

**MINUTES OF CLASSIS CENTRAL PLAINS**

Meeting at Faith CRC, Pella, IA

Thursday, May 17, 2023, 7PM

Art. 7594 – Before the meeting, a presentation was given for delegates from Andrew Rienstra with World Renew. Additionally, a supper meal was provided for the delegates by Rev. Jonathan Spronk and Faith CRC.

Art. 7595 – Rev. Brian Oschner opened with devotions based on Psalm 19 and prayer.

Art. 7596 – Constituting Classis

A. Roll call indicates the following delegates are present:

<b>CHURCH</b>	<b>MINISTER</b>	<b>ELDER</b>	<b>DEACON</b>
<b>CEDAR</b>	John Ritsema	Calvin Rozenboom	Grant Van Den Heuvel
<b>PEACE CR</b>	---	Russ Marcus	**Michelle Van Rheenen
<b>LEIGHTON</b>	---	*Josh Van Kooten	*Cole Vande Voort
<b>TRINITY STL</b>	**Michael Bentley	**Larry Birchler	**Josh Kleyn
<b>NEW LIFE</b>	Rick Admiraal	*Keith Van Gent	*Tricia De Haan
<b>NEWTON</b>	Aaron Gunsaulus	*Doug Roorda	Nick Vasquez
<b>IC CHINESE</b>	**Johnlo XU	**Tom Fisher	---
<b>BETHEL OSKY</b>		Bryan Mulder Alan Van Waardhuizen	Russell Terpstra
<b>FIRST OSKY</b>	Erik Kamp	*Joel De Bruin	*Josh Van Donselaar
<b>CALVARY PELLA</b>	Brad Bierma	Ivan Mulder	*Aaron Sandbulte
<b>FAITH PELLA</b>	Brian Ochsner	Lee Talma	*Jean De Waard
<b>CONNECT PELLA</b>	---	Fred Van Den Broek	*Caryn Van Hemert
<b>GRACE PELLA</b>	---	Marlow Ten Napel	Nathan Blunck
<b>PEORIA</b>		*Glen Fynaardt Bernie Veenstra	Doug Vande Voort
<b>CORNERSTONE PELLA</b>	---	*Matt Vos	*Will Vande Voort
<b>PRAIRIE CITY</b>	Matt McClure	*Lynn Elrod	*Dustin De Raad
<b>SULLY</b>		*Gary Christensen	Mike Vander Molen
<b>TRACY</b>	Al Bandstra	Dan Sneller	---
<b>CROSSROADS DSM</b>	Mark Jicinsky	Justin Gaiser	Roger Vos

\* First time delegates who signed the Covenant for Officebearers

\*\* Delegates who attended the meeting via zoom

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

Chair: Rev. Aaron Gunsaulus

Stated Clerk: Rev. Jonathan Spronk

Art. 7597 – Request for Emerging Church Status for Korean CRC of St. Louis.

- A. For the past couple of years, Rev. Jaebok Choi has been leading a church plant in the St. Louis area that has been meeting on Sundays at a local restaurant. The church plant is working toward organized status under Church Order Art. 38.

- B. **Motion made and supported via Church Order Art. 38-a to grant *emerging* status for Korean CRC of St. Louis under the care of Trinity CRC St. Louis.**

**Carried**

Art. 7598 – Revisions to Classis Central Plains Rules of Procedure concerning Classis Leadership Team.

- A. Presentation is made by Rev. Aaron Gunsaulus about the proposed revisions.

