

Classis Iakota
MINUTES
March 2, 2021
Faith CRC – Sioux Center, IA

Art. 3581: The meeting begins with a time of worship being led by Cliff Hoekstra, one of the pastors of the host church. There is the singing of “Praise to the Lord, the King of Creation” and “Ten Thousand Reasons,” followed by the reading of portions of Acts 15. Pastor Hoekstra then shares some thoughts on this passage, stressing the importance of the gospel message serving as the necessary foundation for the church when dealing with difficult issues. He concludes our time of worship with a prayer for God’s guidance.

Art. 3582: Presentation of Credentials and Roll Call

<u>Churches</u>	<u>Ministers</u>	<u>Elders</u>	<u>Deacons</u>
Corsica	Scott Nichols*	Gordon Feenstra	Richard Borderwyck
Harrison	Gary Maas	LeRoy Lefers	Clayton Vanden Hoek*
Inwood	Adam Eisenga	Glenn Vande Vegte	Doug Vanden Bosch*
New Holland	John Gorter	Darcy Jongejeugd	Dillon Munneke*
Platte	Drew Hoekema	Ken Overweg	Mike Buitenbos*
Rapid City – Hope		Jerry Vanden Bos	David Phelps*
Rock Rapids	Doug De Groot	Byron Vande Weerd	
Rock Valley – Calvin	Gideon Wamala	James Vande Kerk	David Kats*
Rock Valley – First	Matthew Haan	Elmer Boon*	Tyler Den Boer*
Rock Valley – Trinity	Henry Lengkeek	Brad Van Heuvelen	Zach Eckardt*
Amistad Christiana			
Sioux Center – Bethel	John Lee	Herm Van Den Hul	Jon Meverink*
Sioux Center – Bridge of Hope		Glen Boer	Desiree Coulander*
		Tim Van Soelen	
Sioux Center – Covenant	Joel Kok	Jeff Ploegstra*	Kris Vander Plaats*
Sioux Center – Faith	Bob Pollema	Ryan Van Beek	Trevor Mouw
Sioux Center – First	Kurt Monroe	Tim Klein	Joel Van Otterloo*
Sioux Center – Lebanon		Verlyn Dekkers	Al Van Wyhe*
		Wayne Dekkers	
Sioux Falls – Cornerstone Prison		Gordon Dyk	
Sioux Falls – First	Cal Hoogendoorn	Dave Rozenboom	Matt Van Zee*
Sioux Falls – Shalom	Kyle De Young	Brooke Heethuis*	Pam Ten Napel*
Valentine – Lakeview	Mark Langenbach	Gary Peters	

*Indicates first time delegates who signed the Covenant for Officebearers

Art. 3583: Classis is declared constituted by Henry Lengkeek, the Chairperson of the day, with the following councils having recorded their protest of the seating of women delegates, seeing this as a violation of the Word of God: New Holland CRC, Platte CRC, Calvin Rock Valley CRC, First Rock Valley CRC. John Lee serves as Vice-chair and Bernie Haan as Clerk for the meeting.

Art. 3584: The Chair welcomes the delegates and visitors. The Chair appoints Kurt Monroe to handle the prayer concerns, and he appoints the delegates from First Sioux Falls CRC to serve as the Credentials and Article 41 Committee. Items on the Credentials are shared with the delegates and then given to the Committee of the Day.

Art. 3585: The Chair notes the time schedule for the day (9-11:45, lunch, 1-3:15, coffee, 3:30-).

Art. 3586: Prior to acting on the overtures to synod which have been presented by various councils, the Chair gives John Lee, as the classical representative on the Council of Delegates, the opportunity to explain the reasoning behind the COD’s cancelling of Synod 2021. He also presents the various options with regard to handling the overtures.

Art. 3587: The overtures from First Rock Valley CRC (see Agenda, p. 2) and First Sioux Center CRC (see Agenda, pp. 3-4) regarding the synodical committee report on human sexuality are presented.

