

ABSTRACT
of the
MINUTES
for the
WESTERN CLASSIS
Reformed Church in the United States

14th Annual Session

March 9-11, 1998
Faith Reformed Church
Anderson, California

TABLE OF CONTENTS

1999 WESTERN CLASSIS DIRECTORY.....	1
Ministers	1
Primarius Elders	2
Secundus Elders	2
Licentiate	3
Students under Care of Classis	3
1999 WESTERN CLASSIS ROLL.....	3
INFORMATIONAL SUMMARY.....	4
Officers	4
Classis Guideline for Giving	4
Permanent Classis Committees	4
DIRECTORY OF CONGREGATIONS	5
ABSTRACT OF THE MINUTES WESTERN CLASSIS.....	8
SERVICES.....	8
Worship Service.....	8
Devotions.....	8
ORGANIZATION	9
FRATERNAL DELEGATES AND VISITORS.....	9
RECEPTION OF NEW MINISTERS AND CHURCHES	9
STANDING COMMITTEE APPOINTMENTS.....	9
PRESENTATION AND REFERRAL OF OVERTURESREPORTS AND COMMUNICATIONS.....	10
PRESENTATION OF PERMANENT COMMITTEE REPORTS	10
Executive Committee.....	10
Missions Committee	12
Christian Education Committee.....	17
Candidates and Credentials Committee	22
Interchurch Relations Committee	25

Publications Committee.....	27
Diaconal Ministries Committee.....	28
<i>Procedures for the Disbursement of Requested Diaconal Aid</i>	29
Heidelberg West Youth Camp Committee.....	33
REPORTS OF OFFICERS	35
President's Report on the State of the Church.....	35
The Stated Clerk's Report on the Minutes.....	37
Executive Committee of Synod's Report.....	40
Treasurer's and Auditor's Report.....	40
PAROCHIAL REPORTS OF MINISTERS	42
CONSTITUTIONAL QUESTIONS TO ELDERS	70
REPORT OF MEMBERSHIP AND FINANCIAL STATISTICS	71
REPORTS FROM CLASSIS=FRATERNAL DELEGATES	71
ADDRESSES FROM DELEGATES FROM OTHER REFORMEDCHURCHES AND VISITORS	72
EXAMINATION OF CANDIDATES	72
Thomas Mayville.....	72
Gary Mancilas.....	72
Steven Richert.....	72
REPORTS OF SPECIAL COMMITTEES	72
Joint Consistory of Faith Reformed Church of Anderson, California.....	72
Special Committee on Submitting Constitutional Amendments.....	74
REPORTS OF STANDING COMMITTEES	78
Examination and Licensure Committee.....	78
Excuses Committee.....	79
Finances Committee.....	79
Judicial Committee.....	79
Minutes of Synod Committee.....	80
Missions Committee.....	80
Nominations Committee.....	81
Benevolences Committee.....	81
Overtures Committee.....	82
MISCELLANEOUS REPORTS AND OTHER BUSINESS	82
Expression of Appreciation to the Host Congregation.....	82

Adoption of the Stated Clerk's Report, Executive Committees Minutes, and Overture Committees Report	83
READING OF THE MINUTES	83
ADJOURNMENT.....	83
Roll Call.....	83
Devotions.....	83
Apostles=Creed, Lord's Prayer, Benediction, and Doxology.....	83
APPENDIX.....	84
Membership and Financial Statistics	85
Standing Rules of the Western Classis	86

1999 WESTERN CLASSIS DIRECTORY

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Gross, Rev. Lloyd	(602) 854-3701
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Mancilas, Gary	(661) 726-1038
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E-Mail: t.mayville@juno.com	
Merica, Rev. Jonathan	Home (209) 369-7914
752 Golden Avenue, Lodi, CA 95240	
Church (209) 367-0552	
E-Mail: JonMerica@aol.com	
Pollema, Rev. Vernon	Home (661) 746-0211
235 James Street, Shafter, CA 93263.....	
Church (661) 746-6907	
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Riffert, Rev. Neale	(530) 347-1119
20636 Mayfair Ct., Cottonwood, CA 96022	
E-Mail: nealer@snowcrest.net	
Roe, Rev. Dennis	Home (530)272-6693
17355 Alexandra Way, Grass Valley, CA 95949	
Church (530) 273-4673	
E-Mail: mathatas@jps.net Fax: (530) 273-4673	
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5142 Cribari Pl., San Jose, CA 95135	
E-Mail: RevRDS@aol.com	
Sawtelle, Rev. Gene	Home (530) 671-7579
9882 Garden Highway, Yuba City, CA 95991.....	
Church (530) 755-2272	
Treick, Rev. Paul	Home (209) 526-0637
1515 Carlton Avenue, Modesto, CA 95350.....	
Church (209) 523-3220	
E-Mail: TriWheeler@aol.com	
Walker, Rev. Frank	Home (661) 827-9885
5601 Spring Blossom St., Bakersfield, CA 93313	
E-Mail: fhw@iname.com	
West, Rev. Jim	(916) 488-5569

5216 Locust Avenue, Carmichael, CA 95608 E-Mail: jimwest@jps.net

Primarius Elders

- Goehring, Allen** (661) 664-8849
9820 Rancho Verde Dr., Bakersfield, CA 93311
- Johnson, Wayne** (916) 424-0290
837 West Cove Way, Sacramento, CA 95831
E-Mail: johnson@ns.net
- Merz, Eric** (661) 758-2354
1291 Poplar, Wasco, CA 93280
- Peery, Michael** (530) 365-7464
2258 Mill St., Anderson, CA 96007
E-Mail: peerys@jps.net
- Stewart, Greg** (530) 751-2151
2495 S. Walton Ave., Yuba City, CA 95991
Fax: (916) 755-4193
- Van Houten, Earl** (209) 527-2474
1425 Albany Ave., Modesto, CA 95350
E-Mail: thepearl@softcom.net
- Van Tol, Ted** (530) 934-4117
7578 Road 41, Willows, CA 95988
- Vander Wal, Jerry** (209) 823-1915
7701 E. Lathrop Rd., Manteca, CA 95336
- Wood, Ernie Z.** (661) 949-7771
43850 N. 20th St. E. Space 200, Lancaster, CA 93535
E-Mail: ezanewood@usa.net

Secundus Elders

- Elliott, Richard** (916) 485-9862
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- Fay, Richard** (209) 599-5450
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E-Mail: RMF124@aol.com
- Jones, Jeff** (661) 665-2833
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- Mills, Jeff** (760) 762-5907
24351 Joshua Ave., Boron, CA 93516
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- Schlegel, Douglas** (916) 688-4002
8135 Pixley Way, Sacramento, CA 95828

- Stricker, Werner** (530) 673-5058
 1160 Cecily Ct., Yuba City, CA 95991
- Wilbur, Steve** (209) 745-7411
 179 West AE@Street, Galt, CA 95632
- Williams, Greg** (661) 399-6890
 2800 Worthington Ave., Bakersfield, CA 93308
 E-Mail: williams@lightspeed.net

Licentiate

- Richert, Steven** (530) 272-9668
 13924 Day Rd., Grass Valley, CA 95945
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Students under Care of Classis

- Caughey, Chris** (760) 432-6057
 355 Idaho Ave. #6, Escondido, CA 92027
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- Henderson, Paul** (219) 838-3941
 8542 Henry St., Highland, IN 46322
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- Henry, Scott** (661) 267-0138
 38824 Ocotillo Dr., Palmdale, CA 93551
- John Sawtelle** (619) 489-1512
 151 Gayland Pl. Apt. 109, Escondido, CA 92027
 E-Mail: JWSnDLS@aol.com
- Wood, Ernie Z.** (661) 949-7771
 43850 N. 20th St. E. Space 200, Lancaster, CA 93535
 E-Mail: Ezwood@hughes.net

1999 WESTERN CLASSIS ROLL

For the Classical Year beginning March 9, 1999

Minister	Primarius Elder	Secundus Elder	Charge
Dale Clark			Covenant, Chico
Jay Fluck	(Stated Supply, L. A. Basin Home Mission Work)		
Lloyd Gross	(Pastor Emeritus, Grace Refd, Bakersfield)		Retired, Mesa, AZ
Gary Mancilas	E. Zane Wood	Jeff Mills	Grace, Lancaster
Thomas Mayville	Ted Van Tol		Grace, Willows
Jonathan Merica	Jerry Vander Wal	Steve Wilbur	Providence, Lodi

Vernon Pollema	Eric Merz	Greg Williams			Ebenezer, Shafter
Dennis Roe					(Assoc. pastor, Covenant Refd Church, Sacramento serving Grass Valley)
Robert Sander					Retired, San Jose, CA
Gene Sawtelle	Greg Stewart	Werner Stricker			First, Yuba City
Neale Riffert	Michael Peery	Richard Elliot			Faith, Anderson
Paul Treick	Earl Van Houten	Richard Fay	Trinity, Modesto		
Frank Walker	Allen Goehring	Jeff Jones			Grace, Bakersfield
Jim West	Wayne Johnson	Douglas Schlegel	Covenant, Sacramento		

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INFORMATIONAL SUMMARY**OFFICERS**

President **C** Rev. Jim West
 Vice-President **C** Rev. Neale Riffert
 Stated Clerk **C** Rev. Paul Treick
 Treasurer **C** Mr. Chris Fellersen

CLASSIS GUIDELINE FOR GIVING*(Per communicant member)*

Classical Dues	10.00
Benevolences	52.00
Home Missions	63.00
Publications	00.00
Building Fund	00.00
Heidelberg Youth Camp	<u>00.00</u>
TOTAL	\$125.00

Treasurer-s Address: Mr. Chris Fellersen
 8675 Sleepy Hollow Dr., Elk Grove CA 95624
 Ph. (916) 423-1741

PERMANENT CLASSIS COMMITTEES

Executive Committee: Jim West, Paul Treick, Wayne Johnson

Candidates and Credentials Committee: F. Walker, E. Van Houten (3 yrs); J. West, J. Stuebbe (2 yrs); D. Roe, P. Treick (1 yr)

Missions Committee: N. Riffert, E. Merz (3 yrs); D. Roe, S. Wilbur (2 yrs); J. Merica, F. Walker (1 yr)

Christian Education in the Church: J. Fluck, G. Mancilas (3 yrs); D. Clark, E. Z. Wood (2 yrs); V. Pollema, R. Fay (1 yr)

Interchurch Relations Committee: N. Riffert, E. Merz (3 yrs); R. Sander, J. Clark (2 yrs); J. Merica, G. Mancilas (1 yr)

Publications Committee: T. Mayville, M. Peery (3 yrs); V. Pollema, T. Van Tol (2 yrs); W. Johnson, D. Clark (1 yr)

Diaconal Committee: G. Sawtelle, Werner Stricker (3 yrs); R. Sander, C. Van Egmond (2 yrs); V. Pollema, R. Eddington (1 yr)

Heidelberg West Youth Camp Committee: G. Sawtelle, G. Stewart (3 yrs); P. Treick, G. Williams (2 yrs); T. Mayville, S. Richert (1 yr)

(Indicates chairman)

DIRECTORY OF CONGREGATIONS

ANDERSON, CA - Faith Reformed Church

Church Location: 3291 Rupert Rd.. (off Stingy Lane)
Church Mailing Address: P.O. Box 902 Anderson, CA 96007
Church Phone: (530) 365-6874
Service Times: Sun. Sch. 9:30 am; Worship 10:30 am
Pastor: Neale Riffert/Mary Elizabeth/Neale Jr.
Home Address: 20636 Mayfair Ct., Cottonwood, CA 96022
Home Phone: (530) 347-1119 **E-Mail:** nealer@snowcrest.net

BAKERSFIELD, CA - Grace Reformed Church

Church Location: 420 Columbus Street, Bakersfield (north on Union Ave. to Columbus St., east on Columbus to the church)
Church Mailing Address: 420 Columbus St., Bakersfield, CA 93305
Church Phone: (661) 325-0165
Service Times: Sun. Sch. 9:45 am; Worship 10:30 am and 6:30 pm
Pastor/Wife/Children: Frank Walker / Christine / Sharon, Bethann, Cathryn, Tari, Jonathan.
Home Address: 5601 Spring Blossom St., Bakersfield, CA 93313
Home Phone: (661) 827-9885 **E-Mail:** fhw@iname.com

CHICO, CA - Covenant Reformed Chapel

Church Location: Meeting at 1877 Hooker Oak Ave. (Adventist Church: east on East Ave. To Hooker Oak Ave., Turn right; proceed through first stop sign and turn left into church parking lot)
Church Mailing Address: 2665 Floral Ave., Chico, CA 95973
Church Phone: (530) 345-2732
Service Times: 9:30 AM; evening service at 6:00 PM. Phone for location.
Pastor/Wife/Children: Dale Clark/Sandra/Alan, Laura, Thomas, Jonathan
Home Address: 2665 Floral Ave., Chico, CA 95973
Home Phone: (530) 898-9229 **E-Mail:** clarkds@jps.net

GRASS VALLEY, CA - Covenant Reformed Church

Church Location: 336 Crown Point Circle (in the Nevada County Board of Realtors Bldg). From US 49 N., take the Idaho-Maryland exit in Grass Valley. Turn right and proceed 2 mile to Centennial Rd.. Turn Right. Proceed approximately 2 mile to Crown Point Circle. Turn Right. go one block then bear right at the Y. Turn into the first drive on the left. There will be a sign identifying the building and the church.
Church Mailing Address: P. O. Box 2264, Grass Valley, CA 95949
Church Phone/Fax: (530) 273-HOPE
Service Times: Sunday: 10:00 AM Bible Study for all ages; 11:00 AM Worship and Praise; Wednesday: 7:00 PM Bible Study & Prayer; Thursday: 4:00 PM Young Peoples= Bible & Catechism Class at Pastor's home (ages 12-16).
Pastor/Wife/Children: Dennis E. Roe / Julie / Josiah, Abigail, Esther, Joanna
Home Address: 17355 Alexandra Way, Grass Valley, CA 95949
Home Ph.: (530) 272-6693 **E-Mail:** mathatas@jps.net **Fax:** (530) 273-4673

LANCASTER, CA - Grace Reformed Church

Church Location: 44957 Elm Ave. Lancaster, CA 93534 (corner of Elm & Kettering)

Church Mailing Address: P.O. Box 2472, Lancaster, CA 93539
Church Phone: (661) 940-4669
Service Times: Sun. Sch. 9:30 am; Worship 10:45 am
Pastor/Wife/Children: Gary Mancilas/ Gloria
Home Address: 44503 13th St. E., Lancaster, CA 93535
Home Phone: (661) 726-1038 **E-Mail:** gmancilas@hughes.net

LODI, CA - Providence Reformed Church

Church Location: 245 E. Vine Street, Lodi
Church Mailing Address: 245 E. Vine St. Lodi, CA 95240
Church Phone: (209) 367-0552
Service Times: Sun. Sch. 9:30 am; Worship 10:30 am & 6:00 pm; Tues. Bible Study 7:00 pm.
Pastor/Wife/Children: Jonathan Merica / Marsha
Home Address: 752 Golden Ave., Lodi, CA 95240
Home Phone: (209) 369-7914 **E-Mail:** JonMerica@aol.com

LOS ANGELES - Home Mission Work

Church Location: Call (562) 947-4837 for current location.
Service Times: Worship 10:30 am; Catechism Class 12 Noon; Dinner 1:00 pm; Bible Study 6:00 pm.
Stated Supply/Wife/Children: Jay E. Fluck/ Loretta/ Jeffery, Joel, Erin
Home Address: 11502 La Serna Dr., Whittier, CA 90604
Home Phone: (562) 947-4837 **E-Mail:** jefluck@aol.com

Fax: (562) 947-5958

MODESTO, CA - Trinity Reformed Church

Church Location: 960 El Terino Ave., Modesto (Briggsmore east; right on Coffee, right on E. Fairmont 2 blocks.)
Church Mailing Address: 960 El Terino Ave., Modesto, CA 95350
Church Phone: (209) 523-3220
Service Times: Sun. Sch. 9:15 am; Worship 10:30 am & 6:00 pm
Pastor/Wife/Children: Paul Treick / Karen / Paula, Sara
Home Address: 1515 Carlton Ave., Modesto, CA 95350
Home Phone: (209) 526-0637 **E-mail:** triwheeler@aol.com

SACRAMENTO, CA - Covenant Reformed Church

Church Location: 2020 16th Avenue, Sacramento (from Frwy 99 take 12th Ave/Sutterville Rd.. Exit. Go west to Freeport Blvd., left to 16th Ave and left to 2020 16th Ave. From I-5 Frwy take Sutterville Exit, go east on Sutterville to Freeport Blvd., left on Freeport and right on 16th Ave. to 2020 16th Ave.)
Church Mailing Address: 2020 16th Ave., Sacramento, CA 95822
Church Phone: (916) 451-1190
Service Times: Sun. Sch. 9:45 am; Worship 11:00 am & 6:00 pm
Pastor/ Wife/Children: Jim West / Elaine / Ruthanna
Home Address: 5216 Locust Ave., Carmichael, CA 95608
Home Phone: (916) 488-5569 **E-Mail:** jimwest@jps.net

SHAFTER, CA - Ebenezer Reformed Church

Church Location: 235 James Street, Shafter (next door to the city library, fire, and police depts.)

Church Mailing Address: 235 James St., Shafter, CA 93263
Church Phone: (661) 746-6907
Service Times: Sun. Sch. 9:30 am; Worship 10:30 am & 7:00 pm (1st, 2nd, 3rd Sundays)
Pastor/Wife/Children: Vernon Pollema / Betty
Home Address: 235 James St., Shafter, CA 93263
Home Phone: (661) 746-0211

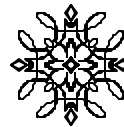
WILLOWS, CA - Grace Reformed Church

Church Location: 112 South Butte St. (corner: Butte & Sycamore)
Church mailing Address: P.O. Box 225, Willows, CA 95988
Church Phone: (530) 934-2732
Service Times: Sun. Sch. 9:00 am; Worship 10:00 am
Pastor/Wife/Children: Thomas Mayville/Carolyn/Michelle,
Home Address: 839 Crestwood Way, Willows, CA 95988
Home Phone: (530) 934-7501 **E-Mail:** t.mayville@juno.com

YUBA CITY, CA - First Reformed Church

Church Location: 9882 Highway 99, South of Yuba City
Church Mailing Address: 9882 Garden Hwy., Yuba City, CA 95991
Church Phone: (530) 755-2272
Service Times: Sun. Sch. 9:30 am; Worship 11:00 am
Pastor/Wife/Children: Gene Sawtelle / Sharon
Home Address: 9882 Garden Hwy., Yuba City, CA 95991
Home Phone: (530) 671-7579

ABSTRACT OF THE MINUTES WESTERN CLASSIS *Reformed Church in the United States*



Meeting
 March 9-11, 1999

Faith Reformed Church, Anderson, California

“... walk worthy of the vocation wherewith ye are called,
 With all lowliness and meekness, with longsuffering,

forbearing one another in love;
 Endeavouring to keep the unity of the Spirit
 in the bond of peace.
 There is one body, and one Spirit,
 even as ye are called in one hope of your calling;
 One Lord, one faith, one baptism,
 One God and Father of all, who is above all,
 and through all, and in you all.
 Ephesians 4:1-6

SERVICES

The Western Classis of the Reformed Church in the United States opened its 14th Annual Session at Faith Reformed Church of Anderson, California on Tuesday, March 9, 1999 at 1:00 PM with devotions by Rev. Neale Riffert. The hymn *Rejoice, All Ye Believers* was sung. Rev. Riffert read Psalm 1 and addressed the delegates and visitors on the subject of *The Happy Man*.

The Tuesday evening Worship Service was held at 7:00 PM with Licentiate Thomas Mayville conducting the service and Rev. Jim West preaching on *Looking unto Jesus* from Hebrews 12:1, 2. Following the service housing assignments were given and refreshments and fellowship followed in the fellowship hall of the church.

The Wednesday morning devotion was held with Rev. Vernon Pollema leading. The hymn *Ye Servants of God, Your Master Proclaim* was sung. He read Scripture from Jeremiah 1:1-11 and addressed the delegates on *Jeremiah, a Prophet to the Nations*.

The Wednesday morning devotion was led by Rev. Paul Treick. The hymn *How Sweet and Awful is the Place*. He read the Scripture from II Corinthians 11:1-7 and addressed the delegates on *The Simplicity That is in Christ*.

The closing devotions were led by Elder Greg Stewart who read II Timothy 3:16 - 4:7. After a brief exhortation, he led the assembly in prayer. Each session of the meeting was opened and closed with calling on God in prayer according to a schedule prepared by the out-going President. A number of prayers were offered during the course of business for various people or causes. After all the Parochial Reports were read, the President led in prayer for the needs of all the pastors and congregations.

ORGANIZATION

Rev. Gene Sawtelle, the retiring President of the Classis, called the meeting to order on Tuesday, March 9, 1999 at 1:23 PM, and led in prayer. The initial roll call showed eleven ministers and eight delegate elders present. The Bar of the House was defined as the first five pews on each side of the aisle.

Following the reading of the Standing Rules, Rev. Gene Sawtelle announced that after serving for the past nine years, he wished not to be nominated for President due to health considerations. The following were elected: Rev. Jim West, President; Rev. Neale Riffert, Vice-President; Rev. Paul Treick, Stated Clerk; Mr. Chris Fellersen, Treasurer.

Rev. Dennis Roe was appointed as the *Reformed Herald* reporter.

The assembly adopted the Agenda, Services, and the Order of the Day. Special Orders of the Day were set for the Ordination Examinations of candidates Thomas Mayville, Gary Mancilas, and Steven Richert.

FRATERNAL DELEGATES AND VISITORS

Rev. Andy Preston, fraternal delegate from the Presbytery of Northern California, Orthodox Presbyterian Church was welcomed, seated in the Bar of the House, and given the privilege of the floor. He brought greetings from his presbytery and greetings were given to him to return to the presbytery.

There were no other fraternal delegates present at the meeting.

Elder delegates who were serving for the first time were introduced and welcomed. They were Steve Wilbur (Lodi), Eric Merz (Shafter), Greg Stewart (Yuba City), and Earl Van Houten (Modesto). Licentiates Thomas Mayville, Gary Mancilas, and Steve Richert were present, seated in the Bar of the House, and given the privilege of the floor.

Student Scott Henry from Palmdale was present at the meeting in order to come under Care of the Classis as a student for the Christian ministry.

RECEPTION OF NEW MINISTERS AND CHURCHES

Rev. Neale Riffert, the new pastor of Faith Reformed Church of Anderson was welcomed. Rev. Jay Fluck, stated supply in the home mission work in the Los Angeles area, was welcomed. Prayer of thanksgiving was offered for providing undershepherds for God's people in these areas.

There were no new congregations to welcome this year.

STANDING COMMITTEE APPOINTMENTS

The President made the following Standing Committee Appointments:

Examination and Licensure: *F. Walker, D. Roe, P. Treick, J. West, Elder from Modesto, Elder from Bakersfield.*

Excuses: **D. Clark, R. Sander, Elder from Willows*

Finances: **D. Roe, N. Riffert, J. Fluck, Elder from Sacramento*

Judicial: **D. Clark, V. Pollema, Elder from Modesto*

Minutes of Synod: **J. Merica, Elder from Lancaster, Elder from Lodi.*

Missions: **J. Merica, Elder from Sacramento, Elder from Anderson*

Nominations: **V. Pollema, G. Sawtelle, Elder from Shafter*

Benevolences: **G. Sawtelle, Elder from Shafter, Elder from Yuba City*

Overtures: **N. Riffert, G. Sawtelle, Elder from Yuba City*

PRESENTATION AND REFERRAL OF OVERTURES REPORTS AND COMMUNICATIONS

All pertinent overtures and materials were given to the Overtures Committee for dispersal to the appropriate Standing Committees. Some items from the Permanent Committee reports were also referred to Standing Committees. The results of the Classis actions to the various committee recommendations are printed in this Abstract.

