

Report on the meeting of Classis Central US of the URCNA

Convening in Sioux Falls, South Dakota
April 3-4, 2017

It was with joyful hearts that the delegates arrived for the 42nd meeting of Classis Central U.S. in Sioux Falls, South Dakota, at the building where the Christ Reformed Church worships. Not only was this the first time the recently organized Christ Reformed Church hosted Classis, but this was also a concurrent meeting with Classis Manitoba of the Canadian Reformed Churches (CanRC), which was the first time Classis Central U.S. has held a concurrent meeting with another assembly. The Consistory of Christ Reformed and the convening Consistory for Classis Manitoba worked diligently and within a brief timeframe to organize the concurrent meeting, and the delegates to Classis Manitoba made the lengthy trip south to make the concurrent meeting a reality. We give thanks to God for bringing this to pass and for having it proceed smoothly and profitably. Classis Central U.S. convened at 6:30 p.m. on Monday, April 3, and concluded just before supper on Tuesday.

The Monday evening session began with delegates from both assemblies present for devotions, after which each Classis met separately for their opening matters. A number of reports were heard by Classis Central, including reports for eleven church visits made according to Article 27 of the Church Order.

The Classis Manitoba delegates rejoined Classis Central U.S. delegates to hear fraternal greetings from Rev. G. I. Williamson on behalf of the Presbytery of the Dakotas of the Orthodox Presbyterian Church and Rev. Brian Janssen of the Iowa Presbytery of the PCA. The chairman of each Classis alternated in responding to the fraternal guests and leading the Classes in prayer. Along with these fraternal addresses, Rev. Harold Ludwig reported on the CanRC mission work that is ongoing in Brazil. After hearing these matters, the classes recessed early in the evening to allow for further fellowship between the delegates.

The morning session opened with delegates from both classes being present. Rev. James Grossman brought fraternal greetings from the Northern Plains Classis of the RCUS, and Rev. Travis Grassmid brought fraternal greetings from the South Central Classis of the RCUS. The Stated Clerk read a letter of greetings from the Ohio Presbytery of the OPC. After these greetings and further reports, the report of the Church Planting Advisory Committee (CPAC) was received. At the recommendation of the CPAC, Classis voted to continue classical assistance for the mission works El Pacto de Gracia (Hispanic church plant in Chicago Heights, IL) and Luz de Vida (Quito, Ecuador). Classis also elected Micah Van Maanen to serve on the CPAC in place of Grant Diekevers. Updates were heard on those two mission works as well as on the situation of chaplain Rev. Andrew Spriensma, who is under the oversight of Faith URC (Beecher, IL). Numerous reports were received prior to the morning break. After the break, Mr. Peter Veenendaal from Classis Manitoba fraternally addressed Classis Central, and Rev. Todd De Rooy (CERCU representative for Classis Central) responded.

Classis Central then turned its attention to the overtures on its agenda. The first overture requested various changes to the Classis *Rules of Procedure*, the first change sought to require a manuscript for each sermon that is to be evaluated by the Classis for candidacy exams, ordination exams, and colloquia docta. Other changes requested by this overture involved minor "housekeeping" changes to the rules. All changes were approved by the Classis.

The second overture requested Classis Central to overture Synod 2018 to revise Article 64 of the Church Order in light of the pastoral advice that was received by Synod Wyoming 2016 concerning membership departure. These revisions will codify in the Church Order the transferring, releasing, and erasing of membership in situations that are not currently covered by the Church Order categories of excommunication and exclusion. Classis Central voted to send this overture to Synod 2018.

The third overture requested Classis Central to overture Synod 2018 to adopt a "Marriage Affirmation & Gospel Testimony." This overture desires our federation to clearly affirm the

Scriptural teaching on the nature of marriage, given the contested nature of marriage in our culture. This overture addressed concerns that were raised at Synod Wyoming 2016 in a related matter. Classis Central voted to send this overture to Synod 2018. After approving this overture, the Classis took a break for lunch. The delegates to Classis Manitoba were present for this entire session; they and other fraternal delegates gave helpful input during these matters.

Beginning its third session after lunch, Classis Central heard church visitors from Classis Manitoba report on three visits they had made to churches within Classis Manitoba. After these reports, Classis Central considered an appeal about a doctrinal and confessional matter arising from a member in the Covenant Reformed Church in Pella, IA. Deliberation over the first nine grounds of this appeal lasted until the afternoon break, at which time the delegates from Classis Manitoba left to conduct business specifically related to their Classis.

After the break, Classis Central continued deliberating over the appeal, taking up the final grounds. Some of the grounds were found to be valid and other grounds were found to be invalid. The appeal as a whole was not sustained; Classis Central made this decision without dissent. Classis Central then provided pastoral advice related to the matter.

Classis went on in its business and appointed Rev. Joel Vander Kooi to serve as a church visitor for the west side of the Classis. Rev. Vander Kooi replaces as church visitor Rev. Bradd Nymeyer, who has accepted a call to the First URC in Chino, California. Classis also appointed Mr. Gerald Swets to serve as our CECCA delegate. Mr. Swets takes the place of Mr. Martin Nuiver, who completed his term of service as CECCA delegate. Classis also approved \$300 as remuneration for the Classis Treasurer.

Classis gave advice to the Cornerstone URC (Sanborn, IA) Consistory concerning a pastoral matter and gave advice to the Providence URC (Des Moines, IA) Consistory that they may proceed to the second step of discipline with a professing member. The Consistory of the Sioux Center URC requested assistance in filling its pulpit during their upcoming vacancy.

The next meeting of Classis Central US is scheduled to convene in Waupun, Wisconsin on September 11, the Lord willing. The Consistory of the Grace URC in Waupun will serve as the convening and hosting Consistory.

The delegates to Classis Manitoba rejoined delegates to Classis Central for final matters, including closing devotions and prayer. We give thanks to the Lord for providing this wonderful opportunity to meet together, work together, and fellowship with each other. Classis wishes to express its sincere appreciation to the members of the Christ Reformed Church for their gracious hospitality, to the Christ Reformed Consistory for its work in convening this meeting, to the delegates to Classis Manitoba of the CanRC for traveling to Sioux Falls, and to Rev. Todd Joling for his excellent service as chairman.

For further information, contact Rev. Talman Wagenmaker, pastor of the Grace URC and Stated Clerk of Classis, by telephone at 920-324-2924 or via e-mail at ClassisCentralUS@gmail.com