

**Classis lakota**  
**AGENDA**  
**March 3, 2020, 9:00 A.M.**  
**First Christian Reformed Church of Sioux Center, Iowa**  
**Rev. John Gorter, Chair                      Rev. Drew Hoekema, Vice-Chair**

**I. INITIAL BUSINESS**

- A. Opening Devotions (host church)
- B. Presentation of Credentials & Roll Call
- C. Signing of the Covenant for Officebearers by first-time delegates
- D. Declaration that Classis is constituted.
- E. Welcome to delegates and other attendees
- F. Adoption of time schedule: 9:00-11:45; lunch; 1:00-3:15; coffee time; 3:30-
- G. Appointment of Committees for the Day
  - 1. Review of Credentials and Art. 41
  - 2. Prayer Concerns
  - 3. Tally Committee (provided by host church)

**II. READING OF INSTRUCTIONS AND OVERTURES**

- A. Sharing of items on the Classical Credentials
- B. Overture from First Sioux Falls CRC Regarding Diaconal Ministry (p. 2)
- C. Overture from First Sioux Falls CRC Regarding Finance Ministry (p. 3)

**III. COLLOQUIUM DOCTUM:** a doctrinal conversation with Dr. Justin Bailey

- Some biographical information (pp.3-4)
- Endorsement from the Classical Ministerial Leadership Team (pp. 4-5)
- A. Introduction by Covenant CRC of Sioux Center
- B. Inquiry into the applicant's "soundness of doctrine, sanctity of life, and knowledge and appreciation of Christian Reformed Church practice and usage" (Church Order Supplement, Article 8, E. 4.)
- C. Procedure for admitting the applicant (similar to that of a candidate)

**IV. STANDING COMMITTEE REPORTS**

- |   |                              |
|---|------------------------------|
| A. Stated Clerk (p. 6)                    | F. Church Counselors         |
| B. Interim Committee (p.7)                | G. Regional Pastors (p. 14)  |
| C. Home Missions Team (p. 8-9)            | H. Minn-I-Kota Youth (p. 15) |
| D. Ministerial Leadership Team (pp.10-12) | I. Safe Church Team (p. 16)  |
| E. Church Visitors (p. 13)                | J. Classical Treasurer       |

**V. ELECTIONS/NOMINATIONS**

- A. Stated Clerk Alternate—Rev. J. Gray has completed his first term
- B. CHMT Clergy member—Rev. D. Hoekema has completed his first term
- C. CHMT Lay member—Mr. G. Dyk has completed his first term
- D. CMLT Clergy member—Rev. A. Eisenga has completed Rev. D. De Graaf's first term
- E. Election of delegates to Synod: minister via rotation (Rev. John Lee); one minister delegate via election; one elder delegate, one deacon delegate

**VI. CLASSICAL/REGIONAL REPRESENTATIVES TO SYNODICAL BOARDS**

- |   |                               |
|---|-------------------------------|
| A. Calvin College                                   | D. Faith Formation Ministries |
| B. Calvin Theological Seminary (p. 17)              | E. Resonate Global Mission    |
| C. Council of Delegates                             | F. World Renew                |
| • Dr. Steve Timmermans, CRCNA<br>Executive Director |                               |

## VII. COMMITTEES OF THE DAY REPORTS

- A. Art. 41 Committee
- B. Varia

## VIII. SMALL GROUP “CHURCH VISITING” (p. 18): ACTION ITEM—PLEASE TAKE NOTE OF THIS!

## IX. CLOSING BUSINESS

- A. Next Meeting – September 15, 2020
  - B. Concluding Remarks (chairperson)
  - C. Closing Prayer
  - D. Adjournment
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## OVERTURE TO CLASSIS IAKOTA DIACONAL MINISTRY

### OBSERVATION

The September 17, 2019, discussion regarding Classical 2020 Ministry Shares, particularly the stated concerns about the reallocation of funds currently assigned to the former Siouxland Diaconal Conference, seemed to reveal a desire to explore the continuation of some form of sustainable and accountable diaconal ministry.

The First CRC Council, Sioux Falls, SD, believes the following Overture (2 recommendations) is an attempt to help Classis to continue to support, encourage and develop Christ-centered diaconal ministry.

### RECOMMENDATIONS

The First Christian Reformed Church, Sioux Falls, SD, overtures Classis to:

1. Appoint an Ad Hoc Committee from among the members of Classis Iakota to study the feasibility and focus of establishing a new ministry similar to that exercised by the Siouxland Diaconal Conference (SDC).

#### Grounds

- Classis seemed to express disappointment at the closing of the SDC and a desire to see some form of the ministry continue
- Diaconal ministry should continue to be cultivated and encouraged locally, regionally and globally

2. Discontinue the current Siouxland Diaconal Conference Classical Ministry Share:

#### Grounds

- When a ministry is discontinued, the previously requested ministry share should be discontinued. Such a decision honors the nature of the ministry share requests, the members of Classis who provide ministry shares, and the standards of fiscal trust.
- When a new diaconal ministry is established it is then once again appropriate to request ministry share support.

Respectfully Submitted

The Council  
First Christian Reformed Church, Sioux Falls, SD  
November 2019

## **OVERTURE TO CLASSIS IAKOTA FINANCE MINISTRY**

### **OBSERVATION**

The September 17, 2019, discussion and subsequent decision of Classis Iakota regarding Classical Ministry Shares for 2020, the concerns about the reallocation of funds currently assigned to the former Siouxland Diaconal Conference, and the discussion about the need for a unified budget (Minutes of 9/17/19 Meeting, Article 3506:A.1.2), is best interpreted as a request for the implementation of appropriate lines of authority and fiscal trust for responsible ministry practice.