PRESENTATION OF PERMANENT COMMITTEE REPORTS

A. Executive Committee

Esteemed Brethren,

The business of the Executive Committee was primarily over the telephone, although we met informally in person to discuss business as well. This report and the minutes of the committee are comprised of the Recommendations in Executive Circulars 13:1 to 13:5. The full text of the circulars are a matter of Western Classis records.

The following matters and recommendations were circularized and approved:

In the matter of the call to Rev. Henry Bowen,

Recommendation 1: *That the resignation of Rev. Henry Bowen as pastor of Grace Reformed Church of Willows, CA be approved.*

Recommendation 2: *That the pulpit of Grace Reformed Church of Willows be declared vacant as of June 15, 1998.*

Recommendation 3: *That the pastoral relationship [of Rev. Henry Bowen] with the Western Classis be dissolved contingent upon official notice of his reception by Covenant East Classis, RCUS.*

In the matter of Calvary OPC of La Mirada,

Recommendation 4: *We recommend that the Interchurch Relations Committee of Western Classis and the Spiritual Council of Grace Reformed Church of Bakersfield meet with the Rev. Al Pontier and the session of Calvary OPC of La Mirada, and that Rev. Jonathan Merica make arrangements for the time and place for this meeting.*

In the matter of Mr. Thomas Mayville and his call to Grace Reformed Church of Willows,

Recommendation 5: *We recommend that the call from Grace Reformed Church of Willows to Mr. Thomas Mayville, and the acceptance of the call from Mr. Mayville be declared in order, and that Thomas Mayville be given a preliminary examination by the Candidates and Credentials Committee so he may serve in Willows as stated supply until a full licensure examination can be held on August 25, 1998 at a Special Meeting of the Western Classis to be convened at 9:00 am at Trinity Reformed Church of Modesto.*

In the matter of pulpit supply for Grace Reformed Church of Willows,

Recommendation 6: *That the report of the Candidates and Credentials Committee in regard to the preliminary examination of Mr. Thomas Mayville be approved and that Mr. Mayville be allowed to fill the pulpit at Grace Reformed Church of Willows until a further recommendation is made following his licensure examination.*

In the matter of amending the Special Classis Meeting agenda,

Recommendation 7: *That the Agenda of the August 25 Special Classis meeting be amended to include a report from the Interchurch Relations Committee in regard to their meeting with the Presbytery of Southern California, OPC.*

In the matter of establishing a home mission work in the L. A. Basin,

Recommendation 8: *That the Western Classis establish a home mission work in the L.A. Basin.*

Recommendation 9: *That the Western Classis provide \$1,430.00 per month beginning November 1, 1998, for Home Mission support to the L.A. Basin work.*

Recommendation 10: *That the Western Classis petition Synod for \$1,430.00 per month in benevolent aid for the mission work in the L.A. Basin beginning November 1, 1998.*

Recommendation 11: *That Rev. Jay Fluck be approved by the Western Classis as the Stated Supply for the L.A. Basin work.*

Recommendation 12: *That Grace Reformed Church in Bakersfield, California be requested to take oversight of the L.A. Basin work.*

Recommendation 10 was submitted to Synod and circularized. It was not approved by Synodical circular.

In the matter of the call to Rev. Neale Riffert to Faith Reformed Church of Anderson,

Recommendation 13: *We recommend that the call to Rev. Neale Riffert from Faith Reformed Church of Anderson, CA and the acceptance of that call be declared in order.*

Recommendation 14: *We recommend that the examination of Rev. Riffert be declared satisfactory.*

Recommendation 15: *We recommend that Rev. Neale Riffert be added to the Roll of Ministers of the Western Classis.*

Recommendation 16: *We recommend that the Installation Service for Rev. Riffert be held on February 2, 1999 at 7:00 PM at Faith Reformed Church in Anderson, and further that the Installation Committee consist of Rev. Dale Clark, chm., Rev. Jim West, Rev. Paul Treick, and the Elders of Faith Reformed in Anderson. Rev. Clark will conduct the Service, Rev. Jim West will give the charge to the Pastor, and Rev. Paul Treick will give the charge to the congregation.*

Recommendation 17: *We recommend the following schedule for services for the Classis Meeting:*

March 9:

1:00 PM - Opening Devotions: Rev. Neale Riffert

7:00 PM - Evening Worship: Conducting, Mr. Thomas Mayville; Preaching, Rev. Jim West.

March 10:

Morning Devotions: Rev. Vernon Pollema

March 11:

Morning Devotions: Rev. Paul Treick

Closing Devotions: Elder from Faith Reformed, Anderson

No other business was brought to the attention of the Executive Committee.

Respectfully submitted,

Classis Action: The report as a whole was adopted.

B. Missions Committee

Esteemed Fathers and Brethren,

When our Lord Jesus *Asaw the multitudes, He was moved with compassion on them, because they fainted, and were scattered abroad, as sheep having no shepherd. Then said he unto his disciples, The harvest truly is plenteous, but the labourers are few; pray ye therefore the Lord of the harvest, that he will send forth labourers into his harvest.* (Matt. 9:36-38)

As it was in the days of our Lord Jesus, so also it is today *...the harvest truly is plenteous.* We live in a time of unprecedented opportunity for the work of home missions and as these opportunities arise the need for ministers of the Word increases. Our Lord teaches the means of obtaining these labourers is to *...pray ye therefore the Lord of the harvest, that he will send forth labourers into his harvest.*

By the good providence of God, the Western Classis is busily engaged in the work of home missions in Chico and Grass Valley, with the potential of mission works beginning in the L.A. Basin area and Pleasanton.

In the Home Missions Report of Covenant Reformed Church in Chico, Rev. Dale Clark states the first and foremost need of the congregation is the prayers of fellow Christians. This past year the congregation did not experience the growth it had hoped to see. At the beginning of last year there were 11 communicate members and 4 baptized members. By the end of 1998 the communicate membership was increased to 13 with 4 baptized members. However, one communicate member will soon be leaving due to work related reasons.

Added to the need for more families to build up the congregation, there is the need for God to send financial blessings. The congregational giving fell short of the budget for 1998. With other sources of revenue, however, the total income fell short of the total budget by only \$348.00

Covenant Reformed Church of Chico sees the need of outreach in the community to bring new families into the church. They are planning to distribute door hangers explaining who they are, and giving a presentation of the gospel based upon the first question of the Heidelberg Catechism. The brethren of the Western Classis ought to keep this outreach effort in prayer.

Rev. Clark has expressed his desire to see the reformed faith extended to other neighboring communities as the Lord guides and provides. He states in his report, *We want to see a reformed work here and in Paradise and Oroville at least. By God's grace this will happen and we trust Him to do it.*

Given the present financial conditions of the congregation in Chico, the Consistory of Covenant Reformed Church requests that the same support of the Western Classis be continued to 2001, at which time they hope to begin reducing the Classical support.

In the Western Classis Home Missions Committee (WCHMC) Report last year, a recommendation was made regarding a Bible study in Salt Lake City, Utah which read as follows, *That Mr. David Sawtelle be encouraged to conduct a Bible study in Salt Lake City, Utah with the goal of starting a Reformed church.* Your chairman contacted the father of David Sawtelle and was informed that an OPC church is in the Salt Lake City area and that David is now attending the OPC work. Therefore, at this time there are no present plans of pursuing an RCUS mission work in Salt Lake City.

It should also be noted from the WCHMC Report last year that ministers of our Classis met with the Evangelical Reformed Church of Sacramento on February 24, 1998 with the prospect that this congregation may join with the RCUS. This congregation left the OCRC. Your chairman made contact with the pastor of the congregation, Rev. Wayne Leigh, to see if there are any plans to join with the RCUS. Rev. Leigh responded by saying that the decision is on hold until the congregation is unified in the direction they want to go.

Although Covenant Reformed Church of Grass Valley is not a mission work funded by the Western Classis, but is under the oversight of Covenant Reformed Church of Sacramento, CA, we give thanks to God for the progress of the church this past year. They are working on organizing as a congregation in the RCUS and have recently added a new elder, licentiate Steven Richert. As the church continues to grow there is a need for a larger facility for the congregation to meet. Let us keep them in our prayers that God will provide a permanent meeting place that will be adequate for their needs.

It has been the goal of Providence Reformed Church in Lodi to engage in the work of missions once it became self-supporting and free of its building debt. An opportunity to begin a work in Pleasanton, CA is now underway with Grace Reformed Bible Study which meets each Thursday evening. Pleasanton is an ideal area for a mission work because it is centrally located in what is called the Tri-Valley area, consisting of Livermore, Dublin, San Ramon and Danville. These communities combined have a population of nearly a quarter

of a million people, and there is no faithful reformed church in the area. We are very grateful to the Chinese Bible Church for allowing the use of their building free of charge to conduct the Bible study. An ad on the church page of the Tri-Valley Herald runs each week inviting people in the area to join the study.

The WCHMC has been busily engaged in working to establish a mission work in the L. A. Basin. After the Interchurch Relations Committee met with members of the Presbytery of Southern Ca, OPC, the Western Classis directed the Home Missions Committee to proceed with an assessment of the group of families desiring to organize as a mission work under the Western Classis. Delegates of Classis have already seen the reports of the Interchurch Relations committee and Home Missions Committee, along with the recommendations. Therefore, your Committee will not be going over that information again in this report. However, it should be noted that the WCHMC Report, along with its recommendations (exec. Cir. 13:4), was circularized in the Western Classis. Since there were no objections in Classis to the recommendations of the WCHMC to establish a home mission in the L.A. Basin, the recommendations were then sent to the delegates of the RCUS Synod by circular letter (252:2). The two objections from different Classis needed to defeat the recommendations were received, thus delaying all further action on the L.A. Basin until the meeting of Synod. For the benefit of the delegates of Classis, your Committee met on January 13, 1999, to answer the objections made by delegates of Synod, as well as to deal with other committee work. Regarding the objections by Synod delegates to begin the mission work in the L.A. Basin, please note the following objections received from three RCUS Synod delegates, and your Western Classis Home Missions Committee's responses:

Objection #1: The RCUS Synod has not assessed the work.

Response: Two members of the Synodical Home Missions Committee represented the Committee when the Western Classis made its assessment. This was done in consultation with the chairman of the Synodical Home Missions Committee. Further, the Synod missions manual says that a committee of assessment will be drawn from the Permanent Classical or Synodical Home Missions Committees, if possible. The assessment that was made, therefore, appears to fall well within the required parameters.

Objection #2: The budget for the work in L.A. is structured significantly differently than those of established works.

Response: We were asking for benevolent monies (not missions funding) just to get the work off the ground. The details of the budget can be worked out later.

Objection #3: Synod would have no input in the calling of a pastor for the work.

Response: No pastor has been called yet. The Western Classis has thus far approved having Rev. Jay Fluck serve the LA group only as stated supply. Further, it should be noted that in our understanding the L.A. work is a Classical work, not a Synodical work. Yet, it should also be sufficient that Synod had two representatives at the assessment meeting, as noted above.

Objection #4: A missions pastor must have five years experience in the RCUS.

Response: It should first be noted that the Synodical manual does not require five years of experience in the RCUS, but five (5) years of experience in the ministry. Rev. Fluck certainly qualifies, but let us observe also that he comes from a church with which we have had fraternal relations for many years. He is, therefore, not totally unfamiliar with Reformed teaching and practice. Lastly, it must be said that no one has yet been called to pastor the L.A. work.

Objection #5: Synodical monies require Synodical oversight.

Response: Are Classes not permitted to have their own works, for which Synod can provide some financial aid to the Classes? This principle is fundamental to Reformed church government. However, it should also be said that the Synodical missions budget was set in advance. Since there were insufficient funds for Synod to take on the L.A. work, the Classis took up the challenge and tried to appeal to Synod for benevolent aide.

Objection #6: The Western Classis failed to follow the Synodical manual.

Response: This objection lacks specifics and, therefore, cannot be answered.

Objection #7: No one in the L.A. group has a long history in the RCUS.

Response: Where is this required in the manual? This idea, if carried out as a matter of practice, would make it almost impossible to establish new works in areas where there is not already a concentration of RCUS folks. This is a defective view of missions and evangelism.

Objection #8: Rev. Fluck's involvement in an L.A. work may be perceived by the OPC as an insult.

Response: Nothing has been decided about a pastor for the work yet. However, there has been some interaction between the RCUS and the OPC on this matter at various levels. The possibility of an insult is more or less confined to the Southern California Presbytery and to certain personalities within it. The issues that may cause insult have been resolved to the best of our ability.

Objection #9: Several steps in the Synod manual have not been followed.

Response: See objection #6.

Objection #10: A mission work that is to be supported by Synod must be subject to the oversight of the Synodical Home Missions Committee.

Response: See objection #5.

Objection #11: It is unknown how long Synod will be obligated to provide \$1,430 per month.

Response: This was a stop-gap measure until the 1999 Synod.

Objection #12: A Synodical budget has not been laid before us.

Response: Synod's participation must be evaluated.

Objection #13: It is unknown how long Shafter will provide health insurance for Rev. Fluck.

Response: It is our understanding that this is for the first year only.

Objection #14: It is unknown who owns the house that the \$12,000 payment is budgeted for.

Response: Rev. Fluck owns the house. It seems to us unreasonable to ask him to sell his house and pay rent to someone else. In either case, we are buying a house for someone. Do we want to assist our brother to buy his house, or do we want to buy a house for someone unknown to us? But again, it should be borne in mind that Rev. Fluck has not been called to this work. No matter who serves in L.A., we will have to provide money for housing.

Objection #15: No rationale is given for not following the rule that requires mission pastors to have five years of experience in the RCUS.

Response: There is no such rule. See objection #4.

Objection #16: There was nothing in the budget for Synod or Classis guidelines.

Response: This is because the budget that we laid before Synod is only for the first year. Since these people were not included in last year's calculations, there is nothing for them to pay. Provision for paying the guidelines will be part of future budgets.

It is the conclusion of the WCHMC that in spite of the objections raised, each of the objections may be resolved with the assistance and support of Synod. The Western Classis should continue to pursue establishing a work in the L.A. Basin by making a request to Synod for support. Your Committee chairman will be meeting with the Synodical Home Missions Committee in Yuba City on February 12, 1999, regarding this matter.

It should be noted further that the Western Classis does not have funds available to undertake the work in the L.A. Basin. When your Committee met on January 13, 1999, it was discovered that the \$3,000 a month in benevolent aid, allocated for Faith Reformed Church in Anderson, was not added into the guideline at the last Classis meeting. In order for Classis to provide \$3,000 a month for the Anderson church, based upon 600 communicate members, the Anderson work alone will be an increase of \$60.00 per communicate member on the guideline for giving. The entire guideline for the last classical year was \$84.00 per communicate member. The bottom line is that the Western Classis cannot take on an additional financial load with the anticipated increase for the coming year.

The Western Classis ought to give thanks to God for the many opportunities given to it to engage in the work of missions. May we remember the words of our Lord Jesus to, *Lift up your eyes, and look on the fields; for they are white already to harvest. And he that reapeth receiveth wages, and gathereth fruit unto life eternal: that both he that soweth and he that reapeth may rejoice together.* (John 4:35-36) As we pray for new opportunities and laborers to do the work, pray fervently for the financial resources to under-take the work.

As many delegates of Classis are aware, Mr. Richard Elliott, a member of the WCHMC has a new job assignment in Sacramento and is providentially hindered from doing his duties as an elder. Accordingly, he has contacted your chairman requesting that he be relieved from his duties on the WCHMC. He writes, *After six months of experience now in my new Sacramento job (which was an unsolicited and unexpected promotion that requires me to live and work in Sacramento), it is apparent to me that I will be providentially hindered from continuing as an active elder at Faith Reformed Church and from participation on the committee(s) of Classis/Synod. My new work location and responsibilities will preclude me from giving adequate attention to these important responsibilities. Accordingly, I would ask that I be excused from my assignment on the Home Missions Committee.*

Recommendations of the WCHMC:

- 1.) That the Western Classis supply \$21,000 from the Home Missions fund to assist the Chico work during the forthcoming Classical year.
- 2.) That the Western Classis Home Missions Committee refer the L.A. Basin work to the Synodical Home Missions Committee to make an assessment of its feasibility; that the work might be subject to the planning, three-year budgeting and oversight of the Home Missions Committee of Synod.
- 3.) That the letter of Mr. Richard Elliott's resignation from the WCHMC be referred to the Standing Nominations Committee at the forthcoming Classis meeting.

Respectfully submitted,

Rev. Jonathan Merica, Chm., Rev. Dennis Roe, Rev. Frank Walker, Mr. Ryan Spitzer

Classis Action: The report was referred to the Standing Missions Committee.

C. Christian Education Committee

Esteemed Brothers in Christ,

Your committee met briefly once this year at the Special Classis meeting in August. At this meeting we simply voted to elect Rev. Clark as chairman since Rev. Bowen had moved to Hamburg, MN. Otherwise we communicated by phone or e-mail.

There were two specific items that the Classis gave to the committee. The first was to work on the handwork materials for the Pre-School Curriculum. With the changes to the committee from last Spring we have not completed this task. We hope to meet at this coming meeting to sort some of this out.

The other item of business was the survey of the churches of Classis regarding their catechetical instruction. Please see the attached results of the survey. Of the 11 churches of Classis eight responses were received. At present the Anderson congregation does not have a confirmation class, and Rev. Riffert has only recently arrived. As for other results, we summarize the responses as follows:

1. The majority start the formal instruction in the 5th or 6th grade.
- 2a. The programs extend for 3-6 years.
- 2b. The general pattern is that it lasts the school year for 1-2 hours per week.
3. All require memorization from there it varies greatly as to the understanding of the extent of memorization.
4. The majority use Jones workbook and the Church in History as texts, with many using the Confirmation Handbook also.
5. The learning of Psalms, hymns and Scriptural songs is mainly done at other times, mainly the worship service.
6. The pastor is the main instructor with the elders helping as a general rule.
7. There are differing approaches, but all are looking for doctrine and life in the responses of the catechumens.
8. See the individual responses.

There has only been one consistory which has made any response to the Pre-School curriculum. If there are any other responses that would help us to perfect it before it is published then we would greatly appreciate.

Your committee recommends the following:

1. *That the Committee edit the Pre-School curriculum in preparation for publication.*
2. *That the Committee edit and prepare the handiwork for the Pre-School curriculum for publication.*
3. *That the churches examine the survey on catechetical instruction and seek to improve their programs.*

Respectfully submitted,

Dale Clark, Chm., Vernon Pollema, Richard Fay, Greg Stewart, E. Zane Wood

Classis Action: Recommendations 1 and 2 were adopted. On #3, Take Note.

Survey of the Western Classis Regarding Catechetical Instruction

The following is the code used for the churches that responded. *A - Anderson; B - Bakersfield; C - Chico; G - Grass Valley; La - Lancaster; Lo - Lodi; M - Modesto; Sa - Sacramento; Sh - Shafter; W - Willows; Y - Yuba City* (A-Anderson, La-Lancaster, and Y-Yuba City did not respond.)

1. At what age or grade level do you begin instruction for confirmation?

B - Sixth grade, though some parents prefer to wait until seventh grade.

C - In Chico the only students are my own children. I usually start the class at grade 5 or age 11.

G - The average is probably 11 -12 years of age. However, it is really dependent upon the individual child's maturity.

Lo- Usually at 6th grade.M - We begin the initial instruction of the Heidelberg Catechism in Sunday School at the third Grade level. There they memorize and recite one question

per week and have it explained. The regular course of instruction for Confirmation begins in Grade Five and lasts four years or more.

Sa- The policy of this congregation is that catechumens will begin their course of study upon reaching the age of twelve and in the month of September. There may be exceptions to this, depending upon one's level of spiritual maturity or other unforeseen circumstances.

Sh- Fifth grade, 10-11 yrs. of age

W - Grade 6

2. a. How many years of instruction does confirmation usually last?

B - We require a minimum of three years of instruction before confirmation. During this time the students memorize the catechism as outlined in Question 3 (below). We also devote one year to each of the following topics: Old Testament history, New Testament history and church history.

C - 3 years

G - Three years.

Lo- Three years, minimum, or until the parents, catechumen, and Spiritual Council agree that the catechumen is ready for confirmation.

M - Usually it lasts for four years, but on some occasions it will last for five years. The latter can either be by the choice of the Spiritual Council or of the student who wants another year.

Sa- Its a 3 year course.

Sh- 4 yrs.

W - 6 years, though trying to reduce it to 4 years, to end in 10th grade.

b. How many hours per week and how many weeks are involved each year?

B - Confirmation instruction takes about one to one and half hours each Wednesday evening and we hold classes eight months of the year (September through April). We also require some instruction in the catechism during our summer Bible school.

C - Usually 1 evening per week for about 2 hours per night

G - 1.5 hrs. per week for 48 weeks per year.

Lo-

M - The Catechism class is held each week for two hours. We usually go for 30 weeks for all but the class expecting to be confirmed that year. For them the class continues for another 15-20 weeks at two hours a week. We meet on Thursday nights from 6:30 to 8:30 PM. During all this time they have assignments in catechism class, and also one question to recite for the Sunday School. Thus, they will recite a minimum of four questions each week.

Sa- I conduct two classes each week. Wednesday afternoon from 3:30 - 4:30, and Sunday morning from 9:30 - 10:35. We meet throughout the year, including summer.

Sh- One hour & fifteen minutes; 40 weeks

W - 1 hour per week for 36 weeks per year

3. Is the entire Heidelberg Catechism memorized? How do you understand the phrase Able to recite the entire Catechism before Confirmation?*

B - The entire catechism is memorized and recited as follows: (1) Each week of instruction, the students are assigned approximately ten questions to recite the following week. (2) Students also recite one question each Lord's Day (throughout the entire year) before the adult Sunday school class (3) The pastor reviews the entire catechism with each year's confirmands during the four to six weeks before confirmation. During this time, they are required to recite the entire catechism twice. (4) About eighty to ninety percent of the catechism is also recited before the elders during the confirmation examination.

C - The entire catechism is memorized and the student is expected to be able to recite the entire catechism.

G - Yes, the entire catechism is memorized. We break up the instruction into three, one year segments with recitation of questions 1-43 in segment one, questions 44-85 in segment two, and questions 86-129. The catechism is recited before the pastor or an elder and then before the congregation. The later is done sequentially (that is, if I have seven students preparing to recite segment one, then the first student would recite question one, the second student reciting question two, and so on, after the seventh student recites question seven, repeating in order until all forty three questions are recited.).

Lo- Yes. That at one time the Catechumen memorized every answer. It does not mean that the Catechumen necessarily has the Catechism totally memorized beginning to end.

M - Yes. We take here just what the Constitution says, that they are able to recite the entire Heidelberg Catechism prior to being examined for confirmation. At the exam, they are called on to recite it and explain each question.

Sa- Yes. Memorizing the Heidelberg Catechism is part of the instruction leading to confirmation of the covenant youth. At this age, covenant youth are expected not only to memorize the answer, but also to understand the biblical truth conveyed by both the question and answer. ... To reinforce this, catechumens will be required to recite the Heidelberg in blocks of 43 before the elders.

Sh- Yes. That they have memorized and recited the entire Catechism, although this may not have been at one sitting or one single time.

W - That is the goal though none have done so to date. This years grads are to do so. they have memorized and recited each question over the course of the instruction.

4. What materials are you using for instruction?

B - The pastor prepares his own materials.

C - Jones workbook, Bible Survey by William Hendricksen, and The Church in History by R. B. Kuiper.

