

Classis Iakota
MINUTES
September 20, 2022
First CRC in Rock Valley, Iowa

Art. 3685: The meeting begins at 9:00am with a time of worship being led by Rev. Matthew Haan, the pastor of the First Rock Valley CRC. Along with a responsive reading of Psalm 93 and the reciting of the Nicene Creed, there is the singing of “Holy, Holy, Holy” and “Holy Spirit.” A prayer is given prior to the reading of Ephesians 2:1-10, which serves as the basis for Rev. Haan’s meditation: “The Way We Were and The Way We Are Called to Be.” Another prayer is offered, and the worship time concludes with the singing of “Wonderful, Merciful Savior.”

Art. 3686: Below is the list of the delegates appointed by their councils who are present at this meeting:

<u>Churches</u>	<u>Ministers</u>	<u>Elders</u>	<u>Deacons</u>
Corsica	Scott Nichols	Elroy Zomer	Dick Bordewyk
Harrison	Gary Maas	Keith Vanden Hoek	Seth Reimnitz
Inwood	Adam Eisenga	Mike De Vries	Darrin Van De Stroet
New Holland	Norlyn Van Beek	Larry Van Zee	Mike Zomer
Platte	Drew Hoekema	Wilmer Nieuwenhuis	Jay Sybesma
Rapid City – Hope		Eric Kelderman	
Rock Rapids	Doug De Groot	Bill Harmsen	
Rock Valley – Calvin	Gideon Wamala	Kevin Den Boer	Todd Visser
Rock Valley – First	Matthew Haan	Nolan Van Otterloo	Mike Pollema
Rock Valley – Trinity	Stanley Groothof	Brad Vis	Bob Van Grootheest
Amistad Christiana	Eddy Olguin	Silvestre Gonzalez	
Sioux Center – Bethel	John Lee	Daryl Wieringa	Nate De Wit
Sioux Center – Bridge of Hope		Glen Boer	Tina Folkerts
		Pres Moerman	
Sioux Center – Covenant	Joel Kok	Len Rhoda	John Visser
Sioux Center – Faith	Bob Pollema	Ken Emmelkamp	Josh Harmelink
Sioux Center – First	Kurt Monroe	Tim Klein	Jevon Groenewold
Sioux Center – Lebanon	Robert Drenten	Jerry Steenhoek	
Sioux Falls – Cornerstone Prison	Scott Van Voorst	Gordon Dyk	
Sioux Falls – First		Dan Heard	
		Justin Snyder	
Sioux Falls – Shalom	Kyle De Young	Jay Van Engen	Megan Meehan
Valentine – Lakeview	Joshua Stammis	Vernon Walkling	

*Indicates first time delegates who signed the Covenant for Officebearers

Art. 3687: Classis is declared constituted by Scott Van Voorst, the Chairperson of the day, with the following councils recording 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. Kyle De Young serves as Vice-chair and Bernie Haan as Clerk for the meeting.

Art. 3688: The Chair welcomes the delegates and visitors. The Chair appoints Bob Pollema to handle the prayer concerns.

Art. 3689: The Chair notes the time schedule for the day (9-noon, lunch, 1-3:15, coffee, 3:30-)

Art. 3690: The Stated Clerk shares the additional comments on some of the classical credentials:

1. Pledge amounts for, or comments about, the denominational ministry shares are noted on the credentials of Harrison CRC, New Holland CRC, Rock Rapids CRC, Calvin Rock Valley CRC, Trinity Rock Valley CRC, Bridge of Hope Sioux Center CRC, Covenant Sioux Center CRC, Shalom Sioux Falls CRC. [These are referred to the Classical Treasurer.]

