. The Charter was revised again in 2010. The CRC is less insistent than it once was that

our ecumenical partners understand issues in the same way as those issues are understood in the CRC. The CRC does not endorse every position taken by ecumenical partners; nor do we need to (cf. Church Order Art. 50-c). Rather, the present understanding in ecumenical circles is that churches learn from each other and discuss differing perspectives. Ecumenical relationship can be built on common interests and commitments to the ministry of the gospel and the mission to which the gospel calls the whole Christian church...

Were Overture 15 to be adopted, the EIRC would have to operate contrary to this stance in the Ecumenical Charter, which would itself be a violation of Church Order Article 19-a: "Synod shall appoint a committee to encourage ecumenical relationships with other Christian churches, especially those that are part of the Reformed family, *as articulated in the synodically approved Ecumenical Charter of the Christian Reformed Church* so that that the Christian Reformed Church may exercise Christian fellowship with other denominations and may promote the unity of the church of Jesus Christ" (emphasis added).

Stated Clerk's Report – March 2025

Since the September 2024 meeting of classis, I have handled the following:

- Updated the Classical Rules of Procedure and the List of Classical Functionaries and posted them on our website, along with the minutes of the 9/17/24 classis meeting and a document giving the highlights of that meeting.
- Was in communication with Sarah Hoogendoorn whose request in July 2024 to be released from ministry in the CRCNA was inadvertently overlooked and therefore did not get acted on by Classis at our September 2024 meeting. See the CIC's report regarding the handling of this matter.
- Contacted Jeff Santema and Calvin CRC in Rock Valley about Jeff's license to exhort which needs to be renewed for another two years.
- Received and responded to many e-mails from individuals and/or churches who had a question about an ecclesiastical matter or want to bring a ministry-related matter to the attention of our classis.
- Communicated with the CIC about matters Classis Lakota needs to or might have to handle at the March meeting.
- Sent out a couple of reminders of our 3/4/24 meeting to the councils of our classis and other ministry leaders who give reports to classis.
- Gathered what was necessary for putting together the agenda for the 3/4/24 meeting.

Classis lakota Interim Committee Spring 2025 Report

Your Classis Interim Committee met on January 8, 2025 and corresponded regularly by email and phone to follow up on the work of the fall 2024 classis meeting and prepare for the spring 2025 classis meeting. Much of the work we did and the conversations we had is found throughout this agenda.

However, here are some of the highlights of our work that should be noted:

1. We discussed necessary elections at the March meeting and the stated clerk informed the CMT, the Finance Committee, and the Classical Safe Church Team that they needed to provide nominees for the impending vacancies on their respective teams/committees.
2. We discussed the vacancy of leadership on the Classical Safe Church Team following Tara Boer's resignation. The stated clerk received an update from Tara, including the recommendation that Abby Vanden Bosch replace her. This was communicated to the Classical Safe Church Team for their consideration.
3. We discussed necessary renewals of licensure to exhort and the stated clerk communicated to Jeff Santema and Calvin CRC that he would need to renew his license if he desired to continue exhorting.
4. We discussed the necessary processing of retirements from ordained ministry and the necessary actions of church councils and classis:
 - a. Gideon Wamala's final Sunday of service as minister was February 9, 2025. He will be retiring according to Church Order, article 18-a.
 - b. Rev. Dr. Jay Shim is also retiring according to Church Order, article 18-a.
5. We have assigned counselors for vacant churches:
 - a. Rock Rapids CRC, Rock Rapids: John Lee
 - b. Calvin CRC , Rock Valley: Kurt Monroe
 - c. Shaloms CRC, Sioux Falls: Drew Hoekema
6. The stated clerk informed us that he has been working on an updated version of the Rules for Classical Procedure to provide to churches. He will also remind them of the following decision that classis made at the September meeting: "Any officebearer who has an unresolved confessional difficulty gravamen is to recuse himself/herself from being delegated to broader assemblies (i.e. classical and/or synod) based on the decision of Synod 2024."
7. On behalf of classis lakota, the CIC approved the release of Rev. Sara Hoogendoorn from ministry in the CRC according to Church Order, article 14-b. We also acquired the necessary concurrence of synodical deputies. Approval of this report will constitute classis' approval of Rev. Hoogendoorn's release from ministry according Church Order, article 14-b.
8. We discussed other agenda items, including presentations from denominational agencies, that are present in the agenda.
9. The CIC also discussed potential overtures to classis for synod 2025.

Classical Mission Team Report

On December 17, 2024 the CMT met at Shalom CRC in Sioux Falls at 4:00 pm. All members were present: Gideon Wamala, Robyn Kelderman, Joel Kok, Rod Ledebouer, Gary Maas, Scott Van Voorst, Ivan Van Dusseldorp, and alternate Jack Gray.