G - R. B. Kuiper, The Church in History; Paul H. Treick, Our God and His People; Dennis E. Roe, A Survey of the N.T. (a study I have developed)

Lo- a. The Bible; b. Norm Jones Workbook on the Catechism; c. Catechism with proof texts
M - We use the Heidelberg Catechism, Norman Jones=Catechism Workbook, the Bible, Kuipers Church in History. I have a Church History video series that I show (six half-hour programs). I have made the glossary from Jones=Workbook into a small pamphlet that they have to know (but not necessarily memorize in the final year of instruction). On occasion I give quizzes on Bible study and catechism. They have one book report to do either on the Life of Calvin (Van Halsema) or Three Men Came to Heidelberg (Van Halsema).

Sa- We use the Norman Jones workbook. We use Sketches from Church History and The Ministry of Christ by Breisch

Sh- The Creeds (Three Forms of Unity), The Confirmation Handbook, English Bible & Bible History, The Church In History, by R.B. Kuiper, RCUS History (Some years ago we used Study Helps on the Heidelberg Catechism by N. Jones)

W - The Church in History by Kuiper, Catechism, Canons of Dort and Belgic Confession, Jones Workbook, will be using the Handbook

5. How do you bring in the singing of Psalms, Hymns and Spiritual Songs?

B - The pastor has absolutely no musical ability whatsoever. However, we do have singing during Sunday school, worship and summer Bible school. On the fifth Sunday of each five-Sunday month, we have a congregational hymn-sing during which the stories behind some of the hymns are told.

C - We sing Psalms to start the class as the Psalms seem to be the least known. Currently as it is only my children we sing through a couple of hymns in the Trinity Hymnal during our family worship.

G - We sing from the Trinity Hymnal and from a booklet of, what we believe, to be the best contemporary Scripture Songs.

Lo- In the worship service.

M - This is done in Sunday School where we sing both Psalms and Hymns. I often discuss the meaning of the hymns or teachings from them on Sundays. We do not memorize these songs at this time, except in the early Sunday School classes where we take certain songs from the Trinity for memorization.

Sa- We sing Palms, hymns and Scripture songs too.

Sh- Through Sunday School classes and the worship service.

W - Through the singing at the close of the Sunday School hour

6. Who instructs the youth?

B - The pastor teaches the catechism class. It is apparent in most cases that parents take an active role in the instruction of their children as well.

C - The pastor

G - The pastor with an elder substituting when needed.

Lo- Elders under the oversight of the Pastor and Spiritual Council

M - This is done by the pastor, as required in the Constitution, Art. 192. There are a few times when the pastor is absent that an elder has filled to teach the class.

Sa- (By inference from letter the Pastor does with help from the elders.)

Sh- Primarily the pastor with assistance from the elders.

W - Pastor has the older group and a deacon has the younger students

7. What is involved in the examination of the youth when they come before the elders?

B - Recitation of the catechism; demonstration that the students understand what they are reciting; questions relating to the meaning, purpose and responsibilities of church membership, including personal faith; a general knowledge of the Bible, redemptive history and church history (including the history of the RCUS).

C - See the response of the Willows Spiritual Counsel.

G - They are examined in their knowledge (and memorization) of the catechism, of Scripture and their life. They must come with a recommendation from their parent/s.

Lo- Recite portions of the Catechism answers and/or respond with their understanding of the answer in their own words. Answer questions on Basic Doctrinal questions not necessarily in the Catechism. Ask for understanding and agreement to abide by the Constitutions of the RCUS and Providence Reformed Church. M - The examination is on a Friday night before confirmation is scheduled. The Pastor takes them through various areas and the elders observe. When finished, the Elders also ask questions which they feel were not asked or where they want a more thorough answer. We go through the following areas: Recitation and explanation of the Heidelberg Catechism questions, knowledge of the English Bible, Church History, Specific Doctrines, and finally they are asked to give an oral explanation of what it means for them to confess that they are a Christian. This latter matter is also written beforehand and submitted to the Elders for approval. If this statement is weak, they may be asked to meet with the elders or to take another year of study. This paper is no less than one page, and it is carefully gone over with the student by the pastor if there are areas that are omitted from a full discussion of this subject. On the basis of this paper, they make their oral summary before the elders.

In the last year, I have given the Church History test as a written test prior to the oral exam in order to save more time on the night of the exam. We invite the entire congregation to be present at this examination which usually lasts about three and a half hours. On the Sunday of confirmation, instead of the usual Sunday School, I have the confirmation Class recite and give a brief explanation of the questions from the Catechism relating to the law and prayer.

Sa- When a catechumen comes before the elders for examination and confirmation he will be expected to demonstrate a systematic working knowledge of biblical doctrine as confessed by the Reformed Church in the United States. A major portion of this examination consists of being able to answer the questions set forth in the Heidelberg Catechism from memory. After completing all their block work (and at a separate meeting), ... will appear before the elders to declare their hearty faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. They will testify of God's saving grace in their lives. If they give a good confession, and are able to explain their faith, they will be recommended for communicant membership.

Sh- In addition to reciting from the Catechism, they are given lists of questions in the other areas of instruction which they must be prepared to answer before the elders. They are also required to prepare an essay on What Confirmation Means To Me, which is read and discussed before the elders.

W - The Spiritual Counsel looks for understanding of church history, comprehension of redemptive history, reciting of Bible verses and catechism. Also to ascertain the sure knowledge and hearty trust of the student.

8. Is there anything else involved in your catechetical instruction that would be helpful to know?

B - No.

C - In Bible I have taken the stance that the students are of an age that they need to know the content on the books of the Bible, outlines etc., not the redemptive history as this should have been done by this time.

G - I made printed 3X5 cards of the catechism questions which I distribute to the students.

Lo- It is an expectation (before confirmation) that Christian Fruits be manifest in the life of the confirmer. M - We do not look upon completion of a fourth year of instruction as the automatic end of the course. If they have been lax or need more time, they may take another year. We do a lot of review on the memory of the catechism. Each week they have three questions. One or two may be new ones, and the third is a review from the previous week. We do a number of quizzes during the year to see if they have the memory and the meaning down. Each year we take a book of the Bible to read and study. Then they also will be taught the contents of each book in the Bible. The elders also discuss the catechetical training when they do family visitation with members. We especially want the children to know what part confirmation plays in the Covenant of which they are a part. We need to place more emphasis on a study of the other two creeds The Canons of Dort and the Belgic Confession. I go through the basic doctrines of each with the children, but we do not use a regular workbook or a formal study of these. We are going through them in a very meticulous way following Confirmation in the Teenage Sunday School, but I think it would be helpful to have more time for this prior to confirmation.

Sa-

Sh- The confirmands are also examined publicly before the congregation to demonstrate their knowledge and understanding of the Scriptures and doctrines of the Reformed faith.

W - Parental involvement has been increasing for memorization and looking at the catechism as families in preparation for the classes.

The survey is for information to the churches.

D. Candidates and Credentials Committee

Brethren:

Since the last spring meeting of Classis, your committee has done the work of the church as follows. We examined Mr. Tom Mayville in orthodoxy and intent last June. This was in anticipation of his licensure examination, which we arranged with the Executive Committee for last August. Mr. Mayville sustained his licensure examination and is now serving as stated supply of the Willows charge. Mr. Mayville is prepared to present himself for his ordination examination at this meeting of Classis. Your committee is recommending that he be asked to recite the Heidelberg catechism (in committee) and undergo an examination on the floor of Classis in soteriology and eschatology.

Near the end of last summer it was brought to the attention of the chairman of this committee that Mr. John Sawtelle, who is scheduled to graduate from Westminster Theological Seminary in California this spring, had embraced a position somewhat akin to exclusive psalmody. John describes his position as follows:

My position with respect to song in public worship is grounded in the regulative principle of worship as it is expressed in our confessional standards. The Reformed regulative principle of worship as articulated in Heidelberg Catechism Q & A #96 states *That we in no wise make any image of God, nor worship Him in any other way than He has commanded us in his word.* In my judgment, God, in scripture, does not clearly or unambiguously command the church, either by precept or example, to compose uninspired compositions or to sing them in public worship. Therefore, I cannot in good conscience sing or lead the worshiping covenant community in singing uninspired songs in public worship. There is an additional factor which I humbly ask that you consider, namely, that the position I hold, with respect to song in public worship, is in complete conformity with the position on song in public worship outlined in the RCUS Directory of Worship. Sub-point number six of point number two. *The Scriptural Elements of Public Worship,* reads, *Since the metrical versions of the Psalms are based upon the word of God, they ought to be used frequently in public worship. Great care must be taken that all the materials of song are in perfect accord with the teaching of Holy Scripture.* It is difficult to imagine that any songs could claim to be in more perfect accord with the teaching of Holy Scripture than the inspired songs which are contained in scripture and which were given by God to sing in praise to Him in assemblies of public worship.

Members of the committee met with John in early November to discuss our concerns with him. Since then we have kept in touch with John both in person, by phone and via email. Our committee believes that John's position is a violation of the regulative principle in that it is more restrictive than Scripture, and is therefore not acceptable to the RCUS. However, we do not believe that our committee has the authority to issue a binding statement to this effect. We would rather see Classis address this matter and give your committee guidance. Our recommendation is that John request a licensure examination no later than January 1, 2000, after conforming to our practice of hymn-singing.

When Rev. Neale Riffert accepted the call of the Anderson church, your committee examined him by phone in orthodoxy and intent. Being well satisfied that he is wholly committed to Reformed orthodoxy, we recommended to the Executive Committee that he be placed on the roll of ministers and installed in the Anderson charge. This matter found favorable disposition both with the Executive Committee and the Classis.

In mid-December, the chairman of your committee received a letter from the Rev. Steve Larson, in which he requested to transfer from the OPC to the RCUS. Your committee met with Rev. Larson in late January. Though Rev. Larson has been dissatisfied with the direction of the OPC for some time, the immediate occasion of his request was a complaint that he lodged in another OPC presbytery against the actions of another minister. His complaint was denied. Rev. Larson is currently working as a mission pastor to a Spanish work in the Santa Ana suburb of Los Angeles. He wishes to continue in this kind of work without financial compensation, supporting himself by teaching in the public schools. Rev. Larson would like to be called by an RCUS church to do similar work. However, he made it clear to the committee that he does not wish to transfer without a call. At present your committee is merely providing this information to Classis. We are not planning a licensure examination for Rev. Larson at this time.

Your committee also met with Mr. Steve Richert and Mr. Gary Mancilas, both of whom report that they will be prepared for the completion of their examinations at this meeting of Classis. Your committee recommends that Steve Richert be examined in church history, RCUS standards, eschatology and practica on the floor. During Classis he will also recite the catechism in committee; and that Gary Mancilas be examined in all the loci of theology, philosophy, apologetics and practica.

Mr. Paul Henderson is now completing his second year of studies at MARS, and looks forward to serving a summer internship in the RCUS. His cumulative GPA is 2.86. Paul requests \$3000 for tuition and \$250 for books for the 1999-2000 academic year.

Mr. Chris Caughey is in his first year at Westminster Theological Seminary in California. He, too, reports that his studies are progressing well. Chris will be returning to Grass Valley this summer to work with Rev. Roe. He is also requesting student aid for the 1999-2000 academic year as follows: \$7560 for tuition and \$250 for books.

Because of other commitments, Mr. E. Zane Wood has been unable to advance in his preparation for the gospel ministry. He is currently considering a more traditional approach to theological education, and has been in contact with MARS and New Geneva (formerly Knox Seminary of Colorado Springs, CO). Your committee recommends that Mr. Wood pursue

his theological studies at an approved RCUS seminary (per Article 17 of the Constitution). We expect that Zane will have a better idea of what course he will take by the time Classis meets.

Since your committee met in late January, the chairman has received a request from a member of the Lancaster church to be taken under care of Classis. This request was accompanied by a recommendation from the Lancaster Consistory. Mr. Scott Henry hopes to enter the M.Div. program at MARS in the fall of 2000. Scott is planning to be present at this meeting of Classis, at which time he should meet with the Standing Examination and Licensure Committee so that the committee can determine whether he should be interviewed by Classis for the purpose of coming under care.

As a final note, your committee has continued the practice of assigning one of its members to each student. This practice works well and for the most part keeps the committee in regular contact with the students.

Recommendations:

1. That Mr. Mayville present himself for his ordination examination at this meeting of Classis; and that he be examined in Heidelberg catechism recitation (in committee), soteriology and eschatology.
2. That prior to January 1, 2000, and after conforming to our practice of hymn-singing, Mr. John Sawtelle make a request to the Candidates and Credentials Committee to undergo his licensure examination.
3. That Classis take note of Rev. Steve Larson's availability for a call to work among Hispanic people in the Santa Ana region of Los Angeles.
4. That Mr. Steve Richert present himself for the completion of his ordination examination at this meeting of Classis; and that he be examined in Heidelberg catechism recitation (in committee), church history, RCUS standards, eschatology and practica.
5. That Mr. Gary Mancilas present himself for his ordination examination at this meeting of Classis; and that he be examined in all the loci of theology, philosophy, apologetics and practica.
6. That Classis overture Synod to provide student aid for the 1999-2000 academic year as follows: Mr. Paul Henderson (\$3000 tuition and \$250 books to study at MARS) and Mr. Chris Caughey (\$7560 tuition and \$250 books to study at WTSCA).
7. That Mr. E. Zane Wood pursue his theological studies at an approved RCUS seminary (per Article 17 of the Constitution).
8. That Mr. Scott Henry meet with the Standing Examination and Licensure Committee with the purpose of being interviewed on the floor of Classis to come under care.

Respectfully,

F. Walker, P. Treick, J. West, D. Roe, J. Stuebbe, J. Heerema

Classis Action: The report was referred to the Examination and Licensure Committee.

E. Interchurch Relations Committee

Esteemed Fathers and Brethren,

The Interchurch Relations Committee of the Western Classis continues to maintain a meaningful fraternal relationship with the brethren of other Reformed and Presbyterian churches with whom we have fraternal relations. Your committee chairman has been in contact with members of both OPC Presbyteries in California, and the RPCNA by means of telephone, E-mail, and sending Western Classis delegates to the various stated meetings of our fraternal churches. The willingness of several Western Classis delegates to attend the meetings of our fraternal churches was greatly appreciated. The delegates will be giving their individual reports when Classis convenes on March 9-11, 1999 in Anderson, CA.

On July 11, 1998, in compliance with the recommendation of the RCUS Synod, the Western Classis Interchurch Relations Committee arranged a meeting with members of the spiritual council of Grace RCUS, and a representative of the Session of Calvary OPC, along with representatives of the Presbytery of Southern California (OPC) to determine whether our involvement in beginning a mission work in the L. A. basin with former members of Calvary OPC in La Mirada, CA would violate the comity agreement through NAPARC or strain our fraternal relationship with the Presbytery of Southern California (OPC). The representatives of the Presbytery expressed a concern about the RCUS beginning a mission work

in close proximity to Calvary OPC in La Mirada. Greater concern was expressed that former members of the La Mirada congregation would be involved in the work, and that Rev. Jay Fluck would likely be the pastor of the mission work.

At the Special Western Classis Meeting on August 25, 1998, a report was presented to Classis by the Permanent Interchurch Relations Committee regarding the concerns of the Presbytery of Southern California. The action of Classis at the special meeting was to direct the Permanent Home Missions Committee of Classis to proceed with an assessment of a potential mission work in the L. A. basin. The Western Classis Home Missions Committee will be giving a report regarding the present status of establishing the mission work in the L. A. basin at the next classis meeting.

The Presbytery of Southern California (OPC) conducted three regularly scheduled meetings. The Western Classis was represented at two of their meetings. Elder E. Zane Wood was the Western Classis delegate at New Life OPC in La Mesa, CA on May 8-9, 1998. Rev. Vernon Pollema and Rev. Frank Walker were also present at the meeting. Licentiate Gary Mancilas was the Western Classis delegate at the Beverly OPC on October 16-17, 1998.

The Presbytery of Northern California (OPC) has two stated meetings each year. The Western Classis was represented at both meetings. Rev. Dennis Roe attended the Presbytery meeting as a delegate of Classis at Covenant OPC in San Jose, CA on March 20-21, 1998. The fall meeting of the Presbytery of Northern California was represented by Rev. Dale Clark, which convened at the Orthodox Presbytery Church in Santa Cruz on September 25-26, 1998.

You will notice when the fraternal delegates give their reports at the next Western Classis meeting, that both Presbyteries of the OPC are embroiled in the AFramework Hypothesis@ controversy and the contention by some in the OPC that it is a deviation from their Confession of faith. There are some in both Presbyteries who want to require all men examined for the ministry to take an exception to their Confession of faith, if they hold to the AFramework Hypothesis@theory. The Presbytery of Northern California is particularly moving in that direction and has formed a committee to study the confessional view of the creation. It should also be noted that the Presbytery of Northern California recognizes Greenville Presbyterian Theological Seminary in Greenville, South Carolina.

Many of the Western Classis delegates are familiar with Mr. Robert Coie who has served as Stated Clerk of the Presbytery of Southern California. After many years of serving in that capacity he was replaced by Rev. William Warren. Mr. Coie is to be commended for his many years of faithful and honorable service in the kingdom of our Lord.

The Pacific Coast Presbytery of the RPCNA met immediately after our Classis meeting last spring on March 13-14, 1998. Your chairman attended the meeting and will be giving a report of the meeting at Classis. The Pacific Coast Presbytery meets this year prior to our Classis meeting. It will convene on February 19-20, 1999 in San Diego. Your chairman plans to attend that meeting as well, and will report to Classis.

All the churches with whom we have fraternal relations were invited to attend the 14th Annual Western Classis Meeting in Anderson, CA. The RCUS Synod chairman of the Interchurch Relations Committee is continuing to make every effort to open up communications with the Independent Presbyterian Church of Mexico. Correspondence has been made with J. P. Roberts who seems optimistic that the IPCM wants to continue the fraternal relationship, but lack of communication is raising serious doubt. In the meantime we will continue to seek to get a definite answer from them regarding the direction they will go.

It is the hope of your committee that Classis will take notice of the concerns facing our fraternal churches and to keep them in prayer. May God's grace and peace abound in our churches as we labor together for His kingdom and glory.

Respectfully Submitted,

Rev. Jonathan Merica, Chm., Rev. Robert Sander, Rev. Dennis Roe, Elder Jamie Clark, Elder Eric Merz

Classis Action: The report was received by the Classis with no further action.

F. Publications Committee

Esteemed Brethren,

Your Publications Committee has only a single item to report. The booklet commissioned by the Classis for the defense of the Reformed doctrine of infant baptism is available. Entitled AThe Baptism of Infants in the Old and New Testaments,@copies are available from the author, Pastor Jim West, at a price of \$5.60 + shipping. The author waived payment of royalty in order to keep the price down on such a modest quantity. We encourage the churches of the Western Classis to make full use of this new resource.

An initial print run of 500 copies was produced, with sufficient stock on hand to meet the current flow of orders. Orders are coming from churches in other Classes, as well. The

cover features a photo of Dr. Cornelius Van Til surrounded by dozens of RCUS children at a California conference in the early 1980s. The author has requested that, should the Classis print additional copies, an effort be made to improve the quality of the photo reproduction, or perhaps, adopt a different cover design.

Recommendations:

1. That the Publications Committee monitor the stock of the baptism booklet and, should demand warrant a second printing, circularize a recommendation and quote.
- 2) That a second printing be of sufficient size to warrant payment of authors royalty without making the per copy price prohibitive.
- 3) Should the Western Classis elect not to proceed with a second printing, that the rights to the booklet shall revert to the author, Rev. Jim West.

Respectfully submitted,

Wayne Johnson, Chm., Vernon Pollema, E. Zane Wood, L. Dale Clark,

Ted Van Tol

Classis Action: All three recommendations were approved by the Classis.

G. Diaconal Ministries Committee

Esteemed Brethren:

The Diaconal Committee received and approved three requests for diaconal aid this past year totaling \$3750.00. These requests came from the Rev. Jay Fluck.

The first request was on August 25, 1998 in the amount of \$775.00 with the following specifications: \$537.00 for September's health insurance premium, \$41.50 for the dental insurance premium, and the remaining amount applied toward utility bills.

The second request was on October 24, 1998 in the amount of \$575.00 to pay for October's health insurance premium.

The third request was on December 4, 1998 in the amount of \$2400.00 to replace lost salary for the month of December.

The Rev. Jay Fluck was approved by the Western Classis as Stated Supply for the LA Basin work and, beginning November 1, 1998, was to receive \$1430.00 per month in Home Mission support from the Classis. An additional \$1430.00 per month in Benevolent Aid was petitioned from Synod. Due to objections to the Synodical Circular, funding for the LA Basin work was not established.

In the meantime, Mr. Fluck's living expenses continued. Although he was engaged in ~~mentmaking~~ work at the time, the salary was not adequate. Subsequently he found another job as a construction foreman with better pay only to have the work run out in November.

The Ebenezer Reformed Church of Shafter has agreed to pay Mr. Fluck's monthly health insurance premium for one year beginning in November of 1998.

Also, during this time, Mr. Fluck sought and was contacted by some of our churches in the Midwest who had vacant pulpits. He has preached trial sermons at two of these churches.

Since the beginning of the new year Mr. Fluck resumed the construction foreman job at a full and adequate salary.

At the 13th Annual Session a communication to the Western Classis from the Presbytery of Southern California of the Orthodox Presbyterian Church concerning a proposed joint venture to build one or more retirement centers in Southern California went through Overtures and was referred to the permanent Diaconal Committee.

The communication extended a formal invitation to the Classis Southwest of the United Reformed Churches in North America, the two local Presbyteries of the Presbyterian Church in America (Pacific Presbytery & South Coast Presbytery), The Reformed Presbyterian Church of North America, and the Reformed Church in the United States, Western Classis.

The Presbytery of Southern California, OPC, proposed that a joint Steering Committee of up to 13 men be elected from the above denominations and requested the names of contact persons or representatives. In a letter dated March 16, 1998, the names of Diaconal Committee members, Rev. Dennis Roe and Rev. Vernon Pollema were submitted. To date no response or further information has been received.

Respectfully submitted,

V. Pollema, Chm., R. Sander, D. Roe, C. Van Egmond, R. Eddington

*Procedures for the
Disbursement of Requested Diaconal Aid*

Esteemed Brethren:

At the 12th Annual Session of the Western Classis, the Permanent Diaconal Committee was given the following mandate: *The Permanent Diaconal Committee is to develop procedures in accordance with I Timothy 5:3-16 and other related Scriptures for the disbursement of requested diaconal aid* (1997 Abstract, page 76). This report should have been submitted to the 13th Annual Session, but due to the chairman's oversight, it was not. Begging your indulgence, it is being submitted at this time.

The question, in its simplest form, is, *Who is to receive diaconal aid?* That the Church is to engage in ministries of mercy is clearly called for by the apostle Paul in Galatians 6: 10: *As we have therefore opportunity, let us do good unto all men, especially unto those who are of the household of faith.* This passage, while supporting diaconal ministries to the needy of the world outside the church, clearly gives priority to *those who are of the household of faith* (cf. Deut. 15:7,8; Rom. 12:13). It is with that priority and relevant Scriptures that this report is mainly concerned.

Since I Timothy 5:3-16 was specifically referenced in the above mandate, it will be dealt with first. This passage is not without difficulty. There appears to be a division with verses 3-8 dealing with widows in general and their need, and verses 9-16 speaking of widows and their work and of such being placed on a *list* or *catalogued*.

I TIMOTHY 5:3-8

Honor widows that are widows indeed. But if any widow have children or nephews, let them learn first to show piety at home, and to requite their parents: for that is good and acceptable before God. Now she that is a widow indeed, and desolate, trusteth in God, and continueth in supplications and prayers night and day. But she that liveth in pleasure is dead while she liveth. And these things give in charge, that they may be blameless. But if any provide not for his own, and specially for those of his own house, he hath denied the faith, and is worse than an infidel.

