

The Reverend Schenectady Classis
AGENDA
Stated Session - February 23, 2021 6:00 PM
Zoom Video Conference
Helderberg Reformed Church, host church

Attendance

Present:

Enrolled Ministers: *J. Vanderbeck (president and chair COS), M. Hodgkin (vice president), L. De Kruif (clerk), M. Van Maastricht (chair, OJB), K. Busman (past president), J. Marvel, J. Legg, J. Vincent Meyer, J. Bosman, D. Carlson, Ja. White, Jo. White, L. Vanderwal, K. McHeard, L. Jonkman, G. Szantner, B. Doolittle, J. Bork*

Elder Delegates: *C. Lasselle (Altamont), T. Flynn (Amity), J. Pettis (Bacon Hill), B. Haringa (Cobblestone), E. O'Leary (Ft. Miller), B. Lewis (FRC Schenectady), D. Schalekamp (FRC Scotia), J. Healey (Helderberg), M. Rand (Lisha's Kill), J. Domaracki (Lynnwood), A. Kreig (Niskayuna), S. O'Brien (Niskayuna), Mark Booth (Old Saratoga), Bill Viscussi (W. Glennville)*

Officers: *V. Hayner (treasurer)*

Retired Ministers: *None*

Preaching Elders: *C. Jackson, T. Flynn, J. Moak, M. Rand, C. Laselle*

Licensed Candidates: *Trey Tirpak*

Guests: *Susana Combs (OJB, Bacon Hill), Lynn Carman Bodden (Interim, FRC-Schenectady), Bob Hoffman (Regional Synod of Albany), Abby Norton-Levering (Regional Synod of Albany), Kay Grosch (Lynnwood)*

Absent with notice: *W. Schutter, J. Fulkerson, B. Dykema*

Absent without notice: *R. Scheenstra, I. van Tonder, T. McCrossan, E. Nichols*

Call to Order and Worship

Rev. Jonathan Vanderbeck led the classis in worship and called the meeting to order at 6:08 PM. Guests were introduced as listed above, and a quorum was declared. Rev. Megan Hodgkin and Rev. Matthew van Maastricht were appointed tellers.

Approval of the Agenda

The president called for a motion to approve the agenda as presented. A motion was made and seconded.

VOTED: To approve the agenda. (CARRIED)

Approval of the Consent Calendar

The president presented the consent calendar containing the following reports: Minutes of the October Stated Session, the Executive Committee, the Church Oversight and Supervision Committee, the Trinity Committee of Management, and the Albany Synod Executive Committee. The president

called for a motion to approve the consent calendar, indicating all reports have been received by the body. A motion was made and seconded.

VOTED: To approve the motion. (CARRIED)

Treasurer's Report

Treasurer Vicki Hayner presented the 2020 End of the Year report, noting that all assessments have been paid. The first assessment payment for 2021 is due February 15. A motion was made and seconded to receive the report as presented.

VOTED: To approve the motion. (CARRIED)

Overtures and Judicial Business

Chair Matthew van Maastricht presented the following recommendation on behalf of the committee:

SC2-21-1: To enter judicial session to consider a disciplinary matter regarding a member of Classis.

VOTED: To approve the recommendation (CARRIED)

The classis moved to judicial session, and considered a disciplinary matter regarding a member of Classis.

The judicial session was closed and the results of the session were announced as the classis resumed the stated session. The results of the judicial session were as follows:

To depose the Rev. Mr. Jason Fulkerson from the office of Minister of Word and Sacrament and to distribute this recorded decision and disciplinary action to the Regional Synod of Albany and the General Synod of the Reformed Church in America, pursuant to BCO 2.I.5.15, and to other assemblies upon request.

Officer Business

President's Report

Vice President Megan Hodgkin assumed the chair as President Jonathan Vanderbeck offered his report.

INSERT REPORT HERE

The president presented the following recommendation:

P-1: To form an ad-hoc committee of at least six individuals to craft a formal policy regarding how the classis responds to reports of sexual harassment and sexual misconduct by its ministers. The membership of this committee shall be appointed by

the President. At least one member shall be a member of the Overtures and Judicial Business Committee. The Stated Clerk and President shall serve ex-officio as counted members. At least one member shall have legal experience. This committee shall be empowered to bring recommendations to the classis regarding the creation of a formal policy.

The recommendation was seconded from the floor and discussion was opened on the floor. Concern was raised about including preaching elders. It was noted that preaching elders are under the care of their consistories rather than the classis. The classis can only enact discipline for its ministers. The motion moved to a votee

**SC-2-21-2 VOTED: To approve the president's recommendation as stated above.
(CARRIED)**

President continued his report, presenting the following recommendation:

P-2: To require all ministers, preaching elders, and commissioned pastors to submit to boundary awareness training every two years and to provide attestation of attendance to the Stated Clerk and further, that it be the policy of classis that those who are not in fulfillment shall be required to submit to conversation with the Executive Committee explaining the reasoning for failure to comply.

The recommendation was seconded from the floor and the motion was discussed. Questions were raised as to what kind of training would meet the requirement, and whether the classis would provide opportunities for training. The president clarified that it was the intent of the classis to provide training. The policy developed would clarify the kinds of training that would meet the requirement.

A motion was made and seconded to call the question.

VOTED: To call the question (CARRIED)

**SC-2-21-3 VOTED: To approve the president's recommendation as stated above.
(CARRIED)**

The president concluded his report and returned to the chair, thanking the body for approval of the proposed recommendations.

Clerk Report

Clerk De Kruif presented the 2019 Constitutional Inquiry report to the body to be entered into the minutes. A motion was made and seconded:

SC-2-21-4: To enter the 2019 Constitutional Inquiry report into the minutes for the

record of the Classis.

VOTED: To approve the motion. (CARRIED)

The clerk reported on the 2021 Regional Synod and General Synod. Both bodies are considering postponing their annual assemblies for the year, and reports will be made in early March on those plans. If they are willing to attend the same delegates will be appointed that were appointed in 2020:

Delegates for Regional Synod include: Rev. Jennifer Legg, Rev. Lisa VanderWal, Rev. Kent Mc Heard, Rev. Daniel Carlson, Elder Lou Smith, Elder David Snyder, Elder Art Casey. An elder from Trinity Reformed Church was also to be appointed, but as the congregation has been dissolved, an alternate will be appointed.

Delegates for General Synod include: Rev. Megan Hodgin, Rev. Matthew van Maastricht, Elder David Hoffman, and Elder Brad Lewis. Possibly need one elder delegate

The clerk reported on the following happenings in the Regional Synod:

- Grants are available from the Synod Ministries Board. Information available from Classis representatives, Rev. Jason White and Jim Pettis, Jr.
- The Regional Synod is seeking nominations for the Camp Fowler Board of Trustees (must be from Schenectady Classis), the Finance Committee (must have financial experience) and for president and vice president.
- The Albany School of Ministry is seeking more preaching elder candidates to participate in the next cohort of their preaching elder training. This will begin in the fall of 2021.
- Faithwalking and Churches Learning Change continues. Information can be found through the synod website.
- The Albany Synod Fellowship Program is seeking applications for fellows and ministry sites for the 2021-2023 cohort. See Lindsey De Kruif, program coordinator for more information.

The clerk announced that the classis is seeking nominations for president and vice president. These offices are to be elected at the next stated session of classis.

The following upcoming sessions of classis were announced:

1. Mar 19, 2021 - ZOOM (Special Session - Boundary Awareness Training)
2. May 25, 2021 - Old Saratoga
3. October 26, 2021 - Woestina
4. February 22, 2022 - Amity

Dependent on the safety of meeting in person, these meeting dates may be altered.

Treasurer's Report

Treasurer Vicki Hayner presented the 20202 End of Year report. A motion was made and seconded

to receive the report.

