

Classis Central Plains  
 Budget Proposal (Version 2) 9.15.2023  
 2024-2025

	Actual 23-24	Requested 24-25	Pledged 24-25
Student Fund	\$11,000	\$11,000	
Home Missions			
Committee Expense	\$200	\$200	
Geneva Campus Ministries	\$23,500	\$30,000	
Areopagus Ministries	\$12,000	\$13,000	
New Life Prison	\$16,500	\$16,500	
Total	\$52,200	\$59,700	
Dordt University	\$80,150	\$159,575	
Church Development Grant	\$2,000	\$2,000	
New Church Plant	\$4,500	\$4,500	
Classis Expense			
Travel Expense	\$1,500	\$1,500	
Classis Meals	\$750	\$750	
Printing, Postage	\$50	\$50	
Treasurer Bond	\$100	\$100	
Conferences	\$1,750	\$1,750	
Clerk	\$3,000	\$3,000	
Treasurer	\$3,000	\$3,000	
Total	\$10,150	\$10,150	
Total	\$160,000	\$246,925	
Total active professing members		2306	
Ministry shares per member		\$107.08	

Synod Report to Classis Central Plains  
September 2023

As I sit down to write this report, The Banner is pulled up on an adjacent screen. You can go and read a fairly accurate description of all that took place and the decisions that were made in regards to:

1. Confessional Status of the definition of unchastity,
2. The adoption of a new Code of Conduct:
3. How the church is proceeding with Neland Ave. CRC
4. How to better encourage Ministry Shares and support of the denomination
5. Two new Seminary Professors
  - Dr. Gabriela Tijerina-Pike as the Director of Latino/a ministries
  - Dr. Daniel Daley as Professor of New Testament
6. Newly appointed Co-Director of World Renew: Jamie McIntosh
7. Several other issues pertinent to the business of the church.

I will not spend my time in this report articulating what you can (and should) read there. But rather spend a few moments in reflection around the question: What posture are we taking in the CRC.

When asked what my experience at Synod was like, I told a good friend of mine from Michigan, “the traditional voice won the battle, but lost the war.” I have been around the CRC long enough to know and love one of the greatest strength of this denomination is the careful, thoughtful, and deliberative work this denomination has done to navigate difficult issues in the past. Our times of collective discernment, through the leading of the Holy Spirit and the ability to hold two sides of a mystery in tension, has guided the church’s work both on the theological matter being discussed and in the practice of the discernment itself. The posture was one of desiring to work together.

Not so with this Synod, there was a palpable fear and lack of trust from the very beginning. Camps were formed, dividing lines drawn, pre-synod meetings with only certain “like-minded” delegates were held and from the opening of synod most delegates seemed on the defensive. Fear lead to the stumbling through of what should have been thoughtful and easy answers of belonging, gospel proclamation, and the beautiful balance of grace and truth within the church.

As I left Synod, trusting that Jesus is still Lord of his church, I left feeling this same division is worse than when we started. The traditional camp will fail to be a place of grace in finding ways to extend the pastoral care needed and the progressive camp will fail to find ways to express that everyone’s sexuality must be surrendered to the lordship of Christ. Mimicking the world, the posture of fear and lack of trust seems only to have strengthened.

So, permit me to offer a word of encouragement to the church following my experience at Synod. In this moment truth is at stake, yes; but so is grace. In obedience to Christ, the decisions we reach are only as effective as the process by which we got there, the process can dismantle the decision if it, in effect, shows the opposite. I invite the church to return to the thoughtful and discerning posture we used to have where grace and truth worked

side by side. Where decision were not based on fear but care and are able to hold in tension our work guided by the Holy Spirit in each heart.

Respectfully,

Rev. Brian Ochsner

# Faith CRC - Pella

## Church Report

Submitted by Rev. Rick Admiraal, Church Advocate

Date: September 1, 2023

Report: On August 15, 2023 I received an email from Mr. Loren Bogaards, the council president of Faith CRC in Pella. The email contained the church responses to the six questions on the Healthy Church Advocates (formerly church visitors) web page: <https://sites.google.com/view/healthy-church/church-advocate-questions-for-churches>. Here are the responses:

1. Are your leaders aware of what healthy churches and leaders look like? What can you do to make sure that all of your leaders are working toward the same goal, to be a healthy church?  
>We set both Pastor and corresponding Council goals each year. Currently we are encouraging and providing opportunities for all members including Council to "Learn and Serve". Specific examples include holding a ministry fair each fall where members can look at all the learning opportunities (which have been expanded greatly) available from Faith and allow them to pick one that meets them where they are at in their Faith walk. In addition, the "Learn and Serve" theme will be used to guide our family visiting discussions and encourage families this year. The final goal is that members will be more comfortable in sharing their faith.

2. How do you see God making you a stronger and healthier church?

>The education program and participation has expanded greatly. We started an "Elevate" program where we do periodic one on one intergenerational mentoring of our youth as part of the traditional Sunday School offering. We have plans to increase the frequency of those sessions and incorporate the "Learn and Serve" concept by having individuals mentor but also provide one on one lesson training thus providing more opportunities to share our faith. Another area of growth is that we see teens to post-college individuals wanting to get involved in programs like GEMS or Kids of the Kingdom. Lastly, we have been extremely blessed to have strong biblical preaching that encourages us to strengthen our faith daily.

3. What are some goals that God might have for your congregation and/or leadership?

>More involvement in group prayer opportunities and more members willing to share their faith.

4. In what ways are the church and the leadership making progress on achieving those goals?

>We have performed interviews / fact finding to understand what keeps individuals from sharing their faith and are putting programs in place to improve. Programs include: the expanded Elevate program, house visitation conversations and ministry fair opportunities.

5. Describe the working relationship between the pastor and the council; between the pastor and the congregation; between the council and the congregation.

>We are positive about all of these relationships. The Pastor performance review process went well. We are getting good congregational feedback regarding the messages being preached and also pastoral care. Currently we have a high degree of trust between all parties. We make sure to have a lot of listening and reflection on all parts.

6. Is there something we as your Church Advocates can do to encourage and support you in achieving those goals?

>We would always appreciate your prayers as well as holding us accountable.

Summary: I was greatly encouraged to hear about all the good things God is doing at Faith CRC. It is also encouraging to see their participation in the life of Classis Central Plains. So I requested a follow-up meeting. On August 24, I met for lunch with Mr. Loren Bogaards (council president) and Rev. Brian Ochsner (lead pastor). They spoke highly of the staff, which includes a youth director, education director, and worship coordinator. Things seem to be working like a well-oiled machine. However, it has been increasingly difficult to find people willing to put their names up for elder or deacon. They also found the transition before Pastor Brian's arrival to be beneficial. From 2019-2021, the church had the privilege of having Rev. Dale Slings serve as their Strategic Transitional Minister (STM). Overall, I thank God for His Spirit working at Faith CRC. In addition to the programs mentioned above, they reach out through the Coffee Break Ministry, Kids Hope USA, and the annual summer service project to Compton, California. May God continue to bless Faith CRC as the congregation continues to learn and serve in His Kingdom.