

**Agenda for Classis Heartland
Saturday, March 4, 2023 - 8:30 AM**

Location: Calvin Christian Reformed Church
326 7th St SE
Le Mars, IA 51031

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 must also sign the Covenant of Officebearers prior to the meeting.

Morning Session, 8:30 – 11:45 AM

2. Welcome and Constitution of Classis

- a. Welcome, Announcements, and Instructions
- b. Classical Credentials and Attendance Report
- c. Chair declares Classis Constituted with the following officers serving
 - 1) Chairman: **Rev. Brian Dunn**
 - 2) Vice-Chairman: **Rev. Kevin Muyskens**
 - 3) Stated Clerk: **Rev. Phillip Westra**
 - 4) Treasurer: **Dr. Randy Smit**

3. Worship, Meditation, and Prayer led by Rev. Brian Hofman and Calvin CRC Team

4. Additions to the Agenda from Classical Credentials

5. Classical Home Missions Committee (CHMC)

- a. CHMC Report (**pp. 3–4**)
- b. Oral Report from Rev. Lora Copley, Areopagus at Iowa State University
- c. Guided Discussion about being Missional as a Classis

6. Classical Stewardship Committee (CSC)

- a. CSC Minutes from Feb. 13, 2023 (**p. 5**)
- b. Treasurer's Report (**pp. 6–10**)

7. Church Counselors (verbal report given to classis, written report submitted to clerk)

- a. Hawarden CRC – Rev. Nate Kuperus
- b. First CRC in Hull – Rev. Brian Dunn
- c. Northern Lighthouse in Lincoln – Rev. Chad Van Ginkel
- d. Ochededan CRC – Rev. Ben Wiersma
- e. First CRC in Orange City – Rev. John Klompier
- f. Immanuel CRC in Orange City – Rev. John Klompier

8. Classical Nominating Committee (CNC)
- a. Communication from First CRC Sheldon re: Synodical Delegate Selection **(p. 11)**
 - b. Ballot for Synodical Delegate Nominees **(forthcoming)** for electing synodical delegates

9. Overtures
- a. Northern Lighthouse re: Organization of F Street **(p. 12)**
 - b. Living Water Church re: Calvin University **(pp. 13–14)**
 - c. Calvin CRC re: seating female delegates **(p. 15)**

10. Small Group Prayer Time for our Churches, Classis, and Denomination

Lunch Break, 12:00 – 12:30 PM

Afternoon Session, 12:30 – 3:30 PM

11. Classical Education Committee (CEC)
- a. CES Written Report **(pp. 16–17)**
 - b. Minn-I-Kota Youth Network Written Report **(p. 18)**
 - c. Barb Hibma, classis prayer coordinator, sharing about Prayer Walls and a Prayer Summit in California
 - d. Dr. Tara Boer, coordinator of Safe Church Team, Written Report **(pp. 19–20)**

12. Classical Interim Committee (CIC)
- a. CIC Summary Report from Oct. 5, 2022, Jan. 18, 2023, and Feb. 15, 2023 **(pp. 21–22)**
 - b. Combined Classis Heartland and Classis Iakota CICs from Nov. 14, 2022 **(p. 23–24)**
 - c. Communication from Church of the Servant **(pp. 25–26)**
 - d. Classis Heartland Diaconal Task Force Proposal **(p. 27)**
 - e. Stated Clerk Report **(p. 28)**

13. Church Visitors
- a. To the South, visitors are Rev. Brian Dunn and Rev. Nate Kuperus:
 - 1) Oct. 10, 2022 visit with Living Water **(p. 29)**
 - 2) Oct. 24, 2022 visit with Calvin CRC **(p. 30)**
 - 3) Jan. 16, 2023 visit with First CRC in Orange City **(p. 31)**
 - b. To the North, visitors are Rev. Sam Keyzer and Rev. Chad Van Ginkel:
 - 1) Oct. 3, 2022 visit with Ocheyedon CRC **(p. 32)**
 - 2) Nov. 9, 2022 visit with Immanuel CRC in Sheldon **(p. 33)**
 - 3) Nov. 9, 2022 visit with First CRC in Sheldon **(p. 34)**

14. Classical Ministry Leadership Team (CMLT) verbal or written report to be determined

15. Adjournment: Next meeting is scheduled for Wednesday, September 20, 2023 hosted by Immanuel CRC in Orange City

Committee Report to Classis

REPORT OF THE –Classical Home Missions Committee TO CLASSIS IN SESSION, - Saturday, March 4th, 2023 AT –Calvin Christian Reformed Church Le Mars, IA

Report filed: - February 14, 2023

Esteemed Delegates:

The Classical Home Missions Committee convened on two occasions subsequent to the most recent Classis meeting, meeting together on October 12, 2022, in attendance at that meeting were Kevin Muyskens, Keith Hoekstra, Gary Hibma, Allan Kramer, and Jeff Heerspink. The second meeting took place on January 25, 2023 in attendance at that meeting were Kevin Muyskens, Keith Hoekstra, Jeff Heerspink, Allan Kramer, Gary Hibma, and Mark Volkers. Each of the meetings opened with prayer, held in accordance with the requirements of church order for classical meetings, and closed with mutual prayer.

ITEMS FROM CLASSICAL HOME MISSIONS COMMITTEE MEETINGS

The committee had the opportunity to visit with Lora Copley via zoom meeting to discuss Areopagus Ministries, the campus ministry serving the Iowa State University campus in Ames, IA and the students there. She shared many of the opportunities that she continues to experience to disciple students there, including small group, apologetics groups, Bible studies, working on building a Reformed connected student group, as well as helping with Iranian Family Home Aid. Another goal that Lora shared with the committee was a desire to create connection opportunities with local churches that surrounded the ISU campus.

Sage Peterson completed the work as a part of the Residency in Lincoln, in response the success that they experienced with the program, Willow Applegate applied to participate in the residency program in continuing the process of encouraging and equipping future leaders of the church for the work of discipleship. There is clear evidence of the working of God in the activities and progress of the program.

The committee also discussed church planting activities, the transition of the Sergeant Bluff congregation to Elevate is going well, the committee desires to continue to be connected with the congregation and it's leaders as they continue to worship together, and rejoice that God has brought to them a Senior Pastor in Joshua Camping. We rejoice also in the commitment of New City in Kansas City to proceed toward the work of planting a church. The committee plans to take an opportunity to visit New City and encourage them, the committee also approved funds in order to support this goal. F-Street Church in Lincoln is preparing itself to move from an emerging congregation to an organized congregation. The committee rejoices in the continued growth of the congregation and celebrated the work that God is doing there including ministries like Indwell, Immerse, a new vision that they are exploring in serving the community, and the work that God is doing through the residency program.

Kevin Schutte from Olathe has shared with our committee the incredible missional activities that are happening there. The church there is seeking to be a community member in wonderful ways, offering their space to serve other church groups, imagining a community where the church shares neighborhood with a community of homes from Habitat for Humanity. The committee would like to visit along with our visit to New City.

Classical Home Missions Committee Report to Classis

Page 2 of 2

The committee discussed our connections to the prison ministries in the area, we encourage our committee and our congregations to find ways to engage in serving those ministries.

The committee reviewed information provided by Geneva campus ministries to the committee, it was decided to look further into the goals and plans that Geneva has in regard their mission on campus.

