

MINUTES OF CLASSIS CENTRAL PLAINS

Meeting at Leighton CRC, Leighton, IA
Saturday, February 25, 2023 at 8AM

Art. 7582 – Pastor Al Bandstra opened with devotions and prayer.

Art. 7583 – Constituting Classis

A. Roll call indicates the following delegates are present:

CHURCH	MINISTER	ELDER	DEACON
CEDAR	John Ritsema	William Hol	Grant Van Den Heuvel
PEACE CR	Gary Brouwers	Brent Disselkoen	*Dale Everts
LEIGHTON		Daren Van Kooten Josh Van Kooten	John Roose
TRINITY STL	Mike Bentley	Tim Yakubu	Tami Terlouw
NEW LIFE	Rick Admiraal	Dave Gritters	*Linda Zuidema
NEWTON	Aaron Gunsaulus	Craig Van Wyngarden	Caleb Gunsaulas
IC CHINESE	Johnlo Xu	---	---
BETHEL OSKY		Dale Hessing Alan Veenstra	*Eric Nieuwsma
FIRST OSKY	Jonathan Spronk	Steve Plate	*Kyle De Ronde
CALVARY	Brad Bierma	Roger Van Hal	*Aaron Sandbulte
FAITH	Brian Ochsner	John Verburg	*Angie Groenenboom
CONNECT		Ralph De Haan Fred VanDenBroek	Kyle Veenstra
GRACE	---	Virg Jansen	Larry Hanthorn
PEORIA		*Mark Franje *Henry Vande Voort	Bret Fynaardt
CORNERSTONE	---	Jerry Uitermarkt	Kurt Boender
PRAIRIE CITY	Matthew McClure	Larry VanDerHart	---
SULLY		Rick Vos	*Rick Jansen
TRACY	Al Bandstra	Doug Veenstra	---
CROSSROADS	Mark Jicinsky	Ron Bogaards	*Derek DeVries

*First time delegates who signed the Covenant for Officebearers

B. The Chair declared Classis Central Plains constituted with the following officers:

Chair: Rev. Mike Bentley

Vice-Chair: Rev. Aaron Gunsaulas

Stated Clerk: Rev. Jonathan Spronk

C. The Chair welcomed the following Synodical Deputies via Zoom:

Rev. Rus Boersma (Classis Northcentral Iowa)

Rev. Phil Westra (Classis Heartland)

(Rev. Clifford Hoekstra of Classis Iakota missed the original zoom call for the Art. 14 discussion but was informed of the Classis discussion and decision).

Art. 7584 – Church Order Art. 14b Release for Rev. Chris Allen

A. Rev. Chris Allen has accepted a non-parish ministry call from the Reformed Church in America and is seeking ordination in the RCA.

B. **Motion made and supported to declare via Art. 14b that Rev. Chris Allen is honorably released from the office of Minister of the Word in the Christian Reformed Church in North America effective Feb. 25, 2023.**

Carried

C. The Synodical Deputies concurred.

D. The Chair thanks the synodical deputies for their work and releases them from the Zoom.

Art. 7585 – Classical Leadership Team (Interim Committee), Rev. Matt McClure, reporting:

A. **Motion made and supported to approve the work of the Classical Leadership Team**

Carried

B. **Motion made and supported give Grace Fellowship permission under Church Order Art. 55 to have their elders administer communion on April 6 (Maundy Thursday), August 20 and December 10 unless they have called a pastor who has accepted and can administer the sacraments by that time. On April 6 they plan on Marlow Ten Napel being the administering elder and on August 20 and December 10 Virgil Jansen being the administering elder.**

Carried

Art. 7586– Classis Finance Committee/Treasurer Report, Don De Waard, reporting:

A. Don reminds the delegates that there are still several churches that have not sent in their pledge amounts for the upcoming budget.

B. Financial report for March 2022-Feb. 2023 is presented.

(Report is listed at end of Minutes – p.9-10)

C. **Motion made and supported to approve the financial report for March 2022-Feb. 2023**

Carried

D. **Motion made and supported to approve the recommendation of the Finance Committee to send \$25,000 out of existing funds to Dordt University.**

Carried

E. 2023-24 Budget is presented

(Budget is listed at end of Minutes – p. 11)

F. **Motion made and supported to approve the 2023-24 Budget.**

Carried

- G. Motion made and supported to have Classis Missions Committee contact our Classis supported ministries and ask them to send their annual financial reports to our Classis Finance Committee.**

