

Meeting Minutes for Classis Heartland
First Christian Reformed Church of Hull, IA
Saturday, March 9, 2024

Article 01: Constitution of Classis

Clerk Rev. Phillip Westra announced that credentials were in order. We are missing credentials from one church, Pathway CRC, and two minister delegates absent with notice, Rev. Brian Hofman and Rev. Aldon Kuiper. Delegated designated with an asterisk (*) are first-time attenders and signed *The Covenant of Officebearers*. Chair of classis Rev. Ben Wiersma declared classis constituted with the following officers and delegates, then welcomed delegates and visitors.

A. Classis Meeting Officers

Chair: Rev. Ben Wiersma
Vice-Chair: Rev. Aaron Gonzalez
Stated Clerk: Rev. Phillip Westra
Treasurer: Mr. Randy Smit

B. Classis Meeting Delegates (M = minister delegate, E = elder delegate, D = deacon delegate)

Calvary CRC – Orange City, IA: Mr. Dan Tracy (E), Mr. Mike Krommendyk (E), and Mr. Mitch VanOtterloo (D)
Calvin CRC – LeMars, IA: Mr. Ron De Kok (E) and Mr. Steve Haringa (D)
F Street Church – Lincoln, NE: Pastor Jeff Heerspink (M) and Pastor Bill Thornton (E)
First CRC – Hospers, IA: Rev. Aaron Gonzalez (M), Mr. Arnie VanderWilt, and Mr. Caleb De Groot* (D)
First CRC – Hull, IA: Rev. Aaron Greydanus (M), Mr. Dan DeWit (E), and Mr. Devin Bonestroo (D)
First CRC – Orange City, IA: Mr. Darrell Schuller (E), Mr. Mark Kuiken (E), and Mr. Matt Van Schepen (D)
First CRC – Sheldon, IA: Rev. Brian Dunn (M), Mr. Pete Van Velzen (E), and Mr. Leroy Kreykes (D)
Hawarden CRC – Hawarden, IA: Mr. Dave Dorhout (E)
Hope CRC – Hull, IA: Pastor Keith Hoekstra (M), Mr. Calvin Vander Zwaag (E), and Mr. Michael VanOtterloo (D)
Immanuel CRC – Orange City, IA: Rev. Cody Statema (M), Mr. Ed Starkenburg (E), and Mr. Andrew Nieuwendorp* (D)
Immanuel CRC – Sheldon, IA: Rev. Kevin Muyskens (M), Mr. Lyle Hoekstra (E), and Ms. Lorna Kraayenbrink* (D)
Ireton CRC – Ireton, IA: Rev. Nathan Kuperus (M), Mr. Brad Dekkers (E), and Mr. Josh Hooyer (D)
Living Water Church – Orange City and Sheldon, IA: Rev. Jesse Walhof (M), Mr. Randy Brands (E), and Mr. Gary Hibma (D)
New City Church – Kansas City, MO: Rev. Andrew Vanden Akker (M)
Northern Lighthouse Church – Lincoln, NE: Pastor Jon Keyzer (M), Mr. Dave Brown* (E), and Mr. Cyndi Brown* (D)

Ocheyedan CRC – Ocheyedan, IA: Rev. Lee Khang (M), Mr. Loren Zevenbergen (E), and Mr. Larry Post (D)
Pathway Community Church – Olathe, KS: No delegates present
Prairie Lane CRC – Omaha, NE: Rev. Chad Van Ginkel (M), Mr. Mike Hostetler (E), and Mr. Steve Vanden Tuig (D)
Sanborn CRC – Sanborn, IA: Rev. Phillip Westra (M), Mr. Craig Solsma (E), and Mr. Nick Schilling* (D)
Sibley CRC – Sibley, IA: Rev. Ben Wiersma (M), Mr. Keith Boersma (E), and Mr. Leon Runia (D)

C. Classis Meeting Guests

[Morning]

Dr. Randy Smit (Classis Treasurer)
Mr. Loren Veldhuizen (Council of Delegates)
Rev. Jordan Helming (First CRC in Orange City)
Ms. Barb Hibma (Classis Prayer Coordinator)
Mr. Dave Reno

[Afternoon Only]

Rev. Brad Meinders (Resonate)
Rev. Doug De Groot (Minn-I-Kota Youth)
Ms. Lee De Groot (Minn-I-Kota Youth)
Rev. Scott Van Voorst (Cornerstone)
Rev. Todd Zuidema (Dordt University)
Mr. Adam Remirez
Rev. Cliff Hoekstra (Synodical Deputy from Iakota)
Rev. Scott Muilenburg (Synodical Deputy from Minnkota)
Rev. Russell Boersma (Synodical Deputy from Northcentral Iowa)

Article 02: Opening Worship and Meditations

Rev. Aaron Greydanus lead a time of opening worship. The assembly sang “Be Thou My Vision,” recited Belgic Confession Article 20 together, and also sang “Holy Spirit, Living Breath of God.” Rev. Greydanus read from Luke 22:39–47, the scene from the Mount of Olives where Jesus prayed “Not my will, but yours be done.” Classis meditated on how Christ’s sacrificial death is for us but also a way in which we are called to follow. We concluded this time with a prayer and final song called “Your Will Be Done.”

