

Classis Central Plains Agenda

Sully CRC, Sully, IA

Saturday, February 28, 2026, 8AM

Chair: Rev. Michael Bentley

Vice Chair: Rev. Nate Klingenberg

1. Opening Devotions
2. Roll Call Constituting Classis
3. New Business
 - a. Art. 18 Retirement request from Rev. John Ritsema (p.2)
 - b. Classis Central Plains and Multiply Conference Discussion (p. 2-3)
 - c. Communication from Peace Cedar Rapids (p. 3)
4. Reports (if no p. #, verbal report at meeting)
 - a. Classical Committees
 - i. Classical Leadership Team (Interim Committee) (p. 3-4)
 - ii. Classical Ministry Leadership Team
 - iii. Classis Treasurer/Classis Financial Committee/2026-27 Budge (p. 4-5)
 - iv. Classical Missions Committee
 - v. Nomination Committee (p. 6)
 1. Delegates for Synod 2026
 - b. Classical Functionaries
 - i. Stated Clerk
 - ii. Healthy Church Advocate (Church Visitors)
 - iii. Church Counselors
 1. Rev. Will Verhoef for Connect (p. 6-8)
 2. Rev. Jonathan Spronk for Prairie City (p. 8)
 - iv. Regional Pastors
 - v. CRC Council of Delegates – Rev. Erik Kamp – Central Plains Rep.
 - c. Classical Ministry Reports
 - i. Areopagus Campus Ministry (Iowa State University) (p. 9)
 - ii. Multiply Conference Reports
 1. Jonathan Spronk (p. 10-12)
 2. Drew Ryder (p. 12-13)
 - d. Denominational Agency Reports (attached at end of Agenda)
 - i. Zach King - General Secretary Spring Classis Meeting Letter
 - ii. Calvin University BOT January 2026 Report
 - iii. Calvin Seminary BOT Spring 2026 Report
 - iv. Reframe Ministries
 - v. Trudy Ash – Thrive Playlist
5. Classis Prayer Time
 - a. Classis will have time of small group prayer. Delegates are asked to share in prayer time about the joys and concerns of their Church. Info about small group assignment and rooms will be shared at the meeting.

6. Speakers
 - a. Rev. Zach King – General Secretary CRCNA
 - b. Rev. Christian Sebastia – Classis Rocky Mountain and Houston area church plants
 - c. Mr. Rick Zomer – CRCNA Faith Formation Consultant – Christian Parenting and Caregiver Initiative
 - d. Mr. Bret Erikson – Geneva Campus Ministry (University of Iowa)
7. Next Regular Meeting of Classis: Friday and Saturday, Sept. 18-19, 2026 at Location TBD
8. Adjournment and Closing Prayer

Rev. Jonathan Spronk, Stated Clerk – Classis Central Plains

New Business

Art. 18 Retirement Request for Rev. John Ritsema

Rev. John Ritsema has served Cedar CRC since 2018 and has requested Church Order Art. 18 retirement due to age from Classis Central Plains, effective for April 30, 2026.

Article 18

a. A minister who has reached retirement age, or who because of physical or mental disability is incapable of performing the duties of the office, is eligible for retirement. Retirement shall take place with the approval of the council and classis and in accordance with synodical regulations.

Classis Central Plains and Multiply Conference Discussion

In November, Elder Drew Ryder (Crossroads DSM) and Pastors Erik Kamp and Jonathan Spronk (First Oskaloosa) attended the Multiply Conference in Port St. Lucie, FL along with many other CRC church leaders. Two written reports from Drew and Jonathan are attached to the agenda for your information. (p. 10-13 of this Agenda)

Over the last few months, several pastors and elders of Classis Central Plains and Classis NorthCentral Iowa have been involved in various conversations about discipleship, leadership development and church planting/revitalization. In consultation with the Classis Leadership Team and with our next regular Classis meeting Sat. Feb. 28, 2026 at Connect Church Pella, we would like to host **a Classis-wide worship service on the evening of Friday, Feb. 27 also at Connect Church.**

The plan at this time is to have a **worship service begin at 6:30PM.** We would like to invite our Classis delegates, our officebearers and our congregational members to come. The worship service will be led by Classis Pastors as well as Rev. Zach King, General Secretary of the CRCNA and Rev. Christian Sebastia, Classis Rocky Mountain church planter, both of whom will be visiting Classis that weekend. Moreover, we are inviting church leaders from Classis NorthCentral Iowa to join us as well. We hope to use this time for the ministry of Word and Prayer as we seek God's direction for our churches.

After the service, we will have **a time of coffee fellowship followed by a structured time of small-group discussion for our delegates, officebearers and interested congregational members.** We hope to have more details about what particular discussion questions we will ask, but suffice to say the main points of discussion will be about a vision for the Christian Reformed Church in our region in 10-15 years, what are our congregational needs and what does Classis need to do going forward.

On Saturday, Classis will schedule a time with the delegates to reflect on what was discussed on Friday evening and about what action steps Classis could take going forward.

Communication from Peace CRC Cedar Rapids to Classis about Budget Timing

Several years ago, classis made the decision to prepare an annual budget based on pledges. These pledges were made based on a proposed budget that was discussed at the September meeting. The timing of the budget process allowed churches to discuss a pledge for the future year at their council meetings and present it to the congregation for approval before the pledge was submitted to classis.

For the past few years, classis has not received a proposed budget at the September classis meeting as our procedures describe. As a result, classis has not had the opportunity to discuss budgeting priorities, and churches are being asked to submit a pledge after they have already set their following years budget, without sufficient time to discuss as councils and to ask for congregational approval.

We wanted to communicate to the classis our desire to return to the schedule that was previously established. Without that timing, we are forced to make our pledge based on the budget for the current year rather than the budget for the year to come. We would like classis to have the opportunity for input, and we would like sufficient time to present our pledge to the congregation for their approval.

Thank you.