Carried

Art. 7587 – Synod 2023 Delegate Selection

- A. Ballot is presented to delegates for voting. The following slate of delegates is approved:
1. Minister: Rev. Brian Ochsner
 2. Elder: Ivan Mulder
 3. Deacon: Caleb Gunsaulus
 4. Other Officebearer: Rev. Brad Bierma
 5. Minister Alternate: Rev. Johnlo Xu
 6. Elder Alternate: Lee Talma
 7. Deacon Alternate: Aaron Sandbulte
 8. Other Officebearer Alternate: Rev. Aaron Gunsaulus

Art. 7588 – Classis received the following written and verbal reports for information:

- A. Stated Clerk – Rev. Jonathan Spronk
- B. Classical Ministry Leadership Team – Rev. Aaron Gunsaulus
1. Brandon Mick, who is currently serving on staff at Connect Pella, has recently been approved by CMLT as he completes his Candidacy process and hopes to be approved as a Candidate for Ministry at Synod 2023.
- C. Classis Missions Committee – Rev. Mark Jicinsky
- D. Church Counselors
1. **Motion made and supported to appoint Rev. Gary Brouwers as church counselor for Iowa City Chinese Church as they search for a new English-language minister.**

Carried

- E. Church Visitors
1. Classis is reminded that we are in need of another volunteer to serve as a church visitor. Current and former officebearers are invited to contact the Stated Clerk if they willing to serve.
- F. World Renew Update for Classis

Art. 7589 – The following speaker addressed Classis on behalf of their ministry:

- A. Rev. Lora Copley – Areopagus Campus Ministry at Iowa State University

Art. 7590 – Overture from Newton CRC:

Prohibit Exceptions and Gravamina in All Agencies, Ministries, Boards, Broader Assemblies, and Other Entities of the CRCNA

A. Discussion is had concerning the Overture from Newton. Amendments to the Overture from Peace CRC are received as friendly amendments by the Newton delegation. The amended overture is presented to Classis (see below).

B. **Motion made and supported to approve the Overture and send to Synod 2023.**

Carried

Overture: Prohibit Exceptions and Gravamina in All Agencies, Ministries, Boards, Broader Assemblies, and Other Entities of the CRCNA

I. Background

For many years, there have been discussions and disagreements in the CRCNA over human sexuality, most of which have centered on the issue of homosexual activity. Nevertheless, the denomination's official stance on this issue has remained unchanged since Synod 1973 adopted the position that homosexual practice "is incompatible with obedience to the will of God as revealed in Scripture."

In 2016, the report from the Committee to Provide Pastoral Guidance re Same-sex Marriage, was considered by synod. Synod 2016 received the majority and minority reports as information, but recommended to the churches the pastoral guidance of the minority report (Agenda for Synod 2016, pp. 436-43) in conversation and in keeping with the synodical decisions of 1973, 1999, and 2002.

Additionally, however, Synod 2016 appointed a new study committee to articulate a foundation-laying biblical theology of human sexuality. This committee's work (the HSR) was published in November 2020, and included, among many other things, an affirmation of the CRCNA's long-held position on the matter of homosexual activity. But because of the cancellation of Synod 2021, the report was not addressed officially until Synod 2022.

Synod 2022 took several actions centered on the HSR. These actions included recommending the HSR to the churches as providing a useful summary of biblical teaching regarding human sexuality. Additionally, Synod 2022 affirmed that "unchastity" in Heidelberg Catechism Q&A 108 encompasses adultery, premarital sex, extra-marital sex, polyamory, pornography and homosexual sex, all of which violate the Seventh Commandment. In so doing, synod declared this affirmation "an interpretation of [a] confession" (Acts of Synod 1975, p. 603). Therefore, this interpretation has confessional status in the CRCNA.

Following this decision of synod, the office of the General Secretary published a FAQ¹ addressing the decisions of Synod 2022 regarding human sexuality. In this FAQ, questions 6-11 appear to essentially allow for exceptions to be taken to Synod 2022's decisions through the process of submitting confessional-difficulty gravamina. But then question 12 goes on to say something that appears to contradict this. The FAQ has resulted in a great deal of confusion, and there remains a lack of clarity in the denomination concerning Synod 2022's decisions and their ramifications.

For example, the Council of Delegates (COD), at its October 2022 meeting, approved a “process for filing an exception to the *COD Statement of Agreement with the Beliefs of the CRCNA*.”² Similarly, Calvin University's board of trustees decided in October 2022 to retain faculty members who filed confessional difficulty gravamen in response to Synod 2022's decisions concerning human sexuality.³ Additionally, some councils and classes are considering confessional difficulty gravamina as a way to grant exceptions to officers who do not agree with Synod 2022's decisions regarding human sexuality.

