

Classis Iakota
MINUTES
March 7, 2023
Rock Rapids CRC

Art. 3716: The meeting begins at 9:00am with a time of worship led by Doug De Groot, the pastor of the Rock Rapids CRC. There is the singing of “Rock of Ages, Cleft for Me” and “Blessed Assurance,” followed by the reciting of Q & A 1 of the Heidelberg Catechism. Rev. De Groot then offers a brief message based on Romans 8:38-89. He offers prayer and our time of worship concludes with the singing of “Amazing Grace”

Art. 3717: From the credentials received the following individuals are present for this meeting:

<u>Churches</u>	<u>Ministers</u>	<u>Elders</u>	<u>Deacons</u>
Corsica	Scott Nichols	Cory VanderPol	George Veenstra
Harrison	Gary Maas	Kevin Van Gendern	Joel Maas
Inwood	Adam Eisenga	Casey Scholten	Steve Faber
New Holland	Norlyn Van Beek	Gorden Munneke	Tyler Veurink
Platte		Jerome Bentz	Ian Kuipers
Rapid City – Hope	no delegates present		
Rock Rapids	Doug De Groot	Butch De Boer	Verlyn Nyhuis
Rock Valley – Calvin	Gideon Wamala	Jim Vande Kerk	Eric De Jager
Rock Valley – First	Matthew Haan	Randy Byl	Zach De Jager
Rock Valley – Trinity	Henry Lengkeek	Glenn Zevenbergen	Evan Van Maanen
Amistad Cristiana	Eddy Olguin	Daniel Sanchez	Jesus Uscanga
Sioux Center – Bethel	John Lee	Kyle Wynia	Keith De Jong
Sioux Center – Bridge of Hope		Glen Boer	Tina Folkerts
Sioux Center – Covenant	Joel Kok	Trena Van Wyk	Mike Janssen
Sioux Center – Faith	Bob Pollema	Harry Wieringa	Bret Van Wyk
Sioux Center – First	Kurt Monroe	Wayne Klein	David Vander Tuin
Sioux Center – Lebanon	Bob Drenten	Wayne Dekkers	Val Haverhals
Sioux Falls – Cornerstone Prison	Scott Van Voorst	Gord Dyk	
Sioux Falls – First		Justin Snyder	Leigh Roelofs
Sioux Falls – Shalom	Kyle De Young	Bryan Santema	Cameron Stuiwe
Valentine – Lakeview	Joshua Stammis	Vernon Walkling	Gregory Jackson

Art. 3718: Classis is declared constituted by the Chair, and while the delegates sing “Jesus, Keep Me Near the Cross” and “O Master, Let Me Walk with Thee” the first time delegates and past delegates who haven’t re-signed the Covenant come forward to sign the Covenant. The following councils have recorded their protest of the seating of women delegates, seeing this as a violation of the Word of God: New Holland CRC, Platte CRC, Calvin Rock Valley CRC, First Rock Valley CRC. Kyle De Young serves Chair, Joshua Stammis as Vice-chair, and Bernie Haan as Clerk for this meeting.

Art. 3719: The Chair welcomes the delegates and visitors. The Chair appoints Joshua Stammis to handle the prayer concerns. The host church provides individuals to serve as the Tally Committee.

Art. 3720: The Chair notes the time schedule for the day (9:00-noon; lunch; 12:45-3:00).

Art. 3721: The Stated Clerk informs the delegates of the additional items given on the classical credentials. They include: a communication from Shalom CRC, a request from Calvin CRC on behalf of Jeff Santema for a renewal of his license to exhort, and a request from First Sioux Falls CRC on behalf of Calvin Hoogendoorn for approval to retire.

Art. 3722: The overture from the Inwood CRC (see Agenda, p. 7) regarding the classis meeting date in the Fall is presented by Adam Eisenga.

