

**The Minutes of
the Special Session of
the Reverend Classis of Schenectady
January 25, 2019— 9:00 AM
Christ Community Reformed Church**

Attendance:

Present:

*Ministers: K. Busman, L. DeKruif, J. Fulkerson, L. Battjes, J. Vanderbeck, J. Meyer
Vincent, J. Legg, M. Hodgins, K. McHeard, J. Bosman, J. White, G. Szantner*

Elders: J. Pettis, Jr., T. Pangburn, M. Rand, J. Moak, K. Clement

Guests: L. Coonie, J. Baird, J. Hoerich

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Call to Order: President Busman called the meeting to order at 9:06 AM. Announcements were made.

Privilege of the Floor: A motion was made to give guests privilege of the floor. M/S/C

Opening Worship: President Busman led the classis in a devotional service.

Presentation from Dr. David Olsen, Samaritan Counseling Center:

President Busman welcomed Dr. David Olsen, our presenter from Samaritan Counseling Center, and the guests of the classis.

Dr. Olsen took the floor and led the classis in Boundaries Awareness Training.

At the conclusion of Dr. Olsen's presentation, President Busman closed the meeting in prayer and called for the meeting to be adjourned.

Adjournment: The meeting was adjourned at 1:00 pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Rev. Lindsey De Kruif, Stated Clerk

**The Minutes of
the Stated Session of
The Reverend Classis of Schenectady
February 26, 2019— 7:00 PM
Altamont Reformed Church, Altamont**

ATTENDANCE:

PRESENT:

Enrolled Ministers: K. Busman (president), L. De Kruif (clerk), D. Carlson, J. deVelder, S. Duensing, J. Fulkerson, M. Hodgin, J. Marvel, K. McHeard, R. Scheenstra, G. Szantner, J. Vanderbeck, M. van Maastricht, J. Vincent Meyer, Ja. White, Jo. White

Elder Delegates: T. Pangburn (Altamont), P. Lansing (Amity), T. Flynn (Amity), J. Pettis, Jr. (Bacon Hill), K. Hileman (Bellevue), K. Clement (Christ Community), B. Haringa (Cobblestone), T. deJong (Ft. Miller), D. Walsh (FRC Scotia), C. Tashijan (Helderberg), M. Rand (Lisha's Kill), L. Smith (Lynnwood), T. Lehner (Niskayuna), S. Combs (Old Saratoga), L. L. Lumbra (Trinity), A. Westfall (Trinity), K. Hayner (W. Glenville), K. Brittain (Woestina)

Retired Ministers: None

Preaching Elders: J. Moak, C. LaSalle, C. Jackson, L. Smith

Candidates: H. Kramer

Guests: J. Hoeplich, K. Grosch, M. Fuez

Officers: V. Hayner (treasurer)

Rev. Kent McHeard (a minister of classis) attended this Stated Session as a representative of the General Synod Council, and Rev. Jason Fulkerson (a minister of classis) attended this Stated Session as representative of Regional Synod in his role as president.

ABSENT WITH NOTICE: L. Battjes, L. VanderWal, W. Schutter, W. Levering, J. Legg

ABSENT WITHOUT NOTICE: J. Bork, J. Bosman, B. Doolittle, T. McCrossan, A. Reilly

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Worship: The classis gathered with opening worship led by the Reverend Matthew van Maastricht. He preached on Isaiah 6.

Call to Order by President Busman at 7:24 PM.

The President called for a quorum. Clerk De Kruif declared a quorum. The President appointed Jason Fulkerson and Jake Marvel as tellers for the duration of the meeting.

The president asked for a motion to give privilege of the floor to guests of the classis. A motion was made and supported from the floor to give privilege of the floor to guests.

Voted R-219-1: To grant privilege of the floor to guests of classis. (APPROVED)

Approval of the Agenda: The clerk made note of additions to be added to 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-219-2: to approve agenda. (APPROVED)

Presentation: Mr. Peter Lion of the Center of Economic Growth (Director of Sustainability) and member of First Reformed Schenectady presented to the classis on the topic of reducing the carbon footprint within our churches. The Center for Economic Growth is a not-for-profit which serves eight county region around capital region. Mr. Lion works with businesses coming to Capital Region providing them with resources to reduce their output of carbon. He has led an initiative at FRC Schenectady to make their building more environmentally sustainable. Resources from his presentation are available on the classis website.

Approval of the Minutes: The President asked a motion to approve the minutes of the October 2018 Stated Session. Motion from floor and seconded.

Voted R-219-3: To approve the minutes of the October 2018 Stated Session. (APPROVED)

Approval of Special Session (Boundaries Awareness)

Voted R-219-4: To approve the minutes of the January 2019 Special Session. (APPROVED)

Review of Elders' Minutes: Those present exchanged minutes of their boards of elders to be reviewed. The minutes of the following congregation were reviewed: Altamont, Amity, Bacon Hill, Bellevue, Cobblestone, FRC-Schenectady, FRC-Scotia, Helderberg, Lynnwood, Niskayuna Old Saratoga, West Glenville, and Woestina. Minutes were not received from Christ Community, Fort Miller, Lisha's Kill, and Trinity.

Clerk Items:

The Clerk noted the rotation of delegates to the 2019 General Synod in Holland, MI, June 6-11. Rev. Jason White and Rev. Ben Dolittle have been appointed as minister delegates. Elder Sunny

Baldwin (FRC Scotia) and Elder Bradley Lewis (FRC Schenectady) have been appointed as elder delegates.

The Clerk noted the rotation of delegates to the 2019 Regional Synod of Albany at Camp Fowler, May 5-6. Rev. Jeremy Bork, Rev. Megan Hodgkin, Rev. Matthew van Maastrich, and Rev. Stacey Duensing have been appointed as minister delegates. Elders Ken Hayner (West Glenville), Sunny Baldwin (FRC Scotia), Jim Pettis, Jr. (Bacon Hill), and Chris Murphy (Bellevue) have been appointed as elder delegates. Delegates can look for registration information in their email from Camp Fowler.

The Clerk noted that the Regional Synod is seeking nominations for their Personal, Finance, and Overtures and Judicial Business Committees. Interested persons may reach out to the clerk. Schenectady Classis also must fill vacancies on the Executive Committee (must be a minister) and the Synod Ministries Board (may not be a minister). Nominations must be made by mid April. Speak to the clerk if you are interested in serving or have a nomination to make.

The Clerk thanked those who have submitted their consistorial report forms online and reminded those who have not yet completed them to do so soon. The Clerk also gather the Constitutional Inquiry reports from those gathered.

The Clerk also noted that the Regional Synod is accepting applications for their Fellowship Program until May 1. Churches interested in serving as fellowship sites are encouraged to contact the Regional Synod for application information. Collaboration between churches is encouraged.

The Clerk noted the dates of the 2019 stated sessions of classis will be held on May 28, 2019 at Lynnwood Reformed Church and on October 22, 2019 at Trinity Reformed Church. The February 2020 Stated Session will be held at Christ Community Reformed Church on February 25, 2020.

Treasurer's Report:

The 2018 End of Year Financial Report was received. A motion was made to receive this report and seconded.

VOTED R-219-5: To receive the 2018 End of Year Financial Report. (APPROVED)

Consent Agenda: The consent agenda was presented and included reports of the Church Supervision and Oversight Committee, the Ministry Oversight Committee, and the Synod Ministries Board. The President asked for a motion from the floor to receive the reports presented. A motion was made and seconded.