SC2-21-5: To receive the 2020 End of Year Report. (CARRIED)

Ministry Oversight

Chair Megan Hodgkin presented the committee report. A lectionary lunch program will be offered on Zoom led by Rev. Kent Busman for classis preaching elders. The committee presented a preaching elder candidate to be received under care of the classis with the following recommendation:

MO-1: To receive Mrs. Lynn Makrin, of the First Reformed Church of Scotia under care of the Reverend Classis of Schenectady as a Preaching Elder candidate; to enlist the Ministry Oversight Committee to oversee her progress in the preaching elder training courses and her examinations at the appropriate time, in order to prepare her to be commissioned as a Preaching Elder.

SC-2-21-6: To approve the motion to receive Mrs. Lynn Makrin as a preaching elder candidate. (CARRIED)

Church Oversight and Supervision

Following the determination in the judicial matter of Jason Fulkerson, the Church Oversight and Supervision Committee offered the following recommendation:

COS-1: To terminate the call of Jason Fulkerson to the Niskayuna Reformed Church.

SC-2-21-7 VOTED: To approve the recommendation to terminate the call. (CARRIED)

No new business was brought before the classis and the president called to adjourn the meeting after sharing affirmations among the classis.

The meeting was adjourned with closing prayer led by President Vanderbeck at 8:31 PM.

Respectfully submitted,

Rev. Lindsey De Kruif, Stated Clerk

**2019 Constitutional Inquiry Report
Classis of Schenectady**

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?

Yes:16; No: 0; No answer: 1

2. Are the points of doctrine contained in the Heidelberg Catechism explained in your church as required by the Book of Church Order (BCO) (Chapter 1, Part I, Article 2, Sec. 11f, p. 16)?

Yes: 16; No: 1

3. Has your consistory considered the nature and extent of the ministry of the congregation in accordance with the BCO (Chapter 1, Part I, Article 2, Sec. 1, p.13)?

Yes: 17; No: 0

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?

Yes: 17; No: 0

5. Does your church contribute annually and significantly in its prayers, gifts, and service to the mission of the Reformed Church in America?

Yes: 17; No: 0

6. Does the consistory provide for worship, including the celebration of the sacraments, in accordance with the requirements of the BCO (Chapter 1, Part I, Article 2, Sec. 11, p.15)?

Yes: 17; No: 0

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?

Yes: 17; No: 0

8. Is the education of the young people in the essential truths of the Word of God faithfully attended to in your congregation?

Yes: 17; No: 0

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: 14; No: 3

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)?

Yes: 17; No: 0

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)?

Yes: 17; No: 0

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

Yes: 16; No: 1; 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?

Yes: 15; No: 1; No answer: 1

Special Session of the Classis of Schenectady
March 19, 2021
Zoom Video Conference

Attendance

Present:

Enrolled ministers: J. Vanderbeck (president), M. Hodgins (vice president), L. De Kruif (clerk), K. Busman (past president), K. McHeard, D. Carlson, M. van Maastricht, J. Meyer Vincent, G. Szantner, B. Doolittle, J. Bosman, Jo. White, J. Bork, Ja. White, B. Dykema, L. Jonkman, R. Scheenstra, J. Legg

Elder delegates: J. Domaracki, T. Flynn, S. O' Brien, D. Walsh, M. Rand, W. Viscussi, J. Pettis, Jr., M. Booth, A. Kreig, B. Lewis, C. Lasalle, B. Harringa

Preaching elders: C. Jackson, J. Moak, T. Flynn, L. Smith, M. Rand, C. Laselle

Guests: V. Hayner (Treasurer), K. Clement, H. Scribner, L. Bodden, S. Zanicky, A. Wiltz, L. Lichtig, D. Olsen (Presenter), C. Salon, J. Pittman, L. Cleworth, L. Etkin, G. Nelson, M. Caplan, S. Durocher, N. Pizzolo, M. Collins

Absent:

Enrolled ministers: L. Vanderwal, I. van Tonder, B. Schutter, L. Battjes, J. Marvel, T. McCrossan, E. Nichols

Call to Order and Opening Prayer

President Jonathan Vanderbeck called the meeting to order at 9:05 AM and opened the meeting in prayer.

Presentation by David Olsen of Samaritan Counseling

The president introduced Rev. Dr. David Olsen of Samaritan Counseling. Rev. Dr. Olsen led the classis in training on boundaries awareness for clergy and church staff.

The presentation concluded with a facilitated discussion about the boundary violation in the classis.

Adjournment

The meeting was adjourned with prayer at 12:31 PM.

Respectfully submitted,

Rev. Lindsey De Kruif, Stated Clerk

**The Minutes of
the Special Session of
The Reverend Classis of Schenectady
For the Examination of the Kate Newendorp
Zoom
May 16, 2021 — 3:00 PM**

Attendance:

Present:

Enrolled Ministers: J. Vanderbeck (president), L. De Kruif (clerk), J. Bosman, M. van Maastricht, G. Szantner, K. Busman, K. McHeard

Elder Delegates: J. Domaraki (Lynnwood), C. Jackson (Altamont), J. Pettis (Bacon Hill), Elizabeth Irwin (Woestina), M. Rand (Lisha's Kill)

Retired Ministers: none

Preaching Elders: C. Jackson, M. Rand

Candidates: Kate Newendorp

Guests: Kay Grosch

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Call to Order

The meeting was called to order by President Vanderbeck at 3:01 PM, and he led the classis in prayer.

Examination of Candidate Kate Newendorp

The president asked for a motion to give privilege of the floor to guests of the classis.

M/S/C to grant privilege of the floor to guests of the classis. (APPROVED)

Ms. Kate Newendorp was invited to introduce herself. She is a recent graduate from Western Theological Seminary in Holland, MI. She recently transferred her church membership to Christ Community Reformed Church in Clifton Park, and thus was transferred as a student under care from Central Iowa. She anticipates beginning a one-year chaplain residency at the Mayo Clinic in Rochester, MN.

Rev. Garret Szantner, chair of Ministry Oversight, explained the exam process and introduced the Ministry Oversight Committee. Rev. Kent Busman led the exam in theology, Rev. Szantner led exams

in the sacraments and the mission and history of the RCA, and Rev. Matthew van Maastricht led the exam in the standards and polity of the RCA.

Examiners from the Ministry Oversight Committee proceed with the examination of Ms. Newendorp in the areas of theology, sacraments, standards and polity, mission and history of the RCA.

After a thorough examination in each of these areas, the examiners opened the floor to questions from the classis.

With the conclusion of questions from the floor, a motion was made to suspend the examination and to enter into executive session for deliberation.

***M/S/C to close the examination and to enter into executive session for deliberation.
(APPROVED)***

Guests including Ms. Newendorp were removed from the virtual meeting space, and the classis continued with the deliberation of the examination.

Upon conclusion of deliberation, the classis exited executive session with a motion to conclude executive session and to announce and make public the results of the examination. Ms. Newendorp was invited back into the Zoom room with applause and the president joyfully announced that the classis had sustained all of her exams. The president called for a motion to declare Kate Newendorp a licensed candidate for ministry in the Classis of Schenectady.

M/S/C to declare Kate Newendorp a licensed candidate for ministry in the Classis of Schenectady. (APPROVED)

The classis rose in their respective locations as Ms. Newendorp read the declaration for licensed candidates for ministry. She will sign the classis record at a later date.

The president announced the anticipated ordination date for Ms. Newendorp on Sunday, June 13 at 4:00 PM on the lawn of Christ Community Reformed Church.

The president adjourned the meeting at 4:31 pm and invited Rev. Johan Bosman, minister of Christ Community Reformed Church to lead the classis in prayer.