2. The council for Bridge of Hope Sioux Center CRC is requesting that Nathan Hitchcock, their church consultant, be allowed to give a report about the fruit of the vision-casting at Bridge of Hope as well as their exploration into hiring a bi-vocational pastor. [This request is granted; see Article 3700-A]
3. The council for Faith Sioux Center CRC informs classis that they have approved the extended service of Pastor Cliff Hoekstra to the First Reformed Church (RCA) of Rock Valley, Iowa according to Church Order Article 8, Supplement D. Pastor Cliff will remain accountable to the Faith CRC council as far as his ministerial credentials and the church membership of him and his wife.
4. The council for First Sioux Falls CRC notes that Pastor Van Rathbun, their interim pastor and an ordained pastor in the RCA, is attending this meeting as an observer.
5. The council for the Shalom CRC informs classis that they issued a call to the Rev. Norlyn Van Beek to serve as a Specialized Transitional Minister and that he accepted that call. He was installed on July 31, 2022, and began serving the New Holland CRC in August. “We celebrate with Rev. Van Beek as he begins this new chapter of ministry,”
6. The council for the Lakeview CRC asks that there be pastoral mentorship meetings for Joshua Stammis. [This matter is referred to the CIC.]

Art. 3691: First Rock Valley CRC submits the following overture:

That Classis Iakota require all Officebearers who were ordained and installed to office who signed the Covenant for Officebearers prior to Synod 2022, be willing to re-sign the Covenant for Officebearers with clear understanding of the decisions of Synod 2022 in view.

Grounds:

1. All leaders of the church sent to Classis are required to be of one mind and heart in faith and covenant revealed in God’s Word, taught by our Lord Jesus Christ and directed by the Holy Spirit. (1 Cor. 1:10; 2 Cor. 13:11; Phil. 2:2).
 2. Synod 2022 gave clarity to the doctrines of Penal Substitutionary Atonement and Human sexuality that should be affirmed by all signers of the Covenant for Officebearers.
 3. The goal of this re-signing is to highlight our unity and fidelity to the full revelation of God’s Word and in unity with our denominational decisions.
- A. Speaking on behalf of the First Rock Valley CRC council, Matthew Haan responds to questions asked about this overture.
- B. **Motion** to approve this overture with its grounds. [Classis votes by ballot.] **-Adopted**
The negative vote is registered by Rev. Stanley Groothof.

Art. 3692: First Sioux Center CRC submits the following overture:

That Classis Iakota, to better align its practice of constituting its delegation to synod to the encouragement of Synod 2019 and to our shared value of maximal mutual discernment, 1) delegate, when possible, one or more delegates to synod for two consecutive years, preferably maintaining a balance of returning and new delegates to provide for consistent continuity and 2) select all delegates, including the second Minister of the Word delegate, by active communal discernment and vote and not simply by rotation.

Grounds:

1. Classis Iakota would be faithfully fulfilling the encouragement of Synod 2019 to classes “to send one or more delegates to synod for two consecutive years, if possible, to build continuity from synod to synod.” The rationale behind synod’s encouragement was: “multiyear commitments could be encouraged to enhance continuity and local interest in denominational matters, while also respecting classical rules and procedures” (cf. Acts of Synod 2019, pp. 809-810).

2. As synod 2019 pointed out, serving as a delegate for two consecutive years could “enhance continuity and local interest in denominational matters.” In addition, delegates frequently point out that their first synod as a delegate is largely spent learning synodical procedure and that they are unable to contribute as effectively as they would be in subsequent synods. By seeking to maximize the effectiveness of Iakota’s delegation, our classis is enabled to better serve Christ’s church.
 3. Delegating both Minister of the Word candidates by deliberation and vote (rather than one being appointed by scheduled rotation) gives classis healthy community input and discernment into selecting the delegates who would be most gifted for the unique deliberations that lie before each particular synod. Delegates to the deliberative assembly of synod are best chosen by the prayerful deliberation and discernment of classis.
 4. This preserves flexibility to classis in selecting its annual delegation.
 5. A published list of past delegates and years of service can still inform the discernment of the body as it seeks to constitute its delegation in ways that include a variety of voices and experiences.
- A. Speaking on behalf of the First Sioux Center CRC council, Kurt Monroe responds to questions being asked about this overture.
- B. **Motion** to delegate, when possible, one or more delegates to synod for two consecutive years, preferably maintaining a balance of returning and new delegates to provide for consistent continuity. *-Adopted*
- C. **Motion** to select all delegates, including the second Minister of the Word delegate, by active communal discernment and vote, and not simply by rotation. *-Adopted*