VOTED R-219-6: To receive the consent agenda. (APPROVED)

Committee Reports

Executive Committee

President Busman announced the appointment of Victoria Hayner (member of West Glenville) as the treasurer of Schenectady Classis. Per the Classis Bylaws, Mrs. Hayner must be elected to fulfill the remaining term of Mr. James Burnetter. President Busman presented the following recommendation:

VOTED R-219-6: To elect Victoria Hayner to position of treasurer for the remainder of the unexpired term vacated by James Burnetter. (APPROVED)

President Busman noted the investment of classis funds approved by the Executive Committee; an investment of \$100,000 in Fenimore Assess Management and \$100,000 in the Community Loan Fund of the Capital Region.

Clerk De Kruif presented on behalf of the Executive Committee, a resolution honoring Rev. Stacey Midge, who transferred to Cincinnati Presbytery on February 16, 2019. The classis voted that the following resolution be spread across the minutes of the Reverend Schenectady Classis and sent to the Presbytery of Cincinnati to be shared with its members.

VOTED: R-219-7 That the following resolution be spread across the minutes of the Reverend Schenectady Classis and sent to the Presbytery of Cincinnati to be shared with its members:

Resolution of Thanksgiving and Affirmation for the service and ministry of the Reverend Stacey Midge

WHEREAS the Reverend Schenectady Classis is an assembly and judicatory within the Reformed Church in America; and

WHEREAS the classis is the body that oversees and cares for ministers and churches in its care; and

WHEREAS the Reverend Stacey Midge, who was ordained as a Minister of Word and Sacrament by the Reverend Classis of Central Iowa on July 20, 2003, and has served within our bounds as a Minister of Word and Sacrament in good and regular standing for the past ten years, has now been released to the care of the Presbytery of Cincinnati where she serves as the senior minister of the Mount Auburn Presbyterian Church; and

WHEREAS the Reverend Midge has served the congregations of our classis faithfully as the Associate Minister for Youth, Mission and Outreach at the First Reformed Church of Schenectady, and supervisor of the Niskayuna Reformed Church and Trinity Reformed Church; and

WHEREAS the Reverend Midge has served our classis faithfully as Vice President, President, and Past President of our classis and led an overhaul of our classis structure to ensure that “good, decent, and in order” would actually mean something; and

WHEREAS the Reverend Midge has served our denomination faithfully as chair of the Regional Synod of Albany Overtures and Judicial Business committee, vice presidential nominee to the General Synod, and moderator of the Commission for Women, among countless other jobs, positions, and roles both great and small; and

WHEREAS the Reverend Midge has served ALL of God’s people faithfully through her tireless advocacy and justice for all people in participating on the Belhar Confession Implementation Taskforce, advocating to eliminate the conscience clauses from the Book of Church order, and serving as a founding board member of “Room for All,” working for the inclusion of LGBTQ people in the full life and ministry of the church, which, thanks to her work, has included at least four Ministers of Word and Sacrament in this classis alone; THEREFORE be it:

RESOLVED, that the Reverend Schenectady Classis:

offers profound thanks and gratitude to the Reverend Stacey Midge for her years of dedicated service to the denomination, classis, and local congregation and send her forth with our blessing into these new endeavors with the Presbyterian Church (USA).

*Done this day in stated session of the Reverend Schenectady Classis, on the twenty-sixth day of February, in the year of our Lord, two thousand and nineteen.
(APPROVED)*

Overtures and Judicial Business:

Chair Jonathan Vanderbeck presented the recommendations on the changes to the Book of Church order to be voted upon by the classis as follows:

VOTED R-219-8:To approve Proposed Change #1 titled “Eligibility to Vote on Amendments to the Constitution of the Reformed Church in America” and to direct the Stated Clerk to submit the results of this vote to the office of the General Secretary of the Reformed Church in America. (APPROVED)

VOTED R-219-9:To deny Proposed Change #2 titled “Regional Synod Superintendence of Classes” and to direct the Stated Clerk to submit the results of this vote to the office of the General Secretary of the Reformed Church in America. (APPROVED)

VOTED R-219-10: To approve Proposed Change #3 titled “Modifications to Formulary #5” and to direct the Stated Clerk to submit the results of this vote to the office of the General Secretary of the Reformed Church in America. (APPROVED)

Chair Vanderbeck continued the report with the following recommendations to the bylaws of classis;

VOTED R-219-11: To approve, on second reading, the ten submitted amendments to the *Bylaws* from the October 2018 Stated Session that were approved on first reading and declare them officially approved. (APPROVED)

Chair Vanderbeck presented the following overture:

R-219-12: *To direct the Stated Clerk to submit the following overture and reasons to the office of the General Secretary.*

The Reverend Classis of Schenectady overtures the General Synod:

To urge RCA institutions, congregations and members to take immediate steps to begin to reduce fossil fuel consumption and transition to renewable energy; and further,

To direct the General Synod Council, in conjunction with the Advocacy Initiative, to develop a means for gathering information and sharing stories to help encourage and equip RCA institutions, congregations and members to take steps to reduce fossil fuel consumption; and further,

To instruct the Commission on Christian Action, in consultation with the Global Mission Team and the General Synod Council, to prepare a preliminary assessment of the effects of projected climate change (sea level rise, increasing frequency of extreme weather events such as droughts and floods, food shortages, the growing number of environmental refugees, etc.) on RCA congregations, mission facilities and programs and to suggest measures for addressing these challenges; and further,

To instruct the Commission on Christian Action to review the previous 1993 Christian Action report, “Global Warming,” and the 1999 report, “Climate Change Update,” and to report to the General Synod in 2020 with additional recommendations for resources and actions to help the church more faithfully care for God’s creation and be a bold and compassionate witness in a time of environmental and social crisis.

Reasons:

1. *The 1993 Christian Action report, “Global Warming” (MGS 1993, pp 98 - 103), stated that “the greatest priority must be to reduce the use of fossil fuels, particularly coal and oil” and called on churches “to play a positive role with wise purchases and an active*

educational efforts to inform members about the cause and consequences of global warming and the steps that are necessary to reduce this danger” (p.100). In response to that report the General Synod voted:

1. *to instruct the general secretary to write letters to governmental leaders in the United States and Canada “urging support for national and international policies to reduce the emissions of greenhouse gases, to curb deforestation and to promote reforestation” (p. 102).*
 2. *called on pastors “to prepare special liturgies and sermons so that members may be equipped to understand environmental issues from the biblical perspective of creation and stewardship.”*
 3. *called on churches “to improve the energy efficiency of church buildings and appliances...”*
 4. *encouraged “RCA camps and conference centers to stress environmental issues in their programs and to model environmental stewardship in their operations” (103).*
2. *The 1999 report of the Christian Action Commission, “Climate Change Update,” (MGS 1999, pp. 98 - 104) noted that addressing climate change is:*
5. *a matter of faithfulness to the Biblical mandate “to till and to keep” the garden of creation.*
 6. *an issue of justice. The poor, the marginalized and future generations will suffer the most from the effects of climate change, while the wealthier and those in the more developed nations have been responsible for most of the greenhouse gas emissions.*
 7. *a means of fulfilling the Biblical command to love our neighbors as ourselves. We cannot ignore the plight of our neighbors who are already suffering as a result of global climate change.*
3. *Since those reports were presented to the synod the threat of climate change has become even more severe. Twenty-five years ago when the first Christian Action paper on global warming was presented the CO2 level in the atmosphere was approximately 350 parts per million. Today it is more than 400 parts per million. U.S. carbon emissions jumped by 3.4% in 2018, the biggest rise in eight years. The 20 warmest years on record have been in the past 22 years, and 2018 was the 4th warmest year on record. The most recent report (October 2018) of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, a U.N.-sponsored collection of the world’s top scientists, stated that the world may have as little as 12 years to act to limit global warming to 1.5 degrees Celsius. If we don’t act to reduce fossil fuel emissions the consequences will be catastrophic, according to the report.*

Drought and poverty would intensify. There would be food shortages, more devastating wildfires, coastal flooding, an increasing number of environmental refugees, and coral reefs would die-off at an alarming rate. “Several hundred million” lives are at stake, according to the IPCC.

