

**Classis lakota**  
**AGENDA**  
**March 5, 2024, 9:00 A.M.**  
**Trinity CRC, Rock Valley, IA**  
**Rev. Scott Nichols, Chair**                      **Pastor Gary Maas, Vice-Chair**

**I. INITIAL BUSINESS**

- A. Opening Devotions—led by the host church
- B. Presentation of Credentials & Roll Call
  - Signing of the Covenant for Officebearers by first-time delegates and returning delegates who haven't signed the Covenant since the September 20, 2022 meeting.
- C. Declaration that Classis is constituted.
- D. Welcome to delegates and other attendees
- E. Adoption of time schedule: 9:00-12:15; lunch; 1:00-3:15; coffee time; 3:30-
- F. Appointment of Prayer Leader
- G. Tally Committee (provided by host church)

**II. INSTRUCTIONS AND OVERTURES**

- A. Overtures from First Sioux Center CRC
  - 1. Declare Heidelberg Catechism 108 and sexual ethics to be salvation issues (pp. 3-4)
  - 2. Amend Church Order, Supplement, Article 5,B: "Regulations concerning the procedure to be followed in the submission of a confessional-difficulty gravamen" (pp.4-6)
- B. Overture from Platte CRC regarding Ecumenical Relations with the RCA (pp 6-9)
- C. Overture from First Rock Valley CRC regarding Public Acknowledgement of Sin and Declaration of Repentance (pp. 9-11)

**III. STANDING COMMITTEE REPORTS**

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|----------------------------------|----------------------------------|
| A. Stated Clerk (p. 12)          | G. Church Counselors             |
| B. Interim Committee (pp. 12-14) | H. Regional Pastors (p. 19)      |
| C. Ministerial Leadership Team   | I. Minn-I-Kota Youth (pp. 19-20) |
| D. Missions Team (p.14-15)       | J. Safe Church Team              |
| E. Finance Committee (pp.15-16)  | K. Classical Treasurer           |
| F. Church Visitors (pp. 16-18)   |                                  |

**IV. ELECTIONS/NOMINATIONS**

- A. Classical Interim Committee Alternate—Bob Drenten has completed his first 3-year term
- B. Stated Clerk—Bernie Haan has completed another 3-year term
- C. CMT Clergy—Gary Maas has completed his first 3-year term (Sept '23)
- D. CMT Clergy—Gideon Wamala has completed his first 3-year term
- E. CMLT Lay—Orlan Gulker has completed his first 3-year term
- F. CMLT Clergy Alternate—Bob Drenten has completed his first 3-year term
- G. Classical Safe Church Clergy—Henry Lengkeek has completed his first 3-year term
- H. Synodical Deputies—Cliff Hoekstra has completed his first 3-year term as the regular and Dan De Groot has completed his first 3-year term as the alternate
- I. Council of Delegates—John Lee has completed his second 3-year term
- J. Calvin Theological Seminary Region 8 Trustee—Rev. John Lee and Rev. Brian Oschner (lead pastor for Faith CRC in Pella) are on the ballot.
- K. Election of delegates to Synod (per the decision made at the 9/20/22 classis meeting: "classis shall consider sending one or more delegates to synod for two consecutive years."

## **V. CLASSICAL/REGIONAL REPRESENTATIVES TO SYNODICAL BOARDS**

- A. Calvin University
- B. Calvin Theological Sem (pp. 20-21).
- C. Council of Delegates
- D. Faith Formation Ministries
- E. Resonate Global Mission
- F. World Renew

## **VI. CLASSICAL "CHURCH VISITING" IN SMALL GROUPS (see below)**

## **VII. CLOSING BUSINESS**

- A. Next Meeting – September 17, 2024 at Platte CRC
- B. Concluding Remarks (chairperson)
- C. Closing Prayer
- D. Adjournment

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Group 1: Lakeview, Platte, Corsica, First SF, Cornerstone, Inwood, Lebanon, Trinity RV, First SC, Faith SC

Group 2: New Holland, Harrison, Shalom SF, Rock Rapids, First RV, Calvin RV, Amistad Cristiana SC, Bethel SC, Bridge of Hope SC, Covenant SC

## **MINISTERS**

1. How have you seen the faithfulness of God in ministry this year?
2. What challenges have you or your church had to walk through in the past year?
3. What have you attempted to do to grow as a minister?
4. Any new, different or surprising pastoral issues in your church that you've dealt with recently?
5. When have you preached a sermon in the past year where you felt particularly encouraged?

## **ELDERS**

1. How have you seen the faithfulness of God in your church this year?
2. What difficult situations or decisions in your consistory or council might you appreciate some advice on?
3. How do you go about strengthening and supporting your minister's preaching?
4. What have you enjoyed about being an elder?
5. How is your consistory going about trying to get to know members better?

## **DEACONS**

1. How have you seen the generosity of God and His church in the past year?
2. What is your diaconate's feeling about, and approach to, the new system of ministry share pledges?
3. What difficult questions facing your diaconate would you appreciate other deacons' input on?
4. How can being a deacon be about more than just collecting money and keeping bills paid?
5. What have you enjoyed about being a deacon?

**Overture #1 from First Sioux Center CRC**  
**That synod 2024 declare that Heidelberg Catechism 108 and sexual ethics are salvation issues**

**Background:**

Leading up to and following synods 2022 and 2023, a common argument has been made for maintaining “unity” with, and withholding discipline from, those who disagree with both synods’ affirmations that “unchastity” in Heidelberg Q&A 108 “encompasses adultery, premarital sex, extramarital sex, polyamory, pornography, and homosexual sex, all of which violate the seventh commandment.”<sup>1</sup> That common argument is this: Heidelberg Catechism Q&A 108 does not address a “salvation issue” and should therefore be treated as some form of *adiaphora* (a matter judged to be not essential to the faith: a “questionable” or “disputable” issue about which Christians can disagree).

