

MINUTES OF CLASSIS GRANDVILLE

Thursday, January 20, 2022

Meeting at:
Friendship Christian Reformed Church
Byron Center, Michigan

Chairperson: Rev. Bob Huisman
Stated Clerk: Rev. Dan Mouw

Article 1

OPENING WORSHIP

Classical prayer coordinator, Diane Dykgraaf, and members of the Healthy Church Team led classis in opening worship, including a special time of prayer devoted to the needs and challenges within congregations, classis, and the Christian Reformed denomination.

Article 2

CREDENTIALS

The following individuals served as delegates:

CHURCHES	MINISTERS	ELDERS	DEACONS
Byron Center First		*Mike Ezinga *Brad Youngs	
Friendship Heritage Pathway Second Dorr	Daniel Kinnas Bob Huisman Cedric Parsels	*Steve Sytsma *Jack De Groot Jeff De Vries Henk Porte Shaun O'Brien Benjamin Tjapkes	*Keith Nyenhuis *Brad Diekema Tom Koetje
Grandville Fellowship Hanley Hope Ivanrest South Grandville Wyoming Calvary Faith Community Hahn-In Hispana Emanuel	Joe Vanden Akker Dale Fopma Brandon Haan George Vink Mark Van Drunen Rog Groenboom	*Pete Bottema Kirk Riddering Lois Knooihuizen *Steve Maring Steve Weeda *Arnie Toonstra	*Tamie De Witte *Dale Van Kley Barb Lutke *Mike Toering *Tim Walburg

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Lee Street

Steve De Vries

Harry Disselkoen

Katy Pastoor

*First-time delegates who stood to indicate their agreement with the Covenant for Office-bearers.

Article 3

CLASSIS IS CONSTITUTED

Rev. Bob Huisman assumed the chair. Rev. Dan Kinnas served as vice-chairperson. The chairperson introduced the agenda and timeframe for this evening session. The delegates from Friendship CRC were appointed to serve as the credentials committee.

Article 4

WELCOME OF GUESTS

The chairperson welcomed guests in attendance, including: Rev. George Vink, interim pastor at South Grandville CRC; Rev. Bryce Mensink, who represents Classis Grandville as synodical deputy; Rev. Hank Vlaardingerbroek, pastor of visitation at Faith Community CRC and church visitor; Rev. Allen Ponterelli, church planter for Southwest Community; and Carla Bieber, Regional Connector for Resonate Global Mission, who distributed materials to the delegates.

Candidate Ram Aryal was also in attendance. He was invited to address classis, and he indicated that he has accepted a call to serve as the next pastor at the Christian Reformed Church in Farmington, New Mexico. Rev. Joe Vanden Akker led classis in prayer for Candidate Aryal's future ministry in Farmington.

Article 5

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT TEAM

Rev. Dan Kinnas updated the delegates on Classis Grandville's ongoing support for two church plants: Southwest Community Church and the Albanian Christian Ministry. The Community Engagement Team is in dialogue with Rev. Matthew Postma, who is beginning a new campus ministry at Grand Valley State University directed toward university faculty and graduate students. The Community Engagement Team has contributed \$1000 to this new ministry.

Rev. Kinnas presented the following motion to Classis Grandville:

That Classis Grandville contribute \$10,000 to the Albanian Christian Ministry and contribute \$10,000 to Southwest Community Church for ongoing support of these ministries in 2022. This motion was supported.
ADOPTED.

Article 6

HEALTHY CHURCH TEAM

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Rev. Dale Fopma reported that Paul Wassink is retiring early as church visitor due to serious health concerns.

Diane Dykgraaf, classis prayer coordinator, reported that she has met with several prayer teams in local congregations. Her hope is to gather a classis-wide meeting of prayer leaders in Classis Grandville within the next few months. She is also making plans for a prayer newsletter to be distributed to the members of each congregation.

Diane invited delegates to join the denominational prayer team on the second Wednesday of the month at 11:00 AM for online prayer. She encouraged delegates to share with their councils the blue prayer guide that classis utilized in its opening worship.

Article 7

STEWARDSHIP TEAM

Rev. Rog Groenboom invited congregations to consider applying for a classical grant to help fund new ministries in their churches. An application form will be sent out in approximately late March.

