

Classis Iakota
AGENDA
Special Session June 9, 2020; 7:00 P.M.
Zoom Conference Call
Rev. Drew Hoekema, Chairman

Join Zoom Meeting
<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/87111290260>
Meeting ID: 871 1129 0260

I. INITIAL BUSINESS

- A. Opening Devotions
- B. Presentation of Credentials & Roll Call
- C. "Signing" of the Covenant for Office Bearers by first-time delegates
- D. Declaration that Classis is constituted.
- E. Welcome to delegates and the Synodical Deputies

II. JOINT REQUEST FROM BRIDGE OF HOPE CRC AND REV. JOEL DE BOER (p. 2-4)

- A. That Rev. De Boer be released from active ministerial service at Bridge of Hope CRC in accordance with Church Order Article 17 (cf. Report of the Advisory Team and the Joint Separation Agreement).

III. REQUEST FROM COVENANT CRC OF SIOUX CENTER

- A. In accord with Church Order Article 12c, that Classis Iakota recognize that Dr. Justin Bailey's work as an Assistant Professor of Theology at Dordt University is consistent with the calling of a minister of the Word. (The churches will recall that Dr. Bailey, at the March meeting of classis, was welcomed into the ordained ministry within the Christian Reformed Church after undergoing a colloquium doctum [doctrinal conversation], having been previously ordained in a non-denominational Reformed church.)

IV. REPORT FROM THE CLASSICAL INTERIM COMMITTEE (p. 5-6)

V, CLOSING BUSINESS

- A. Concluding Remarks by the Chairperson
- B. Closing Prayer
- C. Adjournment

Joint Separation Agreement: Rev. Joel De Boer and Bridge of Hope Church

Weighty Reasons:

1. There is a *fundamental difference* between Council and Pastor on what the calling and responsibilities of a pastor are in the Bridge of Hope Church.
2. *A loss of trust beyond recovery*, due to many factors, between members of Council and Pastor Joel has continued to accelerate the Article 17 separation
3. With input from the Pastor Church Resources, the regional pastor, and the committee appointed by the Classical Interim Committee, *we all agree that ministry here has moved to the point of presenting Article 17* for release.

End Date: Final day of work is **May 15, 2020**

Severance Package:

- BOH will provide roughly *one month leave of absence* (from May 15 to June 9) during which full compensation will continue.
- BOH will provide *four months' salary and housing allowance*, beginning on June 9. BOH will pay the first two months up-front to help Joel and Deb as they deal with the initial costs of beginning this transition.
- BOH will provide *six months medical insurance* coverage payments, beginning on June 9
- We note that BOH will continue to pay into the *CRC pension fund*
- *6 Counseling sessions* (3 for Deb & 3 for Joel; that is costs beyond what insurance covers).

Future for Joel:

- Joel will take time off to discern where to relocate.
- He and Deb will take a minimum of two months for closing this chapter and releasing the pain while continuing to develop his non-profit Coaching Business for coaching rural Pastors and Churches beginning in the Midwest of the USA.
- Joel requests from Classis that he be allowed under article 14c to retain his ministerial status for working, preaching, and assisting him in this new business venture related to ministry.
- **Request for Ministerial Credentials:** Pastor Joel requests that his ministerial credentials be held for this next year with Faith CRC in Sioux Center until Joel finds and establishes where he will be attending church.

Future for BOH:

- Bridge of Hope will seek clarification as a church on its vision.
- Bridge stands ready for additional counsel.

Report of Classis Iakota Advisory Team assigned to Bridge of Hope and Rev. Joel De Boer

Team members: Rev. Kurt Monroe, Rev. Joel Kok, Rev. John Lee

Overview: Through the past several months, Rev. Joel De Boer has been in conversations with the Regional Pastor, CIC chair, and other colleagues as he navigated growing tensions he was experiencing at his call to Bridge of Hope (BOH). In April, the Council of BOH and Rev. De Boer began to work with Rev. Dave Den Haan and Rev. Sean Baker of CRCNA Pastor Church Resources (PCR). With the relationship continuing to deteriorate, on Monday, May 4, Rev. Joel De Boer formally requested help pursuing an Article 17 separation from his call to Bridge of Hope. The CIC convened by Zoom on Thursday, May 7 and appointed an Advisory team of Rev. Joel Kok (Church Visitor to BOH), Rev. Kurt Monroe, and Rev. John Lee (CIC member) to work with both parties. That same day, that team contacted Daren Dieleman, chair of council of BOH and Rev. Joel De Boer and began to work through the process of separation – including numerous contacts via phone, Zoom, and e-mail.

The Advisory Team, Pastor Joel De Boer, and three members of the BOH Council met on Tuesday, May 12 to negotiate a mutual separation agreement, including agreed upon weighty reasons and a severance package as well as to invite both parties to speak into the process of moving forward toward healing and renewal. That joint agreement and a joint communication to the BOH congregation was subsequently approved by the BOH Council on Wednesday, May 13. That material was also presented to the BOH Congregation at a Zoom congregational meeting on Tuesday, May 19.

Members of the Advisory Team have also had several contacts with the PCR Team. In summary:

- 1) The PRC Team concurs that it would be wise for classis, as it processes this joint request for an Article 17, to appoint two oversight committees – one for Rev. Joel De Boer and one for the Bridge of Hope congregation.
- 2) They would encourage the classis to leave the mandates for both committees open enough to be informed by the forthcoming recommendations that they will provide in their report to the council of Bridge of Hope.