The argument that HC 108 does not address a “salvation issue” (and that sexual ethics broadly speaking are not a “salvation issue”) is made numerous times in the agendas for both synods 2022 and 2023 and is used as the foundation of arguments for maintaining “unity” and refusing to discipline those who disagree with position of the CRCNA. For example, Neland Avenue CRC’s response to the decisions of synod 2022 states: “But we do agree on paying attention to the call of the Holy Spirit and the fact that this issue is not a salvation matter that should shatter churches or denominations.”<sup>2</sup> In the same report from the *In Loco* committee for Neland Avenue CRC, an elder from Neland Avenue offered the same line of argumentation for remaining a member and officebearer of that church: “I’m still at Neland because I don’t think this issue, though very important, is a salvation issue.”<sup>3</sup> The same line of argumentation was employed already in 2022 by classis Chicago South, who attacked the Human Sexuality Report, saying that “the report works against its call to repentance and hospitality, erects barriers to open conversation, and continues to support a culture of shame by claiming the church’s teaching on sexuality already has confessional status, by arguing sexual ethics are a matter of salvation ...”<sup>4</sup>

The CRCNA’s own confessions, however, rule out the possibility of such arguments. In fact, the Heidelberg Catechism itself explicitly states that unchastity is certainly a salvation issue. Q&A 87 says:

Q. Can those be saved who do not turn to God from their ungrateful and unrepentant ways.

A. By no means. Scripture tells us that no unchaste person, no idolater, adulterer, thief, no covetous person, no drunkard, slanderer, robber, or the like will inherit the kingdom of God.

In order to argue that unchastity and sexual ethics (along with idolatry, adultery, theft, covetousness, drunkenness, slander, robbery, or the like) are not “salvation issues,” we would be required to revise or remove Q&A 87 from the catechism. If we did not revise or remove Heidelberg Catechism Q&A 87, the argument that sexual ethics is not a salvation issue would always be confessionally incoherent (and as we believe our confessions to be a faithful summary of Scripture’s teaching, also biblically incoherent).

**Overture:**

Classis lakota therefore overtures synod 2024 to

1. declare that Heidelberg Catechism Q&A 108 addresses a salvation issue;

**Ground:**

The Scriptures and confessional standards (particularly Heidelberg Catechism Q&A 87) make clear that Heidelberg Catechism Q&A108 does address a salvation issue and that unchastity and sexual ethics are salvation issues.

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<sup>1</sup> *Acts of Synod 2022*, 922.

<sup>2</sup> *Agenda for Synod 2023*, 328.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, 330.

<sup>4</sup> *Agenda for Synod 2022*, 657. Other examples from the agendas of both synods could be cited. This line of argumentation is also frequently found in the publications and public statements of individuals and organizations advocating for the classification of human sexuality as *adiaphora* and for “space for disagreement” within the CRCNA on the issue of human sexuality.

2. declare that it is a serious deviation from the teachings of the confessions of the Christian Reformed Church in any way to deny that either Heidelberg Q&A 87 or Q&A 108 address salvation issues or to deny that sexual ethics and unchastity are salvation issues;

**Grounds:**

- a. Officebearers in the CRCNA are denying that Heidelberg Catechism Q&A 108 (and implicitly Heidelberg Catechism Q&A 87) and sexual ethics are salvation issues.
- b. It is a serious deviation from the teachings of the CRCNA to reclassify that which is a matter of salvation as a disputable or questionable issue or some other classification; such serious deviations from the clear teachings of Scripture and our confessions endanger the eternal salvation of the sheep and the unity of the flock entrusted to the officebearers' care.

3. declare that any officebearer who denies that Heidelberg Catechism Q&A 87 or Q&A 108 address a salvation issue and/or denies that unchastity and sexual ethics are a salvation issue is worthy of special discipline in accordance with Church Order Article 83;

**Grounds:**

- a. Church Order Article 83 states, "Special discipline shall be applied to officebearers if they violate the Covenant for Officebearers, are guilty of neglect or abuse of office, or in any way seriously deviate from sound doctrine and godly conduct."
- b. Tolerating such denials of these salvation issues puts the CRCNA in danger of transgressing its own boundaries for what a true church is, which includes the proper exercise of church discipline "Belgic Confession, Art. 29).
- c. Officebearers in the CRCNA who deny that Heidelberg Catechism Q&A 87 and Q&A 108 and sexual ethics are salvation issues, instead of faithfully fulfilling the responsibility of their office to confront brothers and sisters regarding their sin, are leaving them in their sin, thus denying them the opportunity for repentance and subsequent reconciliation with God and their neighbors.

4. instruct all classes, councils, and officebearers in the CRCNA that it is our duty to uphold the clear teaching of the Scriptures and confessions on the nature of Heidelberg Q&A 87 and Q&A 108 and sexual ethics.

**Grounds:**

- a. As Christians, we are called to be people of the truth, with integrity and honor, and failure to promote and defend the faith is to break the Covenant for Officebearers.
- b. The church must make every effort to correct such a grievous error, that we might not continue to sin in the eyes of God.

Respectfully submitted,  
Council of the First CRC in Sioux Center

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**Overture #2 from First Sioux Center CRC  
That synod 2024 amend Church Order, Supplement, Article 5, B**

**1. Background:**

At every level of the Christian Reformed Church's ecclesiastical life (council, classis, and synod), officebearers are required to indicate their confessional covenant with one another around our forms of unity by either signing the Covenant for Officebearers or, in the case of synod, standing together to signify their confessional covenant with their fellow delegates. As signatories, officebearers "promise to be formed and governed by them" and profess that they "heartily believe and will promote and defend their doctrines faithfully, conforming [their] preaching, teaching, writing, serving, and living

to them.” As Church Order, Supplement, Article 5, A, 1 says, “The person signing the Covenant for Officebearers affirms without reservation all the doctrines contained in the standards of the church as being doctrines that are taught in the Word of God.”

It is clear that some councils and classes within the Christian Reformed Church North America are using the confessional-difficulty gravamen as a means of allowing those who cannot “affirm without reservation all the doctrines contained in the standards of the church as being doctrines that are taught in the Word of God” to either begin their service as officebearers or continue in service as officebearers without any desire or effort to resolve the “difficulty” at the council level or by submitting the matter to classis or synod for examination or judgment. This practice renders the integrity of our covenant as officebearers uncertain, particularly at the classical and synodical levels where, due to the confidential and pastoral nature of the confessional-difficulty gravamen process, delegates cannot know the nature or weight of any confessional difficulties that their fellow officebearers from other councils might have submitted. In short, delegates to classis and synod do not know (and cannot know) if their fellow delegates have “difficulties” with the confessions, what the nature and type of those difficulties might be, and if the delegates to the ecclesiastical body are in confessional covenant or not. This is clearly problematic and unsustainable.

To restore the integrity of the confessional covenant of classes and synod and to maintain the pastoral sensitivity of the confessional-difficulty gravamen process, those who have submitted confessional-difficulty gravamen should not be delegated to those ecclesiastical bodies that do not and cannot know the nature of their difficulties (i.e. classis and synod) until their difficulties are resolved with appropriate pastoral care and confidentiality and until they can affirm “without reservation all the doctrines contained in the standards of the church.” To further preserve the integrity of the confessional covenant of the council and the mutual accountability of councils, classis, and synod, a reasonable timeline should be observed for providing help to officebearers with difficulties and for classical and synodical examination and judgment of those difficulties.

