

Meeting Minutes for Classis Heartland

Hawarden Christian Reformed Church

Wednesday, September 21, 2022

Article 01: Constitution of Classis

Rev. Kevin Myskens welcomed delegates to our gathering of Classis Heartland. Rev. Phillip Westra, stated clerk, reported classis credentials are in order, delegates had checked in and first-time delegates signed the *Covenant of Officebearers* (designated with an * below). Rev. Jesse Walhof declared classis constituted with the following officers and delegates.

A. Classis Meeting Officers

Chair: Rev. Jesse Walhof
Vice-Chair: Rev. Brian Dunn
Stated Clerk: Rev. Phillip Westra
Treasurer: Mr. Randy Smit

B. Classis Meeting Delegates

Calvary CRC – Orange City, IA: Rev. John Klompfen (minister), Mr. Ward Van Peurse* (elder), and Mr. James Hellinga* (deacon)
Calvin CRC – LeMars, IA: Rev. Brian Hofman (minister) and Mr. Steve Ver Mulm (elder)
First CRC – Hospers, IA: Rev. Aaron Gonzalez (minister) and Mr. Roger Jacobsma (elder)
First CRC – Hull, IA: Rev. Loren Kotman (minister), Mr. Henry Kats (elder), and Mr. Lyle Leloux (deacon)
First CRC – Orange City, IA: Mr. Bruce Lefever (elder) and Mr. Matt Van Schouwen (deacon)
First CRC – Sheldon, IA: Rev. Brian Dunn (minister), Mr. Kent Nieuwendorp (elder), and Mr. Dustin Doppenberg (deacon)
Hawarden CRC – Hawarden, IA: Mr. Brian Obbink (elder), Mr. Lyle Meyers (elder), and Mr. Harv Van Ballegoeyen (deacon)
Hope CRC – Hull, IA: Pastor Keith Hoekstra* (minister), Mr. Matthew Boer (elder), and Mr. Dan Bosma (deacon)
Immanuel CRC – Orange City, IA: Mr. Ver Westra (elder), Mr. Brent Mulder (elder), and Mr. Josh Pluim (deacon)
Immanuel CRC – Sheldon, IA: Rev. Kevin Muyskens (minister), Mr. Jeff Schemper (elder), and Mr. Joel Gesink (deacon)
Ireton CRC – Ireton, IA: Rev. Nathan Kuperus (minister), Mr. Kelly Noteboom (elder), and Mr. Brian Bonnema (deacon)
Living Water Church – Orange City and Sheldon, IA: Rev. Jesse Walhof (minister), Mr. Adrie Groeneweg (elder), and Mr. Rick Droog (deacon)
New City Church – Kansas City, MO: Rev. Andrew Vanden Akker (elder)
Northern Lighthouse Church – Lincoln, NE: Rev. Sam Keyzer (minister) and Mr. Jon Keyzer (elder)
Ocheyedan CRC – Ocheyedan, IA: Rev. Thomas De Does (minister), Mr. David Bootsma (elder), and Mr. Curtis Visser (deacon)
Pathway Community Church – Olathe, KS: Pastor Kevin Schutte (minister)
Prairie Lane CRC – Omaha, NE: Rev. Chad Van Ginkel (minister), Mr. Mike Hostfilfr (elder), and Mr. Jesse Hagey (deacon)

Sanborn CRC – Sanborn, IA: Rev. Phillip Westra (minister), Mr. Larry Reitsma (elder), and Mr. Josh Rydberg (deacon)
Sibley CRC – Sibley, IA: Rev. Ben Wiersma (minister), Mr. Jeff VandeGriend (elder), and Mr. Loren Bosma (deacon)