The council of Peace Christian Reformed Church, Cedar Rapids Iowa

Classis Reports

Classis Leadership Team (Classis Interim Committee)

Classis Leadership Team

Members: Mark Jicinsky, Chair; Jon Spronk, Ron Groenendyk, Fran DeHaan, Darren Kornelis

1. CLT voted via email on January 7, 2026 to **approve inviting Rev. Christian Sebastia to travel to Classis in Feb. and pay for his travel expenses.** (this is in keeping with the motions that Classis supported last fall to have greater connections between us and the Hispanic church plants).

2. CLT has been planning the Feb. Classis meetings and we anticipate that we will meet via zoom again in Feb. to go over the Agenda.

Submitted

Jon Spronk – Stated Clerk

Finance Committee

Thursday, January 22, 2026
1pm at Don De Waard's office

Members Present: Kevin Bolt, Keith De Bruin, Don De Waard, John Ritsema

Minutes:

1. John Ritsema called the meeting to order and opened with prayer.
2. The motion was made, supported and carried to approve the minutes of the January 30. 2025 meeting.
3. Treasurer Don De Waard presented a financial report for the year ending 2025.
4. It was noted that there were substantial expenditure increases to the New Church Development Fund and the Student Fund.
5. Based on the current level of church pledges received it was moved, supported and approved to present to classis a proposed expenditure budget of \$182,500 with an income budget of \$160,000.
6. The difference in budget amounts can be partially offset by drawing down the current New Church Development Fund balance and not making an additional contribution to Dordt University this year.
7. A motion was made, supported and carried to raise the Pulpit Supply honorarium from the current \$175 plus mileage level to \$200 plus mileage.
8. The committee continues to have two vacancies. In addition to that, with the upcoming retirement of the chair of the committee, classis will need to assign new committee leadership.
9. The classical treasurer will be at the February 28 meeting of classis to respond to any questions for clarification.
10. The motion was made and approved to adjourn. Pastor John had closing prayer.

Submitted.

John Ritsema

Classis Central Plains
 Budget Proposal
 2026 - 2027

	Actual 25-26	Requested 26-27	Pledged 26-27
Student Fund	\$11,000	\$23,000	\$23,000
Home Missions			
Committee Expense	\$200	\$200	\$200
Geneva Campus Ministries	\$30,000	\$30,000	\$30,000
Areopagus Ministries	\$13,000	\$13,000	\$13,000
New Life Prison	\$16,500	\$16,500	\$16,500
Total	\$59,700	\$59,700	\$59,700
Dordt University	\$71,650	\$169,596	\$71,650
Church Development Grant	\$2,000	\$2,000	\$2,000
New Church Plant	\$4,500	\$15,000	\$15,000
Classis Expense			
Travel Expense	\$1,500	\$1,500	\$1,500
Classis Meals	\$750	\$750	\$750
Printing, Postage	\$50	\$50	\$50
Treasurer Bond	\$100	\$100	\$100
Conferences	\$1,750	\$1,750	\$1,750
Clerk	\$4,000	\$4,000	\$4,000
Treasurer	\$3,000	\$3,000	\$3,000
Total	\$11,150	\$11,150	\$11,150
Total	\$160,000	\$280,446	\$182,500
Total active professing members		2367	
Ministry shares per member		\$118.48	

Nomination Committee

Nomination Committee will be presenting a ballot for Classis functionaries and Synod 2026 Delegates at the meeting. We are need for nominations for the Finance Committee. If there are any nominations, please let the Stated Clerk, Jon Spronk know.

Classical Functionaries

Classis Counselors

Will Verhoef - Connect CRC

Connect CRC (formerly First CRC of Pella) has been “vacant” since August 2022.

Here is the list of Interim Pastors who have served Connect Church since Rev. Brad Meinders left:

Rev. Don Draayer served from September 2023 until the end of May 2024.

Rev. Will Verhoef served from June to September 15, 2024

Rev. Albert De Vries served from September 22 through December 1, 2024

Rev. Jack Vanden Heuvel served from January 5, 2025 through March 2025

Rev. Don Draayer served again from April through June, 2025.

Rev. Will Verhoef served again from August through October 2025

Rev. Dale Slings served from November 2025 through January 2026

Rev. John Gorter agreed to serve from February through Easter Sunday (April 5, 2026)

Connect Church went through a Discernment Process in September and October 2023. On January 8, 2024 Council appointed a Task Force to develop a renewal process. That Renewal Team worked @nine months. The congregation approved its proposal in September 2024 including a commitment to report in a year. In December 2025 the Renewal Team prepared a report for the Council and congregation on whether it is meeting the first year goals of the Renewal Process. It was a mostly positive report. (The report is attached.)

The Pastor Search Team continues to seek its next fulltime pastor. Connect Church has also appreciated others who have been willing to lead in worship and preach (or exhort) as needed.

Continue to keep this church in your prayers as it seeks to ”Connect People to Jesus” through its mission of “Disciples Made, Matured and Multiplied”.

Your Classis Counselor for Connect CRC,

Will Verhoef

Renewal Evaluation Report for Year One for Connect Church

The renewal task force recommended the adoption of the following core values:

- a. We value the Holy Scripture as the infallible, inspired Word of God for the instruction in living and encouraging one another in such living.
- b. We value being a praying church, trusting God to supply all our needs.
- c. We value being a warm and inviting church community built on mutual trust and integrity that reaches out to the community and the world with the Love of Christ.

Over the course of the past year, we implemented the following practices to live into those core values:

Our Prayer Walk ministry began last fall and has continued faithfully until today. Limited turnout to organized walks caused it to change form to a more private setting, but it has not stopped in the meantime and prayers continued to be offered over our community and others.

The Sunday afternoon Bible Study has been meeting since the beginning of the year and has met regularly each week since then. We have studied the book of Galatians and Revelation and are just starting the book of Genesis. We have also had a Bible Study that meets during the Cadet and GEMS lessons. It started last spring and studied the Fruit of the Spirit and has continued this fall with the book of Mark. It was hoped for this Bible study to be an opportunity for parents of GEMs or Cadets to attend, but that has not happened yet. Feedback from attendees for both of these is that they have been enjoyable as well as educational. Through these Bible studies, we are living into our core value of believing the Word of God is useful for instruction in living and encouraging one another.