## **2. Overture:**

Classis lakota overtures synod to amend Church Order, Supplement, Article 5, B. to read as follows [new material to the supplement is highlighted in gray]:

1. Ministers (whether missionaries, professors, or others not serving congregations as pastors), elders, or deacons shall submit their “difficulties” to their councils for examination and judgment. Should a council decide that it is not able to judge the gravamen submitted to it, it shall submit the matter to classis for examination and judgment. If the classis, after examination, judges that it is unable to decide the matter, it may submit it to synod, in accordance with the principles of Church Order Article 28-b. **These procedures shall follow the following timetable.**
  - a. **A council shall have six months, or until the next classis meeting, whichever is greater, to provide the necessary information and/or clarification being sought. If the gravamen is forwarded to classis, classis shall have six months, or until agenda items for the next synod must be submitted, whichever is greater, to provide the necessary information and/or clarification being sought. If the gravamen appears before synod, synod’s decision is binding, and the subscriber will have until the end of that calendar year to either 1) affirm the standards without reservation, 2) file a confessional-revision gravamen, or 3) resign from office.**
  - b. **If applicable, ministers can be honorably released at the conclusion of this process.**
2. In all instances of confessional-difficulty gravamina, the matter shall not be open for discussion by the whole church, since this type of gravamen is a personal request for information and/ or clarification of the confession. Hence this type of gravamen should be dealt with pastorally and personally by the assembly addressed.

3. A confessional-difficulty gravamen is a personal request for help in resolving a subscriber's doubts about a doctrine contained in the confessions that arise after the officer has, in good faith, subscribed themselves to the Covenant of Officebearers. It is not a request for an assembly to tolerate a subscriber's settled conviction that a doctrine contained in the confessions is wrong. Therefore, in all instances of confessional-difficulty gravamina, no assembly may exempt a subscriber from having to affirm all of the doctrines contained in the standards of the church.
4. To honor the confidential and pastoral nature of the confessional-difficulty gravamen process and to maintain the integrity of the church's confessional covenant, the local council of an officebearer who has submitted a confessional-difficulty gravamen may not delegate that officebearer to a broader ecclesiastical assembly (classis or synod) until the difficulty has been resolved and the officebearer can affirm without reservation all the doctrines contained in the standards of the church as being doctrines that are taught in the Word of God. If the officebearer who has submitted a confessional-difficulty gravamen is nominated as a delegate to a broader assembly by an officebearer outside of his or her own council, he or she must decline the nomination.

### 3. Grounds:

- a. Confessional-difficulty gravamina were never intended as a permanent exception from our confessions. Therefore, we cannot let their illegitimate use as permanent exceptions from the confessions compromise the integrity of our confessional covenant.
- b. Due to the confidential nature of confessional-difficulty gravamina, delegates to broader assemblies (classis, synod) have no confidence that their fellow delegates hold to the same beliefs and are deliberating from the same biblical and confessional foundation.
- c. Adding a timetable to the guidelines and regulations will ensure that commitment to God's Word, commitment to the testimony of the creeds and confessions, and mutual trust among all officebearers of the CRCNA will be restored in a reasonable and prompt manner.

Respectfully submitted,  
Council of the First CRC in Sioux Center  
January 29, 2024

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## **Overture to Classis from the Platte CRC Ecumenical Relations with Reformed Church in America**

### **Initial Statement**

We, the Council of Platte Christian Reformed Church, Platte, SD, urge Classis Lakota to adopt the following:

Classis Lakota overtures Synod 2024 to re-examine the ecumenical relationship of the Christian Reformed Church in North America (CRCNA) to the Reformed Church in America (RCA) to reflect recent large-scale changes in the RCA and in Christian solidarity with brothers and sisters in congregations who felt obligated to leave the RCA due to practices that do not align with stated positions.

## **Rationale**

### **Historical**

The CRCNA and RCA share a common heritage. Though after 1857, focus was often placed on the great differences and animosity between these two theological ‘cousins,’ the more recent past has seen a closer working together. On paper, it seemed as if the reasons for any original split were becoming obsolete and irrelevant. This culminated in the so-called “Pella Accord,” a joint resolution from Synod 2014 that “the RCA and CRC should act together in all matters except those in which deep differences of conviction compel them to act separately” (*Acts of Synod 2014, Article 20, p. 504*).

More recent years, however, have seen significant changes, particularly in the RCA. While the CRCNA has continued to affirm its historical theology and practice regarding human sexuality, inaction in the RCA to defend its stated positions have led a majority of congregations to disaffiliate from the denomination. While the RCA has officially stated positions that align with those of the CRC, these churches have cited unaddressed *practices* by congregations and classes which do not align with the *positions* of General Synod that are shared by the CRC.

With the departure of these churches, some of whom had previous RCA-CRC joint affiliation, the RCA of 2024 is no longer the RCA of 2014. If churches leaving the RCA share the official CRCNA position reflected by our Foundation-laying Report on Human Sexuality, we ought to have grave concern about the character of the RCA that remains.

Thus, it is imperative to begin a dialogue about current RCA practices and whether we really are aligned in doctrine and practice.

### **Biblical and Theological**

The Biblical priority of unity drove the CRCNA and RCA to explore greater partnership; however, what is the focus of Christian unity? The Biblical focus on love is grounded in truth (Eph 4:15). Though our churches share common heritage and geography, if the church represents the Kingdom of Christ, unity can only be found in common faith.

Commands toward unity in the New Testament letters are balanced out by calls for the church to remain watchful, and perhaps even to separate. In 1 Corinthians 5, a church celebrates its tolerance of a sexually immoral man, only to be admonished by the Apostle Paul, who calls for the man to be put out from the church for the sake of his salvation. Throughout 1 John, the Apostle John warns the church of the spirit of Antichrist (2:18-27; 4:1-6), going so far in 2 John as to warn believers not to associate or partner with false teachers (vv. 10-11). When our Lord Jesus speaks to the seven churches through John, He praises those who reject certain practices (2:6) while He criticizes those who tolerate them (2:14-15).

The spirit of Matthew 18 calls us, then, to approach the RCA directly to ask about their current doctrine and practice as we evaluate whether we are as aligned as churches in communion ought to be. Though Christ’s words here speak specifically to individuals, it seems applicable and wise for denominational relationships among the same theological family.