Article 8

LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT TEAM

Rev. Bob Huisman reported on student fund support.

Article 9

CELEBRATION FELLOWSHIP CHRISTIAN REFORMED CHURCH

This prison congregation is a grant recipient in Classis Grandville. Glen Van Andel indicated that their ministry now encompasses three prisons in Ionia, Michigan. He introduced Mark Hartman, who addressed classis as a returning citizen who first became part of Celebration Fellowship while imprisoned. He described how Celebration Fellowship restores the dignity of inmates whose humanity was 'stripped' in prison. Mark has initiated a 'halfway' house church for former prisoners to attend when they are initially released to help them through that transition.

Rev. Allen Pontarelli led classis in prayer for Glen, Mark and Celebration Fellowship CRC.

Article 10

EXECUTIVE PRESENTATION

John Bolt, Deputy Executive Director and Chief Financial Officer of the CRCNA, described for delegates the great value and cost effectiveness of ministry share giving. He requested prayers from the churches for leadership transitions, Synod 2022, and continued adaptations required due to Covid-19.

Article 11

VOLUNTEERS IN SERVICE

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Suzanne Reinink presented a video that highlighted the impact of a VIS volunteer from a Classis Grandville congregation with a mother and family in the community.

Article 12
REGIONAL PASTOR
No report.

Article 13
CHURCH COUNSELORS
Rev. Bob Huisman, counselor for Second Byron Center CRC, reported that they have a search committee in place and are beginning interviews with prospective candidates. South Grandville CRC still needs to have a church counselor assigned.

Article 14
CHURCH VISITORS
The church visiting team of Rev. Ron Baker and Rev. Hank Vlaardingerbroek reported visits with Lee Street CRC and South Grandville CRC. Their written reports are included with these minutes.

Article 15
OVERSIGHT TEAM FOR REV. A.J. GRETZ
This oversight team, comprised of Rev. Tom Vander Ploeg, Rev. Dale Fopma, and Kathy Vanden Bosch, is in the initial stages of its work.

Article 16
ELECTION OF DELEGATES AND ALTERNATES TO SYNOD, 2022
Classis Grandville received six minister nominations, three elder nominations, and one deacon nomination.

Because of the preponderance of minister nominations, the following motion was made and supported:

**That Classis Grandville select ministers to serve in the 'at large' category of delegates.
ADOPTED.**

After a series of ballots and casting of lots, the following delegates and alternates were chosen:

Minister delegate: Rev. Bob Huisman	Minister alternate: Rev. Tom Vander Ploeg
Elder delegate: Shaun O'Brien	Elder alternate: Mark Oosterheert
Deacon delegate: Brad Diekema	Deacon alternate: TBD
Other officebearer delegate: Rev. Cedric Parsels	Other officebearer alternate: Rev. Rog Groenboom

The need for a deacon alternate was assigned to the Executive Team for follow-up with church councils.

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Article 17

SYNODICAL DEPUTIES

The three year terms of Classis Grandville's current synodical deputy, Rev. Bryce Mensink, and alternate synodical deputy, Rev. Doug Fauble, expire on June 30, 2022. Both are eligible to serve a second three year term.

The following motion was made and supported:

That Classis Grandville appoint Rev. Bryce Mensink for a second three year term as synodical deputy and appoint Rev. Doug Fauble for a second three year term as alternate synodical deputy, beginning July 1, 2022.

ADOPTED.

Article 18

COMMISSIONED PASTOR REQUEST

The Ivanrest CRC asked delegates to approve their proposed job description for the position of "Director of Student Ministries" in their congregation as being consistent with the office of commissioned pastor. They also submitted a learning plan.

The following motion was made and supported:

That Classis Grandville declare that the proposed job description from the Ivanrest CRC for the position of "Director of Student Ministries" is consistent with the requirements for the office of commissioned pastor.

ADOPTED.

Synodical deputies Rev. Al Gelder (Classis Grand Rapids East), Rev. Dave Spoelma (Classis Holland) and Rev. George Vink (Classis Grand Rapids South) concurred with this decision.