1. *The U.S. National Climate Assessment released in November 2018 reported that climate change could cause hundreds of billions of dollars in annual damage in the U.S. as deadly heat waves, wildfires, crop failures, coastal flooding, and an increase in extreme weather events take their toll. The report estimates that the cost to the United States economy of projected climate impacts would be \$141 billion from heat-related deaths, \$118 billion from sea level rise and \$32 billion from infrastructure damage by the end of the century, among others. The nation's farm belt is likely to be among the hardest-hit regions. By 2050, if action is not taken, the scientists forecast that changes in rainfall and hotter temperatures will reduce the agricultural productivity of the Midwest to levels last seen in the 1980s. "This report draws a direct connection between the warming atmosphere and the resulting changes that affect Americans' lives, communities, and livelihoods, now and in the future," the document reads, concluding that "the evidence of human-caused climate change is overwhelming and continues to strengthen, that the impacts of climate change are intensifying across the country, and that climate-related threats to Americans' physical, social, and economic well-being are rising."*
2. *The 2018 report of the Lancet Countdown on health and climate change noted that above-average and record-setting temperatures in the U.S., and heat waves have been getting more frequent and lasting longer and puts people at risk for heat exhaustion and heat stroke while worsening chronic conditions such as lung, heart, and kidney disease. One estimate predicts that by 2050, approximately 3,400 more Americans will die prematurely each year as a result of increased heat. According to the report, climate change is also elevating the risk of mosquito-, tick-, and water-borne diseases. Climate-sensitive vector-borne illnesses transmitted by mosquitoes, ticks, and fleas, including Lyme disease and West Nile virus, tripled between 2004-2016. Longer warm water seasons and increased water temperatures support pathogens and bacteria, like Vibrio, which can cause gastrointestinal illnesses, food poisoning, skin infections, and even death.*
3. *Similar data can be cited for the nation of Canada. Average temperatures in Canada have increased by 1.7 degrees Celsius since 1948. The nation has experienced a higher rate of warming than most other regions of the world, particularly in its far-north and west. Cases of Lyme disease have been reported across Canada, in areas where it was never thought to exist. In early July 2018, a heat wave in the southern part of the Canadian province of Québec took the lives of up to 54 people. The Canadian Arctic is especially vulnerable and it is warming at a much faster rate than much of the rest of the world. Scientists are already seeing dramatic reductions in Arctic sea ice cover, particularly in the summertime. This shrinking sea ice disrupts normal ocean circulation and causes changes in climate and weather around the globe. <https://www.canada.ca/en/services/environment/weather/climatechange/causes-effects.html> <https://www.climaterealityproject.org/blog/how-climate-change-affecting-canada> <https://www.cbc.ca/natureofthings/blog/how-climate-change-is-already-affecting-canada>*

4. *There are small signs of hope, signs that the Spirit is at work among us. “The creation waits with eager longing for the revealing of the children of God” (Ro. 8:19), wrote Paul, suggesting that creation itself is yearning for the children of God to fulfill their biblical mandate “to till and keep” the earth. But the need for action is urgent. We are the first generation to feel the impact of climate change and the last generation able to do something about it. By working together we can more faithfully care for God’s good earth, protect the lives of the poor and vulnerable, show love for our neighbors, and in word and deed witness to God’s promise “that the creation itself will be set free from its bondage to decay and will obtain the freedom of the glory of the children of God” (Romans 8:21).*

A motion was made and supported from the floor to amend the overture as follows (underlines additions, ~~strikethroughs~~ deletions):

(...)

To instruct the General Synod Council ~~Commission on Christian Action~~, in consultation with the Global Mission Team and the Commission on Christian Action ~~General Synod Council~~, to prepare a preliminary assessment of the effects of projected climate change (sea level rise, increasing frequency of extreme weather events such as droughts and floods, food shortages, the growing number of environmental refugees, etc.) on RCA congregations, mission facilities and programs and to suggest measures for addressing these challenges; and further,

(...)

VOTED: Indeterminate

A motion was made to call for division of the house. The President called for a rising vote.

VOTED: To not adopt the amendment.

R-219-12 was again before the house.

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

4. Nevertheless, there is cause for hope. Increasing awareness, advances in technology, and renewed commitment to the ministry of creation care are making change possible. As examples, Christian camps within our denomination have significantly reduced its fossil fuel consumption by installing solar panels and implementing other energy conservation measures. Multiple churches have made care of creation a central priority in their congregation, including a decision to eliminate investments in the fossil fuel industry from a portion of their endowment funds and to re-invest in renewable energy. The RCA Care of Creation Initiative coordinated by Earl James

and in partnership with Creation Justice Ministries has held several workshops and training events to equip congregations to address climate change and other threats to the well-being of God's creation.

~~These~~ There are small signs of hope, signs that the Spirit is at work among us. "The creation waits with eager longing for the revealing of the children of God" (Ro. 8:19), wrote Paul, suggesting that creation itself is yearning for the children of God to fulfill their biblical mandate "to till and keep" the earth. But the need for action is urgent. We are the first generation to feel the impact of climate change and the last generation able to do something about it. By working together we can more faithfully care for God's good earth, protect the lives of the poor and vulnerable, show love for our neighbors, and in word and deed witness to God's promise "that the creation itself will be set free from its bondage to decay and will obtain the freedom of the glory of the children of God" (Romans 8:21).

VOTED: To adopt the amendment.

The overture as amended was before the house.

VOTED: To adopt overture as amended.

The final version of **R-219-12** as amended reads as follows:

To direct the Stated Clerk to submit the following overture and reasons to the office of the General Secretary.

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To instruct the Commission on Christian Action to review the previous 1993 Christian Action report, “Global Warming,” and the 1999 report, “Climate Change Update,” and to report to the General Synod in 2020 with additional recommendations for resources and actions to help the church more faithfully care for God’s creation and be a bold and compassionate witness in a time of environmental and social crisis.

Reasons:

1) The 1993 Christian Action report, “Global Warming” (MGS 1993, pp 98 - 103), stated that “the greatest priority must be to reduce the use of fossil fuels, particularly coal and oil” and called on churches “to play a positive role with wise purchases and an active educational efforts to inform members about the cause and consequences of global warming and the steps that are necessary to reduce this danger” (p.100). In response to that report the General Synod voted:

1. to instruct the general secretary to write letters to governmental leaders in the United States and Canada “urging support for national and international policies to reduce the emissions of greenhouse gases, to curb deforestation and to promote reforestation” (p. 102).
2. called on pastors “to prepare special liturgies and sermons so that members may be equipped to understand environmental issues from the biblical perspective of creation and stewardship.”
3. called on churches “to improve the energy efficiency of church buildings and appliances...”
4. encouraged “RCA camps and conference centers to stress environmental issues in their programs and to model environmental stewardship in their operations” (103).

2) The 1999 report of the Christian Action Commission, “Climate Change Update,” (MGS 1999, pp. 98 - 104) noted that addressing climate change is:

1. a matter of faithfulness to the Biblical mandate “to till and to keep” the garden of creation.
2. an issue of justice. The poor, the marginalized and future generations will suffer the most from the effects of climate change, while the wealthier and those in the more developed nations have been responsible for most of the greenhouse gas emissions.
3. a means of fulfilling the Biblical command to love our neighbors as ourselves. We cannot ignore the plight of our neighbors who are already suffering as a result of global climate change.

3) Since those reports were presented to the synod the threat of climate change has become even more severe. Twenty–five years ago when the first Christian Action paper on global warming was presented the CO2 level in the atmosphere was approximately 350 parts per million. Today it is more than 400 parts per million. U.S. carbon emissions jumped by 3.4% in 2018, the biggest rise in eight years. The 20 warmest years on record have been in the

past 22 years, and 2018 was the 4th warmest year on record. The most recent report (October 2018) of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, a U.N.-sponsored collection of the world's top scientists, stated that the world may have as little as 12 years to act to limit global warming to 1.5 degrees Celsius. If we don't act to reduce fossil fuel emissions the consequences will be catastrophic, according to the report.