C. Classis Meeting Guests

Rev. Steve Boersma
Mr. Jim Viet (Classical Deaconate Task Force)
Rev. Scott Van Voorst (Cornerstone Prison Church)
Mr. Matt Dengler (candidate for Licensure to Exhort)
Mr. Loren Veldhuizen (Council of Delegates)
Ms. Lee De Groot (Minn-I-Kota Youth Network)
Mr. Randy Smit (Classis Treasurer)
Ms. Tara Boer (Safe Church Team Coordinator)
Rev. Gary Nyenhuis (Pastor at Living Water in Orange City)
Mr. Del Walinga
Dr. Wayne Kobes (Dordt University)
Mr. Pete Dekkers
Rev. Lora Copely (Areopagus Campus Ministry at ISU)
Pastor Keo Phommarath (Siouxland Unity)
Mr. Sage Peterson (Intern at F Street Church)
Rev. Dan De Groot (Synodical Deputy from Classis Iakota)
Rev. Rus Boersma (Synodical Deputy from Classis Northcentral Iowa)
Rev. Scott Muilenburg (Synodical Deputy from Classis Minnkota)

Article 02: Opening Worship and Meditations

Rev. Kevin Myskens lead us with a responsive reading and we sang “How Great Thou Art” and “Speak, O Lord.” Rev. Tom De Does read 2 Corinthians 2:2–3 and 4:5–11. He then reflected on his years in ministry. Rev. Loren Kotman then focused our attention on how God uses us as jars of clay to share the treasure of the gospel with others.

Article 03: Classical Interim Committee (CIC)

- A. Rev. Nate Kuperus highlighted two key decisions the CIC had to make since the last classis meeting. The first was the transfer of property to Elevate Community Church after Friendship Community Church disbanded. The second was selecting a new Council of Delegate representative to serve the remainder of Rev. Mark Vande Zande’s tem. The CIC requested classis ratify the CIC’s appointment of Mr. Loren Veldhuizen as our COD rep. He was recommended to the CIC by our Classical Nominating Committee.
1. Motion: Ratify the appointment of Mr. Loren Veldhuizen to be our representative from Classis Heartland to serve on the Council of Delegates (COD), finishing up Rev. Mark Vande Zande’s term. **Adopted.**
 2. Mr. Loren Veldhuizen addressed classis briefly thanking the delegates for entrusting him with this important role. He seeks to represent Classis Heartland well and is glad to discuss COD matters with church leaders.
 3. Motion: Approve the work of the Classical Interim Committee. **Adopted.**
- B. Mr. Jim Viet spoke about the classical diaconate task force and the communication found in the classis agenda supplement (pg. 52). Their recommendation, which met with positive

feedback by classis, it to create a resource team of deacons which can respond to needs and inquiries from churches. Mr. Viet asked churches to bring this back to their councils and let him know what deacons might be interested in serving on this team.

- C. Rev. Phillip Westra reported about his work as stated clerk and highlighted three future matters for churches to note.
1. Churches will be contacted soon about their denominational ministry share pledges.
 2. Meetings of Classis Heartland in 2023 are scheduled for Saturday (March 4) and Wednesday (September 20). The location of the September 20 meeting will not be Kansas City as the agenda stated.
 3. There will be a different classis credentials form next year in light of synod's decision to allow campus ministers and commissioned pastors to serve as delegates.
 4. Motion: Approve the work of the stated clerk. **Adopted.**
- D. Rev. Jesse Walhof and Rev. John Klompfen offered some highlights about their experiences and the decisions that came out of synod 2022.
- E. Rev. John Klompfen facilitated a discussion about the proposed Code of Conduct. Rev. Zachary King, the General Secretary of the CRCNA, has requested feedback from classis and councils. In this discussion delegates highlighted the following three questions as needing clear answers and encouraged councils to communicate with the General Secretary as they deem appropriate.
1. Is there any way(s) the Code of Conduct might undermine what we subscribe to in the Covenant of Officebearers?
 2. Given that Jesus offended people, what exactly constitutes abuse in situations where people report a subjective experience of "harm" but no specific sin can be named?
 3. The Code of Conduct has been called a tool but what is the function of this tool legally?

Article 04: Classical Stewardship Committee (CSC)

Rev. Nate Kuperus drew delegates' attention to the CSC report (pg. 51 in the supplement) and the proposed classis ministry shares for 2023 (pg. 24 in the agenda). The proposed budget entails a ministry share of \$111.79 per active adult member. Two line items with significant reductions are 1) the student aid fund since we are not currently supporting any seminary students financially and 2) Friendship Community Church since they are no longer an emerging church in our classis. The only line item with a significant increase is for the Youth Consultant, to support higher levels of staffing.

