

Addendum A
**The Minutes of
the Stated Session of
The Reverend Classis of Schenectady
May 22, 2018 — 7:00 PM
Lisha's Kill Reformed Church, Schenectady**

ATTENDANCE:

PRESENT:

Enrolled Ministers: K. Busman (President), A. Reilly (Vice President), L. De Kruif (clerk), W. Levering, D. Carlson, J. deVelder, K. McHeard, M. Hodgin, Ja. White. J. Meyer Vincent, L. VanderWal, M. van Maastricht, J. Vanderbeck, R.G. Szantner, J. Bosman, S. Duensing, J. Legg.

Elder Delegates: B. Lewis (FRC Schenectady), J. Healey (Helderberg), M. Anderson (Fort Miller), M. Sanders, (Fort Miller), A. Deyoe (Old Saratoga), T. Flynn (Amity), K. Britain (Woestina), T. Knutti (Cobblestone), P. Lansing (Amity), K. Mix (Lynnwood), K. Hayner (West Glenville), T. Pangburn (Altamont), J. Pettis (Bacon Hill), D. Walsh (Scotia), M. Rand (Lisha's Kill), Adrienne Westfall (Trinity), K. Hileman (Bellevue)

Retired Ministers: J. Hoffman, A. Hudak

Preaching Elders: C. Jackson, J. Moak, M. Rand, L. Smith

Candidates: H. Kramer

Guests: Rev. Jonathan (RCA General Synod Prayer Chaplain) and Jeanette Brownson, Amanda Bruehl (RCA Development)

ABSENT WITH NOTICE: J. Fulkerson, B. Doolittle, R. Scheenstra, J. Hoperich, T. Lehner (Niskayuna), B. Harringa (Cobblestone), L. L. Lumbra (Trinity)

ABSENT WITHOUT NOTICE: J. Bork, J. Marvel, T. McCrossan, S. Midge, W. Schutter, R. Hoffman, M. Leach (FRC Schenectady)

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Call to Order by President Busman at 7:20 PM.

The President called for a quorum. Clerk De Kruif declared a quorum. The President appointed Rev. Garret Szantner and Preaching Elder Kit Jackson as tellers for the duration of the meeting.

Approval of the Agenda: The President asked for a motion to approve the agenda. A motion was made and supported from the floor to approve the agenda.

Voted R-518-1: to approve agenda. (APPROVED)

Approval of the Minutes: The President asked a motion to approve the minutes of the February 2018 Stated Session. Motion from floor and seconded. The following corrections were noted from the floor: Clara LaSalle was absent, Kay Grosch is not a member of the Search and Supervision committee, and Tulia Pangburn's name was misspelled.

Voted R-518-2: To approve the minutes of the February 2018 Stated Session with corrections. (APPROVED)

Consent Agenda: The consent agenda was presented and included reports on Specialized Ministers, 2018 Session of the Regional Synod of Albany, Church Supervision and Oversight Committee, and the Synod Ministries Board. The clerk noted and shared an additional report from Rev. Jeremy Bork to be included in the Specialized Ministers' Report. The President asked for a motion from the floor to receive the reports presented. A motion was made and seconded.

Voted 518-3: To receive the reports presented in the consent agenda. (APPROVED)

Clerk Items:

The Clerk noted that Rev. Jonathan Vanderbeck, Rev. Jordan White, and elders Linda Young from First Reformed of Rotterdam (Woestina) and Pieter Lansing from Aminty Reformed have been appointed delegates to the 2018 General Synod in Grand Rapids MI, June 7-12.

The Clerk thanked ministers who have completed their background check application. To date, two ministers need to complete the background check application. The Overtures and Judicial Business will be tasked with creating procedure for following up on background checks and renewing checks in the future.

The Clerk noted the dates of the 2018-2019 stated sessions of classis will be held on October 23, 2018 at Bellevue Reformed Church, on February 26, 2019 at Altamont Reformed Church, and on May 28, 2019 at Trinity Reformed Church.

President's Report:

Vice President Reilly took the chair, so that President Busman could deliver his report. The text of the report is as follows:

Schenectady Classis, May 2018

Rev. Kent Busman, Classis President

Everybody take a couple deep breaths....

I read your consistorial reports....

I learned a version of this poem last week from a Hope College Co-Ed while carrying a backpack and a 75 lb canoe over my head.

When death comes like a knife between the shoulder blades;

When death comes like a hungry bear in autumn

What will it be like in that cottage of darkness?

I do not want it to find me afraid or questioning.

Therefore,

I will see each life as a daisy: as singular and as lovely

I will look upon every body as a lion of courage; precious to this world.

I want to be a bride married to amazement

I want to be a groom holding the world in his arms

I want, when death comes, I don't want to end up simply having visited this world.