### **Ecclesiastical**

Our Ecumenical Charter states, “*Unity is intrinsic to the truth of the gospel and to our confession...the unity of the church is a unity in truth, the truth that is Jesus Christ, as revealed in Holy Scripture.*” While we reach out to people striving for visible oneness in the church, “passion for the truth of Christ calls us to reject all forms of unity that compromise unequivocal witness to Jesus Christ.” The present state of the RCA, and our present form of unity with them, may compromise unequivocal witness to Jesus Christ.

As a fellow Reformed denomination, the RCA affirms the Three Forms of Unity. Our primary concern regards a potential failure to promote and defend two primary areas of our common confession:

1. Heidelberg Catechism [HC] 108 and 109 – though on paper, the RCA has made several statements that align with the CRC, in practice, there have been reports of the ordination of openly-practicing homosexual clergy and of clergy solemnizing same-sex marriages without consequence.
2. Belgic Confession [BC] 29 – this inaction thus would reflect a lack of the “third mark” of the true church: “It practices church discipline for correcting faults.” While the CRCNA must surely examine itself on this area and repent for a lack of discipline correcting many varied sins, the third mark appears to be increasingly missing from the RCA.

## **Practical**

In recent years the entire Dakota Classis of the RCA, along with many other congregations throughout Iowa, have disaffiliated themselves from the RCA. In many of our communities, we enjoy solid working relationships with these congregations that share our Reformed convictions. Now, however, our church order and ecumenical relationships reflect us having a closer relationship to a distant denomination that we no longer recognize than to these church families.

In our area, as well as others across the denomination, dialogue has been taking place to discern relationships with the Kingdom Network (KN) and the Alliance of Reformed Churches (ARC). Recent Synods have begun the process of seeking greater unity with these brothers and sisters.

As our brothers and sisters in these churches acted out of a stand for Biblical truth on matters of Scriptural authority and anthropology, it is our obligation then as a church in communion to question the current doctrine and practice of the RCA.

## **Overture**

That Synod 2024:

- A. Instruct the Ecumenical and Interfaith Relations Committee [EIRC] to communicate with the RCA General Secretary and Commission on Christian Unity the following points, and to report back to Synod 2025 regarding responses received:
  1. A desire for shared commitment to our confessional Reformed heritage, doctrine and practice.
  2. A concern regarding the nature of churches which have disaffiliated with the RCA as being in alignment with CRCNA positions.
  3. A request for clarification on the RCA’s ongoing commitment in faith and practice to HC 108 and 109, specifically as it relates to the forbidding of unchastity, which encompasses homosexual sex.
  4. A request for clarification on whether RCA clergy have been, or are being, permitted to solemnize same-sex marriages, or to themselves remain in same-sex marriages or romantic partnerships, while remaining ministers in good standing.
  5. A request for response before Synod 2025.
- B. Provisionally declare the following decisions of Synod to be inoperative, until further review from Synod 2025 (upon receiving further response from the RCA to the above communication):
  1. Articles 36(b)(9) and (10) of Synod 2005 (Orderly Exchange of Ordained Ministers between the CRC and the Reformed Church in America) [*Acts of Synod 2005* p. 740]
    - “9. That synod approve the Orderly Exchange of Ordained Ministers between the CRC and the Reformed Church of America subject to the additions or amendments to the Church Order (or supplements thereof) as recommended.
    10. That synod propose...changes in Church Order Article 8 and its supplement.”



2. Article 20 of Synod 2014 (Resolution on the Relationship between the Reformed Church in America and the Christian Reformed Church in North America) [*Acts of Synod 2014* p. 504] *“That synod adopt the joint resolution prepared for the CRC synod and the General Synod of the RCA.”*
- C. Provisionally declare Church Order Article 8b, along with its supplement, 8D, to be inoperative until further review from Synod 2025.
  - D. Request that Synod 2025 further review the ecumenical status of the Reformed Church in America as a church in communion.
  - E. Prohibit CRCNA classes from delegating RCA-ordained ministers or commissioned pastors to future Synod meetings until the above decisions and articles in concern again become operative.
  - F. Instruct the General Secretary to work with Thrive on developing a plan for how to potentially shepherd pastors and congregations affected by these decisions (i.e., RCA ministers called to CRCNA churches, union churches) for proposal to Synod 2025, while advising them to continue any current arrangements until further notice.

**Grounds:**

1. With over half of its member congregations leaving, most of whom are in alignment with the CRCNA, the RCA is no longer the same denomination as the one with whom these bonds were formed.
2. Scripture calls for a unity based upon common faith in Jesus Christ, not upon ethnic heritage, historical relationships, or common geography, and for separation from those tolerant of sin – sexual sin in particular.
3. Faithfulness as a church in communion requires encouragement toward faithful statements and faithful practices related to our common Reformed confession, especially regarding RCA clergy, who are permitted to seek a call in CRCNA congregations.
4. The presence of delegates ordained in the RCA at Synod meetings deliberating on the CRC’s relationship to the RCA presents an obvious conflict of interest.
5. Since many congregations disaffiliating with the RCA align with the CRC position on human sexuality, we act out of solidarity with them and out of grave concern for the denomination they have left.

Respectfully submitted,  
 Elroy Kaemingk  
 Clerk of Council

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**Overture to Classis from First Rock Valley CRC  
 Public Acknowledgement of Sin and Declaration of Repentance**

The council of the First Rock Valley CRC is asking Classis Iakota to overture Synod 2024 to:

Call all CRC churches who have publicly stated they are no longer willing to call practicing same-sex relationships a sin, to choose one of the following options:

1. Publicly repent of their decision and bring themselves back into compliance with the Bible’s and our confessions’ position on human sexuality, which has been acknowledged throughout all nations and generations of the Church catholic for nearly 2000 years, including the last 50 years of CRCNA synodical decisions.

2. Voluntarily disaffiliate from the Christian Reformed Church in North America by December 31, 2024.
3. If neither of these two things occur, Synod 2025 is to acknowledge that the fellowship-breaking actions and inactions of these affirming churches: [named here] be effectively removed from the fellowship of the Christian Reformed Church.
4. All churches listed below<sup>5</sup> and their governing classes who refuse to exercise church discipline over them, will no longer have delegations recognized at Synod, nor will they have representation on the Council of Delegates or any other denominational bodies and agencies.