Art. 3693: First Rock Valley submits the following overture:

That Classis Iakota require all those currently holding licensure to exhort in Classis Iakota to affirm their shared faith in the gospel by signing the Covenant for Officebearers at the Classical level.

Grounds:

1. The classis has oversight in addition to the local church council of all those who hold licensure to exhort.
 2. While we realize license to exhort is not necessarily an officebearer by ordination, they are given the role of elder when they license to exhort the Word of God in public worship. This makes their work accountable to the Classis, and to the Churches, they serve to be in confessional alignment.
 3. It is important that all license holders are able to sign without exception the covenant that every Pastor, Elder and Deacon are required to sign at the classical level as teachers of God’s people.
 4. This signature requirement clarifies the submission to the Word of God and to the leadership of Classis and the Church, for doctrinal understandings, faith, and its applied living.
- A. Speaking on behalf of the First Rock Valley CRC council, Matthew Haan responds to questions asked about this overture.
- B. **Motion** to approve this overture with its grounds. *-Adopted*

Art. 3694: The Stated Clerk’s Report (see Agenda, p. 2) is presented.

- A. In addition to the report the following matters that were part of a recent Stated Clerk’s Gathering on 9/8/22 are shared:
- a. Councils are reminded that the CRCNA General Secretary is asking that feedback from councils on the proposed Code of Conduct (emailed to the churches on 8/19) be submitted by December 31, 2022.
 - b. Guidelines for handling abuse allegations have been established by the COD. It is noted that 1) classical church visitors are to be made aware of allegations and consulted, 2) synodical deputies may be called upon to offer advice if an abuse allegation arises, and 3) the Safe Church ministry offers training for church visitors and synodical deputies.

- c. Per synodical decision campus pastors and pastors from non-established emerging churches may now be delegated to classis meetings; they would be in addition to the three delegates coming from a council. From now on this component will be on the classical credentials form.
 - d. With the decision by Synod 2022 to delete Church Order Article 54-b (preaching the Heidelberg Catechism at one of the services each Sunday), the question is raised as to the need for Candidates for CRCNA ministry providing a Catechism sermon as part of their classical examination.
 - e. Resources are available on the CRCNA website for churches and their pastors who are discerning their next steps with regard to affiliating or disaffiliating with the CRCNA.
- B. **Motion** to approve the work of the Stated Clerk. *-Adopted*

Art. 3695: John Lee gives an oral report regarding Synod 2022 on behalf of the synodical delegates from our classis.

Art. 3696: The Classical Interim Committee Report is presented by Stanley Groothof (see Agenda, p. 3).

- A. An update is given about the disbanding of Hope CRC in Rapid City (see Agenda, pp 2-3).
 - **Motion** to acquiesce to the disbanding of Hope CRC in Rapid City with the distribution of the assets as indicated by the congregation at their meeting on 20 July 2022 (given below) pending satisfactory legal transfer of assets to the Barnabas Foundation.
 - 50% -to Classis Iakota (to be used for a church plant where Classis believes it appropriate)
 - 14% -to be distributed evenly to the CRC congregations in Platte, Harrison, New Holland, and Corsica (the churches that planted Hope CRC)
 - 4% - to the Center for Church Renewal Legacy Project (for their work and the work of the Barnabas Foundation in selling the property)
 - 12% -to Resonate World Missions (with 2% of the allocation going directly to the Cady family mission, a family with direct ties to Hope CRC) and World Renew
 - 7% - Love INC (which Hope CRC hosted, funded, and helped support from its infancy)
 - 3% - Church Response (which members of Hope CRC organized, and which Hope CRC supported for many years)
 - 2% - Habitat for Humanity
 - 2% - Cedar Canyon Youth Camp
 - 2% - Cornerstone Rescue Mission
 - 4% - Hope Center in Rapid City
- Adopted*