Respectfully submitted,

Rev. Lindsey De Kruif, Stated Clerk

**The Minutes of
the Special Session of
The Reverend Classis of Schenectady
For the Ordination of Licensed Candidate Katherine (Kate) Newendorp
Christ Community Reformed Church
Clifton Park, NY
June 13, 2021 — 3:30 PM**

Attendance:

Present:

Enrolled Ministers: J. Vanderbeck (president, and presiding officer), L. De Kruif (clerk), G. Szantner, J. Bosman, K. McHeard

Elder Delegates: J. Moak (Niskayuna), A. Kreig (Niskayuna), B Lewis (FRC Schenectady), J. Pettis, Jr. (Bacon Hill)

Retired Ministers: none

Preaching Elders: J. Moak, C. Jackson

Licensed Candidates: Kate Newendorp, Trey Tirpak

Guests/Worship Participants: B. Popkes (Albany Classis), P. Convis (Albany Classis), David Newendorp, Deb Newendorp

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Call to Order by President Vanderbeck at 3:45 with prayer.

Privilege of the Floor: The President asked for a motion and to give guests and participants in worship the privilege of the floor. A motion was made from the floor.

VOTED: to give guests the privilege of the floor. (CARRIED)

Introductions were shared among guests and classis members.

Approval of the Order of Worship: The president asked for a motion to approve the order of worship for the ordination of Licensed Candidate Kate Newendorp to the ministry of Word and Sacrament. A motion was made from the floor.

VOTED: to approve the order of worship for the ordination of Licensed Candidate Kate Newendorp. (CARRIED)

Candidate Kate Newdorp and Rev. Johan Bosman offered instructions for worship.

Adjournment:

The President asked for a motion to adjourn the meeting with the benediction. A motion was made from the floor.

VOTED: to adjourn the meeting with the closing benediction of the service of worship for the ordination of Licensed Candidate Kate Newendorp. (CARRIED)

The Ordination of Licensed Candidate Kate Newendorp followed.

Rev. Bosman led the classis in prayer before the classis gathered in worship.

Meeting was adjourned with the closing benediction given by Rev. Kate Newendorp.

Respectfully submitted,

Rev. Lindsey De Kruif
Stated Clerk

The Reverend Schenectady Classis
AGENDA
Stated Session - June 29, 2021 6:30 PM
First Reformed Church
Schenectady, NY

Attendance:

Present:

Enrolled Ministers: *J. Vanderbeck (president and chair COS), , M. Hodgins (vice president), L. De Kruif (clerk), J. Legg, J. Vincent Meyer, L. Jonkman, Ja. White, K. McHearl, B. Dykema, R. Scheenstra*

FOA Ministers Serving Classis: L. Bodden

Elder Delegates: *T. Flynn (Amity), J. Pettis (Bacon Hill), P. Obrecht (Bellevue), B. Lewis (FRC Schenectady), D. Schalekamp (FRC Scotia), J. Healey (Helderberg), L. Smith (Lynnwood), A. Krueg (Niskayuna), M. Booth (Old Saratoga), V. Hayner (W. Glenville), L. Young*

Officers: *V. Hayner (treasurer)*

Retired Ministers: *None*

Preaching Elders: *L. Smith*

Candidates: *None*

Guests: *Abby Norton-Levering (RSA)*

Absent with notice: *D. Carlson, J. Marvel, M. van Maastricht, W. Schutter, L. Vanderwal*

Absent without notice: *K. Busman (past president), J. Bosman, L. Battjes, J. Bork, B. Doolittle, T. McCrossan, R. G. Szantner, E. Nichols, W. Schutter, I. van Tonder, Jo. White, K. Newendorp*

Worship

The meeting was opened with worship led by Rev. Lynn Carmen Bodden, interim minister at First Reformed Church (Schenectady), and classis president, Rev. Jonathan Vanderbeck.

Call to Order

President Vanderbeck called the meeting to order at 7:03 PM.

Declaration of a Quorum and Appointment of Tellers

The president declared a quorum and appointed Susanna Combs and Jenn Legg as tellers for the duration of the meeting.

A motion was made and seconded from the floor to grant privilege of the floor to guests. The classis voted.

VOTED: To grant privilege of the floor to guests. (APPROVED)

Approval of the Agenda

The agenda was presented to the classis, and was approved by consent.

Approval of the Consent Agenda

The consent agenda was presented to the classis for approval. The agenda included: the minutes of the February 2021 Stated Session, the May 2021 Special Session (Student Exams and Licensure of Kate Newendorp), and the June 2021 Special Session (Ordination of Kate Newendorp. Reports from the Treasurer, the Ministry Oversight Committee, and the Synod Ministries Board were also included in the consent agenda. The president requested a motion for approval. A motion was made and seconded. The classis voted.

VOTED: To approve the consent agenda. (APPROVED)

Officer Reports

President's Report

Vice President Megan Hodgins assumed the chair while President Vanderbeck presented his report to the classis.

REPORT OF THE PRESIDENT OF THE CLASSIS OF SCHENECTADY

The Rev. Jonathan Vanderbeck, LCSW

June 2021

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Finally, brothers and sisters [and siblings], farewell.

Put things in order,

listen to my appeal,

agree with one another,

live in peace;

and the God of love and peace will be with you. (2 Corinthians 13:11)

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Beloved Classis of Schenectady, I come to you on this warm June evening, full of gratitude and honor to have served you as your President for these past 25 months. It has been a journey of unexpected challenges, difficulties, and heartbreak, with a number of circumstances I would never want to wish upon anyone else. We have endured much together; a global pandemic, the retirement of several long-serving colleagues, deaths of other colleagues and former professors, closure of one congregation, the ever-growing threat of racial injustice, a political insurrection... all while trying to continue to do ministry together.

Some of you may remember that in my first President's report back in October of 2019, I had requested you to share with me ways you had seen growth that wasn't pertaining to numbers. Here are some of the things that you wrote:

- *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!” (Report of President Vanderbeck, Delivered October 2019)*

A lot has changed since that day. For one, we gathered on that day at a church that no longer exists, Trinity Reformed Church of Rotterdam. These last 15 months of global pandemic have put a strain on our ministries in ways that most of us never anticipated. Many of us are feeling burned out, exhausted, and even more aware of our own frailty and morality. As I leave the office of President, I want us to keep these things in the forefront of our minds as we move forward. Rather than trying to come up with something witty, I figured it would be appropriate to send you off with scripture. In doing so, I will echo the exhortations of the Apostle Paul in his final farewell to the church at Corinth.

Put things in order (be perfected)

Schenectady Classis, even in the midst of all the hardships, you have done good work in these last 25 months. You have done good order. In my time, I have watched you establish a policy for church supervision, paid family leave, boundary awareness, and sexual harassment. However, the reality remains. We’re exhausted from this work. In my work as the Coordinator for Clergy and Congregational Care at the Samaritan Counseling Center, I see clergy from all denominations and faith traditions. They are all saying the same thing. These are not the cries of lazy ministers who don’t want to change; these are pastors who are at the breaking point. And so, I charge you with recommendation

P-7-21-1: To strongly encourage consistories to provide for an extra week of vacation (which includes a Sunday) to their ministers to be used by the end of 2021 in order to help encourage the ongoing longevity and mental health of their ministers and to direct the Stated Clerk to send a pastoral communication to all churches communicating this request.

The chair asked for support from the floor. Support was received, and the floor was opened for discussion. With no discussion the classis voted.

SC6-21-1 VOTED: To approve the recommendation. (APPROVED)

I will continue to encourage the Executive Committee and Ministry Oversight Committee to ensure that pulpit supply through our incredibly talented and gifted preaching elders and other ministers who are available are able to support our ministers serving local congregations.

Listen to my appeal (be exhorted)

I appeal to you to consider the words I spoke in my first President's report to you. Since we met then, one of our congregations has closed and others might not be far behind. It is easy to be discouraged. But I would exhort you who are feeling fatigued, downtrodden, and defeated to remember that life and growth do not always look like numbers. For my former congregation, Trinity Reformed Church, new life and growth looked like recognizing what had to die in order for new life to be born. The congregation has now merged with Messiah Lutheran Church of Rotterdam, a growing, fully-welcoming congregation in the ELCA, with its former building being used as a community center. As we all consider what new life looks like, I encourage all of us to think about new and innovative growth patterns.