The committee discussed some ideas about how it is that the committee can encourage our congregations and classis to engage in mission work. Encouraging the congregations to take advantage of the ECP grants for reaching out and missional activities. That we as God's church move from simple "Hi" to a welcome that creates connections. The committee also wants to engage in sharing opportunities and activities that our congregations are doing, coordinating with ministries to create videos of some of the things that are going on in our classis.

ITEMS FOR CLASSICAL INFORMATION

The Committee approved the following in regard to the subjects of the meetings outlined previously.

Approved the application of Willow Applegate for Residency Position

Approved \$10,000 for New City Church Plant activities utilizing the Ministry Opportunity Fund

Approved \$2,000 budget for creating communications of the missional activities going on in our classis.

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, and we would ask for the prayers of the members of classis in seeking to be intentionally missional as congregations and classis members.

Motion to approve the work of the committee.

Respectfully Submitted this –February 14, 2023

Pastor Keith Hoekstra

Pastor Keith Hoekstra

Classis Heartland Stewardship Committee Agenda
Thursday, February 13, 2023
12:45PM, The Grill at Dordt University

1. Opening Prayer by our Chair
2. Roll Call (clerk)
 - a. Present: Rev. Nate Kuperus (chair), Mr. Chris Dekkers (lay member), Mr. Eric Kroese (lay member), Mr. Randy Smit (Classical treasurer), and Rev. John Klompier (clergy alternate)
 - b. Absent: (question as to whether or not Rev. Jesse Walhof, CHMC alternate, automatically becomes part of our Committee. He replaces Rev. Tom De Does who had been the CHMC Rep. to CSC)
3. Review Previous Minutes
4. Old Business
 - Diaconal Task Force update. CIC to handle it. Rev. Muyskens will be the contact between Classis and the Taskforce. Note: there is still a sum of money earmarked for Diaconal Ministries (\$16,035)
5. Ministry Share Analysis and Statement of Activity (Winter)
 - a. Treasurer reviews the "Balance Sheet" and "Statement of Activities" for 2022.
 - b. Ministry shares have been fully paid by all but four churches; better than 2021. Pastor Klompier and Pastor Kuperus will formulate a letter/email to churches who haven't paid full ministry shares. They will describe that this contact is an ordinary procedure, asking if the church has particular matters classis can pray for or if there is need for assistance. Letter will include a "blank" to fill in the amount of shortfall. This may help churches understand that this is an ordinary form letter and will note the specific amount.
 - c. Under 'Activities', our treasurer notes repayment of some seminary dollars (Mr. Negus won't complete seminary and paid classis back an amount of \$10,300) and no disbursement of the Friendship Community funds (\$3889.00) as this church has ceased to exist.
 - What should be done with the funds (\$14,189.27)?
 - i. **Motion** made and supported to recommend that Mr. Negus' repayment to student fund (\$10,300) be placed in the Classical Expenses column, as the CMLT has a healthy balance and few students.
 - ii. By consensus the \$3889.00 slated for Friendship will be placed in the Classical Home Missions fund.
6. Classical Treasurer Report (with amendments) approved.
7. New Business
8. Additional Items? None mentioned.
9. Next Meeting: August 21, 2023 @11:15AM. Location TBD.
10. Closing Prayer by Mr. Randy Smit
11. Meeting adjourned

**Classis of the Heartland
Christian Reformed Church**

**Treasurer's Report
January 1 - December 31, 2022**

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

(712)441-9303

**CLASSIS OF THE HEARTLAND
BALANCE SHEET
DECEMBER 31, 2022
WITH COMPARATIVE FIGURES AT DECEMBER 31, 2021**

	<u>2022</u>	<u>2021</u>
Assets		
Cash	\$ 102,934.63	\$ 79,931.86
Certificate of Deposit	<u>77,465.36</u>	<u>77,233.39</u>
Total Assets	<u>\$ 180,399.99</u>	<u>\$ 157,165.25</u>
Net Assets		
Temporarily Restricted Net Assets		
For Classical Home Missions Ministry	\$ 5,738.58	\$ 4,988.12
For Diaconal Ministry	16,035.30	16,035.30
For Ministry Opportunities	69,760.25	60,652.20
For Classical Expenses	24,819.24	14,927.87
For Established Church Development	24,960.01	22,227.29
For Education Committee	1,020.80	4,491.10
For Prayer Coordinator Conference	5,678.56	5,678.56
For Residency Program	9,464.42	9,923.36
For Student Aid	<u>22,922.83</u>	<u>18,241.45</u>
Total Temporarily Restricted Net Assets	<u>180,399.99</u>	<u>157,165.25</u>
Total Net Assets and Liabilities	<u>\$ 180,399.99</u>	<u>\$ 157,165.25</u>

**CLASSIS OF THE HEARTLAND
STATEMENT OF ACTIVITIES
FOR THE YEAR ENDED DECEMBER 31, 2022
WITH COMPARATIVE TOTALS FOR THE YEAR ENDED DECEMBER 31, 2021**

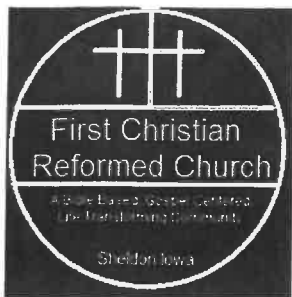
	Classical Expense	Diaconal Ministry	Established Church Dev	Education Committee	Student Aid	Classical Home Missions	Ministry Opportunities	Residency Program	Prayer Coordinator	Other	2022 Total	2021 Total
Revenues												
Ministry Shares	\$13,369.01	\$0.00	\$3,632.72	\$129.70	\$4,681.38	\$1,861.19	\$9,108.05	\$4,541.06	\$0.00	\$259,386.63	\$286,709.74	\$323,094.54
Student Aid Reimbursement	\$10,300.00										10,300.00	
Friendship Balance						3,889.27					3,889.27	12,246.92
Interest	435.76										435.76	1,441.73
Total Revenue	24,104.77	-	3,632.72	129.70	4,681.38	5,750.46	9,108.05	4,541.06	-	259,386.63	311,334.77	336,783.19
Expenses												
Classis Meeting Meals & Stipends	1,916.73										1,916.73	1,569.66
Travel Expense/Mileage	2,204.34										2,204.34	1,228.13
Stated Clerk Stipend	3,000.00										3,000.00	30,000.00
Treasurer Stipend	2,750.00										2,750.00	2,750.00
Meeting Coordinator Stipend	2,000.00										2,000.00	2,000.00
Sate Church Coordinator Stipend	1,000.00										1,000.00	750.00
Elder Delegates to Synod											0.00	0.00
Miscellaneous	773.87										773.87	79.90
Supplies	324.45										324.45	528.40
Postage	174.00										174.00	55.91
Stated Clerk Conference	0.00										-	(500.00)
Accounting Fees	70.00										70.00	85.00
Grants			900.00	3,600.00		5,000.00		5,000.00			14,500.00	1,150.00
Student Aid											0.00	10,000.00
Payments to Agencies	14,213.39	-	900.00	3,600.00	-	5,000.00	-	5,000.00	-	259,386.63	259,386.63	279,582.65
Total Expenses	14,213.39	-	900.00	3,600.00	-	5,000.00	-	5,000.00	-	259,386.63	288,100.02	329,279.65
Net Increase (Decrease) In Net Assets	9,891.38	-	2,732.72	(3,470.30)	4,681.38	750.46	9,108.05	(458.94)	-	-	23,234.75	3,568.65
Net Assets at Beginning of Year	14,927.86	16,035.30	22,227.29	4,491.10	18,241.45	4,988.12	60,652.20	9,923.36	5,678.56	0.00	157,165.24	153,596.59
Net Assets at End of Year	\$24,819.24	\$16,035.30	\$24,960.01	\$1,020.80	\$22,922.83	\$5,738.58	\$69,760.25	\$9,464.42	\$5,678.56	\$0.00	\$180,399.99	\$157,165.24

