

News Report of Classis West of the PRCA Meeting September 25-27, 2019

Classis West of the Protestant Reformed Churches met from September 25-27, 2019, in Calvary PRC (Hull, IA). The meeting was capably chaired by Rev. Ryan Barnhill (pastor of Peace PRC), who was serving in this capacity for the first time in his ministry.

Noticeably absent from the meeting was one of the elder delegates from Immanuel PRC (Lacombe, AB), who remained home to support a family in the congregation whose teenage son had recently died in an automobile accident.

The night before Classis convened, the delegates gathered with the Calvary congregation to worship God and to hear the specimen sermon of Mr. Matt Kortus, pastor-elect of Hope PRC (Redlands, CA). He preached on Philippians 4:6-7 and displayed clearly the gifts that God has entrusted to him for the proclamation of the gospel.

The following day was largely taken up by the joyful work of examining Mr. Kortus. Throughout the exam he gave a good account of the intellectual and spiritual gifts necessary for the ministry. Classis unanimously approved his examination, and the synodical deputies from Classis East heartily concurred. The brother plans to be ordained and installed into the ministry on October 6, with Rev. Nate Decker (pastor of Grandville PRC) officiating. We give thanks to the Lord of the harvest for supplying another faithful laborer.

In closed session, a consistory sought the advice of Classis to proceed with the erasure of a baptized member. After hearing of the individual's impenitence and the labors of the consistory to this point, Classis took the sad decision to advise the consistory to proceed with erasure.

Also in closed session, Classis treated an appeal from an individual regarding the discipline work of a consistory. Classis ruled the appeal not legally before it.

Classis also had before it four protests against decisions taken at its March meeting in closed session. After much deliberation, Classis decided not to sustain the protests in several matters and to sustain them in certain other matters.

Following a question that arose with the report of the stated clerk, Classis approved a number of guidelines that the stated clerk can follow when he receives requests for confidential material from an individual who is not an officebearer.

Classis adopted a pulpit supply schedule for Immanuel PRC: Rev. Engelsma (November 10 and 17), Rev. Barnhill (December 8 and 15), Rev. Guichelaar (January 5 and 12), Rev. Laning (January 26 and February 2), Rev. N. Langerak (February 23 and March 1), and Rev. J. Langerak (March 15 and 22). Classis also adopted a pulpit supply schedule for First Edmonton PRC: Rev. Lee (October 20 and 27), Rev. Regnerus (November 10 and 17), Rev. Kortus (December 8 and 15), Rev. R. Kleyn (January 5 and 12), Rev. De Boer (January 26 and February 2), Rev. Key (February 23 and March 1), and Rev. Brummel (March 15 and 22).

Classis sustained the protests of five protestants with regard to their objections to Classis' decisions in March 2019 and declared those decisions to be in error. The decisions which were declared to be in error were 1) to sustain an appeal against a consistory's decision to read an apology in response to the member's protest of Rev. Marcus' preaching concerning providence, and 2) to advise the consistory to proceed to his suspension. Classis did so with the following grounds:

- A.1. Although Rev. Marcus' teaching on providence was erroneous, suspension according to Arts. 79-80 of the Church Order was not the proper way of addressing it.
- A.2. Classis erred in its judgment that Rev. Marcus' proposed apology was not adequate.

- A.3. Nowhere in its grounds did Classis demonstrate that the statements of Rev. Marcus were explicitly contrary to the teachings of Scripture and the confessions.
- A.4. Classis erred in giving as a ground for suspension that “such a suspension would give the consistory time to do an investigation into the extent of his teaching in the congregation, especially with regard to the instruction of the catechism students.”
- A.5. Classis erred in giving as a ground for suspension that Rev. Marcus “cannot labor effectively in the congregation with a cloud of suspicion hanging over his orthodoxy.”
- A.6. Classis erred in giving as a ground of suspension that certain statements of Rev. Marcus were “suspicious,” which statements are not inherently wrong.

Classis made apology to First Edmonton consistory and to Rev. Marcus for the advice given in March. Classis will continue to address matters that pertain to this case when they reconvene on Tuesday, November 5. Please remember the Classis in your prayers as they take up this important work again in a month.

The expenses of this part of the meeting totaled \$12,447.28.

Rev. Joshua Engelsma
Stated Clerk, Classis West