Motion to move the fall meeting of classis from the third Tuesday in September to the final Tuesday in August. **-Defeated**

Art. 3723: The communication from Shalom CRC which they sent on December 14, 2022, to Dr. Zachary King and the Council of Delegates about the proposed Code of Conduct is distributed to the delegates for information.

Art. 3724: The first overture from First Sioux Center CRC (see Agenda, pp. 2-3) regarding the proposed Code of Conduct is presented by Kurt Monroe.

Motion to overture Synod 2023:

- a. to acknowledge the tragic reality of the abuse of power within the church and our denomination.
- b. to recognize that deficiencies in the present Code of Conduct preclude its healthy functioning as a tool to prevent abuse and therefore synod should not encourage that it be required throughout the denomination.
- c. to encourage church councils and classes to appropriately respond to the reality of the abuse of power within the church and our denomination by
 - i. examining their governance models and procedures to 1) assess whether all officebearers and ministry leaders are truly held accountable to Scriptural standards of behavior and the right exercise of authority and 2) ensure that the governance model and procedures are transparent and open to all members of the church.
 - ii. making clear the expectation that all officebearers and ministry leaders will be held accountable to the standards of Scripture regarding the exercise of power and authority for all those who govern in the church.
 - iii. studying and reinvigorating the exercise of mutual accountability and church discipline, noting that when an abuse of power is tolerated, the failure is ultimately the failure of officebearers to exercise church discipline and robust scriptural oversight of one another.

Grounds:

- a. The Code of Conduct for Ministry Leaders is redundant and therefore unnecessary. Everything the Code of Conduct attempts to achieve is better accomplished by Scripture itself and by the process of church discipline that is outlined in Scripture and in the CRCNA's Church Order.
- b. The opening paragraphs of the Code of Conduct's preamble reveal a questionable theological foundation. The preamble presents an often one-sided and reductionist view of Scripture's treatment of the gift and exercise of authority and power, highlighting the need for kenosis (emptying) while giving insufficient attention to the need for the exercise of power in the church to govern the body of Christ in order to confront, admonish, convict, and call to repentance those who are in sin (as modeled by Jesus himself in his earthly ministry and as compelled by the epistles of Christ's apostles).

- c. The vague and extra-biblical terminology in the Code of Conduct (e.g. “abuse of power,” “bullying,” “harassment”) lacks the Scriptural context in which those terms might be accurately interpreted; that terminology is thus open to broad and potentially abusive interpretation. Scripture names specific sins in biblical contexts that allow the church to properly identify specific sins and appropriately hold accountable brothers and sisters in Christ (including those in positions of institutional power).
- d. A mandated, one-size-fits-all Code of Conduct does not reflect the beautifully varied contextualized realities of the CRCNA. God has blessed the CRCNA with different Canadian and US legal and cultural contexts, rural and urban contexts, and ethnic majority and minority contexts where the understanding and proper exercise of authority find varied healthy expressions captured by unique grammars and patterns of community formation that cannot be adequately captured in a uniform document.
- e. Mandating the use of the Code of Conduct for unordained ministry leaders and employees in classes and in local churches establishes a new and unhealthy precedent, seeking to enforce orthopraxis in areas where we have refrained from enforcing orthodoxy. As God is Lord of our hearts and minds and not just our words and actions, for synod to mandate unordained local ministry leaders to sign a Code of Conduct but not something akin to the Covenant for Officebearers would be to privilege behavior over belief in ways that are neither Reformed nor wise. It would also establish a precedent of increasing centralized control of local ministry personnel, including local HR practices, that could unintentionally contribute to the very patterns of institutional abuse of power the code itself seeks to avoid. ***-Adopted***

[Stated Clerk’s notes: 1) the background for this overture is included when sent to synod; 2) the overture from First Rock Valley CRC regarding the Code of Conduct (see Agenda, p. 8) is withdrawn; 3) the second overture from First Sioux Center CRC regarding the Code of Conduct (see Agenda, pp. 4-6) is withdrawn.]