The Young Adult Group began meeting at the beginning of June and has done so faithfully each week since then. The group gathers at Iris Coffee every Tuesday evening for a meal and then spends some time together in the Word. We have had a large number of people come at least once and over the course of the past few months have eventually settled on about 8 regular members though we always welcome any others who would like to attend. We have studied the books of Philippians and Galatians and are currently studying Ephesians.

+1 is a program that was not a part of the original recommendation, but was brought to us by Pastor Don Draayer and fit well with what we are trying to accomplish through our Renewal. The idea is to find one person for each of us to invite to church or to strengthen relationship with. This is a slow process, one that will take time. Feedback that has been heard so far is that many have an individual in mind and have been having conversation with them. Connect church also offers Connect cards that can be used to connect with people and give them an easy way to ask for prayers or other needs.

The English Language Learners Class was not a part of the original recommendation, but a program that came out of the continued attempts to seek renewal and find and fill needs within our community. Connect Church partnered with Grace Fellowship to host an English Language Learners course for local individuals who wanted to learn or improve their English. We had about 8 volunteers from our church who, with the volunteers from Grace Fellowship, helped a large number of students over the course of four months. Many friendships and connections were made and built during this time

together and we look forward to seeing what God has in store for the future. Plans are still being made for the future of this course but we are excited to see where it goes.

The following goals were set to help us evaluate our progress

- a. Year 1:
 - i. Church Vitality Index number of 6
 - ii. One new outreach investment in our community
 - iii. 10% increase in our Youth Ministry Programs

Based on these criteria, we can say that we were successful in created a new outreach investment in our community. Starting the ELL program gave our members the opportunity to work with a new demographic and meet people who lived in entirely different countries. The program gave people the opportunity to create bonds that were unlikely to happen naturally.

We were also successful in increasing our Youth Ministry Programs. We have had 13 new students across Cadets, GEMS, and YACs over the past year which is an 80% increase over what we had before we started working on renewal, bringing our current total students in those programs to 29. Many of these new students have come to us from Kristi Pinegar who works with kids through 725 Ministries. While new students can come with new challenges, the opportunity to minister to these kids, as well as their parents at the larger events, has been a blessing to our congregation and we encourage the congregation as a whole to continue to engage with these people when they can.

Our church's vitality index over the past year has been 0 and is a short-coming of our past year in Renewal. This is one area for continued opportunity and one that everyone can participate in. +1 and the prayer cards seem to be our best opportunity for growth in this metric and the congregation is encouraged to take it seriously and help reach out to those who are not a part of a church family and yet need the love of God. Any other ideas that members of the congregation might have for this are welcomed by the Renewal Team.

Jonathan Spronk – Prairie City CRC

Prairie City CRC had been vacant since the summer of 2024. In October 2025, call was extended to Rev. Brad Diekema, recently of First CRC of Mt. Vernon, WA. The call is a term-call of 30 months that can be extended by agreement of pastor and council to a permanent call. Rev. Diekema accepted the call and was installed as pastor on Jan. 11, 2026.

Thank you to the pastors and exhorters who capably filled the pulpit for PCCRC over the past couple of years. As the vacancy has concluded, this concludes my work as counselor for PCCRC.

Rev. Jon Spronk – Classis Counselor for PCCRC

Areopagus Ministry

Spring 2026

Dear Classis Partner in Ministry,

The new semester has begun! 2025 was a good year. God worked at Iowa State (see [TGC article on this](#)) —and He brought us new student connections, growing relationships, and, most of all, deepening gospel trust and obedience.

As we enter Spring 2026, we've been encouraged that God "goes slow, to go fast," and "**goes deep, to grow wide.**" We desire to make disciples who make disciples. *Matt 28:19-20*. Both Lora and Joel are being discipled with Discipleship 222, and are discipling a student each in this Catechism based multiplying model.

This semester, Lora pares down to the essentials -- reading Scripture together, both in 1:1 Bible studies (*James, Romans, Judges*) and in a weekly **public reading of Scripture** group (Acts-Revelation). Joel is doing more with young men in our Areopagus orbit; yesterday was billiards! And our group joins Trinity's *Young Adults* for movies, meals, games and (what else?) the Super Bowl.

Our student president Matt Haken is working hard to begin a **Christian Engineering Society** chapter at ISU. To that end, Areopagus will be hosting Dordt profs Griffioen and VanderWerff, in a **March 30, 6pm** Faith and Engineering lecture event.

This will be a different semester. We face transitions – our Board president, Randy Raak moves to help *Resonate*. Areopagus shares Lora's focus with our CRCNA magazine [The Banner](#), part-time. (Areopagus' own [Herb Schreur](#) put in a great article.) We are grateful for the flexibility given by our ministry for Lora to serve in this interim way, but we are also anxious that time is allotted wisely and well. Please pray for this, even as we pray that Jesus' name is lifted high in all our work.

On behalf of our board, our student steering team, and those served by our ministry, **thank you** for your prayers and financial support. **We are excited** to see what God will do in this new year!

Yours, trusting in our always faithful Lord,

Lora A Copley
505-387-6861



PS Follow us on Instagram for regular photos!

"Great are the works of the LORD. They are pondered by all who delight in them." *Psalms 111:2*



Report on the Multiply Conference for Classis Central Plains by Pastor Jon Spronk

Event Summary

The Multiply Conference was held at Sunlight Community CRC in Port St. Lucie, FL, November 8-11, 2025. Attending from Classis Central Plains was Pastors Jon Spronk and Erik Kamp from First CRC Oskaloosa and Elder Drew Ryder from Crossroads CRC West Des Moines.

The gathering began with a pre-conference gathering that demonstrated the worship service of Public Reading of Scripture that Sunlight is practicing with small groups as an additional morning service. The essentials of this service begin with gathering for breakfast and fellowship, a time of Psalm singing, followed by long, dramatic readings of scripture (4-5 chapters in a session) with time of small group discussion, ending with Communion and a final sung Psalm. If you are interested in additional information about this liturgical practice, there is an informational website at www.prsi.org.