The First CRC Council, Sioux Falls, SD, believes the following recommendations (overture) is an attempt to help steer Classis in a good direction.

### **RECOMMENDATIONS**

The First Christian Reformed Church, Sioux Falls, SD, overtures Classis to:

1. Form a Classical Finance Committee mandated to submit at each Fall meeting of Classis a unified annual Ministry Share budget.

#### Grounds

- Classis is well served to have a single unified annual budget as noted in the initial recommendation of the Classical Home Missions Committee (Agenda if 9/17/19 Meeting, p.5)
- Standing committees of Classis are accountable directly to Classis and no standing committee is to be under the supervision of another standing committee

2. Adopt the following boundaries and expectations for the Finance Committee: [a] committee will be comprised of between 3 to 5 able members of Classis and the Classis Treasurer (in an ex officio capacity); [b] committee members may not serve on other standing committees in order to avoid conflict of interest; and [c] Ministry Share requests are to be submitted by June 30 of each year.

#### Ground

- Classis is well served to establish the legitimate boundaries of membership before the selection of individuals to serve

Respectfully Submitted

The Council  
First Christian Reformed Church, Sioux Falls, SD  
November 2019

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## **Some Biographical Information Regarding Dr. Justin Bailey**

### **EDUCATION**

- Ph.D. Fuller Seminary
- Th.M. Trinity Evangelical Divinity School
- M.Div. Trinity Evangelical Divinity School
- B.A. Moody Bible Institute

### **OVERVIEW**

I work at the intersection of Christian theology, culture, and ministry. Having served as a pastor in a number of diverse settings, my work as a professor explores the ways that culture shapes the practice of Christian faith, as well as the ways that the Christian imagination shapes believers to participate in culture. My research seeks to bridge gaps between church and academy, exploring the formational

spaces where they overlap. As a theology professor at Dordt, I resonate deeply with Dordt's task and calling to provide an academically rigorous and culturally engaged education, shaped deeply by the Reformed theological vision.

#### AREAS OF INTEREST

Cultural hermeneutics, Imaginative apologetics, Protestant aesthetics, Spiritual Formation, Technology and Media, Faith and Doubt

#### COURSES TAUGHT

- Kingdom, Identity, and Calling
- Biblical Foundations
- Biblical Study Methods
- New Testament Letters
- Teaching the Bible
- Spiritual Formation
- Gospel, Church, and Culture
- Theology and Popular Culture
- Leadership for Discipleship and Formation
- Aesthetics: Beauty, Desire, and Imagination

Justin has been at Dordt for three years. While completing his Ph.D. before coming to Dordt, Justin served as Pastoral Assistant for Teaching and Discipleship at Grace Pasadena Church (PCA) in California and as an adjunct professor at Fuller Theological Seminary.

Justin's wife, Melissa, works as the VP for Marketing for a medical supply company and serves as an elder at Covenant CRC in Sioux Center. Justin and Melissa have two children, Benjamin (9) and Sophia (8).

### **Classis Ministerial Leadership Team (CMLT) Recommendation Form: Article 8**

**Applicant's Name:** Bailey      Justin      Ariel  
Last/Family      First      Middle

**This applicant was interviewed by the CMLT of Classis Iakota on 2019      October      8**  
Classis Name      Year      Month      Day

#### **Statement of Need**

c.f. CRC Church Order Supplement Article 8 E.4:

The need for calling a minister of another denomination shall be acknowledged when:

- a. The minister to be called has such extraordinary qualifications that the church recognizes that it would be important for the denomination to acquire his service, or,
- b. The need of a particular congregation for a pastor is so urgent that it can be met only by calling a minister from another denomination, or,
- c. The minister is a new-church developer and is being called to start a new church, or,
- d. There is a need for indigenous leadership in a multicultural or ethnic minority church.

(Note also the rest of C.O. Supplement Article 8 E and F)

1. Please describe and reflect on the "need factor" with reference to this applicant:

*The minister to be called has such extraordinary qualifications that the church recognizes that it would be important for the denomination to acquire his service.*

2. Summarize what you believe are the applicant's strengths and/or gifts for ministry.

*Dr. Bailey evidences gifts of the Holy Spirit consistent with the calling of ministers of the Word who serve as pastors of congregations: preaching the Word, administering the sacraments, conducting public worship services, catechizing youth, training members for Christian service, exercising pastoral care, engaging in and promoting the work of evangelism and diaconal outreach.*

3. Summarize the areas that you believe the applicant could still grow in order to become even more effective in ministry.

*Dr. Bailey could still grow in his understanding of the history and polity of the CRCNA and in the history and context of the local CRCNA, which he has done and continues to do.*

4. What motivates the applicant's desire to become a Minister of the Word in the Christian Reformed Church?

*Dr. Bailey is motivated to become a minister of the Word in the CRCNA by a desire to further serve the local church(es) and by a desire to be open to the possibility of God calling him to further ministry within the church, such as serving as a pastor of a congregation.*

5. What previous ministry experience does the applicant have? Attach a separate piece of paper if necessary.

*Dr. Bailey's previous ministry experience is well-documented in the other initial documents of the Article 8 affiliation process.*

6. Has the applicant begun work in a CRC setting as "stated supply?" ☐ Yes ☒ No

If "Yes," when does the position begin and where will it be?