Mary Oliver via Sarah...

For the last 10 days I've been in the Adirondack backcountry working with college students; helping them explore the motifs of creation care and justice that fill our sacred texts. A topic that I feel is at the core of the message of the Incarnation and that is neglected or marginalized by most churches and preachers. I thought this poem might get your attention as I once again give a report to my colleagues, friends, and fellow travelers.

I read your consistorial reports. They were remarkably similar to the ones I read 25 years ago when I served as president of this wonderful Classis. The concerns were the same: aging congregations, lack of or tightening of resources, how to be the church in a society that has left the notion of "church" behind.

And, even though our numbers 25 years later are dramatically less, each of our churches put on a good face and proclaimed their hope that is embedded in:

New pastoral leadership

New programs, such as backpack stuffing, NEAT dinners, food pantries, and a wonderful little diner in the Bellevue neighborhood that I need to be pro-active about having any breakfast meetings there... and you should be too. 😊

Or, a possibly, somewhat, maybe larger Sunday School.... On some Sundays...

We are a hopeful people. It's one of the ways we remain tethered together. Sometimes our hope is encapsulated in that prophetic phrase by the Monty Python boys: "I'm not dead yet." We end

our meetings in a circle so we can look each other in the eye to say: “You are not alone! Hang in there.

However, “*when death comes...*”

We are a hopeful people in an era of decline. Our numbers have dropped by 400 active confirmed members in 4 years. Our deaths are over twice that of our baptisms and I’ve already helped bury 5 of the saints this year: just yesterday helping to send Adrian Gray on his way. But you are hopeful people, so you will remind me that we can’t just look at raw numbers. There is new life budding like the trout lilies in the Adirondacks. We have installed, ordained, or commissioned 7 pastors in the last year!!! That’s in reality, a highlight in my time as president. So, if we just hold on....

But here is the crux of my message to us all tonight. We can no longer just hold on. It is clear to me in reading your reports that we, as a collective whole, are afraid and questioning: just what our poet, Mary, prays we won’t be when death finds us.

I’ve watched us just “hold on” for 31 years now and I’m done.

And I’ve given up on hope as that to which I cling.

I choose now to cling to “courage”. Courage in the face of overwhelming evidence that what we are doing will not last much longer. Courage is the step beyond hope. It is the step that the 3 jewish boys took who were captives of Nebuchadnezzar. You remember the story: The idol – the refusal to bow – the ultimatum to bow or burn. Their response must be our response in these times.

If our God whom we serve is able to deliver us from the furnace of blazing fire and out of your hand, O king, let him deliver us. **But if not**, be it known to you, O king, that we will not serve your gods and we will not worship the golden statue that you have set up.’

It may be that God can turn this Classis around and we will find ourselves will full pews and cushioned bank accounts. BUT IF NOT, we should be about the things that will remind those after us that we were not “just visiting this world:” just hanging out in Schenectady.

We’re going to need more than hope. We are going to need courage to be “brides to amazement” and “grooms holding the world in our arms.” We are going to need courage to be the disciples

who heard the wind, saw the tongues of fire, and stepped out of Jerusalem and in to a whole new world.

We are going to need courage to confront the issues of our day. Let me list 4 of them. And these are not in the form of proposals for people to vote on, but if you still want to be stuck with me as the Classis President for 2018-19, then you will get an idea of where I will be trying to steer the ship.

1. We are not going to “just hold on” and tread water anymore when it comes to Preaching Elders. The Ministry Oversight Committee must be courageous and present a new process for not only caring for existing Preaching Elders, but to engage a new generation. Thursday, a class on preaching the Season of Creation, will be held at the Synod Office thanks to Daniel Carlson & John Paarlberg. All of our Preaching Elders have registered to attend. There is still time for any of you to register. Go talk to Daniel right now if you are interested.
2. I’m going to encourage you to vote yes on the proposal d: the Overture on Unity. I’m encouraging you to vote yes because I love the people who wrote this and I have trust that they are smarter than me on these things. I despise that it is here because it reminds me of what is broken. We just reaffirmed our unity together 7 times last year as we installed and ordained our comrades. It reminds me of how frightened we are and of how much time and energy we therefore use in order to protect ourselves rather than to ‘hold the world in our arms...’
3. I’m going to work with the Executive Committee to encourage them to dialogue with the Schoharie Classis Executive Committee to explore the issues of collaboration and possible merger. I’m no longer going to hope that the Synod will be able to do this on their own and I’m no longer afraid of what a merger might do to us. 40 years ago we merged with the Saratoga Classis and we seem okay. Twice this last year I have heard an explicit call for help from them. I choose to not willingly abandon my friends. There are lots of issues when we think about changes on that level. We have great minds in this Classis who are great policy wonks!! We should at least explore this.