Drought and poverty would intensify. There would be food shortages, more devastating wildfires, coastal flooding, an increasing number of environmental refugees, and coral reefs would die-off at an alarming rate. "Several hundred million" lives are at stake, according to the IPCC.

1. The U.S. National Climate Assessment released in November 2018 reported that climate change could cause hundreds of billions of dollars in annual damage in the U.S. as deadly heat waves, wildfires, crop failures, coastal flooding, and an increase in extreme weather events take their toll. The report estimates that the cost to the United States economy of projected climate impacts would be \$141 billion from heat-related deaths, \$118 billion from sea level rise and \$32 billion from infrastructure damage by the end of the century, among others. The nation's farm belt is likely to be among the hardest-hit regions. By 2050, if action is not taken, the scientists forecast that changes in rainfall and hotter temperatures will reduce the agricultural productivity of the Midwest to levels last seen in the 1980s. "This report draws a direct connection between the warming atmosphere and the resulting changes that affect Americans' lives, communities, and livelihoods, now and in the future," the document reads, concluding that "the evidence of human-caused climate change is overwhelming and continues to strengthen, that the impacts of climate change are intensifying across the country, and that climate-related threats to Americans' physical, social, and economic well-being are rising."
2. The 2018 report of the *Lancet* Countdown on health and climate change noted that above-average and record-setting temperatures in the U.S., and heat waves have been getting more frequent and lasting longer and puts people at risk for heat exhaustion and heat stroke while worsening chronic conditions such as lung, heart, and kidney disease. One estimate predicts that by 2050, approximately 3,400 more Americans will die prematurely each year as a result of increased heat. According to the report, climate change is also elevating the risk of mosquito-, tick-, and water-borne diseases. Climate-sensitive vector-borne illnesses transmitted by mosquitoes, ticks, and fleas, including Lyme disease and West Nile virus, tripled between 2004-2016. Longer warm water seasons and increased water temperatures support pathogens and bacteria, like *Vibrio*, which can cause gastrointestinal illnesses, food poisoning, skin infections, and even death.
3. Similar data can be cited for the nation of Canada. Average temperatures in Canada have increased by 1.7 degrees Celsius since 1948. The nation has experienced a higher rate of warming than most other regions of the world, particularly in its far-north and west. Cases of Lyme disease have been reported across Canada, in areas

where it was never thought to exist. In early July 2018, a heat wave in the southern part of the Canadian province of Québec took the lives of up to 54 people. The Canadian Arctic is especially vulnerable and it is warming at a much faster rate than much of the rest of the world. Scientists are already seeing dramatic reductions in Arctic sea ice cover, particularly in the summertime. This shrinking sea ice disrupts normal ocean circulation and causes changes in climate and weather around the globe. <https://www.canada.ca/en/services/environment/weather/climatechange/causes-effects.html> <https://www.climaterealityproject.org/blog/how-climate-change-affecting-canada> <https://www.cbc.ca/natureofthings/blog/how-climate-change-is-already-affecting-canada>

4) Nevertheless, there is cause for hope. Increasing awareness, advances in technology, and renewed commitment to the ministry of creation care are making change possible. As examples, Christian camps within our denomination have significantly reduced its fossil fuel consumption by installing solar panels and implementing other energy conservation measures. Multiple churches have made care of creation a central priority in their congregation, including a decision to eliminate investments in the fossil fuel industry from a portion of their endowment funds and to re-invest in renewable energy. The RCA Care of Creation Initiative coordinated by Earl James and in partnership with Creation Justice Ministries has held several workshops and training events to equip congregations to address climate change and other threats to the well-being of God's creation.

These are small signs of hope, signs that the Spirit is at work among us. "The creation waits with eager longing for the revealing of the children of God" (Ro. 8:19), wrote Paul, suggesting that creation itself is yearning for the children of God to fulfill their biblical mandate "to till and keep" the earth. But the need for action is urgent. We are the first generation to feel the impact of climate change and the last generation able to do something about it. By working together we can more faithfully care for God's good earth, protect the lives of the poor and vulnerable, show love for our neighbors, and in word and deed witness to God's promise "that the creation itself will be set free from its bondage to decay and will obtain the freedom of the glory of the children of God" (Romans 8:21). (ADOPTED)

Chair Vanderbeck continued the report and brought the following recommendations regarding the amendment of the bylaws.

R-219-13: To approve the following amendment to the *Bylaws* of the Reverend Schenectady Classis on first reading and for submission to the May 2019 Stated Session for final approval. (underlines insertions, ~~strikethroughs~~ deletions):

Article IV. Officers of Classis and Election

(...)

Sec. 3 Terms of office are as follows:

(...)

b. The terms of office for Stated Clerk and Treasurer are three years. Each may be elected to one consecutive terms.

Discussion was held and confusion was expressed around the language of the proposed change. A motion was made to refer back to OJB.

VOTED: Motion to refer back to committee (APPROVED)

VOTED R-2-19-14: To approve the following amendment to the *Bylaws* of the Reverend Schenectady Classis on first reading and for submission to the May 2019 Stated Session for final approval. (underlines insertions, strikethroughs deletions):

Article III. Sessions of Classis

Sec. 1 Stated sessions shall ordinarily be the fourth Tuesdays of February, May, and October. (APPROVED)

Old Business: No old business presented.

New Business:

One item of new business was brought:

A motion was made and supported to adopt the following resolution:

WHEREAS: The Classis of Schenectady has long been committed to the witness of unity in the midst of diversity, and;

WHEREAS: The Classis of Schenectady has been a witness to the broader church on how to “be in this together, for good”

WHEREAS: The Classis of Schenectady has adopted a bylaw of non-discrimination in regards to LGBTQ people and has rejected division, even in the midst of our differing views, and;

WHEREAS: The General Conference of the United Methodist Church today, February 26, 2019, voted to codify discriminatory practices into church law, barring LGBTQ people from being ordained and from same-sex couples from

marrying, which will result in inexplicable harm to LGBTQ people, and;

WHEREAS: The witness of the broader church is harmed when discrimination against any people is the rule of the church, therefore, be it:

RESOLVED: That the Classis of Schenectady offers prayers to our LGBTQ siblings in Christ who have experienced and will experience discrimination as a result of this decision, calls upon all those who have caused harm to repent, and recommits our witness to the broader church to be “in this together, for good.”

Adopted unanimously in full stated session, this twenty-sixth day of February, in the year of our Lord, two-thousand nineteen. (APPROVED)

VOTED R-219-15: To adopt the motion.

The president asked the classis to pray for our Methodist brothers and sisters. Rev. Vanderbeck led the classis in prayer.

A motion was made and supported from the floor:

To direct the Stated Clerk of the Classis, in consultation with the Classis Executive Committee, to send the previously adopted resolution to all appropriate assemblies and judicatories within the UMC and our denomination.

VOTED R-219-16: To adopt the motion.

Adjournment:

The president called for the meeting to adjourn following closing prayer and affirmations. Motion to adjourn and the president called for a vote. (APPROVED)

Meeting adjourned at 9:03 pm with closing prayer by the president.