Opening devotions were from Proverbs 3:3-6

Tyler Helpers gave an introduction and update on his work in South Africa with Resonate Global Mission

Scott prayed for the Helpers family and their work in South Africa.

Ron De Wit and Simplice Noutsougan shared about the ministry, Simdel Children's Ministry in Togo, West Africa. Ron shared requests on behalf of SIMDEL Children's Ministry:

1. Consideration of being part of Classis Iakota Evangelism Ministry
2. Consideration of being able to present at a Classis meeting.
3. Classis endorsement to contact and work with churches in Classis Iakota.

Gideon prayed for the work of SIMDEL Children's Educational Ministry.

A motion was made, supported, and approved to allow a representative from SIMDEL Children's Educational Ministry to present at the March 2025 Classis meeting.

A discussion took place on the potential for an additional CRC church on the west side of Sioux Falls.

Joel Kok closed in prayer

The CMT recently received a request from Inspiration Hills Bible camp to receive funding from the Classis in the amount of \$10,000. The CMT would like input from the Classis on how to respond to this request.

Robyn Kelderman recently informed us that she will no longer be able to serve on the CMT due to other commitments. She will be dearly missed, as she served as our secretary.

Respectively Submitted
Gary Maas - chairman

New Roots Ministry

Report for the Spring 2025 meeting of Classis Iakota

Thank-you, Classis Iakota, for your impactful support!

A growing outreach of New Roots Ministry is our relationships with new Americans who also happen to be of other faiths---Islam, Hinduism, and Buddhism. Sixteen months ago, we hired a person to be a part-time liaison, who especially makes connections with women and children. 80%+ of her connections have been with people who identify as Muslim. As our liaison teams up with our pastor/director, and with volunteers who help with practical programs like driver training for new American adults, friendships are developing, including often with people of other faiths, and within that, the Gospel is being shared.



Some Ethiopian Christians in Sioux Falls, especially those of the large Oromo tribe, were Muslim before coming to faith in Jesus. They can be effective as our teammates in reaching their own Oromo people, especially if they are healthy as churches. That has been a challenge for some Ethiopian congregations. There are now over 12 Ethiopian congregations, with many of them being less than 20 people. Church planting that occurs with the negative energy of division is often cause for a lack of growth. So, as has been a major priority for New Roots Ministry for its entire 17+ years, we seek to help the now 60+ churches of mostly new Americans in Sioux Falls to be healthy, which in part helps them to help us multiply Gospel outreach efforts. Our other ministries including education, mentoring, and workplace chaplaincy, also help with that.



Thank-you again, Classis Iakota! --- Fred Wilgenburg, New Roots Ministry

Finance Committee Report Classis Iakota March 4, 2025

The finance committee met 12/5/24. Treasurer Bob Van Ruler was absent with notice.

Highlights

- The Finance Committee is developing guidance for the care of its surplus funds. These include funds from the disbanding of Heartland CRC in Sioux Falls and Hope CRC in Rapid City. This will include guidance for interim investment of these funds and for the appropriate distribution of these funds.
- An audit of fiscal year 2024 is being conducted this winter and the committee intends to submit its findings to classis at this March 2025 meeting.
- A new email address is now in place to contact the Treasurer of Classis Iakota: **classisiakotatreasurer@gmail.com** Please alert your churches and update your address information. The address will also be posted on the Classis Iakota website.
- As noted by the Classical Ministry Team, Ms. Robyn Kelderman has stepped away from her duties to the CMT and thus also to the Finance Committee. Her service was valuable and we are grateful for her work.
- For the eligible position on our committee we recommend Mr. Darrel Raih for a second term. (See below.) His name has been forwarded to the stated clerk as a single nominee.
- Classis Iakota should take note that the Finance Committee serves as the point of contact for support offered to Lakeview CRC and its valuable ministries.
- The Finance Committee reflected on the recent requests Classis Iakota has received for the support of new ministry and mission causes. For the sake of clarity in procedure and judgment, the committee offers the following points for consideration.
 - a. The initial point of contact with Classis Iakota for organizations not affiliated with classis is the Stated Clerk and not with any committee of classis.
 - b. The Stated Clerk may help direct inquiries for new support of such organizations to an appropriate committee of classis. The Classical Interim Committee may assist the clerk to direct inquiries appropriately.

- c. As Classis Iakota considers support for a new ministry, mission, or organization, this question should be kept in mind: ***Is this a ministry of classis?*** That is, is there an obvious shared interest for supporting this ministry that ought to be accomplished by support shared through classical ministry share funding?

