

Classis of North Grand Rapids Meeting Minutes

Stated Session

Resurrection Reformed

September 19, 2023

Opening: Worshi led by Kearsten McCoy, seminarian

Opened with song and prayer. She shared her experience in joining the RCA through Servant's Community Church and her experience with the Classis as it led to becoming a seminarian.

Business Meeting Called to Order by Ben Bruins, President at 6:39 PM.

Roll Call (completed by signature)

A – Excused Absence U – Unexcused Absence

Church	Clergy	Elder	Elder
Central Reformed	Steven Pierce	Burt Vander Laan	Tim Elzinga (Finance)
	Matt Shults (MUC)		
Oakview Community Church	Vacant	Jerry DeRuiter (A)	John Dykema (A)
Resurrection Reformed	Doug Kiel		
Richmond Reformed	Vacant	Nancy Werkema (U)	(U)
Servant's Community	James Earley	(U)	
Standale	Vacant	Lin Cline	Sharon Palma
The Community - Ada	Mara Joy Norden	Katie Musick-Reynhout (VP)	
Third Reformed	Jeff Petersen	Ron Schollaart (A)	
Trinity Reformed	Ben Bruins	Jan Koopman	
	Sarah Bruins		
Specialized Ministers/Ministers Without Charge/Inactive			
Eric Bogerd (A)	Nancy Boote	Jennifer Holmes Curran	Laura Dilley (U)
Anne Elzinga	Bob Karel (U)	Kristi Kiel	Ryan Landt (U)
Steve Luchies (A)	Tim Meendering (U)	Kristen Meyer (A)	Cheryl Molhoek
Billy Norden	Rebecca Stegeman Riekse	Matt Rose (U)	Robyn Saylor (U)
Eric Schalk (U)	Jessica Shults (A)	Peter TeWinkle	Dave Vander Woude (A)
David Veldt (A)	Les Wiseman (U)	Phil Pratt	
Eric Branch (U)	Rachel Bush (U)	Kate Kooyman (A)	Jennifer Petersen (A)
Jonathan Tice (A)	Susan VanderWall (U)	Bill VanderWerp (A)	Christopher Westerbeek (U)
Aaron Wetzal (A)	Steve Wolters (U)	Nancy Claus (A)	
Andre Daley (U)			
Retired Ministers			
Bill Fennema	Lou Lotz	Ralph Robrahn	
Associate In Ministry		Commissioned Pastor	
Willa Brown (A)		George Werkema (U)	
Guests			
Kearsten McCoy	Lisa VanLonkhuyzen		

Welcome

Rev. Phil Pratt upon transfer from Delaware-Raritan Classis. Burt Vander Laan, elder delegate from Central Reformed Church.

Approval of the Agenda

Motion made, supported, and passed to approve the agenda as presented.

Approval of Previous Meeting Minutes

Motion made, supported, and passed to accept the minutes of the March 21, 2023.

Appoint Tellers

Tellers were appointed from Trinity and Oakview.

Committee and Council Reports

Executive Committee

Recommendation made and passed to appoint the Rev. Dr. Mara Norden to be chairperson of the Revitalization Team and an at-large member of the Classis Executive Committee. The Executive Committee also moved the Rev. Jess Shults to the Revitalization Team from the Pastoral Care Committee.

Recommendation made and passed to accept the resignation of Nancy Claus as co-chairperson of the Student Care Committee and from the Executive Committee.

Recommendation made and passed to adopt the statement Living Together with Difference Around Human Sexuality Policy.

Amendment made, supported, and failed to replace the word **policy** with the word **statement**.

Recommendation made and passed to adopt the Policy for Receiving Churches Upon Transfer to NGRC (intra- and inter-denomination).

Amendment made, supported, and failed to replace the word **confirm** with the phrase **inquire as to**.

Finance Committee

Tim Elzinga asked for any questions on the August financial report distributed prior to the meeting.

Recommendation made and passed to adopt the 2024 Budget as indicated on the included document. Billy Norden presented an overview of the Classis historical and current financial situation.

Recommendation made and passed to adopt a covenant shares funding method.

Recommendation made and passed to use 0.296% for Classis operations and 0.2938% for salary aid calculated on the previous year's Consistorial Report (contributions received, line 21).

Recommendation made and passed to adopt the 2024 minimum salary guidelines for Ministers of Word and Sacrament.

Recommendation made and passed to approve the expense portion of the 2024 budget.

Nominations Committee

Motion made, supported, and passed:

Finance Committee

No nominations: 2 - Laypeople, terms expiring September 16, 2025.

Overtures and Judicial Business

Reappoint [Bill Fennema](#), second term, expiring September 16, 2025

No nomination: 1 – Layperson, full term, expiring September 16, 2025

No nomination: 1 – Layperson, unexpired term, expiring September 17, 2024

Reappoint [Jeffrey Petersen](#), extra position term, expiring September 16, 2025

Pastoral Care Committee

Reappoint [Kristen Meyer](#) and Elder [Kerri Vryhof](#) to second terms, expiring September 15, 2026

No nomination: 1 – Clergy, unexpired term, expiring September 16, 2025

Specialized Ministry

Reappoint [Cheryl Molhoek](#) to a term expiring September 16, 2025 and appoint her as chairperson

No nomination: 2 – Laypeople to terms, expiring September 16, 2025

No nomination: 1 – Parish minister to a first term, expiring September 17, 2024 (eligible for two full terms after)

Appoint [David Veldt](#) to an extra term, expiring September 16, 2025

Student Care

Appoint [James Earley](#), full term, expiring September 16, 2025; and appoint as representative to the Executive Committee.

No nomination: 1 – Elder, full term, expiring September 16, 2025

Words of Hope Lay Delegate

No nomination: 1 – Layperson to fill an unexpired term, expiring August 31, 2025

Motion made, supported, and passed approve these named nominations.

Revitalization Team

Motion made, supported, and passed to appoint Phil Pratt to the Revitalization Team.

Specialized Ministry Committee

Motion made, supported, and passed to receive the report as presented, receiving Rev. Phil Pratt upon transfer from Delaware-Raritan and designating Eric Bogerd as a specialized minister. Rev. Pratt read and signed the Declaration for Ministers of Word and Sacrament.

Overtures and Judicial Business

Motion made, supported, and passed to accept as a first reading the Rules of Order, 2023.7.20.

Student Care Committee

Conducted Theological Interviews with seminarians VanLonkhuyzen and McCoy.

Miscellaneous

Anti-racism Task Force Presentation

Peter TeWinkle and Nancy Boote presented an overview of the Task Force's purpose and suggested means of participation by churches and individuals interested in the goal of living anti-racism.

Classis Identity Discussion

Ben opened the discussion regarding the Classis identity following the changes within the Classis that took place over the past several years. Who are we now? Shape the Classis meetings are different at every meeting over the past two years. More resilient.

When are you most enthused about Classis? Carpooling to Classis meetings—getting to know people; personal, connecting. More participation, a vulnerability on the part of members and delegates to participate in conversations and discussions.

COVID changed the churches and Classis forever. Churches that left have forever changed the Classis. Forces a certain form of clarity to those remaining. Presents opportunities that we haven't recognized before—things that that matter. Classis members and delegates seem to be made up of younger people as opposed to what many churches look like—mid-age-to-older.

An opportunity is the large number of specialized ministers to broaden care to communities and pastors. Seems like a few long term members and new members know very little about other churches and ministries.

Stated Clerk Business

Announcements/Reminders

- Requests for Retirement Status from Nancy Claus and Bill VanderWerp.

Motion made, supported, and passed to grant retirement status to Nancy Claus and Bill VanderWerp effective this date.