**Classis of the Heartland
Analysis of Ministry Shares Paid
2022**

Church	Members	Total Ministry Share	Paid in 2022	% Paid
Hawarden	74	8,083.02	8,225.01	102%
Hospers	86	9,393.78	13,128.50	140%
Hull First	372	40,633.56	40,633.56	100%
Hull Hope	181	19,770.63	22,055.60	112%
Ireton	94	10,267.62	10,267.62	100%
KC-Pathway	50	5,461.50	1,000.00	18%
Le Mars	78	8,519.94	8,509.00	100%
Lincoln-Northern Lighthouse	50	5,461.50	2,701.00	49%
New City Church	20	2,184.60	1,000.00	46%
Ocheyedan	115	12,561.45	12,561.45	100%
Omaha	88	9,612.24	9,612.24	100%
Orange City Calvary	296	32,332.08	38,225.35	118%
Orange City First	212	23,156.76	24,637.26	106%
Orange City Immanuel	185	20,207.55	20,207.55	100%
Orange City Living Water	262	28,618.26	28,618.28	100%
Sanborn	116	12,670.68	12,670.68	100%
Sheldon First	129	14,090.67	14,090.68	100%
Sheldon Immanuel	213	23,265.99	23,265.96	100%
Sibley	60	6,553.80	6,300.00	96%
Totals	2,681	292,845.63	297,709.74	102%

**Classis of the Heartland
Analysis of Ministry Shares Paid
2022**

Cause	Total Ministry Share	Paid in 2022	% Paid
Amistad Cristiana	9,234.81	10,463.12	113.3%
Areopagus ISU	4,857.19	4,795.10	98.7%
Classical Expense	13,405.00	13,369.01	99.7%
Classical Home Missions Committee	938.35	1,861.19	198.3%
Cornerstone Prison Ministry	4,691.75	5,267.56	112.3%
Dordt University	181,879.04	177,645.09	97.7%
Education Committee	134.05	129.70	96.8%
Established Church Development	3,753.40	3,632.72	96.8%
Friendship Community	4,691.75	4,710.60	100.4%
Geneva Campus Ministries U of I	4,691.75	4,559.89	97.2%
Laotian Ministry - Sioux City	17,587.36	18,209.89	103.5%
Lincoln - Chaplain	4,691.75	4,541.06	96.8%
Lincoln - F Street	4,691.75	11,004.20	234.5%
Lincoln- F Street Leadership	4,691.75	4,541.06	96.8%
Ministry Opportunity Fund	9,410.31	9,108.05	96.8%
Pathway - Argentine	4,691.75	4,541.03	96.8%
Residency Program	4,691.75	4,541.06	96.8%
Student Aid Fund	4,691.75	4,681.38	99.8%
Youth Consultant	9,410.31	9,108.03	96.8%
Total Classical Ministry Shares	292,835.57	296,709.74	101.3%



First Christian Reformed Church
901 9th St.
Sheldon, IA 51201
(712)324-2374
Rev. Brian R. Dunn
firstcrc@hotmail.com
Atfirst.org

Classis Heartland

Re: Synodical Delegate Selection

Delegates of Classis Heartland,

In response to the Synod Review Task Force, Synod 2019 adopted several changes to “how we do synod.” While many of those changes apply to procedures at Synod there are, however, a few that apply to how we as a Classis select our delegates for Synod. Recommendation m., which was adopted by Synod 2019 reads, *“That synod encourage classes to send one or more delegates to synod for two consecutive years, if possible, to build continuity from synod to synod.”* (Acts of Synod 2019, pg. 809-810)

Our hope is Classis Heartland would honor this encouragement from Synod as part of our Synodical delegation selection process. Continuity is important especially in light of the issues our denomination is facing. Therefore, if our delegates from Synod 2022 are willing to serve once again, we would like to encourage them to do so to provide continuity.

It is our hope that we would begin our Synodical delegate selection process from here forward by asking our *Synodical delegates who have not served two consecutive years if they would be willing and able to serve a second consecutive year. Once this part of the selection process is satisfied, then we can begin with our normal balloting procedure.*

If it is Classis’ will that this become normal procedure for Synodical delegate selection, our delegation would be willing to make a motion from the floor to that affect.

Blessings in Christ,

Consistory of the First Christian Reformed Church of Sheldon

Overture from the Northern Lighthouse Church to Classis Heartland

Northern Lighthouse Church requests Classis Heartland to approve the organization of F Street Church according to article 38-b in the Church Order. We are so excited to see what God has done through this ministry! The Church Order lists several grounds for organization, and we believe that FSNC qualifies under these grounds.

A. Ordinarily the congregation shall have been in existence at least three years.

F Street Neighborhood Church was planted over eight years ago. The first worship service at FSNC was held on, June 1st of 2014. Since 2014, the F Street congregation has continuously met and has grown in many ways (numerically, in new outreach avenues, and in effectiveness for serving Christ).

B. The congregation shall include a sufficient number of members who meet the Biblical requirements for church office and are committed to use their personal and spiritual gifts in providing leadership and support to the congregation and its ministry.

F Street currently has four men serving in a Leadership Capacity, whose gifts and leading have been affirmed by the congregation, and who meet the Biblical requirements for Elders. FSNC also has more individuals attending who could serve in the role of Elder potentially, and as a congregation they are in the process of adding additional leaders at this time.

FSNC also has "Team Leaders" (those who oversee various areas of ministry) who meet the Biblical requirements for Deacons and would be considered so moving forward, following the organization process.

C. The congregation exercises financial stewardship for the continuing development and effectiveness of its ministry and, prior to organization, provides the classis with financial information that reflects its capacity and commitment toward financial self-support, including personnel expenses and classical and denominational funding support.

F Street has finished every year above budget. F Street has also added staff (all of their ministry staff raise 50% of their own support) and has been able to make significant improvements to its facilities in the last few years. F Street has seen yearly growth in local giving and although the church receives, by God's provision, much outside support, they have received only \$5000 from Classical Home Missions in past several years (indicating they are not financially dependent upon the denomination).

D. The community in which the congregation is located offers the potential for continuing ministry, and the congregation gives evidence of its continuing commitment to fulfill the great commission with the resources and opportunities God gives.

F Street was planted in the Near South Neighborhood in Lincoln, NE (just south of downtown). F Street seeks to follow God's call to serve in very practical ways within this neighborhood. There are many in the neighborhood who have experienced a lot of hurt and brokenness (due to Homelessness issues, Sex Trafficking, Loneliness, Poverty, etc.). Because of this call to the neighborhood, there are many opportunities to share the hope and the transformative power that the Gospel offers both for this life and for eternity. As a church, they have had an average of five Adult Baptisms per year. Their ongoing prayer is for more workers – because the Harvest is plentiful!

At a recent F Street congregational meeting, strong support was given toward becoming an organized CRC church. A great deal of gratitude was also expressed for all of the support and encouragement that have been provided by Classis Heartland since F Street was planted.

Thank you for your consideration in this matter.

