

Agenda for Classis Heartland
Saturday, March 8, 2025 - 8:30 AM

Location: Calvary Christian Reformed Church
709 5th Street
Orange City, IA 51041
712-737-2797

1. Check-in 8:00 – 8:25 AM

All delegates must check-in with the stated clerk prior to the meeting. Delegates serving for the first time in their respective office need to sign the Covenant of Officebearers prior to the meeting.

Morning Session, 8:30 – 11:45 AM

2. Welcome and Constitution of Classis

- a. Welcome Delegates and Guests, Announcements and Instructions
- b. Classical Credentials and Attendance Report
- c. Chair declares Classis Constituted with the following officers serving
 - 1) Chairman: **Rev. Aaron Greydanus**
 - 2) Vice-Chairman: **Rev. Keith Hoekstra**
 - 3) Stated Clerk: **Mr. Pete Van Velzen**
 - 4) Treasurer: **Dr. Randy Smit**

3. Opening devotions and time of worship led by Rev. John Klompien

4. Communications from Churches

Letter from First Christian Reformed Church of Sheldon re: seating of female deacon delegates at classis. **(p. 4)**

5. Classical Nominating Committee (CNC)

Elect delegates to Synod 2025 meeting June 13-19 at Redeemer University in Ancaster, Ontario, Canada.

6. Classical Stewardship Committee

- a. Written Report **(pp. 5-6)**
- b. Treasurer's Report – Dr. Randy Smit **(pp. 7-11)**

7. Overtures Proposed for Classis to submit to Synod 2024

- a. Overture from First Christian Reformed Church of Orange City re: classical study committee to review the nature, function, and authority of the offices of Elder and Deacon **(p. 12)**
- b. Overture from First Christian Reformed Church of Orange City re: adding a supplement to Church Order article 3 to include a discipleship/educational component for all offices, including Elder and Deacon. **(p. 13)**

- c. Overture from First Christian Reformed Church of Orange City re: directing Thrive ministries to focus on officebearer training in the coming year. **(p. 14)**
- d. Overture from Sibley CRC re: amending the synodical mandate and guidelines of the Banner. **(pp. 15-21)**
- e. Overture from First CRC Hull re: encouraging every church within the CRCNA to identify, train, and maintain an individual with a license to exhort in their church by Synod 2027. **(p. 22)**

8. Church Visitors and Regional Pastors

- a. Rev. Chad Van Ginkel and Rev. Cody Statema, visitors to the north
- b. Rev. Ben Wiersma and Rev. Phillip Westra, visitors to the south
- c. Rev. Brian Dunn, regional pastor to the north
- d. Rev. Sam Keyzer, regional pastor to the south

9. Church Counselors

- a. Hawarden CRC – Rev. Nate Kuperus
- b. New City Church – Rev. Kevin Muyskens
- c. Hospers Firs CRC – Rev. Aaron Greydanus
- d. Living Water Oversight Committee – Rev. Cody Statema **(p. 23)**

Morning Break, 10:00 – 10:15 AM

10. Classical Interim Committee (CIC)

- a. CIC summary from 2024 meetings **(pp. 24-25)**
- b. Stated Clerk Report **(p. 26)**
- c. Additions to the Agenda from Classical Credentials

11. Classical Ministry Leadership Team (CMLT)

- a. CMLT written report **(p. 27)**
- b. Approval of the job description (Art. 23-a) and approval of allowing Hospers CRC to be led by a Commissioned Pastor whose intent is to become ordained as a Minister of the Word in the future (Art. 24-b) **(pp. 28-30) The job description will be forthcoming.**

12. Classical Home Missions Committee (CHMC)

- a. CHMC written report **(p. 31)**
- b. Presentation by Rev. Brad Meinders, US Central Regional Mission Leader **(p. 32)**
- c. Presentation by Lora Copley -Areopagus **(p. 33)**
- d. Video about F Street – Residency Program

Lunch Break, 12:00 – 12:45 PM

Afternoon Session, 12:45 – 3:30 PM

13. Prayer time led by Classis Prayer Coordinator Barb Hibma
14. Council of Delegates (COD) report by Mr. Loren Veldhuizen
15. Classical Discipleship Committee (CDC)
 - a. Written Report **(pp. 34-35)**
 - b. Safe Church Team Written Report from Dr. Tara Boer **(p. 36)**
 - c. New Safe Church Coordinator approval – Ms. Abby Vanden Bosch biography – **(p. 37)**
 - d. Minn-I-Kota Youth Network –Ms. Lee DeGroot **(p. 38)**
16. Dordt University Report **(pp. 39-40)**
17. Thrive Playlist **(p. 41)**
18. Adjournment: Next meeting is Wednesday, Sept. 17, 2025, at Prairie Lane CRC in Omaha



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March 2025— Classis Heartland

Classis Credentials Committee,

The delegates and council of First CRC Sheldon protests Classis Heartland's decision to seat women deacon delegates. We believe this decision is based on at best weak biblical evidence and at worst is contrary to what the scriptures teach about God's designed roles for men and women. This is not a protest against women, nor the use of their gifts, but rather, we believe the scriptural evidence clearly teaches the offices of elder and deacon are for men.

Many will point to texts such as Romans 16:1 as Paul commends "our sister Pheobe, a servant of the church at Cenchreae..." The word for servant can be translated as "deacon" but has more often been translated as servant until recently (NIV 2011 in particular). Additionally, 1 Tim. 3:11, seems to be rightly translated in the ESV and NIV 84 as "their wives..." since Paul will later admonish the deacons to be the husband of one wife, and does not mention women deacons only being the wife of one husband.

While much more could be said about these passages and others, in the end, it is our fear that this decision will lessen our strong hold to the scriptures and lead us down a slippery slope. While that is not always a reason to not do something, one can hardly argue that our culture has not slid down a similar slope. Therefore, in light of these reasons as well as others, we would call Classis Heartland to reconsider this position and stand firm in a beautiful biblical view of masculinity and femininity and so give the world around us a great witness of how God calls us to live into our beautiful design.

We understand the need for an overture to deal with this issue and we will consider that for a future classis meeting.

In Christ,

The Delegates and Council of First CRC Sheldon

REPORT OF THE CLASSIS HEARTLAND STEWARDSHIP COMMITTEE
to
CLASSIS IN SESSION 3/8/25 - Calvary CRC, Orange City IA

Esteemed delegates:

Your Stewardship Committee met on February 3, 2025 at Dordt University. Present at the meeting were Rev. Keith Hoekstra (Home Missions liaison), Ms. Leandra Hulstein (Lay representative), Rev. John Klompier (alternate), Mr. Eric Kroese (Lay representative), Rev. Nathan Kuperus (chair), and Dr. Randy Smit, (treasurer). The meeting was opened in prayer by our chair. The committee adopted items of internal protocol, analyzed ministry shares and activity, reviewed the treasurer's report, and received an update from our Home Missions liaison. It was decided that our next meeting will be held September 3, 12:30PM at the planned Dordt Dining facility. The meeting was closed in prayer by our treasurer.

Old business involved the topic of internal protocols for the protection of our Treasurer and the good of Classis. Your committee asks our chair, who is able to review banking information, to do so before each meeting. Further, a copy of the treasurer's report shall be copied to the alternate treasurer each Spring with all meeting minutes also copied to the alternate treasurer. We believe this will aid in transparency and keep our alternate up-to-date.

We analyzed Ministry Shares and the Statement of Activity, finding both to be in good order. It was noted that \$500 for a pastor's encouragement luncheon with Mr. Colin Hanson at Dordt University was allocated to our classis "grants" line item. We remind classis committees that requests for such money are best handled via classis, not the stewardship committee.

The Treasurer's Report was in good order. Church participation has been exceptional. Some gave more this year, accounting for shortfall last year. We noted two churches who still give nothing. Our Home Missions Liaison will contact them to discern any needs and ask them how much they plan to give next year as a mark of their participation in Classis. A lay representative noted that a particular item on page two "Statement of Activities" was not 'mathing'. Our Treasurer will correct that. Discussion commenced about the report on page four, "Analysis of Ministry Shares Paid". Why are some ministries receiving 96% of ministry shares promised while other ministries receive amounts in excess of 100%? A footnote will be added to page four, explaining that because some churches do not pay their ministry shares, ordinary ministry shares could not meet their full commitment. Other churches pay their 100%, and give beyond that.

They direct these excess funds to particular ministries, as is their prerogative. The Treasurer's Report was approved.

Our Classis Home Missions liaison related upcoming costs. Two Kansas City churches are looking for a commissioned pastor and may ask CHMC for assistance. F Street and Northern Lighthouse churches each retain a student intern at \$5000 each. Sibley is receiving \$1000 grant for ESL. Churches are to be reminded that \$1000 grants for mission initiatives are available from CHMC. The CHMC is also discussing how to raise up new pastors, especially commissioned pastors. The liaison's report was received for information.