B. Financial matters:

- a. **Motion** to increase the reimbursement rate for classical preaching appointments from \$100 to \$125 per service, with the Finance Committee setting this rate in the future. *-Adopted*
- b. **Motion** to increase the reimbursement for meals at classis meetings to \$8 per person plus a \$60 gratuity, with the Finance Committee setting this rate in the future. *-Adopted*

C. **Motion** to approve the work of the Classical Interim Committee. *-Adopted*

Art. 3697: The Classical Missions Team Report is presented by Adam Eisenga (see Agenda, p. 4)

- A. Adam Eisenga reads a letter from Mark Klompien, missionary to Nepal. Copies of the August edition of “Klompiciens in Kathmandu” are also distributed to the delegates.
- B. Fred Wilgenburg distributes a report from New Roots Ministry and is given time to address the delegates.
- C. Lora Copley introduces herself as the new director for Areopagus and provides an update concerning this ministry on the campus of Iowa State University.

D. **Motion** to approve the work of the Classical Missions Team. **-Adopted**

Art. 3698: Classical Ministerial Leadership Team Report is given by Adam Eisenga (see Agenda, p. 4).

• **Motion** to approve the work of the CMLT. **-Adopted**

Art. 3699: The Finance Committee's Report is given by Bob Drenten (see Agenda, p. 5)

A. **Motion** that the Classical Missions Team develop a strategy to use the existing surplus funds associated with CMT, with a view especially to fiscal years 2024 and 2025; furthermore, that 25% of the surplus in each account be held in reserve. **-Adopted**

B. **Motion** that the annual stipend for 2023 for the Classical Treasurer and Stated Clerk be set each at \$3000 which is an increase from the current rate of \$2750 for each position.

-Adopted

C. **Motion** that December 15 be adopted as the deadline for churches to report their denominational (CRCNA) ministry share pledges to the Classical Treasurer. **-Adopted**

D. **Motion** to approve the work of the Finance Committee. **-Adopted**

Art. 3700: Church Visitor Reports

A. Classis receives a written report from Gideon Wamala and Elder Dennis Wynia regarding their visit to the Rock Rapids CRC on August 15, 2022 (see Appendix #1).

B. Classis receives a written report from Joel Kok and Elder Len Rhoda regarding their visit to the Lebanon CRC on August 17, 2022 (see Appendix #2).

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

Art. 3701: Church Counselor Reports

A. A brief oral report is given from Joel Kok, the counselor for Bridge of Hope Ministries CRC in Sioux Center. Nathan Hitchcock is then given time to share his report as church consultant for Bridge of Hope CRC.

B. A brief oral report is given from Scott Nichols, the counselor for the New Holland CRC.

C. Adam Eisenga, the counselor for the First Sioux Falls CRC, defers his report to the Oversight Committee, whose report is later on in the agenda and of which he is a member.

D. **Motion** to approve the work of the Church Counselors. **-Adopted**

Art. 3702: Regional Pastors Report

A. A written report from Dave Smit, the regional pastor for the Iowa churches in Classis Iakota, is distributed (see Appendix #3)

B. An oral report is given by Kyle De Young, the regional pastor for the South Dakota churches in Classis Iakota.

C. **Motion** to approve the work of the Regional Pastors. **-Adopted**

Art. 3703: Minn-I-Kota Youth Ministry Report is given by Lee De Groot (see Agenda, p. 6).

A. Lee DeGroot informs classis that she is staying on as the Minn-I-Kota Youth Ministry director and that Doug De Groot, her husband, will be assisting her.