*However, he did serve Bethel CRC of Sioux Center, Iowa admirably during Pastor John Lee's sabbatical in the summer of 2018.*

**(Note: Licensure to Preach under Article 8 is granted by the Candidacy Committee in consultation with the Classis after the submission of the initial documents in the Article 8 affiliation process.)**

7. When does the applicant anticipate completing the requirements of the Modified Ecclesiastical Program for Ministerial Candidacy? (and has the CMLT begun discussions with the Candidacy Committee regarding this program?)

*Dr. Bailey anticipates completing the requirements of the MEPMC prior to an anticipated colloquium doctum at the March 3, 2020 meeting of Classis Iakota. Our CMLT has no requirements for Dr. Bailey beyond those of the Candidacy Committee.*

### **Endorsement**

Do you, the CMLT, recommend the applicant for pursuit of Christian ministry in the CRC?

☒ Yes, without reservation

☐ Yes, with reservation (elaborate on a separate piece of paper)

☐ No, we do not recommend (elaborate on a separate piece of paper)

## STATED CLERK REPORT – MARCH 2020

Since the September 2019 meeting of classis, I have handled the following:

- Upon receiving the written minutes and a summary of the 9/17/19 classis meeting from Rev. Stanley Grootthof, who served well as the Stated Clerk pro tem for that meeting, they were distributed to the appropriate groups and individuals, as well as added to our website: [www.classisiakota.org](http://www.classisiakota.org)
- Received and responded to 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
- Redesigned the Classical Rules of Procedure to make it easier to read and find the subject matter the reader is looking for.
- Received approval from the CIC to attend a Stated Clerk's Gathering in Southern California on January 8-10. Below are some of the matters presented and discussed at this gathering:
  - Reminder of the place and role of classis in our denomination
  - Navigating the application of decisions made by synod regarding abuse of power
  - What to expect with regard to the change in the approach to ministry shares
  - The top 10 Church Order questions/issues the past few years as presented by Rev. Kathy Smith, Professor of Church Polity at Calvin Theological Seminary
  - How to function more effectively as a stated clerk
  - The new "Connections" program through Faith Formation Ministries
- Sent out reminders of our 3/3/20 meeting to the councils of our classis and other ministry leaders who give reports to classis
- Sent out reminders to Dr. John Kok, Mr. Barry Miedema, and Mr. Jeff Santema, as well as to their respective overseeing councils, that their two-year licenses to exhort are due to expire at our 3/3/20 classis and invited them to extend their licenses for another two years.
- Sent out messages to synodical deputies in our area requesting their presence at our 3/3/20 meeting for the purpose of a colloquium doctum
- Corresponded with the council for the Hope CRC in Rapid City in response to their request for advice on how to proceed with releasing their pastor through the use of Church Order Article 17
- Gathered together what was necessary for putting together the agenda for the 3/3/20 meeting and met with the CIC to discuss and decide on how to proceed with regard to various matters

## **Classis lakota Interim Committee Report for March 2020 Classis Meeting**

Since our fall classis meeting, the Interim Committee met twice as well as joined the Classis Heartland Interim Committee for two meetings to discuss matters of mutual interest.

1. The ecclesiastical credential for Cliff Hoekstra was processed and sent to Faith CRC Sioux Center. Adam Eisenga agreed to serve as the church counselor for Rock Rapids CRC.
2. Bernie attended and benefited from the Stated Clerks Gathering in Bellflower, California, in January. The CIC approved for the registration fee to be paid from the expense fund.
3. Classis Rules of Procedure revisions
  - 3.1. The CIC revised the Rules of Procedure in light of (a) the dissolution of the Siouxland Diaconal Conference and the formation of the Safe Church Team, (b) the decision for the Home Missions Committee to compile Ministry Shares (excluding those from the standing committees), and (c) the desire to make it easier to read.
  - 3.2. The CIC recommends that the role of Alternate Stated Clerk be filled by the Classis Interim Committee secretary.
4. Classis meeting preparation
  - 4.1. When we discuss the overture from First CRC Sioux Falls re: diaconal ministry, we will recommend that should classis choose to explore the formation of a new diaconal ministry, we do so together with Classis Heartland. We suggest a combined task force of 8 members, 4 from each classis.
  - 4.2. It was brought to our attention that Rev. Paul Birnbaum and the council for the Hope CRC in Rapid City are in the process of using Church Order Article 17 to release Rev. Birnbaum from his ministry with the Hope congregation.
  - 4.3. Our meeting will include a colloquium doctum interview with Dr. Justin Bailey so he can serve as an ordained minister in the CRC per Church Order Article 8 (supplement E) as requested by the council of Covenant CRC Sioux Center. Cal Hoogendoorn will conduct this.
  - 4.4. After lunch, delegates will break into small groups for a “roundtable” style of church visiting. We’ll discuss a number of questions which councils are encouraged to consider ahead of time (see the final page of the agenda).
  - 4.5. We look forward to welcoming Steve Timmermans, Executive Director of the CRC, to speak about the upcoming changes in Ministry Shares and to have a time of visiting.

### *Suggested Host churches for upcoming classis meetings:*

Mar 2020: First CRC Sioux Center  
Sep 2020: Corsica CRC  
Mar 2021: Faith CRC Sioux Center  
Sep 2021: Harrison CRC  
Mar 2022: Bridge of Hope CRC Sioux Center  
Sep 2022: First CRC Rock Valley  
Mar 2023: Rock Rapids CRC  
Sep 2023: Amistad Cristiana Sioux Center

## Classis Iakota Home Missions Team

Report for Classis – Spring 2020

The Classis Home Missions Committee (CHMC) is comprised of Pastors Bob Pollema (Chair), Drew Hoekema (Secretary), Matthew Haan and Joel DeBoer, with lay-members Jacklyn Nieuwendorp (Inwood), Gord Dyk (Cornerstone) and Piet Koene (Amistad).