Article 03: Communications and Overtures from Churches

- A. A letter from Ocheyedan Christian Reformed Church re: “The Chosen” (pp. 3–4 in the agenda) and a letter from Immanuel Christian Reformed Church of Sheldon re: “The Chosen” (p. 2 in the supplement) are received for information. No motions were made regarding these.
- B. A letter from First Christian Reformed Church of Sheldon re: seating female deacon delegates (p. 5 in the agenda) was received as information.

- C. Calvary Christian Reformed Church of Orange City presented a “Communication Regarding the Unfinished Business of Synod 2023” (p. 6 in the agenda) and classis discussed this matter.
Motion: Make this a communication from Classis Heartland to Synod 2024 Program Committee. **Adopted.**
- D. Sibley Christian Reformed Church presented an Overture re: The Banner (pp. 7–8 in the agenda) and classis discussed this matter.
Motion: Table the overture from Sibley CRC re: The Banner until our Fall classis meeting.
 Grounds: Synod 2024 has a lot on their agenda and we wouldn’t want this matter, while important, to hinder the progress of dealing with the matters already before synod. **Adopted.**
- E. First Christian Reformed Church of Sheldon withdraws two previously submitted overtures, one re: Catechism 108 and sexual ethics are salvation issues (pp. 9–10 in the agenda) and the other re: Church Order Supplement to Article 5.B (pp. 11–12 in the agenda), because Classis Iakota has already adopted these overtures.
- F. First Christian Reformed Church of Sheldon presented two overtures re: Confessional Difficulty Gravamen (pp. 3–4 in the supplement) and classis discussed this matter.
Motion: Adopt Overture #1 re: Confessional Difficulty Gravamen from First Christian Reformed Church of Sheldon. **Adopted.**
Motion: Adopt Overture #2 re: Confessional Difficulty Gravamen from First Christian Reformed Church of Sheldon. **Adopted.**

Article 04: Classical Nominating Committee (CNC)

- A. Rev. Brian Hofman lead classis in the process of voting for delegates to synod. Instructions were given and paper ballots were handed out. Two rounds of voting resulted in the following delegates selected:
1. Rev. Jesse Walhof - minister delegate
 2. Rev. Aaron Greydanus - minister delegate
 3. Mr. Dan Tracy - elder delegate
 4. Mr. Gary Hibma - deacon delegate
 5. Rev. Benjamin Wiersma - alternate minister delegate
 6. Rev. John Klompien - alternate minister delegate
 7. Mr. Mike Krommendyk - alternate elder delegate
- B. Rev. Phillip Westra distributed a paper ballot for a new regional representative to serve on the board of Calvin Theological Seminary. Delegates were to vote for one of the two candidates and Rev. Westra shared the following tabulated results.
1. Rev. John Lee – 43 votes
 2. Rev. Brian Ochsner – 4 votes

Article 05: Classical Interim Committee (CIC)

- A. Rev. Nate Kuperus drew classis’ attention to the summary of CIC’s work on page 14 of the agenda and offered to answer any questions. No questions were asked.
- B. Rev. Phillip Westra asked classis delegates to review his report on page 15 of the agenda and offered to answer any questions.
- C. Rev. Phillip Westra shared the following items from classis credentials.

1. Calvary CRC noted their proposed communication, which classis has already dealt with above (Article 03 item C).
2. First CRC of Hull noted Rev. Aaron Greydanus' availability to represent classis at synod, which was considered in the voting procedures above (Article 04 item A).
3. First CRC of Orange City stated, "Our church appreciated the classical pulpit supply" which was received as information.
4. New City Church of Kansas City stated, "We are looking for another grant for 2024, for Matt Rogers our worship pastoral intern." This was shared with Rev. Kevin Muyskens, chair of the CHMC.
5. Ocheyedan CRC stated the following on their credentials which was received by classis for information:

"The council of Ocheyedan Christian Reformed Church sends her delegates in protest to this assembly of Classis Heartland. While we affirm the gifts and talents that our Lord has given to women in the church, and how these gifts and talents can be used to greatly bless and serve the body of Christ; as it pertains to the offices of Pastor, Elder, and Deacon, the Scriptures are clear (i.e. 1 Timothy 3:1–13 and Titus 1:5–9): these offices are to be held only by qualified men, of god-fearing character, in order to rule and govern the body of Christ in good order. Members of the body of Christ are thus called then to submit to the order which Christ has ordained for His Bride. In light of Scripture's clear teaching on this issue, and the current position of the Christian Reformed Church regarding this matter, we sit in protest to the seating of women delegates at this assembly."