The Finance Committee urges classis to consider the weight of a shared interest and value when considering new requests. Many organizations in our classis (and beyond!) do fine work! When considering support, the committee feels it is important for classis to weigh not only the *quality* of the work done by that entity but also to weigh how the *scope* of that work fits into the broader context of regionally shared ministry. Classis, of course, weighs each opportunity for support on its own merit.

Recommendations

1. **That Classis Iakota accept the single nomination of Darrel Raih for a second term on the Finance Committee, March 2025-March 2028.**

Grounds

- a. **Mr. Raih has served well in the formation-stage of the committee.**
 - b. **Continuity remains an important consideration in this stage of the committee's work.**
 - c. **Mr. Raih is willing to serve another term.**
2. **That Classis Iakota receives the balance of this report as information and approves the work of its Finance Committee.**

Respectfully submitted,

Rev. Bob Drenten, Chairman
Darrel Raih
Eric Maas
Robyn Kelderman
Treasurer Bob Van Ruler, *ex officio*

Church Visitor Report – Classis Iakota
Sioux Center: First Christian Reformed Church
September 23, 2024

On the above date we met with the council of First Christian Reformed Church in Sioux Center. The meeting was announced to the church. The council had no matters to bring to our attention. Records of council business were available and in good order.

The council shared several joys their church experienced in the past year. They paid off their debt for their recent upgrade to their facilities, including a donation of 10% of that amount which was given to causes beyond First CRC. Their council was honored to provide two delegates from Classis Iakota to Synod 2024. The church donated a generous gift to Rock Valley Christian School toward their flood recovery expenses. Rev. Kurt Monroe regularly hosts soup suppers offering hospitality and conversation for interested Dordt University students. These are examples of the evident vital ministry of their church.

The past year was also marked by a challenge. Rev. Monroe pursued his desire to establish a classical academy to provide a new alternative for Christian day school education. This fostered misunderstanding and tension between the pastor and members of a church with a history of support

for Sioux Center Christian School. The council agrees that this matter now has largely been resolved. We made a point of commending the council and pastor for how they addressed this matter and for working hard to gain understanding and trust between the parties involved.

When asked, "What makes First CRC unique in the community of Sioux Center churches?" the council focused on their love of worship that draws from deep, historic liturgical traditions.

We commended the council for their spiritual leadership to First CRC.

Rev. Robert Drenten
Elder Rick De Boom
Church Visitors, Classis Iakota

Church Visitor Report – Classis Iakota
Sioux Center: Bethel Christian Reformed Church
October 21, 2024

On the above date we met with the council of Bethel Christian Reformed Church in Sioux Center. The meeting was announced to the church. The council had no matters to bring to our attention. Records of council business were available and in good order. Bethel CRC is an active, vibrant church. To that point, we kept our meeting within the allotted time to allow for a number of young people who followed our visit with their profession of faith conversation with the council. We thank God for the Spirit's work within their congregation.

We invited the council to tell us of the Lord's blessings they've experienced in the past year. Their responses included their gratitude for Sunday morning worship gatherings numbering around 800, the blessing of a gifted ministry staff, and the strong leadership of Rev. John Lee as their pastor. Most noteworthy in our visit was the news that Bethel Church has appointed two coordinators to launch Stephen Ministry congregational care support.

The council works to meet the challenge of spiritual care of the congregation. With Rev. Lee, Rev. Duane Tinklenberg cares for the many and varied needs of the church. Some of those challenges are taxing; the consistory is working hard to address some of the deeper hurts several of their membership carry.

We discovered that a high number of elders and deacons are serving in their office for the first time. Given the demands of ministry, we wondered who helped these new officebearers with experienced advice. The council takes time for training and shows a healthy spirit of teamwork. They are most grateful for the mentorship offered by members who served as elders and deacons in the past. The congregation's support for its council is evident.

Our visit assured us that the Lord is blessing Bethel CRC abundantly.

Rev. Robert Drenten
Elder Rick De Boom
Church Visitors, Classis Iakota

Classis Iakota
In session March 4, 2025
At the Covenant CRC, Sioux Center

As the **classical counselor** for the Inwood CRC, I remain informed of the activities of the search committee through their minutes. They continue to search for their next pastor and reach out to potential candidates. They continue to solicit suggestions of individuals to consider.

They are in contact with a number of potential candidates to discern availability to consider a call. A number of them do not feel they are at a place where they are able to consider a call at this time.

They continue to pray for wisdom from the Lord and encourage classis to continue to remember them in your prayers as well.

