

News Report of Classis West of the PRCA Meeting March 1-2, 2023

Classis West of the Protestant Reformed Churches met on March 1-2, 2023, in Lynden PRC (Lynden, WA). This small congregation did an outstanding job of hosting the twenty-eight delegates from the fourteen churches in the Classis.

Classis began on Wednesday, March 1, with opening devotions led by the chairman of the previous meeting, Rev. M. Kortus (pastor of Hope Redlands PRC), who gave a fitting meditation on Psalm 20. After Classis was legally constituted, the meeting was capably chaired by Rev. Jonathan Langerak (pastor of Covenant of Grace PRC), who was serving in this capacity for the first time in his ministry.

Five first-time delegates to Classis signed the Formula of Subscription, the minutes of the previous meeting of Classis were approved, and the four questions of Article 41 of the Church Order were asked and answered. Routine reports of the stated clerk, classical committee, and reading sermon committee were read and approved. The church visitors reported on their work over the last year and the presence of unity, peace, and love prevailing in the churches in spite of the hardships of the last year.

After recessing for the late morning and most of the afternoon for the committees of pre-advice to prepare advice, Classis met and gave approval to Prof. D. Kuiper to publish some material from the Classis West archives in upcoming articles he intends to write in the *Protestant Reformed Theological Journal* on the history of Classis West.

Classis made a schedule of pulpit supply for the five vacant congregations in the Classis: Doon (IA) PRC, Hosanna PRC (Edmonton), Loveland (CO) PRC, Lynden (WA) PRC, and Randolph (WI) PRC. Due to the large number of vacancies in Classis West, it was decided to ask Classis East for assistance in covering two Sundays for each of the vacant congregations in the next six months.

Classis approved the subsidy requests for 2024 for five congregations and forwarded them on to Synod 2023 for its approval.

Classis treated in closed session an appeal in which a victim of child sexual abuse objected to a consistory's discipline work with the perpetrator of the abuse. Classis permitted close loved ones of the victim to be present in the sessions and also allowed a pastor and another individual to speak on the victim's behalf. Classis unanimously sustained the first part of the appeal and declared that the consistory erred in accepting the initial confession of the perpetrator. Classis judged that a more thorough investigation of the nature and extent of the sin was required, that confession of sin to those sinned against should have taken place before an announcement of reconciliation was read in the church, and that later events seriously called into question the genuineness of the confession. Classis also unanimously sustained the second part of the appeal and declared that the consistory erred in their announcement of the perpetrator's sin. Classis judged that the announcement of sin should have included more information regarding the specific nature of the sin committed: rather than merely a general reference to sin against the 7th commandment, the announcement should have included a reference to the 6th commandment and that this was a case of child sexual abuse by an adult in a position of authority over a period of several years. Classis also explained how this was necessary for the

covenant community, the sinner, and the victim. Classis also appointed a special committee to provide assistance to the consistory in this case.

Having met until about 9:00 PM on Wednesday, Classis decided to recess until the following morning.

The next day, Thursday, March 2, Classis began by treating an overture from a consistory. The consistory submitted to Classis an overture to be forwarded to Synod 2023 that Synod appoint a committee to research and engage an independent, third-party investigation to conduct an investigation into sexual abuse in the PRCA. Classis decided not to forward the overture to Synod, on the grounds that: 1) the overture had insufficient information for Classis to make an informed judgment to approve the request, and 2) that with the limited information provided about what would be the nature and work of a third party investigation, the overture did not show the necessity of such an investigation from the Scriptures.

Throughout the meeting, Classis also voted for various classical functionaries. Rev. J. Engelsma was reappointed to a three-year term as Stated Clerk, and Rev. J. Langerak was reappointed to a three-year term as Assistant Stated Clerk. Rev. M. De Boer was reappointed to a three-year term on the Classical Committee, and Rev. R. Barnhill was appointed to a one-year term to fill a vacant position. Rev. A. Brummel was appointed to a three-year term as a *primus* synodical deputy, Rev. M. De Boer was re-appointed to a three-year term as a *secundus* synodical deputy, Rev. J. Marcus was appointed to a one-year term as a *secundus* synodical deputy to fill a vacant position, and Rev. S. Regnerus was appointed to a two-year term as a *secundus* synodical deputy to fill a vacant position. Classis appointed Revs. A. Brummel, R. Hanko, S. Key, and J. Marcus as church visitors, with Revs. R. Barnhill and J. Engelsma as alternates.

Ministers delegated to Synod 2023 were Revs. R. Barnhill, A. Brummel, J. Engelsma, M. Kortus, and J. Marcus. Alternates are Revs. H. Bleyenberg, M. De Boer, J. Langerak, and S. Regnerus. Elders delegated to Synod 2023 were Keith Bruinsma (Peace), Chester Hunter, Jr. (Edgerton), James Regnerus (Doon), Peter Smit (Hope), and Ryan Van Overloop (Crete). Alternates are Robert Brands (Loveland), Travis Feenstra (Hope), Steve Huizenga (Crete), Alvern Miersma (Hope), and Joel Moore (Loveland).

Classis appointed Rev. J. Langerak as the moderator for Lynden PRC in their upcoming vacancy.

Classis finished its work around 12:30 PM on Thursday.

The expenses of this meeting totaled \$17,638.94.

Classis will meet next in Crete (IL) PRC on September 27, 2023, the Lord willing.

Rev. Joshua Engelsma
Stated Clerk, Classis West