II. Overture

Classis Central Plains overtures Synod 2023 to take the following actions:

1. Inform all agencies, ministries, boards, broader assemblies, and other entities of the CRCNA—including, but not limited to, all classes and future synods, the COD, and the board of trustees, faculty, and staff of Calvin University and Calvin Theological Seminary—that members of these various bodies of the CRCNA may not register exceptions to the doctrines and beliefs of the CRCNA, but must affirm, without reservation, all the doctrines and beliefs of the CRCNA; nor may these bodies grant such exceptions to its members.

2. Inform all agencies, ministries, boards, broader assemblies, and other entities of the CRCNA—including, but not limited to, all classes and future synods, the COD, and the board of trustees, faculty, and staff of Calvin University and Calvin Theological Seminary—that:

¹ <https://www.crcna.org/synod/hsr-faq>

² <https://www.crcna.org/news-and-events/news/council-delegates-meets-0?fbclid=IwAR1PhkGAYuE1e-QH0KFUUqIWfjAUjBoFpb-0rfwBIMvP5M3YpHQ3FP4OzoU>

³ https://calvinchimes.org/2022/11/01/board-of-trustees-retains-faculty-who-disagree-with-crcna-on-lgbtq-relationships/?fbclid=IwAR0Gfwr5bLzBLU7jGrvKRb2GY_ez_SIpM2iIION6uhCtECzCuDQ8eC5zzDM

- a) Current members of these various bodies of the CRCNA who have submitted confessional-difficulty gravamina with their local councils must resolve the issue with their councils and/or classes by the end of calendar year 2023, or step down from the denominational body on which they serve.
- b) Future members of these various bodies of the CRCNA who submit confessional-difficulty gravamina with their local councils while already serving on one of these denominational bodies must resolve the issue with their councils and/or classes within six months of filing the gravamen, or step down from the denominational body on which they serve.
- c) In the above two situations *resolve* means that those who have filed confessional-difficulty gravamina no longer have the doctrinal difficulty, and are able to affirm, without reservation, their full agreement with the doctrines and beliefs of the CRCNA.
- d) No one having an active confessional-difficulty gravamina submitted to their local councils may be appointed to serve on these various bodies of the CRCNA.

3. Require all agencies, ministries, boards, broader assemblies, and other entities of the CRCNA to remove any members of these bodies who cannot or will not affirm, without reservation, their full agreement with the doctrines and beliefs of the CRCNA in the time periods specified in 2a and 2b above, and who will not voluntarily remove themselves from the denominational bodies they serve.

4. Inform church councils that if an officer of the church has submitted a confessional-difficulty gravamen to the council, and is serving on an agency, ministry, board, broader assembly, or other entity of the CRCNA, or is being considered for appointment to such a denominational body, the council is required to inform that denominational body of the officer's gravamen, regardless of where the council and the officer are in the process laid out in Church Order Supplement, Article 5.

5. Inform the classes and future synods of the CRCNA that nominees and appointees to all agencies, ministries, boards, broader assemblies, and other entities of the CRCNA must affirm their full agreement with the doctrines and beliefs of the CRCNA, may not take any exceptions to these doctrines and beliefs, and must not have a confessional-difficulty gravamen submitted to

their local council; rather, they must affirm, without reservation, all the doctrines and beliefs of the CRCNA.

6. Instruct the office of the General Secretary to update the *FAQ about Synod 2022 and the Human Sexuality Report* to reflect items 1-5 above.

Grounds:

1. The tradition and polity of the CRCNA does not allow its officers to take exceptions to the doctrines and beliefs of the denomination. By extension, this should not be permitted in any agencies, ministries, boards, broader assemblies, and other entities of the CRCNA.
2. The opening paragraph of the *COD Statement of Agreement with the Beliefs of the CRCNA* reads as follows: “We promise to do this work in obedience to the revealed will of our Lord Jesus Christ *and in full agreement with what the congregations of the Christian Reformed Church in North America confess.*”⁴
3. All officers of the CRCNA sign the *Covenant for Officebearers*—a covenant in which we affirm “without reservation all the doctrines contained in the standards of the church as being doctrines that are taught in the Word of God.” (Church Order Supplement, Article 5)
4. “The decisions of the assemblies shall be considered *settled and binding*, unless it is proved that they conflict with the Word of God or the Church Order.” (Church Order Article 29, emphasis added)
5. These actions not only address the response of some in the CRCNA to Synod 2022’s decisions regarding human sexuality; they also address the dangerous and harmful precedent that is being set by this response. Thus, they serve as a safeguard against similar actions being taken in the future, should there be disagreement with other decisions of the assemblies and/or the doctrines of the church.