Sincerely,

Northern Lighthouse Elders

Overture from Living Water Community Church to Classis Heartland

Background:

On October 28, 2022, Calvin University's board of trustees voted to allow faculty members with confessional difficulties on human sexuality to remain in good standing within the institution. The board decision was characterized as "respectful of the university's covenantal partnership with the Christian Reformed Church in North America, consistent with confessional commitment, congruent with existing policies and procedures, supportive of academic freedom, and reflective of constructive engagement."¹

This has allowed faculty who have filed gravamen the continued ability to teach, work for, and minister to students, while at the same time allowing those same faculty to hold positions in opposition to our Confessions. Furthermore, the board's decision is, in fact, contrary to Confessional commitment and also negates the authority structure set in place for how gravamen is to be handled by the institution.

Therefore, the Council of Living Water overtures Classis Heartland to Overture Synod 2023 as follows:

To withhold all denominational funding from Calvin University beginning on September 1, 2024, with the provision that the University will be funded after this date upon the full adherence, without exception, to our Covenantal standards by all faculty and staff members of Calvin University.

Grounds:

1. Synod 2022 affirmed the Christian Reformed Church's traditional understanding of unchastity as found in the Heidelberg Catechism Q and A 108, and this understanding has confessional status.² This decision was made by the majority of Classes at Synod, and it is considered "settled and binding".³ As this is the position of the Christian Reformed Church, the decision made by Calvin University's board of trustees, as outlined above, directly opposes the understanding of the Christian Reformed Church. Therefore, Calvin University can no longer be funded by the Christian Reformed Church as the covenantal relationship shared between the institutions has been severely damaged.
2. The decision by Calvin University's board of trustees is contrary to the position taken by 74 percent of the delegates to synod that represented much of the denomination.⁴ As the action by the board of trustees is incompatible with the Christian Reformed Church, Calvin University and the values and beliefs it holds are no longer representative of the denomination.

¹ <https://www.crcna.org/news-and-events/news/calvin-board-responds-synod-2022>

² Acts of Synod 2022, pg. 922

³ Church Order and Its Supplements, Article 29

⁴ <https://www.thebanner.org/news/2022/06/synod-2022-upholds-traditional-stance-on-same-sex-relationships>

3. The Calvin Faculty Handbook states that “Under the authority of Synod, the Church assigns authority for the life of the University to the Board of Trustees. The Board of Trustees, in turn, assigns authority within the University’s governance system, in which decisions about personnel and confessional interpretation are assigned to the Professional Status Committee (PSC).”⁵ Thus, authority for the registering of gravamen falls ultimately under the authority of Synod. As neither Synod nor the Council of Delegates has received or reviewed any gravamen of either the confessional-difficulty nature or the confessional-revision nature, Calvin University has not adhered to the necessary policies and procedures; thereby further illustrating Calvin University’s desire to no longer be overseen by the denomination.
4. Confessional-difficulty gravamen are intended to be a “personal request for information and/or clarification of the confession.”⁶ In the case of confessional-revision gravamen, “the burden of proof, therefore, rests upon the signatory who calls upon the church to justify or revise its confessions.”⁷ In both cases, gravamen are intended to bring clarity and/or change our confessions. Calvin University faculty and staff have not used gravamen in this manner but utilize them merely as a way of showing disagreement with the covenantal standards to which they must subscribe. Calvin University’s board of trustee’s decision to allow gravamen to be used in this manner further shows Calvin University’s opposition to adhere to the Christian Reformed Church’s confessional standards.

Approved by Council January 23, 2023

Respectfully submitted,

Adrie Groeneweg

Clerk of Council

Living Water Community Church, Sheldon and Orange City, Iowa

⁵ Calvin Faculty Handbook, pg. 44, Article 3.5.1.1

⁶ Church Order and Its Supplements, Article 5, Supplement B.2.

⁷ Church Order and Its Supplements, Article 5, Supplement C.1.

Overture: Seat Female Deacons as Delegates at Classis Heartland Meetings

Background

- Synod 2000 recognized two different perspectives in the CRC on ordaining women to serve in church offices and recognized both perspectives as honoring the Scriptures as the infallible Word of God. Therefore Synod 2000 decided (building on the decision of Synod 1995) that all CRC congregations may allow women to serve as ministers, elders, and deacons. Synod 2007 affirmed that individual classes may choose not to allow female delegates. Classis Heartland currently does not allow female officebearers to serve as delegates, though some congregations within Classis Heartland elect women to serve as elders and deacons.

Overture

- The councils of Calvin CRC and Immanuel CRC Sheldon overture Classis Heartland to seat female deacons as delegates at classis meetings and to adjust section I.D of the Rules of Procedure accordingly so that those congregations who choose to have women serving as deacons may be more fully represented in classis.

Grounds

- We, the councils of Calvin and Immanuel, are committed to Classis Heartland and desire to fully participate in classis meetings. As a smaller congregation with a smaller council than many congregations within Classis Heartland, Calvin has a smaller pool of currently serving church officers. We recognize that this issue affects not only Calvin but may also affect other churches in classis. Allowing smaller churches who are in a similar situation to ours the freedom to delegate female deacons would increase the likelihood of us having both an elder and a deacon who are able to serve at each classis meeting.
- Since this matter was last discussed in Classis Heartland in 2019, more women have begun serving in leadership roles within classis. For example, Immanuel recently ordained a female deacon.
- Women can be nominated for and serve on committees of Classis Heartland, and through their nominations and service we have seen women's gifts being utilized in many roles within classis. We believe that the seating of women as delegates would allow for classis to fully utilize the many types of spiritual gifts God has given to His church.

Please note, we are NOT asking any congregation to change its practice when it comes to ordaining women to serve on its council. We respect that there are two perspectives and deep convictions, and we want each council to have full authority to nominate its own minister, elder, and deacon delegates according to Church Order Article 40a. We simply ask that Classis Heartland acknowledge all the deacons ordained and delegated by the council they serve—whether they are male or female—and allow them to speak, vote, and represent their congregation at meetings of Classis Heartland.

Calvin CRC Council
Ron De Kok, President
Bob Hughes, Clerk

Immanuel CRC Council
Kevin Muyskens, President
Mark Vander Pol, Clerk

**REPORT OF THE –CLASSICAL EDUCATION COMMITTEE- TO
CLASSIS IN SESSION, - MARCH 4, 2023
AT –CALVIN CRC, LEMARS, IA**

REPORT ON THE WORK OF THE CEC

Esteemed Delegates:

The Classical Education Committee met on September 7, 2022 and January 11, 2023. Members present at each meeting were Rev. Aaron Gonzalez, Rev. Jesse Walhof, and Rev. Ben Wiersma. Rev. Gonzalez opened with devotions and prayer at each meeting. Each meeting was closed in prayer.