- Approve Delegates to 2024 General and Regional Synods.
 - **General Synod**
 - Revs. Eric Bogerd and Kristen Meyer; alternates: Jennifer Holmes Curran and Matt Shults
 - An elder from Servant's and George Werkema (Commissioned Pastor); alternates: Third and Trinity
 - **Regional Synod**
 - Year 2: Revs. Dave Vander Woude and Jennifer Holmes Curran. Elders Central and Servant's.
 - Year 1: Revs. Eric Bogerd and Matt Shults. Elders Resurrection and The Community; alternates: Third, and Trinity.
- Installation Service October 1, 2023 3 PM of the Rev. John Delger as Minister of Word and Sacrament at Richmond Reformed.
- Requests for demissions by Revs. Laura Dilley, Robert Karel, Tim Meendering, and Eric Schalk.

Motion made, supported, and passed to grant demission status to Revs. Laura Dilley, Robert Karel, Tim Meendering, and Eric Schalk.

- Consistorial Reports will be available online January 1, 2024. Now is a good time to review memberships and encourage approaches to inactive members.
- Constitutional Inquiries are to be completed and returned to the stated clerk no later than January 31, 2024.
- Church Consistory and Elder minutes are due to the stated clerk no later than January 31, 2024. Please ensure that your minutes conform to the BCO specified content. Ask me if you need that.

Particularia

The Stated Clerk thanked Resurrection for hosting church for the meeting.

The Rev. Dr. Dick TerMaat passed away this past week and it was requested that the stated clerk send a letter to Helen TerMaat stating sympathy and appreciation for Dick's service.

Phil Pratt brought attention to an October 17, 9 am breakfast presentation at the Gathering Space in Ada regarding stewardship within congregations.

Resolutions

Motion made, supported, and passed to excuse the absences of Eric Bogerd, Willa Brown, Nancy Claus, Jennifer Holmes Curran, John Delger, Jerry DeRuiter, John Dykema, Bill Fennema, Kate Kooyman, Lou Lotz, Steve Luchies, Kristen Meyer, Ralph Robrahn, Ron Schollaart, Jessica Shults, Bill VanderWerp, Dave VanderWoude, David Veldt, Aaron Wetzel

Closing

Motion made, supported, and passed to close the meeting.

Closing Prayer by Ben Bruins.

Next Classis Meetings

Executive Committee Meetings: Third Tuesday of the Month except January, March, and September. 11:30 AM, Third Reformed Church

January 16, 2024; Ada Congregational Church, Dinner 5:30 PM; Stated Session 6:30 PM.

March 19, 2024; Servant's Community, Dinner 5:30 PM; Stated Session 6:30 PM.

May 21, 2024; Standale Reformed Church, Student Exams, No Dinner; Special Session 6:30 PM



Benjamin Bruins, President



Robert J. Teitsma, Stated Clerk

Financial Overview

NORTH GRAND RAPIDS CLASSIS

September, 2023



A look back, and a
historical accounting of
financial reserves.

CLASSIS MEMBERSHIP IN 2014

In 2014, Classis membership total:

3,513 members

MEMBERSHIP TRANSITIONS OVER THE DECADE

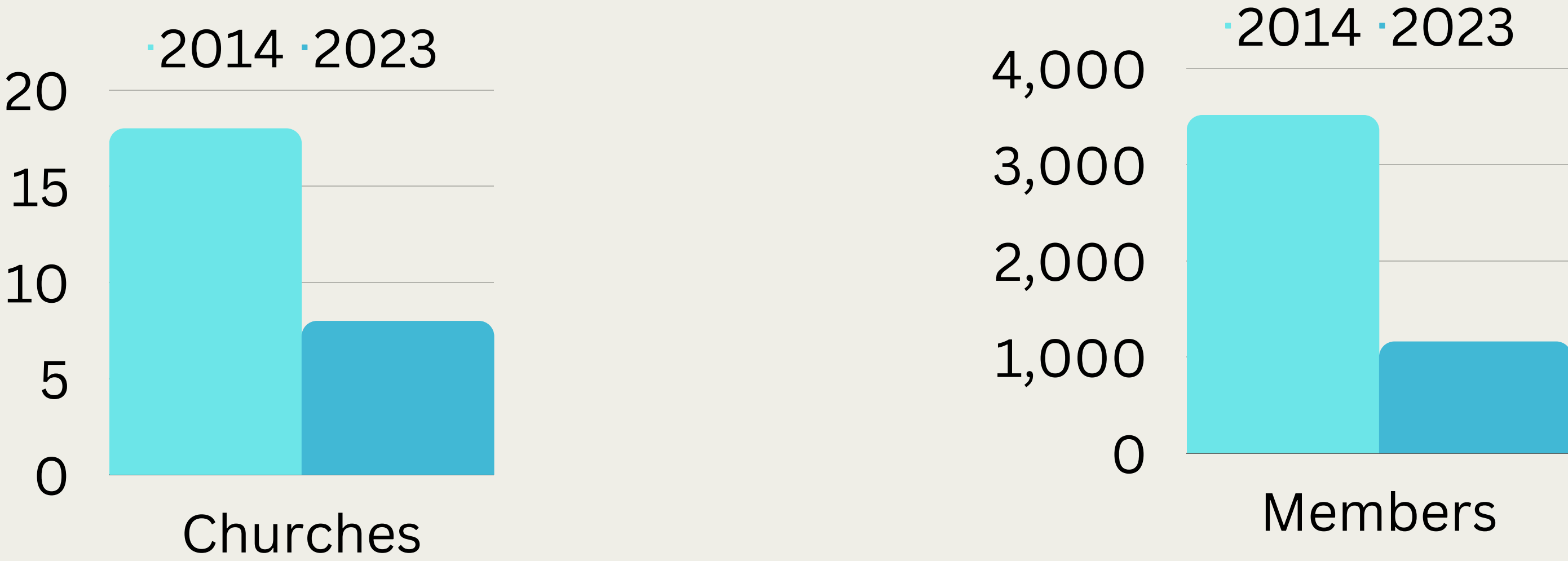
In the past decade, five congregations have been closed. Aberdeen, Casnovia, Clancy Street, Common Ground, and Faith Harvest.

MEMBERSHIP TRANSITIONS OVER THE DECADE

Upon the General Synod vote to approve aspects of the Vision 2020 report, the following congregations have left the classis: Fourth Reformed, Knapp Street, Orchard Hill, Remembrance, and Rockford.