ITEMS FOR CLASSICAL INFORMATION

Your Stewardship Committee and Treasurer are working to maintain protocols, preventing financial mismanagement and keeping our alternate treasurer abreast of our work.

We remind Classis that it is not at the committee's discretion to 'release funds' outside of budgeted line items. We encourage committees to bring special requests for funds to Classis or the Classis Interim Committee.

Please note that page four the treasurer's report reflects that some ministries receive less than the 100% amount pledged by classis. This is because our Treasurer disburses ministry share commitments to ministries based on regular ministry share receipts. This year a couple of churches, comprising about 70 members of classis, have not given regular ministry shares. This requires the treasurer to adjust amounts given to each ministry. That said, other churches do pay their full commitments and provide extra, designating it to particular ministries. These ministries reflect a payment above 100%.

We thank the CHMC for considering how we can raise up new Ministers and Commissioned Pastors. Also, \$1000 missional grants are available.

ITEMS FOR CLASSICAL ACTION/RECOMMENDATION

We submit the Treasurer's Report and move to approve it with appreciation.

Respectfully submitted this February 3, 2025

Rev. John Klompfen, Committee Secretary
Stewardship Committee of Classis Heartland

Classis of the Heartland
Christian Reformed Church

Treasurer's Report
January 1 - December 31, 2024

Randy Smit, Treasurer
410 Lincoln Ave SE
Orange City, Iowa 51041

(712) 441-9303

**CLASSIS OF THE HEARTLAND
BALANCE SHEET
DECEMBER 31, 2024
WITH COMPARATIVE FIGURES AT DECEMBER 31, 2023**

	<u>2024</u>	<u>2023</u>
Assets		
Cash	\$ 131,083.50	\$ 121,598.53
Certificate of Deposit	<u>82,687.73</u>	<u>79,118.86</u>
Total Assets	<u><u>\$ 213,771.23</u></u>	<u><u>\$ 200,717.39</u></u>
Net Assets		
Temporarily Restricted Net Assets		
For Classical Home Missions Ministry	\$ 7,664.38	\$ 6,671.07
For Diaconal Ministry	16,035.30	16,035.30
For Ministry Opportunities	68,509.51	69,647.34
For Classical Expenses	41,465.31	36,672.78
For Established Church Development	30,688.69	27,732.76
For Education Committee/Discipleship	1,281.07	1,150.27
For Prayer Coordinator Conference	5,678.56	5,678.56
For Residency Program	19,020.94	14,077.01
For Student Aid	<u>23,427.47</u>	<u>23,052.30</u>
Total Temporarily Restricted Net Assets	<u>213,771.23</u>	<u>200,717.39</u>
Total Net Assets and Liabilities	<u><u>\$ 213,771.23</u></u>	<u><u>\$ 200,717.39</u></u>

**CLASSIS OF THE HEARTLAND
STATEMENT OF ACTIVITIES
FOR THE YEAR ENDED DECEMBER 31, 2024
WITH COMPARATIVE TOTALS FOR THE YEAR ENDED DECEMBER 31, 2023**

	Classical Expense	Diaconal Ministry	Established Church Dev	Education Committee	Student Aid	Classical Home Missions	Ministry Opportunities	Residency Program	Prayer Coordinator	Other	2024 Total	2023 Total
Revenues												
Ministry Shares	\$16,815.00	\$0.00	\$2,955.93	\$130.80	\$375.17	\$993.31	\$9,862.17	\$4,943.93	\$0.00	\$278,891.80	\$314,968.11	\$313,059.41
Student Aid Reimbursement											0.00	\$-
Friendship Balance												
Interest	4,066.76										4,066.76	1,962.57
Expenses												
Total Revenue	20,881.76	-	2,955.93	130.80	375.17	993.31	9,862.17	4,943.93	-	278,891.80	319,034.87	315,021.98
Classis Meeting Meals & Stipends	1,750.76										1,750.76	1,750.76
Travel Expense/Mileage	2,447.17										2,447.17	2,447.17
Stated Clerk Stipend	3,500.00										3,500.00	3,500.00
Treasurer Stipend	3,250.00										3,250.00	3,250.00
Meeting Coordinator Stipend	2,000.00										2,000.00	2,000.00
Safe Church Coordinator Stipend	1,000.00										1,000.00	1,000.00
Miscellaneous	600.00										600.00	600.00
Supplies	674.98										674.98	674.98
Postage	274.32										274.32	274.32
Stated Clerk Conference	0.00										-	-
Accounting Fees	92.00						11,000.00				92.00	92.00
Grants	500.00										11,500.00	22,500.00
Student Aid											0.00	0.00
Payments to Agencies	16,089.23										278,891.80	259,386.63
Total Expenses	16,089.23	-	-	-	-	-	11,000.00	-	-	278,891.80	305,981.03	297,475.86
Net Increase (Decrease) In Net Assets	4,792.53	-	2,955.93	130.80	375.17	993.31	(1,137.83)	4,943.93	-	-	13,053.84	20,286.35
Net Assets at Beginning of Year	\$36,672.78	\$16,035.30	\$27,732.76	\$1,150.27	\$23,052.30	\$6,671.07	\$69,647.34	\$14,077.01	\$5,678.56	\$0.00	200,717.39	153,694.94
Net Assets at End of Year	\$41,465.31	\$16,035.30	\$30,688.69	\$1,281.07	\$23,427.47	\$7,664.38	\$68,509.51	\$19,020.94	\$5,678.56	\$0.00	\$213,771.23	\$173,981.29

Classis of the Heartland
Analysis of Ministry Shares Received
2024

Church	Members	Total Ministry Share	Paid in 2024	% Paid
Hawarden	70	8,103.20	12,212.00	151%
Hospers	86	9,955.36	8,664.52	87%
Hull First	375	43,410.00	40,961.24	94%
Hull Hope	179	20,721.04	20,040.69	97%
Ireton	106	12,270.56	12,270.56	100%
KC-Pathway	50	5,788.00	0.00	0%
Le Mars	73	8,450.48	8,797.00	104%
Lincoln-Northern Lighthouse	67	7,755.92	6,690.16	86%
New City Church	20	2,315.20	0.00	0%
Ocheyedan	113	13,080.88	13,080.88	100%
Omaha	85	9,839.60	9,492.32	96%
Orange City Calvary	311	36,001.36	45,895.49	127%
Orange City First	210	24,309.60	25,186.80	104%
Orange City Immanuel	203	23,499.28	23,499.28	100%
Orange City Living Water	261	30,213.36	30,086.55	100%
Sanborn	113	13,080.88	13,080.88	100%
Sheldon First	139	16,090.64	15,510.50	96%
Sheldon Immanuel	203	23,499.28	23,499.24	100%
Sibley	52	6,019.52	6,000.00	100%
Totals	2,716	314,404.16	314,968.11	100%

Classis of the Heartland
Analysis of Ministry Shares Paid
2024

Cause	Total Ministry Share	Paid in 2024	% Paid
Amistad Cristiana	12,076.98	13,084.05	108%
Areopagus ISU	6,378.78	6,267.64	98%
Classical Expense	16,296.00	16,815.00	103%
Classical Home Missions Committee	1,032.08	993.31	96%
Cornerstone Prison Ministry	7,686.28	8,876.09	115%
Dordt University	187,947.20	182,413.25	97%
Education Committee	135.80	130.80	96%
Established Church Development	3,069.08	2,955.93	96%
Geneva Campus Ministries U of I	5,133.24	5,241.60	102%
Laotian Ministry - Sioux City	18,142.88	17,473.64	96%
Lincoln - Chaplain	10,239.32	10,420.91	102%
Lincoln- F Street Leadership	5,133.24	10,421.30	203%
Ministry Opportunity Fund	10,239.32	9,862.17	96%
Pathway - Argentine	5,133.24	4,943.93	96%
Residency Program	5,133.24	4,943.93	96%
Student Aid Fund	135.80	375.17	276%
Youth Consultant	20,505.80	19,749.39	96%
Total Classical Ministry Shares	314,418.28	314,968.11	100%

The Council of First CRC Orange City overtures Classis Heartland to appoint a classical study committee to review the nature, function, and authority of the offices of Elder and Deacon, including their unique roles and distinctives, with the goal of providing Elder and Deacon training and training material to aid the churches in this critical task. The review should include the authority of the offices and their unique roles in the life of the council, church, and classis. The training should include a review of the Covenant for Officebearers, the Creeds and Confessions, Church Polity (including the Church Order), and the practical aspects of ministry including visitation, assessing needs, discipleship, and discipline.

Classis could consider requesting a joint study committee with other nearby Classis to both share the labor and to include a broader representation which could encompass more expertise and resources.