Topics discussed at the meetings 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** – The CEC has been in contact with Sam Keyzer, Del Walinga (T.L.T. facilitators in Heartland) to help promote and support upcoming T.L.T. events.
 - i. TLT had a Summit gathering on October 28-29. The CEC gave a \$1500 grant to cover the cost of the event.
 - ii. No future dates have been announced at this time.
 - b. **Dordt and Classis Heartland Opportunities** – The CEC will remain in contact with Rev. Todd Zuidema at Dordt University in order to partner with them in educational events.
 - c. **Dunamis Project** – The CEC is promoting these events held each spring and fall at Ingham Lutheran Bible Camp in Milford, IA. Information about the events will be sent out through the Stated Clerk. The CEC encourages each church to promote these events and help support the cost of the event for their congregation members. If a church is unable to support financially, please contact the members of the CEC for assistance.
 - d. **Abide Project** – The steering committee for the Abide Project is in discussion about future events. Online opportunities are available on their website (<https://www.abideproject.org/>). These include articles, devotionals, and podcasts. The CEC discussed what the ongoing relationship with Classis Heartland and the Abide Project would look like.
2. Ministry Support on behalf of Classis Heartland
 - a. **Classis Prayer Coordinator (Ms. Barb Hibma)**
 - i. Ms. Hibma brought a couple of ideas to the CEC.
 1. Ms. Hibma shared the Prayer Wall that is currently being used at Living Water – Sheldon.
 2. Ms. Hibma is planning to attend a Prayer Catalyst Gathering at All Nations Church in California. The CEC passed a motion to fund travel, lodging, and other expenses from this trip. Estimated cost is \$1700 from the Prayer Coordinator Fund.
 - b. **Minn-I-Kota Youth Network (Ms. Lee DeGroot)**
 - i. MIK Youth Network has received a donation of \$22,500 from Hope CRC in Rapid City, SD. The MIK Youth board has decided to use those funds for future scholarships for youth leader training events.

- c. **Safe Church (Dr. Tara Boer)**
 - i. New information concerning Safe Church Policy compliance in the CRC has been sent out.
 - ii. The CEC discussed how to best support the Safe Church Team, churches, and Church Visitors in the role of Safe Church Advisors.
- 3. Financial Reports
 - a. The CEC discussed the current balance of the CEC and how those funds could be stewarded to further the purpose and intent of the CEC.
 - b. Current balances will be reported by the Classis Treasurer.

ITEMS FOR CLASSICAL INFORMATION

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

ITEMS FOR CLASSICAL ACTION / RECOMMENDATIONS

Recommendation 1: That Classis approve the work and report of the Classis Education Committee.

Recommendation 2: That Classis recognize the Abide Project as a useful resource for education and formation in regards to maintaining biblical and confessional integrity within the Christian Reformed Denomination.

Grounds: The Abide Project is a collection of CRC pastors, leaders, and church members who work to maintain biblical and confessional integrity through learning opportunities, prayer, and scholarship.

Recommendation 3: That Classis communicate with the Abide Project about hosting an event at either a local church or Dordt University in 2024.

Grounds: Many supporters and participants in the Abide Project events come from the three local classes. An event hosted in Northwest Iowa would be a good opportunity for local church leaders, pastors, and church members to attend and learn more.

Members of the CEC: Rev. Aaron Gonzalez, Rev. Jesse Walhof, Rev. Ben Wiersma



MINN-I-KOTA YOUTH NETWORK

Thank you all for the continued support of our youth, our youth leaders, and Minn-I-Kota Youth Network Ministry (MIK Youth). Over the past 13 years I have seen a lot of changes in youth culture and in our world around us, but there are a few things that never change and I hold on tightly to these promises. Our God never ever changes. No matter what...we can trust God...He is consistent. He and His Word are the same yesterday, today, and forever! **Malachi 3:6 and Hebrews 13:8.**

BOARD MEMBERS *Minnkota Classis: Representative-Pastor Greg Timmer-9/2022, Karmen Vis-Co Secretary-9/2017, Sarah Van Dyken-Co Secretary-5/2019. *Iakota Classis: Representative-Pastor Henry Lengkeek-9/2018, Dan Elgersma-President-1/2019, Shelli Kollis-1/2020, *Heartland Classis: Representative-Pastor Ben Wiersma-9/2021, Kody Tesch-Treasurer-11/2019, Beth Heerspink-4/2021

I am Lee De Groot. I have had the privilege of serving Minnkota, Iakota, and Heartland Classis as your Youth Ministry Coordinator through (MIK Youth 2/1/2011) and as the Champion Representative (2016)/Executive Team Member (2019) for Faith Formation in Youth Ministry. I often say my passion for youth ministry is because a long time ago I too was young ☺, but also because of my 5 children and now my growing number of grandchildren (#12 due in March, #13 due in June, and #14 due in July).

This fall my husband, Pastor Doug De Groot (Pastor of Rock Rapids, IA CRC), joined me in a part time paid position. This has been a blessing as he helps me with various events. Together we also do a lot of brain storming and talking about "what's next".

This year we have brought back the Travelling Lesson Plan. I had taken two years off during the COVID years. This year's lesson is from Numbers 22. The title is "Would You Rather-The Talking Donkey". If your church would like us to come and teach this lesson, please, contact us and we will get you on our calendar. We will continue this lesson through 2023.

The Jr High Retreat is coming up—April 21, 22, and 23 at Inspiration Hills. This event is in its 13th year and we look forward to it every year. We continue to partner with Dordt University and started meeting with our team of Student Leaders this past October. Our theme this year is "Satisfied" and is taken from the John 4:13-14. The registration forms will be handed out at the Classis meetings. This year three of the 26 DU Student Leaders went through this retreat when they were in Jr High...That is full circle ministry.

Be watching for a new Leaders' event coming in Feb 2024. MIK Youth will be partnering with Ryan Feltman (Synod of the Heartland), Ron de Vries (Faith Formation Ministries), and Rick Zomer (Therefore Go Ministries) to bring your leaders a local event designed for each individual.

MIK Youth was blessed with a "parting gift" from Rapid City, SD Hope CRC. The MIK Board has set up "THE RC HOPE SCHOLARSHIP FUND". If you know of an individual who is in need of aid to attend an upcoming MIK Youth event, please contact me or a board member. It is our "HOPE" to offer these scholarships for many years to come because of this generous gift from RC Hope CRC!

Thank you for all your continued support in this ever changing world! Let us know how we can serve you and our youth.

God Bless~~Lee & Pastor Doug De Groot

Classis Heartland & Iakota Safe Church Report Spring 2023

Prepared by: Tara Boer, Iakota & Heartland Safe Church Coordinator
Submitted: 02/06/23

Iakota & Heartland Classical Safe Church Team Members: Pastor Henry Lengkeek (Trinity CRC, Iakota) Heidi Van Roekel (Bethel CRC-Iakota), Pastor Jesse Walhof (Living Water CRC-Heartland), Kristi Habben (Sibley CRC-Heartland). Tara Boer (Hope CRC, Heartland).

Classical Safe Church Team Tasks:

- The Safe Church Team serves in a consultative role for churches in classis who are developing (or reviewing/revising) congregational safe church policies.
- 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 Meeting:

A team meeting took place on October 25, 2022 to discuss outcome of classes meetings. The team discussed the proposed signing of the code of conduct policy by ministry leaders, concerns for churches who report physical safety concerns from community and congregation members, and training initiatives needed for leaders and churches as they create and maintain effective safe church practices. The team will meet again in February.

Safe Church Committee Activity

Committee members continue to serve church leaders and congregations who ask for assistance and resources. Classes clerks forwarded an email and survey to churches for the purpose of understanding what ministry leaders need to support their safe church goals.

Please complete this survey if you haven't already.

Safe Church Team Goals:

The safe church team continues to ensure that each church have an updated safe church policy, conduct background checks on ministry leaders, and maintain a 2-3-person safe church team to over-see the policy. Ministry leaders can further prevent abuse by implementing the CRC supported Circle of Grace programming in their Sunday school classrooms. This curriculum takes 2-4 weeks of the year and provides age-appropriate education on boundaries, safe behaviors with others, the internet, and social media. Please contact Tara if you have questions about what services to use for background checks and how to get started with Circle of Grace.