Respectfully submitted,

Rev. Lindsey De Kruif, Stated Clerk

**The Minutes of
the Stated Session of
The Reverend Classis of Schenectady
May 28, 2019— 7:00 PM
Lynnwood Reformed Church, Guilderland, NY**

Attendance:

Present:

Enrolled Ministers: K. Busman (president), L. De Kruif (clerk), J. Legg, M. Van Maastricht, R. Scheenstra, D. Carlson, L. Battjes, M. Hodgins, Ja. White, R.G. Szantner, S. Duensing, J. Fulkerson, J. Vanderbeck, Jo. White, K. McHeard

Elder Delegates: T. Pangburn, T. Flynn, J. Pettis, T. Knuttie, B. Haringa, T. De Jong, M. Leach, D. Schalekamp, J. Healey, M. Rand, L. Smith, T. Lehner, S. Combs, L. L. Lumbra, A. Westfall, K. Hayner, K. Brittain

Retired Ministers: None

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

Candidates: H. Kramer

Guests: M. Fuez, J. Gonda, E. Nichols

Absent with notice: *J. Marvel, J. Meyer Vincent, W. Levering, J. deVelder, V. Hayner (treasurer)*

Absent without notice: *J. Bosman, T. McCrossan, B. Doolittle, J. Bork, W. Schutter*

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Worship: The classis gathered with opening worship led by the Reverend Stacey Duensing and Reverend Garret Szantner

Call to Order by President Busman at 7:40 PM.

The President called for a quorum. Clerk De Kruif declared a quorum. The President appointed Rev. Jason White and Rev. Jordan White as tellers for the duration of the meeting.

The president asked for a motion to give privilege of the floor to guests of the classis. A motion was made and supported from the floor to give privilege of the floor to guests.

Voted R-519-1: To grant privilege of the floor to guests of classis. (APPROVED)

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-519-2: to approve agenda. (APPROVED)

Approval of the Minutes: The President asked a motion to approve the minutes of the February 2019 Stated Session. Motion from floor and seconded.

Voted R-519-3: To approve the minutes of the February 2019 Stated Session. (APPROVED)

Clerk Items:

The Clerk noted the rotation of delegates to the 2019 General Synod in Holland, MI, June 6-11. Rev. Jason White and Rev. Ben Dolittle have been appointed as minister delegates. Elder Sunny Baldwin (FRC Scotia) and Elder Bradley Lewis (FRC Schenectady) have been appointed as elder delegates.

The Clerk noted the rotation of delegates to the 2020 Regional and General Synods. Ministers to be appointed as delegates for the 2020 Regional Synod (in Syracuse) are Rev. Jennifer Legg, Rev. Tom McCrossan, Rev. Johan Bosman, Rev. Richard Scheenstra. Churches to appoint delegates to the 2020 Regional Synod include: Bellevue, Trinity, Lynnwood, and Christ Community. Ministers to be appointed as delegates for the 2020 General Synod (in Orange City, IA) are Rev. Jeremy Bork and Rev. Megan Hodgins. Churches to appoint delegates to the 2020 General Synod include: Bacon Hill and Cobblestone.

The Clerk presented the 2018 Constitutional Inquiry Report. A motion was made **to receive this report to be entered into the minutes of classis.**

Voted R-519-4: To accept the motion. (APPROVED)

The Clerk noted that the Rev. Liam Battjes' contract with First Reformed, Schenectady will end in June 2019.

The Clerk noted the dates of the 2019-2020 stated sessions of classis will be held on October 22, 2019 at Trinity Reformed Church, on February 25, 2020 at Christ Community Reformed Church, and on May 26, 2020 at First Reformed Church, Schenectady.

Rev. Jonathan Vanderbeck (Chair, OJB) presented the portion of the Overtures and Judicial Business regarding bylaw changes, which affect the scheduling of Stated Sessions of Classis.

The following recommendation was made from the committee:

To approve, on second reading, the submitted amendment to the *Bylaws* from the February 2019 Stated Session that was approved on first reading and declare it officially approved.

Article III. Sessions of Classis

Sec. 1 Stated sessions shall ordinarily be the fourth Tuesdays of February, May, and October. (APPROVED)

Voted R-519-5: To approve the recommendation of the committee (APPROVED)

The clerk announced that Trinity Reformed Church requested the date of the October 2019 Stated Session be changed to Monday, October 28, 2019. The original date is in conflict with their 12-Step ministry that meets weekly in their facilities. A motion was made and seconded from the floor **to change the date of the October Stated Session from Tuesday, October 22 to Monday, October 28.**

Voted R-519-6: To move the October 2019 Stated Session to Monday, October 28. (APPROVED)

Treasurer's Report:

The 2019 First Quarter Financial Report was received. Busman noted highlights of the report. A motion was made to receive this report and seconded. Motion to receive the report, seconded and carried.

VOTED R-519-7: To receive the 2019 First Quarter Financial Report. (APPROVED)

Consent Agenda: The consent agenda was presented and included reports of the Synod Ministries Board, the Regional Synod of Albany, Church Oversight and Supervision, Ministry Oversight, and the Specialized Ministry Report. A request was made to remove the RSA Albany School of Ministry report from the consent agenda. The president removed the report from the consent agenda and opened up discussion on the report. The president invited participants who took part in the preaching elder conversation with the Regional Synod in April to speak. This was a Synod-wide conversation regarding the training and care of preaching elders. It was noted that many pulpits are empty throughout the Regional Synod and that preaching elders provide an important ministry. A pilot program for the Albany School of Ministry has been initiated by Albany Classis, and classes throughout the Regional Synod have been invited to participate in the formation of the program. Classes will collaborate together using resources from the Regional Synod. Affirmation for the program was affirmed by our current preaching elders as well as Rev. Jason Fulkerson, the current past president of the Regional Synod. A motion was made from the floor and seconded **to instruct the Executive Committee of Schenectady Classis to submit a letter of support of the Albany School of Ministry to the Regional Synod of Albany Executive Committee.**

VOTED R-519-8: To instruct the Executive Committee of Schenectady to send a letter of support of the Albany School of Ministry to ASEC. (APPROVED)

The consent agenda as amended was presented. The President asked for a motion from the floor to receive the reports presented. A motion was made and seconded.

VOTED R-519-9: To receive the consent agenda. (APPROVED)

President's Report

Clerk DeKruif took the chair, and President Busman presented his 2019 president's report.

Well, this is it. The last of 3 president's reports that you will have to sit through from me. After Stacey Midge accepted a call to Ohio, I spoke to you in Fort Miller about how the Cavalry is Not Coming. Our churches, moderate and small, are not going to be revived by an outside source. I spoke of the need for our ministries to be grounded once again in SACREDNESS: not "growth" or "survival."

Last year, fresh out of the forest with moss still between my toes, I reminded you that we are "not dead yet." That we must do the things that are consistent with our vision of the Gospel, not the things that are expedient or put band aids on sucking chest wounds. That many of our congregations must step BEYOND HOPE a live courageously so that we are not found by our God to be either "afraid or questioning" as Mary Oliver advised us.

I'm not sure if those two bits of advice were helpful or made any difference in our understanding as churches tethered together in this time and space.

This year I come to you, again fresh from the forest where I've been working with bright eyed, eager college students, who want the Church to be part of their world, but most of whom have abandoned the Church (even Hope College students!!) because the Church has abandoned the world.

You should be pleased with where we have gone as a Classis the last 2 ½ years. We have restructured – going from 4 committees to 3: streamlining responsibilities and adding a OJB Committee (which just the thought of you all working together makes me smile! ☺)

The Ministry Oversight Committee has worked hard and been a catalyst for the Synod to take the work and wisdom of our Preaching Elders seriously. They have met with them all, are currently working to add 2 more Preaching Elders and are coordinating with Albany Classis to begin offering classes to train the next generation.

Church Oversight has been involved in at least one of our congregations as they struggle with the changing calculus of demographics and resources to continue a vital ministry in a neglected area of our Synod.

We have transitioned into a new Bookkeeper, Vicki Hayner and have had a successful 'passing of the baton' by Jim Burnetter.

The Executive Committee has met routinely throughout the year so that information can flow more smoothly and we are not always responding to issues or crises.