CHMC convened in November to **submit the following revised ministry share recommendations** to classis (per our fall meeting, if approved this will be retroactive to the beginning of the calendar year):

<b>Ministry Shares</b>	<b>Min. Share '19" (based on 4,000)</b>	<b>Min. share '19'</b>	<b>Min. Share '20' (based on 4,000 mem.)</b>	<b>2020</b>
Amistad	<b>\$5.25</b>	\$21,000	<b>\$5.00</b>	\$20,000
Areopagus	<b>\$1.50</b>	\$6,000	<b>\$1.60</b>	\$6,400
Classical Expense Fund	<b>\$2.50</b>	\$10,000	<b>\$2.50</b>	\$10,000
Classical Home Missions	<b>\$0.00</b>	\$0	<b>0</b>	0
CMLT	<b>\$2.00</b>	\$8,000	<b>\$1.00</b>	\$4,000
Cornerstone	<b>\$5.75</b>	\$23,000	<b>\$5.75</b>	\$23,000
Dordt College	<b>\$68.37</b>	\$273,480	<b>\$68.37</b>	\$273,480
Geneva	<b>\$1.50</b>	\$6,000	<b>\$1.60</b>	\$6,400
Lakeview/Valentine	<b>\$3.25</b>	\$13,000	<b>\$3.25</b>	\$13,000
New Roots	<b>\$4.00</b>	\$16,000	<b>\$4.00</b>	\$16,000
Prairie Light Youth	<b>\$1.13</b>	\$4,500	<b>\$3</b>	\$12,000
Siouxland Diaconal	<b>\$8.25</b>	\$33,000	<b>\$0</b>	\$0
Timothy Leadership	<b>\$0.00</b>	\$0	<b>\$0</b>	\$0
Siouxland Unity	<b>\$6.63</b>	\$26,520	<b>\$6.63</b>	\$26,520
Minn-I-Kota Youth	<b>\$3.75</b>	\$15,000	<b>\$2.5</b>	\$10,000
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>\$113.88</b>	<b>\$455,500</b>	<b>\$105.20</b>	<b>\$420,800</b>

*Grounds:* Having listened to classis and spoken with most ministries listed above, these amounts largely reflect requested amounts. CHMC deemed further contribution to a Siouxland Diaconal fund to be poor stewardship of ministry share funds until ministry clarity warrants continued funding. Prairie Light is given a substantial increase in order to assist with some current financial realities. We also encourage the exploration of further diaconal ministry and would direct any interested parties to a remaining balance in the Siouxland Diaconal classis fund.

**Church Planting:** the committee hopes to soon set the focus of its attention and resources on one (or perhaps two) projects. In the meantime, initial work continues for these areas:

**West Sioux Falls:** The two Sioux Falls congregations were approached concerning their interest in planting another church on the west side of Sioux Falls and the prospects of perhaps serving as sending/calling churches. Two CHMC representatives met with the executive committee of First CRC – Sioux Falls in January to begin these conversations and discern any possible next steps.

**Chamberlain:** Drew Hoekema and a member of the Platte congregation living in Chamberlain continue to correspond. No meetings have been held yet; however, this member has stated at least a location and a core group that could be the beginnings of a church plant.

**Hope CRC – Rapid City:** Joel DeBoer has been serving as a coach alongside the council of Hope CRC in Rapid City, and has corresponded with them both from a distance and in person about next steps in the life of their congregation.

For the future, please be in prayer for all of the above ministries and especially for the potential church plants in our area. We are grateful for the support of Classis congregations, and it is our hope and prayer that God's Kingdom would continue to expand in Iowa and South Dakota.

Respectfully submitted,

Drew Hoekema  
CHMC Secretary

**CMLT Report  
January 22, 2020**

Members: Rev. Doug De Groot, Rev. Adam Eisinga, Mr. Nathan Nieuwendorp, Mr. Bob Van Ruler (treasurer), Rev. Cory Van Sloten (chair), and Mr. Gerald Van Voorst.

I. Old Business

A. Review of accounts standing:

- a. Rev. Chad Van Ginkel has completed ten years of service in the CRCNA as of this year and his financial award has been forgiven.
- b. With updated accounts standing, we have 11 former students in full-time ministry in the CRCNA whose loans are being forgiven at a rate of 10% per year; 2 former students who are not in qualifying ministry in the CRCNA and are repaying their loans; 2 former students who are not in qualifying ministry in the CRCNA and have not yet begun to repay their loans; and 2 students who are temporarily on deferment while continuing education or waiting on a ministry opportunity.

II. New Business

A. Notes on correspondence since last meeting:

1. Adam Ramirez completed the MTS program at Calvin Theological Seminary in May 2019 and is discerning where the Lord is leading him in ministry and/or further education. He is considering pursuing a DMin from Western Theological Seminary.
2. Youri Lee received her Master of Divinity from Calvin Theological Seminary in May 2019 but has delayed the candidacy process due pursuing Clinical Pastoral Education and now to being a stay-at-home mom to her infant daughter and the anticipation of relocating with her family soon.