Please also continue to follow the CRC Safe Church ministry page, blogs, and upcoming events. They offer many resources to ministry leaders and congregations in the form of education, training, policy formation, abuse prevention and response.

Please do not hesitate to contact a member of our committee if you would like to talk about any needs or problems that your church has. You may communicate with any committee member above or contact Tara directly at 712-898-6468 (cell) or tara.boer@dordt.edu

Classical Interim Committee – Heartland
October 5, 2022
Calvary CRC, Orange City

1. Membership: All present Rev. Kevin Muyskens (Chair), Rev. Nathan Kuperus-via phone call (Clerk), Rev. Brian Hofman (Vice-chair), Rev. Phillip Westra (Stated Clerk)
2. CIC invites Rev. Brian Dunn to serve as church counselor for First CRC, Hull upon Rev. Kotman's retirement.
3. CIC invites Rev. Ben Wiersma to serve as church counselor for Ocheyedan CRC upon Rev. De Does's retirement.
4. CIC accepts the request for classical appointment pulpit supply to Ocheyedan CRC and First CRC, Hull. They will be included on the schedule beginning January 2023.
5. CIC recognizes that congregations with pastors will be asked to offer them multiple times in 2023 for classical appointment to vacant churches.
6. CIC invites Rev. Sam Keyzer (retired pastor at Northern Lighthouse, Lincoln) and Mr. Jeff Heerspink (commissioned pastor of F Street) to serve classical appointments. Ordinarily only active, ordained ministers of organized congregations are expected to fill classical appointments.
7. CIC determines that no further action is necessary on the part of Classis Heartland in the disaffiliation/dissolution of Friendship Community Church, Sergeant Bluff since this congregation was 'emerging' and not 'organized' according to church order.
8. CIC invites Rev. Muyskens to join the Diaconal Ministry Task Force in order to create a stronger administrative link between the task force and the classis.
9. CIC suggest the Diaconal Ministry Task Force to have three diaconally-minded lay people actively involved on the task force. If they need more people to fulfill this, the task force should seek additional members.
10. Motion duly made and carried to accept the transfer of ministerial credentials of Rev. Steve Boersma from Dispatch CRC, Dispatch, KS to Hawarden CRC.
 - a. Rev. Boersma was separated from the church in Dispatch, KS and is seeking a call. In the meantime, he and his wife have moved to Hawarden and are worshipping with the Hawarden CRC. It is fitting that ministerial oversight are transferred to the local congregation.
11. CIC instructs the Rev. Westra (stated clerk) to forward a reformatted version of the petition regarding Church of the Servant CRC of Classis Grand Rapids East hosting Synod in 2023 to the General Secretary and Council of Delegates.
12. CIC receives an appeal to classis regarding a council decision.

Classical Interim Committee – Heartland
January 18, 2023
Immanuel CRC, Sheldon

1. Membership: All present Rev. Kevin Muyskens (Chair), Rev. Nathan Kuperus (Clerk), Rev. Brian Hofman (Vice-chair), Rev. Phillip Westra (Stated Clerk)
2. The Stated Clerk has received two separate correspondence regarding the Classis Heartland overture concerning Church of the Servant hosting Synod 2023.
 - a. Rev. Musykens will draft a reply letter to the Church of the Servant in hopes of maintaining a respectful dialogue.
 - b. The correspondence and the reply will be included in the Classis Agenda packet.
3. CIC continues to oversee an appeal to classis (Church Order art. 30) regarding a council decision.
4. CIC made initial preparations for sermon evaluation and oral examination for John Keyzer if he was to seek ordination as a Commissioned Pastor at the March meeting. (after the meeting it was determined that Mr. Keyzer will be ready for sermon evaluation and oral examination at the Fall 2023 classis meeting)
 - a. CIC invites Rev. John Klompien to be the examiner and Rev. Garry Nyenhuis to be the sermon evaluator with another evaluator yet to be determined.
 - b. CIC assigns John 6:1-15 as the text to be preached on for evaluation.
5. CIC instructs the Stated Clerk to notify the upcoming chair and vicechair of classis of their roles at the upcoming meeting of classis. The next meeting will be at Calvin CRC, Le Mars on Saturday, March 4

Classical Interim Committee- Heartland
February 15, 2023
Immanuel CRC, Sheldon

1. Membership: All present Rev. Kevin Muyskens (Chair), Rev. Nathan Kuperus (Clerk), Rev. Brian Hofman (Vice-chair), Rev. Phillip Westra (Stated Clerk), Rev. Dunn (Spring Classis Chair)
2. **Motion duly approved: Classis Heartland will require all who renew or attain a license to exhort in Classis Heartland to sign the Covenant for Officebearers**
3. CIC reviews the upcoming classis agenda/schedule.
4. Rev. Muyskens reports that an appeal regarding a decision made by a church in classis has been settled through a mutual agreement.

Combined Classis Heartland and Classis lakota Interim Committees Meeting

14 November 2022, 2:00pm, Bethel CRC Sioux Center

Stanley Groothof, Bernie Haan, Brian Hofman, Nate Kuperus,

John Lee, Kurt Monroe, and Kevin Muyskens | Absent: Phil Westra

1. Opening

John opens our meeting in prayer.

2. Old Business

2.1. Successor to Siouxland Diaconal Conference:

Members of Classis Heartland have been developing a combined classical diaconal ministry. Tomorrow Kevin will meet with several people from Classis Heartland to continue discussing this after which he will reach out to Cliff Hoekstra (*cah23@mtcnet.net*) and/or Scott Hulstein (*scotth@ntlifts.com*) of Classis lakota. With refugees moving into the area, we see value in a shared diaconal ministry to potentially help in the process of welcoming and settling them.

2.2. Minn-I-Kota Youth:

We are grateful Lee De Groot has decided to continue serving Minn-I-Kota Youth together with her husband, Doug. Stanley will ask the Minn-I-Kota board to submit their minutes to both CICs in addition to their bi-annual reports to classis.

2.3. Safe Church Ministry:

Both classes have increased their remuneration for Tara Boer. We note that the denomination is currently welcoming feedback on the Code of Conduct.

2.4. Continuing Education:

Because Dordt University no longer hosts Day of Encouragement, we wonder about educational opportunities in our region. Stanley will encourage Todd Zuidema to ensure all pastors in area classes are notified of continuing education events that are offered through Dordt. The Classis lakota CIC and Classis Heartland Education Committee will discuss potential training for other leaders too, perhaps on alternating years (deacons one year, elders the next, lay-volunteers the next, etc.).

2.5. Classis Renewal:

With the transition of denominational personnel, this initiative seems to be declining. That need not stop our two classes from sharing best practices as we're doing today.

3. New Business

3.1. Synod 2022:

We sense that many people in our classes are content with the decisions of Synod 2022, particularly in regards to the Foundation-laying Biblical Theology of Human Sexuality report.

3.2. Best Practices:

1. Classis lakota has modified its procedures for delegating officebearers to synod, considering officebearers' gifts and welcoming individuals to be delegated two years in a row for continuity.
2. Classis lakota requested its licensed exhorters to sign the Covenant for Officebearers. The Classis Heartland CIC will consider asking its licensed exhorters to do the same.