Grounds:

1. Scripture, our Confessions, the Church Order, and the CRC form of ordination/installation all hold a very high view of the Offices of the church. While we take seriously the training for ministers and commissioned pastors, we have often neglected the training of elders and deacons. The act of discipling an individual prior to ordination for all offices, including elder and deacon, shows the church respecting this high view of office and honoring those being ordained into them by preparing those individuals for service in Christ's kingdom.
2. Such a task, done well, is too substantial for an individual congregation to take on.
3. Our Reformed Heritage has a high view of church office and expects well trained and equipped leaders for the church.
4. We cannot properly equip elders and deacons without first rightly reviewing and assessing their particular callings and unique contributions.
5. Both educational materials for officebearer training and classis run training sessions would be of immense value to the local church for generations to come, significantly strengthening their ministry and that of the Classis with well-equipped and trained leaders.
6. Many other Reformed denominations, and in particular of Presbyterian cousins, have a long standing practice of such training with great benefit. We can learn from them (and surely borrow from well designed and tested practices).
7. Many of these resources already exist and could be reviewed and collated or summarized for practical use in each of our congregations.

The council of First CRC Orange City overtures Classis Heartland to Overture Synod to add a supplement to Church Order article 3 to include a discipleship/educational component for all offices, including that of Elder and Deacon. This training would benefit the church and the individual by equipping individuals with tools needed to fulfill the tasks of the office to which they have been called. Therefore, we recommend Synod adopt the following addition to the Church Order Supplement to Article 3:

“The church shall complete training prior to election or ordination for all officebearers, including a study of the Covenant for Officebearers, the Creeds and Confessions, church polity, and the ministry tasks for their particular office so as to ensure individuals are prepared and equipped for the weighty tasks each office requires.”

Grounds:

1. Scripture, our Confessions, the Church Order, and the CRC form of ordination/installation all hold a very high view of the Offices of the church. While we take seriously the training for ministers and commissioned pastors, we have often neglected the training of elders and deacons. The act of discipling an individual prior to ordination for all offices, including elder and deacon, shows the church respecting this high view of office and honoring those being ordained into them by preparing those individuals for service in Christ's kingdom.
2. On the topic of equipping the saints, H. De Moor says, “the offices... are organs of Christ's gracious rule; they constitute the presence of Christ enabling his people to fulfill their calling; their authority is an administered authority which remains the authority of the Lord of the church; (and they exist) to equip the saints for ministry. (*Acts of Synod 1999* p. 286)
3. The official acts of the church can be performed by elders in “circumstances of special need.” (*Acts of Synod 1999* P. 288- 290) If in some circumstances the official acts of the church can be performed by elders, there is a definite need for discipling and further training for the office. This is all the more critical in a period where there is a growing shortage of ministers, where elders will be increasingly called upon to perform more acts of ministry.
4. For some individual the issue is not a lack of willingness to serve in the offices of elder or deacon, rather, a sense of inadequacy as they feel ill-equipped for the tasks required by the office.
5. Due to a shift in culture, there is a growing lack of biblical and theological knowledge in the membership of our churches. To educate office bearers through discipleship to properly prepare them for service in Christ's church is critical.
6. Educational materials for officebearer training would be of immense value to the local church for generations to come, significantly strengthening their ministry with well-equipped and trained leaders.
7. Many other Reformed and Presbyterian denominations have a long standing practice of such training with great benefit. We can learn from them (and surely borrow from well designed and tested practices).
8. A person's faith is not fully formed once that person becomes a member of the church or once that person is nominated to serve in the office of elder or deacon. If we take training seriously for secular vocations, how much more for spiritual vocations. Those called to fill the office of Elder and Deacon should be eager to grow and develop in faith formation that they may serve Christ and his church to the best of their ability, to God's glory and his people's good.
9. Many of these resources already exist, but the local church often lacks the time or expertise to assemble them in a cohesive plan. They could be reviewed and collated or summarized for practical use in each of our congregations with long term benefit.

The council of First CRC Orange City overtures Classis Heartland to Overture Synod to direct the office of the General Secretary to direct Thrive ministries to focus on officebearer training in the coming year, including collating and developing materials to be used at the classical and congregational level that incorporates the Covenant for Officebearers, the Creeds and Confessions, Church Polity (including the Church Order), and the practical aspects of ministry including visitation, assessing needs, discipleship, and discipline. It should also include a review of the unique nature of the individual offices and their respective spheres.

Grounds:

1. Scripture, our Confessions, the Church Order, and the CRC form of ordination/installation all hold a very high view of the Offices of the church. While we take seriously the training for ministers and commissioned pastors, we have often neglected the training of elders and deacons. The act of discipling an individual prior to ordination for all offices, including elder and deacon, shows the church respecting this high view of office and honoring those being ordained into them by preparing those individuals for service in Christ's kingdom.
2. Such a task, done well, is too substantial for an individual congregation to take on.
3. Our Reformed Heritage has a high view of church office and expects well trained and equipped leaders for the church.
4. Educational materials for officebearer training would be of immense value to the local church for generations to come, significantly strengthening their ministry with well-equipped and trained leaders.
5. Many other Reformed and Presbyterian denominations have a long standing practice of such training with great benefit. We can learn from them (and surely borrow from well designed and tested practices).
6. Many of these resources already exist and could be reviewed and collated or summarized for practical use in each of our congregations.
7. Due to a shift in culture, there is a growing lack of biblical and theological knowledge in the membership of our churches. To educate office bearers through discipleship to properly prepare them for service in Christ's church is critical.

The Council of Sibley Christian Reformed Church of Sibley, IA overtures Classis Heartland to send the following overture to Synod 2025.

I. Introductory comments:

The synodical mandate of *The Banner* is guided by four main tasks:¹

- Inform readers about what is happening in the CRC as well as the church at large,
- Provide articles that edify and encourage Christian living,
- Stimulate critical thinking about issues related to the Christian faith and the culture of which we are a part in a way that encourages biblical thinking about these issues, in line with our confessional heritage; and
- Offer tools to help readers find fresh awareness to seek, learn, worship, and serve as Reformed Christians in contemporary society.

The Banner holds general responsibilities to these various groups of people:

- To its subscribers and readers in the Christian Reformed Church
- To the ecclesiastical assemblies (councils, classes, synod) of the CRC
- To the official agencies of the CRC

Summary: According to the synodical mandate *The Banner* is a CRC publication intended for CRC members. As stated on *The Banner* website cited above, “*The Banner* is a publication of the Christian Reformed Church in North America rather than an independent magazine.”

II. Background

As directed by Synod 2014, the Board of Trustees (BOT) (now a function of the Council of Delegates (COD)) was called to review the 1998 synodical mandate concerning *The Banner*.² One of the grounds for this was “It is appropriate to review mandates from time to time.” The BOT recommended changes to the synodical mandate of *The Banner* to give greater clarification, which were approved at Synod 2015.³ What is highlighted in the overtures concerning *The Banner* in 2014-15 was concern for *The Banner*’s adherence to the publication’s synodical mandate. What was not addressed in this review of the synodical mandate was the online presence of *The Banner*.

As reported to Synod 2024, *The Banner* website averages more than 85,000 pageviews per month, *The Banner* app has more than 10,000 pageviews per month, and there are increased efforts to engage on various social media platforms such as Facebook and X (formerly called Twitter).⁴

Upon writing this overture, *The Banner*’s Facebook page states that it is “The Official Magazine of the Christian Reformed Church.” To the casual observer of this page, this would imply that *The Banner* represents the voice of the denomination on a public platform. *The Banner* also has a presence on X. Again, *The Banner* represents the denomination on a public

¹ The Synodical Mandate and General Responsibilities for *The Banner* can be found on The Banner’s website: <https://www.thebanner.org/content/synodical-mandate> or *Agenda for Synod 2015*, p. 49-50.

² *Acts of Synod 2014*, p. 573-574.

³ *Agenda for Synod 2015*, p. 49-50 and *Acts of Synod 2015*, pg. 641.

⁴ *Agenda for Synod 2024*, p. 51-52.

platform. The reality is that people outside of the denomination view the publication as officially representing the denomination.

The Banner has indicated the publication's commitment that it is a place where controversial articles can be posted.⁵ This is to spark conversation and be a place where the many voices of the denomination can be heard. *The Banner* has also committed to be an "anti-echo chamber" publication. This is to create a "kitchen table" location for members of the denomination to have their diverse voices heard.⁶

Concerns about the balance and representation of the many diverse voices of the denomination have grown in the last decade. There are concerns with how *The Banner* represents the denomination on public platforms despite the lack of clear guidance on this in the synodical mandate. Sibley Christian Reformed Church's council reached out to *The Banner*, specifically Editor in Chief Shiao Chong, with their concerns of *The Banner's* presence on social media and how the publication represents the denomination. Chong's response indicated that it is not the responsibility of *The Banner* to promote the official positions of the denomination. According to the synodical mandate, this is of course correct. This gives *The Banner* license to represent the denomination without any mandates to do so or for upholding the positions of the denomination.

