



MINUTES

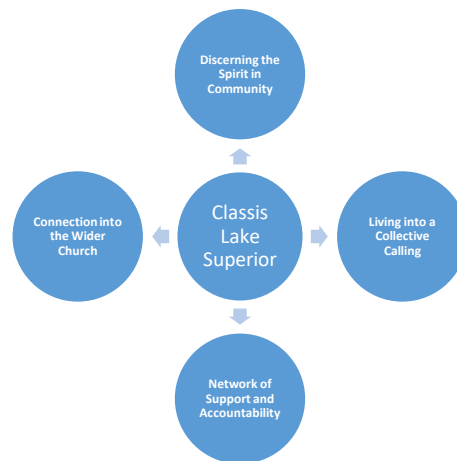


OF CLASSIS LAKE SUPERIOR OF THE CHRISTIAN REFORMED CHURCH Meeting In Person on March 4-5, 2024 At Emo CRC, Emo, ON

Who we are:

Classis Lake Superior is a covenanted fellowship of churches that seek to be faithful Reformed expressions of the body of Christ, honoring the triune God through worship and prayer, making disciples for Jesus Christ, and proclaiming and portraying His love in their communities and the world.

The Roles of Classis:



I. Convening of Classis

Art. 1 Officers

President: Rev. Brian Bolkema
Vice-President: Rev. Ben Verkerk
Stated Clerk: Rev. Henry Gunnink

Art. 2 Opening and Organization

2.1 At 2:45 pm CST

- .1 Emo’s pastor Marno Retief welcomed everyone to Emo and led Classis with singing, “How Great Is Our God.”
- .2 Chair, Brian Bolkema, read Mark 2:13-17 noting that the sick want to be healed and seek out those who can heal. Jesus is the only one who can heal spiritual sickness at the root of our unhealth. The Mission of the church is to bring people to Jesus for that healing and to testify to the prescription that was given to us. He opens with prayer.

2.2 Vice Chair, Ben Verkerk

- .1 calls the roll.

(Key: ✓ = present, x = absent, - = none or n/a)

<u>Church</u>	<u>Name</u>	<u>Office</u>	<u>Mon</u>	<u>Tues</u>
Baldwin, WI	Dan De Graff	Pastor	✓	✓
	Russell Roloff	Elder	✓	✓
	none	Deacon	-	-
Bethel Princeton, MN	none	Pastor	-	-
	Rob Braun	Elder	✓	✓
	Ken Krahnke	Deacon	✓	✓
Bethlehem, Thunder Bay, ON	Marg Rekman	Pastor	✓	✓
	Sharon Jaspers	Elder	✓	✓
Bridgewood, Savage MN	none	Pastor	-	-
	Gaye (Hanson) Rieger	Elder	✓	✓
	Christina Marie Miner	Elder 2	✓	✓
Brooten, MN		Elder	-	-
		Deacon	-	-
Bunde, MN	Joel De Boer	Pastor	✓	✓
	Dalen Folkerts	Elder	✓	✓
	Jerrick Ruschen	Deacon	✓	✓
Calvary, Edina, MN	Nick Van Beek	Pastor	✓	✓
	Jon Van Hulzen	Elder	✓	✓
		Deacon	-	-
Covenant, Winnipeg, MB	Ben Verkerk	Pastor	✓	✓
	Brian VanHeyst	Elder	✓	✓
	Jenny Siepman	Deacon	✓	✓
Emden, Renville, MN	David Zigterman	Pastor	✓	✓
	Tim Link	Elder	✓	✓
Emo, ON	Marno Retief	Pastor	✓	✓

	Jack Esselink	Elder	✓	✓
	Doug Veldhuisen	Deacon	✓	✓
Faith, New Brighton, MN	None	Pastor	-	-
	Mike Kubacki	Elder	✓	✓
	Phil Vande Kamp	Elder 2	✓	✓
First, Brandon, MB	Alanna Pryke,	Elder	✓	✓
	Ben Wolters	Deacon	✓	✓
First, Thunder Bay, ONT	Matthew Guichelaar	Pastor	✓	✓
	Michael Dykstra	Elder	✓	✓
	Ron Perrier.	Deacon	✓	✓
Good News Fellowship, Wpg MB	No Delegates		-	-
Grace, Inver Grove Hgts, MN	Joe Hwang	Pastor	✓	✓
	None	Elder	✓	✓
Hancock, MN	David Dick	Pastor	-	-
	John Boon	Elder	✓	✓
Hope, Thunder Bay, ON	None	Pastor	-	-
	Adam Agombar	Elder	✓	✓
Pease, MN	none	Pastor	-	-
	Julee Moorlag	Elder	✓	✓
	Duane Droogsma	Elder 2	✓	✓
	Dylan Ash	Deacon	✓	✓
Raymond, MN	Chad Taatjes	Elder	✓	✓
	Lanne Roelofs	Elder	✓	✓
		Deacon	✓	✓
Rock of Life, Willmar, MN		Pastor	-	-
		Elder	-	-
Transcona, Winnipeg, MB	Brian Bolkema	Pastor	✓	✓
	Roger Vaags	Elder	✓	✓
	Owen Westervelt	Deacon	✓	✓
Trinity Hill, Chanhassen, MN	Kyle Sandison	Pastor	✓	✓
		Elder	-	-
Unity, Prinsburg, MN	None	Pastor	-	-
	Chris Huisinga	Elder	x	x
	Wilson Brouwer	Elder 2	✓	✓
	Darrel Frikke	Deacon	✓	✓
Classical Functionaries				
Treasurer	Kristi Santema		✓	✓
Stated Clerk	Henry Gunnink		✓	✓
Synodical Deputies				
Presenters				

Calvin Seminary	Shawn Brix		✓	
Resonate	Brad Meinders		✓	
Indigenous Family Centre	Shannon Perez		-	
Canadian Director of Advancement	Roshani Morton		✓	
Canadian Communications Specialist	Victoria Veenstra		✓	
Diaconal Ministry Canada	Mark Vanderwees		✓	
Other Guests				
Mike Miedema, Chaplain	Headingley Correctional Center		✓	✓
Marcelo Viana	Amber Pastor		✓	✓
Joel Brigham	Guest Pastor, Hope CRC		✓	✓
Marcus Velthuisen	Sound/Tech, Emo		✓	✓

- .2 17 of 42 present are first time delegates who come forward to sign the register affirming their agreement with the Covenant of Officebearers.
- .3 Joel Brigham, guest pastor at Hope CRC, is welcomed as a guest.
- .4 Chair welcomes all guests and explains that at any time during the proceedings, should they like to speak they need to request that privilege of the floor and chair/classis will decide whether to grant it.