The widows described above are to be a priority when it comes to receiving diaconal aid. The Scriptures have much to teach with regard to widows. William Hendricksen, in his commentary on 1-11 Timothy, lists the following:

- (1) God is *the* father of the fatherless, and a judge of the widows (Ps. 68:5). They are under his special care and protection (Ex. 22:23; Deut. 10:18; Prov. 15:25; Ps. 146:9).
- (2) By means of the tithe and *the* forgotten sheaf *he* provides for them (Deut. 14:29; 24:19-21; 26:12,13). At the feasts which he has instituted, they too should rejoice (Deut. 16:11,14).
- (3) He blesses those who help and honor them (Is. 1: 17,18; Jer. 7:6; 22:3,4).
- (4) He rebukes and punishes those who hurt them (Ex.22:22; Deut.24:17; 27:19; Zech. 7:10; Job 24:3,21; 31:16; Ps. 94:6; Mal. 3:5).
- (5) They are the objects of Christ's tender compassion, as is clear from the Gospels, especially from the Gospel according to Luke (Mk. 12:42,43; Luke 7:11-17; 18:3,5; 20:47; 21:2,3).
- (6) In the early church they were not forgotten. It was the neglect of certain widows which led to the appointment of the first deacons, so that in the future widows might receive better care (Acts 6:1-6). And according to James, one of the manifestations of a religion that is pure and undefiled is this: *to visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction* (James 1:27).

Mindful of such Scriptures, Paul instructs Timothy to *honor ... those who are really (as the name implies) widows.* In the original the word *widow* means the one *bereaved, deprived*, i.e., of her husband, and thus often without a means of support. Employment for widows was not always available. Some widows were too old. Such must be provided for by the church.

However, not all widows fall into this category. Paul continues, *But if any widow have children or nephews (grandchildren), let them learn first to shew piety at home, and to requite their parents: for that is good and acceptable before God.* In order that the church not be unnecessarily burdened, children and grandchildren are to fulfill their religious duty toward those who brought them up. They are required to requite or make a *real return* to their parents for all the love and care bestowed upon them. This piety they must *learn* because, by nature, children are often disinclined to provide for their needy parents.

Such a lesson is clearly implied in the fifth commandment. The incident that confronted our Lord in Mark 7:11 ff is instructive in this regard: *And he said unto them, Full well ye reject the commandment of God, that ye may keep your own tradition. For Moses said, Honor thy father and thy mother, and, Whoso curseth father or mother, let him die the death: But ye say, If a man shag say to his father or mother, It is Corban, that is to say, a gift, by whatsoever thou mightest be profited by me, he shall be free. And ye suffer him no more to do ought for his father or his mother.* A son could circumvent the law of caring for his parents by pledging his money to the temple treasury with payment being deferred until after his death. In the meantime, rather than giving

help to his parents, the son held on to his money under the pretense that it was devoted to God and could not be touched.

Furthermore, according to Paul, the real widow, having been left all alone, has set her hope on God (vs. 5). She has nowhere else to go! Her refuge is the living God, for on earth she is no one's dependent. There is no child or grandchild or anyone else whose duty it would be to support her. Her hope and expectation is from God. It is such widows for which the church is to provide and honor.

I TIMOTHY 5:9-16

Let not a widow be taken into the number under threescore years old, having been the wife of one man, Well reported of for good works, if she have brought up children, if she have lodged strangers, if she have washed the saints' feet, if she have relieved the afflicted, if she have diligently followed every good work. But the younger widows refuse: for when they have begun to wax wanton against Christ, they will marry, Having damnation, because they have cast off their First faith. And withal they learn to be idle, wandering about from house to house; and not only idle, but tattlers also and busybodies, speaking things which they ought not I will therefore that the younger marry, bear children, guide the house, give none occasion to the adversary to speak reproachfully. For some are already turned aside after Satan. If any man that believeth have widows, let them relieve them, and let not the church be charged, that it may relieve them that are widows indeed.

If the above verses refer to widows that are placed on a list or catalogued, the question becomes, Who are these widows? According to William Hendricksen there are, in the main, four views (*New Testament Commentary, 1-11 Timothy and Titus, 172-173*):

(1) They are deaconesses (Schleiermacher) See special study on Deaconesses C 81:31.

(2) They are those widows who are entitled to material support from the church (Chrysostom, Calvin, N.J.D. White in *The Expositor's Greek Testament*, Dibelius, and many others). The theories vary. Some think of all the widows of 60 and above, who possess the qualities that are mentioned. Others believe that only such widows are meant who were willing to work for the church.

(3) The question must be left unanswered (Lenski).

(4) These are the widows who possessed the necessary qualifications for the performance of certain spiritual and charitable functions in the church (C.J. Ellicott, A.T. Robertson, E.F. Scott, C. Bouma, and many others).

Number 2 above appears to have the most merit and support and renders the above mentioned division unnecessary. Verses 9-16 are simply a further delineation of those who are widows indeed and deserving of the church's support. Because Paul wishes to promote the spiritual and charitable work of the church, he advises that young widows accept an offer of marriage if possible, that they not waste their time in idle gossip, and that they adorn their confession with a life to God's honor. Paul then returns to the point with which he began, i.e., the church must not be burdened, so that it may assist those who are really widows. These are the widows who are completely destitute, having no one to support them. If everyone fulfills his duty, it will be much easier for the church to care for these widows.

MATTHEW 25:31-46

When the Son of man shall come in his glory, and all the holy angels with him, then shall he sit upon the throne of his glory. And before him shall be gathered all nations: and he shall separate them one from another, as shepherd divideth his sheep from the goats: and he shall set the sheep on his right hand, but the goats on the left. Then shall the King say unto them his right hand, Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world. For I was an hungred, and ye gave me meat I was thirsty, and ye gave me drink I was a stranger, and ye took me in: Naked, and ye clothed me: I was sick, and ye visited me: I was in prison, and ye came unto me. Then shall the righteous answer him, saying, Lord, when saw we thee an hungred, and fed thee? or thirsty, and gave thee drink? When saw we thee a stranger, and took thee in? or naked, and clothed thee? Or when saw we thee sick, or in prison, and came unto thee? And the King shall answer and say unto them, Verily I say unto you, Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me. Then shall he say also unto them on the left hand, Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels: For I was an hungred, and ye gave me no meat I was thirsty, and ye gave me no drink I was a stranger, and ye took me not in: naked, and ye clothed me not. sick, and in prison, and ye visited me not. Then shall they also answer him, saying, Lord, when saw we thee an hungred, or athirst, or a stranger, or naked, or sick, or in prison, and did not minister unto thee? Then shall he answer them, saying, Verily I say unto you, Inasmuch as ye did it not to one of the least of these, ye did it not to me. And these shall go away into everlasting punishment but the righteous into life eternal.

This passage is often cited as a basis for all kinds of diaconal ministries, locally and worldwide. For example, the following appears in the literature of a church relief agency: Disaster, hunger, disease, poverty, illiteracy, these mark the lives of many people in our world. Our Lord Jesus Christ called all Christians to minister to those in need, when he said, as you did it to the least of these my brethren, you did it unto me. Many Christians have been accused and convicted by this passage when passing by the homeless along the street, the bell-ringer for the Salvation Army, see starving children on TV in some third world country, etc.

Is this what our Lord intended when He spoke these words? Jesus designates the object of concern as the least of these my brethren. Who are these brethren? Elsewhere in Matthew's Gospel we find that Jesus does not have in mind the poor and needy in general, but the poor and needy who are his disciples. In Matthew 12:46-50, Jesus asks the question,

Who is my mother and who are my brethren? He answers his own question: **And stretching forth his hand toward his disciples, he said, Behold my mother and my brethren! For whosoever shall do the will of my Father which is in heaven, the same is my brother, and sister, and mother.**

In Matthew 28: 10 we have the words of our risen Lord to the women who had just left the empty tomb on Easter morning: **Be not afraid. go tell my brethren that they go into Galilee, and there shall they see me.** Jesus-brethren were those who had believed and confessed that he was the promised Messiah, the Son of the living God, and who had been commissioned to carry the gospel to the ends of the earth. A connection can be seen between Jesus-brethren who are hungry, thirsty and homeless in Matthew 25 and the instructions He gave to the disciples in Matthew 10. Here the Lord is commissioning them for a preaching mission **to the lost sheep of the house of Israel** (vs 6). He sends them out homeless, depending for food, water and shelter on those who will receive their message: **And into whatsoever city or town ye shall enter, enquire who in it is worthy, and there abide till ye go thence** (vs 11). He sees them encountering rejection, persecution, imprisonment, even death: **And ye shall be brought before governors and kings for my sake, for a testimony against them and the Gentiles. But when they deliver you up, take no thought how or what ye shall speak for it shall be given you in that same hour what ye shall speak.... And ye shall be hated of all men for my name's sake: but he that endureth to the end shall be saved. But when they persecute you in this city, flee ye into another. . .** (vs 18, 19, 22, 23). Whoever rejects them and the gospel they bring will face the judgment of God: **It shall be more tolerable for the land of Sodom and Gomorrah in the day of judgment than for that city** (vs 15). Surely this corresponds with the words of Matthew 25:41 ff: **Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels. For I was an hungred, and ye gave me no meat. . .**

This remains the commission of the church. The kingdom of heaven is at war with the powers of this world today as well and the words of Jesus still apply: **Blessed are they which are persecuted for righteousness's sake: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are ye, when men shall revile you, and persecute you, and shall say all manner of evil against you falsely, for my sake. Rejoice, and be exceeding glad: for great is your reward in heaven: for so persecuted they the prophets which were before you** (Matthew 5:10-12).

Thus in Matthew 25:31-46 our Lord's concern is not for the poor, needy and oppressed of this world, but for those messengers of the kingdom who go forth in His name. According to the world they may not amount to much, but the question of eternal life or eternal condemnation hangs on how they are received. The church is duty-bound by all means available to support and encourage those who are suffering for the sake of Christ and His gospel. (cf. Acts 11:27-30; I Cor. 8 & 9).

CONCLUSIONS:

(1) The first recipients of diaconal aid are to be those within the household of faith. This is to begin at the local level where deacons are in charge of the poor and needy and are to make their ministrations to the bodily necessities of the poor the occasion and means of a still better benefit to their souls. If a local situation becomes too burdensome, assistance should be sought first from Classis and, if necessary, from Synod.

(2) Diaconal aid is to be dispensed to those who are truly in need and have no other means of support. This will require investigation and knowledge of the situation. This is best ascertained at the local level.

(3) Diaconal aid is to be given to those who suffer need for the sake of the gospel. As our knowledge of such needs extends out into the world, so should our support. Again, these needs, being of the household of faith, must come before the world.

Respectfully submitted,

V. Pollema, Chm., R. Sander, D. Roe, C. Van Egmond, R. Eddington

Classis Action: The report and the Special Study was received by the Classis.

H. Heidelberg West Youth Camp Committee

Esteemed Brothers,

I am writing this report voluntarily as a member of the committee in the absence of the chairman, Rev. Bowen, who moved to Covenant East Classis at about the time the camp was to be held last June. I ask the indulgence of the Classis for this report being late for that reason.

Plans were well underway for the 1998 Heidelberg West Youth Camp, and many registrations had been received. However, it was necessary to cancel last year's camp due to the deep snow on the area roads and in the campground. Attempts were made to find another place for camp or to move our dates later to avoid this sort of problem, but any other campgrounds are considerably more costly and this is the only date available other than one in late August which would eliminate a number of children and adults due to the beginning of the school year.

A T-Shirt logo was prepared for last year, but was canceled at the last minute, so we did not have costs. The checking account was opened and closed again, so we would not incur monthly charges. All in all, the cancellation of last year's camp did not cost us money.

We did look over the Christian Berets Campground near Sonora. It is a brand new and more spacious area and lower down the mountain. This is something that we want to keep our eye on for next year if possible. They are planning construction of more dormitories and a swimming pool. Judging by the present cost of the camp which was used last August for a Women's Retreat, this might suit us very well. Any other camps that we have heard about are so expensive that we fear many families might not be able to afford it.

We did sign a contract with Peaceful Pines camp for the coming year. It is the same week as before **C June 14-18, 1999**. The committee will have to determine if we want any of the children to arrive on Monday or not. Traditionally, this day was set aside for the cooks to get set up. The terms are the same as last year. The cost is \$9.00 per day per camper; daily visitors must pay \$6.00 per day. They have a \$250 (last year's) deposit in hand. We are hoping to keep the per-camper cost in the area of \$65-\$70 this year.

Last year, the ladies of Yuba City were scheduled to do the cooking. It is hoped that they (with the possible cooperation from another church) will be willing to do this again. This is not yet finalized. It is a considerable savings when we volunteer to cook our own meals. Many camps provide this, but it raises the cost per day considerably.

Please encourage people from your congregations to volunteer for cooking and for counselors. Last year, we were very short of help, and if we are going to make this camp successful it greatly depends on everyone's cooperation. As a Classis Camp, this should not be optional when it comes to the participation of ministers for counseling, lectures, and worship services. If we do not have enough counselors and teachers, we may have to cancel the camp this year. These camps have been good for our young people, even though it is a real labor of love for those who are responsible or organize it.

Our committee has not had a formal meeting as yet to determine the Theme and details of this year's camp, but will do so soon after the committee is approved by the Classis. There will be information sent to the churches prior to camp. Please advertise the dates now, encourage participation, and make the information available to all when it arrives. The Nomination committee needs to take note that our committee needs to have a new member added to the committee.

Respectfully submitted,

Paul H. Treick (chm. pro tem) Elder Greg Williams, Elder Jeff Jones, Deacon Greg Born, Elder Richard Fay

Classis Action: The Classis received the report.

REPORTS OF OFFICERS

A. President's Report on the State of the Church

Esteemed Brothers in Christ,

In this my final report as president of the Western Classis please permit a personal note. In the nine years or so that I have served in this office I have been privileged to serve with a hard-working, gifted Stated Clerk. Rev. Paul Treick has done an exemplary job in a difficult office. The Abstract of the minutes of the Western Classis is completed and mailed on time. The executive circulars are timely and written well. He has done an outstanding job, even while he has been busy doing other work for the Church. He serves on committees for Western Classis and the Synod of the RCUS. He has tended to his calling as minister of the Word in Modesto, CA, at Trinity Reformed Church. Thanks, Paul, it has been a pleasure working with you. Yours has been the difficult task, but you have done it and done it well.

I have served with some fine elders on the Executive Committee of the Western Classis, both from Modesto and also my own elder from Yuba City, Werner Stricker. Thanks to you all.

As I read the parochial reports of the ministers and licentiates of the Western Classis I rejoiced that the Word of God is being preached faithfully in our congregations. Bible studies are taught as well. The covenant youth of our churches are being prepared for confirmation and communicant membership. (Article 192, Constitution of the RCUS). The sacraments of Holy Baptism and the Lord's Supper are being properly administered, and Christian discipline is properly exercised.

Membership and financial statistics reveal the following: total received by confirmation, letter and profession this year was 49C down 38%; total old/new members was 664C down 4%; total lost by dismissal was 17C down 35%; total lost by erasure/discipline was 15C down 64%; total lost by death was 9C up 23%; total lost by dismissal, erasure/discipline and by death was 41C down 45%; total communicant membership was up 1% to 623; the number of unconfirmed members remained unchanged at 321; our total baptized membership

was up 1% to 943; the number of families in our congregations was also up 1% to 333 ; giving to Synod guideline averaged \$134 per communicant memberC up 19%; average giving to the Western Classis guideline was \$71 per communicantmemberC up 14%; our average total giving to the RCUS per communicant member of the Western Classis was \$258C up 26%. Please refer to the Membership and Financial Statistics Report for more complete information.

Although our retired ministers, Rev. Robert Sander and Rev. Lloyd Gross., have not been in the best health they have both been able to preach and teach God's Word on a number of occasions Let us remember to pray for our dear brothers in Christ and their wives.

We look forward to three examinations on the floor of classis this year. Mr. Tom Mayville sustained his Licensure examination during a special meeting of the Western Classis in August 1998. He is serving as stated supply of Grace Reformed Church, Willows, CA. He will present himself for his ordination examination. Mr. Gary Mancilas, stated supply, Grace Reformed Church, Lancaster, CA, will be examined in all the loci of theology, philosophy, apologetics and practica. Mr. Steve Richert, currently residing in Grass Valley, CA, and serving as an elder of Covenant Reformed Chapel, will be examined in church history, RCUS standards, eschatology and practica.

It has been recommended by the Candidates and Credentials Committee that student under care of the Western Classis, John Sawtelle, request a Licensure examination no later than January it 2000, after conforming to our practice of hymn-singing in public worship. Mr. Sawtelle will complete his third year of seminary at Westminster Theological Seminary in California and is scheduled to graduate in May 1999.

Mr. Paul Henderson will be completing his second year at MARS, and he will be serving a summer internship in First Reformed Church, Yuba City, CA, thanks to the financial assistance of his home congregation, Ebenezer Reformed Church, Shafter, CA.

Mr. Chris Caughey will complete his first year of studies at Westminster Theological Seminary in California. He will return to Grass Valley, CA, to work with Rev. Dennis Roe for the summer.

Mr. E. Zane Wood has been in contact with MARS and New Geneva regarding his theological training. He has been encouraged by the Candidates and Credentials Committee to pursue his theological training at a seminary approved by the RCUS.

Mr. Scott Henry, a member of Grace Reformed Church of Lancaster, CA, has requested to be taken under care of the Western Classis. The Lord willing he hopes to enter the M. Div. program at MARS in the fall of 2000 and to meet with the Standing Examination and Licensure Committee here with the purpose of being interviewed on the floor of Classis to come under care.

Let us rejoice that God is continuing to raise up men from our own congregations to preach His Word. Let us also give thanks to our faithful God that no charge in the Western Classis is vacant at this time. We are happy to welcome Rev. Neale Riffert and his family to California. He has been busy preparing, along with the members of Faith Reformed Church, to host the 14th Annual Session of the Western Classis.

As the parochial reports are read this year it will be readily apparent that our ministers, elders and deacons have had a busy year. The people of our congregations, including our young people, have been active in the life of the Church. But, then, that is what God has called us to doC to labor, to be busy serving Him out of thankfulness. Question 86 of the Heidelberg Catechism, ASince then we are redeemed from our misery by grace through Christ, without any merit of ours, why should we do good works?@The purpose is given in the answer. ABecause Christ, having redeemed us by His blood, also renews us by His Holy Spirit after His own image, that with our whole life we show ourselves thankful to God for His blessing, and that He be glorified through us; then also, that we ourselves may be assured of our faith by the fruits thereof; and by our godly walk win also others to Christ.@

We are doing the work of the church when we preach the Word of God, administer the sacraments, administer church discipline and meet in Consistory and Spiritual Council. But we are also doing the work of the church when we serve on the committees of the Western Classis and Synod. We are doing the important work of the church when we attend classis and synod meetings. How it used to irk me when I would receive in a parochial report an excuse from a minister of classis saying, AI will be unable to attend classis this year because I am too busy doing the work of the church.@What were the rest of us doing, taking a leisurely vacation? No, brothers in Christ, we will be doing the very important work of His Church while we are here at the 14th annual session of the Western Classis. Let us serve Him with all diligence here, as we serve on Western Classis committees, committees of Synod of the RCUS, and as we continue to serve Him in our congregations.

I look forward to the fellowship with you, my brothers in Christ, each year at classis and synod. The bonds of our fellowship and service for our Lord grow stronger each year for me, my fellow soldiers of Christ.

And Let us not be weary in well-doing: for in due season we shall reap, if we faint not. (Gal. 6:9).

Respectfully submitted,
Gene Sawtelle, President

Classis Action: The Western Classis commended Rev. Gene Sawtelle for his faithful work as President of the Western Classis and Rev. Paul Treick for his faithful work as Stated Clerk of the Western Classis.

The report was adopted and is to be printed in the *Reformed Herald* and in this Abstract.

B. The Stated Clerk's Report on the Minutes

Esteemed Brothers in Christ,

Since there were three meetings of the Western Classis in the past Classical year, your clerk had a busy year.

The Minutes of the 13th Annual Meeting were typed and bound in a permanent binder, along with all reports, overtures, and pertinent documents. The Synod's Committee on the Minutes of Classis took exception to two items in the Special Classis Meeting held November 11, 12, 1997. On page 4, line 35 a motion to consider seriatim was apparently rescinded without motion. Your clerk would note that there was a substitute motion to consider all the items as a whole which was seconded and carried. If there was an error it occurred in the fact that the substitute was then not voted on, but a motion to adopt the report as a whole passed. I am not sure that this was an error at all, but it did not affect anything substantive to the purpose of the meeting, being only approval of mileage requests. The second error was on page 5, lines 1 and 2 and had to do with the wording of the order by the President. What appears to be unclear does not seem in error to your clerk: Rev. Pollema indicated the list of the witnesses and all who had not given testimony were asked to leave until after they had testified. I placed a comma between witnesses and and to clarify what took place.

The first Special Meeting of Classis was held March 1, 1998 in Garner, IA in order to license Rev. Jay E. Fluck. The minutes of this meeting with supporting documents were typed and are bound in a permanent binder and should be reviewed by the Synod at their next meeting.

The second Special Meeting of Classis was held August 25, 1998 in Modesto, CA for two purposes. First, the Licensure Examination of Mr. Thomas Mayville was held. His examination was declared satisfactory. Following this the delegates heard a report from the Special Interchurch Relations Committee on their meeting with the people seeking a mission work in the L. A. Basin and how this might impact our relations with the Presbytery of Southern California, OPC. These minutes were typed and are bound in a permanent binder along with all pertinent documents. They also should be reviewed by the Synod at their next meeting.

The Abstract of the 13th Annual Session of Classis was prepared, bound, and mailed in the time frame specified in Standing Rule #9. For the Western Classis, one copy was sent to each delegate and six copies for each congregation. Three copies were mailed to all the other congregations of the RCUS and one copy to each retired pastor. The cost of printing 200 Abstracts was \$521.84 and the cost of mailing was \$71.46.

The President's Report on the State of the Church was published in the Abstract and sent to the *Reformed Herald* where it appeared in print. The statistics of Western Classis were also printed in the Abstract as directed.

Ten overtures from the Western Classis were sent to the 252nd Annual Meeting of the Synod of the RCUS. These overtures were acted upon at Synod and are reported in the Abstract of Synod. The result of our votes on the revision of the Directory of Worship were sent to the Stated Clerk who reported these to Synod.

I have continued with the practice of sending a special notice to the Classis Treasurer listing all items passed at Classis which he should be aware of. I also sent a Guideline form to each congregation for the payment of Classical Guidelines.

All credentials and statistical forms were sent to the Synodical Stated Clerk.

A letter of Dismission of a Minister was sent to Covenant East Classis for Rev. Henry Bowen. He was received and we received notification. A letter of Dismission was received from Covenant East Classis for Rev. Neale Riffert. I sent them notification of his reception into the Western Classis.

Your clerk reports the following changes in matters pertaining to the roll of the Western Classis:

Men Licensed: 1 (Mr. Thomas Mayville)

Calls Accepted: 1 (Rev. Neale Riffert)

Ministers Received: (Rev. Jay E. Fluck, from the Presbytery of Southern California, OPC; Rev. Neale Riffert, from Covenant East Classis, RCUS)

Ministers Ordained: 0

Ministers Installed: 1 (Rev. Neale Riffert in Faith Reformed Church of Anderson, CA)

Ministers Transferred: 1 (Rev. Henry Bowen to Covenant East Classis)

Ministers Removed: 0
 Ministers or Elders Deceased: 0
 Churches received or removed: 0
 Churches changed (new name): 0
 Necrologies Received: 0

Your clerk received a request from Rev. Calvin Malcor (OPC) regarding the possibility of holding our Western Classis meeting at a location in conjunction with the OPC, PCA, and possibly the URC. The Executive Committee along with some other members of Classis discussed this, but felt that this would not be very productive since our sessions really allow for very little free time for fellowship, and we would have to abandon the principle of holding our meetings in our local churches. Rev. Malcor was informed of our opinion on this. I bring this to your attention if the will of the Classis is different than the assessment of your humble clerk.