- A. Matthew Haan speaks on behalf of the First Rock Valley council, explaining their overture and then stating that they are okay with classis picking either their overture or the one from First Sioux Center CRC.
- B. Kurt Monroe speaks on behalf of the First Sioux Center council.
- C. **Motion** to consider the overture from First Sioux Center CRC over against the overture from First Rock Valley CRC. *-Adopted*
- D. **Motion** to send the following overture from First Sioux Center CRC to Synod 2022:
That Synod 2022 accede to recommendations A through F of the Committee to Articulate a Foundation-laying Biblical Theology of Human Sexuality.
Grounds:
 - 1. The study report provides doctrinal clarity in faithfulness to God’s Word that will reduce the theological hear which plagues our denomination so that our pastoral warmth and witness to the world might increase.
 - 2. The study report provides the doctrinal and confessional clarity necessary to maintain not only the unity of the CRCNA, but also the CRCNA’s unity with the catholic and apostolic church of all times and places.
 - 3. The study throughout is a helpful invitation to Christian discipleship as a covenant community, calling each of us to submit our sexuality to Christ’s call to daily take up our cross (Luke 9:23), die to our sinful nature (Colossians 3:5), and embrace the mutual accountability we share as member of Christ’s body (Hebrews 3:13).
- E. **Motion** to table the motion above. *-Adopted*

Art. 3588: The overture from First Rock Valley CRC regarding a separation process for non-compliant churches (see Agenda, pp. 2-3) is presented.

- A. Matthew Haan speaks on behalf of the First Rock Valley council.
- B. After some friendly amendments to the overture, **Motion** to send the following overture from First Rock Valley CRC to Synod 2022:
That Synod 2022 give Neland Avenue CRC and all like-minded churches who desire to read, think and live outside of the confessional nature and bounds of authoritative scripture the option to be allowed a one-time six-month window to resign their membership from the denomination with their assets including church property at the vote of their individual bodies.
Grounds:
 - 1. It is clear both from the persistent actions of Neland Avenue CRC and of the lack of oversight of Classis Grand Rapids East, that there is no longer a way forward in conversation if we cannot read the holy Scriptures in mutual agreement.
 - 2. It is the unfortunate consequence of those affirming same sex marriage to have broken covenant in this way with the body of the CRC and the living and historical church universal. By her actions Neland Avenue CRC is not only disagreeing with the decisions of synod but also showing disregard for the decisions of synod.
 - 3. In this way a resignation of membership can occur without the need for further church discipline to proceed.
 - 4. This act of mutual separation will allow for healing to take place within both the majority body that remains and those who are now freed to live and minister as they have already deemed fit.

-Adopted

Art. 3589: The overture from Calvin Rock Valley CRC (see Agenda, p. 22) regarding the action taken by the Neland Avenue CRC in Grand Rapids, Michigan, is presented.

- A. Gideon Wamala speaks on behalf of the Calvin Rock Valley council.
- B. **Motion** to change this from an overture to a communication to be sent to the COD.

-Adopted

- C. **Motion** to send this communication to the COD and the program committee for synod after the CIC and the Calvin Rock Valley council make some revisions based on suggestions made during the deliberation of this matter at the classis meeting (see the final version below).

-Adopted

We, Classis Iakota, ask the Council of Delegates to use their oversight and all permitted disciplinary means to bring Neland Avenue CRC back to the teachings of God's Word and our shared commitment to synod's decisions of 1973, 2002 and 2016 regarding this congregation installing a practicing homosexual in the office of deacon.

Our covenanted understanding of God's Word forbids all sexual relations outside of one man being married to one woman. There are many warnings to all who break or abuse the covenant of marriage and God labels such sin as sexual immorality and we should flee from it (1 Corinthians 6:18). We urge the Council of Delegates to address this matter and Neland Avenue CRC to confess their sin, reverse their decision, be forgiven and restored to grace.

While we recognize the normative role of synod in adjudicating such matters, it is necessary for the Council of Delegates to act pastorally on this in the interim of synod in light of the extraordinary cancellation of synod 2020 and 2021. Intervention is needed to preserve the unity and integrity of God's church, its witness to the church catholic, and to lower denominational anxiety as we seek healthy dialogue around the report to synod 2022 of the Christian Reformed Church's Committee to Articulate a Foundation-Laying Biblical Theology of Human Sexuality. God's Word calls us to admonish one another as we together seek to stay in step with the Spirit. Ongoing tolerance of Neland Avenue's unilateral action makes that journey as a denomination unnecessarily fraught, undermining the environment we need to engage in humble dialogue, which can further harm the most vulnerable among us.