Division and a loss of trust in our denominational institutions is a reality we are facing as a denomination, reflected in part by reduced giving. There have been repeated calls for unity and rightly so. Now is the time to rebuild trust and unity within the denomination. Taking steps regarding our denominational publication is just one small part of that. The COD reported a decision made in May of 2024 that *The Banner* should become self-sustaining by 2027.⁷ The goal is to remove ministry shares from the publication. A problem that could occur with this transition is a greater sense of freedom for the publication to adhere to the publication's commitments, which would not properly address the growing concern and loss of trust.

Summary: There are concerns with how *The Banner* adheres to its current synodical mandate. With these concerns in mind, one wonders how *The Banner* can also represent the denomination on a public platform, despite not having a synodical mandate to do so or to hold *The Banner* accountable. The commitment to publish controversial articles and be an anti-echo chamber conflicts with the reality of representing the CRC in public spaces via social media. The kitchen table analogy implies a space of privacy where different opinions can be heard. A publication that is read by those outside of the denomination and which posts in public spaces negates this "kitchen table" analogy.

III. Overture

Classis Heartland overtures Synod 2025 to Amend the Synodical Mandate and Guidelines of *The Banner* to reflect its representative public nature as follows [See Appendix for reference of the current synodical mandate]:

⁵ Shiao Chong, "Why We Publish 'Controversial' Article," *The Banner*, September 2022. Also found at this link: <https://www.thebanner.org/columns/2022/09/why-we-publish-controversial-articles>

⁶ Shiao Chong, "Anti-echo Chamber," *The Banner*, November 2024. Also found at this link: <https://www.thebanner.org/columns/2024/11/anti-echo-chamber>

⁷ *Acts of Synod 2024*, p. 624.

1. That under the Banner's Synodical Mandate, to add to this section a 5th item that says:
(5) represent the denomination publicly to the broader Christian Church and to the world at large by speaking from a distinctly Reformed perspective in line with our Confessions and Synodical decisions, representing the CRCNA as its official publication.
2. That under "General Responsibilities", point A.2 be amended to say,
(2) Presenting to the readers the issues pertinent to the life of the church and encouraging biblical and Reformed thinking about these issues."
3. That under "General Responsibilities," to add to this section a 5th item that says,
D. To represent the CRCNA to the broader church and world from a faithful Reformed perspective according to our Confessions and Synodical decisions and as its representative publication, providing clear statements regarding the official position of the denomination in any article or report dealing with controversial or diverse viewpoints,"
4. That under "Freedom of Editorial Staff" point E, to amend it to say,
E. Provide responsible criticism and evaluation of trends within the church and society and of actions, decisions, policies, programs, etc., being considered by or already approved by ecclesiastical assemblies and agencies, with proper acknowledgment and respect for the official positions of the CRCNA and within the confines of our Confessional covenant commitments."

Grounds:

1. The synodical mandate has not addressed the publication's presence on social media. The mandate does not include guidelines for representing the denomination outside of the members of the denomination. The reality is that those outside the denomination already consider the publication as a representation of the denomination at large. In a digital age, the publication is readily available to anyone globally with internet access. The guidelines should reflect this reality.
2. *The Banner* has committed to publishing controversial articles that do not represent the denomination. While it is necessary for any publication to consider and allow for diverse viewpoints, as the magazine of the CRCNA it should represent our denomination's official confessional and biblical positions faithfully and acknowledge any articles which are in conflict with them clearly so as to avoid the current confusion within and outside our denomination.
3. Since *The Banner* does represent the CRC, the publication should do so in a way that accurately fulfills the synodical mandate to think critically on various issues in ways that are in line with the existing regulations under Editorial Integrity "A. The Banner materials should be faithful to Scripture and the confessions."
4. In the midst of growing distrust, now is the time to work toward unity.

5. *The Banner* is working toward financial independence from ministry shares. This transition time is a good time to review the mandate. It is appropriate to review synodical mandates from time to time.

APPENDIX

The Mandate of *The Banner*

Adopted by Synod 2015 (Acts of Synod 2015, p. 641)

The Banner is a publication of the Christian Reformed Church in North America rather than an independent magazine. Accordingly, the editorial staff, led by the synodically appointed editor in chief, is accountable to the church for the style and content of this magazine. This accountability to the church is realized in a number of diverse, sometimes overlapping, and at times conflicting responsibilities to various groups and structures within the denomination.

All these responsibilities are governed by *The Banner's* synodical mandate to

- (1) inform readers about what is happening in the CRC as well as the church at large,
- (2) provide articles that edify and encourage Christian living,
- (3) stimulate critical thinking about issues related to the Christian faith and the culture of which we are a part in a way that encourages biblical thinking about these issues, in line with our confessional heritage; and
- (4) offer tools to help readers find fresh awareness to seek, learn, worship, and serve as Reformed Christians in contemporary society.

Guidelines for *The Banner's* Accountability and Freedom

I. Lines of accountability

Lines of accountability have been established by previous decisions of synod and CRC Publications. For the editorial staff, accountability runs through the editor in chief, who is directly accountable to the following:

- A. The Council of Delegates, the body mandated by synod to publish this denominational periodical. This accountability includes the following:
 1. Reporting periodically on editorial activities and decisions.
 2. Reporting reactions, criticisms, and suggestions received from readers and churches.
 3. Recommending needed changes in policies and procedures.
 4. Carrying out all approved policies and procedures.
- B. The executive director, the administrative head appointed to manage and coordinate the work of denominational staff. This accountability includes the following:
 1. Keeping him/her informed of possibly sensitive or controversial issues being addressed and listening seriously to any advice offered regarding such issues. The executive director should, at his/her discretion, consult with other CRC ministry leaders.
 2. Being fiscally responsible.
 3. Following approved personnel procedures.
 4. Working cooperatively with Ministry Support Services.

II. General responsibilities

In addition to this direct accountability, the editorial staff carries general responsibilities inherent in the nature of a denominational magazine:

- A. To its subscribers and readers in the Christian Reformed Church for:
 1. Reporting in an honest and unbiased manner information about activities affecting the church.
 2. Presenting to the readers the issues pertinent to the life of the church in a way that shows the diverse positions held within the church and encourages biblical and Reformed thinking about these issues.
 3. Edifying readers so as to encourage them to grow in Christian maturity and faith and to live out their faith in daily life.
 4. Providing a vehicle through which church members can express their views and opinions on pertinent issues.
- B. To the ecclesiastical assemblies (councils, classes, synod) of the CRC for:
 1. Keeping church members informed about important decisions taken.
 2. Reporting significant trends or policy directions.
- C. To the official agencies of the CRC for:
 1. Presenting and explaining their ministry on behalf of the churches, making sure the information disseminated is accurate.
 2. Keeping church members informed about important changes in their programs and personnel.
 3. Encouraging church members to support and participate in the ministries being carried out.

III. Freedom of editorial staff

In order that it may carry on these diverse responsibilities, the editorial staff must be granted the freedom to do the following:

- A. Inform its readers and subscribers about what is occurring in the church (including relevant problems, needs, and concerns) even though some persons, congregations, or agencies may prefer that such information not be disseminated.
- B. Investigate and determine the facts regarding any occurrence in the church that appears to merit reporting to readers.
- C. Lead and encourage a responsible discussion of the issues important to the life of the church through editorial comment and publication of articles that represent the various views held within the church.
- D. Permit people of the church to voice their views and reactions even though some of these views may be unacceptable to others in the church.
- E. Provide a biblically prophetic and responsible criticism and evaluation of trends within the church and society and of actions, decisions, policies, programs, etc., being considered by or already approved by ecclesiastical assemblies and agencies.

IV. Editorial integrity

The following guidelines for editorial judgment will be used in determining what materials (editorials, articles, news stories, etc.) are published in the pages of *The Banner*:

- A. *The Banner* materials should be faithful to Scripture and the confessions.
- B. *The Banner* materials should edify and educate readers.
- C. Truth must be written but always in love.
- D. Criticism must be constructive and fair.
- E. Editing of materials should always maintain the intent of the author while making the writing more effective in presenting the author's views.
- F. No author should be demeaned by editorial comment or by the way an article, column, letter, etc., is presented.
- G. Selection of authors should aim at equity of representation (U.S./Canada, minorities, men/women, younger/older, conservative/progressive, etc.).
- H. Nothing deliberately inflammatory, insulting, or divisive should be published.
- I. Nothing that serves the interest solely of one individual, organization, or group in contrast to other individuals, organizations, or groups or in neglect of the general interest of the churches should be published.
- J. *The Banner* should give preference to CRC authors.
- K. Heads/titles should not be misleading or sensational; they should accurately reflect the heart of the story/article.

Background:

The last number of years have proved that ministers of the Word are retiring from full-time ministry at a far greater rate than ministers of the Word are ordained into full-time ministry. The latest Forum published by Calvin Theological Seminary (Winter 2025) brings to light other circumstances that cause ordained ministers to transition out of ministry and points out the lack of individuals to fill those positions.