Nate Rustius, who is serving Ivanrest CRC in this position, will be examined at a later date.

Article 19

STATED CLERK REPORT

Rev. Dan Mouw, stated clerk, added the following matters to his report in the printed agenda:

- 1) He received a letter of thanks from Rev. Heather Strooboscher for the work of her classically appointed oversight team, who greatly assisted her following an Article 17 separation. She is now serving as pastor at the Creston CRC in Grand Rapids.
- 2) Marc Faasse, Classis Grandville's delegate to the board of World Renew, is completing his second term on June 30, 2021 and is not eligible for another term. Councils are requested to approach members of their congregations who may be interested in serving the denomination in this way. Please contact the stated clerk for nomination materials.

A motion to approve the work of the stated clerk was ADOPTED.

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Article 20

CLASSICAL TREASURER REPORT

Classical treasurer Leon De Lange distributed a current financial report dated January 19, 2022. The fiscal year will end on January 31, 2022.

Church pledges for ministry shares for 2022 – 2023 are due by the end of January. The five churches whose pledges remain outstanding were requested to submit that information to Leon.

A motion to approve the work of the classical treasurer was ADOPTED.

Article 21

CREDENTIALS COMMITTEE

The delegates from Friendship CRC, serving as the credentials committee, noted the following matters on the classical credentials:

- 1) From Calvary CRC – “In 2015 the Council of Calvary CRC committed to paying 100% of ministry shares to Classis Grandville and to work toward paying an increased percentage of our denominational ministry shares. At the same time we realized that, although people were joining Calvary as new members, many of the new members were unable to significantly contribute financially to the ministries of the church. Because of these two factors, at that time we requested an exemption based on the number of current members who fit the lower-income guidelines outlined in the synodical guidelines. Each year, since that time, we have requested such an exemption. This year we have already submitted our pledge for denominational ministry shares, so this request is only for classical ministry shares.

For calendar year 2022 we are requesting an exemption of 51 members based on their inability to significantly contribute financially to the ministries of the church. This is out of a total of 210 active adult professing members, which would result in a final number of 159 for the purposes of ministry shares. These numbers were determined during our denominationally required annual membership count.”

A motion was made and supported to grant this reduction request for 51 members. ADOPTED.

- 2) From Dorr CRC – “Given the importance of the human sexuality report and its recommendations to our classis, we would like the Executive Team to facilitate a classis wide conversation about the human sexuality report prior to Synod 2022.”

The chairperson referred this request to the Executive Team for action.

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Article 22

SAFE CHURCH TEAM

Safe Church Team director Bryna Parsels prepared a Safe Church Training video for Friendship CRC and it is available for use by all the congregations in Classis Grandville. Churches are requested to email Bryna at bp71710@gmail.com and she will send the link to this video. Local congregational safe church teams are urged to make use of this resource.

Article 23

CRCNA COUNCIL OF DELEGATES

Delegate Rachel Bouwkamp updated classis delegates with highlights from recent COD meetings. COD responsibilities have been significantly more demanding since Synod was unable to meet in 2020 and 2021.

The search process for new denominational leadership appears to be on track for appointments by Synod, 2022.

Article 24

WORLD RENEW

No report.

Article 25

CLOSING

After a motion to adjourn was adopted, Chairperson Bob Huisman closed the meeting with prayer.

**Next regular meeting of Classis Grandville
Thursday, May 19, 2022**

Church Visitor Report – Lee Street Christian Reformed Church November 15, 2021

Our meeting with council members was held in the sanctuary. It began at 7:05 with Aaron Kooyers leading in devotions expressing concerns about our world being filled with anxiety but then he also spoke about how the people of the church care for one another especially in difficult times. He used a person's recent surgery as an example. He then read John 16:31-33 and opened in prayer.

Ron Baker led the church visitor meeting while Pastor Steve DeVries took notes since our other church visitor (Hank Vlaardingerbroek) was stuck out of town with truck problems. Four main questions were asked.