B. Review of funding policy [approved January/March 2018]: (1) Up to 75% of current tuition at Calvin Theological Seminary not to exceed 75% of CTS's current tuition at three years of full-time residential study. (2) Up to 50% of tuition (50% of CTS's current tuition) at other seminaries, at the discretion of the CMLT, not to exceed 50% of tuition (50% of CTS's current tuition) at three years of full-time residential study.

C. Approval of funds for 2020-2021 academic year [see chart below]

1. Anna Christians (see attached biography) ~ requesting \$8,000
2. Luke Vander Leest (see attached biographical update) ~ requesting \$4,000

*Note: CTS's 2019-2020 MDiv tuition: \$499/credit hour (\$16,467/year @ 33 credit hours)*

*75% = \$12,350 x 3 years = \$37,050 (maximum current award)*

*50% = \$8,233 x 3 years = \$24,700 (maximum current award)*

D. Next meeting: Wednesday, July 15, 2020

<b>Student:</b>	<b>Degree/Institution/Anticipated Graduation/Vocational Goal:</b>	<b>Recommended amount:</b>	<b>Support to date: (through May 2020)</b>
<b>Anna Christians</b> Dordt University Covenant CRC Sioux Center	MDiv / Western Theological Seminary / May 2023 Goal: Minister of the Word	<b>\$8,000</b>	<b>\$0</b>
<b>Luke Vander Leest</b> Dordt College First CRC, Sioux Falls	MDiv / Sioux Falls Seminary / May 2024 Goal: Minister of the Word	<b>\$4,000</b>	<b>\$4,000</b>
<b>Total:</b>		<b>\$12,000 (\$4,000 last year)</b>	

*Respectfully submitted on behalf of the CMLT,  
Rev. Cory Van Sloten*



My name is **Anna Christians** and I am 22 years-old. I was born and raised in Sioux Center, IA and currently reside there as I will be finishing up my time at Dordt University in May of 2020. My parents are Mark and Lisa Christians and both are employees of Dordt University. My father teaches psychology and my mother works in the registrar's office. I have two older siblings: Ben is 31, married, has two children, and is a doctor at the University of Iowa in Iowa City. Emily is 28, married, has one child, and is a nurse at the children's hospital in Denver, CO. I have grown to enjoy being the youngest and having great older siblings to look up to.

I attended Sioux Center Christian from kindergarten through 8<sup>th</sup> grade and then spent my high school years at Unity Christian in Orange City. While at Unity I was involved in choir, praise team, theatre, volleyball, soccer, softball, and student leadership. Since birth, I have been a member of Covenant Christian Reformed Church in Sioux Center. I was baptized by Dan DeGroot, then Herm Van Niejenhuis came, followed by Kory Plockmeyer, and we are currently pastored by Joel Kok. At Covenant, I have been involved with leading worship on the praise team, going on SERVE trips, and was a member of our most recent pastoral search committee from February-August of 2018. I love the emphasis of intergenerational worship, women in leadership, and deep consideration of God's Word at Covenant. I have felt supported and encouraged by the congregation as I have grown up as a member in it.

Currently, I am a senior at Dordt University majoring in Theology with emphases in Biblical Studies and Missions and Ministry. I am also involved in Concert Choir and am an assistant to our director of Worship Arts in Campus Ministries. Since switching my major to theology after my freshman year at Dordt, I have thoroughly enjoyed my theology professors and classes. Regarding my sense of calling to ministry I will never forget the day I was confronted with the reality that I felt I was called to ministry. Growing up, I always liked church and found myself being involved in leading worship, attending youth group, going on service projects, and being fascinated with the idea of the church family/community. But it was not until an experience to the Holy Land of Israel and a conversation with my aunt when I returned, that I finally admitted to myself that pursuing a vocation in ministry was God's call for my heart. Helping, serving, and listening to others have always been passions and gifts of mine. These gifts of listening and conversing with others have led me to build relationships with my peers and walk alongside them through joys, sorrows, confusion, and more. I see ministry full of service, shepherding, and love.

Whether it is ministry in a church, for a non-profit, or as a missionary, I want to minister in a way that is pleasing to the Lord; not boasting in human wisdom and lofty words, as Paul says in 2nd Corinthians, but deciding to know nothing other than Christ and Him crucified. To minister in a way

knowing that the Holy Spirit is at work and believing in Christ's transforming power. The Good News of Jesus is sweet, and I desire for others to know that gift. Presently, my aspirations for ministry involve an academic setting—perhaps campus ministries involving conversing and building relationships with young adults. I have always loved school and learning so I would love to be around that setting and encourage others in their pursuit of learning as well. Or, I have considered the church setting involving being on staff as a pastor or doing some administrative/organization work while also shepherding a congregation.

The idea of going to seminary to study Scripture more deeply and learn how to better serve God's people is intriguing. To receive more instruction, guidance, and illumination to the Word of God is something that excites me. After four years of undergrad I am still full of curiosity—there is more out there for me to learn: from scholars, professors, classmates, experience in serving, reading, and more.

**Luke Vander Leest**

Biographical Update

Classis lakota

December 24, 2019

Dear Members of Classis lakota CMLT Committee,

Thank you for your encouragement and support over the past year. Starting seminary as a 43 year old, with a busy and active family and a demanding job as a teacher, coach and counselor has been a challenge. Despite the challenges, God has been incredibly gracious and good to my family and I.

I began courses at Sioux Falls Seminary last June, and just finished the fall semester. Along with classes at Sioux Falls Seminary, I'll be starting the EPMC program through Calvin Seminary this coming summer. At my current rate, it will be another 7+ years before I am able to seek ordination through the CRCNA. I'm definitely still figuring out how to balance various responsibilities and opportunities and welcome your prayers for wisdom, discernment and direction as decisions are made for the upcoming year.