1. Motion: Approve the proposed 2023 budget from the CSC. **Adopted.**
2. Motion: Approve the work of the Classical Stewardship Committee. **Adopted.**

Article 05: Minister Retirements

The following motions came from the councils of Ocheyedan CRC and First CRC of Hull as letters addressed to classis.

1. Motion: Approve the retirement of Rev. Thomas De Does from Ocheyedan CRC effective November 4, 2022. **Adopted.**
2. Motion: Approve the retirement of Rev. Loren Kotman from First CRC of Hull effective December 15, 2022. **Adopted.**

*Rev. Kevin Muyskens offered a prayer of blessing for these two retiring ministers.
Classis paused the meeting to take a brief morning break.*

Article 06: Examination of Mr. Matt Dengler for Licensure to Exhort

- A. Rev. Aaron Gonzalez introduced Mr. Dengler to classis and highlighted his recent completion of the preaching class through Timothy Leadership Training.
- B. Rev. Brian Hofman informed classis that he and Rev. Walhof recently observed Mr. Dengler lead worship and preach at an evening service at First CRC of Hopsers. They spoke with appreciation about his faithfulness to Scripture and clarity of teaching, as well as his effectiveness in leading worship and prayer.
- C. Rev. Nate Kuperus interviewed Mr. Dengler, asking him questions about his own faith journey, what led him to desire to preach, his biblical knowledge, and his theological convictions.
- D. Guests were dismissed for an executive session to deliberate and decide.
Motion: Grant Mr. Matt Dengler a license to exhort in Classis Heartland. **Adopted.**
- E. Mr. Dengler and guests to classis were welcomed back. The chair informed him of their decision and congratulated him. Rev. Gonzalez led classis in laying on of hands and prayer for Mr. Dengler as he serves the church.

Article 07: Church Counselor and Visitor Reports

- A. Rev. Loren Kotman, counselor for First CRC in Hull, submitted a written report (pg. 27 in the agenda) reminding classis that Pastor Keith Hoekstra is currently serving this church as a Commissioned Pastor while he completes his EPMC program.
- B. Rev. Chad Van Ginkel, counselor for Northern Lighthouse, told classis his update is essentially his letter of recommendation for Mr. Jonathan Keyzer to become a Commissioned Pastor (pg. 38 in the agenda) as this reflects the church's future plans for pastoral leadership.
- C. Rev. Nate Kuperus, counselor for Hawarden CRC, submitted a written report to the stated clerk and informed classis verbally that the church is currently holding conversations for discernment, advertising their vacancy, and forming a search committee.
- D. Rev. Nate Kuperus shared with classis that he and Rev. Brian Dunn had been requested to meet with the leadership of Immanuel CRC as they discern what is best for their church moving forward. He submitted a written report to the stated clerk.
- E. Rev. Nate Kuperus shared with classis that he and Rev. Brian Dunn visited Calvary CRC on August 8, 2022. At the close of an encouraging meeting, they commended the council of Calvary CRC for their faithful work in Christ's kingdom. He submitted a written report to the stated clerk.
- F. Rev. John Klompier, counselor for Immanuel CRC in Orange City, read and submitted a written report to the stated clerk. The church has concluded their time with an interim pastor, Rev. Verlyn Boone, and has their search committee and search process going.
- G. Motion: Approve the work of our church counselors and church visitors. **Adopted.**

Rev. John Klompier led classis in a prayer for the congregations in classis who are in the process of searching for a pastor and the ongoing work of our church counselors and visitors.

Article 08: Communication and Requests from Churches

- A. *Communication from Calvary CRC* (pg. 53 in the supplement): The letter is about Church of the Servant being the convening church for Synod 2023. Discussion was held with some speaking in favor and others speaking against the proposed communication.