2.3 Chair

- 1. Declares classis constituted.
- 2. Welcomes above guests as noted.
- 3. Thanked all the Monday workshop presenters.

2.4 The following Committees were appointed to assist with Classis business:

- 2.4.1 Credentials: Bridgewood-Baldwin
- 2.4.2 Overtures: Calvary-Brandon
- 2.4.3 Balloting: Princeton - Hope
- 2.4.4 Expenses: First TB – Pease

2.5 Devotions

- a. Monday, Chair Brian Bolkema, cf. above.
- b. Tuesday morning, Vice Chair Ben Verkerk told about the gift of a 300 year old Dutch Staten Bible a community member had given to him in Winnipeg. Its existence is a testimony of how 300 years ago the Dutch people wanted the Bible in their own language, just as the Synod of Dort

(1618-19) had said they needed the Bible in their own language. It has been handed down through the generations. This echoes what we read in Psalm 145:4 that “One generation commends your work to another.”

Today we join a long line of faithful followers of Jesus who continue to hand on to the next generation, our children and grandchildren, the story of the mighty acts of God so they too will sing His praises. As our ancestors sang, “Ere Zij Gott” we shall sing in our language today as well. He opened with prayer.

- c. Chair invited Marcelo Viana to offer prayer at the close of the Monday afternoon session prior to breaking for supper and himself closed the final session of Classis on Tuesday which finished in the dining room.

3. Other Monday activities

a. Pre-Classis Workshops/Presentations, 10:30 -12 noon and 1- 2:30 pm

1. Enhancing Your Pastoral Care
Facilitator: Pastor Joel De Boer, Bunde CRC;
2. Helping without Harming in Church Benevolence;
Facilitator: Mark Vanderwees, Diaconal trainer. Regional Ministry Developer, Eastern Canada, with Diaconal Ministries Canada
3. The Future of Pastoral Leadership in the CRC;
Facilitator: Shawn Brix, Canadian Church Relations Liaison, Calvin Theological Seminary.
4. Indigenous Family Centre -- (Unable to attend and present);
Facilitator: Shannon Perez, Executive Director, and Justice and Reconciliation Mobilizer for the Christian Reformed Church in NA
5. CRCNA Ministry Shares;
Facilitator: Roshani Morton, Canadian Advancement Dir. CRCNA and Victoria Veenstra, Canadian Communications Specialist
Victoria Veenstra
6. The OS of the Church;
Facilitator: Pastor Brad Meinders, Resonate Regional Mission Leader

b. Monday Evening Worship, Sharing, Prayer

1. Members of the Emo CRC joined Classis in a time of worship led by Pastor Marno Retief from the Emo, CRC. He led in a meditation based on Hebrews 6:13-20, entitled, “Christ our Hope.”
2. East Region churches were invited to share their stories. This was done with the use of pictures of various churches and their ministries making

all aware not only of where they were located geographically but also showing something of who they were, what ministries they were doing and the challenges they were facing.

3. Joel De Boer, Marg Rekman, and Michael Miedema then led delegates in prayer for these churches.
4. Worship concluded with singing, “Bless The Lord, O My Soul.”

4. Schedule

- a. Followed as presented in the agenda.
- b. Officers ruled two changes for Tuesday:
 1. 9:00 am start time instead of 8:00 am.
 2. Altered lunch break, 1:10 instead of 12:00.

In keeping with a decision to be more intentionally aware of how our activities reflect the four roles of Classis, the minutes of Classis actions such as reporting, deliberating, deciding, etc. are here grouped according to which role they best describe.

Role 1: A Place of Discerning the Spirit in Community:

When classis delegates gather, they are to discern God’s will with others on behalf of their larger church community. Classis, as a deliberative assembly, is a community where this discernment happens.

II. Conducting of Classis business and deliberations

Art. 3. Discernment Activities

A. Overtures

1. Classis received 2 Letters from Judy De Wit
 - a. informing Classis that proper procedure has been followed with the submission of her overture, giving the date when the Hancock CRC council had declined to adopt it, and
 - b. giving background info for her other overtures.
2. Judy was also welcomed to classis via Zoom in order to present her overtures and participate in their discussion via answering questions.

3. Overture #1: Requesting the Appointment of a Committee to explore and research the need for a CRCNA licensing board for licensed and commissioned CRCNA Pastors.

Background on licensing boards

Licensing boards serve to protect the public from misconduct, maltreatment, and abuse by being an access of those harmed to file a complaint or grievance against a licensed professional who they believe has violated them. Medical and mental health professionals answer to their particular licensing boards (social worker licensing board, marriage and family licensing board, medical board) and attorneys answer to a bar board. Some of the services that a licensing board provides are licensure renewal, reporting of CEU hours for renewal, and forms to file complaints and grievances. Licensing boards meet throughout the year to review complaints and other concerns. When wrongs are determined, licensing boards have the power to implement disciplinary action, such as requiring the licensee to take a class, withdraw or withhold license from him/her, or suspend the license. Disciplinary action is reported to the contracted insurance companies of those charged.

Recommendation:

I overture* Synod 2024 to appoint a committee to explore and research the need to develop and implement a CRCNA licensing board for pastors of the CRCNA (licensed and commissioned pastors) who have allegations regarding misconduct, maltreatment, any form of abuse including abuse of power, and / or job performance. This would not include a pastor's theological commitments or position.