4. Finally, the Denomination seems as though it may be headed for a showdown in a couple weeks. It may be that those present will be able to hold the RCA together and find a way forward. BUT IF NOT, be courageous. Continue to do the work of Christ here where you have been called to serve.
- Visit Jacob's Well and have a cup of coffee with a friend or better yet, be courageous and share one with a stranger.
 - Pack backpacks with food for kids and families who need it. And then be courageous and preach against the principalities and powers that work to keep kids hungry.
 - Mentor kids through Kids Hope and then be courageous enough to work to fund our schools.
 - Continue to find ways to be the presence of Christ in the space and time in which we find ourselves.

When death comes like a hungry bear in autumn, I do not want it to find me questioning or afraid....

I am blessed to be part of this Classis in the midst of this Synod at this particular time in history. We've got a rough road in front of us, but I love that I can laugh with you. I love that we don't compete, but rather are trying to complement. I love that you are smart people who dream good dreams. I love that at the end of the day, we can all still hold hands.

Thank you for the honor of serving. On behalf of the entire Executive Committee thank you for your trust and support.

The vice president asked for a motion to receive the president's report. A motion was made and seconded from the floor.

R518-5 Voted: To receive the president's report with gratitude. (APPROVED)

President resumed the chair.

Treasurer's Report:

The 2018 First Quarter Report was presented. The President asked for a motion to receive this report. A motion was made from the floor and seconded to receive the 2018 First Quarter Report.

R518-5 Voted: to receive the 2018 First Quarter Report. (APPROVED)

Reports from Committees:

Executive Committee:

President Busman presented the following recommendations on behalf of the Executive Committee:

R518-5: To approve the proposed amendment from the February 2018 Stated Session to the bylaws of Schenectady Classis. (APPROVED)

Voted: To approve the proposed amendments to the bylaws of Schenectady Classis.

R518-6: To approve the proposed amendments to Section IX.a. (Church Supervision and Oversight membership).

The clerk noted that the text for the amendment had been left out of the Executive Committee Report and requested that the amendment be referred to the Overtures and Judicial Business Committee to be presented to the classis at a later date. A motion was made from the floor and seconded to refer the amendments to Section IX.a. to OJB.

R518-7 Voted: To refer the proposed amendments to Section IX.a to Overtures and Judicial Business. (APPROVED)

President Busman vacated the chair, and Clerk De Kruif presented the report on Nominations. The Executive Committee recommended the following nominations for the offices of President and Vice President:

To elect to the office of president, Rev. Kent Busman.

To elect to the office of vice president, Rev. Anne Reilly.

Nominations were welcomed from the floor.

Motion made and seconded to close nominations and voted on recommended nominations..

R518-8 Voted: To close nominations and vote on recommended nominations. (APPROVED)

Classis proceeded to a vote on the nominations of Rev. Kent Busman to the office of president and Rev. Anne Reilly to the office of Vice President.

R518-9 Voted: To elect to the office of president, Rev. Kent Busman and to elect to the office of vice president, Rev. Anne Reilly. (APPROVED)

A point of information was raised inquiring about a motion adopted by the classis at its October 2017 stated session directing the Executive Committee to develop a plan for classis assessments to be paid based on annual church income. The stated clerk informed the classis that the Executive Committee had failed to develop a plan but stated that the Executive Committee was willing to hear more specific proposals in the future.

Ministry Oversight 2 Committee: No written report. President and Chair Kent Busman thanked off going members, Rev. Lisa VanderWal, Rev. Joyce deVelder, and Brad Lewis and welcomed new members, Rev. Megan Hodgins, Rev. Janet Meyer Vincent, and Mark Fuez.

Overtures and Judicial Business (Ad-Hoc): Chair Jonathan Vanderbeck presented the report with following recommendation.

To dissolve the Ad-Hoc Overtures and Judicial Business Committee formed on November 2, 2017 by President Kent Busman, effective at the adjournment of the May stated session of the Reverend Schenectady Classis.

R518-9: Voted as above. (APPROVED)

Old Business: No old business presented.

New Business:

Overture on Unity: The Revs. Daniel Carlson, Lindsey De Kruif, Jason Fulkerson, Megan Hodgins, William Levering, and Matthew van Maastricht presented the following statement (reasons included) to the classis in an overture:

We, the Reverend Classis of Schenectady, within the Reformed Church in America, publicly declare our commitment to pursuing Christian ministry together. We celebrate the diversity within our assembly and pledge our unwavering support for one another, and our steadfast opposition to discrimination. We will not allow external tensions and disagreements to divide us or exclude those who serve among us.