**Grounds:**

1. Synod 1926 asserted the right for ecclesiastical assemblies to take decisive disciplinary action even if the Church Order does not stipulate an exact process of action (Acts of Synod 1926, p. 329 and p. 330). It also made clear that a consistory worthy of discipline had “placed itself outside of the church relationship” (Acts of Synod 1926, p. 139).
2. Classis Hudson in 1992 recognized that one of the churches in its classis “had broken the bonds of fellowship with the denomination and therefore have placed themselves outside the fellowship of the CRC” (Minutes of Classis Hudson, Sept. 23, 1992, obtained from Heritage Hall). Synod itself said that the church that was no longer in fellowship with the denomination would be allowed to participate in Synod’s process of appeals if it “would bring itself into conformity with the standards from which it was declared to have deviated” (Acts of Synod 1993, p. 610).
3. Synods 2022 and 2023 have given enough time for churches and Classes to discern their covenant fidelity to the fullness of God’s Word related to human sexuality and the desire to be affiliated with the Christian Reformed Church.
4. In Paul’s letter to Titus, he speaks directly to the need for pastors of the church of Jesus Christ to resist false teachers, particularly in Titus 3:10-11, “Warn a divisive person once, and then warn him a second time. After that, have nothing to do with him. You may be sure that such a man is warped and sinful; he is self-condemned.”
5. This meets the burden of Synod’s instruction to “err on the side of caution, permitting full opportunity for other pastoral efforts to take effect” (Acts of Synod 1991, p. 771).
6. Our Lord and Savior commands his church to permit what His Word permits and to forbid what it forbids (John 20:23, Matthew 16:19, Matthew 18:17,18, 20).
7. Discipline with the end goal of restoration has been sought. (Matthew 18:22, 1 Corinthians 5:5, Galatians 6:1, Hebrews 12:11).

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Currently, these 14 churches are known as openly affirming congregations: All Nations CRC, Halifax, NS, Church of the Servant CRC, Grand Rapids, MI; Eastern Ave. CRC, Grand Rapids, MI; Fellowship CRC, Edmonton, AB; First Christian Reformed Church, Grand Rapids, MI; First Christian Reformed Church, Toronto, ON; Grace CRC, Grand Rapids, MI; Loop CRC, Chicago, IL; Meadowvale CRC, Mississauga, ON; Neland Avenue CRC, Grand Rapids, MI; Oakdale Park CRC, Grand Rapids, MI; Sherman Street CRC, Grand Rapids; The Road Church, Calgary, AB; and Washington DC CRC. You can find the statements of these churches as of 1/2024 here: <https://www.hesedprojectcrc.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/12/Affirming-Churches-complete-2023-12.pdf>

Oakdale Park CRC’s statement can be found at <https://oakdaleparkchurch.org/core-values/>

Public Acknowledgment of Sin and Declaration of Repentance  
for use by a council of the CRCNA

We, the Council of \_\_\_\_\_ Christian Reformed Church:

1. Acknowledge before God and His people that we have sinned against God and his church by persistently going beyond the teaching of our Lord, by breaking the unity of the church by refusing to submit to its instruction and discipline, and by refusing to bend our necks under the yoke of Jesus Christ.
2. Acknowledge before God and His people that we are truly sorry for our sin and believe that the Lord has forgiven us.
3. Reaffirm our union with Christ and desire to be readmitted to the covenant family of God.
4. Reaffirm, without reservation, that all the doctrines contained in the standards of the church are doctrines that are taught in the Word of God.
5. Promise to do all we can, with the help of the Holy Spirit, to strengthen our love and commitment to Christ by sharing faithfully in the life of the church, honoring, and submitting to its authority.
6. Promise to be formed and governed by the forms of unity of the CRCNA, heartily believing, promoting, and defending their doctrines faithfully, conforming our preaching, teaching, writing, serving, and living to them.
7. Promise to join with the people of God in doing the work of the Lord everywhere.

Signed: \_\_\_\_\_ [clerk of council]

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Public Acknowledgment of Sin and Declaration of Repentance  
for use by a classis of the CRCNA

We, Classis \_\_\_\_\_ of Christian Reformed Church North America:

1. Acknowledge before God and His people that we have sinned against God and his church by persistently abusing our God-given authority by refusing to fulfill our responsibility to lovingly discipline the councils and officebearers entrusted to our care and by breaking the unity of the church by refusing to heed its admonitions and warnings.
2. Acknowledge before God and His people that we are truly sorry for our sin and believe that the Lord has forgiven us.
3. Reaffirm our union with Christ and desire to be readmitted to the covenant family of God.
4. Reaffirm without reservation that all the doctrines contained in the standards of the church are doctrines that are taught in the Word of God.
5. Promise to do all we can, with the help of the Holy Spirit, to strengthen our love and commitment to Christ by sharing faithfully in the life of the church, honoring, and submitting to its authority.
6. Promise to be formed and governed by the forms of unity of the CRCNA, heartily believing, promoting, and defending their doctrines faithfully, conforming our preaching, teaching, writing, serving, and living to them.
7. Promise to faithfully use our God-given authority as Scripture demands in the admonition and discipline of the officebearers and councils entrusted to our care.
8. Promise to join with the people of God in doing the work of the Lord everywhere.

Signed: \_\_\_\_\_ [stated clerk of classis]

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

## Stated Clerk's Report – March 2024

Since the September 2023 meeting of classis, I have handled the following:

- Updated the Classical Rules of Procedure and the List of Classical Functionaries and posted them on our website, along with the minutes of the 9/19/23 classis meeting and a document giving the highlights of that meeting.
- Contacted those whom classis has given a license to exhort to inform them of their need to renew their license per the Classical Rules of Procedure. The following individuals are requesting that their license be renewed for another two years: Jason Lief, Barry Miedema, Trevor Mouw, Nathan Nieuwendorp, and Thomas Soodsma. ***This will need the approval of classis.***
- Attended the 12/5/23 meeting of the classical interim committees of Heartland and lakota to discuss matters of mutual concern.
- Attended the 12/5/23 meeting of the classical interim to handle matters that classis has asked the CIC to tend to.
- Received and responded to e-mails from individuals and/or churches who had a question about an ecclesiastical matter or want to bring a ministry-related matter to the attention of our classis.
- I wasn't able to attend the 1/29/24 zoom meeting of the CRCNA Stated Clerks but I was able to watch a video-recording of this meeting and will provide a summary of this meeting at our classis meeting.
- Sent out reminders of our 3/5/24 meeting to the councils of our classis and other ministry leaders who give reports to classis.
- Gathered what was necessary for putting together the agenda for the 3/5/24 meeting and met with the CIC to discuss and decide on how to proceed with regard to various matters to be handled at the classis meeting.