Agree with one another, Live in peace;

The RCA is incredibly divided, much like our country. And while full inclusion is a value that we practice here in Schenectady Classis, we also recognize that we are all on different journeys. As an openly-gay minister, I am grateful that I have been twice elected to serve and lead you, and have been privileged to be privy to many conversations as many of you have wrestled with these questions. I believe strongly that the ways in which Schenectady Classis does ministry together is a witness to the denomination as a whole. And while I personally wish things were further along, I believe it is vitally important to continue to affirm and confess what we believe. Therefore, I would ask the classis to reaffirm its beliefs by adopting the following:

P-7-21-2: To reaffirm the bylaws adopted by Schenectady Classis which states:

The Classis of Schenectady celebrates the wide diversity of people within its bounds. As such, the classis does not discriminate against its candidates, members and delegates on the basis of gender identity or expression, sexual orientation, age, race, color, national or ethnic origin, or disability, nor does it prevent consistories and congregations from holding differing views on matters of same-sex marriage and affirmation of LGBTQ+ persons.

The chair asked for support from the floor. Support was received and the floor was opened for discussion. With no discussion, the classis voted.

SC6-21-2 VOTED: To approve the recommendation. (APPROVED)

Finally, brothers and sisters, farewell.

It has been an honor to serve as your President. But even more of an honor is that I have been able to be a member of this classis for five years. Most of you know that I came to the Classis of Schenectady to take a position in this very church, the First Reformed Church of Schenectady. Though not all of you know of the journey in which it took for me to get to this place. I came from Holland, Michigan, where the Classis of Holland, on a technicality, chose to ordain me, the first

openly-gay, person-of-color in the Reformed Church in America. However, we knew that members of Holland Classis who were unhappy with this decision, were preparing to file charges against me, as well as filing a complaint against the Classis for authorizing my ordination. As such, almost immediately after my ordination, I boarded a plane and flew to New York where I signed the Declaration for Ministers at West Glenville Reformed Church. This Classis has kept its promises to me; to care for me and to nurture me. You just voted to reaffirm our local commitments to one another. I commend the work that Schenectady Classis continues to do to bear witness to our denomination, church, and world. However, it has also been emotionally and psychologically taxing to remain in a denomination that continues to debate the roles of LGBTQ people. It is nerve-wracking to think that should denominational politics change, my life and the lives of so many of our members and congregants could be overturned.

As such, tonight is not only my final time before you as your President, it is also my final time before you as a member of this Classis. On May 15, 2021, I celebrated five years of ordained ministry in the Reformed Church in America. As such, this entitled me to seek ordination in a denomination that has already firmly committed to inclusion and celebration of people like me. I will not have to look over my shoulder, in a state of fear that my life and my calling to Christ's church could be challenged. I have applied to the Presbytery of Albany and their Committee of Ministers and Congregations, akin to our Ministry Oversight Committee has recommended me to the Presbytery for reception. On Saturday, June 5, the Presbytery of Albany voted to receive me as a member, effective July 1, in order that good order within our Classis could be kept.

Beloved Schenectady Classis – you have done good work and you have stood for justice. You have received, under your care, numerous LGBTQ ministers and students. But for my own mental health, I need to find a home where I can thrive.

The Presbytery of Albany's actions are contingent upon one final action of Schenectady Classis. I must, pursuant to the Presbyterian Book of Order G-2.0505b, which states: "Upon enrollment, the minister shall furnish the presbytery with evidence of having surrendered membership in any and all other Christian churches with which the minister has previously been associated." relinquish my membership in all other Christian churches. In order to do this in our polity, I must request to be demitted from the office of Minister of Word and Sacrament. Since I am asking to be released from the promises I made to you when I signed the Declaration for Ministers five years ago, you must agree, by vote, to release me. As such, I bring you P-7-21-3:

**P-7-21-3: To commend the Rev. Jonathan Vanderbeck to the Reverend Presbytery of Albany, PC(USA), effective July 1, 2021, and further;
at that time and upon evidence of reception by the Presbytery of Albany, to declare the Rev. Jonathan Vanderbeck demitted from the office of Minister of Word and Sacrament in the Reformed Church in America, and further;
to attest that Rev. Jonathan Vanderbeck's demission is not made as the result of any matter of judicial business or pending judicial business, and that he is demitted in good and regular standing, and further;**

to then and at that time, remove Mr. Jonathan Vanderbeck's name from the roll of the classis and transfer all care of Mr. Jonathan Vanderbeck to the Presbytery of Albany.

The chair requested support from the floor for the recommendation. Support was received and the floor was opened for discussion. Discussion ensued questioning the language of dimission as Rev. Vanderbeck's ordination would be transferred to the PCUSA. It was noted that Rev. Vanderbeck's demission from the Reformed Church in America is required for the completion of his transfer. When debate ceased, the classis voted. As the vote proceed, the chair noted both the grief and love in this action.

SC6-21-3 VOTED: To approve the recommendation. (APPROVED)

Siblings in Christ. Know that as I leave you, it is not for fault of this Classis. But I pray that you know that these conversations about who belongs at Christ's table are exhausting and mentally draining. I leave, as so many others have also, having fought this fight for a long, long time. Please know that while the denomination continues to debate, real people face real consequences. We know this; we've seen it in having to rescue seminary students from non-affirming and openly hostile places in the Midwest, where I am from. I am grateful for all the support you have offered me. The Classis has fulfilled all of its promises to me when I made the Declaration for Ministers five years ago.

And so, as I go, know that I carry with me the promises I made to you. Even as we release each other from our ecclesial obligations to one another, know that I will always seek to do as professed: "to preach and teach the good news of salvation in Christ, to build up and equip the church for mission in the world, to free the enslaved, to relieve the oppressed, to comfort the afflicted, and to walk humbly with God."

Thanks be to God.

Respectfully Submitted,

*Rev. Jonathan Vanderbeck
President, Classis of Schenectady*

The president also presented the following resolutions upon the retirement of the Rev. Joyce de Velder and the Rev. Richard Scheenstra.

***Resolution of Thanksgiving and Affirmation
For the Service and Ministry of
The Reverend Joyce Borgman de Velder***

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 Joyce Borgman de Velder, who was the first woman to enter the Master of Divinity program at Western Theological Seminary in 1972 was ordained as a Minister of Word and Sacrament on July 15, 1979 by the Reverend Classis of Albany, following a year long debate over the validity of her ordination by the Regional Synod of Albany and the General Synod of the Reformed Church in America; and

WHEREAS the Reverend Joyce Borgman de Velder became one of the first women to be ordained to the office of Minister of Word and Sacrament as she served the Delmar Reformed Church in the Classis of Albany as their Associate Minister; and

WHEREAS the Reverend Joyce Borgman de Velder received a call to serve the Old Saratoga Reformed Church in 1982 and served faithfully until her retirement in the summer of 2020; and

WHEREAS the Reverend Joyce Borgman de Velder has served as a role model and guide for countless women seeking ordination in the Reformed Church in America, as well as other marginalized individuals who have also faced barriers to their calling; and

WHEREAS the Reverend Joyce Borgman de Velder, guided by the Holy Spirit and alongside her colleagues at the Bacon Hill Reformed Church and Fort Miller Reformed Church, in particular, the Reverend Janet Vincent, helped develop the Turning Point Reformed Churches ministry, a collaborative ministry between the three churches, which led to the creation of a position with the Regional Synod of Albany Fellows Program for the Reverend Jennifer Legg, continuing her support for new ministers even up to her retirement; and

RESOLVED, that the Reverend Schenectady Classis:
offers profound thanks and gratitude to the Reverend Joyce de Velder for her years of dedicated service to the denomination, classis, and local congregation.

