

Classis Iakota
AGENDA
Special Session July 16, 2024; 6:30pm
First CRC in Sioux Falls, SD
Gary Maas, Chairman
Drew Hoekema, Vice Chair

I. INITIAL BUSINESS

- A. Opening Devotions
- B. Presentation of Credentials & Roll Call
- C. Signing of the Covenant for Office Bearers by first-time delegates
- D. Declaration that Classis is constituted.
- E. Welcome to delegates and the Synodical Deputies

II. REQUEST FROM SHALOM CRC of MUTUAL AGREEMENT FOR SEPARATION

- Upon mutual agreement that Rev. Kyle De Young be released from active ministerial service at Shalom CRC in Sioux Falls in accordance with Church Order Article 17 [Due to the confidential nature of this request, the formal written request from the Shalom CRC council, along with the separation agreement and the report from the Classical Church Visitor are being mailed to the churches.]

III. MISCELLANEOUS

- A. Classical Interim Committee Report
- B. Church Visitor Report on visit made to Rock Rapids CRC
- C. Church Visitor Report on visit made to Lebanon CRC (p. 2)
- D. Report from the Delegates to Synod 2024
- E. Possible follow-up matters

IV. CLOSING BUSINESS

- A. Concluding Remarks by the Chairperson
- B. Closing Prayer
- C. Adjournment

Church Visit Report

Joel Kok, Pastor of Covenant CRC in Sioux Center, Iowa

The Council of **Lebanon Christian Reformed Church** shared many edifying thoughts with their church visitors. On the evening of **Thursday, June 20, 2024**, Elder Nick Breems and Pastor Joel Kok visited with the Council of Lebanon, and we left feeling encouraged. The Council members of Lebanon share devout commitments to their congregation in ways that can give them and all members realistic hope.

We began our visit by asking Council members to describe the purpose, vision, and hope for their congregation regarding the next five years of their church life. Like most congregations, members of Lebanon have some hope for growth in numbers of members, but even more they have biblical hope for people growing in faith. They hear God calling them to love one another as a family of faith and to love their neighbors as witnesses to Christ in their community. One Council member specified that Pastor Bob Drenten has helped him grow in faith, and other Council members expressed agreement.

In terms of numbers, we can share that Lebanon has about 30 families and 55 professing members. In the context of Classis Iakota, that means they can be viewed as a smaller congregation, which can raise issues about how to have hope for the future. And still, with respect to both the future and the present, a relatively smaller number of members can also offer a source of spiritual strength. In a smaller group, all members can get to know one another, and each member can find areas to serve. In the words of Jesus, we can say, "Do not be afraid, little flock, for your Father has been pleased to give you the kingdom." (Luke 12:32) Two examples of Lebanon seeking first the kingdom of God while trusting our Father to provide are the following: they support two missionary families, and they serve an outstanding meal every year to people in need in Sioux Falls, South Dakota. At a community "banquet" in Sioux Falls, arranged to help the poor, Lebanon provides not just the physical labor but also the delicious food.

As we turned to specific members and groups in the Council, we continued to receive good thoughts. Pastor Bob acknowledges challenges related to the population in their area declining and also related to younger generations being less inclined than older generations to regular participation in church life. At the same time, Pastor Bob has experienced God bringing new people into their congregation, as our Lord continues to act in ways we cannot predict but can trust. The Elders spoke with gratitude regarding rewarding home visits, and they also observed that as they grew more elderly, they gained wisdom as Elders. The Deacons expressed gratitude for doing their work together and for receiving healthy contributions, both financial and otherwise. One Deacon expressed gratitude for the way in which his marriage led him into Lebanon CRC. As he shared ways in which he has offered care to others, he stated, "I've learned a lot."

Nick Breems and I could add additional details to our report, but we trust the information provided so far suffices. We can add that just as the Council members at Lebanon find their service to be not a burden but a blessing, so did we find our visit with them to be not a burden but a blessing. And we can conclude by echoing the trust Lebanon Council members express in relation to our faithful Lord who covenants with us with steadfast love that endures forever.