We need to take note of the fact that while Executive Circular 13:4 pass approved by the Western Classis, the Recommendation forwarded to the Synod did not receive the approval of the Synod via circular. It would appear that we need to determine at this meeting if the other Recommendations which we approved of are now all null and void or if they are still valid (see the recommendations in the Executive Committee Report).

Your clerk would like to address the matter of sending reports, credentials, and statistics via E-Mail, that these should be in ASCII text form or attached in a common word-processing form. Some of the ones sent are not readable by my programs. Also, and more importantly, you are required to follow each of these with a hard copy of your report with the required signatures. I appreciate the reports, etc. in a computerized format since it is easier to put the Abstract together, but we do need records for binding which follow the specified forms.

A letter was received from the Stated Clerk (pro tem) of South Central Classis regarding actions taken at a Special Meeting held in Loveland, CO. It reads as follows:

September 14, 1998

South Central Classis is hereby informing the Western [sic] Classis of the action at a special Classis meeting held in Loveland, Colorado on Aug. 7, 1998.

Steven Schlei, pastor of Peace Reformed Church (RCUS) in Loveland, CO, was found guilty of the following charges duly brought against him:

1. Willful and malicious lying
2. Schism
3. Contumacy

These charges all related to the knowingly untruthful and misleading actions on the part of Steven Schlei which directly led to Peace Reformed Church declaring itself a congregation no longer in organic union with the Reformed Church in the United States.

The Classis sentenced Steven Schlei to be deposed from the office of Minister of the Word, all his ministerial credentials thus taken from him.

Furthermore, the Classis mandated the Executive Committee of Classis to establish a committee to serve as a liaison with the consistory of Peace Reformed Church to communicate that the Classis had denied their request to be removed from the roll of churches of South Central Classis and that the pulpit of Peace Reformed Church would be declared vacant upon this action of Classis being considered final.

The thirty days for appeal to this action of Classis having passed without notification of appeal by Steven Schlei, this action of the South Central Classis stands.

May the Lord of His Church be glorified and may His Spirit work repentance in Steven Schlei.

In Christ's Service,

George Horner, Stated Clerk (pro tem) South Central Classis, RCUS

Your Clerk has been in lengthy telephone conversations with a representative of a group who have an interest in joining the RCUS. They were invited to attend our Classis and Synod meetings, but I was recently informed that they would be unable to attend the Classis meeting due to work schedules. They do plan to have representatives at our Synod meeting in Bakersfield. This group is in the San Diego area. The individual with whom I spoke is Mr. Guillermo (Agil) Baloy, 757 Maria Ave., Spring Valley, CA 91977. Ph. (619) 697-0272. I told him that I would bring this to the attention of the Classis so a committee could be erected to meet with this group. We should act on this matter at this meeting.

In accord with the instructions of Synod, a reminder that all reports, communications, and overtures (incl. excuses) must be submitted on white letter-sized paper since they are included in the bound copy of the minutes. If all members of a committee are not available to sign a report, at least a *majority* of the members must sign. Unsigned or insufficiently signed reports cannot be received by the Clerk.

Respectfully submitted,
Rev. Paul H. Treick, Stated Clerk

Classis Action: The matter concerning interest in a work in Southern California was referred to the Standing Missions Committee. The report was adopted as a whole.

C. Executive Committee of Synod=s Report

As there were no referrals from the Synod to the Classes for action, there was no written report from the Executive Committee of Synod.

D. Treasurer=s and Auditor=s Report

BALANCE SHEET
DECEMBER 31,1998

ASSETS:	<u>12-31-98</u>	<u>12-31-97</u>	<u>CHANGE</u>
Cash	\$112,508.91	\$111,686.95	\$821.96
Mis. Bldg. Fd. Loan-Willows	<u>9,000.00</u>	<u>21,000.00</u>	<u>(12,000.00)</u>
TOTAL ASSETS	\$121,508.91	\$132,686.95	(\$11,178.04)
LIABILITIES:			
Accounts Payable	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00
	0.00	0.00	0.00
TOTAL LIABILITIES	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00
SURPLUS (DEFICIT)	\$121,508.91	\$132,686.95	(\$11,178.04)
TOTAL LIABILITIES & SURPLUS	<u>\$121,508.91</u>	<u>\$132,686.95</u>	<u>(\$11,178.04)</u>
FUND BALANCES:			
General	(\$648.06)	\$2,043.33	(\$2,691.39)
Home Missions Building Fund	90,225.51	69,220.88	21,004.63
Home Missions	8,079.93	21,748.47	(13,668.54)
Benevolence	11,982.37	15,457.19	(3,474.82)

Publications	1,753.17	2,288.16	(534.99)
Heidelberg Camp	1,115.99	928.92	187.07
TOTAL FUNDS	<u>\$112,508.91</u>	<u>\$111,686.95</u>	<u>\$821.96</u>

INCOME STATEMENT
FOR YEAR ENDED DECEMBER 31, 1998

	Dues	Bldg	Fund	Hm	Miss	Benev.	Publ.	Heid Camp	Total Per Church
INCOME: C.M. 1-01-98									
Faith-And. 35	\$70.00	\$0.00	\$0.00			\$330.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$400.00
Grace-Lancaster 35	49.28	369.60	369.60			1,182.84	49.28	49.40	2,070.00
Grace-Bakersfield 141	278.00	1,000.00	1,000.00			5,000.00	278.00	278.00	7,834.00
Covenant-Chico 13	25.00	187.50	187.50			600.00	25.00	25.00	1,050.00
Covenant-Grass Valley 38	76.00	570.00	570.00			1,824.00	76.00	76.00	3,192.00
Providence-Lodi 56	84.00	630.00	630.00			2,016.00	84.00	84.00	3,528.00
Trinity-Modesto 62	92.97	697.50	697.50			2,232.00	92.97	93.05	3,905.99
Covenant-Sacramento 72	144.00	1,080.00	1,080.00			3,456.00	144.00	144.00	6,048.00
Ebenezer-Shafter 82	164.00	1,230.00	1,230.00			3,936.00	164.00	164.00	6,888.00
Gr.-Willows (Excl. LN 31	62.00	0.00	465.00			1,488.00	0.00	62.00	2,077.00
First-Yuba City 50	196.00	810.00	810.00			2,592.00	108.00	108.00	4,624.00
Publication Book Sales							356.65		356.65
F&M Bank-Int Allocated	71.76	2,430.03	763.35			54262	80.37	32.54	3,920.67
TOTAL INCOME	615	\$1,313.01	\$9,004.63	\$7,802.95	\$25,199.46	\$1,458.27	\$1,115.99		\$45,894.31

EXPENSES:

Stated Clerk Expenses:

Gratuity 1998-99 Clerk		\$400.00	
Abstract Expense & Mailing		621.84	
Clerk Phone/Postage		202.04	\$1,223.88

Executive Committee Expenses:

Classis Meeting-March 1998		1,709.12	
Classis Meeting-August 1998		641.60	
Candidates/Credentials Mileage		144.80	2,496.52

Benevolences:

Grace Reformed-Antelope Vly		9,900.00	
Faith Reformed-Anderson		11,824.28	
Diaconal-Thomas Mayville		1,200.00	
Diaconal-John Sawtelle		2,000.00	
Diaconal-Rev. Jay Fluck		3,750.00	28,674.28

Inter-Church Relations:

Mileage-Delegate to OPC-North		75.60	
Mileage-Delegate to OPC-SoCal (3x)		209.40	285.00

Home Missions:

Covenant Reformed-Chico		21,000.00	
Mileage/Travel/Hotel		434.50	
Telephone		36.99	21,471.49

Publications:

Baptism Book-Camera Ready		250.00	
Baptism Book-Printing		1,743.26	1,993.26

Heidelberg Camp Fund-Disburse 1997 Balance 928.92

TOTAL EXPENSES \$57,072.35

INCOME FOR YEAR (\$11,178.04)

CASH AND NOTE RECEIVABLE ON HAND 12-31-97 \$132,686.95

CASH AND NOTE RECEIVABLE ON HAND 12-31-98 \$121,508.91

INCOME STATEMENT BY FUND
FOR YEAR ENDED DECEMBER 31, 1998

FUND:	Home Mis.					Heid.	Total
	General Bldg Fund	Hm Miss	Benevolence	Publication		Camp	
INCOME:							
Giving	\$1,241.25	\$6,574.60	\$7,039.60	\$24,656.84	\$1,021.25	\$1,083.45	\$41,616.99
Publication Sales					356.65		356.65
Allocated Interest	71.76	2,430.03	763.35	542.62	80.37	32.54	3,920.67
Total Income	\$1,313.01	\$9,004.63	\$7,802.95	\$25,199.46	\$1,458.27	\$1,115.99	\$45,894.31
EXPENSE:							
Stated Clerk	1,223.88						1,223.88
Exec. Comm	2,495.52						2,495.52
Inter Church	285.00						285.00
Benevolences				28,674.28			28,674.28
Home Missions		21,471.49					21,471.49
Publications				1,993.26			1,993.26
Heidelberg Camp					928.92		928.92
Total Expense	4,004.40	0.00	21,471.49	28,674.28	1,993.26	928.92	57,072.35
Income (Loss) Yr	(\$2,691.39)	\$9,004.63	(\$13,668.54)	(\$3,474.82)	(\$534.99)	\$187.07	(\$11,178.04)
Balance 12-31-97	\$2,043.33	\$69,220.88	\$21,748.47	\$15,457.19	\$2,288.16	\$928.92	\$111,686.95
Subtotal 12-31-98	(\$648.06)	\$90,225.51	\$8,079.93	\$11,982.37	\$1,753.17	\$1,115.99	\$100,508.91
Loan Pmts-Willows		12,000.00					12,000.00
Balance 12-31-98	<u>(\$648.06)</u>	<u>\$90,225.51</u>	<u>\$8,079.93</u>	<u>\$11,982.37</u>	<u>\$1,753.17</u>	<u>\$1,115.99</u>	<u>\$112,508.91</u>

Chris Fellsersen, Classis Treasurer

Classis Action: The report was adopted and referred to the Finance Committee.

PAROCHIAL REPORTS OF MINISTERS

Rev. Jay Fluck read his Parochial Report

Fathers and Brethren,

This has been a year of great change for me. One year ago you accepted me into your fellowship. In doing that, you completed a circle in my family history which has given new meaning to the hymn "Faith of our Fathers". I have thrilled to the enforced study of the Heidelberg Catechism. It is true that the best way to learn a subject is to teach it, and as I am teaching it to our group each Lord's day, the glory of it becomes more clear.

I have been privileged to proclaim the Lord's word in three of our organized congregations: Shafter, Anderson and Mitchell. I received a call to Mitchell which I was encouraged to decline in order to begin a church planting work in Whittier, Ca. I have regularly proclaimed the word of God there 37 Lord's days. Rev. Vernon Pollema proclaimed the Word to our people the Sunday on which I was away in South Dakota.

Our Group meets for worship at 10:30 am., Sunday School (our catechetical. study) at noon, has a meal together at 1:00 PM and reconvenes for Bible study at 6:00 PM. On any given Sunday we will have between 21 and 40 in attendance in the morning and between 10 and 20 in the evening.

We are under the oversight of the Bakersfield consistory, but none of us has been formally received into membership, and we have not had the sacraments administered to us in this whole period of time. We greatly desire to celebrate the Lord's Supper as a congregation of the R.C.U.S. In addition, we have six and fifteen sixteenths children who are appropriate and ready for Baptism. (Shannon Heck is due this week) We plead with you to help regularize our status in order that we may take up all of our responsibilities as a congregation of the R.C.U.S.

Since there has been no regular funding for the Whittier work, I have taken secular employment, as a job foreman for a general contractor (Sierra Contracting out of Escondido). This entails a 50 hour work week and pays \$800.00 per week without benefits. I am a contract employee and therefore am paid only when assigned to a job. The Ebenezer congregation of Shafter has graciously paid our health insurance premiums all year, and the Classical Diaconal Committee has supplemented our income to meet our needs. The Lord has fully provided for us through the love of His people.

My heart remains torn between a great desire to leave California, and a great desire to stay ministering to the flock in Whittier. While I do not anticipate any change in that conflict, our situation remains tenuous. If there is not sufficient work available, if there is not sufficient Synodical support, if those in the Classis who have been generous to us (The Sacramento Congregation sent us \$500.00 at Christmas time) are not able to continue, then we will not be able to remain in Whittier. Pray for us brethren, that the Lord would supply all our needs and increase the flock in both size and strength.

Respectfully submitted,
Rev. Jay E. Fluck

Classis Action: The matter of Rev. Fluck's status as Stated Supply was referred to the Judicial Committee.

Rev. Dale Clark read his Parochial Report

Esteemed Brethren of the Classis,

It is with hope and confidence that I write this report. We are but the workmen whom God has seen fit to use to bear witness to the gospel of Jesus Christ our Lord. It is on this witness that Jesus says he will build his church. Therefore we are looking to Christ that this congregation will be established to glorify his name here in Chico.

This past year I have preached nearly every Sunday, the exceptions being two weeks for vacation. I thank my God for the health he has given. With Anderson being vacant, for much of this year, I found myself leaving quickly to go to Anderson 12 times in the year. Also with Mr. Mayville unable to serve the Lord's Supper I have been in Willows 3 times with Mr. Mayville preaching in Chico. While these and the one time to Yuba City have not been onerous personally, it has disrupted somewhat the continuity for fellowship in the Chico work. I have also given invocations to begin the County Board of Supervisors meeting in September, and the graduation ceremonies for the Law Enforcement Class of Butte College in May.

We continue to have a Thursday evening Bible Study, though only a few from Chico attend. (We have one family from Magalia, one family from Oroville, one person Los Malinos, and five families from Chico.) An Adult Sunday School was started in the spring, starting with the Covenant of Grace and now dealing with R. B. Kuiper's book *The Glorious Body of Christ*. This has been an excellent time for discussion and has been helpful to the people who attend. Catechetical instruction has been with my own children as they are the only youth in the congregation. At present only the older two are being instructed formally. It has been somewhat difficult to keep a regular time for it, but that has improved this year.

Fellowship times are arranged on a regular basis. Once a month we have a Soup, Salad and Sandwich Lunch following the Sunday School time. We have called this SSSLunch. The aim is to meet in the park when we can and in some one's home when we can't. Once a month a fellowship meal is planned for one of the members homes. It started out as a time to watch and discuss a historical video, but now it is a time to discuss outreach into the community or other topics.

The attendance each Sunday is down from last year as a family that was attending didn't like some of our stances in the RCUS and left for the Evangelical Free Church. We are averaging over the past year 15.65 persons each Sunday. The last half of the year it has been just below the 15 persons. The congregation has also had to take a stance for truth and through the Willow's Spiritual Council we had to excommunicate a member.

We thank the Classis for the financial and spiritual support of this past year. We are grateful for the prayers offered up on our behalf We continue to pray for the Classis congregations and committees with gratitude to God. Also we give thanks for the financial help that you have given. Financially, we have not struggled because of your help and the seed money that was provided for the startup costs some time ago. We had made a modest increase in the budgeted income last year, but this did not materialize. Statistically,

we are giving per family very well. The numbers were just not there.

I have visited everyone in the congregation at least once as well as numerous phone calls and other less formal visits. The mood of the congregation is somewhat depressed, mainly because growth is not happening as expected. To a degree I think we all thought that the church would expand numerically much the same as oil comes put of the ground in the Middle East very easily. We have found that we have not expended enough energy in spreading the gospel. We have advertized in the local paper, but have found that not to be very successful. We are planning to use a doorhanger to canvas the city. I have also been encouraging everyone to invite others to come to the services. It is still not aggressively done.

The desire is to engage our city, church and others, with the gospel. We are convinced that the reformed faith is the correct interpretation of God's Word. Our difficulty is getting it out. We want to see a reformed work here and in Paradise and Oroville at least. By God's grace this will happen and we trust Him to do it. We continue hopeful, for as David Helseth keeps reminding us of, it isn't the numbers that count but the faithfulness to God that does. Paul wrote, "So then neither he who plants is anything, nor he who waters, but God who gives the increase." (I Corinthians 3:7).

Respectfully submitted,
Rev. Dale Clark

Classis Action: Take Note.

Rev. Neale Riffert read his Parochial Report

Esteemed Brothers:

Having accepted a call to pastor the Faith Reformed Church, Anderson, I arrived in Anderson and began my pastorate November 2, 1998. My first Sunday in the pulpit was November 8th. Our family was received warmly by the congregation, and various members supplied us with meals during our first week in Anderson.

The first several weeks were spent in attending to the various things necessary in getting settled in a new state, and trying to get a household in running order. This was compounded by the fact that we knew we would be moving again within a short time, so that most of our household items were still stored in the moving boxes. Our move to California was really two moves. The second move was made late in December (December 29th) from the house on Blue Jay Lane, Anderson, to our present home in Cottonwood. Men of the church came at 4:00 p. m. on moving day with pick-up trucks and trailers, and by 9:45 p. m. that evening everything was at our new address.

The Saturday following our move, Mary Elizabeth, and our daughter Idelette, who came to visit during her Christmas break (she is teaching at a Christian school in Silver Springs, MD) hosted a tea for the ladies of the church that was attended by about twenty-four women. In case you think we're crazy, the tea was originally planned to be held at our Blue Jay Lane house, but God in His providence moved much more swiftly than we had planned in settling us in Cottonwood.

The greater portion of my ministry during the past classical year was among the saints in Salem Ebenezer Reformed Church, Manitowoc, a congregation that will always be in our hearts. The Lord gave us the privilege of laboring in Manitowoc for twelve years, and the decision to resign to accept the call to Faith Reformed, Anderson was the most difficult decision I have ever made. I greatly appreciated the prayers of many in the Covenant East and Western Classes, and the also the counsel provided.

During the course of the past year, I preached on 51 Sundays preaching primarily on 2 Corinthians, taught 18 catechism sessions for the youth of the church, 44 Sunday School lessons to the Intermediate Sunday School (Salem Ebenezer Reformed Church), taught 40 Sunday School lessons to the Adult Sunday School Class (Salem Ebenezer Reformed Church), 8 Bible Studies to the Adult Bible Class (Salem Ebenezer Reformed Church), held 11 Bible Studies for the Ladies Aid (Salem Ebenezer Reformed Church), conducted 3 weeks of Summer Bible School (Salem Ebenezer Reformed Church), and directed and participated in the Covenant East Classis youth camp that was attended by forty-eight young people. In the ordinary course of ministry I made above 100 visits to members, serving communion to shut-ins, visiting the sick in the hospital, mourning with those who mourned at the death of a loved one, and celebrated with others in marked anniversaries.

I also had the privilege of attending the General Assembly of the OPC, held at Grand Rapids, MI, as the fraternal delegate of the RCUS, served on the Covenant East Classis, Home Missions Committee, and the Synod Home Missions Committee.

As to my labor at Faith Reformed Church, Anderson, I preached 9 times (four Sundays each in November and December, and on Thanksgiving Day).

Western Classis is well aware that Faith Reformed has traveled a rocky road the past several years. The path is not yet fully clear, but by God's grace, progress is being made to make the rough places smooth. I pray that God will look upon us with His blessing, granting us wisdom, patience, humility, love for one another, and above all a deep and abiding commitment to the Kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. We are grateful to Western Classis for assisting us in a time of great trial, giving good counsel, and providing us with pulpit supply through the course of 1998. As a congregation, we covet your continued prayers. As pastor I covet your prayers, that I too, may lead this flock faithfully, with gentleness, patience, and wisdom, and in a manner that will reflect the love of our great Shepherd, Jesus Christ.

Respectfully submitted,
Rev. Neale R. Riffert

Classis Action: Take Note.

Rev. Gene Sawtelle read his Parochial Report

Esteemed Brothers in Christ,

At is of the Lord's mercies that we are not consumed, because his compassions fail not. They are new every morning: great is thy faithfulness.@ Lam. 3:22-23

I give thanks to God for His faithfulness to His covenant people of First Reformed Church of Yuba City, Ca. This past year was not without its trials and sufferings for God's people, but it was also a year of God's blessings that were given to us in abundance.

I thank you, my brothers in Christ of the Western Classis, your congregations and God's people throughout the RCUS, for praying for First Reformed Church. I thank you, too, for praying for my wife and me. God's grace has been sufficient in my recovery from the emergency surgery on 13 Oct. 1998, and the subsequent surgery on 15 Dec. 1998.

God blessed our congregation financially this past year. Our giving was up substantially, and we were able to meet our classis and synod guidelines. Our total income exceeded our total expenses.

In addition to preaching Lord's Day services and teaching the adult Sunday School class, I held training classes for the elders and deacons, taught catechism and confirmation classes and numerous home Bible studies. I made many home visits and hospital calls and conducted Christian counseling as needed throughout the year.

Two communicant members were received by letter of transfer from another Reformed denomination. Two of our covenant young people became communicant members through publicly confessing their faith in confirmation. One covenant infant was baptized.

The office of the keys was exercised through church discipline requiring the excommunication of one male member and the removal of one member by judicial erasure. Eight members were administratively erased when they joined other churches. one member was lost by death. Total baptized membership on 31 Dec. 1998 was 65. Total communicant membership was 48.

There are others who have been attending worship services here for a long period of time who have expressed a desire to receive instruction for the purpose of joining with us in membership in the near future. Average attendance in Sunday worship was 72, and Sunday School opening exercise attendance was 33 (with attendance usually growing to between 40-50 by the time dismissal to individual classes occurred).

A great deal of responsibility for day to day church related business fell upon the Consistory and Spiritual Council from 13 Oct. 1998 through the remainder of the year. I thank God for raising up responsible men for the office of elder and deacon here at First Reformed Church. These men spent countless hours away from their families, prior to that date, dealing with matters related to church discipline, which is an important work of the church.

Again, on behalf of my wife and me, I submit to you all our thanks for your prayers, love, care and concern, your cards, visits and telephone calls during my 2 surgeries, hospitalizations and subsequent recovery. I appreciate all that you have done for us. What a blessed privilege it is to be in the body of Christ and to know that God's people are praying for you and bearing your burden.

Therefore, my beloved brethren, be ye steadfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labor is not in vain in the Lord.@I Cor. 15:58

Respectfully submitted,
Rev. Gene Sawtelle

Classis Action: Take Note.

Licentiate Gary Mancilas read his Parochial Report

Esteemed Brethren,

The writer of Hebrews in 10: 10 stated the following: *By this will we have been sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all.* The work of God's sanctification in His people has been evident in the Lancaster congregation. Sanctification is a work of God's grace whereby He has before the foundation of the world chosen us to be holy through the power of the operation of His Holy Spirit. Sanctification is described as a process or transformation that is an ongoing conformity of the believer to God's holy standard, represented supremely in His Son. In Christ, we have been united as a people to do the work of God in this present world.

Once again, it has been a joy and privilege for me to be at Grace Reformed Church of the Antelope Valley working among God's people. I count it an honor to preach the message of our Sovereign God and labor with His people for the sake of His Son our Lord Jesus Christ. As Stated Supply in Lancaster during the year, I preached forty-five (45) times on the following: Completed the series on Covenant Theology, Order of Salvation, The Work of the Believer in the Kingdom of God, The Doctrine of God, Romans 9, The Reformation, The Apostles' Creed, and The Question of Evil. In preparation for the ordination exam, I have been in the studies of Systematic Theology, Apologetics, and Philosophy.