After a day of worship with the Sunlight Community on Sunday, the main conference started on Monday morning. Rev. Scott Vanderploeg, Pastor of Sunlight Community, introduced the idea and theme of the conference with the acronym MDLC – for *Multiply Disciples, Leaders and Churches* and gave a bit of the history behind conference, talking about the recent trajectories of the Denomination and the discussions about church planting and leadership development at the recent Synod. In all, around 180 attendees from across the US and Canada were present at the conference.

Day 1's focus was on Multiplying Disciples. Day 2's focus was on Multiplying Leaders and Churches. What follows is a quick summary of the main plenary sessions. If you would like to see the sessions, the video is available on Youtube at <https://www.youtube.com/@thedisciplestandard>

- Session 1: Dr. Michael Goheen from Calvin Seminary gave the opening talk on the subject "What Is the Good News?"
- Session 2: Discipleship: a Panel of several leaders from across the denomination talked about "Disciples Make Disciples."
- Session 3: "The 9s." A series of 9 minutes talks from a variety of pastors and church leaders talking about what discipleship and church leadership looks like in their home churches and classes.
- Session 4: Resonate + Thrive: Leaders from Denomination talked about how the Denomination is seeking to assist churches in church planting and renewal.

Additionally, interspersed throughout the conference was workshop sessions on various topics of discipleship and training. And from beginning to the end, the event offered times of worship and prayer, times of small group discussion and connection to other CRC leaders from across the denomination.

In the event, we were challenged to return back to our home church and classis with goals. Scott and other leaders of Classis Southeast US (SE US) told the story of their Classis. In 2007 Classis SE US set the goal for 2020 of 20 churches and 40 new leaders (leaders defined by those who had examinations at Classis – License to Exhorters, Commissioned Pastors, Ministers of the Word). They got very near their goals by 2020 and it remade their Classis into a much healthier group of churches. Scott gave a robust challenge to us for the next decade: ***could the CRC (currently around 1,000 congregations) plant 1,000 churches and develop 2,000 church leaders?*** Divided by about 50 classes, ***could each Classis average 20 new churches and 40 new leaders?***

Impressions

Opening: I desired to attend this conference for a few reasons:

1. Synod 2025: I was deeply impressed by the discussion of the CRCNA direction and Resonate funding at Synod 2025. The trajectory of our denominations demographics is headed

downward, in terms of members, churches, baptisms, and new church leaders. Also, because of changes to ministry share receipts in recent years, Resonate has had to drastically change how it can support church planters, leading to many church planters abruptly losing denominational monetary support in 2025. At Synod 2025, Scott Vanderploeg and Classis SE US challenged our Synod Delegates to consider what our church and our classis could do going forward.

2. **Local Church Driven:** I was intrigued by the grassroots nature of this event. This event was essentially birthed by Sunlight CRC and Classis SE US. Most of the ministry events of my ordained ministry career have often been top-down, with planning and funding coming from the denomination. This event had the real vibe of local churches taking responsibility for changing the dynamic of the denomination. It was a movement that I wanted to be a part of.
3. **One-on-One Discipleship:** For the last several years, I have been aware of the work of Sunlight church. The main emphasis in ministry at Sunlight has been one-on-one discipleship. The idea is that disciples make disciples and in order to be considered a mature and healthy Christian you must be a disciple-maker. Everything that takes place at Sunlight is connected to this purpose. Scott has developed a ministry model called Multiply 222 and I wanted to learn more about how his church has developed their discipleship ministry. I am intrigued by the idea of how to implement these distinct discipleship practices in an established church like I serve at First Osky.

Conclusions:

1. I greatly appreciated the cross-pollination of ideas and thoughts that bubbled up from this conference. It is so rare to be a ministry event that by the CRC, for the CRC and under the leadership of current, active, CRC parish church pastors. For much of my ministry career, we have often chased after the new fads in other denominations or churches (Crystal Cathedral, Willow Creek, Seeker-sensitive, or other mainline or evangelical movements). Sometimes it has worked. Many times, it has not. As someone recently said to me, so often we in the CRC have outsourced our missiology and ecclesiology. This conference felt like peer CRC churches and pastors seeking to help like-minded CRC churches and pastors. This conference is spurring the questions: What does the CRC have to offer? What is a uniquely CRC disciple? CRC church leader? CRC church/church plant?
2. I am convinced that intentional discipleship is the way forward for our churches. Of course, discipleship has always happened in the CRC, graciously through our worship, youth ministry, small groups, fellowships and bible studies. But I have noticed in my ministry career, a lessened ability in our people to know their Bible, be able to share their faith or even be able to pray with someone. I believe a ministry like Multiply 222 could be a resource to our churches to assist in discipleship ministry. The conference did a good job of telling us the necessity of one-on-one discipleship, I came home from the conference needing to hear more about the practical aspects (how is it done well, what is a good format, how will it work in an established church). In coming days, I hope to be in contact with some of the leadership of Multiply 222 so that some of my questions can be answered.

Questions/Action Items for Classis (and local church):

1. Begin a discussion at the Classis-level of what are our goals for Classis Central Plains in terms of church planting and leadership development. **What could be our goals for 2040 for the CRC in Eastern Iowa and in Missouri?**

2. Recently, I and other Classis CP pastors have had conversations with some of the leaders of Classis NorthCentral Iowa about future cross-Classis ministry opportunities: from shared campus ministry oversight, potential church plants to even considering full merger of our Classes. **What does greater connections with Classis NCI look like for Classis CP?**
3. Regional Discipleship Conference: **Could we with the support of the four Iowa Classes (Heartland, Iakota, Central Plains, NorthCentral Iowa) host a mini-Multiply conference for our church leaders?** I talked with Scott about introducing these ideas at a central place (say at Des Moines) so that a church could send an elder, a youth leader, a person passionate about evangelism or others so that more could be challenged with this vision.
4. Further develop the relationship with the Hispanic Church planters with Rev. Christian Sebastia. In September, Classis CP approved for financial support for 7 church planters in Texas and Classis Rocky Mountain. Pastor Erik Kamp and I hope to have Rev. Sebastia attend our Feb. Classis meeting. But even before then, **how can we make better connections of our churches to these Hispanic church planters?**
5. **What are current best practices for church discipleship and leadership development in our Classis churches?** Certainly, our churches have a variety of discipleship and leadership practices. What can we learn from each other? What areas do we need to grow in?