In addition we have incarnated our understanding that a "Classis" is a group of churches in a specific area and we have heard from School Superintendents about rural poverty; gotten a better understanding of the food deserts and other issues surrounding Hamilton Hill, and were given guidance on how and why to lower our carbon footprints as churches serving at a time of global crisis. It's difficult to think of serving and loving our neighbors if we focus solely on our own needs.

All of these movements are tenuous. Any advance can be easily undone. Don't just pray for those who will be in leadership roles.... Help them.

With this as a prelude I have 4 things I would encourage our churches to engage in if we are to continue in ministries that are grounded, sacred, and not afraid:

- 1. Last year Camp Fowler added to its Board of Trustees as voting members folks from the UCC and the PCUSA. It's an interesting model that reminds the camp that their ministry is beyond the traditional boundaries. I challenge your churches to **invite the following** to present at your consistory meetings this coming year: **a cop, a mayor, a principal, and a member from another faith community.** I'm a believer in the law of "Unintended consequences." Who knows what might happen when these outside voices meet the faith filled prayers of your church leaders? What idea for service might they spark in your hearts? Maybe you'll find that the Methodists or Lutherans or Muslims have the same idea on how to serve.*
- 2. **Find your ministry.** Some of you already have: Ruth's place, backpack programs, Kid's Hope, meals together, food pantries, weird and wonderful concerts. **Look deeper.** Don't think about growth or survival. Think only of **servicing** in these ministries. (old guys and kayak story?) Let your people be the body of Christ offered for many. Give them the chance to do great things! **AND WORK TOGETHER.** Our people drive past my church to get to your church. What's wrong with us that we let a river or a wall or a door keep us from being ONE? You may have what my ministry's heart's desire needs.*

3. **Practice radical creation care.** I know what you're thinking: "that's Busman... he can't shut up about this stuff." ☺ But we have to start asking ourselves really hard and new questions:

1. How many tons of CO2 is your ministry worth each year?
2. Is a 10 minute cup of coffee worth a Styrofoam cup that will last "500 years to forever..."
3. Might the money spent on a solar array not only be economical but be a sign to those who see that your congregation cares for something other than themselves?

Could you decide to worship in your fellowship hall during Epiphany, not as a way of saving money or lowering your heat bill, but as an active way of showing that God isn't confined to a sanctuary and that all the earth is sacred to our Lord, who so loves this world?

Could you plan your meetings so that more happened at the same time not only to save on electric to but build a broader coalition of community amongst your congregants?

Could you have people willing to be drivers for others not only to reduce CO2, but also to build those loving relationships that define the best of our faith in Jesus?

Could you, to invoke Wendell Berry: "Plant sequoias, invest in the millennium; practice resurrection"?

Finally, you must be courageous, for we are not done with loss. Some of us will not survive the decision at the 20/20 RCA Synod. Some of us will not survive as separate congregations. Our stories are all stories of moving on. From Abram to Elijah; from Ruth to Moses; from the captives in Babylon to the boys fishing beside the sea of Galilee; from the risen Christ in the tomb to the ones who sailed beyond Jerusalem and Judea to the utter most parts of the earth. **Let go of that which keeps you tethered.** There is no safety there. There is no going back. Remember Lot's wife.

Thank you for letting this hairified Wildman serve as your president for so long. We will be in good hands after tonight. I've seen much good disappear since being ordained. But I am still surprised, almost daily, at how so many of you are being light to others. May we continue in our small way to be a sign for those looking for Jesus, who is not here, but "Is going before you as he said he would." (Mark 16:7).

President Busman's report was received with applause. The clerk thanked the president for his report and his service to the classis.

Committee Reports

Executive Committee

Clerk De Kruif remained in the chair while President Busman gave the Executive Committee report.

The Executive Committee made the following nominations Victoria Hayner to the office of treasurer for a 3-year term, Rev. Megan Hodgin to the office of vice president for a 1-year term, and Rev. Jonathan Vanderbeck to the office president for a one year term. A motion was made **to elect all three in a single voice vote.**

VOTED R-519-10: To elect nominees of all three offices in a single voice vote. (APPROVED)

VOTED R-519-11: To elect Victoria Hayner to the office of treasure for a 3-year term, Rev. Jonathan Vanderbeck to the office of president for a 1 year term, and Rev. Megan Hodgin to the office of vice president for a 1-year term. (APPROVED)

Overtures and Judicial Business:

Chair Jonathan Vanderbeck presented the following recommendations regarding amendments of the bylaws.

To approve the following amendment to the *Bylaws* of the Reverend Schenectady Classis on first reading and for submission to the October 2019 Stated Session for final approval. (underlines insertions, strikethroughs deletions):

Article IV. Officers of Classis and Election

(...)

Sec. 3 Terms of office are as follows:

(...)

b. The terms of office for Stated Clerk and Treasurer are three years. Each may be elected to two consecutive terms.

VOTED R-519-12: To approve the Overtures and Judicial Business Committee's recommendation. (APPROVED)

Old Business: No old business presented.

New Business: No new business presented.

Adjournment:

The president called for the meeting to adjourn following closing prayer and affirmations. Motion to adjourn and the president called for a vote. **(APPROVED)**

Meeting adjourned at 8:30 pm with closing prayer “BE THOU MY VISION” by the president.

Respectfully submitted,

Rev. Lindsey De Kruif, Stated Clerk

2019 Constitutional Inquiry Report

Classis of Schenectady

- | | YES | NO | |
|---|--------|-------|-----|
| 1. Are the doctrines of the gospel preached in your church in conformity with
i. the Word of God?
ii. the Standards of the Reformed Church in America? | __16__ | __0__ | (1) |
| No answer: 1 | | | |
| 2. Are the points of doctrine contained in the Heidelberg Catechism explained in your church as required by the <i>Book of Church Order (BCO)</i> (Chapter 1, Part I, Article 2, Sec. 11f, p. 16)? | __16__ | __1__ | (2) |
| 3. Has your consistory considered the nature and extent of the ministry of the congregation in accordance with the <i>BCO</i> (Chapter 1, Part I, Article 2, Sec. 1, p.13)? | __17__ | __0__ | (3) |
| How do you do this? | | | |
| 4. Is your church engaged in significant, regular activities which faithfully witness to the gospel and which encourage others to respond to God's Spirit in commitment to Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior? | __17__ | __0__ | (4) |
| 5. Does your church contribute annually and significantly in its prayers, gifts, and service to the mission of the Reformed Church in America? | __17__ | __0__ | (5) |
| 6. Does the consistory provide for worship, including the celebration of the sacraments, in accordance with the requirements of the <i>BCO</i> (Chapter 1, Part I, Article 2, Sec. 11, p.15)? | __17__ | __0__ | (6) |
| 7. Does the consistory regularly review the activities of the church in order that the congregation and those whom it serves may become more faithful in their walk as disciples of the Lord Jesus? | __17__ | __0__ | (7) |
| 8. Is the education of the young people in the essential truths of the Word of God faithfully attended to in your congregation? | __17__ | __0__ | (8) |

9. Has the consistory prayerfully considered persons within the congregation, particularly young people, in order to identify with them their spiritual gifts, especially the gift for ministry of Word and sacrament; to encourage the development of these gifts; and to pray for those individuals on a regular basis? YES NO
__14__ __3__ (9)

10. Does the board of elders fulfill its responsibilities of supervision and discipline as set forth in the *BCO* (Chapter 1, Part I, Article 5, p. 20-22)? __17__ __0__ (10)

11. Does the board of deacons fulfill its responsibilities in mercy, service, and outreach as set forth in the *BCO* (Chapter 1, Part I, Article 6, p. 22)? __17__ __0__ (11)

12. Does the consistory regularly engage its minister/s in a mutual reflection on the ministerial needs and challenges of the congregation? __16__ __0__ (12)