Done this day in stated session of the Reverend Schenectady Classis, on the twenty-ninth day of June, in the year of our Lord, two thousand and twenty-one.

The chair called for support of the resolution. Support was received, and the classis voted.

SC6-21-4: To approve the resolution. (APPROVED).

In the absence of Rev. Joyce de Velder, the classis applauded her ministry upon approval of the resolution.

Resolution of Thanksgiving and Affirmation

For the Service and Ministry of

The Reverend Richard Scheenstra

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 Richard Scheenstra, who was ordained as a Minister of Word and Sacrament following his graduation from Western Theological Seminary in 1978 and became pastor of Greenwood Reformed Church in Kalamazoo Michigan; and

WHEREAS the Reverend Richard Scheenstra also served as pastor of Bread of Life, an ecumenical house church in Kalamazoo, Michigan, beginning in 1981, as well as serving as executive director of the Kalamazoo Youth Ministry's drop-in-center and two homeless shelters for twelve years; and

WHEREAS the Reverend Richard Scheenstra received a call to the Bellevue Reformed Church in June of 2002, began his ministry on August 1, 2002, and was installed as their pastor and teacher on September 30, 2002, a position he has now held for the last 19 years; and

WHEREAS the Reverend Richard Scheenstra has faithfully served the congregation gathered at the Bellevue Reformed Church, officiating marriages and funerals, presiding over the sacraments, and preaching the Word of God faithfully; and

WHEREAS the Reverend Richard Scheenstra, guided by the Holy Spirit, helped lead the Bellevue Reformed Church into further mission through the creation of Ruth's Place, a neighborhood thrift store; and Jacob's Well, a community café, which has sought to provide the Bellevue neighborhood with fellowship, employment, and community; and

WHEREAS the Reverend Richard Scheenstra has recently helped steward the consistory of Bellevue Reformed Church through difficult and intentional conversations as it discerned how to be more welcoming to LGBTQ people; and

WHEREAS the Reverend Richard Scheenstra has also served the Classis of Schenectady, the Regional Synod of Albany, and the General Synod of the Reformed Church in America through service as a delegate, committee member, church supervisor, and in various forms of leadership; now THEREFORE BE IT

RESOLVED, that the Reverend Schenectady Classis:

offers profound thanks and gratitude to the Reverend Richard Scheenstra for his years of dedicated service to the denomination, classis, and local congregation and sends him and his wife Sharon into retirement with good wishes and care.

Done this day in stated session of the Reverend Schenectady Classis, on the twenty-ninth day of June, in the year of our Lord, two thousand and twenty-one.

The chair called for support of the resolution. Support was received and the classis voted.

SC6-21-5 VOTED: To approve the resolution. (APPROVED).

Rev. Richard Scheestra was invited to stand, and the classis applauded his ministry.

President Vanderback resumed the chair.

Clerk Items

Clerk De Kruif presented the 2020 Constitutional Inquiry Report to be entered into the record of the classis. The chair asked for a motion from the floor to receive the report. A motion was made and seconded from the floor.

SC6-21-6 VOTED: To receive the 2020 Constitutional Inquiry Report and enter it into the record of the classis. (APPROVED)

The clerk presented correspondence received from the Regional Synod of Albany supporting the ordination of licensed candidate Trey Tirpak, who has accepted a contract to serve as an Albany Synod Fellow at the First Church in Albany.

The clerk presented the roster of General Synod Delegates as follows: Ministers: Megan Hodgkin and Matthew van Maastricht, and Elders: Brad Lewis (FRC Schenectady) and Linda Young (Woestina). General Synod 2021 is set to be held in October in Arizona.

The clerk reported on nominations needed for the Albany Synod Executive Committee from the classis. Richard Scheenstra will leave an unfinished term upon his retirement. A minister will be needed to fill that position until May 2022. An elder will need to be nominated for a new term beginning in May 2022.

The following stated sessions of the classis are scheduled in the coming year:

October 26, 2021 - Old Saratoga Reformed Church
February 22, 2022 - Woestina Reformed Church
May 24, 2022 - Amity Reformed Church

Standing Committee Reports

Executive Committee

Clerk De Kruif presented the Executive Committee report including the nomination for the offices of president and vice president. The Executive Committee acting in the capacity of the Nominations Committee made the following recommendations for the election of officers:

To elect The Rev. Kent McHeard of the First Reformed Church of Rotterdam to a first-term as President, effective at the adjournment of this meeting.

SC6-21-7 VOTED: To elect The Rev. Kent McHeard to the office of President. (APPROVED)

To elect Elder Ms. Kitt Jackson of the Altamont Reformed Church to a first-term as Vice President, effective at the adjournment of this meeting. (APPROVED)

SC6-21-8 VOTED: To elect Elder Ms. Kitt Jackson to the office of Vice President (APPROVED)

Church Oversight and Supervision

The vice president assumed the chair so that COSC chair Jonathan Vanderbeck could present the committee's report to the classis.

The chair reported on the status of the sale of the Trinity Reformed Church. The sale is in the process of being reviewed by the court, and should be completed in time. The Trinity Reformed church has an outstanding loan in the amount of \$5000, and so the committee offered the following recommendation to the classis. This loan helped to cover some of the staff and maintenance costs of the church until the congregation was disbanded and the classis took over care of the building.

To forgive the remaining balance of the \$5000 loan granted to the former Trinity Reformed Church after disbursement of financial assets of the former Trinity Reformed Church have been granted to the classis.

SC6-21-9 VOTED: To approve the recommendation. (APPROVED)

With the ensuing retirement of the Rev. Richard Scheenstra, the committee made the recommendation to grant approval to the Bellevue Reformed Church to act to declare Rev. Scheenstra minister emeritus as follows:

To grant approval to the Consistory of the Bellevue Reformed Church to act to declare the Rev. Richard Scheenstra minister emeritus of the Bellevue Reformed Church, effective on the date of Rev. Scheenstra's retirement.

SC6-21-10 VOTED: To approve the recommendation. (APPROVED)

Ad-Hoc Committee Report

The vice president remained in the chair while the president presented on the Ad-Hoc Committee on Sexual Harassment Prevention. The following people have been appointed to the committee: Bill Faulkner, James Gonda, Susanna Combs, Suzi O'Brien, Lindsey De Kruif, and Kent Mc Heard. Kent Mc Heard will serve as chair of the committee. The committee will bring recommendations regarding the formation of a sexual harassment prevention policy to the classis at the October Stated Session.

Upon conclusion of the report, the chair was returned to the president.

There was no new business before the classis, so the chair called for the meeting to be adjourned. With the adjournment of the meeting, the classis gathered for affirmation, and the meeting was adjourned with prayer at 8:10 PM.

Respectfully submitted,

Rev. Lindsey De Kruif
Stated Clerk

**2020 Constitutional Inquiry Report
Classis of Schenectady**

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?

Yes:14; No: 0

2. Are the points of doctrine contained in the Heidelberg Catechism explained in your church as required by the Book of Church Order (BCO) (Chapter 1, Part I, Article 2, Sec. 11f, p. 16)?

Yes: 13; No: 1

3. Has your consistory considered the nature and extent of the ministry of the congregation in accordance with the BCO (Chapter 1, Part I, Article 2, Sec. 1, p.13)?

Yes: 14; No: 0

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?

Yes: 14; No: 0

5. Does your church contribute annually and significantly in its prayers, gifts, and service to the mission of the Reformed Church in America?

Yes: 14; No: 0

6. Does the consistory provide for worship, including the celebration of the sacraments, in accordance with the requirements of the BCO (Chapter 1, Part I, Article 2, Sec. 11, p.15)?

Yes: 14; No: 0

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?

Yes: 14; No: 0

8. Is the education of the young people in the essential truths of the Word of God faithfully attended to in your congregation?

Yes: 14; No: 0

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: 13; No: 1

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)?

Yes: 14; No: 0

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)?