3. Classis Heartland has been and will likely will continue having discussions about seating women at their classis meetings.
4. We discuss the size of our classes, noting that we are much larger than other classes. Some of our churches have as many baptisms as other entire classes. We wonder whether we should give thought to creating another classis in our region.

3.3. Affiliation:

Several RCA congregations recently expressed interest in affiliating with the CRC, most recently Maurice Reformed Church with whom John has been in conversation. John outlines the steps for affiliation, some of which could be characterized as onerous. We would welcome an overture to synod that makes affiliation more streamlined, even if it's only temporary as RCA congregations determine their future affiliations.

3.4. Ecclesiastical Partnerships:

We note that many area RCAs have joined or plan to join the Alliance of Reformed Church (ARC) or Kingdom Network. We discuss how we can maintain our partnerships with churches that have left the RCA both formally and informally. We see value in having conversations with area ARC and Kingdom Network leaders.

4. Closing

We see value in meeting at least annually to discuss (a) updates and best practices from each classis, (b) shared ministries (e.g. diaconal ministry, licensure to exhort, Minn-I-Kota Youth, Safe Church, etc.), and (c) opportunities for partnership (e.g. continuing education, overtures to synod, regional partnerships, etc.). A number of us look forward to engaging with General Secretary Zach King later this week. Nate closes our meeting in prayer. Meeting adjourns just after 3:30pm.

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Classis Heartland Diaconal Task Force Proposal to Classis March 4, 2023

Committee to form a Diaconal Task Force Members: Jim Viet; Pete Attema; Jon Hellinga; Kevin Muyskens

1. **Structure:** Task force would be headed by a volunteer chair/president/director along with 2-4 leaders in each area of Education, Mercy, and Benevolence. Thus the team would have between 7 & 13 members. (A smaller number is preferred for cohesiveness, but we would not want to turn away qualified volunteers.)
 - a. This will be a Classis Heartland ministry, hopefully with a mirror organization in Classis lakota with whom we could often share events, training, and best practices.
 - b. The Diaconal Task Force would be accountable to the Classical Interim Committee.
2. The following general areas of expertise will be solicited for the diaconal task force:
 - a. **Education:** to provide an annual deacons' training event, to be able to offer training to local churches in the areas of budgeting and leading people in giving.
 - b. **Mercy:** to provide leadership, organization, and coordination to help people of classical churches work together to meet a local or regional need: i.e. responding to the Parkersburg tornadoes or the Red River flooding.
 - c. **Benevolence:** to provide teaching in the areas of benevolence and personal financing. This could be teaching deacons or other church volunteers to teach/mentor others in the areas of personal budgeting and financial management. It could be hands on teaching with individuals in need of personal help in this area. It could include communication and cooperation with organizations such as Love INC in Sheldon or the Center for Financial Education in Sioux Center, etc.
3. **Motion: To approve the foregoing structure and plan as presented.**
4. The churches are asked to submit recommendations for the director of this task force to the committee.
5. **Motion: To empower the committee to appoint a director with confirmation of the Classical Interim Committee.**
6. Each church of classis is asked to submit 1-3 nominees for this task force. Nominees should be submitted to the committee by May 25. Churches are asked to communicate which area (education, mercy, or benevolence) for which their nominee(s) are gifted.
 - a. Nominees should be members in good standing in the CRC. They are not required to be currently serving as deacons.
7. **Budget:** We foresee seeking a \$5,000 (or \$2 per member ministry share) budget at the September 2023 classis meeting. Ideally as a money accumulates the annual request would likely decrease.
 - a. Possible expense items: speakers/trainers; travel expenses; printing & supplies; combined ministry expenses

Respectfully submitted,

Rev. Kevin Muyskens

Stated Clerk Report Classis Heartland, Spring of 2023

Below are tasks I completed as the stated clerk since our last meeting in September of 2022.

1. Completed the meeting minutes and meeting summary from September 21, 2022. Sent them to churches in our classis and denominational functionaries, and uploaded them to our classis website.
2. Updated the Servants of Classis document, sent it to churches and denominational functionaries, and uploaded it to our website.
3. Obtained completed reports from our synodical deputies and sent them to the synodical services office.
4. Working with Calvary CRC and our Classis Interim Committee, I updated the formatting of our communication to the Council of Delegates and sent it to the synodical services office.
5. Processed the credentials of Rev. Steve Boersma from Dispatch CRC to Hawarden CRC.
6. Forwarded several email communications from classis committees or denominational ministries to our churches of Classis Heartland.
7. I have been involved with several communication exchanges, researching, virtual meetings, and in-person meetings regarding an appeal the CIC is responding to.
8. Updated classis leader information with the denomination for the purposes of the yearbook and online Classis Heartland information on crcna.org.
9. Sent a proposal to our denominational candidacy committee that Pastor Jeff Heerspink be given the blessing to continue pastoring F Street as their solo commissioned pastor after they organize as a CRC congregation.
10. Responded to inquiries about Elevate Community Church, commissioned pastor requirements, pulpit supply lists, overture formatting requirements, and search committee processes.
11. Passed along denominational pledge requests to churches and followed up with churches as needed.
12. Communicated classis meeting hosting information to Calvin CRC.
13. Though I did not attend the Stated Clerks Gathering on January 11–13 in California, I have reviewed all notes taken from that event.
14. Gathered information from committees, individuals, and churches in order to compile the agenda for the Spring classis meeting.
15. Updated classis Heartland Website with a list of those licensed to exhort and the meeting agenda.

Respectfully submitted,
Rev. Phillip Westra

10.31.22

Re: Church Visitation

Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

On October 10th, 2022 Rev. Nathan Kuperus and myself (Rev. Brian Dunn) visited the council of Living Water Community Church. This was done in accordance with Article 42 of the Church Order to ascertain whether the church as well as her officebearers were faithfully performing their duties, adhering to sound doctrine while observing Church Order and building up the body of Christ as their part in extending God's Kingdom. We are happy to report in our humble opinion, **Living Water Community Church is doing well in these areas.**

Living Water faces unique challenges as a multisite church in Sheldon and in Orange City, each of them being very different campuses. This makes for a unique flavor of ministry for each campus. In the past, this has presented leadership challenges for the council. Members from both campuses are present on the council overseeing the care and vision of the church. Therefore, they must be mindful of this uniqueness in their discussions and activities. Over the past three years, they have worked hard to bridge these gaps which has allowed for the unique ministries of each campus to flourish. In addition, the council is very pleased with the work of their pastors and Pastor Garry and Pastor Jesse echoed the sentiment toward the council. They have worked hard to communicate well including regular evaluations and encouragements.

Like many churches today, they too are facing many challenges. Recovery from Covid and the issues therein still linger, though overall, they feel they navigated it well. They had already been working to stream and serve people where they were at prior to Covid, and this helped. Yet, questions of discipleship remain as they do for many of us in the church. They are especially challenging at Living Water considering the transient nature of the people they seek to serve.

The council of Living Water would encourage the churches of Classis Heartland to practice creating a welcoming atmosphere at their churches. This is something Living Water has focused on and found it to be very successful in bringing in and retaining new members. They would also suggest for churches looking to improve or change practices, to consider having outside eyes look at the church and its practices. This can open our eyes to see things in a new light, often from the perspective of someone who is not used to the things we grow accustomed to.

As church visitors, it is encouraging to see the success Living Water is having. While their ministry is unique in many ways, they have found interesting ways to work through challenges many of our churches are facing.