* (Is understood as saying "I overture Classis to overture Synod)

Additionally, this committee's exploration and research

- 1) would determine how a licensing board would fit into the current structure of church order and / or what changes would need to be made to make it possible, especially regarding the council, classis, and licensing board relationship
- 2) would determine how a licensing board would work with
 - a. a victim presenting allegations of abuse of power, abuse of authority or misconduct to licensing board
 - b. Safe Church Team (if available), church councils, classis, and church order protocols

- c. Safe Church Team and/or Council when either or both of them present allegations of abuse to licensing board
- 3) would explore what other churches and denominations are currently doing in regards to using a licensing board structure,
- 4) would provide explanations of the amount of power the licensing board would or could have in connection to the authority of councils (and sometimes classis) over a pastor (church order)
- 5) would provide an explanation of what a licensing board could do for councils and classes, such as granting licenses, ensure completion of required training prior to renewal of license, authority to discipline (such as license suspension, a pastor is required to take a class or attend a workshop, or go under supervision)
- 6) would determine what jurisdiction would the licensing board have, such as certain classes, regions, or the entire denomination.
- 7) would determine what kind of background of licensing board members could have, such as social workers, therapists, psychologists, or doctors (M.D.), or other licensed Master level professionals
- 8) would compare and contrast how other professional licensing boards (marriage and family, social workers) execute their duties and responsibilities to understand how a CRCNA licensing board could do theirs
- 9) would address other issues or concerns that may arise from their exploration and research

Grounds:

1. The CRCNA denomination, since the opening of Safe Church Ministry door in 1994, has assured members and victims of the Christian Reformed Church that we as a denomination would do all we can to provide a safe church environment. This was promised again in the passing of Abuse Victim's Task Force Report of 2010, Abuse of Power Overture in 2018, the passing of Code of Conduct in 2022, and others. A licensing board, where pastors answer to a board, would increase safety for all.
2. A licensing board for pastors would increase accountability which would create a safer church for all.
3. A licensing board (consisting of social works, therapists, psychologist, doctors) assures better outcomes because of a board's greater objectivity and greater expertise when reviewing

complaints and situations that involve abuse issues by church leaders.

4. It has been shown that councils lack the ability to know how to do investigations of pastor/church leader wrongdoing, how to ask questions to the accused, how to write reports about their investigations, and lack ability in knowing how to conduct interviews.
5. A licensing board relieves some of the burden of councils and consistories when they are faced with what to do with a pastor's/church leader's misconduct, allegations of abuse and other difficult situations, and how to respond to it.
6. There has been a consistent lack of objectivity of councils and consistories when investigating abuse of power situations and cases because of the councils' and consistories' friendship with the pastor/church leader, their need for the pastor/church leader's approval, and their fear of retaliation and rebuttal should a council member stand up against the pastor/ church leader.

4. Chair calls for the recommendation of the Overtures committee.

It submitted the following report:

The Overtures Committee reviewed the following 2 overtures submitted to Classis Lake Superior by Judy De Wit:

Overture #1: Requesting the Appointment of a Committee to explore and research the need for a CRCNA licensing board for licensed and commissioned CRCNA Pastors.

Overture #2: When a synod receives overtures or appeals related to abuse, its advisory committee(s) shall review and present all pertinent information to synod so that delegates may make informed decisions.

Recommendation One:

The Overtures Committee recommends that Classis Lake Superior not adopt Overture #1.

Grounds:

1. A similar overture to Overture #1 was submitted to the Council of Delegates (COD) in 2021 (acting on behalf of Synod due to COVID-19) and was not adopted: I, Judy De Wit, overture synod to instruct the Council of Delegates to appoint a licensing board composed of clergy, social workers, marriage and family therapists, psychologists, mental health professionals, and

clinicians to ensure better-trained and -equipped leadership in the Christian Reformed Church.

The COD adopted the following (COD Minutes 2021, page 637):
That the COD, on behalf of synod, not accede to Overture 14 (the overture above).

Grounds:

- a. The scope of the overture is too large to take on, but it is desired that the spirit of the overture be considered by the COD.
- b. No cost estimates were received, and it was noted that it would be very difficult to determine full costs.
- c. Administration of a (or multiple, according to location) licensing board is prohibitive.
- d. It is unclear what we are actually asked to license.

While the current overture to Classis Lake Superior is modified (it recommends the formation a committee to explore the need for a licensing board, the 2021 Overture recommends directly the appointment of a licensing board) and addresses some of the concerns of the COD, the current overture does not adequately address the COD's grounds not adopting it in 2021 (cost, scope, administrative concerns, etc.). While a committee may solve some of these problems, the scope of a brand-new entity is beyond the work of a volunteer committee.

2. It is more fitting for the CRCNA to strengthen its current structures, oversight, policies, accountability measures, and institutions (Local Councils, Safe Church Ministry, appeals processes, Candidacy Committee, etc.) than to create a new entity that does not fit well with the structures laid out by our church order. To be sure, local church councils, Safe Church Ministry, and the Candidacy Committee are not perfect. However, a Licensing Board would likely face the same, if not additional struggles in carrying out the mandate of accountability for CRCNA pastors. While the spirit of the overture is understandable and valuable, the execution of the scope of such work remains too large

given its inconsistencies with our current structures and institutions tasked with these issues.

3. The Safe Church Ministry has a staff that is educated, trained, and experienced in matters of abuse of power and is often called on to help local churches with these issues. If they thought a licensing board was necessary because of a pervasive problem in our denomination, it is in their best interest and the church's best interest to do so. Thus far, they have not made such a recommendation.
4. The Safe Church Ministry already does a great job of both handling accusations of abuse of power and providing resources for local churches in dealing with these issues. They have training videos for Local Councils, a detailed Flow Chart for dealing with Accusations of Abuse of power, Guidelines for Handling Abuse Allegations against a Ministry Leader, and a ToolKit for Churches for responding to abuse available online. All can be found here: <https://www.crcna.org/SafeChurch/abuse-response>

RECOMMENDATION ONE of The Overtures Committee that Classis Lake Superior not adopt Overture #1 is**CARRIED.**

6. Overture 2

Overture: When a synod receives overtures or appeals related to abuse, its advisory committee(s) shall review and present all pertinent information to synod so that delegates may make informed decisions.