1. Motion: Classis Heartland petitions the General Secretary and the Council of Delegates to replace the appointment of Church of the Servant as the convening church for synod 2023. **Adopted.**
 2. *NOTE #1*: Voice vote was inconclusive so classis held a ballot vote and the motion carried with 31 voting “yes” and 15 voting “no.”
 3. *NOTE #2*: Following the classis meeting, the stated clerk worked with the Classis Interim Committee and leaders of Calvary CRC to reformat the communication to match standards for such correspondence while keeping the content the same. The final version of this communication the Stated Clerk sent to synodical services is found at the end of these minutes as Appendix A.
- B. *Notes on Credentials*: The following items were included on classis credentials.
1. Ocheyedan CRC requests classis provide stated supply and a counselor for their upcoming vacancy, which the Classical Interim Committee will do.
 2. Ocheyedan CRC states they prefer to hold a classis meeting on Saturday. Our Spring meeting next year is scheduled for Saturday, March 4th.
 3. Sibley CRC asked for classis’ input on how to best structure leadership with a small council. Classis delegates who have experience and input were encouraged to visit with delegates from Sibley CRC or contact Rev. Wiersma.
 4. Sibley CRC asked for classis’ guidance on how to minister to people where they are at rather than just bringing them to church events. Classis suggested Resonate Global Missions has some resources about neighborhood ministry and encouraged delegates from other churches to talk with Sibley CRC who would like to network about this topic.
- C. *Overture from Calvin CRC*: The delegates from Calvin CRC withdrew their overture regarding seating female delegates at Classis Heartland meetings (pg. 28 in the agenda). Calvin CRC hopes to collaborate with other churches on a future communication to state new grounds for such a change and propose something the majority of classis would be in favor of.

Rev. Chad Van Ginkel led classis in a prayer for our denomination and for fruitful collaboration between our congregations and denominational ministries.

Article 09: Classical Education Committee (CEC)

- A. Rev. Aaron Gonzalez reminded classis of the CEC’s task to both promote educational opportunities for church leaders and provide guidance for the classis prayer coordinator, the Minn-I-Kota Youth Network, and the Safe Church Team. He drew the delegates’ attention to their summary report (pp. 29–30 in the agenda) and their proposal to classis (pg. 56 in the supplement). Since the CEC has been working closely with the Safe Church Team and the denominational safe church about navigating difficult situations, the CEC brings the following recommendation.
- B. Motion: Classis appoint the ministers on the Classical Education Committee to serve in the Safe Church Ministry. These ministers will serve as “Special Church Advisers” that will primarily help both church councils and the Safe Church Ministry navigate through particularly divisive cases such as sexual abuse and molestation allegations within the church, cases where third party arbitrations would especially be ideal. **Adopted.**
- C. Ms. Tara Boer, leader of our classis’ Safe Church Team, urged delegates to ensure a safe church team is in place in every church. She recommended classis clearly articulate their hesitations about the proposed Code of Conduct as it is deemed an important tool for distinguishing acceptable and unacceptable behaviors in safe church ministry. Ms. Boer

reminded classis that the Safe Church Team is ready to help churches both prevent problems and navigate problems if they occur.

- D. Ms. Lee De Groot reported on the ministry work of Minn-I-Kota Youth Network. She spoke about 1) their recent change of mind about her stepping down from her current position, 2) their recent Kick-off event at Thunder Road in Sioux Falls, and 3) plans to hold an evening of praise and worship with Bethel CRC in Sioux Center on November 16.

*Rev. Brian Hofman read from Psalm 42 and offered a prayer for lunch.
Classis adjourned to eat lunch together.*

Classical Education Committee Continued

- E. Mr. Del Walinga shared about Timothy Leadership Training (TLT) modules which our classis has utilized recently on weekends at Calvary CRC. He encouraged delegates to consider taking advantage of a class offered by TLT for personal enrichment and to be equipped for leadership. There will be a TLT informative session at Calvary CRC this fall on Friday and Saturday, Oct 28–29.
- F. Dr. Wayne Kobes addressed classis on behalf of Dordt University. He highlighted Dordt's current building projects, awards received, and record enrollment. The generosity of our congregations enables Dordt to continue their educational endeavors and many graduates of Dordt are involved in our classis serving their churches, families, workplaces, and communities. Dr. Kobes closed by thanking our churches for their years of faithful support.
- G. Rev. Ben Wiersma spoke briefly about the Convention of Confessional CRCs hosted by the Abide Project, which several pastors and office bearers from Classis Heartland attended. He also passed out a brochure for the Dunamis Project which he is involved in at the Okoboji Lutheran Bible Camp on October 6–9.
- H. Motion: Approve the work of Classical Education Committee. **Adopted.**

Article 10: Cornerstone Prison Ministry

Rev. Scott Van Voorst gave classis an update about Cornerstone Prison Ministry. The gospel continues to change lives among the inmates Rev. Van Voorst gets to work with and they have been blessed with visitors from other churches in recent months. He also shared some challenges that remain among inmates, especially barriers in communication with the world outside the prison and the extremely high cost of items available for inmates to purchase.