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### Classis lakota Interim Committee Spring Report to Classis

Your Classis Interim Committee met on October 16, 2023, December 5, 2023 and February 5, 2024 to follow up on the work of the fall 2023 classis meeting and prepare for the spring 2024 classis meeting. Much of the work we did and conversations we had is found throughout this agenda. We also met with the CIC of Classis Heartland on December 5, 2023 to discuss matters of common concern and cooperation.

We bring the following motions and items of importance to the attention of the councils of our classis:

1. The CIC makes a motion to adopt the following changes to the Classical Rules of Procedure:

VIII. The Special Functions of Classis, A. Examination of Candidates, 10 [p. 12]:

Current text: In the event of the examination of a female candidate, those churches who have registered their protest to the seating of female delegates will not participate in the examination of this candidate. The examination and vote will be conducted by the remaining delegates.

Proposed text [edited text highlighted]: In the event of the examination of a female candidate, delegates from the churches who have registered their protest to the seating of female delegates will be given the option not to participate in the examination of this candidate. The examination and vote will be conducted by the remaining delegates.

VIII. The Special Functions of Classis, B. Calling Ministers From Other Denominations (*Colloquium Doctum*), 12 [p. 14]:

Current text: In the event of the examination of a female minister, those churches who have registered their protest to the seating of female delegates will not participate in the examination of this minister. This examination and vote will be conducted by the remaining delegates.

Proposed text [edited text highlighted]: In the event of the examination of a female minister, delegates from the churches who have registered their protest to the seating of female delegates will be given the option not to participate in the examination of this candidate. This examination and vote will be conducted by the remaining delegates.

VIII. The Special Functions of Classis, C. Examination of Commissioned Pastor, 6 [p. 15]:

Current text: In the event of the examination of a female commissioned pastor, those churches who have registered their protest to the seating of female delegates will not participate in the examination of this minister. This examination and vote will be conducted by the remaining delegates.

Proposed text [edited text highlighted]: In the event of the examination of a female commissioned pastor, delegates from the churches who have registered their protest to the seating of female delegates will be given the option not to participate in the examination of this candidate. This examination and vote will be conducted by the remaining delegates.

2. The motions to approve the calls of Sam and Gail Ashmore to the position of Commissioned Pastors at the fall meeting of classis lakota, 2023 (Art. 3757, A. and C. of the minutes of that meeting) were “contingent to the clarification of two distinct job descriptions at Bridge of Hope Ministries by the Classical Interim Committee.” The CIC communicates to classis that Bridge of Hope Ministries has provided the CIC with the clarification of two distinct job descriptions, so those motions no longer have contingencies and are adopted in full.

3. The CIC received a request from the council of Lebanon CRC to consider revising the Rules for Classical Procedure (RCP) with respect to our nomination process for our standing committees and functionaries of Classis Iakota. Currently, the RCP assigns this task to the Classical Interim Committee (CIC), but in practice the Stated Clerk solicits nominees from our councils. The council of Lebanon's communication brought to the CIC's attention real deficiencies with our process of nomination, rightly noting that several recent ballots have either presented single nominations, nominations offered from the floor of a classis meeting, or positions that have gone unfilled. The CIC asks that both councils and the standing committees would discuss the nomination process and think about ways to improve it and provide input to the CIC by July 1, so that the CIC might be able to bring a recommendation to classis at its fall 2024 meeting.

4. Other items of note:

a. The CIC examined and approved the credentials of Rev. Steven A. Zwart from Unity CRC, Prinsburg, MN and classis Lake Superior and authorized the counselor of First CRC, Sioux Falls, SD to proceed with installation.

b. Future meeting dates/host churches:

- September 2024: Platte CRC
- March 2025: Covenant CRC Sioux Center
- September 2025: New Holland CRC
- March 2026: First CRC Sioux Falls

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### **Classical Missions Team Report** ***Spring 2024***

Classis Iakota mission team met on January 17, 2024 in Shalom CRC in Sioux Falls.

Pastor Gary Maas opened with prayer and devotions.

We reflected on an update from Siouxland Unity Christian Reformed Church on their search for a summer intern.

Pastor Scott Van Voorst shared an update and prayer concerns on behalf of Cornerstone Prison Church.

It was noted that Pastor Mark Klompfen and his family will be back in the United States this spring and summer and would like to have churches get together to share with them the joys and concerns of ministry in Nepal.

Pastor Jack Gray requested permission from the mission team to approach Calvin CRC in Rock Valley in exploring a cross cultural ministry with Adam Ramirez. The mission team approved this request. Since this meeting Jack has reported that Calvin CRC has agreed to have this discussion with their congregation and also meet with Adam.

Robyn Kelderman brought to the attention of the committee potential needs of ministries that support our churches youth and outreach, such as Cadets, Gems, and Therefore Go which may be in need of financial support.

A motion was made, supported and approved to have the secretary create a Gmail account for continuity in the Classical Missions Team.

Pastor Joel Kok closed in prayer.

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### **Finance Committee Report to Classis lakota - March 2024**

The Finance Committee met November 14, 2023, at Bethel CRC in Sioux Center. Present: Darrel Raih, Eric Maas, Rev. Bob Drenten, and Robyn Kelderman (CMT) Treasurer Bob Van Ruler, ex officio.

#### Items of Note

- The committee reviewed the decision of Classis lakota to reimburse the actual cost incurred by a host church for its meetings. We learned it can be difficult for a host church to calculate its meal costs. For a fair and simple manner of reimbursement, the committee proposes we continue calculating the cost of meals according to the number served. The per meal amount would be set by an objective standard. We recommend that Classis lakota follow the guidance of the US General Services Administration. For 2024 the GSA allows \$15 per plate. See the recommendation below.
- The committee reviewed accounts held by Classis lakota. The purpose and guidance for use of several funds is unclear to us. The committee is working with the stated clerk to clarify the intent of these funds. (Mission Renewal Grant Fund, Church Plant Grant Fund, etc.)
- Treasurer Bob Van Ruler reported the receipt of funds from the disbanding of Hope CRC in Rapid City. Classis lakota should take note of these assets. Recommending a purpose for these funds is beyond the mandate of the Finance Committee. Mr. Jeff Bolt, Director of Advancement for the CRCNA, has offered to give Classis lakota guidance for the orderly receipt and disbursement of this sort of gift.