Background: The CRCNA, since 1994 (the opening of Abuse Prevention Office), has vowed that abuse by church leaders of the denomination will be addressed and dealt with. However, this assurance that abuse will be addressed has failed many times. Whether it is via church process (council, classis, synod) or by presenting, discussing, and approving needed overtures that bring change to our church system to ensure a better response to allegations, our church system has not done what they vowed to do.

Recommendations:

I overture* that when a synod receives overtures or appeals related to abuse, its advisory committee(s) shall review and present all

pertinent information to synod so that delegates may make informed decisions.

* (Is understood as saying “I overture Classis to overture Synod)

Grounds:

When every overture or appeal is opened on synod floor:

1. We follow the vows that we as a denomination have made to address abuse, abuse of power, and abuse in our churches, on all levels.
 2. The council, classis, synod (appeal process) of church order is being followed and ensures that victims’ voices will be heard at synod; when an advisory committee declines to present an appeal or overture to synod more victimization occurs.
 3. We are hearing a possible better way to respond to abuse. Usually, overtures mean a loophole in the appeal process has been found, meaning pastors have manipulated the appeal system to dodge and avoid charges or wrongs they have done. Overtures need to be heard because then we are strengthening our response to abuse.
 4. The protection of pastors is reduced and the voice of the victim is increased. Lying, deceit, gaslighting, and “that didn’t really happen” are typical messages victims hear as responses from church leaders in their situations.
 5. The victim is validated. Refusing to open and discuss overtures and appeals increases the pain and harm already done to victims. Messages of “we don’t want to hear about it” or “let’s call a technicality on this then we don’t have to deal with it” or “he’s such a great man, we don’t want to upset him” are reduced when every overture and appeal are put on the floor of synod.
7. Chair calls for the recommendation of the overture committee.
It presented the following:

Recommendation Two:

The Overtures Committee recommends that Classis Lake Superior not adopt Overture #2.

Grounds:

1. The term “pertinent” is highly subjective and already reflects the way advisory committees currently operate. All advisory committees for Synod are faced with many decisions about what information to present and not to present to Synod. While all advisory committees are made up of biased and sinful individuals, we must trust that as a group they have the collective wisdom to decide what is pertinent to share and what isn’t.

8. **RECOMMENDATION TWO** of The Overtures Committee that Classis Lake Superior not adopt Overture #2 is.....**CARRIED.**

9. Chair thanks Judy for her passion and work invested in this.

MOTION to approve work of the Overtures committee is
.....**CARRIED.**

B. BALLOTING

Classis exercised discernment of the Spirit through submitting nominations and then selecting persons for positions of service within Classis.

The following were selected for:

1. Vice Chair of the September 16-17, 2024 Classis meeting:
Dan De Graff.
2. Functionaries:
 - a. Classical Secretary 3 yr. term, Jan 24 through Dec 26
Henry Gunnink, Les Kuiper, Alt.
 - b. CHMC-CA
Matthew Guichelaar 1st term, Mar 24 through Aug 27
CHMC-US-
 - c. CMLT
Eli Groenendyk and Dan De Graff, 2nd term, Sept 23 thru Aug 26.
– No alternate chosen.
 - d. Synodical Deputies
– Jack Van Marion, Regular 2nd term, 7/23 thru 6/26.
– Rob Braun, Alternate 1st term, 7/23 thru 6/26.

NOTE: This action runs counter to CO Art 48 which calls for only Pastor Nominations to be sent to Synod for appointments, so may be considered null.

e. Church visitors

Central

Reg David Zigterman 3rd term Sept 23 thru Aug 26
Alt Brian Bolkema 1st term Mar 24 thru Aug 27

East

Reg Dan De Graff 2nd term Sept 23 thru Aug 26
Reg Dave Huizenga 1st term Sept 23 thru Aug 26
Alt 1st Jim Busscher 1st term Sept 23 thru Aug 26
Alt 2nd Les Kuiper 1st term Sept 23 thru Aug 26

North-Winnipeg/Brandon

Reg Ben Verkerk 2nd term Sept 23 thru Aug 26
Reg Fred Rekman 1st term Mar 24 thru Aug 27

North-Thunder Bay/Emo

Alt Ben Verkerk 2nd term Sept 23 thru Aug 26
Reg Marno Retief 1st term Sept 23 thru Aug 26

4. CA Delegates cast votes for BOT representatives for Region 2 for:

a. Calvin University

Rev Dr. Marno Retief, 1st Term Jul 24 thru June 30, 27

5. Calvin Seminary

John Lee 17 votes, Brian Oschner 4 votes.

6. Synodical Delegates

a. Since the first ballot did not produce a majority vote for pastor delegates, a motion is made to accept the 2 highest vote recipients as delegates 1 and 4, then vote again on the remaining 9 names.

MOTION is.....CARRIED.

b. Since this ballot also did not produce a majority vote for pastor delegate alternates, a motion is made to take the top two vote recipients and make them alternates.

MOTION is.....CARRIED.

c. Since this resulted in a tie between 2 names, motion is made to cast a lot to select between the two. The one selected would be the 1st alternate and the one not, the 4th alternate.

MOTION is.....CARRIED.

d. Since the ballot for elder delegates did not produce a majority vote

a motion was made to select the top two vote recipients as elder delegate and alternate.

- e. Since there was only 1 deacon nominee, in keeping with Synod 2023’s decision that each classis send a delegation of 4 members, but no more than 2 from any one office, a motion was made to designate the 3rd elder delegate nominee as our alternate deacon delegate.