Article 11: Classical Ministry Leadership Team (CMLT)

- A. Rev. Loren Kotman directed classis to the CMLT report and addendum in the agenda (pp. 34–36) to take the recommendations in order, beginning with usual CMLT business of updating ministry shares and renewing licenses to exhort.
 - 1. Motion: Decrease the per member classical share from \$1.75 to \$0.05 for the year 2023. **Adopted.**
 - 2. Motion: Renew the licensure to exhort for Kurt Reitema. **Adopted.**
- B. First CRC of Orange City has recommended Rev. Jordan Helming, their pastor of visitation, pursue candidacy for Ministry of the Word in the CRC through Article 8. Rev. Helming is currently ordained through the Reformed Church of America. Rev. Kotman noted the Council of First CRC in Orange City, the CMLT of Classis Heartland, and the Candidacy Committee of the CRC have given full support to this.

Motion: Approve the “need” for Rev. Jordan Helming to move forward with the process of Article 8 with his church [First CRC of Orange City] and with classis. **Adopted.**

- C. The Commissioned Pastor position requested by Northern Lighthouse Church, to be filled by Mr. Jonathan Kuyzer, requires classis approve the position description (pp. 39–40 in the agenda) and learning plan (pp. 54–55 in the supplement) based on Church Order Article 23-a. It also requires classis’ approval to serve as the solo pastor of a church according to Article 24-a. Rev. Westra, the stated clerk, shared with classis that our CMLT and the CRC’s Candidacy Committee have approved this, and both motions require the concurrence of Synodical Deputies.

1. Motion: Approve the proposed job description and learning plan for the Commissioned Pastor position at Northern Lighthouse Church according to Article 23-a, with one addition being the Commissioned Pastor is accountable to the elders of the church.

Adopted. Synodical Deputies Concur.

2. Motion: Approve the Commissioned Pastor to serve as the solo pastor of Northern Lighthouse Church according to Article 24-a. **Adopted. Synodical Deputies Concur.**

- D. The job description for Pastor Jeff Heerspink, Lead Pastor at F Street, is outdated. With the blessing of both F Street Neighborhood Church and Northern Lighthouse Church, an updated job description has been brought before classis for approval (pg. 41 in the agenda).

Motion: Approve the job description for Lead Pastor of F Street Neighborhood Church according to Article 23-a.

Adopted. Synodical Deputies Concur.

- E. Motion: Approve the work of the Classical Ministry Leadership Team. **Adopted.**

Rev. Gary Nyenhuis led classis in a prayer for the ongoing work of the CMLT and for each person on a journey toward ordination in Classis Heartland.

Article 12: Classical Nominating Committee (CNC)

- A. Rev. John Klompein addressed classis about nominations. Given our present shortage of pastors in Classis Heartland, the CNC worked to fill positions it deemed had the highest priority and are pleased to report there is one nominee per open position. Rev. Phillip Westra and Rev. Brian Hofman distributed ballots to the delegates.

- B. Motion: Use a voice vote rather than the paper ballots to approve the nominees. **Adopted.**

- C. Motion: Appoint all nominees on the ballot to their positions. **Adopted.**

The following people were therefore appointed.

1. Rev. Nate Kuperus (Classical Interim Committee and Church Visitor to the South)
2. Rev. John Klompier (Classical Interim Committee Alternate)
3. Pastor Keith Hoekstra (Classical Home Missions Committee)
4. Mr. Curt Ahrenholz (Classical Home Missions Committee Alternate)
5. Rev. Aaron Gonzalez (Classical Education Committee)
6. Rev. Chad Van Ginkel (Church Visitor to the North and Classical Ministry Leadership Team)
7. Rev. Ben Wiersma (Church Visitor to the South Alternate)
8. Rev. Jesse Walhof and Ms. Kristi Habben (Classical Safe Church Team)
9. Rev. Brian Dunn (Regional Pastor to the North)
10. Rev. Brian Hofman (Synodical Deputy Alternate).