Art. 3590: Minn-I-Kota Youth Ministry Report is given by Lee De Groot (see Agenda, p. 14).

- A. Lee De Groot shares some testimonials of favorite memories and Bible verses from some graduates of various youth groups in our classis.
- B. The Chair commends this ministry for its ongoing work within our region.

Art. 3591: The Classical Safe Church Team report is presented by Tara Boer (see Agenda, p 15).

- A. Tara Boer is given an extended amount of time to share with the delegates basic information regarding factors that constitute abuse and what the church can do to prevent it and respond to it when it does occur. The churches are encouraged to use the Circle of Grace curriculum for which the Safe Church Team can provide training.
- B. **Motion** to approve the work of this ministry within our region

-Adopted

Art. 3592: The Lakeview CRC council submits a request on behalf of their pastor, Rev. Mark Langenbach (see Agenda, pp. 4-7)

- A. **Motion** to grant the request of the Lakeview CRC council that Rev. Mark Langenbach, at his request, be honorably released from ministry in the CRCNA in accordance with Church Order Article 14-c.

Grounds:

1. Rev. Langenbach states that during his service as a pastor since graduating in 2013 the weekly sermon preparation and writing has been very difficult for him, resulting in much stress and anxiety in his life as a husband, father, and pastor.
 2. After much discernment, Rev. Langenbach states that a position that would focus on his business education and administrative skills would be more suitable for him. This was affirmed through a Vocational Ministry Assessment provided by Pastor Church Resources.
 3. Upon being offered the position of Business Manager for the Cascade Christian Church, a Disciples of Christ church in Grand Rapids, Michigan, Rev. Langenbach has accepted that offer, seeing this as God's way of providing him to work and minister in ways that come more naturally to him.
 4. Having weighed Rev. Langenbach's reasons for being released from ministry in the Christian Reformed Church, the Council of Lakeview Christian Reformed Church have given their blessing to his decision. *-Adopted*
- B. The Synodical Deputies (Brad Meinders, Roger Sparks, and Todd Zuidema) concur with the decision of classis.
- C. Joel Kok offers an intercessory prayer of thanks to God and guidance from God for Mark Langenbach and his wife, Dawn, who are standing at Joel's side.

Art. 3593: Opportunity is given for Todd Zuidema, the director of Church Relations for Dordt University, to extend greetings, express thanks to classis for their on-going financial support, invite the pastors to a pastor's luncheon, and offer himself for pulpit supply.

Art. 3594: The Stated Clerk's Report (see Agenda, p. 8) is presented.

- A. Bernie Haan reminds those present that Classis Iakota has a website which can easily be accessed to provide needed information regarding past decisions made at classis meetings, current classical functionaries, the classical rules of procedure, and financial forms for church treasurers.
- B. **Motion** to approve the work of the Stated Clerk *-Adopted*

Art. 3595: The Classical Interim Committee Report is presented (see Agenda, pp. 8-9).

- A. Matthew Haan highlights the fact that a classical finance team is now in place and had an initial organizational meeting.
- B. **Motion** to approve the work of the Classical Interim Committee *-Adopted*

Art. 3596: Classical Home Missions Team Report is presented by Drew Hoekema (see Agenda, p. 9)

- **Motion** to approve the work of the Classical Home Missions Committee *-Adopted*

Art. 3597: Classical Ministerial Leadership Team Report is given by Doug De Groot (see Agenda, pp. 10-12).

- A. Motion to approve the recommendation of the CMLT that AJ Funk, who plans to attend Western Theological Seminary, receive \$8,000 in support for the 2021-2022 academic year. *-Adopted*
- B. **Motion** to approve the work of the Classical Ministerial Leadership Team *-Adopted*

Art. 3598: The Church Visitor report included in the agenda (p. 13) is noted.