Respectfully submitted,

Rev. Brian Dunn & Rev. Nathan Kuperus
Church Visitors to South Classis Heartland

Church Visitor Report- Calvin CRC, Le Mars

On October 24, 2022, Rev. Brian Dunn and Rev. Nate Kuperus visited the council of Calvin CRC in Le Mars. After a time of introductions, devotions, and prayer, the church visitors lead conversations about how the officebearers carry out their duties with sound doctrine, in good order for the extension of God's kingdom.

The officebearers were able to share the joys of serving in the church. Although there are not many teenagers in the church, there are a good number of young families with small children, which they are very thankful for. The council particularly appreciates Rev. Hofman leading children's messages during the services. They noted the blessing of serving the community in many different ways including the return of their summer VBS program and leading worship services in the nursing homes. The praise team and their ability to lead was a highlight for some.

The elders ensure that communion is celebrated once per month. They expressed that they are blessed by Rev. Hofman's preaching and leadership. One of the main challenges they face is the ongoing work of discipling people to grow in their faith and serve Christ better in the community.

The deacons have faithfully stewarded the gifts given by the congregation and expressed gratitude to God that their congregation gives faithfully. They have been able to support many local ministries and food pantries above and beyond their own local ministry needs. Our visit was the first meeting after council change over so two of the deacons expressed their eagerness to learn more of what it means to be serve as a deacon in the church.

Rev. Hofman has served the congregation of Calvin CRC for just over a year. He feels like his family is settling in well and appreciates the support from the congregation and the council. They give him regular feedback and encouragement in his work. They are serving Christ and his Church well together.

The church visitors commend the council of Calvin CRC for their faithful work in Christ's Kingdom.

Soli Deo Gloria

Humbly submitted,

Classical Church Visitors (South)

Rev. Brian Dunn- First CRC, Sheldon

Rev. Nate Kuperus- Ireton CRC

Re: Church Visitation

Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

On January 16, 2023, Rev. Nathan Kuperus and myself (Rev. Brian Dunn) visited the council of First Christian Reformed Church of Orange City (First CRC). This was done in accordance with Article 42 of the Church Order to ascertain whether the church as well as her officebearers are faithfully performing their duties, adhering to sound doctrine while observing Church Order and building up the body of Christ as their part in extending God's Kingdom. We are happy to report in our humble opinion, **First CRC is doing well in these areas.**

First CRC, at this writing is currently without a Lead Pastor. However, they feel they are in a good place, as much of the leadership has stepped up to meet these challenges. In fact, that has been one of the joys they shared with us as we conversed during our visit. Both the Elders and the Deacons have worked hard to fill gaps. This has allowed them to work closely with their church administrator (being grateful for her work) so things are not falling through the cracks. This is a sign of great communication and leaders stepping up in a big way.

They have also been served by the work of their Pastor of Congregational Care, Jordan Helming. Visiting the shut ins of the church is a priority for First CRC. This is one of the primary roles Pastor Jordan fulfills. In addition, he has stepped up to preach a bit more frequently during the vacancy. The Council has been greatly please with this and his continuing work and are grateful he is on board, and he to work with them.

The Elders of First CRC still engage in regular family visitation typically making it through the entire congregation in 1 ½ years. While this is challenging, it maintains that strong line of communication and connection they need to thrive in the work they do. They are a group that is centered on promoting the pure preaching of the word and have worked hard to keep that organized during their vacancy. The Deacons handle their collections and deal with benevolence issues as they receive them. They have worked hard to build strong relationships with the local school and recently implemented a system provide more accountability with their numbers. These areas and others not mentioned show their faithful work in their offices.

We are encouraged by the work First CRC is doing. They are Christ centered, doing good work in a time of vacancy while they still are doing their best to reach out to the community around them. As Church Visitors, we commend their work and wish God's continuation on the congregation!

Respectfully submitted,

Rev. Brian Dunn & Rev. Nathan Kuperus
Church Visitors to South Classis Heartland

Church Visit to Ocheydan CRC

October 3, 2022

Prior to the meeting with the Council, the church visitors were consulted by the pastor and two elders regarding a conflict situation. That matter is being followed up on.

Chad shared thoughts from Philippians 4, about focusing thoughts on what is admirable, excellent, and worthy of praise.

Blessings mentioned:

- Deacons and elders are said to be diligent and work together well. Elders are active in teaching Catechism classes.
- Financial support is good, including for church projects and missionaries.
- Youth programs , such as Gems and Cadets, draws several community people; and are seen as a strength.
- A Men's breakfast , involvement with Sanborn CRC at the fair, and involvement with a food pantry are examples of outreach.
- The congregation is seen as "faithful" in its various commitments.

Challenges mentioned: Covid, Sunday night worship attendance, and "ageing."

The mission of Ocheydan CRC is guided by the denominational statement.

In light of Pastor Tom's impending retirement, the church plans to have an interim pastor. The pastor search committee is planning to meet tonight.

As part of leadership accountability, mutual censure is done 4X/year. A question they seek to answer during this time: What could we give attention to that would advance God's kingdom?

The meeting was closed in prayer.

Respectfully Submitted,

Sam Keyzer and Chad Van Ginkel

Church Visiting Report
Immanuel CRC, Sheldon
November 9, 2022

Pastor Chad opened with a devotional based on Philippians 4:8 *Fix your thoughts on what is true and honorable and right and pure and lovely and admirable.* Think about things that are excellent and worthy of praise.

Council still reflects with gratitude regarding their 50th anniversary celebration, which included a “reunion” of many.

Care in the congregation is done primarily through four “households of Faith.” These groups are overseen by three people, including an Elder and Deacon. Bible studies are based on sermons.

A Council member alluded to a “very involved” congregation.

The following blessings were noted:

- Finances are good.
- “People help people” when there is a need.
- Gems and Cadets are drawing a good percentage from the community.
- A full time youth coordinator was recently hired.
- Children and worship

Challenges include nominations for Council and “ageing.”

Regarding the future, it was mentioned that “we could make a greater effort reaching out to youth in public schools;” and “we are thinking about the potential of a ‘stand-alone’ youth building.”

This was an enjoyable visit. We rejoice in the Lord’s blessing on this congregation and pray with them regarding the fulfillment of their hopes for the future.

Respectfully Submitted,

Sam Keyzer and Chad Van Ginkel

Church Visiting Report
1st CRC Sheldon
November 9, 2022

The meeting was opened with a devotional based on Galatians 6:9—*So let us not get tired of doing what is good. At just the right time we will reap a harvest of blessing if we don't give up.*

Pastor Brian has been the pastor for one year now. Council is very thankful for his presence and for his “solid preaching of the Word.”

It was said by a Council member, “It’s good to hear the sound of children again,” indicating a greater presence recently of younger children. Among additional blessings for which to give thanks:

- An “improved atmosphere”
- A Hispanic ministry, looking to start a church, using the facilities on Sunday afternoons.

Currently, Pastor and leaders are giving direction based on “Simple Church,” which focuses on worship, cells, and service.

Among future challenges: Reaching those who have become “inactive,” building up the youth group (including volunteers), and improvement in adult discipleship.

This was an enjoyable visit. We were encouraged by the dedication of the leaders and rejoice in the ways the Lord has blessed this congregation. Let us all join this congregation in prayer as the Council gives direction and face the challenges of the future.

Respectfully Submitted,

Sam Keyzer and Chad Van Ginkel