B. Lee highlights certain parts of the report.

C. The Chair commends this ministry for its ongoing work within our region.

Art. 3704: The Classical Safe Church Team report is given by Tara Boer (see Agenda pp. 7-8).

A. Reminders are given by Tara Boer as to the purpose of this Team and brings to the attention of classis that September 25 is Abuse Awareness Sunday.

B. **Motion** to approve the work of this ministry within our region. **-Adopted**

Art. 3705: Bob Pollema closes the morning session with prayer.

Art. 3706: After the noon meal Classis breaks into four designated small groups for an hour of classical church visiting.

Art. 3707: A one page handout from Dordt University is distributed and Brandon Huisman, the Vice-President for Enrollment and Marketing, addresses classis. He expresses thanks to classis for its generous support over the years and from the handout he highlights some of the resources which Dordt University has available for congregations.

Art. 3708: The Classical Treasurer’s Report is given by our Treasurer, Robert Van Ruler.

A. The record of receipts and disbursements for the current year is shared.

B. The unified budget for 2023 is presented. **Motion** that the following amounts (per professing member) be used for Classical Ministry Shares in 2023:

	<u>2022</u>	<u>2023</u>
Amistad Cristiana	5.00	5.00
Areopagus Campus Ministry (Iowa State)	1.60	1.60
Cornerstone Prison Ministry	5.75	7.50
Geneva Campus Ministry (University of Iowa)	1.60	1.60
Lakeview CRC	3.25	3.25
Mark Klompjen	-----	5.00
New Roots	4.00	4.00
Prairie Light Project	-----	-----
Siouxland Unity CRC (Sioux City)	6.25	6.00
Tyler Helpers	-----	1.50
Classical Ministerial Leadership Team (Student Aid)	-----	-----
Classical Expense Fund	2.50	4.00
Dordt University	67.84	68.50
Minn-I-Kota Youth Network	3.75	5.00

Total Classical Ministry Shares	\$101.54	\$112.95	
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-Adopted

C. **Motion** to approve the work of the Classical Treasurer.

-Adopted

Art. 3709: A written report from Calvin Theological Seminary Board is distributed (see Appendix #4) and Bob Drenten, a member of that board, gives a brief report.

Art. 3710: Council of Delegates Report is given by John Lee

- John reports that there has been much turnover on the staff at the denominational offices over the past half year and he points out that the following agencies—Chaplaincy & Care, Disability Concerns, Diversity, Faith Formation Ministries, Pastor Church Resources, Race Relations, Office of Social Justice, Safe Church Ministry, and Worship Ministries—are now in a group being referred to as “Congregational Ministries.”

Art. 3711: The Oversight Committee for First Sioux Falls distributes their report, and the chair grants their request that classis go into executive session.

[The following is a summary of the actions taken by classis. The more detailed minutes of the executive session are on file with the stated clerk and may be accessed only upon request from and approval by the Classical Interim Committee.]

A. Matthew Haan, as the chairperson for this committee, walks the delegates through the report and with other committee members responds to questions being asked.

- B. **Motion** to commend the faithful work of First Sioux Falls to the Lord in growing as a church and with their interim minister, and that First Sioux Falls be given the freedom to form a search committee in the coming months for seeking new shepherds in continued partnership with the Church Classis Care team. **-Adopted**
- C. **Motion** to have the Classical Oversight Committee for Cal Hoogendoorn maintain their contact with him and address any concerns that might exist. **-Adopted**

Art. 3712: Chairperson Scott Van Voorst thanks the First CRC of Rock Valley for their hospitality and thanks the delegates for their gracious attention and spirit of unity and offers some parting words of encouragement to the churches.

Art. 3713: Bob Pollema leads the delegates in a closing prayer.

Art. 3714: Classis adjourns at 3:15pm. The next meeting is March 7, 2023, to be held at the Rock Rapids CRC.