Respectfully Submitted,
Rev. David Heilman

REGIONAL PASTOR OF THE IAKOTA CHURCHES 3-4-2025

Of the eleven Iowa congregations in Classis Iakota, there are three which are presently vacant. Pastor Adam Eisenga at Inwood took a call to Michigan. Pastor Doug De Groot concluded ministry in Rock Rapids and Pastor Gideon Wamala had his farewell on February 16 at Calvin Rock Valley. Search teams are finding it difficult finding pastors, especially younger ones who are willing to lead two Sunday worship services.

Pastor Henry Lengkeek retired this fall after being part of a team ministry at Trinity, Rock Valley. Two of our pastor families, Dan & Mary De Groot and Gideon and Agnus Wamala have experienced virtually total devastation of their entire library, years of sermon notes and almost all of their possessions which were lost in the flood which overtook their area in Rock Valley. This has been a heavy burden which is beyond words.

My goal for this new year as regional pastor is to be in touch with each pastor. It's important and necessary to check the gauges on the dashboard of our vehicles. Likewise, there are times we should check the spiritual, physical and emotional gauges of the life of our pastors as well. The pastors are invited and also enjoy gathering for breakfast four times a year to share how God has blessed their ministry and what concerns they can lift up together to the Lord.

Classis Delegates. Please encourage your congregation to make it a priority to pray for your pastor. Pray fervently for his ministry and his family that God will use him to help you grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

David Smit

Classis Heartland & Iakota Safe Church Team Report Spring 2025

Prepared by: Tara Boer, Iakota & Heartland Safe Church Coordinator

Data Prepared: 01/29/2025

Iakota & Heartland Classical Safe Church Team Members: Heidi Van Roekel (Bethel CRC-Iakota), Pastor Jesse Walhof (Living Water CRC-Heartland), Kristi Habben (Sibley CRC-Heartland)

Classical Safe Church Team Tasks:

- The Safe Church Team serves in a consultative role for churches in the classes who are reviewing or revising congregational safe church policies. It is expected that all churches have an operating safe church policy and a safe church team within your church.
- The Safe Church Team serves as a resource for churches dealing with allegations of abuse.
- The Safe Church Team serves as a clearing house of best practices and periodic trainings for Classis Heartland and Classis Lakota with regard to abuse awareness and prevention.

Team Activity

Members of the safe church team continue to provide support and consultation to various churches in response to questions surrounding safe church policies and have provided guidance to leadership teams when making decisions concerning alleged misconduct. Pastor Henry Lengkeek and Tara Boer have retired from their roles on the Classical Safe Church team. Additionally, Heidi Van Roekel's term will be expiring in March.

Safe Church Team Recommendations

The Classical Safe Church team officially recommends Abby Vanden Bosch, a member of Living Water Community CRC in Sheldon, Iowa, to replace Tara. Abby is a clinical social worker and will have access to consultation with Tara as she adjusts to the position. No nominee has yet been found to replace Pastor Henry or Heidi.

The team asks all churches to review and update their safe church policies each year and seek consultation if assistance is needed. Additionally, if any allegations of misconduct surface in your church, it is advised that the safe church representatives in your church be involved with additional support provided by this team. Please do not hesitate to contact a member of our committee if you would like to talk about any safe church needs your church may have. You may communicate with any committee member or contact Tara directly at 712-898-6468 (cell) or tara.boer@dordt.edu.

Current Team Members

Heidi Van Roekel: mhvanroekel@hotmail.com

Pastor Jesse Walhof: jsswalhof@gmail.com

Kristi Habben: khabben@premieronline.net

World Renew DRS NW Iowa flood response – Overview

- JUNE:** Supporting churches in NW Iowa provide immediate help with emergency lodging and supplies
- JUNE:** Fund-raising appeals for the WR response are publicized
- JUNE/JULY:** Initial planning conversations between DRS and local representatives
- JULY:** Rapid Response Cleanup crew in Hawarden, operating out of Maurice Reformed and coordinated by Hawarden city leadership. Two-week deployment. Michigan volunteers alongside local Iowa volunteers.
- AUGUST:** DRS Director Bob Laarman and Program Manager Chris Gibson met in-person with local churches, Lakota WR representative, pastors, recovery organization and government officials
- AUGUST:** DRS Cleanup Team #2 works with Samaritan's Purse in Spencer for 10 days.
- AUGUST-JANUARY AND ONGOING:** DRS planning/organizing with local volunteer leadership in Rock Valley, Hawarden, and Rock Rapids

SEPTEMBER-PRESENT: DRS discussions and planning with Long Term Recovery Organization (LTRO) based in Rock Valley.