Overture:

Therefore, we overture Classis Heartland to Overture Synod 2025 to encourage every church within the CRCNA to identify, train, and maintain an individual with a license to exhort in their church by Synod 2027. Such an individual is to meet all the requirements of CO article 43b.

Grounds:

1. Raising up leaders in the faith who can faithfully preach and teach God's Word for the purpose of continuing discipleship is important for the faithful growth of the local church.
2. It is necessary for the work of local pastors and classis to aid in identifying and raising leaders for the body of Christ, by praying, training, and encouraging the gifts of ministry.
3. God's Word commands that every church have a teaching elder who leads the flock of Christ.
4. This effort leads to greater accountability for the local church leaders' faith and life.
5. This encouragement provides an opportunity to establish a disciplined course of training for the discipleship of all license to exhort holders and commissioned pastors and the motivation to seek further ordination in the CRCNA.
6. This effort provides opportunities for more churches to be planted in the local classis.

Sincerely submitted,

The Council of First CRC, Hull IA

Report for Classis Heartland (March 2025)

Living Water Community Church of Orange City Oversight Committee
Classis Heartland Report
March 8, 2025

Living Water Community Church of Orange City Oversight Committee (LWOC) was formed after the Heartland Classis meeting on March 9, 2024 with the mandate *“to work with the council and explore emotional health during the transition. As well as possibly looking into hiring a Strategic Transitional Minister (STM) or other tool to address issues the council is facing.”*

The committee is made up of four members: Rev. Nathan Kuperus (chair), Rev. Brian Dunn, Rev. Cody Statema (church counselor; clerk), and Rev. Keith Hoekstra. Since the September 2024 meeting of classis, the committee has met two times with Pastor Cal Hoogendoorn, the Strategic Transitional Minister (STM) at Living Water Orange City.

Over the past several months Pastor Cal has been working diligently with Living Water Community Church and a transition team in leading the congregation through a series of focus groups prayerfully considering the past and hopes of the church. Many good and encouraging conversations took place in the leadership and church as a whole that lead to repentance, expressions of hope for future, and a recommitment to Christ’s work and each other.

Living Water Orange City recognizes the pains that they have been through and desires to lead with a Shepherding heart that was perhaps neglected in the past. On January 5, the Living Water Orange City celebrated a special service of Renewal, Reconciliation, and Recommitting with two professions of faith and a meal together. It was a positive moment in the life of the church.

Living Water Orange City desires to emphasize a shepherding character in its council and is making some structure changes to highlight that value in their elder and deacon bodies as they function as the council.

In all, the committee has recognized that Living Water Orange City is well along the way in healing process after the events of the last several years. Humility and repentance have been pursued, and the church has grown in understanding its need for the gospel, for prayer, and for each other. We are thankful for the health and positivity that the congregation is exhibiting and its enthusiasm for the gospel. While this transition was not an easy one, it allowed the church and leadership to do some needed soul searching and now enter into a time of growth.

Lastly, the committee wants to recognize Pastor Cal and thank him for the thoughtfulness and care with which he has been leading Living Water Orange City as their STM. We believe the Lord has used his leadership to prepare Living Water Orange City to be ready to receive and work with a new pastor.

Recommendation: The committee (LWCCOCOC) recommends that Classis Heartland permit Living Water Orange City to form a search committee to call a pastor.

Recommendation: The committee recommends that Classis Heartland consider the committee to have completed its work, entrusting continued oversight to church visitors, church counselor and regional pastor as necessary.

Classical Interim Committee- Heartland

October 2, 2024

Immanuel CRC, Sheldon

1. Membership: All Present: Rev. Brian Hofman (Chair), Rev. Nathan Kuperus (Clerk), Rev. Aaron Greydanus (Vice-chair)-via phone call, Mr. Pete Van Velzen (Stated Clerk), visiting: Rev. Muyskens (former chair)
2. CIC thanks Rev. Muyskens for serving his serving on the CIC after he gives a final report on the extra duties of the chair of CIC.
3. CIC is made aware that some churches in classis are looking at forming commissioned pastor positions in the months ahead.
4. CIC determines the roles of the new CIC members. Rev. Hofman-chair, Rev. Greydanus- vice-chair, Rev. Kuperus- clerk, Mr. Van Velzen- stated clerk, ex officio.
5. CIC asks Rev. Stephen Terpstra to be the pastoral mentor for Mr. Keith Hoekstra after he is ordained.
6. CIC instructs Rev. Hofman to inform Rev. Brian Dunn (Regional Pastor-North) that organizing pastoral mentorship is ordinarily the work of the regional pastors. CIC leaves the rest of this work to the regional pastor.
7. CIC instructs Mr. Van Velzen (Stated Clerk) to receive the proper paperwork regarding Mr. Hoekstra's ordination from the former stated clerk and submit it to Thrive including the decided ordination date and pastoral mentor.

Classical Interim Committee- Heartland

February 12, 2025

First CRC, Orange City

1. Membership: Rev. Brian Hofman (Chair), Rev. Nathan Kuperus (Clerk), Rev. Aaron Greydanus (Vice-chair), Mr. Pete Van Velzen (Stated Clerk),
2. Invited Guests: Rev. Keith Hoekstra (vice-chair of upcoming classis meeting), Rev. Cody Statema (church visitor), Rev. Chad Van Ginkel (church visitor)-via phone call.
3. CIC determines an appeal request does not meet the requirements of an appeal filed in good order according to Art 30 of the church order. This determination was made after communication with Mrs. Kathy Smith (church policy expert of the CRC)
4. CIC begins preparation for March classis meeting (Rev. Hoekstra is welcomed back.)
5. CIC notes September meeting of classis will be hosted by Prairie Lane CRC, Omaha.
6. CIC reviews vacant churches- Hawarden CRC; Hospers CRC; Living Water, Orange City; New City CRC, Kansas City.
7. CIC will meet with the CIC of Classis Iakota on February 26, 11 AM. at First CRC, Sioux Center to discuss things of mutual regional interest.

Stated Clerk Report Classis Heartland, Spring of 2025

From Phillip Westra, the previous clerk:

Following our last classis meeting I filled out the proper paperwork for Keith Hoekstra's Ministry of the Word for the denomination, processed the synodical deputy forms, and updated the servants of classis document and uploaded it to the website. I had a problem with my first minutes file and had to rework them due to a synchronization problem between my laptop and desktop. I did get the minutes finished and uploaded to the website, though not as timely as I hoped to. With the transition to a new clerk, I reviewed and made sure I am giving things as organized as possible to Pete Van Velzen. I updated our website and recently have been in touch with the new person working with denominational governance, to ensure they have what they need from our classis, including the appropriate information about special meetings the last two years. Two things I am working on before our next classis meeting are: 1) review and update as needed our Rules of Procedure document, reflecting a couple recent decisions, to have CIC review it and upload it to our website, and 2) move the filing cabinet with our classis' archives to First CRC in Sheldon for the new clerk to manage.

From Pete Van Velzen:

1. Met with Phillip Westra on December 23 and January 24 to begin the process of transitioning to the new clerk position. We emailed and talked on the phone several additional times.
2. Met with Kevin Muyskens on January 27, February 10 and February 24 to plan for the spring classis meeting.
3. Communicated meeting hosting information to Calvary CRC.
4. Emailed information to our churches about Synod 2025 plans and requests for nominees before our classis meeting.
5. Arranged for synodical deputies to serve at our March 8 meeting.
6. Attended CIC meetings on October 2 and February 12.
7. Compiled reports and communications into a meeting agenda for March 8.
8. Emailed relevant updates and requests for credentials, reports, overtures, and other communications for our March 8 classis meeting.
9. Participated in a joint CIC meeting between Classis Heartland and Classis Iakota in Sioux Center on February 26.

Respectfully submitted,
Pete Van Velzen

**REPORT OF THE CLASSICAL MINISTRY LEADERSHIP TEAM
TO CLASSIS IN SESSION, Saturday, March 8, 2025**

WRITTEN REPORT

Esteemed Delegates:

1. We received one request for financial assistance for the 2025-2026 academic year. We are still reviewing this request.
2. Committee met with Matt Dengler who was hired by 1st CRC of Hospers, IA as their full time pulpit supply. Mr. Dengler will be attending Kairos in Sioux Falls, SD working towards his Masters of Divinity and ordination in the CRC under article 6.
3. We reviewed the status of ministry leads Matt Rogers and Scott Macdougall of New City Church of KS.
4. Randy Smit reports a \$23,427.47 year-end balance for student aid for 2024.

ITEMS FOR CLASSICAL INFORMATION

LICENSED TO EXHORT IN CLASSIS HEARTLAND

Mr. Dan Tracy (9/2025) (712) 395-8640 dctracy@hotmail.com

Mr. Matt Dengler (9/2025) (712) 221-5227 hatwiththematt@gmail.com

NOTE: Ministers, either retired or serving in non-parish ministry, within Classis Heartland and Iakota and may be available for pulpit supply. Contact information can be requested from the Classis Clerk.