- D. Motion: Approve the work of the Classical Interim Committee. **Adopted.**
- E. Motion: Approve the work of the Stated Clerk. **Adopted.**

Article 06: Colloquium Doctum of Rev. Jordan Helming

- A. Rev. Chad Van Ginkel, chair of the Classical Ministry Leadership Team (CMLT), introduced Rev. Helming to the classis delegates. Rev. Westra, stated clerk, reported that all paperwork for his candidacy is in order and he has been given the green light by the candidacy office, confirmed via email. Rev. Westra also welcomed the synodical deputies Rev. Scott Muilenburg, Rev. Cliff Hoekstra and Rev. Russell Boersma.
- B. Rev. Van Ginkel led classis in prayer for the interview process.
- C. Rev. Nathan Kuperus led an interview of Rev. Jordan Helming covering his "soundness of doctrine, sanctity of life, and knowledge and appreciation of Christian Reformed practice and usage" in accordance with section E.4 in the supplement of article 8 in the church order. After this Rev. Helming took and responded to questions from the floor and questions from synodical deputies.
- D. President of classis Rev. Wiersma declared executive session for classis' deliberation.
 1. Delegates and synodical deputies deliberated together and then the synodical deputies left to meet in their own space so each group could make their decision independently.
 2. Motion: Admit Rev. Jordan Helming into the CRCNA via Article 8. **Adopted. Synodical Deputies Concurred.**
- E. Executive session ended, Rev. Jordan Helming and other guests were welcomed back into the room, the decision was announced, and Rev. Chad Van Ginkel led classis in a prayer of blessing for Rev. Helming.
- F. Motion: Approve the work of the Classical Ministry Leadership Team. **Adopted.**

Article 07: Separation of Rev. Gary Nyenhuis and Living Water Church According to Article 17a

- A. President of classis Rev. Wiersma declared executive session for classis' deliberation. During this time confidential reports from the executive council of Living Water Community Church's Orange City campus and church visitors were given. Copies of the required documents for this process were given to the stated clerk to keep for classis' records. In this executive session the following decisions were made.
1. Motion: Classis Heartland approve the Article 17a separation between Rev. Gary Nyenhuis and Living Water Church, Orange City campus. **Adopted.**
Synodical Deputies Concur.
 2. Motion: Classis Heartland approve the Separation and Severance Agreement between Pastor Garry and LWCC which will take effect on March 17, 2024 and completed by September 30, 2024. **Adopted.**
 3. Motion: Classis urge Pastor Gary to take a three-month hiatus from entertaining calls and pulpit ministry for recovery and respite. **Adopted.**
 4. Motion: Classis approve an oversight committee for Pastor Garry with a mandate to ensure he takes time for respite and recovery as well as explores the root cause of his burnout through counseling. We recommend this committee be made up of Rev. Brian Dunn, Rev. Troy Van Beek (RCA) and Mr. Rod De Boer. This committee will report on their work at the Classis Heartland's fall 2024 meeting. **Adopted.**
 5. Motion: Classis approve an oversight committee for LWCC with a mandate to work with the council and explore emotional health during this transition, the possibility of utilizing a Strategic Transitional Minister (STM), and other tools to address issues the council is facing. We recommend this committee be made up of Rev. Nathan Kuperus, Rev. Brian Dunn, the appointed church counselor, and one additional member to be named later (four in total). This committee should provide a progress report at the fall 2024 Classis Heartland meeting. **Adopted.**
 6. Motion: Assign the CIC the task of finding a Church counselor and fourth member of the oversight committee for LWCC. **Adopted.**
- B. Rev. Jesse Walhof abstained from voting on these five decisions pertaining to Living Water Community Church
- C. The Classical Interim Committee approved Rev. Cody Statema to serve as the church counselor for LWCC and fourth member of the respective oversight committee on April 10, 2024.

Classis took a recess from their meeting for lunch.

Article 08: Classical Home Missions Committee (CHMC)

- A. Rev. Brad Meinders, Regional Mission Leader with Resonate, gave a presentation about Resonate Global Mission's focus on "Congregational Gospel Witness." This entails encouraging every person to share Christ with others. We are equipped to reach your neighbors, and the endeavor to learn from each other formally is called a "Setting the Table" event, one of which was held in Sioux Center recently. Intercultural gospel witness, and church planting, planning to hold church planting residency programs are initiatives that Resonate is currently focusing their attention on in our region.
- B. Pastor Keith Hoekstra led classis in a prayer for Resonate Global Missions.