MOTION is**CARRIED.**

- f. Delegates to Synod are:

Minister Delegate: Dan De Graff;	Alt. : David Zigterman
Elder Delegate: Rob Braun;	Alt. : Gaye Rieger
Deacon Delegate: Erica Snippe Juurako;	Alt. : Elder, Sam Van Huizen
Fourth Delegate: David Dick	Alt. : David Huizenga*

* Since David informed CIC after classis that he is unable to attend Synod, CIC met and chose the minister with the next highest number of votes to take his place. That person is Pastor Joe Hwang from Grace CRC.

ROLE II: A Network of Support and Accountability:
Because disciples are made to live in relationships, church leaders need a community of churches with which to share joys and struggles, to be encouraged and challenged.

Art. 4 Reports of Committees and Functionaries

- 1. Classical Interim Committee – Brian Bolkema, chair...written report rec’d;
 - a. hands the role of chair to vice-chair, Ben Verkerk
 - b. Gives a Verbal update drawing attention to
 - 1) the proposed Job description for the position of Classis Lake Superior Safe Church Ministry Coordinator.

JOB DESCRIPTION

Classis Lake Superior

Safe Church Ministry Coordinator

Description

The Classical Coordinator plays a valuable role in assisting congregations in forming the safe church practices of awareness, prevention, and response. The Classical coordinator does so in the following ways:

1. Recruits and organizes a Classical Safe Church Team consisting of one person from each of the regions within Classis.
 - a. Meets with this team to assist them in organizing their region so that each congregation has a Safe Church ministry team in place.
 - b. Maintains contact with this team between meetings to provide support, education and encouragement as appropriate.
 - c. Assists the regional leaders in providing resources to congregations as appropriate.
 - d. Works with the regional leaders to ensure that all congregations have safe church policies and procedures in place
 - e. Forms and maintains a Classis crisis team.
2. Knows the resources available to congregations and communicates those resources to the team, the churches and Classis.
 - a. Connects regularly with Safe Church Ministry (CRCNA).
 - b. Assists in creating and presenting educational opportunities.
 - c. Serves as a resource in cases of crisis response.
 - d. Acts as a consultant on policy development around Safe Church
3. Connects with Classis Lake Superior in the following ways:
 - a. Attends Classis and submits reports to classis.
 - b. Receives information from the Classis clerk relevant to safe church issues.
 - c. Serves as a resource for Church Visitors, potentially accompanying them on their visits.

Additional Details

- Renumeration is set at \$3000 per year with \$1500 coming as a grant from CRCNA.
- This position will also include some expenses to be determined.
- This arrangement is to exist as a pilot project for 2 years at which time it will be reviewed for further action.

MOTION to approve the Position and Job Description of the Classical

Safe Church Coordinator is**CARRIED.**

2) a letter CIC received from the elders at Bunde requesting that their pastor, Joel De Boer, be released from CIC membership to be able to focus on ministry in Bunde and area. The CIC submitted **MOTION** that Classis regretfully accept Bunde elders’ request is **CARRIED.**

c. Presented a list of 10 names to Classis for endorsement for participation in the GATHER event to be held in Minneapolis April 19-21, 2024. Names presented and received at Classis were:

1. Ted Jeninga, Transcona CRC,
2. Isabel Van Ramshorst, Hope CRC, Thunder Bay,
3. Sonya Cahais, Hope CRC,
4. Rob Braun, Bethel CRC, Princeton,
5. Peter Gysen, First CRC, Thunder Bay
6. Henrietta Heilema, CHMC—CA member,
7. Gaye Reiger, Bridgewood, Savage, MN,
8. Ron Perrier, First Thunder Bay,
9. Dylan Moorlag, Youth Leader, Pease,
10. Samuel Fradette, Pease CRC.

MOTION to endorse these 10 names for CIC to pass along for GATHER is**CARRIED.**

MOTION to approve work of the CIC is**CARRIED.**

Vice Chair returns gavel to the chair.

2. Stated Clerk -- Henry Gunnink written report rec’d;

Verbal update expressed thanks for everyone’s prayers during his open heart surgery and for the great work of alternate Clerk, Les Kuiper.

Also, as requested, he passed along expressions of thanks from Doug Vandekamp, former Pastor at First CRC Bandon, for the prayers and support he received from Classis during his time of disability retirement. He wants everyone to know how well he is now doing.

MOTION to approve the work of the Stated Clerk is**CARRIED.**

3. Church Visitor Reports

North - Thunder Bay/Emo

First CRC Thunder Bay,

Rev. Dr. Marno Retief and Fred Rekman ...written report received.

North – Winnipeg/Brandon

no visits, no reports

Fred Rekman

East Region

Faith CRC Oversight Committee,

Dan DeGraff, David Huizenga, Nick Van Beek written report received.

Stout Support Committee,

Matt DeKam on behalf of the committee ...written report received.

Grace CRC, Inver Grove Heights,

Dan De Graff and Dave Huizenga ...written report received.

Central Region -

no visits, no reports

MOTION to approve the work of the church visitors is ...**CARRIED.**

4. Church Counselor Reports

Brandon, First CRC -- Brian Bolkema ...written report received.

Bunde CRC, Steve Zwart ...written report received.

Brooten Community CRC, Steve Zwart ...written report received.

Faith CRC, Nick Van Beekwritten report received.

Good News Fellowship, Ben Verkerk no report.

Grace CRC, Michael Ten Haken written report, rec'd.

Hope CRC, TB, Marg Rekman written report, rec'd.

Pease CRC, Mark Brouwer written report, rec'd.

Trinity Hill, Mark Brouwer written report, rec'd.

Rock of Life, Steve Zwart written report, rec'd.

MOTION to approve work of church counselors, with special gratitude to those who have completed their work is **CARRIED.**

5. Regional Pastor Reports

a. US Regional Pastor, Henry Gunnink, written report rec'd.

b. Canadian Regional Pastor, Evert Busink,written report rec'd.

MOTION to approve work of Regional Pastors is ... **CARRIED.**

6. Credentials committee – delegates of Bridgewood-Baldwin
Dan De Graff, reporting.

The Credentials Committee Report noted the following re:

1. Proper completion

As of February 28, the majority of credentials that were received have been properly filled out.