Multiply Conference Report - Drew Ryder, Elder Crossroads Des Moines

Overall Impressions

- Incredible event - very hopeful and forward-thinking. So thankful to my church for investing in it.
- I can't remember a conference I've attended which has inspired, encouraged, and energized me more.
- The networking was invaluable - highlighted the need for likeminded leaders to gather regularly to encourage and learn from each other.
- We need more brave and inspirational leaders like Scott Van Der Ploeg. He has figured out how to be a visionary and pragmatist at the same time.
- Church planting is led by "listening prayer" which then leads to action. We cannot ignore God's call to evangelize and fulfill the Great Commission.

Key Learnings

- Everyone in the church is a potential disciple maker.
- We need to get better at training and equipping disciple makers.
- The church will not grow if we are not focused on discipleship.
- We need to get better at teaching the Bible and the central Gospel message both internally and to those outside the church seeking it.
- Techniques such as Public Reading of Scripture and the 222 discipleship program can accelerate Bible literacy and the spread of the Gospel.

- We need good metrics to be strategic about church growth and church planting.
- Church planters are essentially entrepreneurs. They are involved in risky ventures and they need better tools to help them assess that risk. Their business plans should outline their “market opportunity,” their planting strategy, and a financial plan which includes a 3-5-year pro forma and a pathway to self-sustainability.

Action Items

- We need to get our Church Councils on board with discipleship training and setting some internal goals for congregational involvement. The starting point is discipleship among the Council members.
- Need to get Classis to set more ambitious goals for leadership training and church planting.
- We need to help church planters with creating pro forma business plans which will help them attain the right amount of seed funding during their first few years of ministry. I am personally working on a software template which could make this relatively easy for a church planter to build and pitch to a sending church or a funding agency.
- We need to create new funds which can support church plants. These funds could be inside or outside the CRC. I am working on setting up two funds - one which is a loan fund and the other a grant fund. We will create a simple process to apply for funding which will include a requirement to complete a planting business plan using our template. The seed funds will come from Christian business people and individuals who have a heart for missions and church planting as well as churches, Classes, and church missions agencies.



Dear CRCNA Classis Leaders:

Greetings in Christ's name. We pray that you will experience God's richest blessings in the ministry of your congregations and classes in 2026.

In our fall 2025 letter to the CRCNA classes we reflected on Zerubbabel and Joshua's rebuilding of Jerusalem's temple in the face of much opposition and material shortage (Haggai 2). In 2026 we are leaning into the request of Synod 2025 to pray for the renewal of our congregations. As we do so, it's worth returning to the story of the temple's rebuilding again.

During the two decades of temple rebuilding, the prophet Zechariah (Zech 4) also communicated a message of encouragement to Zerubbabel. That message was a reminder that although Zerubbabel was laying the stones of the temple, it was God who was rebuilding it. Only the Spirit of the Lord could do the work of rebuilding – "Not by might, nor by power, but by my Spirit, says the Lord Almighty" (Zech 4:6). The Lord also reminded Zerubbabel that, like the new temple's foundation (when compared to Solomon's temple), the Lord's mighty work often starts small (Zech 4:10).

What does this mean for our congregations and classes in 2026? God is calling our community of churches into the "posture of Zerubbabel" as defined by the following statements:

- Our churches belong to Jesus, who died for them and will renew them (Zech 4:6);
- The Spirit has the resources necessary for the renewal of our congregation (Hag 2:6-8);
- We should not despise the Lord's small beginnings of renewal (Zech 4:10);
- The Lord calls us to pray for the renewing of our congregations (2 Chron 8:13-16).

Below are some key items that we would like classes to be aware of for their winter and spring meetings:

Call to Prayer for Congregational Renewal and Church Planting

At significant moments throughout history, God has called his people to intentional and faithful prayer for their renewal and mission. In obedience to this pattern, Synod 2025 encouraged classes and congregations to devote themselves to praying for the renewal of the Christian Reformed Church in 2025-2026 (*Agenda and Acts of Synod*, p. 698). In response, we have [created materials](#) to support prayer in the fall, winter, and spring classis meetings. Beginning in January 2026, CRCNA agencies will share a

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crcna.org

weekly call to prayer and fasting for both **congregational renewal and for the planting of new congregations** to everyone who wants to participate. Learn more and sign up for weekly prayers [here](#).

Progress on the CRC Congregational Renewal Pathway

Since Synod 2025, our denominational agencies and ministries (especially Thrive) have been collaborating to develop the congregational renewal pathway that was requested by Synod 2023 (*Acts of Synod 2023*, pp. 975-76) and informed by the results of the Gather Initiative (*Acts of Synod 2025*, pp. 509-25). Last fall, we requested classes to interact with these results and provide their feedback.

We are encouraged by the progress on this mandate, which will be shared with Synod 2026 for its approval. The developing pathway will be rooted in a process of learning, discovery, and prayerful discernment for leaders and members. It will also have multiple “on-ramps” for churches in different situations and contexts. It will be designed to attend to the deeper issues facing congregations desirous of renewal. It will be focused on engaging the congregation in its part of God’s mission to the world, and will provide relational support from Thrive as congregations implement renewal efforts. Finally, this pathway is being built on experience with real situations in congregations. For these reasons we would like to again invite your classis to provide feedback on the learning from the Gather Initiative using the materials found [here](#) and emailing your feedback to emay@crcna.org.