In 1998 God gave us the privilege to celebrate the Lord's Supper three (3) times, and we had six (6) baptisms. We rejoice that God has provided for the needs of the body and the ministry of the Sacraments another year. We are grateful to The Reverend Vernon Pollema and The Reverend Frank Walker who have administered the Sacraments. We also thank the Consistories of Ebenezer Reformed Church of Shafter and Grace Reformed Church of Bakersfield for providing this assistance. Our Elders participated in the Sacraments by being faithful to guard the Lord's table.

Our Spiritual Council meets monthly after the Consistory meeting, or as often as required. It became necessary for our Spiritual Council to exercise the Office of the Keys by removing one (1) member by Judicial Erasure. In addition, spiritual discipline has been exercised over four (4) members who have been suspended. The losses by discipline are a deep cause for sadness. We pray that the discipline will bring the erring ones to repentance and restoration. We dismissed two members by Certificate of Dismission to our congregation at Grace Reformed Church of Willows, California.

Currently we have two (2) acting elders and two (2) acting deacons in our Consistory that meets monthly and at other times when warranted. With the election of Elder Jeff Mills and with continued teaching and instruction, the Consistory shows continual growth in their involvement in the rule of the church. Our elders have faithfully labored to oversee the preaching of the Word, the administration of the sacraments, and the exercise of discipline. As a Consistory, we thank Classis for the appointed advisors who have encouraged us with their advice during the year.

It has been a demanding year as far as diaconal needs are concerned. We need to be diligent in prayer that God would continue to strengthen our Consistory by adding men who are scripturally qualified, filled with the Holy Spirit and wisdom and willing to serve Him as officers in His church. My duties also consisted of administrative work, teaching two (2) membership classes, pastoral counseling, premarital counseling, personal and family counseling sessions, marriage counseling and family visitation. We also host people in our home as often as possible. It has not been as often as we would like because of my concentration on studies for ordination. In addition to duties in Lancaster, your servant served as a member of the Synod Home Missions Committee and as a delegate to the Presbytery of Southern California OPC.

The Lord has blessed Grace Reformed Church in Lancaster by adding five (5) new members who were received by profession of faith. By God's grace, our communicant membership in 1998 numbered thirty-seven (37), and the total baptized membership numbered seventy-five (75). In addition, there are thirteen (13) non-member adults who are co-laborers with us, two (2) of whom have recently received membership instruction and will be received into membership in January 1999, and fifteen (15) non-member's children for whom we are deeply grateful to have with us. Baptism was administered to six (6) covenant children. We had one (1) wedding. As a congregation we ministered to one another by faithfulness to the worship services, which have been well attended. The congregation is committed to the hearing of the Word and the Reformed Faith. In an effort to foster fellowship, we have membership dinners, dinners for other special occasions and an annual church picnic. Prayer meetings are held on the first and third Sundays of the month following worship service. The reports of prayers answered have been encouraging to us all.

Our young people have also shown a desire to learn more of God's Word and of the Reformed Faith. Many of them witness to their friends and neighbors. Our hearts have been moved and encouraged by our young people. In addition, our members are committed to witnessing to friends and family about the Reformed Faith and inviting them to worship services. We have seen God's blessings in these endeavors.

The Ladies=Auxiliary continues to meet monthly. Under the oversight of the elders and deacons, the women using their gifts for the welfare of the congregation have been a true blessing to the church. Among other things, they arrange the dinners and oversee the kitchen facilities and supplies. Because of our limited funds, they also raise monies to purchase items that are needed as our church continues to grow. In keeping with the teaching of the Word of God from the pulpit and Bible studies, this year the ladies have received the support of the men and the children to help in many of their efforts. The church as a whole is working on serving as a family. We are very thankful for the organization's efforts.

The members and non-members have rallied to perform janitorial duties and perform specific tasks for the upkeep of the buildings and grounds. The buildings are old and are still in need of considerable care. A few of the members have personally taken on projects and paid professionals to install heaters and gas lines, move stoves, troubleshoot and repair plumbing problems, install lighting fixtures for adequate lighting during evening services, to name a few. Others have taken on specific projects. It is a blessing to see God's people in His service.

The Sunday School classes are well attended, and we thank and praise God for our faithful and dedicated teachers who have served this year. I am presently teaching a survey of the Bible in the adult Sunday School class. Our confirmation class is working to complete preparatory studies for confirmation at this time instructed by Elder Ernie Wood.

We praise God that this past year we were able to meet our budgeted financial obligations, and from the middle of 1998, we were able to meet our Classical Guideline for Giving. It is in our budget for the year of 1999 to meet the full amount of our Classical Guideline, to meet our Synodical Guideline, and reduce both Classical and Synodical financial aid. This would reduce our net drain on Synod and Classis resources from Twenty-five Thousand Dollars (\$25,000) to almost Eight Thousand Dollars (\$8,000).

The saints at Lancaster desire to express their sincere gratitude and heartfelt thankfulness to the churches of the RCUS through the Synod, Western Classis and to Ebenezer Reformed Church of Shafter for their monthly support that makes it possible for us to proclaim the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ. Our congregation has also been faithful, and giving has increased sixty-eight percent (68%). Therefore, it is with great joy to God that we come to Classis this year asking for a reduced amount of financial aid from both Classis and Synod. From Classis, we are respectfully requesting up to Five Hundred Dollars (\$500) per month, realizing a reduction of Three Hundred Dollars (\$300) per month from last year's aid. From Synod, we are respectfully requesting One Thousand Dollars (\$1,000) per month, realizing a reduction of Five Hundred Dollars (\$500) per month from last year's aid. For your consideration, we have provided Classis with a three-year budget, reflecting a reduction of Classical and Synodical aid for each year and full amount of our financial obligation to Synod and Classis (Attachment AA").

I praise God for the opportunity to serve Him in a denomination that continues to hold to the truths of the gospel and the Reformed Faith. Many of my brethren have encouraged me during my trials of ordination with their prayers, words of encouragement and godly advice. For this I offer my heartfelt gratitude. I am also thankful for the love that the congregation in Lancaster has shown toward my wife Gloria and me. May our covenant God continue to bless our efforts as we serve Him together in the coming year. Please continue to pray that God will grant his favor on me. *Therefore, my beloved brethren, be ye steadfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labour is not in vain in the Lord* (1 Cor. 15:58)

Respectfully submitted in Christ,
Licentiate Gary Mancilas, Stated Supply

Classis Action: The Lancaster congregation was commended for their commitment to take on a greater burden of their financial support. On the report, Take Note.

Rev. Vernon Pollema read his Parochial Report

Esteemed Brethren:

The providence of God is defined as the almighty everywhere present power of God, whereby, as it were by His hand, He upholds heaven and earth with all creatures, . . . (Heidelberg Catechism 27). The Lord has blessed Ebenezer Reformed Church by upholding us and giving us another year of growing together in the unity of faith and of the knowledge of our God and Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ. With the prophet Jeremiah we must say that *His compassions fail not, his mercies are new every morning* Great is thy faithfulness. (Lamentations 3:22,23).

The pastor was blessed with another year of good health, being absent from the pulpit only on those Sundays when away for vacation, pulpit supply at Lancaster and Bakersfield, Missionfest at Rock Springs, WY, and when the pulpit was occupied by seminarian John Sawtelle, who completed a 60/40 summer internship at Grace and Ebenezer respectively. We have also been blessed to have our former deacon and spiritual son, Paul Henderson, occupy the pulpit on a couple of occasions. Paul is currently completing his second year at Mid-America Seminary, Dyer, IN. As pastor, I am most grateful for the relief and assistance in preaching duties. It is truly gratifying to see and hear young men who are faithful and

zealous for the proclamation of the only authority for faith and life, the inspired and infallible Word of God.

The elders continue to be vigilant in their oversight of the preaching and teaching of God's Word, the proper administration of the sacraments, and the exercise of Christian discipline. Although the program for family visitation did not fare as well as hoped for, efforts to improve will continue. I am grateful for their commitment and assistance.

The deacons and consistory have been diligent in their concern for the outward and physical needs of the congregation and general household of faith. Diaconal concerns continue to expand as such needs become known. In so doing they have proved the blessing of giving and that *With the same measure that ye mete withal it shall be measured to you again* (Luke 6:38; cf. Acts 20:35).

Outreach and evangelism continued this past year through monthly preaching services in the A, B, and C Yards of Corcoran State Prison. The attendance continues to be good with each chapel usually filled to capacity of about fifty inmates. Within each yard there are a number of inmates with a knowledge and zeal for the doctrines of sovereign grace and thus a desire and appreciation for Reformed preaching. Continue to pray that God will bless the preaching, both to give faith and strengthen faith so that those who are eventually released may live a life of service and obedience to God and not return to their wicked ways.

This past September inmate Mark Casson, a member of Ebenezer, went for a hearing before the Board of Prison Terms and was again denied parole for another two years. Let me share with you his reaction: *There was initial disappointment as God knows my desire to serve Him out there, to get on with my schooling, look for a wife, etc. But one cannot maintain such disappointment for long ... How can I be upset when the God of creation is involved in my meager life, working out events for my good and His glory? Where is room for disappointment in knowing that *If the Son shall make you free, you shall be free indeed,* regardless of the location of my body? How can I be sad when justice is being served to one who is guilty? God has called me out of darkness and into His glorious light. I will continue to serve Him, as He allows, no matter where I am.* Mark has just recently been approved for the Distance Learning Program, especially designed for the incarcerated, and enrolled in the Special Student Program at Reformed Theological Seminary, Jackson, MS.

With sadness I relate that Greg Ramos, who was to have been released from prison this past fall, was placed on hold and returned to Kern County to face new charges stemming from his wife and stepdaughter and largely predicated upon vengeance. He was found guilty and sentenced to eighteen years which can be reduced to half-time. The Lord was merciful in that the *Three Strikes Law* could have been invoked. Greg has confessed his guilt and asked for forgiveness. He remains a member of Ebenezer but has been placed under discipline.

Radio evangelism continued through the Grace & Truth Broadcast. There are regular listeners who make themselves known from time to time, as well as occasional letters requesting a tape of a certain program. There was also one very lengthy, negative response in which the writer strongly objected to God's providential preservation of His Word which enables us to say that the copies and translations available to us are His inspired and infallible Word. I continue to promote the program in the prison chapels where there appears to be genuine interest and regular listeners as well. As for the effectiveness of this ministry we say with the apostle Paul: *Now thanks be unto God which always causeth us to triumph in Christ, and maketh manifest the savour of his knowledge by us in every place. For we are unto God a sweet savour of Christ, in them that are saved, and in them that perish: To the one we are the savour of death unto death; and to the other the savour of life unto life. And who is sufficient for these things?* (II Cor. 2:14-16).

A review of the various organizations and learning activities of the congregation is as follows:

The Sunday School consists of five classes of children and one class for adults. The children's classes are using *Our Guide*, a Sunday School curriculum published by the Protestant Reformed Churches. The oldest youth class, taught by the elders, is concentrating on the *Heidelberg Catechism*. The adult class, taught by the pastor, is currently doing a study of the book of Proverbs.

The Sunday evening Bible Study meets the first and third Sundays of each month. A new study has just begun on *The Parables of Jesus*. We are seeing improved attendance at this study as more members avail themselves of the opportunity to *grow in grace and in the knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ* (II Pet. 3:18).

The present confirmation class numbers seven. Depending upon learning progress and memorization of the catechism, several students may be confirmed later this year.

Vacation Bible School was held June 8-12 with 17 children, divided into four classes and taught by the pastor and volunteer teachers and aids.

Ebenezer has organized its own youth group which meets the second Sunday of each month beginning with noon lunch in the Fellowship Hall. They are studying current issues in the light of God's Word. Two of our young couples are serving as leaders and teachers for this group.

The Bereans organization has been viewing a video series by R.C. Sproul entitled, *What is Reformed Theology?* This series sets forth the theology of the Protestant Reformers as summarized in the Five Points of Calvinism. The video is being supplemented with the work of other authors on the same subject. Once a month this group also joins together for a social, i.e., a meal, recreational activity, etc., which have been times of good Christian fellowship.

The Ladies' Society continues its study of *Women of the Old Testament* by Abraham Kuyper at their monthly meetings. This organization has grown and more women are using their gifts for the welfare of the congregation and others. They arrange the women's service groups which function throughout the year and oversee the kitchen facilities and supplies.

Upon request, they provide food to those in need in the community. They have also raised monies to help support Christian causes. This year an added responsibility will be hosting part of the 253rd Session of the Synod of the RCUS which meets May 17-20.

The Men's Christian Fellowship also meets monthly at which time they review the current issue of *The Reformed Herald* and seek to stay abreast of what is happening in the denomination and Reformed community. It provides an added opportunity for good fellowship for the men.

We praise God for His faithfulness to us as a congregation. May He so govern us by His Word and Spirit that we submit to Him always more and more. May He preserve and increase His Church and destroy the works of the devil. Let us be patient in adversity and thankful in prosperity, and for what is future have good confidence in our faithful God and Father, that no creature shall separate us from His love, since all creatures are so in His hand, that without His will they cannot so much as move (Heidelberg Catechism 28).

Respectfully submitted,

Rev. Vernon Pollema

Classis Action: Take Note.

Rev. Jim West read his Parochial Report

Dear Fathers and Brothers,

God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble. The Lord of hosts is with us, the God of Jacob is our refuge. Those promises from Psalm 46 have been my inspiration and support in the Gospel ministry throughout the last Classical year, as the work of the ministry continues, Except for an occasional melancholy-fit, the Lord has also provided joy in His work as well. The Psalm promises that there is a river, the streams thereof shall make glad the city of God, the holy place of the tabernacle of the most high. This gladdening river of God is as important to the work of the ministry as the task itself. The joy of the Lord is our strength, not a weakness. If we love God, then we will rejoice in our God and rejoice to preach the Gospel.

This past Classical year I preached the Gospel twice each Lord's Day, conducted at least two catechism classes each week, taught the men each Wednesday morning at our weekly breakfast, and discipled an outstanding young man whose membership is in a Baptist church. Besides these regular weekly duties, the Lord's Supper was served at least once each month, along with several baptisms of infants. I chaired the monthly Spiritual Council and Consistory meetings, as well as the chairmanship of two special committees of Synod and Classis. The preaching ministry has tried to strike more of a balance between the Old Testament and the New, as I have been preaching through the Gospel of Mark since January of last year. Also, I began a series on the so-called Minor prophets last year as well. In the middle of last year I finally finished going through the Belgic Confession. I preached through it thematically, seeking to find a suitable text that corresponded with the doctrine stated. My catechumen classes continue throughout the year, there being no hiatus even during the summer months. There are tests, reviews, even exegetical papers required. At the men's breakfast we are studying Calvin's Institutes chapter by chapter and section by section. This has proved to be a great blessing for us all.

Sometime last year my study booklet titled *The Baptism of Infants in the Old and New Covenants* was finally printed. This information has been forwarded to the Publication's Committee of Classis. Several copies have been sold. Your servant is not entirely happy about some of the typos in the booklet, or his failure to include a negative on page 96 when he was critiquing the doctrine of presumptive regeneration. For some reason the printer decided to blue the cover, thus obscuring the picture of Dr., Cornelius Van Til, who is surrounded by many of our covenant youth. What mistakes there are probably good for me, as they have put a much needed hole in my drum. In addition, if I had to do the project over (which I hope I will have opportunity to do once this printing is exhausted), I would have included a critique of paedocommunion. As it is, there are 21 chapters, with questions at the end of each. The questions tend to be thought questions instead of questions derived immediately from the content of the chapter. Many of the questions are related to Church History.

Your servant also finished a new work called *The Glorious Foundation of Christ!* (which is subtitled, *The Missing Clincher Argument in the Tongues Debate*). You will notice the similarity between my title and R.B. Kuipers' *The Glorious Body of Christ*. Yes, I borrowed my title from him. My theme is that prophecy and tongues are a part of the once-for-all foundation of the Church and therefore are finished. They are in fact as finished and final as Christ's once-and-for-all death on the cross. God willing, this will be published in about six weeks. I am very thankful that Covenant Reformed Church of Sacramento has agreed to publish 2000 copies.

Our congregation is rich in three things- peace, purity, and truth. I give thanks for this state of affairs which is due entirely to God's redeeming grace in Christ. This, as well as a Biblically-centered elders who love the Church of Christ, make pastoring Covenant Reformed Church delightful.

As for the temporal condition of Covenant Reformed Church-it is very solid. We have a sizable building and diaconal fund. We also continue to support Covenant Reformed Church of Grass Valley with about \$18,000 a year.

In this past year, there has been some turmoil in Grass Valley, caused mostly by gossip and actions that show a failure on the part of some to understand the meaning of Reformed Church government. This means that Matthew 18 has not been followed in some cases. This has been a grief to us, and we have sought to implement Biblical solutions. One of our solutions was to issue a call to Steve Richert to serve as an elder. This has proved to be very salutary for the church. We thank God for his gifts- he is loved and respected by all. We are, of course, very much convinced that the foundation of the Grass Valley work continues to be very sound. We especially give thanks to God for the zeal and faithfulness of Pastor Rev. Dennis Roe, who has shown himself to be a faithful shepherd of God's people.

Our congregation in Sacramento is frequented by more visitors than we can possibly count. It is often difficult, if not impossible, for me to meet them all. While we thank God for this, we are not sure how to corral the Christians that do visit so that they decide to make our church their church home. Recently, we adopted an elders' invitation to dinner policy, where each elder would invite members and possible visitors to dinner one Sunday a month. This should increase fellowship among us and also provide a ready means to entertain angels unawares. The ambiance will be good too, as this hospitality will occur in the homes of the elders.

Many times my expectation that certain angelic visitors would remain and join the congregation has not come to fruition. One factor is the presence of other Reformed churches. There are now two other Reformed churches in the Sacramento area and the Orthodox Presbyterian Church is also investigating a work in the Rocklin-Roseville area. This means that there is now competition. Good! We welcome competition as long as it has the effect of inspiring us to be more Reformed. I have often said that no community suffers from too much Gospel-preaching! Church-hopping practices, however, that spring from the failure to meet problems head-on and to dodge responsibility, I do not condone.

As I anticipate the future of our church in 1999, I end the way I started, quoting from Psalm 46: *The Lord of hosts is with us, the God of Jacob is our refuge.* May our sovereign God continue to give us great joy to do the work.

In the Name of the Lord of hosts,
Pastor Jim West

Classis Action: Take Note.

Rev. Paul Treick read his Parochial Report

Esteemed Brothers in Christ,

This parochial report is required by Classis so that there might be an overview of my labors and the activities of the congregation I serve. We ought to examine such activities in light of the three marks of a true church: the true preaching of the gospel, the proper administration of the sacraments, and the faithful exercise of Christian discipline. We do not begin anew each year in these areas, but we have been bequeathed a Reformed heritage. Therefore, the questions we must ask are: Have we been good stewards of what has been entrusted to us?—namely the Reformed faith?—Have we been faithful to our covenantal duties? Have we been faithful to preserve the faith once delivered unto the saints? Have we been faithful to maintain the doctrines and practices handed down to us from our forefathers? Stewardship requires that we use present opportunities wisely, and that we leave the next generation as rich or richer than the past.

The Scriptures make it clear that faithful stewardship is required of all men. *As every man hath received the gift, even so minister the same one to another, as good stewards of the manifold grace of God.* (I Pet. 4:10) And again Paul says, *Let a man so account of us, as of the ministers of Christ, and stewards of the mysteries of God. Moreover it is required in stewards, that a man be found faithful.* (I Cor. 4:1,2)

Being a faithful steward does not mean simply clutching on to the faith for ourselves. It means preserving the faith by actively, daily, and consistently immersing ourselves in it and teaching it to the next generation. It means faithfulness in bringing this precious faith to others without shame, compromise, or discouragement. This is our covenant responsibility. This has been my effort and that of the Consistory of Trinity Reformed.

During the year I have prepared materials and taught Sunday School and preached 101 times, including preaching in Willows, Anderson, Garner, IA, and Sioux Falls, SD. Lord's Supper was served four times, and two infants were baptized this year.

In addition to preaching here, I led chapel services at Bethany Home and Ripon Christian High School. I lectured at the Conference in Grass Valley, CA, at the Reformation Conference here, and gave an address on *What it Means to Be Reformed in the Modern World* at the Annual Meeting of the North American Presbyterian and Reformed Council (NAPARC), to which I was also a delegate. I am also a member of a NAPARC committee to publish a Reformed work in a foreign language.

Catechism Classes were held weekly from January through May and then from October through December. We presently have sixteen students who are in attendance along with

four adults who bring their children and stay to help and learn. We are anticipating having four young people prepared for Confirmation this year. With the exception of the months of June through August, Wednesday evening Bible Studies in the Book of Romans were held twice a month. As we are nearly completed with Romans, a new study will begin with looking at the teaching of the cults. One new members class was held during this year.

This year I finished the complete revision of the Old Testament Student's Workbook *Our God and His People in the Old Testament* and the rather extensive Teacher's Manual for this. Both were published in July of this year and are available through the RCUS Book Depository. I am writing similar lessons for the New Testament study and using these now in Sunday School. Presently I am scanning all the articles on the Belgic Confession which appeared in the Christian Observer, with a possible view to making these articles into a book for study.

In addition to my duties at Trinity, I have several other responsibilities on the denominational level. I serve as your Stated Clerk and as a member of the Executive Committee and Candidates and Credentials Committee of Western Classis. I am a member of the Synodical Executive Committee. Committee work includes the Diaconal Ministries Committee, Congo Contact minister, Foreign Radio representative, and on the Special Committee on the Authority of Position Papers. On an interdenominational level, I am the chairman of the Radio Administration Committee which is a branch of Reformed Faith and Life Ministries. This chairmanship has an abundance of work this year with two trips to Chicago, and initiating the French Radio Broadcast by Rev. Eric Kayayan out of South Africa. We hope to begin broadcasts March 24th on Transworld Radio. I hope each of our congregations will consider taking special offerings for this work also. If you have any questions in this regard, I will be very willing to answer them. I am now serving as a member of the Board of Trustees of Westminster Theological Seminary in California, class of 2000, and chair its Academic Committee.

In addition to the two baptisms, we added three other members to our rolls. Two members were taken off the rolls this year C one by dismissal and one by disciplinary erasure. Our communicant membership presently stands at 62 and total baptized membership at 109. We are pleased to have had a number of visitors present at our worship services during the year.

An indispensable part of the life of the church has been a faithful and active Consistory. There is a unity among the elders and deacons that reflects their common love for the Reformed faith and their submission to the Standards of the RCUS. The Consistory and Spiritual Council met monthly for scheduled meetings and at other times when required. Discipline was handled with love and care in accordance with the Word of God and the Constitution. The financial state of the church required that the deacons make family visitations to all the members to inform them of our needs, how the funds are expended, and to address the matter of Christian stewardship.

Last year the matter of volunteerism was addressed at the congregational meeting, and we have seen good results from that discussion. We need volunteers for organists, pianists, weekly cleaning, lawn mowing and yard work, and making tapes for the services. The Spiritual Council has also had good cooperation in the appointment of Sunday School teachers to cover five classes. Greg Born has served diligently as leader for both the Jr. and Sr. Youth Groups. Pat Maddox meets a few times a year to take the Seven-Eleven Youth on outings. Our women meet informally once a month in homes for a devotional and fellowship.

This has been a year in which we hosted two conferences. The Women's Conference was well attended and enjoyed by many within and outside our congregation. This was held at the Christian Berets Campground near Sonora with Mrs. Phyllis Grossmann as guest speaker. This fall the Reformation Conference went well also. In addition our congregation hosted the Synod's Home Mission Conference and a Special meeting of Classis. The help of our ladies in providing lunches and refreshments was greatly appreciated.