Art. 3715: The meeting concludes with the singing of “Praise God from Whom All Blessings Flow.”

Rev. Bernie Haan
Stated Clerk

[Please scroll down to view the Appendices.]

Appendix #1

Date: September 20, 2022

Re: Rock Rapids CRC Church Visit

Church Visitors: Rev. Gideon E. Wamala & Elder Dennis Wynia (Calvin CRC)

On the evening of August 15, 2022, Elder Dennis Wynia and I made a visit to the Rock Rapids Christian Reformed Church in Rock Rapids, Iowa. Prior notification and/or arrangement had been made; and the Council of Rock Rapids CRC expected us on that day. We arrived on time, and then made our way to the council Room to begin the visit.

Having introduced ourselves and the purpose of our visit, we proceeded to ask the Council about things in the church's ministry that they thanked and praised God for. Praise and thanks was given to God for providing them with a new pastor, namely, Rev. Doug DeGroot; mention was made as to how good Reverend Doug was with children's sermons, besides his faithful good preaching of the Word of God. Also, joy was expressed over the church's recent celebration of a hundred years in ministry, an event that saw former pastors attend and reflect on their times of ministry at Rock Rapids CRC. Needless to say, the church, just like most within the north-west region struggled during the times of COVID—social distancing, restrictions on worship gatherings, to name a few. However, a greater sense of community emerged in the post-COVID era whereby the church's members strongly felt the need to worship and fellowship together. To add, council members thanked and praised God for families that remained committed and faithful to the church and ministry.

The visit's focus then shifted to the ministry challenges the Rock Rapids CRC faced. "We are getting older," stated a council member who noted the congregation's age dynamics. "We could do with an addition of new families." Then there was the concern of children going to worship where their friends went, besides the efforts made to make them realize the importance of getting involved in their home church. Finding and implementing relevant, teachable, and applicable Sunday school materials was crucial for the church. Not to mention, the council noted that the giving of tithes and offerings, while still ongoing, could be better, as the church kept track of the moneys and their use via the helps of a certified public accountant. Also, worship services were meaningful, incorporating the Heidelberg Catechism's "LORD'S DAYS," music through video songs, the reading of God's law, and children's sermons. Since the church had only one morning service on Sunday's, still the church continues to find creative ways to utilize the Sunday evenings for lunch and fellowship, such as evening Bible studies, all-church movie nights, and inter-generational games nights.

The council of Rock Rapids CRC, when asked how they'd like to be prayed for by the rest of the churches in the Classis, submitted the following prayer concerns, namely, (1) praying for the church's growth, (2) praying for the church's youth, and (3) praying for the keeping of families. The council noted just how their smallness made ministry challenging in various ways. But the council also expressed the necessity of placing their faith and trust in God in spite of.

We concluded the visit with prayer, expressing confidence that God will indeed continue to empower His servants at Rock Rapids CRC to will and act according to His purposes for His namesake and glory.

Yours fellow servants in Christ,

Rev. Gideon E. Wamala & Elder Dennis Wynia (Calvin CRC)

Appendix #2

Church Visit Report Covenant Sioux Center visits Lebanon CRC

On Wednesday, August 17, 2022, Elder Len Rhoda and Pastor Joel Kok from Covenant Christian Reformed Church in Sioux Center visited the Council of Lebanon CRC, and we left grateful for a highly encouraging time together. The Lebanon Council feels genuine gratitude for the life of the congregation at this time, and we visitors from Covenant shared in their gratitude.

Pastor Bob Drenton began to serve at Lebanon in January 2021. Both Pastor Bob's family and his Council feel that this match has emerged as a blessing. Expressions of gratitude for the blessing emerged as the main theme of our visit. By arranging this call and its acceptance, God answered their prayers.