Art. 3725: The overture from First Rock Valley CRC regarding delegates to Synod 2023 signing the Covenant for Officebearers is presented by Matthew Haan.

Motion to overture Synod 2023 the requirement that all officebearers delegated to Synod 2023 sign the Covenant for Officebearers without reservation of the clear understanding of the decisions of Synod 2022 in view.

Grounds:

1. All leaders of the church sent to Synod 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 the covenant that we make with one another regarding our unity in fidelity to the full revelation of God’s Word and our denominational confessions. ***-Adopted***

Art. 3726: The overture from First Rock Valley CRC regarding restriction of synodical delegates not willing to sign the Covenant for Officebearers is presented by Matthew Haan.

Motion to overture Synod 2023 the restriction of any delegate who has not signed the Covenant of Officebearers without exception or reservation in their local church or Classis from being seated or recognized as delegates at Synod.

Grounds:

1. It is impossible to do the work of the Christ Jesus as office bearers in the Christian Reformed Church if officebearers are not willing to submit their life and doctrine to the clear teaching of God's Word and its summary in our Creeds and Confessions as agreed on in covenant with one another.
2. It is this covenantal foundation that gives us the wisdom and clarity of the Holy Spirit for any subsequent discussions and decisions made in and for the faithful unity of the body of Church before the face of Christ Jesus our living head and Savior.
3. This is in accordance with a reasonable interpretation of Church Order Article 5.

-Adopted

Art. 3727: The overture from First Rock Valley CRC regarding officebeaers who have submitted confessional difficulty gravamina is presented by Matthew Haan.

Motion to overture Synod 2023 the prohibition of officebearers who have submitted confessional difficulty *gravamina* to their local councils from being delegated to higher governing bodies, namely classis and synod.

Grounds:

1. A gravamen is always a stated question asking for a clarifying response. A confessional difficulty *gravamen* is not a declaration of permitted dissent toward the rest of the local body or broader classical and denominational body.
2. For the sake of the integrity of the covenant between officebearers at the classical and synodical level, those seated at those delegations need to have full assurance that their fellow delegates do not harbor reservations about the confessions that would threaten their confessional covenant. Likewise, the confessing members of the denomination should have the assurance that those leading and making decisions on behalf of synod (in denominational offices) are fully, and without reservation, committed to the doctrinal standards that form the covenant bond of unity of the denomination.
3. Without confessional covenantal integrity it is impossible to do the work of Christ Jesus as officebearers in the Christian Reformed Church.

-Adopted

Art. 3728: The communication from Bethel Sioux Center CRC (see Agenda, pp. 8-10) responding to Dr. Zachary King's invitation to reflect on unity is brought to the attention of the delegates by the Chair.

Motion to adopt this communication as a classis and send it to Dr. King. **-Adopted.**

Art. 3729: The Stated Clerk's Report (see Agenda, p. 11) is presented.

- A. Bernie Haan once again reminds those present that Classis Iakota has a website which can easily be accessed to provide needed information regarding past decisions made at classis meetings, current classical functionaries, the classical rules of procedure, and financial forms for church treasurers.
- B. Bernie Haan shares some items from a summary of the Stated Clerks' Gathering that was held in January.
- C. **Motion** to approve the work of the Stated Clerk. **-Adopted**

Art. 3730: The Classical Interim Committee Report (see Agenda, p. 12) is brought to the attention of the delegates by the Chair.

