



The North Grand Rapids Classis

Reformed Church in America

Beloved in the Lord,

Welcome to North Grand Rapids Classis! We are glad to enter into relationship with you as we serve together and strive to be Christ's presence in our various ministries and communities. As a gathering of 18 organized congregations, church starts, affiliated ministries, and many ordained ministers related to the Reformed Church in America, we commit that, "We will follow Christ in mission as a covenanted community cultivating and strengthening leaders, congregations, and ministries of North Grand Rapids Classis." May we be faithful in this endeavor.

Within this packet you will find a variety of information intended to help you get to know North Grand Rapids Classis. There are resources for becoming familiar with how classis works, what is expected of you as a member, and ways that classis can support you. These same documents, along with additional information and resources, may also be found on the classis website, www.northgr.org.

If you have any questions, please ask! A good person to start with is our Stated Clerk, Rob Teitsma (e-mail below). However, a full list of our current leadership may be found on the website and they, along with other members of classis, would be happy to help you.

Again, welcome. We pray that your time as a member of North Grand Rapids Classis will be fruitful and blessed.

North Grand Rapids Classis

www.northgr.org

statedclerk@northgr.org

(616) 723-2025 (Interim Stated Clerk, Rob Teitsma)

North Grand Rapids Classis Covenant of Responsibility

We follow Christ as a covenanted community cultivating and strengthening leaders, congregations and ministries of North Grand Rapids Community.

To accomplish this vision, the classis and the ministers and churches within it enter into a covenant of mutual responsibility.

Each Pastor covenants to:

- Pray regularly for and about the mission and work of North Grand Rapids Classis
- Make the mission and work of North Grand Rapids Classis a priority in his or her overall ministry.
- Attend all regular meetings of Classis unless there are serious extenuation circumstances.
- Come to classis meetings prepared by reading through the pre-Classis packet and familiarizing oneself with the matters to be discussed
- Serve as a member of at least one Classis Team or committee, fully participating in team/committee meetings and work.
- Initiate contact with the Classis Pastoral Care Team at the first sign of tension in the church/pastor relationship; if a specialized minister, initiate contact with the Specialized Ministry Committee or if a Commissioned Pastor contact the Commissioned Pastor Team. Allow the Pastoral Care Team to work with the pastor and church pro-actively rather than re-actively; permit the Specialized Ministry Committee or the Commissioned Pastor Team respectively to provide assistance or guidance.

Each Church covenants to:

- Pray regularly for and about the work and mission of North Grand Rapids, Classis.
- Make the mission and work of North Grand Rapids Classis a priority in her overall ministry.
- Provide the full number of delegates designated in the Book of Church Order to attend all regular meetings of classes unless there are serious extenuating circumstances.
- Send delegates to meetings prepared by reading through the pre-Classis packet and familiarizing oneself with the matters to be discussed.
- Provide at least as many participants for Classis Teams or Committees as there are elder delegates from the congregation to Classis.
- Initiate contact with appropriate Classis Teams or Committees at the first sign of tension or difficulty (i.e. – pastor/church relations, financial difficulties, etc.), allowing the teams to work pro-actively rather than reactively.
- Pay assessments in full and on time in accordance with the established payment schedule.

The Classis Covenants to:

- Pray regularly for the ministries and ministers within the classis.

- Provide all necessary materials and notices in a timely manner, allowing members to be fully prepared for meetings.
- Work proactively to assist congregations when tensions arise, either personal or financial.
- Communicate thoroughly the goings-on of the classis to the congregations, ministries and ministers.
- Provide opportunities for support, encouragement and collaboration between ministers, elders, and ministries of North Grand Rapids Classis.

FAQs

Am I required to go to classis meetings?

All ministers of Word and Sacrament who are members of the classis and all elder delegates are expected to attend all sessions of classis. To request an excused absence, contact the Stated Clerk of Classis.

When are classis meetings?

Regular sessions are scheduled for the 3rd Tuesday of January, March and September, with a session for Student exams generally scheduled on a Tuesday evening in mid to late May.

What other special sessions might I need to attend?

You may be assigned as a delegate to General Synod, Regional Synod, ordinations, and installations. While we encourage participation at all special sessions, the classis assigns particular delegates who are required to attend these special sessions to formally represent the classis. Other required meetings may include judicial business and student exams.

How do I know when my church needs to host a classis meeting?

Host churches are contacted by the Stated Clerk in advance of the meeting. Locations for meetings generally follow the alphabetical list of churches in the directory.

What is expected of my church when we host a classis meeting?

Check with the classis president to discuss his/her agenda and needs for the meeting (devotions, room and table arrangement, time frame, audio-visual needs, etc). The host church usually prepares the meal prior to the meeting and offering coffee and snack mid-meeting (\$300 is allocated to cover the cost).

Do I need to bring an elder to each meeting?

Each church in the classis shall provide 1 elder delegate for every 300 members or fraction thereof in the church, not to exceed 4 per church. Elder delegates can be chosen from the entire body of elders whether or not they are currently serving on the board of elders. All classis meeting materials are sent to ministers and delegates of record who then must ensure that the material is read to prepare for the session.

What does a typical classis meeting look like?

Shared meal (except at Student Exams) followed by devotions/worship prior to the opening of classis.

Appointment of Tellers (volunteers who pass out materials needed during meeting).

Approval of Minutes from previous classis meeting, ordinations, installations, etc.

Reports (committees, teams, special delegations, president's update, church plants, etc.)

Other unfinished or new business

Particularia (any other pieces of information to be shared with classis)

Resolutions (usually an expression of gratitude to the host church)

Adjournment and Closing Prayer

What are the Rules of Order for a classis meeting?

For extensive information on parliamentary procedures, you may reference the Robert's Rules of Order; these are very similar to our rules of order. Classis Rules of order can be found on the classis website, northgr.org.

Help me understand the process for "motions" in a classis meeting.

A motion is a formal proposal by a member, in a meeting, that the group take certain action. When a motion is made, the chair (usually the president) will ask if there is a second or support. The floor will be opened for discussion, limited to 15 minutes, after which we may vote to extend discussion. Either when there is no more discussion or when time has run out, the motion is restated and a vote is called for. The Chair then announces the result of the vote.

How are classis teams and committees organized?

Classis teams and committees are organized differently according to our Rules of Order. You can find a list of teams and their chair persons on page 2 of the Classis Directory as part of the executive committee.

Who serves on classis teams and committees?

Every minister is expected to serve on a Classis committee or team. Areas of interest should be communicated to the Vice-President as chair of the Nominations Committee. All churches are expected to provide at least one individual to serve on a Classis Team or Committee as well.

What things on a local church level require classis approval and who do I contact?

- Taking on debt (Finance Committee)
- Selling property (Finance Committee)
- Changing the process of electing elders and deacons (Overtures & Judicial Business)
- Calling or contracting with a parish minister (Pastoral Care Committee)
- Dissolution of a relationship between minister and congregation (Pastoral Care Committee)
- Starting a new place of worship (Church Multiplication Team)
- Changing the name of a congregation (Overtures & Judicial Business)

What do we do if we have church financial concerns?

Do not wait until it becomes a crisis to ask for help. Contact the chair of the Finance Committee. The team will work with your congregation to help identify options and find a way to address the concern.

Who do we contact for any other matter not addressed in the FAQs?

Contact the Stated Clerk via email: statedclerk@northgr.org. Or by phone using the number listed in the Classis Directory.