- Alternate Treasurer Mickey Visser now has authorized access to the bank accounts of Classis lakota along with the Treasurer. However, the committee has learned that Mr. Visser would not be available to serve as Treasurer in the event that Mr. Van Ruler is no longer serving. The committee notes that Classis lakota needs an individual who could serve as a successor. Ideally, this individual would also be able to help update our bookkeeping procedures to align better with conventional practices in the future. The committee was grateful to learn that Treasurer Van Ruler enjoys his present work and has no plan to step aside in the near future.
- The committee worked with the Treasurer to invest surplus funds of Classis lakota in certificates of deposit.

**Recommendations**

1. **That Classis lakota reimburse host churches \$15 per meal served. The Finance Committee will review this amount annually, basing future reimbursement on the amount set annually by the US General Services Administration.**

Grounds

- a. This satisfies the desire of Classis lakota to reimburse a host church the full cost incurred for a classis meeting.
- b. The US GSA provides an objective standard by which Classis lakota can set its allowed reimbursement.

2. **That Classis lakota approve the work of the Finance Committee.**

Rev. Bob Drenten - Committee Chairman

**Church Visitor Report on visit to:  
New Holland Christian Reformed Church**

On Dec. 10,2023, the New Holland Council met for church visitation. The council highlighted a faithful, unified, and growing body. They celebrated the good news regarding professions of faith and several baptisms. They acknowledged that they actively care for their members, addressing their spiritual and material needs. They were grateful for the willingness of the members to get involved in various ministry opportunities. Their teams were fulfilling their mandates with joy. Faith formation for children and youth were going well and they expressed appreciation for the Faith Alive resources and the Reformed accent being taught and modeled.

The Council noted that there were opportunities for Bible studies particularly for women as well as an active prayer team. There was some concern that a men’s bible study was not available at the present time. It was noted that the Council is considering new practices regarding external safe church procedures as well as enhancing internal safe church practices.



They noted that they are facing challenges. One challenge was the decision to build a new building. The historic church building has served well but the costs of remodeling were prohibitive. At the present time, they are seeking to raise the necessary funds to take down the existing structure and build on the current location. Another significant challenge is the Search process for a new pastor. They have developed an extensive profile and have had communication with possible candidates. Currently, Norlyn Van Beek is serving on an interim basis until June. The congregation and council have been blessed by Norlyn's leadership. He and his wife are greatly appreciated in the community.

The Council acknowledged that the giving has been good. The deacons are working on ways to communicate more clearly where the ministry shares are going in Classis as well as in the Denomination. The Deacons also noted the faithful support of Christian Education.

There was some concern expressed regarding the future direction of the Christian Reformed Church. However, they expressed a cautious optimism regarding the future of their local body.

### **Church Visitor Report on visit to: Harrison Community Church**

On Jan. 30,2024, Marlowe Van Ginkel and Henry Lengkeek met with the Harrison Community Church Council. The Council greeted us with hospitality and enthusiasm as they shared what the Lord was doing in and through this local body.

Around the table there was a wide diversity of ages for which we are grateful. There were experienced leaders along with young leaders who seemed to be energized for their role as elders and deacons. The Council was extremely grateful for the number of young couples and children that were part of this body. It is noted that there were several baptisms recently and during the worship service, children comprised a healthy proportion of the church. It was reported that there is an active women's Bible study during the week comprised of young and old. The deacons noted that stewardship was demonstrated through healthy giving and involvement in the ministry. The Council shared their excitement regarding their new building project which they hoped to complete later this Fall.

Appreciation for Pastor Gary Maas was noted by the Council and particularly the daily meditations and communication that he sends out to the church members. Pastor Gary noted his appreciation for the church's support as well as the support he receives from a group of colleagues who minister in rural settings. The Council noted its desire to minister to its geographic community through food drives and personal contacts as well as their longing to support the mission of the kingdom as they support two missionaries.

Harrison does face the challenge of merging the two congregations as they navigate this new chapter in their history. With a sensitivity to its history, the leaders noted it is not always easy to meet the concerns of all members. There is also the need to balance loyalty to both the CRCNA and ARC in mission and vision. Currently, they are giving to both denominations. Although excited about the merger, it brings challenges.

May we be in prayer for Harrison Community Church that they may be united as they move forward. May we be in prayer that reconciliation will occur with some members who have struggled with the merger. May we look forward in hope for the future that the Lord has planned for Harrison Community Church.

### **Church Visitor Report on visit to: Platte Christian Reformed Church**

On Jan. 30, 2024, Marlowe Van Ginkel and Henry Lengkeek, met with the Council of Platte Christian Reformed Church. The Council demonstrated their hospitality as we shared a light meal together and had a friendly conversation regarding the Lord's work among this local congregation.

There are multiple signs of God's presence at work in the faithful community of Platte CRC. For example, the Council was rejoicing regarding the recent baptism and profession of faith of a young man from the community. Other highlights included an active youth ministry which involves youth from various churches in the community. The council also verbalized their gratitude regarding a vibrant Coffee Break ministry as well as active GEMS and Cadet ministries. We were excited to hear of the church's active community involvement in ministering to the needy as well their partnership with the churches in Platte in doing ministry together. The Council was appreciative of the generosity of the congregation as demonstrated through the financial giving as well as willingness to be involved in various projects. The Council repeatedly acknowledged their love for Pastor Drew and his family.

Like any church, Platte CRC faces challenges in which they covet the prayers of Classis Iakota. They voiced their lament that many of their younger members are moving away to more urban areas for employment. There was also concern for those in the community who experience loneliness because of the rural environment and the congregation's longing to minister to them.

From our perspective, the Council is well led and organized. They demonstrated loyalty to the Reformed faith and the CRCNA. We thank God for this body and commend Pastor Drew Hoekema for his leadership and his teaching the Word of God faithfully and creatively. May we continue to pray for this congregation that they will continue to grow spiritually as well as grow in numbers.

## Regional Pastor's Report of the Iowa Pastors

In his book Pastors at Risk, Dr. Chuck Wickman notes that every pastor, to one degree or another, struggles with isolation, loneliness, inadequacy and insecurity. Some of this is of our own doing. We need to be reminded that, in addition to being a leader, we are human. It's important that each pastor has someone they feel comfortable sharing their heart.

Sensing this need, we as regional pastors are available as a listening ear and a source of encouragement. But in the pastorate the struggles and burdens can be overwhelming. Sometime its important to lament as the Psalmist does in almost a third of the Psalms. I recently read a book entitled **Dark Clouds, Deep Mercy, Discovering the Grace of Lament** by Mark Vroegop which I found enlightening. This is a good resource which is given as a gift.