Full list is available on www.classisheartland.com/servants-of-classis

Classis Heartland

classisheartlandstatedclerk@gmail.com

1. Rev. Sam Keyzer
2. Rev Steve Boersma

Classis Iakota.

iakotaclerk@outlook.com

ITEMS FOR CLASSICAL ACTION

1. Request Approval for examination of Matt Dengler for Commissioned Pastor at 1st CRC of Hospers, IA under article 24-b.
2. That classis approve our report.

Respectfully Submitted February 5, 2025
Rev. Chad Van Ginkel, Chair,
Classical Ministry Leadership Team

Agreement for Use of Art. 24b

Agreement between Matthew Reed Dinger (candidate),
First Christian Reformed of Hesperis (church) and Heartland (classis)
Regarding the use of Article 24b of the Christian Reformed Church

I, Matthew in accepting the call to become a pastor at
First Christian Reformed of Hesperis in Classis Heartland agree to
prepare for ordination of Minister of the Word by:

- () Enrolling in an MDiv program at Calvin Theological Seminary
- () Enrolling in the EPMC program because I have completed an MDiv from a seminary other than Calvin Theological Seminary.
- () Enrolling in an MDiv program at Grace Falls Seminary seminary, then enrolling in the EPMC program.
(Knox)

I commit to make diligent progress towards this learning plan over the course of a 5 year term.
I understand that I will be held accountable to make progress towards completion of this plan by

_____ (reviewing body) and after _____ years, consideration will be made to the potential of extending this term call.

*Signature of applicant: [Signature] Date 1/29/25

*Signature of local church council rep: _____ Date _____

*Signature of classis rep: [Signature] Date 2-4-25

*By typing your name in the signature section, you understand that this form of electronic signature has the same effect as a manual signature.

(Please submit a copy of this completed form to the CRC Office of Candidacy,
slaclear@crcna.org)

Council Recommendation Form for Potential Seminary Student

This portion is to be completed by the applicant and then given to the pastor or clerk of the council (board or governing body) of his or her church:

Applicant's Name: Matthew Reed Dangler

Ministry/Career Goals:

To become a pastor in the Christian Reformed Church
serving in Hospice

Are you a professing member of a Christian Reformed Church? Yes

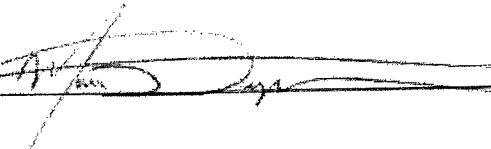
If "yes," give the date of your profession and the congregation:

Profession of Faith: May 2006 Dean First Reformed
Joined Hospice CRC October 2021

If "no," please provide reason:

Check one of the following boxes and sign below:

- I waive my right to view this recommendation
 I do not waive my right to view this recommendation

Applicant's Signature: 

Date: 1/29/25

PHONE
313.276.3954 x2179

EMAIL
candidacy@crcha.org

WEBSITE
crcha.org/Candidacy



Candidacy
Committee

Proposed Minister's Package for Matt Dengler

Salary: \$43,000

Benefits:

- *Mileage at \$.65 per mile
- *All Housing and Utilities provided by use of Church parsonage (not to include cable or livestreaming TV services)
- * 50% of Tuition for Christian education for high school students
- * Two weeks vacation
- * Assist with schooling charges(whatever amount that classis doesn't pay) up to \$4,000 per year
- *Will pay for health insurance up to \$500 per month, capped at \$6000 per year
- *Book allowance up to \$1200 per year
- **Church will need to pay half of the Social Security until he is an ordained pastor
- *Based on 8 services per month until ordained pastor

Committee Report to Classis

REPORT OF THE –Classical Home Missions Committee TO CLASSIS IN SESSION, - Saturday, March 8, 2025 AT –Calvary Christian Reformed Church Orange City, IA

Report filed: - February 12, 2025

Esteemed Delegates:

The Classical Home Missions Committee convened subsequent to the most recent Classis meeting, on January 10, 2025, at Dordt University, in attendance at that meeting were Kevin Muyskens, Keith Hoekstra, Allan Kramer, Mark Volkers, Gary Hibma, and Jeff Heerspink via zoom. The meeting was opened with prayer, held in accordance with the requirements of church order for classical meetings, and closed with prayer.

ITEMS FROM CLASSICAL HOME MISSIONS COMMITTEE MEETINGS

The committee continues to desire to encourage our congregations to utilize ECD grants to use for the purposes of outreach and ministry within their communities.

The committee also desires to be intentional and bold in seeking church plant opportunities within our served communities. The committee has engaged the conversation of desiring to connect with our surrounding classes in order to unite for the purpose of church planting.

The committee continues to seek to highlight things that are going on in our congregations through video presentations to encourage each other and spur on effective ways of connecting for the purpose of the gospel.

The committee continues to connect with ministries that we partner with in the work of the gospel, such as the campus ministries of Areopagus (Iowa State) and Geneva (University of Iowa), Youthfront in Argentine, KS, as well as Cornerstone Prison ministries.

ITEMS FOR CLASSICAL INFORMATION

The Committee approved the following regarding the subjects of the meeting outlined previously.

- a. Approved the application for residency of Eric DeGarmo in connection with Northern Lighthouse in Lincoln.
- b. Approved a video project highlighting a church planting conference to engage the classis in intentional planting conversations.

ITEMS FOR CLASSICAL ACTION / RECOMMENDATIONS

The Classical Home Missions Committee would ask that the Classis approve the work of the committee as presented in this report. We would encourage the churches of our classis to examine the ways in which they are seeing God move, and share those with the committee in order that we can document and encourage each other given the opportunity to share through presentations at future classis meetings. It is our desire also for the members of classis be prayerful and intentional in seeking to be missional as congregations and classis members.

Respectfully Submitted this – February 12, 2025
Pastor Keith Hoekstra
Pastor Keith Hoekstra

Resonate™

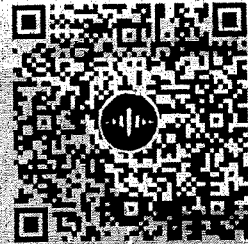
GLOBAL MISSION

Your Church is Not Alone—Resonate is Here to Walk with You

Your church is not alone in living out God's mission. Resonate is here to walk alongside you, providing support, resources, and connections to help your congregation live and share the gospel—both in your neighborhood and around the world.

With six regional teams across the U.S. and Canada, Resonate is ready to listen, encourage, and equip your church for mission. As your Central USA Regional Team, we're here to talk with you and explore how God is at work. Whether you're discerning next steps or looking for practical support, here's how we can walk alongside your church:

- Coaching for pastors and ministry leaders
- Connecting you with missionaries serving overseas
- Partnering with church planters in your own community
- Providing global volunteer opportunities
- Engaging younger generations in mission and discipleship
- Helping your church live out the gospel right where you are



Let's start the conversation. How can we support your church on mission today? Scan the QR code to download your Witness Conversation Cards—a simple tool to help your church reflect on what it means to live on mission and take the next step!

Your Central USA Team



Brad Meinders
Regional Leader
bmeinders@crcna.org



Marianne Giebel
Admin Assistant
mgiebel@crcna.org



Dave Katsma
Local Mission Leader
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Mac Sore
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Jeff Heerspink
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Elaine Lee
Global Coffee Break
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Engaging People. Embracing Christ.

Resonate™
GLOBAL MISSION



A Ministry of the Christian Reformed Church

CAMPUS MINISTRY
Areopagus

410 Lincoln Ave Se
Orange City, IA 51041

24 January 2025

Dear Classis Heartland,

Warmest greetings from sub-zero Ames!

Areopagus celebrated the New Year with a bang! Lora joined 600 international students in Dallas Texas, for a 4 day conference designed to help students investigate Christianity. Discussing Jesus with my roomies (from Bangladesh, Pakistan, and India) into the early morning hours was so special. We are already continuing these conversations on campus this semester.

Thank you for your generous gifts to help make these conversations possible. We desire that Jesus —his new life and worldview-shaping Lordship—would be known and embraced throughout Iowa State University. Whether in 1:1 Bible studies, our “*Theology Matters*” multi-denomination discussion group, having “*Coffee, Tea and English*” with international friends, studying with new classmates in the “*Religion and Society*” class or praying for ISU with a campus prayer group, we know we don’t do this work alone. You are part of our work!

With that recognition, **thank you for being the encouragement and partner you are** to us!

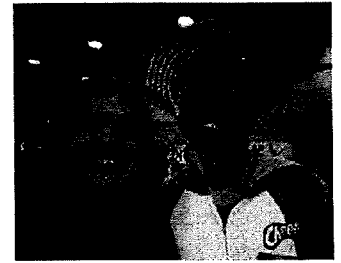
For His Glory,
Lora A. Copley

P.S Thank you also for your prayers for two upcoming events: February 17’s “**Faith and Science**” lecture with Dr. Ethan Brue of Dordt University and February 25’s “**More to Mental Health**” discussion with Dr. Warren Kinghorn of Duke University. Pray God would use these efforts to till good soil and further good health.