A. **Motion** to approve the placement of Robyn Kelderman onto the Classical Missions Team which took place shortly after the September 2022 classis meeting. **-Adopted**

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

Art. 3731: Election/action through the day renders the following results:

A. Classical Ministerial Leadership Team Clergy Member – Joshua Stammis

B. Classical Missions Team Clergy Member – Joel Kok

C. Classical Missions Team Lay Member – Rod Ledebor

D. Classical Mission Team Clergy Alternate – Jack Gray

E. World Renew – Ron Vos

F. Delegates to Synod

a. Minister delegate – Kurt Monroe

b. Minister alternate – Drew Hoekema

c. Elder delegate – Stan Wynia

d. Elder alternate – Duane Bajema

e. Deacon delegate – Jevon Groenewold

f. Deacon alternate – David Vander Tuin

g. 4th Officebearer delegate – Matthew Haan

h. 4th Officebearer alternate – Wayne Klein

Art. 3732: An oral report from the Calvin University Board member, Kathleen Ridder, is given. She shares that a video introducing the new Calvin University president, Wiebe Boer, will be sent to the churches. She is present at the classis meeting throughout the day to answer any questions anyone might have about Calvin University.

Art. 3733: The Classical Safe Church Team report is given by the Safe Church coordinator, Tara Boer (see Agenda, p. 20).

• **Motion** to approve the work of the Classical Safe Church Team **-Adopted**

Art. 3734: Executive Session is declared while classis tends to an overture from Lebanon CRC.

A. The overture is distributed to the delegates. (Note: This overture in its entirety is on file with the Stated Clerk and may be accessed only upon request from and approval by the Classical Interim Committee.)

B. The Chair acknowledges the presence of the Synodical Deputies: Russell Boersma from Classis Northcentral Iowa, Scott Muilenburg from Classis Minnkota, and Phillip Westra from Classis Heartland.

C. The Chair offers a prayer for understanding and guidance.

D. The overture in its entirety is read by Bob Drenten, pastor for the Lebanon CRC which holds the ministerial credentials of Rev. Cory Van Sloten.

E. **Motion** to depose Rev. Cory Van Sloten, per Church Order Article 82, from the office of the minister of the Word. **-Adopted**

- F. The Synodical Deputies concur with the decision made by classis.
- G. Bob Drenten offers a prayer for Cory and his wife, Arla, and for all those affected.
- H. Executive Session is ended.

Art. 3735: The Classical Ministerial Leadership Team Report is given by Adam Eisenga (see Agenda, p. 12) who reports that Anna (Christians) Mooers is no longer pursuing the EPMC program and Trevor Mouw is taking a semester off from online study through Calvin Theological Seminary.

Motion to approve the work of the Classical Ministerial Leadership Team **-Adopted**

Art. 3736: The Classical Missions Team Report is presented by Adam Eisenga (see Agenda, pp. 13-14)

- A. Adam leads classis in a time of reflection and discussion on the following questions:
 - What considerations may have kept your own congregation from considering a church plant since 2000?
 - What excites you about the thought of new churches in our classis?
 - What signs of vitality do you see in your own congregation as to spreading the gospel locally?
 - How could the Classical Missions Team best encourage or equip the churches for our call to grow the church?

- B. At the request of Bridge of Hope which has asked for financial support from the Mission Renewal Grant Fund, Nathan Hitchcock is given time to demonstrate with the use of PowerPoint a new format for teaching the Heidelberg Catechism called “Quest.” (note: this proposal from Bridge of Hope was sent separately from the agenda)

Motion to approve the grant proposal for the remaining balance of \$7,000 in the Mission Renewal Grant Fund to be used for this project. **-Adopted**

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

Art. 3737: The Finance Committee Report is given by Bob Drenten (see Agenda, pp. 9-11)

- A. It is reported that the 2021 financials have been audited and all was found to be in order, and that an audit of the 2022 financials is now underway.
- B. **Motion** to authorize the alternate treasurer of classis to have access to its bank account information. **-Adopted**
- C. Motion that classis delay implementing three-year terms of service for members Eric Maas, Darrel Raih, and Rev. Bob Drenten for one year, until March 2024. **-Adopted**
- D. **Motion** to approve the work of the Finance Committee **-Adopted**

Art. 3738: Church Visitor reports are reviewed.