Materials to Classis:

- 1) This cover letter
- 2) A joint separation agreement from Bridge of Hope and Rev. Joel De Boer

Recommendations to Classis:

- 1) *Recommendation #1:* That classis support the joint request of Bridge of Hope and Rev. Joel De Boer to release Rev. De Boer from active ministerial service at Bridge of Hope in accordance with Article 17.
- 2) *Recommendation #2:* That classis approve the joint separation agreement between Bridge of Hope and Rev. Joel De Boer in accordance with the guidelines stated in Church Order Article 17, Appendix A. The severance package will be for 4 months – wages and housing allowance – to begin June 9, 2020 with an additional 2 months of health insurance and 6 counseling sessions for Joel and Deb provided by the church.

- 3) *Recommendation #3*: That classis aid Rev. Joel De Boer in healing by appointing “an oversight committee of no fewer than three persons to plan and monitor a readiness for the ministry that focuses on professional competence and personal and emotional status” (Article 17a, Church Order Supplement). The CIC will appoint the members of this team, which will further clarify their mandate based on the forthcoming PCR report.
- 4) *Recommendation #4*: That classis aid the Bridge of Hope congregation in its healing by shepherding it through a process of evaluation and assistance before extending another call. During this period, the CIC shall appoint an oversight committee composed of at least three persons. The committee will refine its mandate with input from the forthcoming PCR Report. The oversight committee will recommend to classis the readiness of the congregation to extend a call. The final decision, however, rests with classis (cf. Article 17, Supplement).

As an Advisory Team, we wish to thank both the Bridge of Hope leadership as well as Rev. Joel De Boer for the gracious way they have sought to navigate this painful season in their respective ministries. We lament the hurt that is very apparent for all involved. We also wish to ask for the members of Classis lakota to be in prayer for these brothers and sisters in Christ as they move forward toward healing and renewal.

Respectfully submitted by:

Rev. Kurt Monroe
Rev. Joel Kok
Rev. John Lee

**Classis lakota Interim Committee Report to Classis
June 9, 2020**

1. *Recommendation:* To approve adding the following in the Rules of Classical Procedure. Section 1 – Convening and Constituting of Classis:
“In exceptional circumstances when in-person meetings are judged by the Classical Interim Committee to not be expedient or are not permitted due to legal stipulations, such as in times of war or pestilence, meetings may be held via appropriate internet based technological platforms, which are configured to ensure all matters before the Classis can be conducted virtually, respecting the persons attending the virtual meeting, adequate privacy restrictions, and confidential voting mechanisms.”
Grounds:
 - 1) Our current experience with COVID-19 highlights the occasional need for this flexibility
 - 2) Technological tools now make it possible to conduct effective and efficient meetings in ways that were historically unavailable yet still respect Reformed polity and theology
 - 3) This language has been adopted by Classis Niagara and been commended by Kathy Smith, CRCNA Polity consultant

2. Diaconal ministry:
The following individuals from Classis lakota will serve on a combined Classes Heartland-lakota ad hoc team to study the feasibility and focus to establishing a new diaconal ministry: Jason De Groot (Trinity CRC), Cliff Hoekstra (Faith CRC), Scott Hulstein (Faith CRC), and possibly a member of First CRC Sioux Falls since the overture to form such a team originated with First CRC Sioux Falls. We have received no word yet from Classis Heartland as to who will be serving on this team from their classis.

3. Classis finances:
We are working on drafting a formal mandate for our new Finance Committee that will include (a) encouraging good stewardship in Classis lakota, (b) tracking giving and spending and anticipating upcoming receipts and expenses, and (c) receiving pledges from churches for Ministry Shares. We are still considering and contacting potential committee members.

4. Follow up with Hope CRC Rapid City (as per Church Order art. 17-a supplement):
 - 4.1. The following individuals are serving on the Oversight Committee for Pastor Paul Birnbaum: Kyle De Young, Dale Ellens, and Joel Kok.
 - 4.2. The following individuals are serving on the Oversight Committee for Hope CRC: Joel De Boer, Drew Hoekema, and Henry Lengkeek.
 - 4.3. Drew Hoekema agreed to serve as the church counselor for Hope CRC.
 - 4.4. The CIC approved the transfer of supervision of Pastor Paul Birnbaum from Hope CRC to Covenant CRC.
 - 4.5. We will draw from the Home Missions Fund to cover the expenses of the Oversight Committees, evaluation and counseling for Paul Birnbaum, and wages remuneration for Paul Birnbaum as agreed to at the classis meeting.

5. Request from the Lebanon CRC:
At their request, Rev. Duane Tinklenberg has been appointed to serve as their counselor. Corey Van Sloten is now serving as a full-time chaplain with the Iowa National Guard.
6. Preaching appointments:
Lebanon CRC and Rock Rapids CRC have requested pulpit supply this fall while they are without a pastor which the CIC will arrange.
7. Request from Covenant CRC (to be discussed at our special classis meeting):
Covenant CRC requests for Classis Iakota and the synodical deputies to recognize Justin Bailey's work as an Assistant Professor of Theology at Dordt University as being consistent with the calling of a Minister of the Word.
8. Special classis meeting:
The CIC received information pertaining to the separation between Bridge of Hope Ministries and Joel De Boer as per Church Order Article 17 and prepared for the special classis meeting on June 9, 2020. Documentation has been sent to the churches. Pending the deliberations of classis, the CIC has a potential list of people to serve on the Oversight Committee for Pastor Joel De Boer and on the Oversight Committee for Bridge of Hope Ministries.