CURRENT MEMBERSHIP IN 2023

North Grand Rapids Classis Churches: 9
2022 Confirmed Members: 1,161

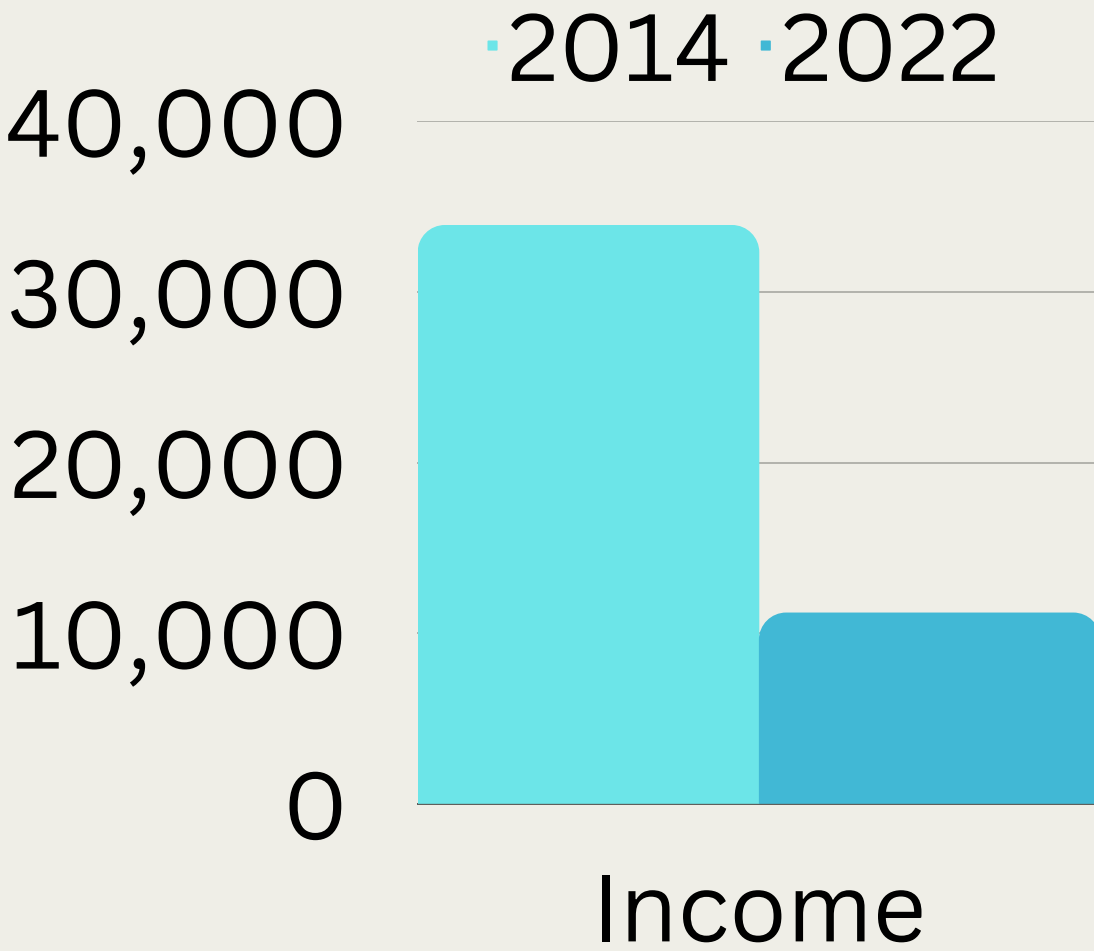


CLASSIS REVENUE

Classis assessments have remained at \$9.65 per member

2014 assessment revenue: \$33,900

2022 assessment revenue: \$11,203



EXPENSES AND INCOME

While classis expenses and spending has continued to rise, classis income has significantly decreased. The budget has not yet been adjusted to account for the decrease in revenue.

RESERVES

The classis has approximately \$980,000 in assets, as follows:

\$347,000 - Checking

\$510,000 - Church Growth Fund Note

\$123,000 - Aberdeen Property Note

HISTORY OF RESERVES

The reserve funds have been built mostly from a transferred church and churches that have closed. This includes:

- Fellowship in Franklin, Tennessee
- Aberdeen Reformed Church
- Casnovia Reformed Church
- Common Ground Church
- Faith Harvest Church

2024 PROPOSED BUDGETED EXPENSES

The executive committee is recommending a 2024 budget of \$166,505 in expenses.

General Synod and Regional Synod covenant shares: \$85,965

Classis Operating Expenses: \$26,040

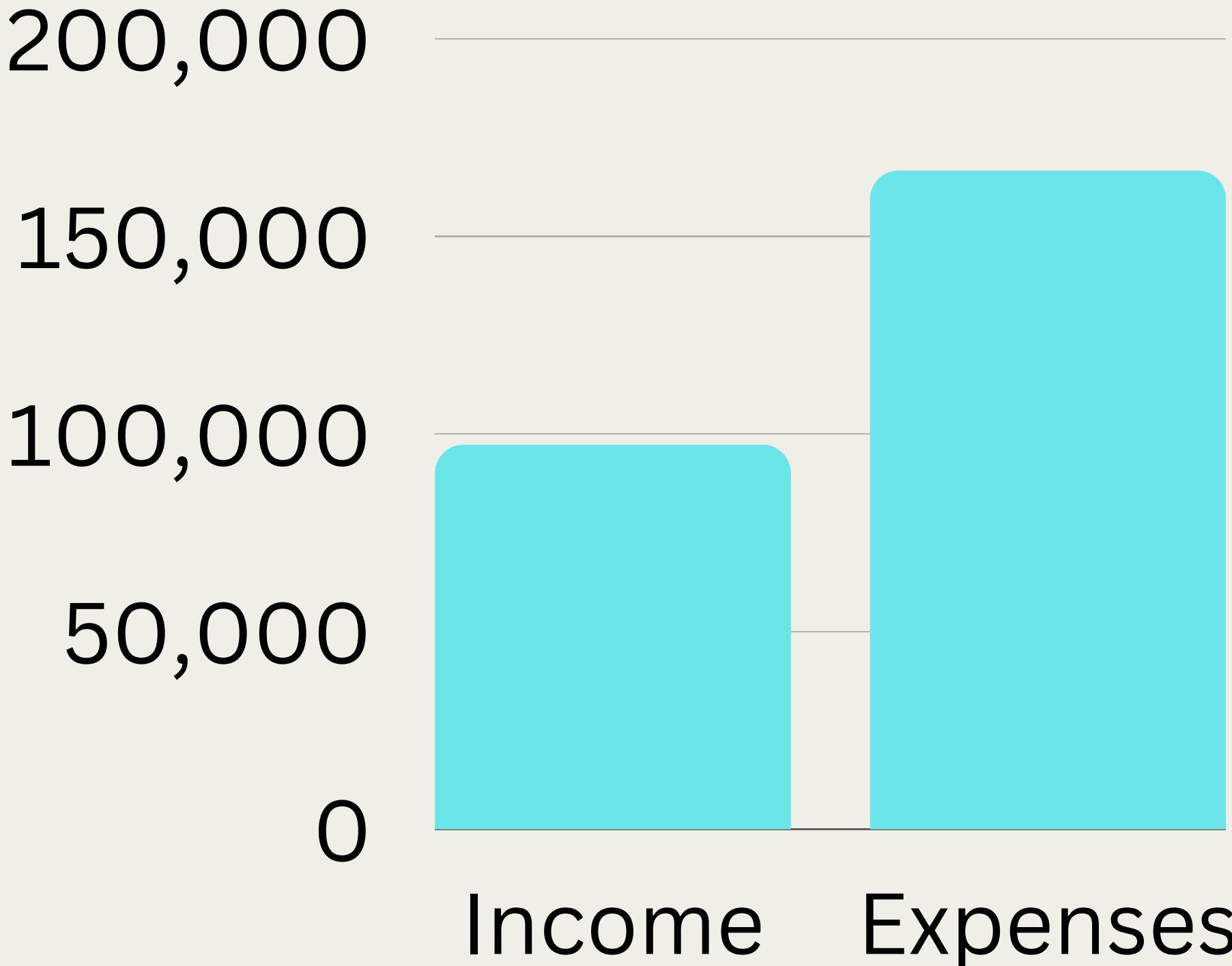
Salary aid for Servants Community Church: \$18,000