⁴ https://www.crcna.org/sites/default/files/cod_statement_of_agreement_with_beliefs_of_the_crcna_7-17.pdf (emphasis added)

Art. 7591 – Delegates entered into small group prayer time.

Art. 7592 – Rev. Mike Bentley closed the Classis meeting in prayer.

Art. 7593 – Classis adjourned.

Next regular session of Classis will be held on Thursday, May 18, 2023 (location to be determined). Agenda materials are due to statedclerk.centralplains@gmail.com by May 1, 2023.

Respectfully submitted

Rev. Jonathan Spronk - Stated Clerk, Central Plains

**Classis Financial
Report**

Classis Financial Report
March 1, 2022 - February
28, 2023

Balance March 1, 2022 \$146,967.62

Receipts:	Ministry shares	\$166,032.15
	Interest	<u>\$170.46</u>

Disbursements:

Student Fund

Will Brouwers	\$5,000.00
---------------	------------

Classis Expense Fund

State Clerk gathering	\$500.00
Treasurer bond	\$100.00
Classis meeting expense	\$621.72
Classis travel	\$1,252.41
Clerk fee	\$3,000.00
Treasurer fee	\$3,000.00

New Church Plant Fund

**Classis Home Mission
Fund**

Geneva	\$23,500.00
Areopagus	\$12,000.00
New Life	\$16,500.00
Peace CRC - grant	\$500.00

<u>Dordt University</u>	\$80,150.00
--------------------------------	-------------

Total disbursements	<u>\$146,124.13</u>
---------------------	---------------------

Designated fund balance - Student fund	\$5,000.00
- New Church Plant fund	\$38,000.00
Undesignated Fund Balance February 28, 2023	<u>\$124,046.10</u>

Classis Ministry Shares
Individual Church Shares & Remittances
 Feb. 28, 2022 – March 1, 2023

	Classis Ministry <u>Shares</u>	Pledged Ministry <u>Shares</u>	Paid <u>To Date</u>	2021 <u>% Paid</u>
Cedar	2958.00	1450.00	1450.00	100.00%
Peace	11934.00	3707.00	3707.04	100.00%
Leighton	4284.00	600.00	756.27	0.00%
Newton	10914.00	1600.00	1600.00	100.00%
North Liberty	5100.00	3000.00	3000.00	100.00%
Bethel	10404.00	5000.00	6000.00	120.00%
First - Osky	29784.00	27000.00	27000.00	100.00%
Calvary	35394.00	22220.00	22573.15	101.59%
Faith	25908.00	23972.00	24456.00	102.02%
Connect	10710.00	5000.00	5000.00	100.00%
Grace	3876.00	5754.00	5754.00	100.00%
Cornerstone	17544.00	9684.00	9684.00	100.00%
Peoria	14122.00	12939.00	12938.71	100.00%
Prairie City	9792.00	2000.00	239.00	11.95%
Trinity - St. L	6732.00	1000.00	1850.62	185.06%
Sully	27336.00	24000.00	24000.00	100.00%
Tracy	4488.00		4000.00	#DIV/0!
Crossroads	15096.00	11095.00	12023.36	108.37%
<hr/>				
Total	246376.00	160021.00	166032.15	103.76%

Classis Central Plains

Budget

2023-2024

	Actual 22-23	Requested 23-24	Pledged 23-24
Student Fund	\$10,000	\$11,000	\$11,000
Home Missions			
Committee Expense	\$200	\$200	\$200
Geneva Campus Ministries	\$23,500	\$23,500	\$23,500
Areopagus Ministries	\$12,000	\$12,000	\$12,000
New Life Prison	\$16,500	\$16,500	\$16,500
Total	\$52,200	\$52,200	\$52,200
Dordt University	\$80,150	\$165,380	\$80,150
Church Development Grant	\$2,000	\$2,000	\$2,000
New Church Plant	\$4,500	\$4,500	\$4,500
Classis Expense			
Travel Expense	\$2,500	\$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	\$3,000	\$3,000	\$3,000
Treasurer	\$3,000	\$3,000	\$3,000
Total	\$11,150	\$10,150	\$10,150
Total	\$160,000	\$245,230	\$160,000
Total active professing members		2420	
Ministry shares per member		\$101.33	