I am in the process of meeting with each pastor to see how ministry is going in this new year. Each quarter there is a Thursday morning breakfast scheduled which is a good time of comradery and support for each other.

At this printing, the Inwood congregation is the only one seeking a new pastor of the Iowa churches. We pray God will meet that need soon.

We praise God for the healing he has given Pastor Gideon Wamala of the Calvin congregation. We continue to pray for two spouses in our Classis: Mary Jo Lee, Pastor John's wife, in her on-going cancer treatment. And Lee De Groot, Pastor Doug's wife after complications in her hip replacement surgery.

David Smit

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## Minn-I-Kota Youth Network Report

Thank You Father! For the past 5 months (since 10/3) I have been recovering from a surgery and an intense stay in SxFalls Avera Hospital in the Acute Care Unit. I have been told repeatedly... "Slow and steady wins the race". If that is the case, I will win! Thank you for all the support and prayers. Recuperation and physical therapy continues! ~Lee DG

### Minn-I-Kota Youth Board:

\***Minnkota Classis:** Representative-Pastor Greg Timmer-9/2022, Karmen Vis-Co Secretary-9/2017, Sarah Van Dyken-Co Secretary-5/2019

\***Iakota Classis:** Representative-Pastor Henry Lengkeek-9/2018, Dan Elgersma-President-1/2019, Shelli Kollis-1/2020

\***Heartland Classis:** Representative-Pastor Ben Wiersma-9/2021, Kody Tesch-Treasurer-11/2019, Beth Heerspink-4/2021-1/2024 Retired from the board in Jan. which leaves the 3<sup>rd</sup> position in Heartland vacant at this time.

In January Rev Ron deVries, the Youth and Emerging Adult Ministry Consultant with the CRCNA, recommended Joan Brady from Classis Huron, SW Ontario, Canada contact me about my position with Minnikota Youth Network in the three classis Minnkota, lakota, and Heartland. Joan is a Mission Catalyst, a position jointly supported by Resonate and Classis Huron. She is a resource to this Classis and she offers support where it is needed. One of the goals she has for the very near future is to bridge a gap in support for the Youth Ministry in Classis Huron. Her main objective is to introduce a supported youth position within this Classis, similar to mine with Minnikota Youth Network. We are continuing to communicate about this position for Classis Huron.

In January I started meeting with the Minnikota Youth 14<sup>th</sup> Annual Jr High Retreat Dordt University Student Leaders. The THEME for this year's retreat is -"**Created to BE---Believe, Belong, Become, and Be a Builder.**" "**Believe in Jesus, Belong to The Family, Become a Follower, and Be a Builder of the Kingdom of God**". There will be four supporting verses TBD along with emphasis on the HC Q&A #1. "...That I Belong..." I have DU student leaders from all three supporting Classis (first time having all three in the same year). All four of my DU Lead-Leaders attended the MIK Youth Jr High Retreat as Jr Highers. The dates of the retreat are Friday evening April 19-Sunday noon April 21 at Inspiration Hills. Registration forms/flyers are available.

Thank you lakota Classis for the generous gift to the MIK Youth Network Ministry. Thank you to all three of the supporting Classis: Minnkota, lakota, and Heartland for your continued prayers and Classical Shares. The ministry continues because of your support! Please, take time to check out the ministry on our website [minnikotayouthnetwork.com](http://minnikotayouthnetwork.com) or follow us on Facebook at [minnikota youth](https://www.facebook.com/minnikota.youth).

*"Be still and know that I am God"*

Lee & Pastor Doug De Groot  
307 South Union Street  
Rock Rapids, IA 51246  
712-470-4244

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**Calvin Theological Seminary Highlights**  
**Spring 2024 Classis Report**  
**Rev. Bob Drenten – Region 8 Trustee**  
(Classes: Central Plains, Heartland, lakota, Lake Superior, Minnkota, Northcentral Iowa)

These CTS Board highlights are from the October 26-27, 2023, meeting. Future meetings are February 29 and May 16-17, 2024.

**Academic Program**

- CTS has begun a search for a professor of systematic theology. Dr. Mary VandenBerg has announced her intent to retire in June 2025.

- CTS has formalized a partnership with the Missional Training Center (MTC) in Phoenix, AZ. MTC formerly partnered with Covenant Seminary of St. Louis. This partnership will include sharing faculty, resources, and opportunities for students. CTS will grant Master of Arts in Missional Theology for MTC graduates. CTS is excited to enter this partnership, seeing opportunities to equip students to understand better both God's mission set forth in Scripture and the cultural contexts where Christ calls us to advance His mission.
- This fall, CTS launched its new degree program in Christian counseling.

### **Student Life**

- Enrollment is recovering from the impact of the pandemic 2-3 years ago. This fall CTS enrolled a total of 305 students for all programs, a 27% increase from 2022-2023. This year a total of 27 M.Div. students entered the program (10 residential and 17 hybrid). Generous scholarships help make study at CTS very affordable. CTS is investing fresh energy developing closer ties with Dordt University and other feeder schools and is making encouraging inroads in Canada through the work of Rev. Shawn Brix. This fall the admissions team reported that applications have doubled over the past year.
- CTS is building 48 new units for student housing at 3300 Burton Ave SE, primarily for international students. The apartments that have housed these students in southeast Grand Rapids have been sold.

### **Vision and Service**

- CTS and Calvin University have partnered for several years offering courses at the Handlon Correctional Facility in Ionia, MI. The Calvin Prison Initiative was featured in a documentary produced by Second Mile Studio. Nathan Roels, the studio's owner and producer of this film is a CTS student. The film, "Behind Our Walls," was released in October 2023.
- The CTS community has entered a strategic planning process, as directed by the board. Mr. Chris Bosch of Chisel Consulting is leading CTS through a process to help focus and clarify the work of CTS.
- CTS is intentional about its relationship with the Christian Reformed Church. The board and administration take seriously the support CTS receives from the CRCNA, the service CTS gives to the CRCNA, and the guidance of the synods of the CRCNA. As a trustee, I have seen and experienced this first-hand.

### **Gratitude**

This is my last report to your classis as your representative trustee to Calvin Theological Seminary's board. My work will conclude with the May 2024 meeting, and my term will conclude following Synod 2024. Thank you for affording me the privilege of representing our region of classes, a trust I kept in mind through my six years of service. We must keep encouraging gifted students and members among us to consider the Lord's call to full-time ministry, and to encourage them to consider CTS as the place to prepare for that work.

Gratefully submitted,

Rev. Robert Drenten  
Calvin Theological Seminary Board, Region 8 Trustee