Student Care Budget: \$12,500

Revitalization: \$4,000

Support for City Hope church plant: \$20,000

2024 OVERALL INCOME V. EXPENSES



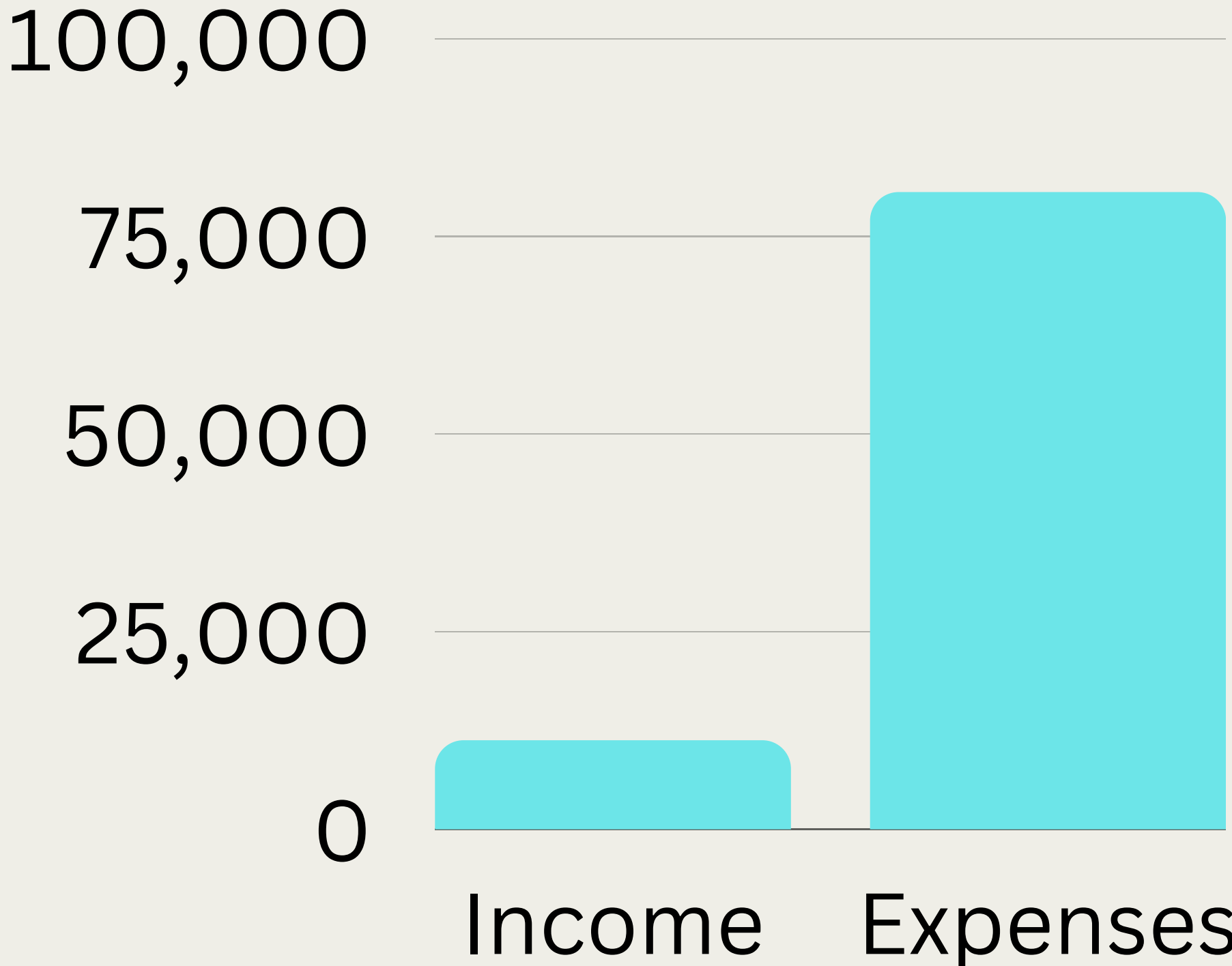
INCOME: \$97,171

EXPENSES: \$166,505

SHORTFALL: (\$69,334)

2024 CLASSIS INCOME V. EXPENSES

*WITHOUT GENERAL/REGIONAL SYNOD COVENANT SHARES



INCOME: \$11,206

EXPENSES: \$80,540

SHORTFALL: (\$69,334)

A NOTE ABOUT COVENANT SHARES

General Synod Covenant Shares will never increase or decrease more than 10% of what the church paid the previous year. This means it may take years before a church is paying the current percentage of covenant shares, and eliminates concern over budget fluctuations like capital campaigns.

2024 PROPOSED COVENANT SHARE RATES

Percentage of contributions received by a church:

General Synod: 2.7%

Regional Synod: 0.75%

Classis: 0.44%

Key Questions for Consideration:

- Should we adapt our budget in response to the change/loss in revenue?
- Is the use of reserves to pay for budgeted expenses the way we want to steward those funds?
- Knowing that the reserves are finite, what is an appropriate amount of time to adjust and increase covenant shares so that our income meets our annual expenses?

Classis of North Grand Rapids--2024 Budget Worksheet

						Executive Committee Recommended	Revenue Neutral			
		2023	2023	2023--Proj.						
Revenue	<u>July YTD</u>	<u>Projected</u>	<u>Budget</u>	<u>vs. Budget</u>		<u>2024 Budget</u>	<u>"Base Line"</u>			
General Synod Assessments / Covenant Shares	\$ 32,264	\$ 64,528	\$ 79,591	\$ (15,063)		\$ 65,025	\$ 65,025			
RSGL Assessments / Covenant Shares	\$ 10,739	\$ 21,479	\$ 26,492	\$ (5,013)		\$ 20,940	\$ 20,940			
NGR Classis Assessments / Covenant Shares	\$ 3,692	\$ 7,384	\$ 9,308	\$ (1,924)		\$ 7,547	\$ 7,547			
NGR Classis Salary Aid	\$ 1,829	\$ 3,657	\$ 4,511	\$ (854)		\$ 7,491	\$ 3,659			10 year deficit reduction plan.
From Assessments / Covenant Shares	\$ 48,524	\$ 97,048	\$ 119,902	\$ (22,854)		\$ 101,003	\$ 97,171			Recurring Sustainable Income
Reserves	\$ 20	\$ 20	\$ -	\$ 20		\$ -	\$ -			
Student Gifts	\$ 38	\$ 38	\$ -	\$ 38		\$ -	\$ -			
	\$ 48,582	\$ 97,106	\$ 119,902	\$ (22,854)		\$ 101,003	\$ 97,171			
Off Budget										
Investment										
Church Growth Fund Note	\$ 4,336	\$ 10,084	\$ 2,500	\$ 7,584		\$ 11,496				Interest
Receivable										
Aberdeen Note from Emmanuel Baptist	\$ 5,967	\$ 10,937	\$ 11,932	\$ (995)		\$ 11,932				Paid ahead in 2022.
	\$ 10,303	\$ 21,021	\$ 14,432	\$ 6,589		\$ 23,428				
Total Income	<u>\$ 58,827</u>	<u>\$ 118,069</u>	<u>\$ 134,334</u>	<u>\$ (16,265)</u>						
				Under Budget						

Classis of North Grand Rapids--2024 Budget Worksheet

Expenses			2023	2023	2023--Proj.	Recommended	Revenue			
General Fund		<u>July YTD</u>	<u>Projected</u>	<u>Budget</u>	<u>vs. Budget</u>	<u>2024 Budget</u>	<u>Neutral</u>			
	General Synod Assessment / Covenant Shares	\$ 54,192	\$ 93,987	\$ 94,375	\$ (388)	\$ 65,025	\$ 65,025			
	Regional Synod Assessment / Covenant Shares	\$ 15,707	\$ 28,953	\$ 31,414	\$ (2,462)	\$ 20,940	\$ 20,940			
	Meals--Classis Session Dinners, etc.	\$ 600	\$ 900	\$ 1,000	\$ (100)	\$ 1,000	\$ 1,000			
	Financial Services	\$ 4,272	\$ 7,320	\$ 7,320	\$ -	\$ 7,320	\$ 7,320			
	Admin Services	\$ 8,061	\$ 13,820	\$ 13,820	\$ -	\$ 13,820	\$ 13,820			
	Office Supplies	\$ -	\$ -	\$ 200	\$ (200)	\$ 200	\$ 200			
	Miscellaneous	\$ 782	\$ 862	\$ 950	\$ (88)	\$ 950	\$ 950	Includes Website expense		
	Insurance	\$ 91	\$ 2,370	\$ 2,750	\$ (380)	\$ 2,750	\$ 2,750			
Sub-Totals		\$ 83,705	\$ 148,212	\$ 151,829	\$ (3,618)	\$ 112,005	\$ 112,005			
Salary Aid Fund										
	Salary Aid	\$ 9,000	\$ 9,000	\$ 9,000	\$ -	\$ 9,000	\$ 9,000			
Student Care										
	Student Care	\$ 180	\$ 309	\$ 2,800	\$ (2,491)	\$ 1,500	\$ 1,500	Committee understands its 2023 budget to be \$1,500		
Expenses from Reserves										
Revitalization										
	Classis Supervisor(s)	\$ 1,519	\$ 2,604	\$ 3,000	\$ (396)	\$ 3,000	\$ 3,000			
	Servants	\$ 9,000	\$ 9,000	\$ 9,000	\$ -	\$ 9,000	\$ 9,000			
	Revitalization--Other / Discretionary	\$ -	\$ -	\$ 1,000	\$ (1,000)	\$ 1,000	\$ 1,000			
	Richmond	\$ 50,000	\$ 50,000	\$ -	\$ 50,000	\$ -	\$ -			
	Servants	\$ 40,000	\$ 40,000	\$ -	\$ 40,000	\$ -	\$ -			
		\$ 100,519	\$ 101,604	\$ 13,000	\$ 88,604	\$ 13,000	\$ 13,000			
	Anti-Racism Task Force	\$ -	\$ -	\$ 10,000		\$ -	\$ -			
						\$ (34,502)	\$ (38,334)	Structural Deficits		
Multiplication Reserves										
	City Hope (All Abilities Church Support)	\$ 20,000	\$ 20,000	\$ 20,000	\$ -	\$ 20,000	\$ 20,000	Approved for 2023 and 2024		
		\$ 120,519	\$ 121,604	\$ 33,000	\$ 88,604	\$ (54,502)	\$ (58,334)			
Student Care--Requested										
	Tuition Assistance	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ 10,000	\$ 10,000	1st year of 5 year request		
	Psychological Evaluations	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ 1,000	\$ 1,000	1st year of 5 year request		
		\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ 11,000	\$ 11,000			
						\$ (65,502)	\$ (69,334)	Deficits as requested		
Expenses Paid From Reserves		\$ 120,519	\$ 121,604	\$ 122,000	\$ 88,604					