Progress on the CRCNA Ten-Year Church Planting Plan

Synod 2025 directed the general secretary to work with the churches, classes, and denominational ministries to create a ten-year church planting plan (*Agenda and Acts of Synod 2025*, pp. 709) to present to Synod 2026. Our CRCNA mission agency, Resonate Global Mission, has been making progress on the plan in collaboration with the CRC classes and agencies/institutions. We give thanks for a successful church planting summit, called the [Multiply Conference](#), co-hosted by Classis Southeast US and Resonate Global Mission in Port Saint Lucie, FL, in November, 2025

We anticipate that the forthcoming plan will have six foci:

- Multiplying disciples and leaders in every congregation and classis;
- Growing support for Diaspora and diverse leaders;
- Clarifying roles and responsibilities to provide strong support and collaboration for church planters between CRCNA agencies/institutions, classes, and congregations;
- Engaging churches near the end of their life-cycle;
- Deepening connections with the global church and international church planting;
- Clarifying sustainable funding.

This winter and spring Resonate staff members will continue to reach out classis leadership for feedback about this developing plan. Please reach out to Tim Sheridan (tsheridan@crcna.org) if you have questions.

God is laying a new foundation to revitalize the ministry and mission of our CRC congregations. Congregational renewal and church planting are two complementary parts of that vision. Let's join together in praying for and supporting this movement of God among us.

Additional Important Items for classis consideration in preparation for summer 2026:

- CRCNA Canadian classes and ministries are busy preparing for the Canada National Gathering on May 28-31, 2026, in Ancaster, ON. See crcna.org/Canada for more information.
- **Thank you for the support you provide** so that our denominational ministries can serve CRCNA churches. Please share your denominational ministry share pledges for the New Year and please generously support these critical ministries. In Canada, reach out to Rosh at rmorton@crcna.org, and in the US reach out to Jeff at jbolt@crcna.org.
- Classes are encouraged to review and offer communications and overtures as desired on the following:
 1. [Report from the COD Task Force to Review Governance Costs](#) (including the proposal for a biennial synod). (also available in [Spanish](#), [Korean](#)) Please take special to the reflection on the number of classes (p.10)
 2. [The Report of the Task Force to Develop Church Order Procedures to Discipline Officebearers, Including Disaffiliation of a Council or Classis Initiated by a Major Assembly](#). (Summary: [English](#), [Spanish](#), [Korean](#))
 3. Advice on the Historical, Biblical, and Theological Aspects of Church Membership (forthcoming).

May God bless you with strength and wisdom as he works to renew our classes and congregations in 2026.



Zach King
General Secretary



Al Postma
Executive Director, Canada

Board of Trustees

Spoelhof Center
3201 Burton St. SE
Grand Rapids, MI 49546-4388



January 2026

As Calvin University marks its 150th anniversary, the university continues to attract more learners and inspire growing support. Even as Calvin adapts to a rapidly changing higher education landscape, the defining story of this historic year is the confidence of students, alumni, and community partners in the university's enduring mission: equipping students to think deeply, act justly, and live wholeheartedly as Christ's agents of renewal in every sector and sphere, across every state, province, and continent.

Students

The number of prospective learners applying to Calvin is on the rise. New spaces, like the nutrition lab; new academic offerings, like aerospace engineering; and new pathways, like the continued education program, are attractive to students looking at Calvin. But what students come to appreciate more than anything is the community that's formed at Calvin, and how the entire community works together to help students holistically thrive.

"The support here is real. You are surrounded by people who believe in you, pray for you, and celebrate your wins. As a first-generation student, that means everything. Calvin is not just a place to earn a degree, it is a place to be transformed, to grow in faith, and to discover the purpose God placed within you."

~**Judith Mukamurenzi '27**

Alumni and Friends

The 65,000+ alumni network at Calvin University is also continuing to find new ways to invest in the student experience. For example, a parent of two grads designed, funded, and helped install custom-engineering components for Calvin's boilers. And the mayor of Grand Rapids asked an engineering class to design a green revolving fund for Michigan's second largest city.

"The first thing that stood out to me was how much they [the mayor and dignitaries] cared about the project and our progress on it that they were willing to set a time every other week to come to campus to hear updates and provide feedback. That meant a lot to me because I could see how much our contributions meant to them."

~**Brayden Meyer '26**

Community and Global Partners

For many decades Calvin has been committed to growing as a trusted community partner. Within the past couple of months, the university has seen direct fruit from those efforts both locally and around the world. In December, a local nonprofit honored Calvin's StreetFest program with its Friends and Champion Award for the program's commitment to helping them fulfill their mission. A few weeks prior, leaders from Calvin and Handong Global University signed a new memorandum of understanding signaling a strengthening of their decades-long partnership.

"I am excited to see how God will continue to open up opportunities through this partnership that will lead to mutual benefit for both the Handong and Calvin communities and ultimately for the flourishing of the world."

~ **Greg Elzinga, president**

Board of Trustees January 22 Meeting Update

At our recent Board meeting conducted virtually on January 22, the Board heard from two varsity athletic students about their experiences as Calvin athletes. Thomas Vacarro (Franklin, TN) is a senior history major and played on the football team; Tryna Vander Zwaag (Hamilton, MI) is a junior elementary education major and played on the women's volleyball team. They spoke positively about their experiences, emphasizing a welcoming community for athletes and the positive influence by their coaching staff. It was a reminder of how valuable these activities and relationships are to the overall student experience. The trustees expressed encouragement from these testimonies.

The Board again discussed the requests from two Synod 2025 advisory committees:

- 1) Provide a rubric which informs and guides the recruitment of, and qualifications for trustees.
- 2) Further define the use of indefinite exceptions to confessional subscription.
- 3) Address the percentage of trustees who must possess convictional alignment with the confessions.

The requests were reported on by various board committees.

The Board affirmed the university's budget methodology and approach for assessing academics, student life, and operations. The board also encouraged the continued and ongoing work that will strengthen our financial sustainability and mission.

Items presented for approval included:

- Room and Board rates for fiscal year 2026-27
- Graduate Program Tuition Rates for fiscal year 2026-27
- Degree Completion Tuition Rates for fiscal year 2026-27
- Amendments to the Trustee Handbook
- Response to Synod 2025 Advisory Committees
- Audited Federal Awards Supplemental Information for June 30, 2025

The university is described as a Reformed Christian liberal arts institution affiliated with the Christian Reformed Church in North America, dedicated to teaching, learning, and scholarship. The Board recognizes that the university cannot avoid contentious issues on which stakeholders may disagree. Instead, it calls for engaging these issues with truth and love, following the example of Christ. Trustees were reminded to address concerns - drawing on biblical principles such as those found in Romans 14.