This year we again embarked on a neighborhood tract handout. Nearly 4,000 homes or apartments were reached. The cost of producing these tracts was kept to a minimal and it cost us just over \$200. We hope to be able to do this again during the year as finances allow. The Youth Groups did all the folding and hole punching for these as well as cooperating in the footwork. We continue also to operate the Faith in Focus telephone devotion.

We hope very soon to begin an urgently needed remodeling project on our church restrooms. Over the past couple of years we have had money donated for that purpose. We plan to convert one restroom to a handicapped restroom, and build a new men's and women's restroom. We hope to do most of this work ourselves.

Financially, we have struggled at times, but the Lord's people have responded to our needs. We appreciate the monthly help we receive from Ebenezer RCUS in Shafter, and individuals outside of our congregation. We are receiving 15 percent of the Synod's aid to Home Mission Churches and hope to be on our own in the year 2001. In looking back at the years as a mission work, we are so grateful and dependant on our gracious God for gathering unto Himself a congregation that loves the Reformed faith and one which shares a loving communion within that faith.

The Reformed faith as defined by the Scriptures and our creeds remains a minority faith in this world, yet our strength is not to be found in our numbers, but in our Lord. We are committed to it because it stands on God's Word, and this is His Church. We could compromise the message, or we could tone down the doctrine, or fail to be faithful to it. If so, we should immediately close our doors, for we would be better off teaming up many others who have already done this. There never has been a time when the Lord's Church could afford to sheath its sword or be blind to its enemies who attempt to undermine the pillar and ground of the Truth. Nor can we ever relax in our commitment to raise our covenant children

in the faith which we ourselves are committed to now. Were it not for the Lord's mercy and faithfulness, we would have been consumed long ago. But, God is faithful. His covenant mercy never fails. He has shown it to us for another year. Praise His Name! Let us be unceasingly in prayer for one another that the Lord will keep us faithful to our covenantal responsibilities.

Remember that each of us is given the task of stewardship, and remember what we are stewards of **C** the timeless and precious promises of the gospel which God has entrusted to our care. *Now unto him that is able to keep you from falling, and to present you faultless before the presence of his glory with exceeding joy, to the only wise God our Savior, be glory and majesty, dominion and power, both now and ever. Amen.* (Jude vv. 24, 25)

Respectfully submitted,
Rev. Paul H. Treick

Classis Action: Take Note.

Rev. Jonathan Merica read his Parochial Report

Esteemed Fathers and Brethren,

Your servant and co-laborer in the gospel this past year has become more painfully aware of the reality of the spiritual warfare of the church militant and the Christian's calling as a soldier of Jesus Christ who must endure hardness as a good soldier of the cross. The sword's loud clashing and roll of stirring drums are daily realities to me as I engage in the work of the Kingdom of God. In the midst of the battle it is encouraging to hear the words of the Apostle Paul to Timothy, *Thou therefore endure hardness, as a good soldier of Jesus Christ. No man that warreth entangleth himself with the affairs of this life; that he may please him who hath chosen him to be a soldier.* (1 Tim. 2:3 -4) I am also reminded by Scripture to *Be strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might. Put on the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil. For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places.* (Eph. 6:10-12)

When wearied by the assaults of the enemy, I am often refreshed with this confidence in my only Savior, Jesus Christ, *Through thee will we push down our enemies: through thy name will we tread them under that rise up against us.* (Ps. 44:5) *Yea, A..in all these things we are more than conquerors through him that loved us.* (Rom. 8:37)

Providence Reformed Church has been remarkably blessed this year with numerous visitors contacting our church by telephone, the yellow pages, and on several occasions by individuals coming to the church doorstep wanting to know about our church and the reformed faith. Several of the inquirers are visiting our services faithfully each week, and some are applying for membership. When all the visitors and members are present in the morning worship service we have a serious shortage of seating space. Please pray that God will direct us in the months ahead to a larger facility, if that be His will.

This past year your servant has been busily engaged in the preaching and teaching of God's Word, as well as being Chairman of the Classis Home Missions Committee and the Interchurch Relations Committee. These two classical committee obligations have required a great deal of extra work. I am requesting that the standing Classis Nominations Committee relieve my workload this coming year by reducing my assignment to one committee chairmanship.

In April, 1998 Providence Reformed Church began an evening worship service every Lord's Day. I teach the adult Sunday School class and preach two sermons each Lord's Day. On Tuesday I teach a Bible study in Lodi, and on Thursday I teach a Bible study in Pleasanton, which is about an hour's drive from Lodi. In our Tuesday evening Bible study I completed a study in the book of The Revelation and am presently conducting a study in the book of Galatians. In Pleasanton we are studying the book of Romans. I am also currently conducting membership classes on Wednesday evenings for visitors who are making application for church membership.

Providence Reformed Church had one covenant child confirmed this year. Catechetical instructions are conducted each Lord's Day morning during the morning Sunday school. An elder teaches the class of six catechumens.

In the parochial report that your servant presented to the Western Classis last year, mention was made that Providence Reformed Church was investigating the Pleasanton area as a potential location to begin a Bible study with the goal of beginning a new mission work. On Thursday, June 18, 1998 we began Grace Reformed Bible Study with a handful of people who responded to a newspaper ad in the local newspaper. Grace Reformed Bible Study continues to meet each Thursday. Our plan is to get a core group of 5 to 6 families to begin a mission work. My son, Bryan, and his wife, Amy, live in the city of Pleasanton. They are strong supporters of the work. From the time the Bible study began to the present, we have had eleven individuals contacting us through email or telephone expressing an interest in the work. Most of the calls we received were from those who were looking for a Lord's Day worship service. The Chinese Bible Church in Pleasanton is allowing us to use their lovely church building free of charge. Gathering the core group is a difficult task, but we trust the Lord will provide. In the months ahead we are hoping to have a more aggressive outreach to bring in more families. Please pray for the work in Pleasanton. There is no faithful Reformed Church in the Tri-Valley area, which consists of Pleasanton, Livermore and Dublin. Pleasanton is very strategically located near the Bay area, and is a short drive to many East Bay cities.

It is my prayer that Providence Reformed Church will be aggressively involved in church planting, as was the church of Thessalonica. Paul said of them, *For from you sounded out the word of the Lord*

*not only in Macedonia and Achaia, but also in every place your faith to God-ward is spread abroad; so that we need not to speak any thing. @ May the gospel be sounded out from all our churches until, **A**the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the LORD, as the waters cover the sea. @ (Isa. 11 - 9)*

For various reasons Providence Reformed Church has lost several regularly visiting families, as well as member families this past year. Two of the member families left to serve in other RCUS churches. Kurt and Marlene Schimke transferred to Blue Cliff Community Church in Karval, Colorado. Kurt is presently enrolled at the New Geneva School of Theology. Steven and Nancy Richert and their family have transferred to Covenant Reformed Church in Grass Valley. Providently, the inflow of new visiting families has exceeded the ones who have left. The Lord is faithful to continue strengthening and building up Providence Reformed Church. We have been bountifully blessed of God.

I have been busily engaged in many other duties outside the normal duties of Providence Reformed Church. I was blessed to visit the Westminster Biblical Missions work in Mishkolc, Hungary, where they have established a theological institute for training young men for the ministry. I was honored to speak at two conferences that were sponsored by RCUS churches. In October I spoke at a conference hosted by Covenant Reformed Church in Carbondale, Pennsylvania. In January of this year, I was honored to speak at the conference hosted by Covenant Reformed church in Grass Valley.

As a soldier of the cross, I am very confident that now is the time for the Church of Jesus Christ to launch its offensive against the kingdom of darkness. Today, as never before I believe we have great potential for advancing the kingdom of God by the proclamation of the gospel. *For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal but mighty through God to the pulling down of strong holds. @ (11 Cor. 10:4) May God give us all grace to endure hardness as good soldiers of Jesus Christ, that we may honorably finish our course, and fight the good fight of faith. As the hymn writer reminds us, **A**Peace shall follow battle, night shall end in day, ... and the end of sorrow shall be near **The THRONE. @***

Respectfully submitted,
Jonathan Merica, Pastor

Classis Action: Take Note.

Rev. Dennis Roe read his Parochial Report

Mr. President and Fellow Servants of our Lord Jesus Christ:

Greetings in the name of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ who alone has redeemed with His precious blood and cleanses us from all our sins. I am mindful that it is He who has called me unto the ministry of the Gospel and that it is He alone who sustains me in the same. Truly, God is good.

I thank God that He has enabled me to be in my fourth year laboring among God's people in the Grass Valley and Nevada City area. I thank you, my brothers in the ministry of the Gospel, for your encouragement and wise counsel given me this past year. Truly, the words of the Psalmist have been my experience when he wrote in the 133 Psalm:

Behold, how good and how pleasant it is
For brethren to dwell together in unity!
It is like the precious oil upon the head,
Running down on the beard,
The beard of Aaron,
Running down on the edge of his garments.
It is like the dew of Hermon,
Descending upon the mountains of Zion;
For there the LORD commanded the blessing- Life forevermore.

I give special thanks to God for the consistory of Covenant RCUS of Sacramento for their oversight and assistance in the ministry. May the Lord return their goodness many times over.

1. THE MINISTRY OF THE WORD

I continue to proclaim God's Word in an expository manner each Lord's Day. This past year I finished a series of messages on Paul's Epistle to the Ephesians. In August, I began an exposition of the Ten Commandments. I am presently expounding the Seventh Commandment. Our morning worship is now averaging in the eighties for attendance.

There is a great need for the proclamation of the Gospel. In addition to preaching in Grass Valley, I had the opportunity to preach the Word at a Reformation conference for Grace RCUS at Bakersfield, as well as at Faith RCUS in Anderson. As chaplain for the 25th Infantry Division Association, I spoke at its annual memorial service which was held at the National Cemetery at Chattanooga, Tennessee in October. In this capacity I also conducted a memorial service for the 3rd Squadron 4th Cavalry at the Vietnam Veterans Memorial of Indiana

at Indianapolis. In addition, several times I enjoyed the privilege of filling the pulpit at CRC of Sacramento in Pastor West's absence.

In our teaching ministry at Grass Valley, we offered four Bible classes for our children and one for adults on Sunday mornings. A new class was added with the help of student under care, Chris Caughey, who began a class for young adults (this is temporarily in hiatus due to lack of classroom space in the winter months. They used the veranda in the warm weather). We employ a number of Bible class curricula C. J. R. Beeke (on the Catechism), Great Commission and Ligonier Ministries. I am presently teaching a series on church history in our adult Bible class which I have developed.

We held a number of special services throughout the year with guest speakers. Pastor Vernon Pollema and Pastor Paul Treick came for our Reformation Bible conference in January of 1998. Mr. Steven Richert provided pulpit supply in my absence and has proven to be a real help in the ministry.

My duties also consisted of numerous membership classes, premarital counseling sessions, personal and family counseling sessions, and calling upon members and non-members in their homes. I also provided three funeral services for friends of the congregation. I also had the joy to conduct the marriage ceremony of two members in our congregation. We continue to hold monthly Sunday afternoon services at a local nursing home. Those of us who attend find this to be a joyful time of fellowship.

Perhaps the most difficult time for me personally was saying farewell to our dear sister Kathleen Pettyjohn and conducting her funeral service. Our congregation still feels her absence and yet we know it is a far better place in which she now dwells. *Absent from the body and present with the Lord.*"

Our catechetical instruction continues on Thursday afternoons. We began our new class in September and are on the first section of the catechism. We have ten students enrolled. This past year seven students recited questions 88-129. Please pray that God would put these words into their hearts as well as their heads.

II. THE MINISTRY OF THE SACRAMENTS

God gave us the privilege to celebrate the Lord's Supper once each month. Again, I thank the elders from Sacramento for their assistance in the faithful administration of this sacrament. I am especially thankful for God bringing Steven Richert to serve in our congregation which gives the elders from Sacramento a rest from their long trips up to Grass Valley.

III. THE MINISTRY OF DISCIPLINE

God, in His good providence, added eleven communicant members to our number during the past year by profession of faith and transfer of membership.

Two members were removed by letter of transfer and one was translated into the presence of her Savior.

IV. MISC. DUTIES AND ACTIVITIES

On behalf of Synod, I continue to serve as a member of its Home Missions Committee and a special committee to examine *Principles for Ecclesiastical Unity.*"

On a classical level, I serve on our Candidates and Credentials committee. I also was appointed to serve on the Home Missions Committee. This involved several trips to Modesto for meetings and one to southern California to investigate a new work being started in the L.A. Area.

I continued to serve as General Secretary for Westminster Biblical Missions which, as you brethren know, involved a trip to Hungary this past April. The Lord willing, I will continue in this service.

V. CONGREGATIONAL ASSESSMENT

I had thought we were ready to organize on our own at last year's annual meeting. However, God in His providence proved this to be premature. We are still in the process of training and calling officers.

We do give thanks to God for bringing Steven and Nancy Richert and family to be with us. We are grateful that Steve was installed as our first elder in November. I must say, both Steve and his dear wife, Nancy, are tremendous assets to the church. Please pray for God's guidance and provision for our congregation as we seek to organize.

As they say, *the honeymoon period is over.* Nevertheless, by God's grace and with His sovereign help, I will continue my labors in the Grass Valley and Nevada City area. I am mindful of Paul's words, *when I was weak, then I became strong.* Please pray that God will remove my weaknesses as hindrances to the prospering of His church in Grass Valley.

Respectfully submitted,
Dennis E. Roe, Pastor

Classis Action: Take Note.

Licentiate Thomas Mayville read his Parochial Report

Esteemed fathers and brothers,

As I submit my first parochial report, a verse of Scripture comes to mind, *Being confident of this very thing, that He who has begun a good work in you will complete it until the day of Jesus Christ.* (Phil. 1: 6) Praise be to our covenant God for this promise of His continued blessings in the days to come, as I begin to serve Him in Willows. To report to you as a Licentiate of the Western Classis is a dream come true. My correspondence with Classis last year consisted of my report to the Candidates and Credentials Committee, as a student for the ministry The Lord has done much since then. He enabled me to pass my Greek comprehensive exam at Seminary on April 29, and later, my Classis Greek exam. In April, I also preached in the URC in Orange city, Iowa and at the RCUS in Menno, South Dakota, Graduation was May 22, but I still have to finish Philosophy and English courses I am working on, before I will receive my diploma. These are courses which I did not have in college. I had hoped to have this goal achieved by now, but was unable to do so. I plan to finish this course work by the end of May, 1999, On May 3 1, 1998, I preached a trial sermon in Willows, and shortly thereafter was issued a call, pending licensure and ordination by the Western Classis.

In response to this call, we left our home in Illinois June 24, and arrived in Willows on July 3, after an interesting, and sometimes unnerving trip cross country. Five days later, the Lord enabled me to pass my preliminary exam on orthodoxy and intent, administered by the Candidates and Credentials Committee. I was given permission to serve as pulpit supply in Willows until my Licensure exam. By His grace, our Lord enabled me to sustain my Licensure Examination on August 25 so that I could serve the congregation at Willows as stated supply, until my Ordination exam. This has been a cause of great rejoicing for me personally, as I have seen the Lord's inward call to the ministry develop over the years, bringing me to the point where the outward call is at hand.

As a Licentiate, the Lord has given me many opportunities to serve Him at Grace Reformed Church in Willows. I have had the privilege of preaching the gospel each Lord's Day morning. So far, I have preached on five of the Psalms, and several series going through 1) the first Chapter of First Peter, 2) the book of Ruth, and 3) 1 Kings 17. The Consistory has expressed a desire to hear a good deal of preaching from the Old Testament. Besides the weekly worship service, I have had the privilege of preaching at worship services for Thanksgiving and Christmas. Additionally, I gave a lecture on the history of the Canons of Dort at our Reformation Evening Celebration. Since I cannot administer the Lord's Supper, Rev. Clark and I have traded pulpits once every other month. He has come to Willows to administer the sacrament, and I have traveled to Chico to preach in his absence. This has worked out well, enabling me to get to know the members of our nearest sister church. The Lord also gave me several opportunities between July and November to minister His word to the congregation in Anderson, as they awaited the arrival of their new pastor.

In preparation for my Ordination examination, I have been studying and meeting with Rev. Clark regularly to complete my internship training, and memorization of the Catechism. Though not an officer at Grace Reformed Church, I have attended the Consistory and Spiritual Council meetings and have participated in most discussions. I also have had the privilege of attending the monthly Joint Consistory meetings with the Anderson officers. Each week, I prepare the bulletin and a sermon outline for the congregation.

The Lord has given me opportunities to engage in His teaching ministry as well. Each week, I have been preparing Sunday School Lessons for 3 classes ranging from pre-school to 5th grade. We began in the book of Judges, and are working our way through the Old Testament, having made it to I Samuel 15 as of this writing- I have tried to blend the content of *Promise and Deliverance* with the activities of *Great Commissions Publications*. We have two Catechism classes, of which I teach the older students who are nearest to Confirmation- This year, we hope to see two or three of the Catechumens confirmed. The younger class is studying the Catechism and Church History, while my class is studying the Belgic Confession and Canons of Dort this year.

With our God's help, I have endeavored to be a faithful shepherd to His people here in Willows, My wife and I have conducted pastoral *get acquainted* visits with each family (except for one at this writing) in their homes. Following ordination, God willing, it is my desire to have each family over for dinner once in the next twelve months. My top priority for the first twelve months here is to get to know God's people, in order that I may better minister to them. The Lord has also given me ample opportunities for visiting the sick of the congregation. Since I have arrived a baby has been hospitalized over a week for spinal meningitis, one man has had a hernia operation, and another was hospitalized for over two weeks after reconstructive leg surgery. At this writing, an 8 year old boy with Down's Syndrome has been in the hospital for over 6 weeks, suffering from mononucleosis, pneumonia, yeast in his blood, and a blood clot. His poor mother has not been home from the hospital since his admission. I have also had the opportunity to counsel one of the Sunday School children and her step mother.

Our Lord has burdened my heart with a desire to minister more to our young people here, and to foster among them deep friendships. To that end, we had a youth night at our home in July, joined in the Modesto rafting trip in August, sponsored a Snow Trip for the Northern CA. churches in January, and a local baseball game in February. I attended Volleyball games, and a football game in which some of our youth competed. I hope to have monthly get-togethers soon, and to involve the college age young people in leadership of these activities. Our God has also caused my path to cross the path of a young man in Willows who wants to go to Seminary. While attending Calvary Chapel Bible College and working with the youth in a local church, the Lord began to enlighten his mind to the Reformed Faith. We meet about every two weeks to talk theology, and to discuss the RCUS, and its approved Seminaries. I believe that this young man will end up in the RCUS eventually, He is torn between the young people he is ministering to and the need to be in a Reformed Church.

With the Lord's help, and the tireless efforts of Rev. Bowen, my predecessor, the first phase of our building project is nearly completed. I have been working on the building about 8 hours per week. Soon, we will have our final inspection of phase 1, which comprises the renovation of about 65% of the building. It is interesting for visitors to tour the building as they move from 1990's construction into the 1890's portion of the building

Christ is governing His church in Willows through faithful men called by Himself to the offices of Elder and Deacon. Our three deacons serve the Lord faithfully in maintaining the building the Lord has given us, and in looking out for the physical needs of the congregation month after month. We hope and pray that from this group of men, the Lord may be pleased to raise up another elder to serve His church here. Our elders have also served the Lord faithfully this past year. They have been faithful in making sure that the pure gospel is preached and taught. With the Chico charge, they have carried out the unpleasant task of excommunication once this year- They have also been careful to guard the table of the Lord, and to counsel, exhort, and admonish those in need of guidance. We have been discussing the role of the elders in family visitation. This year, at our annual Congregational meeting, we will be praising Our God for the faithful service of Elder Rick Lopez for the last 6 years. He has faithfully fulfilled two terms in his office, and will now assume the status of inactive Elder. Sadly, this leaves us with only one elder for now, although having Rev. Clark on the Consistory and Spiritual Council will be a tremendous help. Please pray with us that the Lord will be pleased to work His inward call in the heart of one of the qualified men of the congregation. I am pleased to report that my predecessors Rev. Potter, and Rev. Bowen have instilled in all our officers a deep commitment to the Reformed faith and the RCUS. I count it an honor and a blessing to serve with, and under the authority of such godly and wise men of faith.

Reflection on the state of the Congregation gives me much cause for praising the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. Under Rev. Bowen, one man made profession of faith in 1998, having come to his senior years. Our covenant God brought a new child into His congregation by the sacrament of baptism this past year. With the transfer of Rev. Bowen and his family to Hamburg, and the reception of our family into membership, we have been blessed with an increase from 53 to 56 baptized members this year. I am hopeful that one family and one single woman will join us this coming year. The Lord was also pleased to bless the congregation financially with a 15% increase in total receipts, even though this agricultural community experienced devastation when the Lord sent El Nino to Northern California. This financial blessing enabled the congregation to meet all its Synodical dues and guidelines for the first time in her history, and to reduce its indebtedness from \$21,000 to \$7,081

The Congregation has a positive attitude toward the RCUS and desires to become more and more Biblical and Reformed in its doctrine and practices. What more could a rookie pastor elect ask for? Attendance at worship services averages about 50, yet, as in every congregation, the officers would like to see each and every baptized and communicant member carry out his or her duty to attend faithfully the public services of the church, every Lord's Day. (RCUS Constitution, Article 6) I appreciate very much the spirit of the congregation, and the officers, in graciously receiving instruction and guidance from a man fresh out of seminary. One area needing improvement in the congregation is that of personal evangelism. I hope to be used by the Lord this coming year to inspire all of our members, by example and exhortation, to take up their duty to labor faithfully to bring others to Christ. (Const., Article 6)

The spirit of unity is growing among the congregation. This year, the ladies organized a Ladies Auxiliary, which is a real blessing to all- Among other things, they are arranging for Fellowship Lunches monthly, which foster unity and contribute to the communion of the saints. To this end we have also had some participation in the Hymn Sings in the various Western Classis churches, but I hope to see that participation increase in the coming year. These sings have been a wonderful source of blessing to those who attend. As a congregation, we greatly miss the musical talents of Patty Bowen, yet the Lord has blessed us with Meredith Trew, who diligently provides us with accompaniment each Lord's Day. We are encouraging others to use their gifts in this area too.

Looking to the future, the elders have discussed some of the following possible goals for Grace Reformed Church: A Christian School, a radio ad, a web page, phase 2 of the building renovation, an Evening Worship Service or Bible Study, and an organized Youth Group

Presently, our dilemma is deciding which of these goals to pursue first, second, third, etc. We wait on the Lord to guide us in making these decisions and pray that He will continue to build His church in Willows. May the gates of hell not prevail against it.

In conclusion, I want to express my profound thanks and appreciation to the ministers and delegates of the Western Classis. Through your prayers, labors, support, and guidance, the Lord has prepared me to serve Him, and brought me home to California. I could not have come this far without you. Please continue to pray for me. I sometimes feel like David who prayed, *Now, O Lord my God, . . . I am a little child; I do not know how to go out or come in. And Your servant is in the midst of Your people whom You have chosen, . . . Therefore give to Your servant an understanding heart to judge Your people, that I may discern between good and evil. For who is able to judge this great people of Yours?* (I Kings 3 -.7- 10)] echo the question of Paul, *And who is sufficient for these things?* (2 Cor. 2:16) Yet, with our Lord's help, I will seek to build on the foundation laid by my esteemed predecessors, Rev. Potter, and Rev. Bowen, to the praise of Christ our King.

Your servant,

Thomas Mayville

Classis Action: Prayer was offered for the Mayville family. On the report, Take Note.