(Otherwise)

Hope CRC, Thunder Bay

-did not indicate the box that their Council has instructed and authorized them, but we receive their credentials in good faith.

-Pastor Joel Brigham, a non-CRC pastor serving as interim at Hope CRC is recognized as a guest since he is not an office bearer in the Christian Reformed Church.

2. No Credentials

Credentials have not yet been received from:

-Brooten Community Church and

-Good News Fellowship (Winnipeg, MB).

We would like to remind councils to please file credentials by online forms promptly and completely with the Stated Clerk.

3. Incomplete Delegations

It is noted that three of our churches have no delegates, an additional four are missing a minister or elder delegate, and twelve of our churches do not have a deacon delegate.

Please make every effort to send full delegations when possible!

4. Article 41 Questions

Three requests for discussion were received:

- 1) Emden CRC is requesting an interest-free loan for an upcoming re-siding project on the church's parsonage, for which they may need to take out a loan from a local bank. As an alternative, they are asking classis if it would be possible to obtain a loan from it. The anticipated cost of this project is about \$30,000. We are requesting a loan of \$15,000 to be repaid in 15 monthly installments of \$1,000 beginning January 2025 (or whatever other terms may be decided). The construction bid information is available upon request.

Recommendation: We have reached out to our classical treasurer and request for her to have privilege of the floor to share if this is an option. Assuming the funds are available, we support and recommend providing this loan according to the terms proposed by Emden CRC.

After consulting with the Treasurer, the credentials committee changed their mind and now recommend against it.

Grounds:

1. It is not clear where funds could come from, e.g. revitalization fund or general fund.
2. It's not clear whether making this loan would affect Classis' status with IRS, is it legal? A residing project might not be the same as a building project.

Now, the committee proposes the **Motion:** Classis loan \$15K to Emden for re-siding the church parsonage to be repaid in 15 \$1K amounts beginning in 2025 pending Finance Committee approval.

MOTION to amend the proposal to read "Pending Finance committee approval Re legal acceptability." is**CARRIED.**

MOTION as amended is**CARRIED.**

2) Pease CRC would like advice or suggestions on how to handle communion to shut-ins and/or nursing home residents while without a pastor.

Recommendation: We recommend opening the floor for churches, especially those recently vacant, to share advice or suggestions with Pease and the rest of Classis.

--Suggestions are received, especially Pease is advised to submit names of elders to Classis for Art 55 permission to administer the sacraments. This will enable them more easily to serve the sick and shut in when needed.

As discussed and agreed to in their elders and full council meeting of February 12th, the delegates from Pease now submit the names of the following elders from Pease and request permission for them to administer the sacraments under CO Article 55:

Duane Droogsma, Julee Moorlag, Jeff Hanenburg, Tom Kiel, Byron Byker, Phil Vedders, Tom Patten, Dick Ritzema, and Doug Brink.

MOTION to grant requested permission for these elders is **CARRIED.**

Classis also received a request from the Brooten elders, via a letter to the CIC, dated January 13, 2024 to grant permission for Pastor/Elder Richard Krasky, and elders Ken Visser, Doris Tensen, and Jan Philipsen to administer the sacraments under Article 55 of the CO. Though the letter requests permission for the year 2023, it was noted that was incorrect and permission will instead extend through to the March 2025 meeting of Classis.

MOTION to grant requested permission for these elders is **CARRIED.**

3) Raymond CRC would like to discuss how we can get more pastors and youth leaders.

Recommendation: We recommend opening the floor for Raymond to clarify (regarding pastor shortage in the CRC as a whole or Classis Lake Superior or other) and for delegates to share. CMLT may also share from recent denominational input.

Delegates were referred to information provided by Shawn Brix in his workshop noting what Calvin Seminary is doing to encourage more pastors and youth leaders. Classis encouraged delegates to speak with those who are doing pulpit supply to explore avenues available for them toward ordained ministry as a call, especially as Seminary is now implementing a new “Competency-Based Degree Program” where competencies are evaluated before beginning and taken into account in forming the required curriculum.

5. Nominations

Four names have been submitted by councils for consideration to Synod 2024:

- Pastor David Dick — Hancock’s council
- Elder Rob Braun — Bethel’s council (attended in 2022)
- Elder Gaye Rieger — Bridgewood’s council (attended in 2023 and noted by Bridgewood—would provide consistency in this crucial season)
- Elder Bob Usiak — if absolutely necessary, by way of Baldwin’s council.

All these names were included in the balloting for delegates to Synod 2024.

6. Other Communications

Rock of Life CRC offers the following as a prayer of praise for how God has provided for their congregation during their time of pastoral vacancy in 2023:

Pastor Steve Zwart graciously offered to be our Classis Counselor during the pastor search process and was very helpful in several ways. We decided that we would like to have an interim pastor during the search process and Pastor Steve suggested that we contact Pastor Les Kuiper. Pastor Les accepted our call to be an interim pastor, initially for four months and subsequently for a whole year. Pastor Les has served our congregation very well and has been a real blessing from God. During the search process for a full-time pastor, Pastor Les suggested that we contact Pastor Brian Bolkema. After the interview process and Pastor Brian and his family visiting our church, we extended a call to him and he has accepted our call to be our full-time pastor and will be moving to Willmar, MN in July 2024. During the time of pastoral vacancy and

the search process, we have seen and experienced the hand of God on Rock of Life CRC and we are grateful for Gods continued faithfulness to our congregation.

Recommendation: We joyfully join them in their prayer of praise led by Gaye Rieger.

Gaye came forward and lead Classis in this prayer of thanks and praise.

MOTION to approve the work of the credentials committee is **CARRIED.**

Role III: Living into a Collective Calling:

At some point, churches that are in healthy relationships with one another will begin to ask how God might be calling them to serve their city or region together. Many ministry opportunities go beyond the ability of any one church. Some of these will be classis wide, while others may be in major urban centers of a large, geographically spread classis.

Art. 5 Actions supporting common ministry

- A. **Treasurer’s Financial Report** - Kristi Santema
..... written report received, posted on web site.
additional hard copies distributed at meeting.