Donation Amount: 3,005.95
Donation Date: December 31, 2024
No goods or services were received.

“This service you perform not only supplies the needs of the Lord’s people but also overflows in many expressions of thanks to God.” 2 Cor 9:12

THANK YOU



Board of Directors

Rev. Randy Raak
Justin Struik
Pam Whitney
Andrew Friend
Derek Ten Pas
Lora Copley

**REPORT OF THE CLASSICAL DISCIPLESHIP COMMITTEE TO
CLASSIS IN SESSION, - March 8, 2025
At Calvary CRC, Orange City**

REPORT ON THE WORK OF THE CDC

Esteemed Delegates:

The Classical Discipleship Committee met on Nov. 19, 2024 and Jan. 28, 2025. Members present were Rev. Brian Dunn, Rev. Jesse Walhof, Rev. Ben Wiersma. Jesse opened with devotions and prayer for each meeting. Brian and Ben closed in prayer, one at each meeting.

Topics discussed at the meeting included:

1. Providing Continuing Education
2. Ministry Support on behalf of Classis Heartland
 - a. Classis Prayer Coordinator (Ms. Barb Hibma)
 - b. Minn-I-Kota Youth Network (MIK) (Ms. Lee DeGroot)
 - c. Safe-Church Team Heartland and Iakota (Dr. Tara Boer)
3. Financial Reports

Details of items discussed:

1. Providing Continuing Education
 - a. **Timothy Leadership Training** – TLT is currently hosting two TLT training sessions, one at Northern Lighthouse and F Street Church Lincoln, NE and the other at Calvary CRC, Orange City, IA. TLT is tentatively planning a Summit event in late spring.
 - b. **Abide Project** –
 - i. An Abide sub-committee is working out the details for an Abide Convention to be held at Redeemer University in Toronto, Ontario, CA.
 - ii. The CDC is offering \$100 scholarships for up to 10 people who want to attend the Abide Convention to help cover lodging, travel, and registration costs. To request the scholarship funds, please contact Rev. Ben Wiersma (pastor.sibleycrc@gmail.com)
 - c. **Dunamis** – There are two Dunamis Projects in the tri-state area for those who want to attend.
 - i. DP #2: In the Spirit's Power held March 20-23 in Milford, IA. To learn more or register, visit www.prcmi.org/dpmilford
 - ii. DP #3: The Power of Prayer held April 3-6 in Viborg, SD. To learn more or register, visit www.prcmi.org/dpviborg
2. Ministry Support on behalf of Classis Heartland
 - a. **Classis Prayer Coordinator (Ms. Barb Hibma)**
 - i. The CDC is staying in contact with Barb to discuss ways to incorporate prayer in the work and ministries of the Classis. Barb went to the Gather Event in Niagara this past fall. We are in discussions about having a similar event locally.
 - b. **Minn-I-Kota Youth Network (Ms. Lee DeGroot)**
 - i. Please refer to the MIK-Youth report in the agenda.
 - c. **Safe Church**
 - i. Dr. Tara Boer has stepped down as Safe Church Coordinator as of January 2025. The CDC thanks Dr. Boer for her years of service to our Classis and Classis Iakota.
 - ii. The CDC presents Classis Heartland with a motion to approve Ms. Abby VandenBosch as the new Safe Church Coordinator. Approval from Classis Iakota is also required for this position.

3. Financial Reports

- a. The CDC continually discusses how to best steward the funds that have been provided through the Classis ministry shares.
- b. The CDC approved to partner with Dordt University for the Collin Hansen speaker event held at Dordt on October 11. Dordt University was given \$500 toward the cost of the event.
- c. Current balances will be reported by the Classis Treasurer.

ITEMS FOR CLASSICAL INFORMATION

The Classical Discipleship Committee has been working to fulfill its calling to provide educational and discipleship opportunities for church leaders in Classis Heartland. The CDC has been working to support the Timothy Leadership Training team as well as Dordt University as it provides learning opportunities. The CDC has been offering ministry support to the Classis Prayer Coordinator, Minn-I-Kota Youth Network, and the Safe Church Team. The CDC has been working to be good stewards of the funds that have been allocated to the CDC as well as the Classis Prayer Coordinator.

ITEMS FOR CLASSICAL ACTION / RECOMMENDATIONS

Recommendation 1: That Classis approve the motion from the CDC to appoint Ms. Abby VandenBosch as the new Safe Church Coordinator pending the approval by Classis Iakota.

Recommendation 2: That Classis approve the work and report of the Classis Discipleship Committee.

Members of the CDC: Rev. Brian Dunn, Rev. Jesse Walhof, Rev. Ben Wiersma

Classis Heartland & Iakota Safe Church Report Spring 2025

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

Data Prepared: 01/29/2025

Iakota & Heartland Classical Safe Church Team Members: Heidi Van Roekel (Bethel CRC-Iakota), Pastor Jesse Walhof (Living Water CRC-Heartland), Kristi Habben (Sibley CRC-Heartland)

Classical Safe Church Team Tasks:

- The Safe Church Team serves in a consultative role for churches in the classes who are reviewing or revising congregational safe church policies. It is expected that all churches have an operating safe church policy and a safe church team within your church.
- The Safe Church Team serves as a resource for churches dealing with allegations of abuse.
- The Safe Church Team serves as a clearing house of best practices and periodic trainings for Classis Heartland and Classis Iakota with regard to abuse awareness and prevention.

Team Activity

Members of the safe church team continue to provide support and consultation to various churches in response to questions surrounding safe church policies and have provided guidance to leadership teams when making decisions concerning alleged misconduct. Pastor Henry Lengkeek and Tara Boer have retired from their roles on the Classical Safe Church team. Additionally, Heidi Van Roekel's term will be expiring in March.

Safe Church Team Recommendations

The Classical Safe Church team officially recommends Abby Vanden Bosch to replace Tara. Abby is a clinical social worker and will have access to consultation with Tara as she adjusts to the position. No nominee has yet been found to replace Pastor Henry or Heidi.

The team asks all churches to review and update their safe church policies each year and seek consultation if assistance is needed. Additionally, if any allegations of misconduct surface in your church, it is advised that the safe church representatives in your church be involved with additional support provided by this team. Please do not hesitate to contact a member of our committee if you would like to talk about any safe church needs your church may have. You may communicate with any committee member or contact Tara directly at 712-898-6468 (cell) or tara.boer@dordt.edu.

Current Team Members

Heidi Van Roekel: mhvanroekel@hotmail.com

Pastor Jesse Walhof: jsswalhof@gmail.com

Kristi Habben: khabben@premieronline.net

My name is Abby Vanden Bosch and I am looking forward to the opportunity of serving on the Safe Church team. I grew up in Orange City, IA with my parents and three siblings attending Orange City Christian School and graduating from Unity Christian. I attended University of Sioux Falls where I obtained my degree in both Social Work and Spanish. After four years of college, I moved back when I transitioned into my work at Village Northwest, serving individuals with developmental, physical and cognitive disabilities. Along with assisting these individuals through everyday life, I worked in a leadership role and created goals for each individual to assist in working towards their greatest independence.

After a few years of looking for something a little different, I completed my Master of Social Work online from Dordt University and later received my license to officially become an LMSW. I am currently in my third year now working as the School Social Worker at Western Christian High School. Here I provide mental health and social-emotional support for students and their families, guiding them through challenges both in and outside of the classroom.

Growing up, I attended Immanuel CRC in Orange City. After moving to different places throughout the last few years, I am happy to find a community and home church within Living Water in Sheldon. I am grateful for the opportunity to be a part of a Christian community both personally and professionally, as I can walk alongside students navigating the trials in life but empowering them to pursue their God-given talents and find hope through the storms of life.



MINN-I-KOTA
YOUTH NETWORK



MIK+
POST HIGH
MINISTRY

Thank you everyone for the continued financial and prayer support. I have been working for MIK Youth for 15 years! Pastor Doug De Groot (my husband) joined me very part time 3 years ago.

MINN-I-KOTA YOUTH/MIK+ BOARD MEMBERS:

MINNKOTA CLASSIS:

Classis Rep-Rev Greg Timmer-Prinsburg MN CRC.
Secr-Sarah Van Dyken-Prinsburg MN CRC.
Secr-Karmen Vis-Luverne MN CRC

lakota Classis:

Classis Rep-Rev Scott Van Voorst-Sioux Falls SD Cornerstone Prison Church.
Pres-Dan Elgersma-Sioux Center IA Bethel CRC.
Shelli Kollis-Rock Valley IA Trinity CRC

Heartland Classis:

Classis Rep-Rev Ben Wiersma-Sibley IA CRC.
Treas-Kody Tesch-Orange City IA Immanuel CRC.
Scott deBoom-Hull IA Hope CRC.

