

Classis of North Grand Rapids Meeting Minutes

Stated Session

Ada Congregational Church

January 23, 2024

Opening:

Worship led by Rev. Rebecca Stegeman Riekse and Rev. Phil Pratt. Rev. Riekse gave reflections on Matthew 2:9-10 asking if the shimmer of Christmas continues past the season.

Roll Call (completed by signature)

A – Excused Absence U – Unexcused Absence

Church	Clergy	Elder	Elder
Central Reformed	Steven Pierce	Burt VanderLaan	Tim Elzinga (Finance Chair)
	Matt Shults (MUC)		
Oakview Community Church	Vacant	Jerry DeRuiter (A)	Jayne Dykema (A)
Resurrection Reformed	Doug Kiel (A)	(U)	
Richmond Reformed	John Delger	Nancy Werkema (U)	
Servant's Community	James Earley	Lisa Fox	
Standale	Vacant	Lin Cline	Deb Webster
The Community - Ada	Mara Joy Norden		Katie Musick-Reynhout (VP) (A)
Third Reformed	Jeff Petersen (A)	Ron Schollaart (A)	
Trinity Reformed	Ben Bruins	Jan Koopman	
	Sarah Bruins		
Specialized Ministers/Ministers Without Charge/Inactive			
Nancy Boote	Jennifer Holmes Curran (A)	Anne Elzinga	Kristi Kiel (A)
Ryan Landt (U)	Steve Luchies	Kristen Meyer	Cheryl Molhoek
Billy Norden	Rebecca Stegeman Riekse	Matt Rose (U)	Robyn Saylor (A)
Jessica Shults	Peter TeWinkle (U)	Dave Vander Woude	David Veldt (A)
Les Wiseman			
Eric Bogerd (A)	Eric Branch (U)	Rachel Bush (U)	Kate Kooyman (U)
Jennifer Petersen	Jonathan Tice (A)	Susan VanderWall (U)	Christopher Westerbeek (U)
Aaron Wetzel (A)	Steve Wolters (U)		
Andre Daley (U)			
Retired Ministers			
Ralph Robrahn	Tom Woudstra		
Associates In Ministry, Commissioned Pastor			
Willa Brown (A)		George Werkema	
Guests			
Suzanne Hart	Nick Loubert	Kearsten McCoy	

Business Meeting Called to Order by Ben Bruins, President at 7:05 PM

Welcome

Guests were recognized following their introductions.

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 September 19, 2023 stated session and October 1, 2023, installation of John Delger at Richmond.

Appoint Tellers

Tellers were appointed from Richmond and Servant's.

Committee and Council Reports

Executive Committee

Motion made, supported, and passed to ratify the appointment of Karen Vander Meulen, Third Reformed, to the Finance Committee and approve the appointment of Burt VanderLaan to Student Care.

Ben Bruins asked Classis members to review the two proposed statements and report and thoughts to him. Executive Committee will continue discussion.

“We are a classis of congregations, ministers, commissioned pastors, elders, and students under care committed to journeying together—offering support and accountability. We will focus on caring for congregations, ministers, and students under care.”

“We are a classis that recognizes and celebrates the role of specialized ministers in their capacities of extending the work of the gospel into the world. We are also a classis with many specialized ministers not formally connected to classis congregations. We will focus on establishing connections between specialized ministers and the classis.”

Ben highlighted the transfer situation related to The Branch as presented in the Executive Committee report.

Overtures and Judicial Business

Motion made, supported, and passed to accept the second reading of the revised Rules of Order with an effective date at the end of this session.

Recommendation made, supported, and passed to approve the proposed change to the Book of Church Order by a vote of 27 Yes and 0 No.

Motion made, supported, and passed to refer to OJB the draft overture to General Synod dealing with the method for calculating covenant shares. It was mentioned that the “Taxation” analogy in the draft might dissuade consideration and maybe should be termed in “shares” language.

Motion made, supported, and passed to ask OJB to add a fourth reason to the draft that the current waiver method doesn't fit the situations outlined in the overture and that the Classis conduct an email vote on the final draft overture prior to the March 1, 2024 submission date.

Student Care Committee

James Earley introduced Nick Loubert as a proposed student to be under care. Nick described his faith journey and call to ministry. Ben Bruins read the liturgy for students coming under care.

Motion made, supported, and passed to take Nick Loubert under the care of Classis during his seminary studies at Western Theological Seminary.

Rev. Steve Pierce, pastor of sponsoring Central Reformed Church prayed for blessing on Nick during his studies.

Motion made, supported, and passed to conduct student examinations for Kearsten McCoy and Lisa VanLonkhuyzen on May 21, 2024.

Anti-Racism Task Force

Presentation by Nancy Boote and Kristen Meyers, who showed a video of Rev. Denise Kingdom addressing the history of race and organized religion as identified as the Christian church.

(<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rPLTFUIMXhg>). Kristen read a letter from Rev. Kingdom, who was scheduled to speak but due to the week's delay she was unable to be present. Recommended each member and delegate to visit I Corinthians 13 website to self-analyze each person's understanding of racism.

(<https://www.1cor13project.com/about>)

Regional Synod Report

Nancy Boote highlighted the status of the denomination and region. Region has lost 27% of churches and 43% of members. Classis lost six churches and 57%-member loss. It was also reported that there are ~400 churches wanting to join the RCA from within the United States and from Latin American countries. No additional details were given about who these folks are or why they wish to join our denomination. The RSGL is undergoing a restructuring independent of action by the denomination due to immediate church needs.

Miscellaneous

Announcements/Reminders:

- Directory Update
- Consistorial Reports are to be completed by March 1, 2024.
- Constitutional Inquiries are due to the stated clerk by January 31, 2024.
- Salary and Benefits Verification Reports are due to the stated clerk by February 15, 2024.
- Consistory and Elders Minutes are due to the stated clerk by February 15, 2024.
- General and Regional Synod Delegates—several last minute changes required. Still waiting to finalize.

Particularia

The Stated Clerk thanked Ada Congregational Church and Rev. Riekse for hosting church for the meeting. This is the first time a stated session of Classis has convened in a non-RCA church. Rev. Riekse services her as a Formula of Agreement minister.

Cheryl Molhoek addressed the need transportation for Robyn Saylor who requires heavy lift wheelchair transportation and asked if anyone could assist. Her regular means of transportation through the Grand Rapids system is not always available. Robyn is also interested in preaching opportunities.

Resolutions

Motion made, supported, and passed to excuse the absences of Eric Bogerd, Willa Brown, Jennifer Holmes Curran, Jerry, DeRuijter, Jayne Dykema, Doug and Kristi Kiel, Jeffrey Petersen, Katie Musick-Reynhout, Robyn Saylor, Ron Schollaart, David Veldt, Aaron Wetzel.

Closing

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

Closing Prayer by Ben Bruins.

Next Classis Meetings

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

Classis Special Session:

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



Benjamin Bruins, President



Robert J. Teitsma, Stated Clerk