Reasons:

- 1. The classis is the central unit of governance in the Reformed Church and, among other things, admits candidates to the ministry of the Word, accepts ministers into its bounds, and has exclusive jurisdiction for the oversight and care for its churches and ministers.*
- 2. Laboring in the service of Christ in our context demands that we reject the culture of fear, condemnation, and division present in the wider Reformed Church so that we might minister together, support one another, and spread the gospel of Jesus Christ. We cannot allow outside forces to harm our mutual witness.*

3. *In an affirming a 2012 position statement on same-sex marriage, the classis has already agreed “not to try any charge brought against on of its ministers because of his or her perspective on homosexuality or homosexual relationships, or for officiating at a same-gender marriage if that marriage was performed in accordance with the guidelines for marriage established by his or her consistory, or, in the case of specialized minister, by the classis. (Minutes of the October 2012 Stated Session of Schenectady Classis.)*

President Busman invited them to speak to the overture. Discussion followed. A point of order was raised regarding the fact that there was presently no business before the classis as no action had been made in response to the overture. The point was well taken. Therefore, in response, a motion was made and supported from the floor:

To declare that we, the Reverend Classis of Schenectady, within the Reformed Church in America, publicly declare our commitment to pursuing Christian ministry together. We celebrate the diversity within our assembly and pledge our unwavering support for one another, and our steadfast opposition to discrimination. We will not allow external tensions and disagreements to divide us or exclude those who serve among us.

A motion was made and supported from the floor to amend the original motion (underlines additions, ~~strikethroughs~~ deletions)

...those who serve among us-, and further, to direct the Overtures and Judicial Business committee to study the contents of this overture and to propose changes to the classis bylaws that accomplish the intent of this overture, with report back to classis with proposed changes at its October 2018 Stated Session.

R518-10 Voted: To approve the amendment to the motion. (APPROVED)

The motion as amended was before the house.

R518-11 Voted: To adopt the motion (as amended). (APPROVED)

The final text of the motion reads:

To declare that we, the Reverend Classis of Schenectady, within the Reformed Church in America, publicly declare our commitment to pursuing Christian ministry together. We celebrate the diversity within our assembly and pledge our unwavering support for one another, and our steadfast opposition to discrimination. We will not allow external tensions and disagreements to divide us or exclude those who serve among us, and further, to direct the Overtures and Judicial Business committee to study the contents of this overture and to propose changes to the classis bylaws that accomplish the intent of this overture, with report back to classis with proposed changes at its October 2018 Stated Session. (ADOPTED)

A motion was made and supported from the floor:

MOTION: To direct the Stated Clerk of Schenectady Classis to submit this to all the classes in the Reformed Church in America.

A point of information was raised asking for clarification about the word “this” in the motion, as to whether or not this referred to the text of the submitted overture or the adopted motion. It was clarified that “this” referred to the adopted motion. The President ruled that the motion being considered should be read as “the previously adopted motion” in place of “this.” This amendment was approved by common consent.

R518-12 Voted: To adopt the motion (as amended). (APPROVED)

The final text of the motion reads:

To direct the Stated Clerk of Schenectady Classis to submit the previously adopted motion to all the classes in the Reformed Church in America (ADOPTED).

The clerk brought forward the contracts of Rev. Jonathan Vanderbeck, serving Trinity Reformed Church (Rotterdam) and Rev. John Hoperich, serving Amity Reformed (Rexford) to be renewed by the classis. The Book of Church order requires the classis to approve the contracts of ministers serving under contract annually. The clerk noted there was no substantive changes to Rev. Vanderbeck’s contract, and inquired of Rev. Kent McHeard, supervisor of Amity regarding the contract of Rev. Hoperich. Rev. McHeard reported no substantive changes. The president asked for a motion to approve these contracts. A motion was made and seconded from the floor.

R518-13 Voted: To approve contracts of Rev. Jonathan Vanderbeck and Rev. John Hoperich. (APPROVED)

A request to send President’s report prior to the distribution of the minutes. The clerk noted the request and will follow up.

Rev. Johan Bosman raised from the floor a motion requesting a resolution be made resolution, honoring Rev. Scott De Block’s two decades of ministry in the classis. Rev. DeBlock served the Niskayuna Reformed Church until 2015, and recently transferred his membership to Albany Presbytery. The motion was seconded.

R518-14 Voted: To offer a resolution in honor of Rev. Scott DeBlock’s two decades of ministry within the Classis of Schenectady. (APPROVED)

Request made to make resolution honoring Rev. Adrian Gray, who died May 16, 2018. The Executive Committee will follow up.

Adjournment:

The president called for the meeting to adjourn following closing prayer and affirmations.

Meeting adjourned at 8:53 pm with closing prayer of the hymn “God of Grace and God of Glory.”