Classis of North Grand Rapids--2024 Budget Worksheet

Total Expenses	<u>\$ 213,404</u>	<u>\$ 281,821</u>	<u>\$ 197,241</u>	<u>\$ 82,495</u>	Over Budget				
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							NGR Classis				
							Executive				
							Committee				
							10 Year				
			2024				Deficit				
		2022	Neutral	2023	Classis	NGR	Reduction		General	Regional	
		Contributions	NGR	NGR	Salary	Classis	2024	10 Year	Synod	Synod	Net
		Received--	Classis	Classis	Aid	Salary	Salary Aid	Plan	Covenant	Covenant	Net
2022		Consistorial	Covenant	Assessment--	Covenant	Aid--	Covenant	Net	Shares	Shares	Net
Confirmed		Report,	Shares--	\$6.50 per	Shares--	\$3.15 per	Share	2024	2024	2024	2024
Members		Line 21	0.296%	Member	0.1435%	Member	of 0.2938%	Impacts	Impacts	Impacts	Impacts
102	Ada Community	\$ 192,985	\$ 571.24	\$ 598.00	\$ 276.93	\$ 289.80	\$ 566.99	\$ 250.43	\$ 97.24	\$ (170.00)	\$ 177.67
64	Flint Resurrection	\$ 158,036	\$ 467.79	\$ 416.00	\$ 226.78	\$ 201.60	\$ 464.31	\$ 314.50	\$ 355.71	\$ 1.00	\$ 671.21
289	Central	\$ 808,319	\$ 2,392.62	\$ 1,950.00	\$ 1,159.95	\$ 945.00	\$ 2,374.84	\$ 1,872.46	\$ 1,667.40	\$ 512.00	\$ 4,051.86
35	Oakview	\$ 60,209	\$ 178.22	\$ 240.50	\$ 86.40	\$ 116.55	\$ 176.89	\$ (1.94)	\$ (205.65)	\$ (68.50)	\$ (276.09)
100	Richmond	\$ 169,110	\$ 500.57	\$ 669.50	\$ 242.67	\$ 324.45	\$ 496.85	\$ 3.47	\$ (572.47)	\$ (190.00)	\$ (759.00)
46	Servant's	\$ 186,864	\$ 553.12	\$ 338.00	\$ 268.15	\$ 163.80	\$ 549.01	\$ 600.33	\$ 289.02	\$ 96.00	\$ 985.35
191	Standale	\$ 313,613	\$ 928.29	\$ 1,332.50	\$ 450.03	\$ 645.75	\$ 921.39	\$ (128.57)	\$ (1,139.39)	\$ (379.25)	\$ (1,647.21)
220	Third	\$ 412,306	\$ 1,220.43	\$ 1,365.00	\$ 591.66	\$ 661.50	\$ 1,211.36	\$ 405.29	\$ (539.54)	\$ (388.00)	\$ (522.25)
87	Trinity	\$ 248,216	\$ 734.72	\$ 637.00	\$ 356.19	\$ 308.70	\$ 729.26	\$ 518.28	\$ 544.68	\$ 49.00	\$ 1,111.96
1134		\$ 2,549,658	\$ 7,547.00	\$ 7,546.50	\$ 3,658.76	\$ 3,657.15	\$ 7,490.90	\$ 3,834.25	\$ 497.00	\$ (537.75)	\$ 3,793.50

SYNOD OF THE GREAT LAKES

2024 MINIMUM COMPENSATION GUIDELINES FOR MINISTERS OF WORD AND SACRAMENT

These Guidelines are to be met or exceeded when determining the Salary and Provisions of Compensation for Ministers of Word and Sacrament who serve RCA congregations.

Each year, the Synod of the Great Lakes recommends guidelines to the classes within its region. Each classis considers these guidelines as it approves a minimum standard for compensation for ministers serving the congregations within the classis as described in the RCA *Book of Church Order (BCO)*. These guidelines apply to all Ministers of Word and Sacrament serving congregations within the classis (pastor / minister) whether the invitation to ministry is given in the form of a *call* or a *contract*. By simple definition, a *call* is an employment agreement without an ending date. A *contract* is an employment agreement with an ending date specified.

Part One: The Relationship

All employment relationships, whether call or contract, full-time or part-time, are covenants between the minister and the consistory. These relationships begin with an "invitation to ministry" – a written agreement that clarifies what each party (minister and consistory) can expect from one another in terms of services provided and compensation for those services. All employment relationships between a minister and a consistory require the approval of the Classis. The pastor is expected to perform certain services in his/her ministry among the congregation, and the congregation is expected to provide remuneration to the pastor in a manner that may keep him/her from pre-occupation with financial concerns. Full-time calls and contracts normally limit the pastor's employment to the church.

Goals: Every consistory needs to be involved with their pastor(s) in setting specific goals for both the pastor(s) and the church in order to lead the church in mission for Jesus Christ. Financial considerations are part of this two-way accountability and communication.

Performance Review: The annual constitutional inquiry of the *Book of Church Order* (Chapter 1, part II, Article 7, Sec 1h) requires that "the consistory regularly review the activities of the church in order that the congregation and those whom it serves may become more faithful in their walk as disciples of the Lord Jesus." This review should include an evaluation of the role of the minister in fulfilling this goal.

Personnel Committee: It is recommended that each consistory appoint a personnel committee to work with all church staff members. Realizing that there are differences from church to church, the details of the personnel committee are left to the individual consistory. The following guidelines identify the basic tasks/duties of a personnel committee. A personnel committee:

- a. Meets with each pastor and staff person at least twice per year, preferably including the pastor's spouse once per year.
- b. Sets goals for each position and discusses with each pastor and staff person how the goals fit into the vision of the church.
- c. Reviews the past performance of the pastor(s) and staff persons.
- d. Acknowledges superior achievements and extraordinary service with public recognition and affirmation.
- e. Discusses general employment concerns with pastor(s) and staff persons.
- f. Discusses specific financial needs which include salary, housing, insurance, continuing education, retirement and transportation reimbursement, as applicable.
- g. Considers financial needs beyond the day-to-day living expenses such as medical expenses, education costs, and emergencies.
- h. Discusses other needs such as family crises, illness, marital stress, emotional health, and job satisfaction.
- i. Gives support and encouragement.
- j. Discusses and facilitates good relationships between church staff members.
- k. Serves as the communication link between staff and the consistory.

Part Two: Compensation

Salaries: Salaries must be practical and fair. A salary should assure sufficient support so that financial problems do not interfere with a pastor's best work. This salary scale below is a **minimum standard** only. In addition to fulfilling this standard, the workload, outstanding job performance, and special needs of the pastor should be considered within the process of establishing a salary.