Sioux Falls Christian School, where I have been employed as the Spiritual Life Director for the past 13 years, has been very gracious and helpful as my family and I seek to faithfully walk this new route. I was able to cut back to 80% at school, allowing me to study and go to class two mornings per week. Additionally, I have been encouraged by my church family at First CRC of Sioux Falls. Pastor Cal has been a great mentor and along with several opportunities to preach and provide pastoral care this past year, the council has offered a position as a paid intern this coming summer.

We continue to hold our plans for the future somewhat loosely. At this point, I plan to continue teaching, coaching and counseling at SFC while making slow and steady progress on my seminary training. The financial support, prayers and encouragement of Class lakota continue to be appreciated. Thank you.

## Reports from Church Visitors

On Monday, October 14, Pastor Joel Kok and Elder Steve Holtrop, from Covenant Christian Reformed Church, paid a Classical Church Visit to Lebanon Christian Reformed Church in Lebanon, Iowa. We feel glad to report that Lebanon strikes us as a faithful and healthy congregation.

We began our dialogue in accord with the CRC “Guide for Church Visiting.” We inquired regarding what had been rewarding and what had been challenging over this past year. Regarding the rewarding question, members of the Council spoke of experiencing God’s steadfast love and faithfulness in every part of congregational life. They spoke gratefully regarding their worship services and the sermons by Rev. Cory Van Sloten. They also gave happy reports regarding a summer Church picnic and other joyful potluck meals. And they felt delighted to report that they administered more baptisms (five, I believe) this past year than in several previous years combined. The Council expressed their gratitude warmly.

Regarding the challenging question, they mentioned the departure of a particular family, which included a significant number of members. The separation took place without bitterness, but it still included loss and some grief. They, like many other congregations, struggle with respect to attendance at Sunday evening services. And, also like many other congregations, they live amid demographic challenges that affect church membership numbers. There are fewer farm families in the area, and families these days tend to be smaller than in the past. They pray that they can strengthen the already strong bonds among current members, and they hope and pray for new members as well.

One specific matter for dialogue has to do with Pastor Cory’s calling as a Chaplain in the Army Reserve. In connection with that position, which he has held for several years, he will be deployed first to a training base for one month and then to Kosovo for nine months. So the congregation’s pastor will be away from approximately September 2020 to July 2021. Mrs. Van Sloten will continue to live at their home in Lebanon, so the congregation will plan to support her and the family’s adult children, and they will stay in touch with Pastor Cory while he is overseas. They have not made a final decision about arrangements for preaching and pastoral care during the deployment time, but they seem to lean toward calling a seminary intern.

Lebanon CRC can face the upcoming year and the future beyond with confidence and faith in God’s provision. They have a solid group of older members and a nucleus of younger members—married and single—in their 20’s and 30’s. Their financial status is strong, and they practice generosity both among themselves and to people and causes they support.

Our visit included some reflections on the history of Lebanon CRC, which goes back to a gift of land from the Kooy family in 1903. In their life of more than 115 years, they have experienced some losses (including of their building in both 1921 and 1944) and countless gifts and blessings. They feel loyal to the Christian Reformed denomination, and Classis Iakota can thank God for Lebanon Christian Reformed Church.

(Respectfully submitted by Joel Kok)

**Regional Pastors Report**  
Classis Iakota – March 3, 2020

We are thankful that we could attend a regional pastor conference hosted by Pastor Church Resources (PCR) November 5-7, 2019 in Grand Rapids, MI. A speaker (Chris Adams) talked about thriving in ministry. Some notes:

- 70% of criticisms are not about you, the minister. People often transfer difficult issues from their own lives onto you. (This applies to compliments too!) Ministers also need to be careful of transferring their personal issues onto the congregation.
- Ministers have a tendency to take on more they can handle, either because they enjoy doing so or because they feel obligated to. The problem is that they are usually running on adrenaline continually, which negatively affects their physical and mental health, as well as their relationships, resulting in burnout.
- Ministers should write out goals to maintain well-being: establish boundaries on their work, get 7 to 9 hours of sleep per night, maintain good habits in eating and exercising, and take time to play (doing something they enjoy apart from their work).
- Some habits have been shown to enhance flourishing personally and professionally: wait 30 minutes to look at any screen after waking up (and before going to sleep), develop gratitude and express thanks, have someone with whom to talk in-depth about your life.
- The pastor's spouse also needs attention. So, prioritize marriage and family.

We also discussed how to function well as regional pastors. Some notes:

- Listen actively if fellow ministers complain about conflicts with the church. Then gently lead them to address how they are contributing to the problem and explore how they could adjust their own behavior and attitude.
- Encourage ministers to engage in self-care to avoid burnout: physical health, marriage, family, friendships, walk with God, time management, self-awareness, finances.

Just a reminder that PCR is coordinating and providing funds for a mentoring program. The program is intended for CRC pastors exploring - or going through - transition. Three kinds of transition: moving to a different church or vocation, entering a second church or ministry setting, during later career (55+). Please consult the PCR website if you are interested.

We encourage all pastors to take the Birkman Assessment, which helps them better understanding their skill set and how they relate to people. The cost is \$96 through PCR, a fraction of the total cost.

And if anyone would benefit from professional counseling or therapy online, PCR recommends Champion Barrow and Associates: [championbarrow.com](http://championbarrow.com). You can contact them through Tony Merritt: [merritt@championbarrow.com](mailto:merritt@championbarrow.com) or (800) 292-3399.