Some specific reasons for thanksgiving include the following: A recently divorced woman in her early 60's began attending Lebanon not long ago. In her worship at Lebanon, she has experienced our Lord leading her into communion with both our Savior God and the body of Christ at Lebanon. At this point in her journey, she is meeting regularly with Pastor Bob to prepare for baptism. Worshiping and learning together have proved joyful for both Lebanon and this seeker after God, whom God has found.

Pastor Bob and Council members were able to share some similar narratives regarding other hurting people experience healing from God as they join in worship and fellowship at Lebanon. In addition to such stories, the congregational life also includes ongoing or renewed practices that have been taking place for decades. For example, members were able to arrange for a renewal of the buildings and the grounds that have proved to be very beautiful. They were also planning on a community picnic on August 18, which in the past has resulted in attendance of well over 100 people from both the church and the nearby neighborhoods. Such picnics and other activities were either paused or become more limited during the days of Covid lock-downs. At this time, both new connections and reconnections are taking place.

As Pastor Bob reflected on his previous callings having taken place in other churches; and, as Council members expressed gratitude for the wisdom that has come from his decades of work as a minister, everyone agreed that Lebanon is a relatively small congregation, and still they experience the faithfulness of God in a way that gives them encouragement and hope. Pastor Bob reflected on paying a Church visit to Lebanon a few decades ago, during his time at Bethel CRC in Sioux Center. Back then, the leaders at Lebanon needed to think realistically about a smaller congregation in a somewhat rural setting, and they did so. Leaders today continue to reflect together realistically. And, by faith, they continue to persevere and bear fruit in the mission of God.

Like all congregations, Lebanon also seeks ways to respond to issues such as differences among members and different habits among generations. They also find that as they deal with difficulties, they can witness people feeling deep love for the congregation. In light of these and other thoughts expressed in our visit, Elder Len Rhoda was able to offer heartfelt thanksgiving for both our visit and for congregational life as a whole at Lebanon. We also prayed by name for a few people with health or other conditions, and we were able to conclude with a sense of love, joy, and peace.

Respectfully Submitted,
Len Rhoda and Joel Kok

Appendix #3

IOWA REGIONAL PASTOR'S REPORT

I am the regional pastor of the 13 pastors of the 12 Iowa congregations in Classis Iakota. Presently one of our congregations, Bridge of Hope is vacant. Pastor Cliff Hoekstra, who was the ministry assistant at Faith CRC, accepted a call to pastor the First RCA congregation in Rock Valley. He will begin his ministry in October.

Since the last Classis meeting an invitation was extended to each pastor to come to a breakfast meeting at the Sioux County Livestock Restaurant in Sioux Center. These meetings were well attended on October 21, December 9, February 10, April 7 and June 30. These were times to share what was going well in our congregations, but also sharing our hearts with the struggles and hardships we are experiencing. This was beneficial in praying for one another.

I have made numerous phone calls inquiring how a pastor, his wife and children are doing. Asking if there were any ways for me to assist.

Since the daily grind of ministry, constant need for pastoral care and continual preparations of sermons, appreciation for each pastor's work was shown with the gift of either a copy of Gentle and Lowly, the Heart of Christ for Sinners and Suffers by Dane Ortlund or a copy of his second book, Deeper, Real Change for Real Sinners.

The primary focus of us as your two regional pastors, Pastor Kyle De Young and myself, is to support our fellow pastors in their work of ministry. We desire to walk beside them, their spouse and family, encouraging and praying for and with them. We are grateful to Classis for the financial support for this ministry.

Rev. Dave Smit

Appendix #4

Calvin Theological Seminary – Fall 2022 Ministry Highlights

Since 1876, Calvin Theological Seminary (CTS) has worked on your behalf to faithfully prepare leaders who can nurture disciples and serve the church. Calvin Seminary is a vital and hospitable learning community in the Reformed Christian tradition. Our desire is not just to train pastors but also to form church leaders who can cultivate communities of disciples for Jesus Christ.