- C. Mr. Adam Ramirez talked about his hopes to help our churches engage with Spanish-speaking neighbors.
- D. Rev. Phillip Westra talked about Sanborn CRC's experience with Immerse in Lincoln, NE and encouraged other congregations in our classis to utilize this ministry for week-long intergenerational summer mission trips.
- E. Delegates viewed a video about Friendship Community becoming part of Elevate church in Sioux City.
- F. Delegates viewed a video about Hospers CRC experiencing a missional renewal. This video is accessible at the following link.
https://player.vimeo.com/progressive_redirect/playback/912306995/rendition/1080p/file.mp4?loc=external&log_user=0&signature=faa2b9e08e7db89242b857ad80f41813a1328a024e1bde8ca4b6d09bf5560ece
- G. Motion: Approve the work of the Classical Home Missions Committee. **Adopted.**

Article 09: Classical Education Committee (CEC)

- A. Rev. Aaron Gonzalez, chair of the CEC, spoke generally about their committee's work to provide and encourage educational opportunities for church leaders in Classis Heartland. These include Timothy Leadership Training (TLT), Dordt University events, and an upcoming Abide Project conference planned for July 30–31 at First CRC in Sioux Center.
- B. Rev. Gonzalez reminded classis that the CEC provides both encouragement and oversight to three areas which serve all our churches—the Classis prayer coordinator Barb Hibma, the Minn-I-Kota Youth Network led by Ms. Lee De Groot, and our Safe Church team headed up by Dr. Tara Boer.
- C. Ms. Lee De Groot shared briefly about the Minn-I-Kota Youth Network and her personal health trials since late 2023. She also spoke appreciatively of Dordt University Students Leaders who will help run the Jr. High Retreat at Inspiration Hills on April 19–21.
- D. Motion: Classis change the name of the Classical Education Committee to the Classical Discipleship Committee to better reflect the scope of work the committee does for classis. **Adopted.**
- E. Motion: Approve the work of the Classical Education Committee. **Adopted.**

Article 10: Council of Delegates (COD) Report

Mr. Loren Veldhuizen shared that the COD has spent a significant amount of time discussing and planning how to best manage synod. He also shared about plans to hold events called “Gather” which will bring church leaders together as a means of addressing membership decline.

Article 11: Calvin University Report

Mr. Adam Ramirez briefly introduced himself to classis as our newest representative to the Calvin University Board of Trustees. He has not attended a meeting yet but anticipates an upcoming in-person meeting in Grand Rapids later this Spring.

Article 12: Church Visitors and Church Counselors

- A. Church Visitors to the South, Rev. Brian Dunn and Rev. Nathan Kuperus, have nothing to share apart from their work with Living Water Community Church in Orange City's situation dealt with earlier in the meeting.

- B. Church Visitors to the North, Rev. Chad Van Ginkel and Rev. Sam Keyzer, verbally shared they have been working with Ocheyedan CRC but have no details to share at this time.
- C. Motion: Approve the work of our church visitors. **Adopted.**
- D. Rev. Chad Van Ginkel, church counselor for Northern Lighthouse in Lincoln, informed classis that Pastor Jon Keyzer had been ordained as their pastor on October 22, 2023.
Motion: Consider the work of the church counselor for Northern Lighthouse to be complete. **Adopted.**
- E. Rev. Brian Dunn, church counselor for First CRC in Hull, reported that Rev. Aaron Greydanus was called to lead their congregation and recently installed.
Motion: Consider the work of the church counselor for First CRC in Hull to be complete. **Adopted.**
- F. Rev. Nathan Kuperus, church counselor for Hawarden CRC, shared that the congregation is going through a process of discernment about their future, which he believes is a difficult but healthy thing for them to engage in at this time.
- G. Re. Rev. John Klompfen, church counselor for First CRC in Orange City, verbally shared that the congregation is in the midst of an active search process for their next Minister of the Word.

Article 13: Classical Stewardship Committee (CSC)

- A. Rev. Nathan Kuperus drew that classis delegates' attention to the meeting record for the CSC on page 27 of the agenda and welcomed Dr. Randy Smit to address classis.
- B. Dr. Smit handed out a 2023 treasurer's report. Two key takeaways are that 1) we continue to have a healthy number of assets to keep classis running and equip our churches for special missional projects in the future, and 2) our congregations have faithfully supported our classis through their classical ministry shares. The committee continues to work on updating membership information to sharpen our accuracy of the per member figure for classical ministry shares.
- C. Motion: Approve the work of the Classical Stewardship Committee. **Adopted.**

Article 14: Adjournment

- A. Motion: Adjourn the meeting of Classis Heartland. **Adopted.**
- B. Rev. Aaron Gonzalez led classis in a closing prayer.
- C. All sang the doxology acapella.
- D. Next meeting is scheduled for Wednesday, September 18, 2024, at Calvary CRC in Orange City