No answer: 1

13. Do the salary, housing, arrangements for professional development, and all other benefits received by the minister/s meet the terms of the original call or contract, subsequent revisions thereof, and the minimum standards of the classis? __15__ __1__ (13)

No answer: 1

**The Minutes of
the Stated Session of
The Reverend Classis of Schenectady
October 28, 2019— 6:15 PM
Trinity Reformed Church, Rotterdam, NY**

Attendance:

Present:

Enrolled Ministers: J. Vanderbeck (president), K. Busman (past president), M. Hodgkin (vice president), L. De Kruif (clerk), J. Marvel, M. Van Maastricht, J. Vincent Meyer, R. Scheenstra, J. Bosman, W. Levering, Ja. White, J. Fulkerson, J. deVelder, Jo. White, K. McHeard

Elder Delegates: T. Pangburn, P. Lansing, T. Flynn, J. Pettis, C. Murphy, T. Knuttie, D. Synder, M. Fuez, A. Rice, M. Sanders, J. Gonda, D. Schalekamp, J. Healey, M. Rand, L. Smith, S. Combs, L. L. Lumbra, A. Westfall, K. Hayner, K. Brittain

Officers: V. Hayner (treasurer)

Retired Ministers: None

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

Candidates: H. Kramer

Guests: Brad Morrison, Karen Morrison, Eric Nichols, Denise Kingdom-Grier,

Absent with notice: J. Legg, L. VanderWal

Absent without notice: L. Battjes, D. Carlson, T. McCrossan, B. Doolittle, J. Bork, A. Reilly, W. Schutter, R. G. Szanter

Worship: The meeting was called to order with worship at 6:15 PM. The classis was led in worship by Elder Adrienne Westfall, Rev. Jonathan Vanderbeck, minister of Trinity Reformed, and Rev. Dr. Denise Kingdom-Grier, guest preacher.

Following preaching of the word, Rev. Eric Nichols, Chaplain Resident at Albany Medical Center, was received into the classis and commissioned to his ministry at Albany Medical Center. Rev. Jake Marvel, ACPE Supervisor, participated in the commissioning as a representative of the receiving agency.

Declaration of a Quorum

Following worship, the President called for a quorum. The clerk declared a quorum. The President appointed Elders James Gonda and Jim Pettis 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-1019-1: to approve agenda. (APPROVED)

Approval of the Minutes: The President asked a motion to approve the minutes of the May 2019 Stated Session. Motion from floor and seconded.

Voted R-1019-2: To approve the minutes of the May 2019 Stated Session. (APPROVED)

Consent Agenda: The consent agenda was presented and included reports from the Albany Synod Executive Committee and 2020 General Synod Delegates. Rev. Richard Scheenstra, representative to the Albany Synod Executive Committee was present to speak to the ASEC report, so the President requested a motion **to remove the ASCE report from the consent agenda and receive the remainder of the consent agenda without comment.** A motion was made and seconded from the floor.

Voted R-1019-3: To remove ASCE from the consent agenda and receive the remainder of the consent agenda. (APPROVED)

Mission Presentation: Rev. Dr. Denise Kingdom-Grier, RCA Mission Impact Partner to South Africa, presented to the classis about the RCA's work in South Africa in partnership with Bethany World Services to serve orphaned and vulnerable children in South Africa. Her work focuses on building bridges between partners in South Africa and North America through prayer, purses, and presence. She asked for the prayers of classis congregations for the rampant issues of femicide and inficide occurring among the communities served by RCA mission partners.

Officer Business

President's Report

Vice President Hogdin took the chair and President Vanderbeck presented the following report:

Sisters, siblings, and brothers in Christ;
Grace and peace to you from our Creator God, Jesus Christ our risen Savior, and the Holy Spirit, our Advocate and Guide.

There has been much happening since we last met in May. The General Synod of the Reformed Church in America has continued to stress out about LGBTQ inclusion, going so far as to vote to have the classes "change the rules" on how our Constitution is amended, all in an effort to "do something."

As one of but a few LGBTQ-identified Ministers of Word and Sacrament in our denomination, it has been quite a head-trip to hear people talk about how your very existence is causing the destruction of the church as we know it. Frankly, in the five months since I took office, I've only been seeing growth in our little corner of the world. Certainly, we may still face a decline in numbers, but I am less interested in thinking about how butts-in-pews indicate growth, and more in how spiritual growth is taking place.

A few weeks ago, I asked you to submit to me evidence of how you have seen growth in your congregations. Here are some examples.

- One of our congregations wrote that, for the first time in years, they are hosting a Confirmation class. That congregation is living into its baptismal promises to help children grow and be nurtured in the faith.
- Another wrote that there is an increased desire for spiritual growth. Bible study involvement is up, meaning folks are looking to go deeper than just on Sunday mornings.
- A third congregation wrote that they have moved from receiving monies from fundraisers in their General fund, and have instead moved to designate those funds for specific missions. They went on to write how they are embracing the idea of being a “missional” church.
- Another congregation wrote that there is a growth in interfaith partnerships with their church and community. This congregation wrote that “growth looks like small steps in the right direction”.
- Food pantries seem to be another way to measure growth. One of our congregations wrote that on their CRF last year, their consistory voted to include the number of their regular food pantry attendees as “adherents”. This congregation wrote that this helps them to think about how their actions affect ALL the participants in their congregation.
- Finally, a congregation wrote that, after a number of years of discerning, they are considering full membership with Room for All. They wrote that while it has taken them a number of years to get to this point, it is evidence that “we’ve all grown in our understanding of God’s grace, and what it means to be gracious in our love and care for others!”

Now, this is not in contrast to the report our Past President, Rev. Kent Busman brought, in which we have been reminded that the Calvary is not coming. But rather, this is a challenge to our classis to think about what growth means in a different way. In a broader Christian narrative that is so concerned about the destruction of the church as we know it, and often being blamed by folks such as myself, I want to encourage us to think about different ways to think about growth.

I BELIEVE in the ministry that is happening in Schenectady Classis. I believe that it is not about how MANY are reached, but how WELL we are reaching those that we do reach. I’m reminded of an analogy about this, called the Starfish Parable:

One day, an old man was walking along a beach that was littered with thousands of starfish that had been washed ashore by the high tide. As he walked he came upon a young boy who was eagerly throwing the starfish back into the ocean, one by one.

Puzzled, the man looked at the boy and asked what he was doing. Without looking up from his task, the boy simply replied, "I'm saving these starfish, Sir".

The old man chuckled aloud, "Son, there are thousands of starfish and only one of you. What difference can you make?"

The boy picked up a starfish, gently tossed it into the water and turning to the man, said, "I made a difference to that one!"

Our classis IS making a difference in the world. And I believe that our work, this holy, messy, sacred, and profane work MATTERS. If it didn't, I would be the first to say, "okay, let's pack up shop. We've had a good run, but clearly it's time to move on." I believe that what we are doing matters to God, and to the world. And I believe this work is worth protecting.

As such, I come to you tonight with a proposal. I am not naïve enough to think that the anxiety in our denomination will somehow pass us by, nor do I think that we are immune from whatever actions may come from the General Synod in 2020. I believe in being prepared and in being informed. As your president, that means that I take responsibility to steward the resources and work of this classis WELL. This proposal will empower your Executive Committee to take more direct action to consider what might be before us. By the time you hear this proposal, the Executive Committee, as your Committee of Reference, will have reviewed it, and bring a recommendation to adopt, defeat, or amend it.