John Gorter	<a href="mailto:jgorter25@gmail.com">jgorter25@gmail.com</a>	(605)243-2250
Dave Smit	<a href="mailto:davesmit@aol.com">davesmit@aol.com</a>	(712) 441-9244

## Minn-I-Kota Youth Report

**Welcome to 2020!** I'm in my 10<sup>th</sup> year with Minn-I-Kota Youth Network Ministry as the Youth Coordinator. I'm in my 3<sup>rd</sup> year as a Faith Formation Champion and I joined the Executive Team in Youth Ministry for Faith Formation Ministries with the CRCNA in 2019. It has been such a blessing to be a part of these ministries! Thank you for all your continued support over the years!

## MIK YOUTH BOARD 2020:

## MINNKOTA CLASSIS:

- \*Representative: Pastor Bryan Dick-Volga, SD CRC  
\*Karmen Vis-Luverne MN CRC  
\*Sarah Van Dyken-Prinsburg, MN CRC

**IAKOTA CLASSIS:**

- \*Representative Pastor Henry Lengkeek-Rock Valley IA  
Trinity CRC  
\*Dan Elgersma-Secretary-Sioux Center IA Bethel CRC  
\*Shelli Kollis-Rock Valley IA Trinity CRC

## HEARTLAND CLASSIS:

- \*Representative Pastor Scott Van Voorst-Sergeant  
Bluff IA Friendship Community Church  
\*Randy Hilbelink-President-Orange City IA Calvary CRC  
\*Kody Tesch-Treasure-Orange City IA Immanuel CRC

**SINCE FALL 2019:**

- \*September 21-National Day of Volunteers Conference in Sioux Falls SD.
- \*October 13-Mission Emphasis at 1<sup>st</sup> CRC Orange City.
- \*October 25-26-MIK Youth/Inspiration Hills Leaders' Retreat & Conference.
- \*Designed/printed/stuffed envelopes/sent-off/delivered new MIK Youth 2020 trifolds.
- \*January 31-Feb 1-1<sup>st</sup> Annual High School 10 Hour Lock In/Praise & Worship at Sx Center Bethel CRC Light House Building. College students helping.
- \*Continued doing the Networking Lunches each month in both Sioux Falls and Sioux Center.
- \*Continued doing 1 on 1 meetings with individual leaders upon request.
- \*Continued Meeting with Faith Formation Ministries through Zoom at both the Champion Level and the Executive Level.
- \*Continued meeting with college students who help plan and facilitate larger events.

### ON THE CALENDAR:

- \*Will continue the monthly networking meetings, the 1 on 1 meetings upon request, and the meeting with college students for the Jr High Retreat. Will also continue monthly Zoom meetings with Exec Team and Champions.
- \*Would love to add more locations/times for networking meetings. Please contact me and we will get it on the calendar.
- \*February 10 & 11-Heartland Growing Young Learning Community in Orange City IA Trinity Ref.
- \*February 19-MIK Youth Praise & Worship Night at Edgerton Bethel CRC.
- \*February 29-MIK Great Bear Lazer Tubing Night.
- \* April 3-5- 10<sup>th</sup> Annual MIK/DU Jr High Retreat-Inspiration Hills. Info will be handed out at this Spring Classis Meetings.
- \*May 5-7-Faith Formation Ministries Champion Retreat in Chicago.
- \*July 5-9 MIK/Kody Tesch-(Orange City Imm CRC) will be facilitating the Siouxland Unity Lao VBS with Sergeant Bluff Friendship Community Church as the home base.
- \*August 14-15 Annual Leaders' Retreat at Inspiration Hills.

Thank you for the continued support of Minn-I-Kota Youth Network and Faith Formation Youth Ministries! We continue to covet your prayers for our Youth Leaders/Pastors/Directors and all the children of our churches and communities!

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**Ms. Alethea "Lee" De Groot**

**Minn-I-Kota Youth Network Ministry Coordinator & Faith Formation Champion**

**1121 Elm Street~Hull, IA 51239**

**712-470-4244**

**mikyouthnetwork@gmail.com**

degrootlee@gmail.com minnikotayouthnetwork.com

Facebook, Twitter, Instagram-Minnikota Youth

*"Christ Alone, Grace Alone, Faith Alone, Scripture Alone, by the Glory of God Alone!"*

## **Classis Heartland & Iakota Safe Church Report Spring, 2020**

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

**Iakota & Heartland Classical Safe Church Team Members:** Pastor John Gorter (New Holland CRC-Iakota), Heidi Mulder (Bethel CRC-Iakota), Pastor Jesse Walhof (Living Water CRC-Heartland), Del Walinga (Calvary CRC-Heartland). Tara Boer (Bridge of Hope CRC, Iakota).

### **Safe Church Classis Team Tasks:**

- The Safe Church Team serves in a consultative role for churches in classis who are developing (or reviewing/revising) congregational safe church policies.
- 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 Iakota with regard to abuse awareness and prevention.

### **Team Meeting:**

The Heartland & Iakota Safe Church team members participated in a face to face meeting on 10/16/19 in Sioux Center, IA with all members present. Pastor Walhof gave an update on what was discussed during the fall 2019 Heartland classis meeting and Tara/John gave an update on what was discussed at the fall 2019 Iakota classis meeting. The team divided up all of the Heartland and Iakota churches and each church was assigned to a team member to serve as a point of contact and to offer assistance towards safe church goals. Tara informed the team of what churches had specifically reached out for consultation and the team agreed that a safe church training after the new year would be beneficial for the churches.