SEPTEMBER: Local volunteer leadership begins some high priority repairs

OCTOBER: DRS tool trailer and supplies provided to local volunteer leadership for their use

NOVEMBER: Volunteer recruitment planning begins

DECEMBER/JANUARY: DRS discussions with Spencer, IA Long Term Recovery Organization

DECEMBER: Some individual/local volunteers are scheduled through local LTRO and begin working on needs

JANUARY: Unmet Needs Assessment team meets with impacted households in Hawarden, Rock Valley, and Rock Rapids

FEBRUARY: Unmet Needs Assessment team scheduled in Spencer, IA

MARCH-JUNE (AND FOLLOWING): One week church and college groups work in the area based in Sioux and Lyon counties

MARCH AND FOLLOWING: Discussions and planning on possible response in Spencer

One week group work teams can be scheduled through the World Renew DRS office by contacting:
Anna Scholma, Groups Program Admin Assistant: ascholma@worldrenew.net or
Chris Gibson, Groups Program Manager: cgibson@worldrenew.net

Daily/occasional and local individuals can be scheduled through Long Term Recovery Organization in Rock Valley by contacting: GerryKorver@gmail.com

World Renew Brief Annual Summary 2023-2024

-  **559,987 participants** worldwide were equipped to make change through our community development and disaster response initiatives.
-  **305,218 people received critical humanitarian aid** in 21 countries, including Ukraine, Syria, Lebanon, South Sudan, and Madagascar. Your support brought bold hope and unrelenting love to communities experiencing crisis.
-  **156,224 farmers enhanced their families' food security** with tools, training, and support to help them grow more nutritious food. When farmers thrive, entire communities flourish.
-  **126,710 community members improved their health** and nutrition through our health programs. Families are gaining the knowledge and resources they need to thrive.
-  **135,309 participants accessed economic opportunities** through savings and loans groups, skills training, and small business programs. Together, we're helping families build lasting financial stability.
-  **154,567 people engaged in peace and justice programs**, working toward reconciliation and advocating for fairness in their communities. Your support is fostering unity and healing in places that need it most.

Sioux Falls Care Committee
Classis Iakota
Report to Classis regarding Shalom CRC

The Classis Iakota Care team began their work with Shalom CRC following the special Classis meeting of June, 2024. The committee was made up of Rev. Bob Pollema, Rev. Matthew Haan and Dr. Dayton Vogel.

The Classis care team met with the leadership of Shalom CRC on five occasions to walk through the step-by-step process laid out for discernment for their fellowship in calling a new pastor. The meeting dates and related steps include:

Aug. 20, 2020: discovery, history “How did Shalom get here?”

Sept. 19, 2024: discernment

Oct. 15, 2024: discipline to discipleship, development of leadership

Nov. 20, 2024: direction of the church, interim ministry considerations

Jan. 15, 2024: destination, possible formation of Shalom search committee

Throughout the process the Executive team and Council of Shalom provided a demonstration of willing and capable leadership. The care team and Shalom leadership worked in a collaborative manner with a willingness to explore both the strengths of the church and the barriers that had been encountered. The work carried out throughout the series of meetings covered the topics necessary to arrive at the destination of being prepared to search for Shalom’s next pastor.

Honest conversations, regarding the history leading to separation with encouragement to look into the future began the process. Beginning with the Executive team and later the Council, Shalom engaged in a visioning exercise to shape a definition “who” Shalom is as a church. The leadership of Shalom initiated small group meetings with the congregation to share and listen to members regarding the challenges and on-going need for healing. There appears to be a genuine excitement in the gifts of staff and members to move in the direction identified by the visioning exercise.

The Classis Care team unanimously concur with the overwhelmingly positive vote of Shalom’s council to form a search committee tasked to find their next pastor. **Pending a final vote at Classis, Shalom is encouraged to begin the formation of their search committee.** The Classis Care team will continue to walk with Shalom CRC, in partnership with the Church counselor and church visitor, until a new pastor is hired.

Respectfully submitted,

Rev. Bob Pollema,
Rev. Matthew Haan
Dr. Dayton Vogel

Overture to Classis lakota

Faith CRC overtures Classis to have The Classes Interim Committee create, curate, and maintain a list of six to eight individuals who have the skill and desire to run classes meetings on a rotational basis.

Grounds:

Too often a person, who does not possess the gifts necessary to run an effective Classis meeting, is met with derision and condescension. There seems to be limited patience for their mistakes and lack of knowledge at times. This is compounded by the meeting time crunch creating a group tension.

There are those who are skilled in this area, enjoy this work and run classis meetings well and efficiently. So let us allow them to use the gifts God has given them. The rest of us will still come to classis and all of us will enjoy it a whole lot more.