Calvin's mission endures. Calvin has navigated various chapters of change in our 150-year history, and with God's guidance, we will continue to serve our students and community faithfully in this next chapter. We are reminded of our mission to educate students to think deeply, act justly, and live wholeheartedly as Christ's agents of renewal in the world.

This document outlines key information, including developments of the October 2025 Calvin University Board of Trustees meeting, with the intention of it being shared with the Christian Reformed Church classis clerks for distribution with classis meeting materials. This document is also a resource for Calvin University Classis Region trustees when asked about Calvin University.

CTS Mission Statement

As a learning community in the Reformed Christian tradition that forms church leaders who cultivate communities of disciples of Jesus Christ, Calvin Theological Seminary exists to serve the Christian Reformed Church in North America and wider constituencies by preparing individuals for biblically faithful and contextually effective ministry of the Word and by offering Reformed theological scholarship and counsel.

Spring 2026 Ministry Highlights

Since 1876, Calvin Theological Seminary (CTS) has worked on your behalf to faithfully prepare leaders who can nurture disciples and serve the church. The 2025-2026 academic year does mark our 150th Anniversary – shared by both Calvin Theological Seminary and Calvin University!

For these 150 years we have been a vital part of the learning community within the Reformed Christian tradition. As our context has changed around us, we've responded to the needs of our church, implementing programs that form leaders in various fields of ministry. We continue to refine and explore with you what it means to serve the church, looking forward to this anniversary and beyond. **A public worship service of thanksgiving (that will be live-streamed) will be held the evening of March 29, 2026 in the Covenant Fine Arts Center. You are invited to be present or tune-in!**

<https://calvin.edu/events/150th-anniversary-worship-service-1774817100>

Here are a few highlights that are important building blocks for our ministry partnership with the church.

- **At its October 2025 Board meeting, the Board received the Notice of Retirement of President Jul Medenblik. D.V., he will continue to serve as President until June 30, 2027. President Medenblik's letter of gratitude is linked below. We give thanks for his faithful leadership. We ask for prayers for the CTS Board who following the identification of new Board officers will begin the work of identifying a profile and Search Team. Please pray for the person of God's choosing to be made known.**

https://mailchi.mp/calvinseminary/faculty-staff-student-special-edition-nov25?utm_source=Communications&utm_campaign=f3b8940ef8-EMAIL_CAMPAIGN_2025_07_01_03_07_COPY_01&utm_medium=email&utm_term=0-6c6dbb8fa3-368868529

- **The Board as part of its governance function and review of current structure also moved forward to search for a Professional Service Consultant. Please be in prayer for this important work of evaluation and planning.**

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- Convocation, Wednesday Chapel Services, the Opening Picnic of the Year, Tuesday gatherings for the Public Reading of Scripture followed by lunch together and Christmas Around the World have been used by God to help us gather and support each other in this new year.

You can always “drop-in” to Wednesday Chapels at 10:30 am via a Livestream or watch them later via YouTube. https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PLsfLAGWsG1-6LdBCALm2wk69d_gntsepB

Here is the link to the Convocation 2025 service which includes the address by Dr. Ronald Feenstra who began teaching at CTS in 1992 as one of the foundational faculty members to begin the PhD program at CTS. **Professor Feenstra’s Last Lecture (which will be recorded) has been scheduled for Friday, May 1, 2026.** We also hope this event will be livestreamed.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=m1pXHJUkncY>

- **Please continue to pray for our faculty and staff and please pray for the persons of God’s choosing to fill faculty openings in the area of Old Testament as well as new openings in Pastoral Care and Counseling as well as a Chief Academic Officer/Dean of Faculty. We are glad to report that Rev. David Beelen has agreed to be Director of Vocational Formation for this year and next as part of a ministry team.**
- You can check into all position postings by going to <http://calvinseminary.edu/employment> If you have persons you wish to nominate or recommend, please contact Ms. Karen DeYoung who serves as the CTS Director of Human Resources. She can be reached at kdyoung@calvinseminary.edu.
- **One of our key projects has been the building of our new 46 apartment student housing that is designed with our current and future students in mind and we give thanks that the project is complete!** We have been seeing more second-career students and students with children enroll at CTS. As a result, we planned a new facility with capacity for 20 three-bedroom, 19, two-bedroom and 7 one-bedroom apartments. We are grateful for fund support of over 70% for the estimated cost completion of this project. The location of this new housing is right next to campus at 3300 Burton Street SE. A Community Ribbon-Cutting

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took place on October 30, 2025! Students began moving into this wonderful setting in mid-November.

- **We want to invite all persons to bookmark The Forum as a digital tool for use that includes our usual array of articles as well as podcasts and video. We also maintain a mailing list for The FORUM and invite people to also sign up for this long-standing and trusted resource.**

<https://theforum.calvinseminary.edu/>

<https://wkf.ms/3wXH7r3>

- **Finally, the CTS Board of Trustees recently approved our strategic plan and set our goals to help guide us into the next 150 years of service to the church.** We distill this plan into four major themes:

Compelling Invitation – We focus intentionally on our Reformed heritage and identity not only through scholarship, but also in student formation and societal engagement. We want to share our distinctiveness in bold, create and clear ways that are compellingly invitational and winsome.

Holistic Learning Journeys – We focus on serving students, ensuring the best learning experiences and mentorship by not only equipping staff and faculty appropriately and adequately, but also meeting student expectations for contextual curriculum and multifaceted learning opportunities.

Organizational Excellence – We foster an ethos of organizational excellence where trust, accountability, respect and mutuality around a shared vision are embodied, where individual and collective contributions are valued and celebrated, and where everyone who comes into contact with CTS will experience purpose, fulfillment, care and ultimately a communal experience of our unity in Christ.

Cultivating Abundance – With gratitude to God for His providence, we are encouraged by and appreciate a community of generous supporters through whom our student body will continue to grow and expand, and through whom the mission of CTS is realized. We will promote this missional invitation to ensure a solid fiscal base for the ongoing work of Reformed theological education, formation and scholarship.