Part-time Employment: Part-time calls and contracts are not fully bound by these compensation guidelines because such agreements can vary significantly. The use of the salary table below on a pro-rated basis is helpful and advised. In addition to the salary table, two other provisions must be included in the compensation package according to the BCO (1.I.2.7; 1.II.15.3): 1) payment of 11% of base salary and housing allowance to the minister's Retirement Fund; 2) required insurance coverage. (See items #2 and #3 below.) These insurance coverages are required by the BCO for all ministers working full or part-time and are provided by the Board of Benefit Services. The consistory must cover the cost of the premiums as part of a call or contract for all compensated ministers, unless the classis determines that the minister is serving the church part-time (as defined by the Board of Benefits Services), and that circumstances warrant that the consistory be exempt from this requirement, or the minister is working less than part-time as defined by the Board of Benefits Services. Item #8 also applies to part-time employment, since it is an expense reimbursement.

COMPENSATION PROVISIONS

Items 1 through 7 are the minimum compensation requirements for a full-time minister. Item 8 is a required expense reimbursement.

1. Salary Schedule:

- a. The salary schedule shall apply to all full time ministers whether with a call or a contract. The salary table is based on years of service and the confessing membership of the church. Churches with staff ministries may use the first column (0-200 members) as a minimum for paying the salary of Associate Pastors.
- b. Waiving the Minimum Salary: If a consistory and pastor agree to a less-than-minimum salary, a waiver request, signed by both the pastor and a consistory representative, shall be sent to the appropriate Classis committee for Classis approval. The waiver request must state the amount and the reasons for the exemption. A waiver request shall be submitted to the Classis at least three months prior to the effective date. The compensation forfeited by the waiver is not required to be repaid, unless a repayment agreement is stipulated in the waiver request.

**2024 MINIMUM ANNUAL BASE SALARY SCHEDULE
Based on Years of Service and the Number of Confessing Members**

Base Salary					Base Salary plus Housing Allowance (30%)				
*Years	0-200	201-350	351-500	501+	*Years	0-200	201-350	351-500	501+
0	\$48,420	\$51,264	\$54,038	\$56,806	0	\$62,946	\$66,643	\$70,249	\$73,848
1	\$49,615	\$52,373	\$55,143	\$57,921	1	\$64,500	\$68,085	\$71,686	\$75,297
2	\$50,710	\$53,485	\$56,249	\$59,025	2	\$65,923	\$69,531	\$73,124	\$76,733
3	\$51,819	\$54,593	\$57,347	\$60,136	3	\$67,365	\$70,971	\$74,551	\$78,177
4	\$52,930	\$55,701	\$58,472	\$61,240	4	\$68,809	\$72,411	\$76,014	\$79,612
5	\$54,036	\$56,808	\$59,583	\$62,352	5	\$70,247	\$73,850	\$77,458	\$81,058
6	\$55,145	\$57,919	\$60,685	\$63,461	6	\$71,689	\$75,295	\$78,891	\$82,499
7	\$56,253	\$59,024	\$61,797	\$64,569	7	\$73,129	\$76,731	\$80,336	\$83,940
8	\$57,378	\$60,135	\$62,904	\$65,680	8	\$74,591	\$78,176	\$81,775	\$85,384
9	\$58,504	\$61,262	\$64,015	\$66,786	9	\$76,055	\$79,641	\$83,220	\$86,822
10 +	\$59,581	\$62,382	\$65,123	\$67,921	10 +	\$77,455	\$81,097	\$84,660	\$88,297

*NOTE: Years of Service since Ordination - - *NOTE: This is a 4.0% increase over 2023

2. **Retirement Fund:** Contributions must be made to the RCA Retirement Plan, as stipulated in the call form, to comply with the IRS regulations of the RCA retirement plan document. Contribution payments to the RCA Retirement Plan are required for all employed ministers whether full or part-time, unless the classis determines that the minister is serving the church part-time and that circumstances warrant that the consistory be exempt from this requirement, and the classis approves a waiver. Contributions for all ministers must be 11% of base salary and housing allowance or greater. For full-time ministers, the contribution to the Plan must meet or exceed the EBPH level set by the Board of Benefits Services. (BCO, 1.II.12.3)
3. **Required Insurance Coverage:** Three insurance provisions are included in this requirement: Medical Insurance (including family), Life Insurance, and Long-Term Disability Insurance as stipulated by the Board of Benefits. (BCO, 1.II.12.3)
 - a. **Medical Insurance.** The consistory must cover the cost of the premiums paid for medical insurance for the minister and his/her immediate family. Such medical insurance coverage shall meet or exceed the minimum standards stipulated by the Board of Benefits Services. When the high deductible health plan is chosen, consideration should be given to using all or part of the savings in premium to establish a Health Savings Account for the minister. Medical coverage may be excluded only if family coverage is provided through a spouse's employer-sponsored group plan.
 - b. **Life Insurance and Long-term Disability.** These insurance coverages are provided for every minister through the Board of Benefit Services. The consistory must cover the cost of the premium unless the minister is working less than part-time as defined by the Board of Benefits Services.
 - c. **Dental and/or Long Term Care (including family)** are optional and may be added to the required insurance provisions.
4. **Housing:** The consistory shall provide the pastor with free use of a parsonage including all utilities, or a housing allowance which equals at least 30% of the base salary. The amount designated for the housing allowance and reported to the IRS may be adjusted to take advantage of IRS guidelines. The agreement must be recorded in the consistory minutes at the beginning of each year.
5. **Self-Employment Tax:**
 - a. Pastors shall be paid by the consistory for Self-Employment Tax payments at the rate of one-half of the rate payable by a self-employed person. This reimbursement is calculated on the base salary plus housing.
 - b. If a pastor has elected not to be part of the Social Security system, an equal allowance is to be made for another appropriate retirement program. The consistory shall require evidence that this other retirement program has benefits comparable to Social Security benefits including Medicare.
6. **Professional Development:** (as required in the call form of the BCO): A minimum of one week with a stipend equal to not less than 1/52 of the annual minimum base salary (excluding housing allowance) shall be granted each year for professional development. By mutual agreement, this time and money may be accumulated up to a maximum equivalent of four years of service. The program of study must be approved by the Consistory, and should be mutually beneficial to the church and the pastor. This provision is not a personal saving account for the pastor and does not need to be paid to the pastor when employment ends.
7. **Vacation:** The minimum amount of vacation time granted each year shall be 4 weeks (including 4 Sundays). One week of vacation may be carried over to the next year, unless the consistory has approved a greater amount of vacation carryover.
8. **Car Allowance:** Car Allowance is not a Compensation Provision, but a "cost of doing business" expense incurred by the pastor on behalf of the church. Use of the pastor's personal car for ministry purposes shall be reimbursed to the pastor either at the IRS per mile rate or for actual expenses, whichever is more equitable in the situation, as agreed upon by pastor and consistory. (Note: Per IRS rules, one round trip commute each day is not a reimbursable expense.)

Additional Recommended Provisions

1. Sabbatical: It is recommended that a consistory adopt a policy of granting their pastors at least a six-week sabbatical at full salary after each seven years of service with that congregation. The sabbatical shall be scheduled at a time mutually agreed upon by the consistory and the pastor. The plan for the sabbatical shall be approved by the consistory with the clear intention that the sabbatical benefit both the pastor and the church. Compensation provisions shall continue to be paid during the sabbatical period.
2. Ministerial Couples: It is recommended that the consistory of a church served by a ministerial couple be sensitive to the possibility that a shared parsonage benefit or housing allowance can decrease those pastors' retirement and social security payments thus placing them at a disadvantage when they retire. Those consistories are urged to consider paying more than the minimum retirement and/or social security benefit to correct this inequity.
3. Special consideration: is recommended for those pastors who have led their congregations to start significant new worship services, worship sites or ministries resulting in new conversions to Christ and new ministry leaders. It is suggested that the consistory consider an annual merit increase above the appropriate step in the chart (or above the current salary if already above the minimum annual base salary). If these new revitalization efforts result in the formation of a new church, it is recommended that the salary be at least 5% above the appropriate step in the chart (or above the current salary if already above the minimum annual base salary). These suggestions are voluntary and are at the discretion of the consistory.