Currently Calvin Seminary has around 270 students in various programs including our Latino/a Ministry Certificates. In addition, the school hosts a number of classes, weekly community events, chapel services, conferences, lectures, and other learning opportunities many of which can be viewed on the CTS Vimeo Channel.

Board and Calvin Seminary Ministry Highlights:

- May 21, 2022, marked the first in-person, “normal” Calvin Theological Seminary Commencement date since 2019 because of COVID. We were able to celebrate the completion of a program for 61 graduates who came from Brazil, Canada, China, Japan, Kenya, Mexico, Singapore, South Africa, South Korea and the United States represented.

For comparisons, CTS had 61 graduates also in 2020 and 89 (with 27 in the Latino(a) Program) in 2021.

- Presented two faculty candidates to Synod for their successful interviews. Dr. Wilson Cunha is our new Professor of Old Testament. Dr. Yudha Thianto is our new Professor of History of Christianity and Reformed Theology. Dr. Cunha is originally from Brazil and Dr. Thianto is originally from Indonesia. Their journey to Calvin Seminary illustrates the global impact and reach of Calvin Seminary and Reformed Theology.

<https://www.thebanner.org/news/2022/06/synod-2022-appoints-professor-of-old-testament-to-seminary>

<https://www.thebanner.org/news/2022/06/synod-welcomes-yudha-thianto-as-seminary-professor>

Dr. Thianto has a new book that was recently released by IVP Academic on John Calvin. It is entitled An Explorer's Guide to John Calvin. <https://www.ivpress.com/yudha-thianto>

- The Board approved faculty openings in the field of New Testament and for a Director of Latino(a) Ministry. We urge the church to send nominations in to Calvin Theological Seminary by contacting the Academic Office or through the website at <https://www.calvinseminary.edu/about/employment>
- Calvin Theological Seminary was recognized by Lilly Endowment and received a million dollar grant in their Pathways for Tomorrow program. Calvin Seminary plans on using this resource in the areas of continuing education, Latino(a) ministry and Competency Based Theological Education as a way to come around and raise up more church leaders. The goal is providing theological formation and education in keeping with values of collaboration, flexibility, accessibility and practicality.

- The Board approved new curriculum, especially in the M.A. and M.Div. degree programs, in an ongoing effort to respond to needs of the church. This revision will allow for more elective space and the opportunity for students to concentrate in various areas of calling. In addition, this allows the current distance format for the M.Div. degree to be reduced in time to complete from five years to four years. The Board encourages Classis Ministry Leadership Teams to be aware of the distance learning delivery system (along with the traditional residential program)
- Recognized the work of new staff hires such as Director of Communications and Enrollment Management Annie Mas-Smith and Associate Director of Admissions Justin Den Ouden.
- Along with Calvin University, Calvin Seminary participated in the first ever commencement program for the Calvin Prison Initiative – CPI at Handlon Prison. CTS is anticipating that one recently released student will be continuing their studies at CTS this coming year.
- As we face the fall, we invite your prayers for the Board, faculty, staff and students. We would especially invite you to pray for international students some of whom are still waiting for their visas.
- We also gave thanks for the support given in a major building remodel that was focusing on increasing technology, flexibility and collaborative learning spaces for the purpose of community, education and worship. The Board invites all persons to take a tour of your seminary as you have the opportunity.
- Thank you for your ministry of prayer, support and encouragement! We are glad that we are C.T.S. - Called To Serve!

On a personal note – If I was at the start of my journey toward ministry, Calvin Theological Seminary would be at the top of my list. The updated curriculum, the options for distance learning, the remodeled facilities, and the excellent faculty and staff offer a great preparation for gospel ministry. Take time to soak in what these highlights tell us! We may thank God for the blessing that CTS is to us and to Christian leaders around the world. Please encourage anyone you know who is exploring a call to ministry to take a long, hard look at CTS! - Rev. Robert Drenten, Region 8 Trustee