- B. **Motion made and supported to remove proposed rule 2.c.5 “Classical appointments are for AM services only.”**

**Defeated**

- C. **Motion made and supported to adopt the proposed revisions to Classis Central Plains Rule of Procedure (see below).**

**Carried**

## **Revised Rules of Procedure**

### **E. Classical Leadership Team (CLT):**

1. Conduct necessary business between sessions of classis, including but not limited to: Review all credentials prior to the meeting; review and approve the past minutes; assess and determine the *need* of any congregation seeking approval for one of its officebearers to administer the sacraments under CO Art. 55 and CO Supplement, Art. 55, and if the need is recognized, approve the request(s); appoint counselors for pastorally vacant churches.
2. Classical Appointments:
  - a. Offer classical appointments to pastorally vacant churches that request such appointments (that is, churches with neither an ordained minister, nor a commissioned pastor, nor a lay pastor authorized by classis to administer the sacraments on staff). The church shall pay the sending church an amount approved by classis (currently \$125.00) and pay the pastor the classical mileage rate which is the same as that established by the IRS.
  - b. All ministers and ordained commissioned pastors in classis are to receive the same number of assignments.
  - c. Assignments are to be made with the following guidelines:
    - 1) The goal is monthly pulpit supply for pastorally vacant churches.

- 2) The CLT will determine the appropriate frequency, taking into consideration the current number of vacancies and available ministers, the length of each vacancy, and keeping in mind the goal of monthly pulpit supply.
  - 3) Classical appointments will not be made until at least two months after the CLT has been notified by a church of their desire to have classical appointments.
  - 4) All parties ordinarily shall be notified at least two months in advance.
  - 5) Classical appointments are for AM services only.
  - 6) In the event of a scheduling conflict, the church will be responsible for finding a replacement.
3. Counselors:
    - a. Classis or the CLT shall appoint a counselor for churches without pastors after soliciting suggestions from the church.
    - b. Inform the counselor of his appointment and his responsibilities according to Church Order Article 9.
  4. Salaries: Make a recommendation regarding the Stated Clerk's and Treasurer's remuneration in even numbered years.
  5. Examinations:
    - a. Candidates
      - 1) The calling church requests the examination.
      - 2) The examination is arranged by the CLT following Church Order Article 10.
      - 3) Upon majority vote of Classis and with concurrence of the Synodical Deputies the candidate is approved for ordination into the ministry of the Word in the Christian Reformed Church. His installation date is then announced.
    - b. Ordained Commissioned Pastors
      - 1) The calling church requests the examination.
      - 2) The Stated Clerk requests the Synodical Deputies to rule the position is in keeping with the office of commissioned pastor.
      - 3) The examination is arranged by the CLT following Church Order Article 23.
      - 4) Upon majority vote, the candidate is approved for ordination as a commissioned pastor in Classis Central Plains.
    - c. Exhorters
      - 1) The request for an individual to exhort is made by his council, with a statement of the reason for licensure.
      - 2) The examination is arranged by the CLT following Church Order Article 43.
      - 3) Upon majority vote, licensure to exhort in Classis shall be granted.
      - 4) Reapplication is required after the first year and every other year thereafter, but no further council endorsement or personal appearance normally is needed. When exhorters request renewal of their licensure, they are to report how often they have exhorted and where.
    - d. Ministers From Other Denominations
      - 1) The request may come from a minister or council.
      - 2) The examination is arranged by the CLT following Church Order Article 8.
      - 3) Upon majority vote, with the concurring advice of the Synodical Deputies, the minister shall be declared eligible for a call into the ministry of the Word in the Christian Reformed Church.

Art. 7599 – Healthy Church Advocate Proposal:

- A. Rev. Brad Bierma presents a proposal from Classis Church Visitors about updating Church visiting practices.
- B. **Motion made and supported to approve Healthy Church Advocate Proposal.**

**Carried**

### **Healthy Church Advocate Proposal:**

Recently, the church visitors for our classis met to encourage one another as we serve and support the local churches. As we discussed our work, we recognized several trends in the ministry of church visiting. These trends include the following:

1. Over the past few years, we have experienced a lot of turn-over in the group of church visitors. It seems like we are constantly looking for new people to serve.
2. We continue to struggle to reach our goal of meeting face to face with the churches in our groups. The pandemic certainly made it more difficult, but even before 2020, we did not consistently reach the goal of meeting with our churches at least once every three years.
3. The practice of church visiting does not always reflect the potential. Church visiting is intended to promote healthy local churches and leaders, in addition to providing support during times of conflict within a church. In practice, too much time goes by between contacts for the church visitors to effectively promote healthy practices. Infrequent contacts combined with frequent turnover of council and visitors make it difficult for visitors to establish a relationship with the church where healthy practices can be encouraged.
4. Church visitors are often very busy with ministry in their own respective churches. Asking them to devote more time to encourage 4-5 other churches is unrealistic, and may lead to even more frequent turnover.