- Please join us as we look forward to celebrating God’s faithfulness from 1876 to today and anticipate His continued blessing on our community. **We invite your prayers for the Board, faculty, staff and students and thank you for your ministry of prayer, support and encouragement! We are glad that we are C.T.S. – Called To Serve!**

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Finally, on a personal note, I want to highlight two things.

First, I want to update you on **Calvin Seminary's ongoing commitment to providing a theological education grounded in God's living Word and guided by our shared understanding of that Word as taught in our Reformed confessions.** Prior to Synod 2025, at our May 2025 board meeting, we voted to ensure that all regularly appointed faculty (full or reduced load) would sign the Covenant for Officebearers and would be or become members of a Christian Reformed Church congregation. This step makes explicit what had been assumed for almost 150 years, from the time of Louis Berkhof to the time of Richard Muller, that the faculty of CTS are aligned with and committed to the denomination in whose seminary they serve. Since Synod 2025, we on the board have also been working in good faith to respond to Synod's follow-up request "to provide information to Synod 2026 as to the adherence of all instructional personnel to the CRC's teachings, especially the creeds and our confessions." We will bring a report to Synod 2026 that will reflect additional policies and clarifications regarding adjunct faculty that I believe will be helpful for Calvin Theological Seminary and help ensure faithful, trustworthy theological education for CRC churches we serve and love.

Second, I want to encourage you to be **prayerfully cultivating a culture of calling to full-time vocational ministry in your congregations and classes.** The CRC has a shortage of clergy. We are working to ensure that Calvin Theological Seminary is a world-class place to train them, but we can only do so if you send us students who have heard God's internal *and* external calling to ministry. Classis Heartland and Lakota held a grassroots Conference on Calling at Dordt University on November 22 to encourage those exploring God's call to ministry: <https://www.crcna.org/news-and-events/news/called-conference-encourages-potential-leaders>. We would encourage other classes – and each congregation – to help a new generation hear Christ's challenge: "*The harvest is plentiful but the workers are few. Ask the Lord of the harvest, therefore, to send our workers into his harvest field*" (Matthew 9:35-38).

As always, if you have any questions or ideas, please let me know. My cell number is: 712-441-5871. My e-mail is: jrlee12@gmail.com.

It is an honor to serve God on your behalf as part of the C.T.S. Board.

In Christ,

John Lee



ReFrame Ministries

A Ministry of the Christian Reformed Church

*Classis and Church
Newsletter*
reframeministries.org

Chinese Ministry: Pastor Jerry An



The Chinese ministry team is expanding its base and partnerships in Hong Kong to help local churches reach the growing number of mainland Chinese immigrants with the gospel.

Japanese Ministry: Rev. Masao Yamashita



We are deeply grateful for Rev. Masao's 28 years of faithful service and partnership with ReFrame. Join us in praying for an effective leadership succession plan as Rev. Masao prepares to retire.

Reaching the World through Media

As the official media agency of the CRCNA, ReFrame Ministries is committed to connecting you with partners around the world that are using media to share the good news of Jesus Christ. We work in Arabic, Chinese, English, French, Hindi, Indonesian, Japanese, Portuguese, and Spanish.

Resources for Your Church

Did you know you can search the *Today* and *Groundwork* archives for devotions, blog posts, and episodes rooted in Reformed theology? These trusted CRCNA resources are grounded in Scripture and shaped by our Reformed tradition to support personal faith, group study, discipleship, sermons, and other ministry needs.

2026 Suggested Offering Dates

Thank you for the ministry shares you give to support the agencies of the CRCNA! The following dates are recommended for your church to receive an offering for ReFrame Ministries for additional support.

Sunday, May 17

Sunday, November 8

Sunday, December 6

We have videos available to share about the work of ReFrame with your congregation. We are grateful for your support on any date you choose.

Pulpit Supply and Ministry Updates

We have several pastors on staff, including our Executive Director, Rev. Kurt Selles, and we would be happy to schedule one of them to join you on a Sunday to share the Word and to provide updates. Our church relationship managers are also available to visit with you on Sundays or other days to provide ministry updates. It is our pleasure to meet you and to thank you in person for your support.



Trudy Ash, US Midwest
Spring 2026



800-272-5125 ext. 5118

tash@crcna.org

crcna.org/Thrive

200 East Delaware Avenue



Church Employment Essentials

Thrive's *Employment Essentials* offers practical guidance for healthy church staff. It equips your congregation with employment practices that are both practical and grounded in CRCNA polity, so your staff can flourish and your church can stay focused on its mission. By listening to congregations across North America, we've identified six key focus areas and created step-by-step checklists addressing the most important issues to help your church set up systems for long-term success. crcna.org/ChurchStaffing

Support for Vacant Congregations

Is your church in the middle of a vacancy or looking ahead to one? We can help! In transitional seasons such as vacancy, Thrive is able to come alongside congregations to help you be aware of unique needs that may arise, understand what may be going on in the hearts and minds of church members, and support wise decision-making for next steps. Talk to your Regional Connector or email thrive@crcna.org.

What is Your Church Passionate About?

Over the next few months, Thrive connectors will be reaching out to churches across all of the CRCNA classes to learn more about what makes each church unique. We want to hear from you! Our goal is to understand the unique ministry passions of each church within the denomination. This is an opportunity for your church to share what makes you unique or what God has been calling your church to do. When your connector reaches out to you, we encourage you to set 30 minutes aside to invest in this conversation.

Gather

You are invited to host a one-day Gather event to engage in spiritual discernment for the future of your congregation or classis. Together we will enter the Emmaus Road story found in Luke 24:13-35, acknowledge our expectations and desires to God, tell stories of the redemptive work of Jesus, and renew our vision for ministry.

Stay Informed With the Thrive Newsletter

Subscribe to the [Thrive newsletter](#) for monthly updates on resources, events, and connections to support your congregation's flourishing.



playlist

All resources can be accessed via search at www.crcna.org, or by scanning this QR code to access the live links in the digital version of this document.