MOTION to approve the work of the Treasurer is **CARRIED.**

Art. 6 Classis Ministry Reports

- 1. Classis Home Missions Committee -US, David Zigterman, Chair
.... written report rec’d.
 - 1.1 Verbal update
 - a. Drew attention to a letter of appreciation from The Broken in the report.
 - b. Travis Deur is sending this link to be sent out with these minutes.
(<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/88081691201>) This is needed for a March

- 21 Zoom meeting that precedes the regular April connections meeting.
- c. Informed Classis that the North Center Lao congregation has chosen to step away from Classis and the CRCNA and associate elsewhere.

MOTION to grant permission with God’s blessing to NCL to withdraw from the CRCNA isCARRIED.

1.2. CHMC—US presented the following proposals for:

- a. CHMC Proposes a new mandate to The Church Revitalization Fund.

It is proposed that The Church Revitalization Fund is to be distributed either as

1) a grant for:

- a. revitalization projects

following the approved guidelines and application questions, or

- b. coaching/continuing education

following the approved guidelines and application questions for coaching/continuing education;

or as

2) an interest-free loan for:

specific projects or exploration thereof,

directed at encouraging revitalization within established churches in classis.

Both grant and loan applications shall be facilitated and brought to the floor of classis by the respective Home Missions Committees (US or Canada).

Members of the CHMC may not receive these funds, though churches of which they are members may receive these funds.

- b. Proposed guidelines and application questions coaching/continuing education:

Coaching/Continuing Education Grant Application

Proposed new:

The Church Revitalization Fund is to be distributed either as

-a grant for revitalization projects following the approved guidelines and application questions, or

-a grant for coaching/continuing education following the approved guidelines and application questions for coaching/continuing education,
or distributed as
-an interest-free loan for specific projects or exploration thereof, directed at encouraging revitalization within established church in classis.

Both grant and loan applications shall be facilitated and brought to the floor of classis by the respective Home Missions Committees (US or Canada).

Members of the CHMC may not receive these funds, though churches of which they are members may receive these funds.

Guidelines for those wanting to apply for the Church Revitalization Fund for continuing education:

1. Who is eligible?

Professing members of churches in Classis Lake Superior - ordinarily those in leadership positions.

2. What coaching/continuing education do we support?

The goal of this grant is to help members of this classis in leadership positions to grow in their ability to lead a church through revitalization. This could include seeking help from a coach or licensed counselor. A list of coaches endorsed by the CRCNA can be found here: <https://www.crcna.org/pcr/pastors/coaches>. Other opportunities will also be considered such as conferences or seminars.

3. What is not eligible?

Grant money may not be used to offset a leader's salary or tuition expenses that are part of a degree program (auditing a class would be allowed).

4. What is the grant amount?

Up to \$1,000 for an individual or \$3,000 for a group according to need, and dependent on funds available.

5. What are the expectations for those who complete a grant?

A follow-up report describing your experience in the sessions or events covered by the grant and how this experience has benefited or impacted your local church or region of churches.

6. How often can this grant be sought?

Members may apply for this grant twice every five years.

Application questions

1. What are you seeking a grant for?
2. How much money are you requesting?
3. How do you hope this continuing education/coaching experience will benefit you?
4. How do you think it will benefit the church?
5. What is the approximate schedule for the use of this grant?
6. Contact information
 - a. Name
 - b. Position/role
 - c. Church you belong to
 - d. Email
 - e. Phone

The answers to these questions will be used by CHMC-US or CHMC-CAN to determine if your request meets the guidelines and determine how much money to award each applicant. If your request meets these guidelines, CHMC-US or CHMC-CAN will then propose at the next classis that you receive the requested funding money.

MOTION to approve the new mandate for Church Revitalization Fund as well as the proposed guidelines and application questions is.... **CARRIED.**

c. CHMC-US proposes the following updates for the Rules of Procedure:

- IV. CLASSICAL COMMITTEES AND DELEGATES TO DENOMINATIONAL BOARDS/AGENCIES AND SYNOD
- A. Nomination, Election, and General Regulations

1. Delegates to denominational boards and agencies shall be elected and serve terms according to Synodical regulations.

2. The standing committees of classis are encouraged to make recommendations for filling any vacancies based on the gifts and interests of suitable clergy and laity.
3. The Classical Interim Committee (CIC) shall compile and make any necessary additional nominations for all Classical standing committee elections. Prior to classis meetings, the CIC shall request nominations from the standing committees in writing. Nominations may also be added from the floor.
4. Members of standing committees shall be chosen for three years and in such a way that at least one member is chosen every year.
5. For committees with four members or less, Classis shall ordinarily elect clergy and laity alternates by ballot, to serve in the event of a vacancy.

B. Committees

1. The CIC

I. The CIC shall be responsible for the supervision for the classical youth champion.

Reason: Youth ministry, while important, falls beyond the scope of the mandate given to the CHMC.

2. The Classical Home Missions Committees

- a. The task of the CHMC is to unite the classis behind the mission of God. As Our World Belongs to God, stanza 41, states, "Joining the mission of God, the church is sent with the gospel of the kingdom to call everyone to know and follow Christ and to proclaim to all the assurance that in the name of Jesus there is forgiveness of sin and new life for all who repent and believe. The Spirit calls all members to embrace God's mission in their neighborhoods and in the world: to feed the hungry, bring water to the thirsty, welcome the stranger, clothe the naked, care for the sick, and free the prisoner. We repent of leaving this work to a few, for this mission is central to our being." The CHMC shall encourage the churches of classis to not leave this work to a few.
- b. To this end, the CHMC shall collaborate (ie. seek input from and guidance when appropriate) with Resonate Global Missions to establish new church plants and encourage revitalization of existing churches.