We have been working on something NEW & EXCITING! Minnikota Youth Network is adding a sister ministry called **MIK+ Post High Ministry!** Just like MIK Youth, MIK + will also be supported by the same three CRC Classis: Minnkota, lakota, and Heartland. This ministry is for singles age 19-29. As explained at Classis in September---we are not in place of church or anything that church has to offer this age group, instead it is in addition to the church they are already attending. We are a Saturday night gathering. We have had two gatherings in our home over a meal, planning for the future, and games. We have also started a Bible Study which has met one time in Worthington CRC. At the time of this writing we are planning on bowling and pizza together in Luverne on 2/1/25.

Pastor Doug and I have begun meeting with the Dordt University Student Leaders for the 15th Annual Jr High Retreat which is April 25-27
Classis Heartland Meeting Agenda - March 8, 2025

at Inspiration Hills. Our theme this year is "PEACE" with our theme verse from John 16:33 "I have told you these things, so that you may have peace. In this world you will have trouble. But take heart! I have overcome the world." This 15th Annual Jr High Retreat is for 6th, 7th, and 8th graders. Parents can drop off their students at Inspiration Hills on Friday and pick them up on Sunday. My leaders are my DU Student Leaders. Registration forms are available at Classis Meetings in March.

We have built a Traveling Escape Room. Pastor Doug and I will bring the fun to your youth group. We have just a few Wednesday nights available until the end of this school year. Call us for the list of openings. 712-470-4244

We have three Traveling Lesson Plans. Pastor Doug and I will come to your youth group and lead a lesson for the night. We have just a few Wednesday nights available until the end of this school year. Call us for the list of openings. 712-470-4244.

There are a couple noon lunches on the calendar. This is a great time to network with other Volunteer Youth Leaders/Paid Youth Directors/Pastors. At the time of writing this report we had February 6-Noon-Sioux Falls and February 13-Noon-Orange City scheduled. We are also going to try for the first time since 2020 an online meeting February 20-8-9pm.

Feel free to call us or email us with any questions you may have.

Thank you once again for supporting our youth and their leaders and MIK Youth/MIK +

mikyouthnetwork@gmail.com
www.minnikotayouthnetwork.com

Alethea "Lee" De Groot
& *Pastor Doug De Groot*



Dordt University

Greetings to the Synod of the Christian Reformed Church. At Dordt University, we are grateful for our close relationship with the CRCNA, which has profoundly shaped our institution's mission and identity. Though we are not the official institution of higher education for the denomination, Dordt is committed to serving the CRC and living out our shared Reformed heritage.

We have witnessed God's continued faithfulness in the 2024-2025 academic year at our institution. Dordt remains steadfast in its mission to provide Christ-centered education, a vision rooted in the principles outlined in Article 71 of the Church Order: encouraging the establishment and sustainability of Christian education in the Reformed tradition. This partnership is demonstrated in the many local churches—within the CRC and other traditions—that serve as church homes for our students. Over 90% of our students regularly attend church, and more than 50% participate in Bible studies or small group faith-formation activities. This engagement carries into their post-graduate lives, with 93% of Dordt alumni reporting regular church attendance and many taking on leadership roles in their congregations.

Our faculty also exemplifies this faithfulness. This year, more than 60 faculty and staff read through Calvin's *Institutes*, gathering bi-weekly to discuss and deepen their understanding of Reformed theology. These discussions reflect Dordt's enduring commitment to fostering both spiritual and academic growth within the student body as well as within the lives of Dordt faculty, staff, alumni, friends, and beyond.

Dordt has experienced significant momentum, including record enrollment for four consecutive years. This fall, we welcomed 1,943 students, with 1,581 pursuing undergraduate degrees. Such growth underscores the trust families place in Dordt to provide rigorous academics grounded in a biblical perspective. To accommodate this growth, we continue to expand our campus. The new dining commons and B.J. Haan Auditorium expansion are progressing, with plans to be completed by the 2025-2026 academic year. These spaces will serve our community well into the future.

Academically, Dordt remains a leader in preparing students for kingdom work. New program offerings, such as construction management and construction engineering, reflect our missional commitment to equip students for "Christ-centered renewal in all aspects of contemporary life," including in the workplace. Dordt graduates are well-prepared for their calling: 99.3% of the class of 2024 graduates were employed or in graduate school within six months of graduation. Our nursing program demonstrates this excellence as well, with 100% of the Bachelor of Science in Nursing students in the class of 2024 passing the NCLEX exam on their first attempt. Our innovative Agricultural Service Technology (diesel technology) program equips students for kingdom work by combining hands-on technical training, a Christian worldview, and a strong partnership with regional John Deere dealers, all while having the chance for students to become Deere certified before graduation.

Our students excel outside the classroom as well: the Dordt Wind Symphony received the prestigious invitation to perform at the Iowa Bandmasters Association's Annual Conference this past May, showcasing their musical talent; and our athletic teams continue to achieve success regionally and nationally, including women's basketball claiming the program's first-ever NAIA championship in March 2024 (and ranked #1 as of this writing in February 2025).

OFFICE OF THE PRESIDENT

Dordt University / 700 Seventh Street NE / Sioux Center, Iowa 51250 / 712-722-6333

We are grateful for the support of the CRC in helping us carry out our Founders Vision to provide an educational opportunity “that is Christian not merely in the sense that devotional exercises are appended to the ordinary work of the college, but in the larger and deeper sense that all the class work, all of the students' intellectual, emotional, and imaginative activities shall be permeated with the spirit and teaching of Christianity.” Please continue to pray for Dordt’s faculty, staff, and students as we pursue this calling. If you have questions or seek further engagement, please contact me or Reverend Todd Zuidema, our director of church relations, whose goal is to strengthen Dordt’s connection to CRCNA congregations.

Soli Deo Gloria,

Dordt University

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Erik Hoekstra". The signature is written in a cursive style with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Dr. Erik Hoekstra, President

OFFICE OF THE PRESIDENT

Dordt University / 700 Seventh Street NE / Sioux Center, Iowa 51250 / 712-722-6333

Trudy Ash, US Midwest
Winter/Spring 2025

playlist



800-272-5125 ext. 5118



tash@crcna.org



crcna.org/Thrive



ACCESSIBLE WORSHIP ROUNDTABLES

Have you had a chance to view the Accessible Worship Roundtable series? In this 3 part series, disability consultant, Lindsay Wieland Capel, invites us to think through accessible worship spaces, Dwell children's ministry curriculum developer, Jill Benson, invites us to think about how to welcome children of all abilities in our children's ministry space and worship consultant, Katie Roelofs, invites us to think through how our worship practices can be more accessible and inclusive for all. Why not make it a viewing party with your leadership team at church!

FAITH FORMATION BULLETIN TIPS

Every week Thrive offers a Faith Formation Tip for your congregation. You can access it through the weekly tip sent along with other [announcements to your church office every Wednesday](#). However, you can also access it through our Faith Formation Tips document. This document includes tips from the past 4 years! We have also been working on translating all our 2024 Faith Formation Tips into Spanish and Korean - currently you can access half a year of translated tips - with more to come very soon! Spanish translation can be found [here](#). Korean translation can be found [here](#).

Refugee Resettlement Program Announced

Thrive is excited to announce a new refugee resettlement program called [Welcome Corps](#). This is a public-private sponsorship program that offers refugees a chance to rebuild their lives in safety and helps us live out our biblical call to welcome the stranger as found in Matthew 25. We've partnered with Exodus World Service to guide CRC churches and members interested in this opportunity.

Looking for a great webinar to show at your next leadership meeting? [Churches Engaged in Faithful Welcome](#)

LEADING WITH INTEGRITY: A GUIDE TO THE CODE OF CONDUCT

Serving as a ministry leader is a significant responsibility. In order to encourage ministry leaders to be intentional in using their influence for good, and to clarify expectations for Christlike behavior, the Synod of the CRCNA adopted the Code of Conduct for ministry leaders. This resource was designed to orient ministry leaders to the Code of Conduct by inviting participants to reflect on the Code in light of Scripture, and how best to live out the Code in the context of their own ministry. We hope it serves you well!

Intercultural Cohort Opportunity

Across our denomination, there is a literal "Pentecost explosion" of CRC churches becoming multicultural. In 2024, 17 congregations and ministries in Canada formed a 10 month learning cohort to help each other navigate this explosion. Nine more, including two from the US, have signed on for this cohort experience in 2025. These cohorts include monthly virtual meetings, alternating between whole cohort community meetings and small group coaching. Bimonthly newsletters with helpful tips and resources are also included. If you wish to be on the email list for these newsletters, let Trudy know. Here's the link to one from last year: [Intercultural Cohort Newsletter July, 2024](#). If you wonder if your church might benefit from this sort of learning community and would like more information, contact Trudy. These cohorts are fully funded by a grant to make them accessible to all congregations.