P-1: To direct the Executive Committee, pursuant to the Bylaws of the Schenectady Classis, Article VI, Section 3a, to begin studying potential "ways forward" for the Reverend Classis of Schenectady, including all of her churches, Ministers, students-under-care, and assets, should the General Synod of the Reformed Church in America act in such a way that would threaten the ministry of the Classis. This study would include, but not be limited to, considering ways to transfer or release churches, Ministers, students-under-care, and assets to other denominations, including to denominations that may not yet exist. The Executive Committee would bring interim reports on its work to each stated session of Classis and is empowered to bring recommendations to the classis to fulfill the ends of this proposal.

Thank you for the honor that it is to serve you as your president. I look forward to continuing to steward us forward into the storm.

Humbly Submitted,
The Rev. Jonathan Vanderbeck
President, The Reverend Classis of Schenectady

The president resumed the chair, and the recommendation regarding the President's report was made during the Executive Committee report.

Clerk Items:

The clerk presented the following for information to the classis:

General and Regional Synod Delegates

General Synod Delegates for 2020:

Ministers: Jeremy Bork (waiting confirmation) and Megan Hodgin (confirmed)

Elders: Bacon Hill (David Hoffman, confirmed) and Bellevue (waiting confirmation)

Regional Synod Delegates for 2020

Ministers: Lisa Vanderwall, Daniel Carlson, Jenn Legg (confirmed) Johan Bosman (waiting confirmation)

Elders: FRC Schenectady (Art Casey, confirmed); Trinity, CCRC, Lynnwood (waiting confirmation)

The clerk requested confirmation from those present at the meeting, and will follow up with alternates as needed.

Ministry Transitions:

- Rev. Liam Battjes transitioned from FRC Schenectady to w/o charged.
- Rev. Jennifer Legg transitioned from the Regional Synod Fellowship serving Bacon Hill, Fort Miller, and Old Saratoga to First Presbyterian in Ballston Spa. Her installation will be held on Sunday, November 10 at 3 PM. The classis is invited.
- Rev. Stacey Duensing transferred from Lynnwood Reformed Church to Warwick Reformed Church in the Classis of Orange.

The following deaths were notes:

- Rev. William de Forest on August 14, 2019
- James Burnetter, former treasurer of Schenectady Classis on October 1, 2019

Consistorial Report Deadline: The clerk noted that the General Synod Council requested that the deadline for Consistorial Reports be moved. The deadline is now February 15, 2020

Synod Happenings: The clerk reported that there will be a vacancy on the Synod Ministries Board in May 2020 for a representative from Schenectady Classis. Either a minister or non minister can fill the opening. There are also grants available from SMB for ministries in classis congregations. The Albany School of Ministry has begun its first course and more courses will be offered in the future. Rev. Matthew van Maastricht serves on the board.

Upcoming Meetings:

- February 25, 2020 - Christ Community
- May 26, 2020 - First Reformed Schenectady (with student exams)
- October 27, 2020 - Niskayuna Reformed

Treasurer Report

Treasurer Hayner presented the 2020 Budget and Assessment Schedule, highlighting changes from the previous year, including a reduction of income outside of assessments, reduced support to the RSA Fellowship program (there will no longer be a fellow serving in the classis), an increase of salary to the clerk (in anticipation of additional work in the coming year), an increase of funding for Church Oversight and Supervision (to allow for payment to supervisors) and a change in funding for candidate care to include funds for preaching elder education. Classis assessments will increase to \$13.75 per member. Including assessments to Regional Synod (\$37.00) and General Synod (\$54.22), the total assessment per member will be \$104.97. The Vice President on behalf of the Executive Committee presented the following recommendation: **to approve the 2020 Budget and Assessment Schedule.** The president called for a vote and opened the floor for discussion. A question was raised regarding additional funding for supervisors. The vice president and the president addressed the question, pointing to the revised handbook for supervisors that is under consideration in the Regional Synod, which recommends compensation for supervisors. The specifics of this will be discussed by the appropriate classis committees.

Voted: R-1019-4 To approve the 2020 Budget and Assessment Schedule. (APPROVED)

Committee Reports

Executive Committee

Vice President Hodgkin presented the following recommendations to the classis.

To approve the president's proposal (as stated above).

Voted: R-1019-5 To approve the recommendation. (APPROVED)

To approve Appendix G: 2020 Clergy Compensation Guidelines

Appendix G: 2020 Clergy Compensation Guidelines provides for a 1.7% salary increase for all ministers based on the August 2018 to August 2019 Consumer Price Index. Also added to this year's compensation guidelines are recommendations for structuring salary and benefits for part-time ministry.

Voted: R-1019-6: To approve the recommendation. (APPROVED)

Church Oversight and Supervision

Chair of Church Oversight and Supervision John Moak presented a review of the report and highlighted the ministry of each church under the supervision of classis, Amity Reformed, Cobblestone Reformed, Fort Miller Reformed, and Trinity Reformed. Fort Miller Reformed Church is now supervised by Rev. Jonathan Vanderbeck. He also noted that the committee is reviewing ways of providing better assistance to congregations and including them more fully in the ministry of the classis.

Ministry Oversight

Chair of Ministry Oversight Jason Fulkerson presented the report of the committee, highlighting their work of overseeing preaching elders and students. He noted that the preaching elders of Schenectady Classis are preaching in many congregations throughout the classis and Albany Synod and expressed gratitude for their work. He shared that the classis is seeking more elders to serve as preaching elders and encouraged those interested to reach out to the committee.

Rev. Fulkerson also shared that student under care Heather Kramer is now serving as a student under contract at the Johnstown Reformed Church in Schoharie Classis.

Overtures and Judicial Business

Chair of Overtures and Judicial Business Matthew van Maastricht presented the report of the committee, which included recommendations for the proposed changes to the Book of Church Order made at General Synod 2019. The vote on these recommendations will be made at the February Stated Session. Rev. van Maastricht highlighted the following changes to the BCO that the committee felt needed special consideration. These included the recommendation to allow constitutional changes to be made with a simple majority (51%) for decisions coming out of the Vision 2020 Task Force, the recommendation concerning affiliated churches (noting that affiliated churches are already happening), the recommendation on the process of transferring ministers, and the recommendations which allows for General Synod to specifically form, combine, and disband Regional Synods.

New Business

Report from Turning Point Churches

Rev. Janet Vincent of the Bacon Hill Reformed Church presented a report from the Turning Point Churches (Bacon Hill, Fort Miller, and Old Saratoga). Together the Turning Point Churches hosted Albany Synod Fellow, Rev. Jennifer Legg from November 2017 to July 2019. A fellowship team was formed to support the work of the fellow and to encourage collaborative ministry between the three churches. Since the departure of Rev. Legg, the fellowship team has decided to meet together and continue to encourage collaborative ministry between the congregations. Together they have hosted a community picnic, joint Bible Studies, and combined worship services. The consistories of each congregation have also come together for a joint consistory retreat. There are plans for three combined worship services in the coming year as well as another joint consistory retreat and a women's retreat.

Albany Synod Executive Committee Report

Rev. Richard Scheenstra, representative from Schenectady Classis to the Albany Synod Executive Committee presented a report to the classis. He highlighted the Classis Executive Committee Summit to be hosted the Regional Synod on January 10-11 in Little Falls, NY. At the summit, the participants will be led by Jim Herrington and Trisha Taylor, facilitators for 2020 Vision Team. This will be an opportunity for members of congregations and classes within the bounds of the Regional Synod of Albany to speak into the process of the Vision 2020 Team. The Regional Synod has invited members of each classis executive committee and classis delegates to the 2019 and 2020 General Synods to take part in the summit. The classis will have the opportunity to invite others to the conversation as well.

Adjournment and Closing Prayer

The president called for the meeting to adjourn following closing prayer and affirmations at 8:10 PM. A motion to adjourn was made and seconded from the floor and the president called for a vote. **(APPROVED)**

The meeting was adjourned following affirmations shared on the floor and a closing prayer led by President Vanderbeck.

Respectfully submitted,

Rev. Lindsey De Kruif, Stated Clerk