Note 1: Historical Adjustments to Minister of Word and Sacrament Compensation Guidelines.

- CY'2023 (approved May 2022): 8.5% increase (Regional Synod Assembly delegates voted on this figure, rather than the 6.0% increase proposed by the GLR Finance Committee).
- CY'2022 (approved May 2021): 1.75% increase.
- CY'2021 (approved May 2020): 2.0% increase.
- CY'2020 (approved May 2019): 2.0% increase.
- CY'2019 (approved May 2018): 2.0% increase.
- **5-Year Average Increase: 3.25%**

Note 2: Supporting Information regarding the 2024 Minimum Compensation Increase.

- Social Security Cost of Living Adjustment (COLA) for 2023: 8.7% [announced October 2022]
- Consumer Price Index (CPI): 12/31/21-12/31/22: 6.5%
- Core Consumer Price Index (Core CPI): 1/31/21-1/31/22: 5.7% [excluding food and energy prices]
- Personal Consumption Expenditures (PCE): 12/31/21-12/31/22: 5.0%
- Core Personal Consumption Expenditures (PCE): 12/31/21-12/31/22: 4.4% [Excluding food & energy]
- Gross Domestic Product (GDP) Price Deflator: Q4 2022: 3.5% Annual rate
- Producer Price Index (PPI): 12/31/21-12/31/22: 6.2%
- Wage Inflation (from 2/3/23 jobs report): 4.4%

Note 3: Church Staff Guidelines.

A compensation reference guide for church staff members not-ordained as Ministers of Word and Sacrament titled, "Church Staff Salary & Benefits Guidelines," is available from the Synod of the Great Lakes.



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Congregational Transfer-In/Adoption Policy 2023 Proposal

The Classis of North Grand Rapids will consider *receiving without reservation* the transfer of those congregations from other RCA classes or by adoption those congregations from other denominations that meet the criteria outlined in the ***Book of Church Order Part II, Article 10, Section 7***:

Sec. 7. The classis, in exercising its authority to receive a congregation as a local church of the Reformed Church in America, shall first satisfy itself that:

- a. Such congregation truly desires to organize and function as a local church in accordance with and in all respects subject to, the provisions of the Government of the Reformed Church in America.
- b. Such congregation has satisfied all prerequisites required by the denomination, if any, with which it has been affiliated, for withdrawing from the jurisdiction of that denomination;
- c. Such congregation could function more effectively as a local church of the Reformed Church in America, and would be welcomed as such by the other churches of the classis; and
- d. Such congregation has adopted an organizational document that includes a provision substantially in the form of Appendix, Formulary No. 15 (**Provision for Articles of Incorporation for Congregations**).

Additionally, the requesting congregation must meet the following North Grand Rapids Classis criteria:

1. such congregation is committed to ministering to the total life of all people by preaching, teaching, and proclamation of the gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God, and by all Christian good works.
2. such congregation is committed to abide by the classis's policy for Living Together with Difference Around Human Sexuality.
3. such congregation owns or rents a worship facility located within 200 miles of Grand Rapids, Michigan.
4. such congregation provided the Finance Committee with financial statements from the previous three years and received financial statements of the Classis from the previous three years as well as an estimate of obligations for Classis, Regional Synod, and General Synod assessments/covenant shares.



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PROCESS FOR RECEIVING CONGREGATIONS BY TRANSFER FROM ANOTHER CLASSIS WITHIN THE REGIONAL SYNOD OF THE GREAT LAKES

Background

The regional synod, after consultation with the classes and the consistory involved, may transfer a church from one classis to another classis within its bounds. All consultations required in this section shall occur at a regular session of each consistory (*BCO* Chapter 1, Part I, Article 4, Section 2) or a stated or special session of each classis where a quorum is present that meets the requirements of a quorum of a stated session of the classis (*BCO* Chapter 1, Part II, Article 4, Section 1). It is the prerogative of the classis to receive such a congregation.

Procedure

1. Prior to submitting a request for transfer to the Regional Synod of the Great Lakes the requesting church will notify the North Grand Rapids Classis Stated Clerk of its interest in belonging to North Grand Rapids Classis.
2. The Stated Clerk will provide the requesting church with the North Grand Rapids Classis policy on receiving churches through transfer. Concurrent to this, the Stated Clerk will notify the North Grand Rapids Classis Executive Committee of this request.
3. If the requesting church desires to continue in dialog with North Grand Rapids Classis following review of the policy, the Stated Clerk will coordinate a meeting between the Executive Committee and the requesting Church's consistory and minister.
4. At a minimum, the following Executive Committee members will participate in the subsequent formal meetings with and evaluation of the requesting church: President, Vice President, Stated Clerk, Pastoral Care Committee Chairperson, Finance Committee Chairperson, Church Revitalization Chairperson, Overtures and Judicial Business Chairperson.
5. The Executive Committee, using the Classis criteria, will ascertain that the requesting church will be a compatible, productive, and collegial fit with the member churches of North Grand Rapids Classis.
6. If the requesting church satisfies the Executive Committee that it meets the North Grand Rapids Classis transfer criteria the Executive Committee will recommend the full Classis receive the requesting church without reservation at the next stated session of Classis.
7. If the Classis votes to receive the requesting church without reservation, the Stated Clerk will write a letter to the Regional Synod of the Great Lakes stating the same.
8. The Executive Committee will meet with representatives of the Regional Synod of Great Lakes to complete its due diligence.



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PROCESS FOR RECEIVING BY ADOPTION CONGREGATIONS OUTSIDE THE REFORMED CHURCH IN AMERICA

Background

The Book of Church Order (BCO) is clear that it is a classis responsibility to supervise and receive congregations into its fellowship (BCO, Chapter I, Part II, Article 10, Section 7. a-d.). Requests to transfer to North Grand Rapids Classis from another denominations will be processed in a similar manner as congregations transferring from another RCA Classis.

Procedure

1. At a minimum, the following Executive Committee members will participate in the subsequent formal meetings with and evaluation of the requesting church: President, Vice President, Stated Clerk, Pastoral Care Committee Chairperson, Finance Committee Chairperson, Congregation Care Chairperson, Overtures and Judicial Business Chairperson.
2. An initial meeting is to be scheduled with the consistory and minister(s) of the church expressing interest in becoming part of the RCA. The purpose of the initial meeting is to hear about the vision for ministry and to inform the inquiry church of the polity and theology of the RCA.
3. In addition, appointed members of the Executive Committee will interview the requesting church's past two non-clergy governing board leaders to assess the congregational health.
4. If interest in becoming part of the RCA continues to be expressed after hearing a clear articulation of the polity and theology of the RCA, the focus of the conversation changes. Persons conferring with interested individuals should:
 - a. Appointed members of the Executive Committee will be responsible for scrutinizing the credentials (education, ordination, and sponsoring body) of the pastor transferring into the RCA. The designated leader will explain that the RCA's Book of Church Order requires all entering pastors be examined in "the theology, history, government, and disciplinary procedures of the Reformed Church in America (BCO, Part II, Article 12, Section 3). Give information concerning the content of the examination. Inquire as to the pastor's intention to become a member of the RCA and North Grand Rapids Classis.
 - b. Explore the polity and theology of the current denomination and the polity and theology of the individual interested in becoming an RCA pastor. If differences exist, a second meeting paying special attention to those areas is recommended.
 - c. Examine the differences between the RCA and the denomination of the interested individual or group.



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- d. Explain the RCA's expectations concerning Covenant Shares.
- e. Ask what expectations the interested requesting church has; i.e., What are they looking for from the RCA? Why do they want to join?
- f. When the above issues are dealt with and the interested congregation and Classis wishes to continue discussion, additional meetings are scheduled.
- g. Subsequent meetings are to include clergy and consistory (may include lay members from the requesting church and designees of the Classis Executive Committee).