- A. The Chair notes the Church Visitor reports to Corsica CRC, Lakeview CRC, and Harrison Community Church that are given in the Agenda (pp.16-18).
- B. Bob Pollema gives an oral report of the church visit which he and Matthew Haan carried out at the First Sioux Falls CRC on February 28, 2023. He states that the Oversight Team (Pollema, Eisenga, and Haan) plans to continue for the time being.
- C. **Motion** to approve the work of the Church Visitors. **-Adopted**

Art. 3739: Church Counselor Reports

- A. An oral report is given by Scott Nichols, the counselor for the New Holland CRC.
- B. An oral report is given by Joel Kok, the counselor for Bridge of Hope CRC. He also provides the following post-meeting report: “Bridge of Hope CRC has received and participated in much recovery and renewal since their Article 17 separation. Over the past three years, they have engaged in self-reflection and have also continued to reach out to the community around them. They feel grateful for guidance provided by Dr. Nathan Hitchcock, and they feel hopeful regarding their plan to call a part-time pastor. With a combination of staff workers and dedicated members, they will continue in their mission to welcome people as they are, grow in grace, and go into the world to serve our Lord.”
- C. **Motion** to approve the work of the Church Counselors ***-Adopted***

Art. 3740: Regional Pastors Report

- A. Kyle De Young, the Regional Pastor for the pastors in South Dakota, gives a brief oral report.
- B. **Motion** to approve the work of Dave Smit as the Regional Pastor for the pastors in the churches in Iowa and the work of Kyle De Young as the Regional Pastor for the pastors in the churches in South Dakota. ***-Adopted***

Art. 3741: The Minn-I-Kota Youth Ministry Report is presented jointly by Lee De Groot and Doug De Groot (see Agenda, p. 19)

- A. Registration forms for the upcoming Jr. High Retreat are distributed.
- B. The Chair commends this ministry for its ongoing work within our region.

Art. 3742: The Classical Treasurer’s Report is given by Robert Van Ruler

- A. The Treasurer’s Report for 2022 is distributed and various items in the report are noted, most notably that the Mission Renewal Grant Fund is now depleted with the approval of the “Quest” project (cf. Art.3736B).
- B. The Treasurer requests that each church provide him with accurate membership numbers.
- C. **Motion** to approve the work of the Classical Treasurer ***-Adopted***

Art. 3743: As a member of the Board, Bob Drenten reports on behalf of Calvin Theological Seminary. He highlights the following: 1) with the on-going need for more church leaders CTS has become more aggressive in the area of recruiting; 2) the Board has approved a Master of Counseling degree; 3) the faculty of CTS has adopted a statement which affirms their commitment to honor the decisions of synod. Should any questions or concerns arise regarding any decision of synod, those will be processed within the appropriate assemblies of the Christian Reformed Church.

Art. 3744: The Council of Delegates Report is given by John Lee, who shares some of the highlights from the February meeting of the COD (Highlights were made available to the delegates). A link to a new ministry shares video will be sent out to each congregation with classis minutes.

Art. 3745: The Chair notes the report from Resonate Global Mission which was sent out to the churches via email a couple of weeks ago.

Art. 3746: Items from the Classical Credentials.

- A. **Motion** from Calvin Rock Valley CRC on behalf of Jeff Santema to request that his license to exhort be renewed. *-Adopted*
- B. **Motion** from First Sioux Falls CRC on behalf of Calvin Hoogendoorn to accept his request for retirement effective April 30, 2023 due to age. *-Adopted*

Art. 3747: The Oversight Committee for Cal Hoogendoorn reports that they plan to continue for the time being.

Art. 3748: **Motion** to adjourn is made at 3:00pm *-Adopted*

Art. 3749: The Chair thanks the delegates for their spirit of harmony and cooperation throughout the day and thanks the host church for their hospitality.

Art. 3750: Joshua Stammis offers a closing prayer and the delegates conclude the meeting with the singing of the Doxology.

Next Meeting: September 19, 2023, to be held at Amistad Cristiana in Sioux Center.

Rev. Bernie Haan
Stated Clerk