Yes: 14; No: 0

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

Yes: 14; No: 0

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?

Yes: 12; No: 0; No answer: 2

No reports received from: Old Saratoga, First Schenectady, and Trinity

**The Minutes of
the Special Session of
The Reverend Classis of Schenectady
For the Ordination of Licensed Candidate Trey Spencer Tirpak
First Church
Albany, NY
September 12, 2021 — 3:30 PM**

Attendance:

Present:

Enrolled Ministers: K. Mc Heard (president, and presiding officer), L. De Kruif (clerk), G. Szantner, J. Bosman, D. Carlson, L. Vander Wal, M. van Maastricht, M. Hodgins, I. van Tonder

Elder Delegates: C. Jackson (Altamont), L. Young (Woestina), J. O'Neill (Christ Community)

Retired Ministers: none

Preaching Elders: J. Moak, C. Jackson

Licensed Candidates: Trey Tirpak

Guests/Worship Participants:

Albany Classis Ministers: B. Popkes, A. Norton-Levering, C. Vande Bunte, J. Paarlberg, R. Westhuis

Albany Classis Elders: R. Teal, I. Leet

Other: N. Landrigan (Albany Classis Clerk)

Worship Participants: M. Walston (Albany Classis), C. Carley, C. Tipak, A. Tirpak

++++

Call to Order by President McHeard at 2:33 PM with prayer.

Approval of the Order of Worship: The president asked for a motion to approve the order of worship for the ordination of Licensed Candidate Trey Tirpak to the ministry of Word and Sacrament. A motion was made from the floor.

VOTED: to approve the order of worship for the ordination of Licensed Candidate Trey Tirpak. (CARRIED)

Privilege of the Floor: The President asked for a motion and to give guests and participants in worship the privilege of the floor. A motion was made from the floor.

VOTED: to give guests the privilege of the floor. (CARRIED)

Announcements regarding worship were offered by President Kent Mc Heard and Candidate Trey.

Adjournment:

The President asked for a motion to adjourn the meeting with the benediction. A motion was made from the floor.

VOTED: to adjourn the meeting with the closing benediction of the service of worship for the ordination of Licensed Candidate Trey Tirpak. (CARRIED)

The Ordination of Licensed Candidate Trey Tirpak followed.

Meeting was adjourned with the closing benediction given by Rev. Trey Tirpak.

Respectfully submitted,

Rev. Lindsey De Kruif
Stated Clerk

The Reverend Schenectady Classis
Minutes
Stated Session - October 26, 2021 6:30 PM
Zoom Video Conference

Attendance:

Present:

Enrolled Ministers: J. Marvel, J. Vincent Meyer, K. Busman, J. Bosman, I. van Tonder, L. Jonkman, D. Carlson, L. De Kruif, L. VanderWal, G. Szantner, Ja. White, Jo. White, K. McHeard, B Dykema, S. Huizenga

Elder Delegates: A. Stewart (Altamont), J. Stevens (Amity), T. Flynn (Amity), S. Combs (Bacon Hill). B. Haringa (Cobblestone), A. Rice (Ft. Miller), J. Peterson (Ft. Miller), B. Lewis (FRC Schenectady), J. Healey (Helderberg), M. Rand (Lisha's Kill), J. Domaracki (Lynnwood), A. Kreig (Niskayuna), M. Booth (Old Saratoga), W. Viscussi (W. Glenville), L. Young (Woestina)

Officers: K. McHeard (president), C. Jackson (vice president), L. De Kruif (clerk), V. Hayner (treasurer)

Retired Ministers: none

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

Candidates: L. Grove

Guests: R. Zabriskie

Absent with notice: J. Legg, M. van Maastricht, T. Tirpak

Absent without notice: T. McCrossan, M. Hodgin, B. Doolittle, E. Nichols, K. Newendorp

Call to Meeting and Opening Worship

The meeting was called to order at 6:31 PM by President Kent McHeard and the clerk declared a quorum.

The classis was led in worship by Rev. Rett Zabriskie, interim minister of the Old Saratoga Reformed Church. Rev. Zabriskie led the classis in a liturgy for evening prayer. The lessons for the day included: Ezra 5:1-7, Revelation 4:1-11, and Matthew 12:42-50. Classis members Rev. Lisa Vanderwal, Rev. Lorie Jonkman, and Preaching Elder Carol (Kitt) Jackson read the lessons.

Approval of the Agenda

The president presented the agenda to the floor. A motion was made and seconded to approve the agenda. The motion was approved.

Consent Agenda

A consent agenda including the following items was presented to the classis: Minutes of the June 2021 Stated Session and the September 2021 Stated Session (Ordination of Trey Tirpak) and reports of the Synod Ministries Board, the Albany Synod Executive Committee, the Cam Fowler Board of Trustees, and the Church Oversight and Supervision Committee.

A motion was made from the floor and seconded to approve the consent agenda.

The classis proceed to vote and the consent agenda was supported.

Officer Reports

President's Report

Vice President Kitt Jackson assumed the chair as the president offered his report.

Greetings in the Name of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

Psalm 125:1,2

1 A Song of Ascents. Those who trust in the LORD are like Mount Zion, which cannot be moved, but abides for ever.

2 As the mountains are round about Jerusalem, so the LORD is round about his people, from this time forth and for evermore.

I write this report as we have just concluded the 214th meeting of the General Synod in Tucson Arizona surrounded by the Catalina Mountains. Since General Synod was postponed to October, we were not able to meet in a college campus like we usual so the denomination had to find a space where it could accommodate the number of people would attend general synod. The Westin La Paloma resort was a place that could host such a large group at the last minute. What a wonderful back drop of the Catalina Mountains in the desert of Tucson to aid in the doing of business at Synod. I thought of the verse I cited earlier,

“As the mountains are round about Jerusalem, so the LORD is round about his people, from this time forth and for evermore.”

I thought about that often during the time we were engaged in difficult conversations and I thought of that when I witness discussions came before us as a result of a vote. I will say more about that later.

It will not come as a surprise when I say that we are journeying in challenging times as a Classis and Denomination.

Our Classis

As of the writing of this report our of the 16 churches we have in our classis, 8 of our Churches have supervisors and I know of another congregation that will raise the number to 9 in a few months. Needless to say we are facing challenging times. It is challenging enough to serve during a time of global pandemic but It is extremely challenging for clergy. Many of my colleagues (not only in this classis but in the classes of our denomination) are struggling with depression and thoughts of leaving the office of Minister of Word and Sacrament.

I am so thankful for the efforts our previous President who encouraged our consistories to ensure our Pastor’s had time off. I am so grateful for places like Camp Fowler that has made available prayer cabins for that our clergy can refresh and renew. While I will not bring a recommendation in this report, I will encourage us to continue to be mindful of our clergy, who often carry the weight of all of our frustrations, anger, fear and sorrow on their shoulders. And I would ask that we also keep in prayer the 8 soon to be 9 churches under supervision as they discern how to do ministry while engaging in a search process.

Our Denomination

I trust you will hear a report from our delegates that attended General Synod but I wanted to just report on the three recommendation and an additional recommendation briefly in this report and then I will close. I wanted to mention the three recommendations from the vision 2020 task force because we have spent a few years preparing and waiting for this report. This is the synod that was expected to act on these recommendations last June, but Synod was postponed until this time. What I will do is read the recommendation and then I will read the adopted recommendation as often times motions are amended and the amended motion is what more than times than not are the ones that is adopted.

Recommendation #1

RF 21-1 To direct the General Synod Council to appoint a team of at least 10 but no more than 15 people tasked with the specific work of developing a restructuring plan for the denomination with a view to optimizing the RCA’s sustained spiritual and organizational health, in consultation with the Commission on Church Order and any other bodies it finds necessary. This team should be composed of several executive RCA staff members, and of representatives from around the RCA drawn from regional or local assemblies that have expressed an intention to remain in the Reformed Church in America, and should be representative of the racial, ethnic, gender, age, socio-economic, geographic, and other forms of diversity present in the RCA. This team should use the four principles stated above as it does its work and should bring any recommendations for restructuring that require General Synod

approval, including any proposed changes to the Book of Church Order, to General Synod 2023; and further, To approve the \$0.29 per member assessment to fund the work of this team.