Agenda at these meetings shall include:

Discussion of an exploratory phase, i.e., a minimum period of six months during which the interested group has a chance to relate to the RCA and the RCA has a chance to get to know and understand the church. To take full advantage of this period:

- a. A sponsoring RCA church (or churches) is urged to take the requesting church under its care. Invitations are to be extended for the interested church to attend a minimum of three consistory meetings, a minimum of two classis meetings, and a minimum of two worship and fellowship times.
 - b. The sponsoring church reports to the Executive Committee as frequently as directed to the status of the relationship between the sponsoring church and requesting church and identify any topics of concern with the requesting church.
 - c. During this period the requesting church pastor is given examples of specific questions that may be asked on the classis exam. A mentor is assigned to the pastor if one is needed and/or desired.
 - d. An open and honest discussion of expectations needs to take place. For instance, if the new group expects loans for buildings, the rules regarding how long a congregation must be a member of the RCA before funds are loaned need to be articulated.
5. During the exploratory phase each party will have the opportunity to become better acquainted and will be better able to reach a conclusion about affiliation or membership in the RCA. Either the Classis or requesting church may terminate interest at any time without obligation to state reasons for the termination. If the decision regarding affiliation is positive, the following shall be arranged:
- a. If necessary, the pastor will be examined.
 - b. In consultation with the classis and regional synod executive, an application to be placed in the denominational plan will be completed and sent to the appropriate RCA office.
 - c. Classis will arrange a service in which the congregation is received into the fellowship of the RCA.
 - d. The classis will ensure that the church is properly incorporated and that the church's articles of incorporation properly confirm the relationship of the



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church to the denomination. Specifically, the church 's articles of incorporation should specifically confirm the following:

- 1) The church is a member church in the Reformed Church in America and is subject to (and shall be governed by) the Reformed Church in America's Book of Church Order (BCO).
- 2) Upon any dissolution of the church all its assets shall be transferred as provided in the BCO.
- 3) The articles and bylaws of the church must be filed with the Classis and the method for selection of elders and deacons must be approved by the Classis.

Living Together with Difference Around Human Sexuality Policy 2023 Proposal

The Classis of North Grand Rapid's ministers, elders, and congregations sincerely hold divergent scriptural interpretations regarding human sexuality. We accept our divergent interpretations of scripture as genuine attempts to follow the Spirit of God obediently. We find our unity through our adoption by God in Christ and not through uniform belief. In our baptisms, God brings us into covenant with God and one another. Our theological and ethical differences are important, but they do not undo our adoption into God's covenantal family.

We commit to respecting classis members who hold different scriptural interpretations regarding human sexuality. We commit to respecting the work of ministers and consistories as they exercise local pastoral authority in decisions regarding marriage and congregational leadership.

As a classis, we submit to one another in humility and love. We trust that the Spirit will help us, correct us, and lead us according to God's will. We will continue listening to the Spirit together, always calling one another back to scripture and to the vows of baptism and ordination.

Responsibilities and Expectations

What is the Board of Direction?

The Words of Hope Board of Direction consists of typically two members (one clergy and one lay person) appointed or elected by each of the Classes of the Regional Synods of Canada, the Far West, the Great Lakes, the Heartland, Mid-America, and the Mid-Atlantics. The constituent classes of these regional synods support Words of Hope through an approved annual per-member asking, regular prayer, and the receipt of reports.

Responsibilities of the Board of Direction

Corporate

The Board of Direction holds management authority over the ministry of Words of Hope and exercises that authority on behalf of the supporting classes. The operations and staff of the ministry of Words of Hope are supervised by a Board of Trustees, which is accountable to the Board of Direction.

Individual

Members of the Board of Direction will report on and promote the ministry of Words of Hope within their own classis and geographic areas. The following pages provide more information regarding the individual action plans that each board member will create.

Expectations of Board of Direction Members

1. An informed and enthusiastic commitment to world evangelization and particularly to the ministry of Words of Hope
2. Regularly Pray for Words of Hope
3. Create a personalized action plan to connect with churches and prospective individuals in your classis
4. Make a financial contribution at a level significant to the individual
5. A sincere willingness to attend the Annual Meeting of the Board of Direction (held in September of each year) and to read reports and other information distributed throughout the year
6. Approve the Words of Hope Budget, and Elect Trustees



Rob Teitsma <statedclerk@northgr.org>

Request to demit

1 message

Tim meendering <ptmeendering@gmail.com>

Thu, Sep 7, 2023 at 11:19 AM

To: Rob Teitsma <statedclerk@northgr.org>

Hey Rob,

In response to your August 22 letter regarding the September 19 Classis stated session meeting considering requests for demission, I request demission from the RCA. I would be grateful if it could be made effective on September 30.

Thank you.

Tim Meendering, D.Min.
Pastor
Rockford Reformed Church
616-293-3213 (cell)
tim@rockfordrc.org



Rob Teitsma <statedclerk@northgr.org>

Request to Demit

1 message

Eric Schalk <pastorschalk@icloud.com>
To: Rob Teitsma <statedclerk@northgr.org>

Thu, Sep 7, 2023 at 11:34 AM

Dear Rob,

I received your email requesting I submit my request for demission for the September 19 classis meeting. As you know, I've recently returned from a summer sabbatical and thus I'm a little behind in the Alliance process. With this in mind, I do request demission from the RCA, but ask that it be dated September 30 to ensure the timing works with the Alliance.

In Christ,
Eric Schalk



Rob Teitsma <statedclerk@northgr.org>

Re: Demission Request

1 message

Laura Dilley <laurad@orchardhill.org>
To: Rob Teitsma <statedclerk@northgr.org>

Mon, Sep 4, 2023 at 7:36 AM

Rob,

Is this note from you to on behalf of the executive committee? If it is from the executive committee, I'd appreciate it if you please sent me the contact information for each of the members of the executive committee.

I am working on moving my ordination. I will send over the necessary information.

On a pastoral note to both yourself and the executive committee, as well as a note on what you consider "grace filled" separation, you wrote in the letter you sent me:

"The Classis has been patiently waiting for your demission request. There is wonder why you haven't done so over the past year..."

A great way to find an answering to that wondering would have been to simply call me. As a pastor that is still a part of the RCA, and one who has served within it for going on 12 years, I would've hoped that before I'd received a note of this sort I would have gotten a simple phone call for clarification or even a check in. After I got a rather audacious note from this team a year ago, I sent a sincere response and never got so much as an email reply back from any executive team member. Obviously, the wondering wasn't too concerning for you all...

Pastor Laura Dilley

Laura Dilley

Associate Pastor

Orchard Hill Church

616.784.4060 x237

From: Rob Teitsma <statedclerk@northgr.org>**Sent:** Wednesday, August 23, 2023 12:03 PM**To:** Laura Dilley <laurad@orchardhill.org>**Subject:** Demission Request

Please see and respond to the attached request.

Rob Teitsma
Stated Clerk

616-723-2025

www.northgr.org

Sep. 16, 2023

To: North Grand Rapids Classis
Reformed Church in America

I am writing this note with much sadness and regret in my heart. After 38 years of serving the Reformed Church in America I am being forced by the denomination to request demission from the RCA. Throughout all these years, and to this day, I have remained faithful to my Ordination pledge:

- I believe the books of the Old and New Testaments to be the Word of God and the perfect doctrine of salvation, rejecting all contrary beliefs?

- I will proclaim the gospel of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ; upholding the witness of Holy Scripture against all schisms and heresies?

I have upheld these pledges and I have been true to the denomination I choose to be a part of. I have never wavered. Unfortunately, the RCA has. We have come to the point where the denomination has left me and has moved in an alternate direction away from the standards we were to defend and has rather chosen to embrace the fickle and faulty practices and thinking of the world. It seems a bit irrational that despite my faithfulness I am the one who must change course. This, however, is where the present situation has brought us. I would be grateful if you would please make my demission effective September 30.

Thank-you,

Rev. Robert S Karel
Orchard Hill Reformed Church