- **Motion** to approve the work of the Church Visitors *-Adopted*

Art. 3599: Church Counselor Reports

- A. A written report is given from John Gorter, the counselor for Corsica CRC. (Agenda, p. 21)
- B. An oral report is given from Bernie Haan, the counselor for Cornerstone Prison Church.
- C. An oral report is given from Joel Kok, the counselor for Bridge of Hope Ministries.
- D. An oral report is given from Drew Hoekema, the counselor for Hope CRC in Rapid City.
- E. An oral report is given from Duane Tinklenberg, the counselor for the Lebanon CRC.
- F. **Motion** to approve the work of the Church Counselors **-Adopted**

Art. 3600: Regional Pastors Report

- A. Dave Smit, the regional pastor for the pastors in the Iowa churches, gives an oral report regarding the role of the Regional Pastor.
- B. **Motion** to approve the work of the Regional Pastors **-Adopted**

Art. 3601: The Classical Treasurer's Report is given by Robert Van Ruler

- A. The Treasurer's Report for 2020 is distributed and various items in the report are noted.
- B. **Motion** to approve the work of the Classical Treasurer **-Adopted**

Art. 3602: Council of Delegates Report is given by John Lee, who shares some of the highlights from the February meeting of the COD.

Art. 3603: The reports from Calvin Theological Seminary (Agenda, pp. 16-18) and Resonate Global Mission (Agenda, pp. 18-19) are noted by the Chair.

Art. 3604: The Credentials and Article 41 committee gives their report.

- The Council of the New Holland CRC requests classis to approve the retirement of Pastor John Gorter as of July 31, 2021 due to age. **Motion** to approve this request. **-Adopted**

Art. 3605: The report of the Article 17 Oversight Team regarding Paul Birnbaum is given.

- A. Joel Kok speaks on behalf of the team.
- B. **Motion** to approve the recommendation of the oversight team to declare Paul Birnbaum eligible for call, with the following grounds:
 1. Paul has sought and benefitted from counseling in the form of meeting with a spiritual director.
 2. Paul has engaged in fruitful self-reflection and reading to strengthen his gifts for ministry.
 3. Paul has felt led to explore chaplaincy as a form of ministry suitable for his gifts.
 4. Paul has been offered and accepted a position as a part-time chaplain at Monument Health Rapid City Hospital, and they have indicated that in the near future a full-time position will be available for him.
 5. This specific chaplaincy position fits not only Paul's gifts for ministry but also his family situation. He and his wife Sarah have three children, two nearing the end of High School, one in Elementary
 6. Paul has received encouragement from Rev. Sarah Roelofs regarding chaplaincy as a calling. Sarah has begun a provisional approval process for Paul, which will include consultation with Joel Kok, who is the pastor at the congregation that now holds Paul's ministerial credentials.
 7. Paul has felt led by the Lord to continue his ministerial calling within the Christian Reformed Church.

-Adopted

Art. 3606: The report of the Article 17 Oversight Team regarding Joel De Boer as given in the Agenda (p. 2) is noted: this committee wrapped up its work and Joel accepted the opportunity to serve Bunde (MN) CRC in an interim capacity for 1 year which started in November 2020.

Art. 3607: No report was given from the Ad Hoc Committee to study the feasibility of another classical diaconal ministry.

Art. 3608: Elections/action renders the following results:

- A. Stated Clerk – Bernie Haan
- B. Classical Home Missions Team Clergy Member – Gideon Wamala
- C. Classical Ministerial Leadership Team Clergy Member – Kurt Monroe
- D. Classical Ministerial Leadership Team Lay Member – Orlan Gulker
- E. Classical Ministerial Leadership Team Alternate Lay Member – vacant
- F. Safe Church Clergy Member – Henry Lengkeek
- G. Synodical Deputy – Cliff Hoekstra
- H. Alternate Synodical Deputy – Dan De Groot

Art. 3609: Chairperson Henry Lengkeek thanks Faith Sioux Center CRC for their hospitality and thanks the delegates for their gracious attention and spirit of unity.

Art. 3610: **Motion** to adjourn.

-Adopted

Art. 3611: Kurt Monroe offers a closing prayer and leads the delegates in the singing of “Praise God from Whom All Blessings Flow.”

Rev. Bernie Haan
Stated Clerk