The twice amended RF 21-1 was before the house. It reads as follows:

“To direct the General Synod Council to appoint a team of at least 10 but no more than 15 people tasked with the specific work of developing a restructuring plan for the denomination with a view to optimizing the RCA’s sustained spiritual and organizational health, in consultation with the Commission on Church Order and any other bodies it finds necessary. This team should be composed of several executive RCA staff members, and of representatives from around the RCA drawn from regional or local assemblies that have expressed an intention to remain in the Reformed Church in America, and should be representative of the racial, ethnic, gender, age, socio-economic, geographic, and other forms of diversity present in the RCA. This team should consider the four principles stated above as it does its work and should bring any recommendations for restructuring that require General Synod approval, including any proposed changes to the Book of Church Order, to General Synod 2024; and further, “To approve the \$0.29 per member assessment to fund the work of this team.”

VOTED: To adopt the twice amended RF 21-1 (yes 135; no 69).

RF 21-2 To form a new nonprofit mission agency independent of the RCA that will house what currently makes up the RCA’s work in global missions; and further, To direct the GSC to form an implementation team that will be tasked with incorporating the new agency as a 501(c)(3), drafting bylaws, and recruiting a board of directors, who would then be responsible for appointing an executive director for the new agency in the manner specified in the bylaws. The implementation team should work closely with the RCA Global Mission team to ensure diligent care for current RCA missionaries during the transition to the new agency. And further, To instruct the general secretary to transfer a portion of the current RCA missions budget to the new agency as seed money (to be determined by the general secretary in consultation with GSC); and further, To urge RCA churches and individuals that currently support RCA missionaries and mission projects through Partnership-in-Mission (PIM) shares to continue that support through the new agency

This Recommendation was not Adopted.

The final recommendation is rather long and I will not cite it in its entirety but will only cite a couple paragraphs that has as it’s purpose to create a mutual agreed departure for those congregations who wish to leave the denomination.

RF 21-3 To adopt the following proposed regulations regarding RCA Book of Church Order Chapter 1, Part II, Article 10, Sections 3-6 (2019 ed., pp. 40-44): 1. Introduction. The regulations proposed below are provided to classes considering applications from member churches of the classis for leave to withdraw from the denomination. The Commission on Church Order remains available to provide advisory responses to requests for interpretation of the provisions of the BCO as well as these regulations. Requests for transfers are only considered when a consistory files an application following the process outlined in the BCO. There is no provision in the BCO for churches to transfer other than one church at a time or for a church to

become “independent,” that is, to transfer out of the denomination without joining another denomination. The Dictionary of Christianity in America defines denomination as “an association or fellowship of congregations within a religion that have the same beliefs or creed, engage in similar practices, and cooperate with each other to develop and maintain shared enterprises.”⁴ A separate process for transfer is provided for Ministers of Word and Sacrament, and a minister must complete this process separately from the process of transferring a church. Most of the regulations below are related to a church’s financial relationship with and commitments to the agencies and assemblies of the RCA with the goal of allowing a local church to retain its property and other assets while being solely responsible for any liabilities.

Adopted

VOTED: To adopt RF 21-3 (yes 182; no 25).

An addition resolution that I think is important to mention has to do with forming two Regional Synods:

Restructure Into Affinity Synods Overture 10 The Great Lakes City Classis overtures the General Synod of the Reformed Church in America to adopt and implement the following Affinity Synods restructuring plan: To form two new regional synods as of December 31, 2021: The Central Synod, comprised of affinity-based churches who seek to be relationally aligned by adherence to existing General Synod statements regarding human sexuality; and the New Boundaries Synod, comprised of affinity-based churches who seek to be relationally aligned by their conviction that existing General Synod statements regarding human sexuality should not be adhered to with regard to marriage and ordination; and further, To transfer the classes and churches from these existing regional synods into the two new regional synods as follows: Far West, Great Lakes, Heartland, and Mid-America into the Central Synod, and Albany, Mid-Atlantics, and New York into the New Boundaries Synod (Canada would be unaffected); and further, To recommend an initial transfer window such that any consistory may petition the General Synod for transfer to the other new synod by February 28, 2022; and further, 122 To strongly encourage General Synod 2022 to give deference to the petitions of such local congregations to approve such transfer requests; and further, To recommend to the new regional synods to adopt a substructure resembling their respective current regional synod groupings so as to sustain administrative continuity initially; and further, To recommend to the new regional synods to develop statements describing their respective theological distinctives for the furtherance of the gospel within their bounds and to consider revising their synod name; and finally, To instruct the general secretary, General Synod Council, and General Synod Council staff, in consultation with the Commission on Church Order, to prepare further recommendations and propose necessary amendments to implement the ongoing restructuring of the denomination around these new affinity synods, including a revised General Synod agenda, assessment implications, and related bylaw updates (if any) for report back to General Synod 2022.

“To direct the RF 21-1 team to consider affinity regional synods in accordance with principles 1 and 4 of the Vision 2020 report; and further, “To instruct the Commission on Church Order and the Commission on Theology to study the structure and implications of affinity synods, with a report to General Synod in 2022.” VOTED: To adopt ONB 21-10 as amended (yes 118; no 87). Yet the overture that was adopted is:

While I appreciate the desire to split the denomination into two groups traditional marriage and non traditional marriage, I personally benefit from conversations from those with whom I disagree.

General Synod Council met after GS to discuss some of the business General Synod gave to us after Synod Closed. We will be meeting the first week in November to get to work on these recommendations.

Meeting in the desert.

This general synod was unlike other's I have attended. Never before on College Campuses did I learn of scorpions, coyotes, lizards, and wild pigs running around on the grounds. We met in a desert. Jesus often retreated to a desert (most of our texts reads 'a lonely place') during His earthly ministry. When I think about that I have hope for our denomination. Things look bleak. Churches and classes are talking of leaving the denomination. Some churches already have and some while Synod was in session.

Our own Classis, while we have determined to try to remain together in diversity, which I am so grateful for, we nonetheless are faced with the daunting task of being church in the midst of a global pandemic with many of our congregations in supervision.

I close with these words. We met in a desert with a view of a mountain behind us. I chose to hold on to the verses I began with as we navigate our Classis and Denomination through the parched creature infested desert...

1 Those who trust in the LORD are like Mount Zion, which cannot be moved, but abides for ever.

2 As the mountains are round about Jerusalem, so the LORD is round about his people, from this time forth and for evermore.

Thanks be to God for God's unspeakable Grace.

Respectfully Submitted:

Rev. Kent A. Mc Heard,

President of the Reverend Classis of Schenectady

Ad Hoc Committee on Sexual Harassment Policy

President McHeard also offered an update on the Ad Hoc Committee on Sexual Harassment Policy. A policy is being drafted and will be presented to the classis at the February Stated Session.

The president again assumed the chair and meeting carried on.

Clerk Items

Transitions in Ministry

The Rev. Susan Huizenga was presented to be transferred into the classis from the Classis of Montgomery. She currently serves as a chaplain at the Dartmouth-Hitchcock Medical Center in New Hampshire. A motion was made and supported to approve the transfer of Rev. Huizenga. The classis voted and the motion was approved.

Rev. Huizenga read the Declaration for Minister of Word and Sacrament before the classis. This is her ninth classis.