- c. CHMC shall encourage churches in revitalization through the use of the Church Revitalization Fund and shall advise classis on how this fund shall be used.
- d. CHMC shall encourage church planting through the use of the Church Planting Fund and shall advise classis on how this fund shall be used.
- e. Recognizing the different contexts of and regulations applying to the United States and Canada as well as geographic vastness of the Classis, there shall be two Classical Home Missions Committees: Classical Home Missions–US (CHMC-US) and Classical Home Missions–Canada (CHMC-CA). While separate, these committees shall seek to communicate and cooperate with one another in their work.
- f. The CHMC-US shall consist of 4 members, at least 1 of which shall (ordinarily) be a non-minister.
- g. The CHMC-CA shall consist of 4 members, at least 1 of which shall (ordinarily) be a non-minister.
- h. CHMC, US and CA, shall recommend new members for their committees to the CIC. New members for these committees will be elected by classis.
- i. One member from each CHMC shall be a member of the CIC and Finance Committees.

MOTION to divide the question and take up IV.B.2. h. and i. separately is **CARRIED.**

MOTION to adopt updated Rules of Procedure except for points IV. B. 2. h. and i. is..... **CARRIED.**

MOTION is made to accept h and i.

MOTION to table is..... **CARRIED.**

1.3. New Life-SEA (South East Asian) - Phonh Sinbonditno report.

1.4. Youth Champion, Travis Deurwritten report rec'd.

1.5. Prayer Coordinators
 US East - Rob Braun,
 US Central - Lowell Schwitters written report rec'd.

MOTION to approve the work of the CHMC-US is **CARRIED.**

2. Classis Home Missions Committee - CA, Ben Verkerk, chair
..... written report rec'd.

Verbal update included the introduction of pastor Marcelo Viana of the Amber Church, a Portuguese speaking congregation in Winnipeg. They began with 5 persons worshipping in his home 2 years ago, outgrew that space and began worshipping in a chapel, and celebrated their 1st year anniversary as a church last week. Marcelo reminded us of the exhortation of Psalm 103 to bless the Lord and forget not all his benefits. He asked for prayers and thanked Classis for its support, reminding us as well to measure success not by numbers but by faithfulness to the Lord. Classis joined in prayer for Marcelo and Amber church.

- a. The Gathering Place, Yvonne Schenk written report rec'd.

Classis took note that after 25 years of faithful service both Yvonne Schenck and Sonya Cahais will be retiring from positions at the Gathering Place. It thanks the Lord for their ministry and now joins in prayer that the board of directors can explore new ways of shaping staff positions to continue this ministry going forward. It also instructed the clerk to provide them a certificate of recognition for their services.

- b. Hope Centre Ministries, Shellie Power no report.

- c. Canadian Prayer Mobilizer - Sonya Cahais written report rec'd.

MOTION to approve the work of the CHMC-CA is **CARRIED.**

3. Chaplains,
Gerald VanSmeerdijk, Elim Village, Surrey BCwritten report rec'd.
Dan Crapo, Mayo Hospice Chaplaincy reports in September.
Mike Miedema, Headingley Correctional Centerwritten report rec'd.
..... Verbal update as well.

4. Classical Ministerial Leadership Team – Dan DeGraff, Chair
.....written report rec'd.

MOTION to approve the work of the CMLT is **CARRIED.**

5. Safe Church Team -no report rec'd.

Role IV: A Connection into the Wider Church:

For many people, their main experience of being part of the broader family of the Christian Reformed Church is via classis. Churches participate in their denomination through classical structure and opportunity. Classis also connects the broadness of North American ministry into the individual church's own regional and local context, providing an avenue for a meaningful relationship with the denominational ministries.

In addition, Classis should encourage churches to live outside themselves into the broader Christian community.

Art. 7 Denominational Ministries or Christian Institution Reports

1. Board of Trustees: Calvin University,
Jack Beekma, Region 2 rep. CA.written report rec'd.
Region 8 rep. US no report rec'd.
2. Calvin Seminary:
Board of Trustees: Robert Drenten written report rec'd.
Canadian Liaison: Shawn Brix written report rec'd.
3. Resonate Global Missions,
Brad Meinders written report rec'd.
4. World Renew, Canadian report,
Chris Orme, (Ron Van Heyst, Can Rep) ... written report rec'd.
World Renew US
(Paul Vliem, US Rep)written report rec'd.
5. Council of Delegates:
a. COD- CRCNA (Scott De Vries, Synodical office)..written request rec'd.
6. Diaconal Ministries Canada, Ron Vanden Brink ...written report rec'd.
7. Executive Director of Canadian Ministries, Al Postma
Via use of a video clip, he expressed thanks for being able to serve as
Executive Director, and encouraged participation in the Gather project.

8. Thrive,written playlist rec'd.
Regional Connector, US Midwest, Trudy Ash
Resonate Regional Mission Leader, Pastor Brad Meinders

Agencies and other Christian Organizations

9. Redeemer University College, David Zietsma, Pres written report rec'd.
10. Dordt University no report rec'd.

Art. 8 Minutes:

These Minutes were approved by the Chairman and Vice-Chairman before distribution.

Art. 9 Closing Exercises:

- 9.1 Chair, Pastor Brian Bolkema expressed thanks and appreciation to:
- a. fellow officers, Vice Chair, Pastor Ben Verkerk and Clerk,
Pastor Henry Gunnink, for their work and assistance with leading the meeting; then (after Classis had retired into the lunchroom to conclude its business while enjoying lunch)
 - b. the women of the Dorcas society who so graciously had prepared and served the lunches and coffee treats, and who also graciously covered some of the expenses as a donation to Classis;
 - c. Emo CRC for being a gracious host in many ways, with billeting and hotel arrangements, technical support, and many behind the scenes preparations.
- 9.2 Delegates, in keeping with what they sang in the Classis Monday evening worship time, viz. "Let me be singing when the evening comes," concluded with singing again, "Bless the Lord, O My Soul, Worship His Holy Name."
- 9.3 At about 1:40 pm Chair rules Classis is adjourned.
- 9.4 Fall meeting, the Lord willing:
September 16-17, 2024,
In person at Lake Geneva Christian Center, Alexandria, MN.
Agenda deadline, August 5, 5 pm. CDT.