Recognizing these trends, the church visitors are asking classis to approve a change in how we practice church visiting. Our desire is to make church visiting a little easier for the visitors while keeping it effective in promoting church health. [This plan can be seen here.](#)

To summarize the changes being proposed, we suggest the following:

1. We change the name of this ministry from Church Visitors to Healthy Church Advocates. We believe that this name more clearly describes the purpose of this ministry without needing to constantly explain that we're not talking about someone who is a guest at our worship service. Using this name keeps the purpose of this ministry visible, to promote and encourage healthy churches and leaders.
2. We change the primary means of church visiting from infrequent face-to-face meetings to frequent interactions by phone or email.

3. We encourage the leaders of the church to actively promote healthy congregations and leaders. Church advocates would encourage the leaders to set and monitor goals toward health, and would provide support, resources, and accountability in reaching those goals.
4. We provide resources for the development and training of healthy church advocates.

These changes can be seen in the plan on the website.

To summarize, we see the purpose of church visiting, or healthy church advocates, is “**To promote and encourage healthy churches and leaders.**”

We achieve that purpose through five actions:

1. Semi-annual check-ins

- Every six months, the church advocates contact both the council president and the pastor, [sending them a list of questions](#), asking them to respond within the next two months.
- Church advocates are asked to submit the responses to the chair of the church visiting teams.
- Church advocates submit reports to classis summarizing these responses. Reports are approved by the pastor and council president of the church prior to being submitted.
- Church advocates determine any recommendations they might make to the church leaders.

2. Semi-annual invitations to contact, to the pastor, council president, and congregation. Every six months, the stated clerk requests the churches to include the follow announcement in their communication to their congregation:

Our classis provides encouragement and support to our churches through the work of our Healthy Church Advocates. If you would like to speak to the advocate for your church, please contact your pastor or council president, who is able to connect you.

3. Church advocates attempt to meet with the councils of their churches at least once every three years.
4. Church advocates are available to help churches resolve conflicts within the leadership or the congregation.
5. Church advocates serve as a source and catalyst [for resources](#) that can help churches achieve their goal to be healthy churches.

Art. 7600 – Classical Leadership Team.

A. Written report was received for information.

B. **Motion made and supported to approve the work of the Classis Leadership Team.**  
**Carried**

Art. 7601 – Classis Missions Committee, Rev. Mark Jicinsky, reporting.

A. Rev. Mark Jicinsky reports a recent conversation that he had with the Center for Church Renewal. Materials are distributed to the delegates about this organization which has partnered with many CRC churches. More information can be found through the website: churchrenew.org.

Art. 7602 – Denominational Board reports.

A. Written report from the Calvin Theological Seminary Board of Trustees is received for information.

Art. 7603 – Speakers to Classis.

A. The following speakers address Classis on behalf of their ministries.

- a. Rev. Brad Meinders – Central USA Regional Mission Leader, Resonate Global Mission
- b. Rev. Tom Wolthuis – CRC Council of Delegates

Art. 7604 – Rev. Aaron Gunsaulus closed the session with prayer.

Art. 7605 – Classis adjourned.

Next regular session of Classis will be held on Friday and Saturday, September 15-16, 2023 at Trinity CRC St. Louis. Agenda materials are due to [statedclerk.centralplains@gmail.com](mailto:statedclerk.centralplains@gmail.com) by Aug. 15, 2023.

Respectfully submitted,

Rev. Jonathan Spronk

Stated Clerk, Classis Central Plains