- D. Motion: Approve the work of the Classical Nominating Committee. **Adopted.**

Rev. Brian Dunn led classis in prayer for those who are stepping into new positions in Classis Heartland and for our committees as they carry out their responsibilities.

Article 13: Classical Home Missions Committee (CHMC)

- A. Rev. Kevin Muyskens invited three people to speak on behalf of three ministries the CHMC is working with.
1. Pastor Keo Phommarath spoke about his work with Siouxland Unity Church, an ethnic ministry of Classis Heartland. Pastor Keo spoke about COVID's impact on their ministry practices and the church's ongoing work in light of lingering fears. He distributed a handout which outlines the particular ministry activities of the church and thanked Classis Heartland for their various forms of support.
 2. Mr. Sage Peterson is an intern with F Street Community Church which CHMC helps fund through the Residency Program for Leadership Development. He was the leader of the Immerse Program this past summer among other ministry responsibilities. He expressed appreciation for all he has learned through his time at F Street.
 3. Rev. Lora Copley is the new director of Areopagus Campus Ministry at Iowa State University. Being fairly new to the position, she talked about doing a lot of listening and getting to know students. She expressed gratitude to Classis Heartland for years of supporting this ministry and welcomed churches to contact her if they have a student at ISU she could connect with.
- B. Question from the floor: Did the disbanding of the Friendship Community Church require classis' approval?
- There are three parts to this answer. First, note that classis tasked the CHMC to work with Friendship Community Church on classis' behalf. Second, the decision to disband was ultimately made by Friendship Community Church, with CHMC involved from an oversight capacity. The agreement reached included the provision that if Elevate Community Church were to turn around and sell the property, they would have to give Classis Heartland a significant portion of that money, since classis was instrumental in helping Friendship Community Church purchase the property. Third, Friendship was an emerging church, not an organized church, and therefore did not require classis' approval to disband.
- C. Motion: Approve the work of the Classical Home Missions Committee. **Adopted.**

Article 14: Adjournment

- A. Motion: Adjourn the meeting. **Adopted.**
- B. The chair Rev. Jesse Walhof closed the meeting in prayer.
- C. Delegates sang the doxology together.
- D. The planned dates and locations for 2023 (finalized since the meeting):
1. Saturday, March 4 hosted by Calvin CRC in Le Mars
 2. Wednesday, September 20 hosted by Immanuel CRC in Orange City

Respectfully submitted,
Rev. Phillip Westra, Stated Clerk of Classis Heartland

APPENDIX A

Communication from Classis Heartland:

Background:

Synod 2022 approved the appointment of *Church of the Servant* as the convening church for Synod 2023, but not with the usual unanimous voice vote. Instead, following a brief debate, it was passed by a recorded vote of 139-25 (with 10 abstentions). Those speaking against the appointment expressed concern that *Church of the Servant* may not be inclined to fully support the confessions of the church in light of the decisions of Synod 2022 regarding the HSR report. Those speaking in favor asserted that no such charges had been made against *Church of the Servant*. Synod 2022 approved the appointment giving *Church of the Servant* the benefit of the doubt over an issue on which they had not yet stated an official position.

Following Synod 2022, in a letter to their congregation, the Executive Committee at *Church of the Servant* stated their position on the decisions of Synod 2022 may in fact jeopardize their standing with the CRC. In this letter they say, “We find ourselves in new territory for which there is no roadmap. We face complex questions about the shape and possibilities of our life as a congregation, **especially as it relates to our affiliation with the CRC** and various ministry partners.” (emphasis added).

Recommendation:

We, Classis Heartland, urge the General Secretary and the Council of Delegates to replace the appointment of *Church of the Servant* as the convening church for Synod 2023.

Grounds:

If *Church of the Servant* is questioning their future relationship with the CRCNA, it doesn't seem appropriate for the CRCNA to invite them to host the next Synod.

Classis Heartland
Rev. Phillip Westra, stated clerk