Following the reception of Rev. Huizenga, the clerk made note of the following transitions in ministry:

- Jonathan Vanderbeck transferred to Albany Presbytery
- Trey Tirpak ordained to ministry with Albany Synod Fellowship Program at First Church Albany
- Jeremy Bork moved to active ministry (Mount Olivet Conference and Retreat Center in Minnesota)
- Megan Hodgins moved to without charge
- Lorie Jonkman moved to without charge
- Immanuel van Tonder moved to active ministry (CCRC)

Update on the sale of Trinity Reformed Church

The clerk announced the sale of the Trinity Reformed Church to the Messiah Lutheran Church of Rotterdam was completed in September. Messiah Lutheran Church uses the building as a community center and hosts a food pantry and various 12-step meetings in the building.

Nominations for Albany Synod Executive Committee

The clerk announced that a nomination for an elder from Schenectady Classis is needed for the Albany Synod Executive Committee for a new term beginning May 2022.

Upcoming Meetings

February 22, 2022 - TBD*

May 24, 2022 - TBD*

*The Executive Committee will review the rotation of meetings and the impact of holding virtual meetings at its next meeting.

The Vice president took the chair as needed while the president had technical difficulties.

Treasurer's Report

The treasurer presented the October Reports, noting that support for Campus Ministry, Camp Fowler Prayer Cabins, and the Albany Syond Fellowship Program had been paid. She also noted that many of the expenses in the other expense category were primarily incurred through the process of selling Trinity including upkeep of the building.

Standing Committee Reports

Executive Committee

Clerk De Kruif presented the following recommendations from the Executive Committee:

Recommendation EC10-1: To approve the 2021 Clergy Compensation Guidelines for distribution to the classis congregations.

The recommendation was made based on a 5.3% Consumer Price Index increase. The floor was opened for discussion. There was no discussion. The classis proceed to vote.

Voted R-EC10-1: To approve the recommendation. (CARRIED)

Recommendation EC10-2: To approve the 2022 Budget and Assessment Schedule as presented by the Executive Committee with the changes to the General Synod Assessment Schedule.

Treasurer Hayner noted that the General Synod assessments changed following the October meeting from \$54.22 to \$54.51, and so the total assessment is not \$108.01. The floor was opened for discussion. There was no discussion. The classis proceeded to vote.

Voted R-EC10-2: To approve the recommendation. (CARRIED)

Ministry Oversight Committee

Chair Garret Szantner presented the following recommendation from the committee:

Recommendation MO10-1: To take Lucas Grove under care of the Ministry Oversight Committee and Schenectady Classis in pursuit of ordination.

A motion was made and seconded to give privilege of the floor to Lucas Grove. The classis voted and the motion carried.

Lucas introduced himself to the classis. He is a second year student at WTS and currently serves as the Director of Faith Formation at Lynnwood Reformed Church and an intern at Camp Fowler.

The floor was opened for discussion. There was no discussion and the classis proceeded to vote.

Voted R-MO10-1: To approve the recommendation. (CARRIED)

Report from General Synod Delegates

The clerk read a report from General Synod Delegate Matthew van Maastricht

Dear Colleagues,

I am saddened that I am not able to be with you, for my responsibilities at the seminary preclude it this evening. But I wanted to offer a report on my perspective of the General Synod meeting.

This is, I think, my tenth General Synod, though my first time as a delegate. I led the group composed of the youth corresponding delegates for a number of years, and during that time I was unable to serve as a delegate because I was, for that week, "staff." This is the first time in recent years that I have left a General Synod and did not think, "we've done something terrible this week."

A couple things of note: First, I do think the environment helped. While some may see the environment as simply window dressing, I do think it impacts the mood and tenor. No doubt that in an ordinary year (not one in which substantial discounts are able to be gained because of a drop in business) the costs would be substantially higher. Nonetheless, for this meeting, there were certainly benefits to various aspects of the place of Synod.

Second, the discernment groups were the most functional of this type of group that I've seen. While originally advisory committees, they have functioned like focus groups over the last decade or so, but the goal is, typically, to advise the Synod on how to vote. However, this year, the groups were intentionally not that. Our goal was not to advise the body, nor to bring recommendations, amendments or anything of the like. Our goal was simply to speak and to listen. While I have heard that some groups had some difficulty with that, my group, and several others that I've heard of, did well, largely due to the excellent work of the facilitators. In my group we had delegates from: Central California, Dakota, East Sioux, Southwest Michigan, Zeeland, Illinois, Illiana, Great Lakes City, and

Schoharie. Yet even with the vastly divergent views on many things (including, though not limited to, human sexuality), I do think we were able to listen to one another. I do think that this certainly helped the plenary discussion.

Third, I think that there was a providential slate of delegates, which helped to the Synod to be more careful in its decisions and in its deliberations.

The Synod authorized the creation of a task force to work on a plan to restructure. While some saw this as kicking the can down the road, I do think that the task is a significant one, and it is important that we do so deliberately (Cf. Lk 14:28-30). The Synod did not create a new mission agency independent from the RCA. Every single missionary who was present (current and former) spoke against it, and it failed by a significant margin. The third recommendation to establish guidelines for churches that want to leave was passed. While I continue to have significant reservations about the church order justification and how it was presented, I do think that they provide helpful guidelines for classes in handling churches that wish to depart.

Other noteworthy items: Western Seminary's desire to become largely independent from the RCA was referred to handle some significant lingering questions about the impact. I think this is also a part of a larger conversation about the nature of the connection between the seminaries and the church.

This is a bigger conversation than just Western, and we need to determine if the RCA should have two seminaries, or one seminary in New Brunswick, or if we change the nature of the connection of the seminaries to the General Synod, and what that will look like. On the other hand, Micah McCreary, President of New Brunswick Seminary was elected a General Synod Professor. As NBTS has turned more toward the RCA in recent years, WTS has been turning away. NBTS added a GS Professor, whereas WTS has not added one for a number of years but has been only losing them. At the same time that NBTS, through the Reformed Church Center, has been making significant strides to provide resources for the Reformed Church, WTS seeks to distance itself. I think this should bear weight in our minds when we are looking at the seminaries that we support and send our students to (particularly now since distance-learning is available from NBTS, and in a different manner than WTS).

There were two significant overtures as well. One was to establish a Grace and Truth Commission to function akin to the Office of the Inquisition (only without the torture and murder) only on matters of human sexuality. This was denied without discussion.

The other significant overture was to dissolve all the regional synods, and combine Albany, New York, and Mid-Atlantics into an open and affirming synod, and Far West, Heartland, Mid-America, and Great Lakes into a traditionalist synod, and then allow just over one year for all churches to decide if they want to move to the other synod. The Synod voted, I think wisely, to refer the substance of this overture to the restructuring task force.

The big question, I think, will be who will be on the task force. It is to be formed of people who intend to remain in the RCA. It will be an incredibly significant task and they will require our prayers.

The General Secretary gave a significantly meaningful report, which looked forward with hope and was the very thing that the General Synod needed at this time. Ecumenical partners gave very meaningful greetings and counsel as we find our way through this difficult season. It reminds me that even when we ignore our ecumenical partners, or mistreat them, they continue to care about us, and show up (literally), and that is, I think, a sign of Christian love. It was not all great, however, for the President's sermon at opening worship and report were offensive. Among other things, the president clearly staked his position one side, and in my opinion, did not do so with gentleness, kindness, or love. Until someone pointed it out from the floor, there was a distinct imbalance in those asked to pray at Synod skewed heavily toward men, though after it was pointed out, more women were invited, though I would hope at this time in our denomination's history, we wouldn't have to fight for such things.

If there is ever any desire to speak about any of this anymore, I am always available and open to such a conversation.

Your colleague and fellow laborer in the service of Christ, The Rev Matthew van Maastricht, Minister of Classis

A question from the floor was asked in follow up to the report regarding the timeline of the restructuring task force. A delegate to General Synod noted that this report will be presented to General Synod in 2024.

The president called to adjourn the meeting at 8:01 PM and the president offered prayer as the meeting was adjourned.

Respectfully submitted,

Rev. Lindsey De Kruif, Stated Clerk