### **Safe Church Committee Responses:**

Tara met with council members from 1<sup>st</sup> CRC in Orange City on 10/23/19 and 1<sup>st</sup> CRC in Rock Valley on 10/28/19 to discuss policy development and safe church practices. Tara also joined Trinity CRC in Rock Valley on Sunday 10/17/19 to introduce the congregation to the Circle of Grace curriculum and speak to Sunday school teachers about its implementation. Members of the classical safe church team have contacted their assigned churches to support and encourage them to continue to move forward in their safe church practices.

### **Upcoming Events**

A safe church training was scheduled for January 18, 2020 but was cancelled due to a blizzard. **This event has been re-scheduled for Saturday April 25, 2020 from 8:30am-12pm at Dordt University.** All of those that registered for the January event will have their registration transferred to the April event. Please watch your email for information regarding event registration for those that want to attend the April event. Bonnie Nicholas, over-all safe church coordinator, will be joining along with other professionals to assist church representatives learn more about safe church policies, internet/social media safety, the Circle of Grace curriculum, and ministry boundaries. We encourage all churches to send their safe church team and members of their leadership/youth ministry teams to this upcoming event.

### **Safe Church Team Goals:**

The team hopes that each church will have an identified safe church team and updated safe church policies in their churches. We encourage churches to utilize members of the team to help progress towards these goals.

If a church has specific questions or concerns, please don't hesitate to contact a member of the team or Tara directly at 712-898-6468 (cell) or [tara.boer@dordt.edu](mailto:tara.boer@dordt.edu)

### **Calvin Theological Seminary – Board Meeting Update Fall of 2019**

The Calvin Seminary Board of Trustees met on October 31 and November 1, 2019. It was a significant meeting in a number of areas:

1. The Board approved a number of distinctives as values for the Doctor of Ministry (D.Min.) program being developed for launch in the summer of 2020. The D.Min. program is being co-led by program directors Dr. Danjuma Gibson and Dr. Geoff Vandermolen. Attached is a list of the distinctives. Applicants are now being accepted for this degree that will focus on contextual, practical ministry application. <https://www.calvinseminary.edu/academics/doctor-of-ministry>
2. The Board also approved an expansion of the Ph.D program to add a concentration in New Testament. We anticipate accepting our first students for this concentration in 2020.
3. The Board received a report on the Calvin Prison Initiative (CPI) and approved the request to develop a CPI Foundation to broaden, deepen and sustain support for this ministry. We anticipate the first B.A. degree graduates at the Handlon – Ionia campus on May 11 of 2020.
4. The Board also heard from architects who have been looking at renovations especially centered on the Student Center, Classrooms (some which have not been updated since 1959) and the Chapel. The goal of any renovation would be to create collaborative, integrated space that will also be up to date in technology. The Board approved a capital campaign with the goal of raising funds so that the seminary remains “debt-free.”
5. CTS has approximately 300 students with around 65 of them being identified as “distance” learners. Of the entering class for 1<sup>st</sup> year Master’s programs, 35% of them are women. There are 27 different nations and territories that are represented in the student body – Argentina, Bolivia, Brazil, Canada, China, Costa Rica, Cuba, Dominican Republic, Ecuador, Egypt, El Salvador, Guatemala, Guyana, Indonesia, Kenya, Malaysia, Mexico, Myanmar, Nepal, Netherlands, Peru, Puerto Rico, Rwanda, South Korea, Taiwan, Tanzania and the United States. The top four countries in terms of student registration are the United States, Korea, Canada and China.
6. The Board also had the opportunity to meet Rev. Shawn Brix who has accepted the newly created position of Canadian Church Relations Liaison (CCRL). Rev. Brix will serve as a “pastor-ambassador” who builds and strengthens bridges between Calvin Theological Seminary (CTS) and Canadian churches and ministries. This position is a part of Calvin Seminary's strong commitment to serving churches in Canada, and our desire to imagine and build new partnerships and initiatives. This connecting, listening and serving role will help CTS be more present and available to serve leaders and churches in Canada. Shawn has served congregations since being ordained in 1995 in Acton, Burlington and he is now at Living Hope in Peterborough, Ontario.
7. Finally, the Board gave thanks for the work of faculty, staff and students. They noted a number of recent publications including those by Dr. Amanda Benckhuysen, Dr. Gary Burge and Dr. Bob Keeley. In addition, the Board approved protocols related to a number of new scholarships as well as a substantial gift endowing the position of the Center for Excellence in Preaching along with significant support for programing. Soli Deo Gloria!

## **Classical “Church Visiting” in Small Groups**

The Classical Interim Committee would like our March meeting of classis to once again include some “church visiting” through the use of small groups, and is asking for your cooperation as a council. Please use the set of questions below as your council prepares to share a brief report with a segment of classis at our March 3 meeting. Space has been given to jot down notes of your council’s discussion which can be shared with delegates from classis and then given to the CIC for evaluation and possible follow-up.

- 1) What areas/aspects of your church’s ministry in the last few years have proven to be very rewarding or encouraging?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
- 2) What areas/aspects of your church’s ministry in the last few years have proven to be overly challenging or frustrating?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
- 3) What have you been doing to equip the members of your congregation for ministry?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
- 4) What have you done to encourage your pastor(s) this past year? What continuing education opportunities have been used?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
- 5) What aspects of classical ministry do regard as significant and fruitful?