1. What are you celebrating and giving thanks to God for as a church? .
 - Hired two great pastors who along with their wives are fluent in both English and Spanish
 - Two worship services, English and Spanish, but one church
 - Focus on reaching out to the community and breaking down the walls. Saturday morning prayer walks. Great interaction. Bringing church life outside of the building.
 - Worshipping multi culturally – diversity – some beautiful services and worship
 - Financial security and the ability to help those in need.
 - Increasing connections with local schools and churches because the pastors speak Spanish.
 - The church facility has activities taking place here every day of the week...
 - Great volunteer supply (tech folks).

2. What are some of the struggles and challenges we are facing?
 - Trying to keep track of those who aren't coming to church (and why). Staying in touch is challenging – especially with those who might not want to stay connected to the church.
 - Sunday school numbers are low – we would like more younger families.
 - Challenges of working with one body in two languages

3. Talk about the mission, vision and structure of the church?
 - Our mission is to reach people for the Lord. Our various programs are set up to do that.
 - Our aim is to make and grow mature disciples from the neighborhoods in which we live.

4. Is there anything that you'd like Classis to know about Lee St CRC?
 - Classis would do well to keep an eye on Lee St. Good things are happening here. We have gifted people doing great work but they remain humble and hospitable.
 - Lee St can feel a bit isolated as other CRCs in this area of Wyoming have closed. We don't seem to have much interaction with Classis. We wonder what classis has in mind for us. We believe God has a plan for us with our present staff in this multicultural setting.
 - We are struggling with a more appropriate way to handle lapsing members. Every church seems to be reinventing the wheel; we need a better system that reflects how ideas around membership have changed. Who can help with this?

Ron Baker offered words of encouragement about their efforts at using the many gifts of their people in ministry as one church, (diverse, yet united) among and with their neighbors. God continues to use Lee St in valuable ways in this community. Ron closed the visit with prayer. .

Humbly submitted by Classis Grandville Church Visitor Ron Baker

Church Visiting report - South Grandville CRC October 18, 2021 7:00 PM

On October 18, 2021, we met with 10 (of 14) council members of South Grandville CRC along with Interim Pastor George Vink. This was their normally scheduled council meeting. The chairperson began the meeting by reading a brief devotional based on 2 Corinthians 4:16-18. We had been told earlier that the church recently experienced significant hardships and sorrows: Covid challenge, several deaths, the departure of several families, and also the resignation of the pastor of 2½ years after he and his wife were separated. Because of the church's recent challenges and prior input of a couple council leaders we decided to have an open-ended conversation about how they are coping. We hoped to listen and encourage.

Mission, vision and structure of the church were not addressed much in this visit as the council members indicated they will likely look at these matters in the process of creating their Annual Ministry Plan to be effective June 1, 2022. The church is happy to have Pastor George Vink serving as Interim Pastor to give continuity, stabilize the ministry, provide good messages, help address the ministry plan and also advise the soon to be formed search committee. The church is also aided by Pastor John Witvliet who serves as Pastor of Visitation.

Elders and deacons shared items worth celebrating. Many members have God given talents and blessings which they willing share, enriching church life, including programs like Cadets and GEMS. Several said that even though the church has big challenges there is hope for better days. Comments included "we can see a light, a positive future, even though it feels far away yet . . . many members care deeply about this church. There are good people here."

A few challenges and struggles were mentioned: an aging population, fewer younger families, decreasing numbers of members (some have died, other have left), inconsistent attendance especially by younger families, fewer programs than desired, too little interaction with each other outside of Sunday at church, evangelism/outreach seems lacking, and a large building with too few people to use it like other churches that have more building than people.

At the end of the meeting, we encouraged the council to continue their open dialogue about what one elder called the "what ifs." We suggested they keep asking "what is a healthy church?" and "what is it that helps you be healthy?" We also suggested that they may need to encourage and facilitate more grieving because the church has been through significant painful losses. New life and improved health for the church happens best if appropriate grieving happens. The leaders' commitment to work together is commendable and puts them on a decent footing while they are in what they said is a kind of "wait and see mode while being hopeful." We commended their willingness to consider conversations with other churches about shared ministry possibilities. We closed our time together with prayer, giving thanks and asking God to keep leading and guiding.

We did not suggest it at the time, but in light of the church's challenges, it may be worth doing another visit in the near future.

Respectfully submitted to Classis Grandville, Hank Vlaardingerbroek and Ron Baker