Licentiate Steven Work read his Parochial Report

Esteemed Brethren,

This year has seen some major changes in our family. I was convinced that it was time to move the family closer to an RCUS church. After consulting with a few of the pastors on the candidates and credentials committee, we decided to move to Grass Valley. I have transferred my membership from Lodi to Sacramento and have been installed as an elder. My wife and elder son have transferred their memberships from the PCA in Paso Robles to Sacramento. Now we are all members of the same local church. It has been a privilege to serve with Pastor Roe and he has been gracious in allowing me to preach at least once a month and lead in worship. I had been supporting my family by substitute teaching in Paso Robles, now the Lord has provided a job with the business of a member of our congregation. It is a full time manufacturing position and, together with the work of the church, has caused some changes in the amount of time I am able to spend with my family. We realize the time we had together before the move was a special blessing of God allowing us to grow closer together. My wife and I are finding many opportunities to minister to families in Grass Valley through friendships and fellowship.

I preached 19 times this past year at most of our churches in California plus the OPC in Hanford. I also lead a men's bible study weekly in Grass Valley. I sit in on the weekly catechism class that Pastor Roe leads and lead it in his absence. I am involved with visitation with Pastor Roe. I have been preparing myself for examination at Classis and hope to pass and be available for a call. It has been a blessing to use and sharpen the preaching and teaching gifts that the Lord has given me. It has also been good to shore up my social and interpersonal skills. I look forward to whatever use God may be preparing me for in His Kingdom.

Respectfully Submitted,
Steven Richert

Classis Action: Take Note.

Rev. Neale Riffert read the Parochial Report of Rev. Lloyd Gross

Brothers in Christ,

It is with praise to God that I submit my parochial report to you my dear brothers in Christ.

It is with special gratitude to God that I report that I was able to do some preaching and teaching this past year. Last Summer I did a series of Adult Sunday School studies at the United Reformed Church here on the Covenant. That was a very gratifying experience as the studies were well received. Currently I am doing a similar study of about 4 weeks on "Oaths and Perjury". In our current national, political climate this is timely.

I had opportunity to preach quite a number of times in churches of 4 different Reformed denominations. This has been a profoundly gratifying experience for me. I preached about 10 times in Providence Orthodox Presbyterian Church in Austin, TX during their pastoral vacancy this past year. They are a precious sister church of solid Reformed persuasion. The fellowship with those dear saints was marvelous. I preached a number of times in the Reformed Presbyterian Church of N. America here in Phoenix as they too have a pastoral vacancy. They too have been most appreciative of Reformed preaching. God willing I will be supplying their pulpit for the last half of March and all of April. I preached several Sundays in the United Reformed Church in Ripon, CA. I had the privilege of preaching for the first time in our dear sister church in Yuba City, CA. The fellowship of those saints and Rev. Sawtelle was most precious. I preached on a number of occasions here in the United Reformed Church in Phoenix where my wife and I regularly attend.

Preaching in these different Reformed denominations has made me deeply grateful to see that God has Reformed Christians in various places with each denomination having its peculiar strengths and weaknesses. However, at bottom I have found them to be deeply committed to the Reformed faith and seeking to be faithful to that faith to the best of their ability. We truly can learn from each other and hopefully and prayerfully to be helpful to one another as true brothers and sisters in Christ. There is a commitment to the Reformed confessions. When I preached at Providence OPC in Austin they were seriously studying the Westminster Confession of Faith. Here at the Phoenix URC they did a serious study of the Belgic Confession. This bodes well for the Reformed Faith. May we grow closer in unity in the true faith.

As I indicated above my wife and I attend the United Reformed Church here in Phoenix. We continue to find the preaching and teaching solidly Reformed for which we are just deeply grateful to God. I requested of Grace Reformed Church in Bakersfield, where I am pastor emeritus, for their approval of my becoming an associate member of the Phoenix URC here. They graciously granted that request. Associate membership here means that I have communicant voting membership but would not be eligible to hold office in this congregation. I am requesting Western Classis that I might retain my ministerial credentials in Western Classis with you dear brothers. I trust that is agreeable with you.

My dear wife continues to work full time but we are hopeful that she might be able to cut back on that schedule this fall. God has been incredibly good to us. He owes us nothing but his wrath for our sins and instead has given us grace and blessings above measure. My daily prayer is that we might faithfully serve him in what is future. I pray for all you brothers God's abundant blessings. Though I may not be able to attend this Classis meeting I very much hope to attend the Synod meeting in May. God be with you.

Your Brother in Christ,
Rev. Lloyd Gross

Classis Action: Take Note.

Rev. Robert Sander read his Parochial Report

Dear Brethren:

For the Lord God is a sun and a shield The Lord will give grace and glory: No good thing will He withhold from them that walk uprightly. O Lord of Host, blessed is the man that trusteth in Thee. Ps. 84:11,12

The year of 1998 was an eventful year for me. In January I was able to serve our Yuba City church three times while the pastor was ill.. I served our church in Andersen two times while the congregation needed a supply. I served our Modesto church once at the request of the pastor, I had to turn several invitations down after my back was injured.

Upon returning from Synod in May Betty and I received notice to vacate our house. We had occupied this 4 bedroom house for more than 20 years It was all of God's grace to move into this house for less than \$300.00 a month and never have the rent increased.

We were given 6 weeks to locate another house and move in. Again God's grace prevailed and we were able to purchase a house with my son helping greatly and we moved in with three days to spare. Renting a house in our area rent from \$1000 to 2000. a month. We were considering moving to Quarry-vile Retirement Home in Pennsylvania., but the son who helped us financially didn't want us to leave our established medical help and where three of our four sons live.

I look forward to another year to serve my Savior especially in suppling churches where I can preach the Gospel of Christ for His glory.

Sincerely in His grace,
Rev. Robert Sander

Classis Action: Take Note.

Rev. Frank Walker read his Parochial Report

Esteemed Colleagues:

Greetings in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, who gave his life that we might have life everlasting! It is he whom we serve, and it is he to whom we must give an account of our labors. Let us therefore press on with all diligence that our work abide and we receive the reward (I Cor. 3:14).

Last year I continued teaching and preaching of the Word of God as summarized in our confessions. We held one worship service each Lord's Day at Grace Reformed Church, with special services for Good Friday, Ascension, Pentecost, Reformation Day, Missionfest, Thanksgiving and Christmas. For the most part, sermons focused on the doctrines of our beloved Heidelberg catechism. In addition, I had the opportunity to preach the Word in Anderson, Lancaster and Shafter on occasion. There is nothing I enjoy more than teaching others about the redemption that we have in Jesus Christ.

Other aspects of the work in Bakersfield are progressing well. Our Sunday school program is well organized and faithfully administered by Jon Stuebbe. In the adult Sunday school class (which has been very well attended) we studied parts of John's gospel and the first half of Ecclesiastes, while the children studied topics more appropriate to their ages. The

evening program (not as well attended as Sunday school) covered a greater variety of topics. Catechism class continues to meet eight months each year and focuses on the subjects outlined in the RCUS Constitution, especially the recitation of the catechism. In VBS our youngsters studied the life of Abraham from lessons that I wrote. This year we began the practice of having a hymn-sing on the fifth Sunday of five-Sunday months. The members of our church seem to appreciate and enjoy this opportunity to sing the praises of our God.

Our congregation was blessed last year to have Mr. John Sawtelle, a student at Westminster Theological Seminary in Escondido, as a summer intern. John and his family worked with us for six weeks before going to Ebenezer Reformed Church of Shafter for four weeks. John exhorted from the pulpit and taught VBS and adult Sunday school. He accompanied me on several pastoral visits, and I met with him at least once each week for several hours to review various facets of the ministry. The congregation welcomed John and his family and was grateful for his work among us.

Statistically, our communicant membership declined significantly in 1998. Part of this was due to the transfer of several members from the church militant to the church triumphant (five members went to be with the Lord), and part was due to the faithful exercise of the office of the keys by our elders (four individuals were erased). However, we did have three baptisms, two confirmations and one man received by dismissal from the Lodi congregation. This leaves us with a total communicant membership of one hundred and thirty-seven (seventy-six families).

For me personally, 1998 was somewhat trying as the Spiritual Council and I had to deal with various matters that arose from time to time. First, there were concerns that the sermons were too didactic and perhaps irrelevant to the everyday lives of our people. I confess that this was probably true, for I was heavily involved in extracurricular studies and this may have carried over unintentionally into my preaching style. After this was brought to my attention, I immediately took steps to correct the problem. The elders now report that our people are now saying how great the sermons are. Second, some of our members took offense when I pointed out in my sermons on Heidelberg Question 54 (and later 80) that the Roman Catholic Church is not a true church of Jesus Christ. One family has not returned for worship since then. This then became the occasion (though not the reason) for a second family to stop attending. The Spiritual Council has met with both families, but to no avail. We are planning another meeting with them in the near future. This situation grieves me greatly, but I realize that I must preach the gospel of Christ without offense, though the gospel itself will offend many. Third, toward the end of the year several of our members expressed concerns about the length of the worship service. There were a couple of times when the service exceeded an hour and a quarter (once it came close to an hour and a half). I have thought a lot about this matter, and the more I think about it the less sympathy I have for it. Not only do I have trouble believing that the Lord's complaint against us in the day of judgment will be that we worship him too much, it seems that this concern rests mostly on the notion that the public worship of God, which we do primarily on a day that God himself calls *Adie Lord's day* (Rev. 1: 10), interferes with our lives. I have encouraged the people to consider what they are actually saying when they say that the worship service ran too long, and just as importantly not to make plans that interfere with worship. Worship is, after all, by divine command and not according to our whim and pleasure (Isa. 58:13-14). Though I have always planned a worship service of approximately an hour and a half, I do not think it inappropriate if the service goes a few extra minutes now and then.

In addition to my pastoral work, I also served as Stated Clerk of Synod, chairman of the special committee of Synod to defend the RCUS doctrine of creation, chairman of the Western Classis Candidates and Credentials Committee, and a member of the Home Missions Committee of Classis. Last fall I also began my Ph.D. dissertation, which will focus on the sources of Ursinus theology. Liberals (following the lead of Nevin) are still arguing that the Heidelberg catechism reflects more of Melancthon's theology than Calvin's, except in regard to the sacraments. I believe it is time that this matter be addressed with a full-scale study. I will also be considering the indirect contributions of Augustine, Luther, Moiban and Vermigli.

This year the chairman of the Home Missions Committee of the Western Classis asked the Bakersfield Consistory to consider exercising oversight over a mission work in the L.A. Basin contingent upon a work being started there. As you know that work has not yet been established. Though we have several letters of dismissal from the OPC and a few letters from others requesting membership, we are hesitant to proceed until either Classis or Synod authorizes the work. Rev. Fluck has requested permission from us to administer the sacraments to these individuals. Our Spiritual Council believes that, since these folks are not members of the RCUS, we have no jurisdiction over them; and further, though these individuals may be granted permission to participate in the Lord's Supper at one of our established churches, it is another matter to provide communion just for them. Many of them are still members of the OPC. Before giving a response, we seek the counsel of our brothers at this meeting of Classis.

At the most recent annual meeting of Grace Reformed Church, the congregation voted to adopt a revised Constitution. Most of the changes were of two kinds. First, there were a few places where our Constitution was out of accord with the RCUS Constitution. We wanted to correct this situation inasmuch as our officers are bound to follow the RCUS Constitution wherever the two may be in disagreement. Second, there were other places where our Constitution did not reflect our actual practice or meet the needs of our church. For example, Section IV, Article 1, allowed only communicants to be members of the church. The Reformed Church, however, has always acknowledged that the children of believers are also (baptized but not communicant) members of the church. It is my pleasure to report that the revised Constitution was adopted unanimously and without amendment.

Our congregation is looking forward to hosting this year's Synod along with the Shafter congregation. We are already busily engaged in maintenance, repair and update projects,

viz., repairing the parking lot, installing a retractable door over the kitchen service counter, erecting a new street sign, replacing the concrete landing at the west entrance, and purchasing an ice machine. The congregation approved spending the money for these projects.

Like every other congregation, our church faces problems from time to time. I have already mentioned the major problems that we faced this past year. On the other hand, our elders are fully capable of dealing with whatever issues arise from time to time. It has been my joy to work with them. Overall, the ministry of the Word is well supported in Bakersfield. My family and I feel very much at home here.

Respectfully,
Rev. Frank H. Walker

Classis Action: Take Note.

Following the reading of all the Parochial Reports Rev. Jim West led in prayer for the needs expressed by the pastors and their congregations.

CONSTITUTIONAL QUESTIONS TO ELDERS C Article 81

The President addressed the Questions of Article 81 of the Constitution of the Reformed Church in the United States to the Elder Delegates of each congregation. Grace Reformed, Bakersfield, had submitted written answers since she did not have a delegate at the meeting.

The following answers were given:

1. *Are the doctrines of the gospel preached in your charge in their purity, agreeably to the Word of God?* All answered **AYes**.@
2. *Is careful attention given to the instruction of the your for confirmation, the reception of members into the Church, and The Christian nurture of the members?* All answered **AYes**@except Anderson, **AImproving**.@
3. *In providing spiritual nurture for the congregation:*
 - a. *Is visitation faithfully performed?* All answered **AYes**@except for Lancaster, **AYes**, Improving@and Shafter, **AYes**, needs improvement.@
 - b. *Is Christian discipline faithfully exercised according to the Constitution?*
All answered **AYes**.@
4. *Are the sacraments of Holy Baptism and the Lord's Supper properly administered in accordance with the Constitution?* All answered **AYes**.@
5. *In providing for the furtherance of Christian stewardship:*
 - a. *Are the apportionments for the Classis paid according to the Guidelines for Giving?* All answered **AYes**@except for Anderson , **ANo**:@Lancaster, **AFrom January to June, No; from July to December, Yes**:@Modesto, **ANo**, the full amount was paid, but the last payment was a few days late;@and Willows, **AYes**, a small amount was inadvertently omitted.@
 - b. *Are these monies sent promptly to the Classis treasurer?* All answered **AYes**.@
 - c. *Are the apportionments for the Synod paid according to the Guidelines for Giving?* All answered **AYes**,@except for Anderson, **ANo**:@Lancaster, **ANo**,@and Modesto, **ANo**.@
 - d. *Are these monies sent promptly to the Synod treasurer?* All answered **AYes**.@
6. *Are the Church records properly kept?* All answered **AYes**,@except for Anderson, **AMaking adjustments**.@
- 7a. *Is the temporal contract between minister and people fulfilled in your charge?* All answered **AYes**.@
- 7b. *Is the temporal contract between minister and people adequate to meet his temporal needs?* All answered **AYes**.@

REPORT OF MEMBERSHIP AND FINANCIAL STATISTICS

The Stated Clerk handed out the report on statistics as they were sent to him. These appear in the Appendix of this Abstract.

REPORTS FROM CLASSIS = FRATERNAL DELEGATES

Elder E. Zane Wood read his report as a delegate to the Presbytery of Southern California, OPC, May 8, 9, 1998.
 Lic. Gary Mancilas read his report as a delegate to the Presbytery of Southern California, OPC, October 16, 17, 1998.
 Rev. Dennis Roe read his report as a delegate to the Presbytery of Northern California, OPC, March 20, 21, 1998.
 Rev. Dale Clark read his report as a delegate to the Presbytery of Northern California, OPC, September 25 and 26, 1998.
 Rev. Jonathan Merica read his report as a delegate to the Pacific Coast Presbytery, Reformed Presbyterian Church of North America, March 13 and 14, 1998.
 Rev. Jonathan Merica read his report as a delegate to the Pacific Coast Presbytery, Reformed Presbyterian Church of North America, Feb. 19, 20, 1999.

ADDRESSES FROM DELEGATES FROM OTHER REFORMED CHURCHES AND VISITORS

Rev. Andy Preston brought fraternal greetings and words of encouragement on behalf of the Presbytery of Northern California, Orthodox Presbyterian Church.
 Rev. Dennis Roe responded on behalf of the Western Classis.

EXAMINATION OF CANDIDATES

On Wednesday forenoon, March 10, Licentiate Thomas Mayville was given his ordination examination. He has been serving as Stated Supply for Grace Reformed Church in Willows, CA, having sustained his Licensure Examination in August of 1998. He was examined in Soteriology (esp. common grace) for 15 minutes (Roe), and in Eschatology (esp. the imminent return of Christ) for 15 minutes (Treick). Questions followed from the floor.

On Wednesday afternoon, March 10, Licentiate Gary Mancilas was given his ordination examination. He has been serving as stated Supply for Grace Reformed Church in Lancaster. This examination proceeded as follows: Prolegomena for 15 minutes (Walker); Theology for 15 minutes (Walker); Anthropology for 15 minutes (Walker); Christology for 15 minutes (Roe); Soteriology for 15 minutes (Roe); Ecclesiology for 15 minutes (Roe); Eschatology for 15 minutes (Treick); Historic Philosophy for 20 minutes (Treick); Apologetics for 20 minutes (West); Practica for 20 minutes (West). Questions followed from the floor after several sections of the examination.

In the forenoon of March 11, Licentiate Steven Richert was given his ordination examination. Steve has been serving as an elder in Covenant Reformed Church of Grass Valley. The examination proceeded as follows: Eschatology for 15 (Treick); Church History for 20 minutes (West); Practica for 20 minutes (West); RCUS Standards for 20 minutes (Van Houten). Questions followed from the floor after several sections of the examination.

Thomas Mayville and Steven Richert completed the memorization of the *Heidelberg Catechism* and recited this to the committee.
 The examination results are given in the report of the Examination and Licensure Committee found later in this Abstract.

REPORTS OF SPECIAL COMMITTEES

A. Joint Consistory of Faith Reformed Church of Anderson, California

Esteemed Fathers and Brethren of Classis:

God is our refuge and strength, A very present help in trouble. Therefore we will not fear, Though the earth be removed, And though the mountains be carried into the midst of the sea; (Psalm 46:1-2) This verse has been fulfilled in this congregation this past year. It has been all his work in keeping this congregation alive and now growing. We can but praise our God for his faithfulness and goodness to his people.

Your committee has met ten times this past year, both as a consistory and spiritual council. In January 1998 Mr. Richard Elliott was elected and installed as an elder for the congregation. He and Elder Mike Peery gave many hours of their time in teaching and visiting the members. Regrettably, Elder Elliott has been transferred to Sacramento. He is attending when possible and continues to serve as he is able. We hope that his plans will work out that in a couple of years he will be back in the Anderson area.

Also this past year saw the calling and moving of Rev. Neale Riffert to the Faith Reformed congregation. We are thankful that God in his providence has brought Rev. Riffert to the congregation and that his experience in the RCUS will cement Faith Reformed Church and the RCUS into a mutually beneficial relationship.

The congregation this past year has grown and been strengthened. With the removal of Mr. Stark, harmony has returned to the congregation and some of those who left over fractious problems have returned. It is our hope and prayer that this would continue. There has also been some new growth by the addition of one man to the congregation in January and the attendance of a young family. The change in mood is seen in the increased giving. At the start of the year monthly giving was about \$2,000 and for the last quarter the average was over \$2,700. Also attendance in general is up to 45-55 per Sunday service, but so is the fellowship meals that are held each month. People are staying to chat and fellowship following the services more also.

An attempt was made by the local elders and deacons to have a new constitution adopted. Unfortunately it failed because of the article which had male member voting only. It was following three or four months of teaching and discussion and so it was decided to continue under the RCUS Constitution with all members voting for the time being.

Sadly, we also had to take disciplinary action against a couple in the church, erasing one and suspending the other from the Lord's Table.

Overall, the church in Anderson is being strengthened spiritually and numerically. We want to thank the Classis for its support, both of a financial nature, but more importantly spiritually. The Ministers of Classis have been a great help to the congregation as they saw what the men of Classis were like and the concern of Classis for the work in Anderson. And for the prayers of God's people that petitioned our great God and Savior on our behalf

Your committee would like to make the following recommendations:

1. That \$3,000.00 per month of benevolent financial aid be continued for the 1999 Classical year.
2. That the Special Committee be dissolved having completed its mandate with the calling and installation of Rev. Neale Riffert.

Respectfully submitted,

Rev. Dale Clark (President), Rev. Neale Riffert, Rev. Gene Sawtelle, Elder Richard Elliott, Elder Rick Lopez, Elder Michael Peery (Clerk), Elder Greg Stewart, Elder Werner Stricker, Elder Ted van Tol, Elder Tom Wilcox, Deacon John Benningfield, Deacon Brad Eidman, Deacon James Ochsner, Deacon Floyd Peery, Deacon John van Tol

Classis Action: Recommendation 1 was amended and adopted as follows: *That the Western Classis provide \$22,680 in Benevolent support to Faith Reformed Church, Anderson, and petition Synodical Benevolences to provide \$13,320 to support the Anderson Church.* On Recommendation 2, Take Note.

B. Special Committee on Submitting Constitutional Amendments

At the Annual Classis Meeting in Bakersfield in 1998 an overture was received that congregations of the Classis should submit changes to their Constitutions to the Classis for approval. A committee to study adding the following standing rule was established, *That congregations maintain a current copy of their constitutions on file with the clerk of Classis and that all amendments be submitted to Classis for approval prior to the final vote by the congregation.*"

The place to begin is to understand what the problem was that brought this issue to our attention. In looking at what had happened in the Anderson congregation it was noticed that the church had changed its Constitution dramatically and in conflict with the Constitution of the RCUS. In light of this it was suggested that all congregations submit changes to their constitutions so that some oversight could be maintained. The question then arises as to the constitutional authority for Classical oversight which at this time is not carried out by the RCUS at large.

ARGUMENTS IN FAVOR

There is no explicit constitutional provision directly prohibiting Classis from summoning and approving proposed constitutional changes by congregations, or a constitutional provision mandating such a procedure. However, is there *implied* authority? A case can be made that Classis does care for the churches, even after a congregation has its own constitution in place. *Article 76* speaks about a Classis having *A* jurisdiction over said ministers and pastoral charges. *This implies pastoral concern and disciplinary authority over the charges within its jurisdiction. To this end the Classis has the right to request the records of the congregation. Article 83* says that *A* Classis shall have access to all congregational records, according to the provisions of Articles 66 and 75 of this Constitution. *Article 75* states that *A* the Spiritual Council shall keep a full and accurate record of its proceedings, which shall be submitted to the Classis when occasion requires it and the Classis requests it. *And, Article 66* declares that the Consistory shall *A* submit any or all records to the Classis when the occasion requires it and the Classis requests it. *It may be argued that these Articles imply that if the Classis required that changes to the constitutions of the pastoral charges under its jurisdiction, then they would be sent to the Classis for approval as a *A* record of the congregation. Further, if the original needed approval for the sake of ensuring the*

conformity of its constitution to the Constitution of the RCUS, then it would not be a stretch to ask for all proposed changes also be approved by Classis before adoption. The changes create a change to the union of the congregation with the RCUS. Therefore, it can be argued, such changes should be approved beforehand.

In addition to the above argument, it will be maintained that requiring churches to submit their proposed amendments to Classis would nip any trouble in the bud—thus assuring sound principles of Reformed government in that congregation before any hemlock sprouts up. The local church could act upon the Biblical principle that *in the multitude of counselors there is safety.*"

ARGUMENTS AGAINST

There are, however, implications drawn from the RCUS Constitution and practice that could be used to prove that each congregation may amend its own constitution without seeking approval of Classis beforehand.

To begin with, with the exception of the constitution of a new church, most of the papers that Classis requests from the congregations concern events that have *already transpired*. The papers requested do not concern things that the congregation is going to do,—rather, they concern things that have already happened. This would work against the notion of submitting *proposed* constitutional amendments to Classis for approval.

In Section 2 on Congregations, Articles 8-10 of the RCUS Constitution address the issue of newly organized churches. These churches before they are organized must be approved by Classis. *Article 9* reads—*Whenever a congregation desires to become an incorporated body, a draft of the proposed Articles of Incorporation and Constitution of the congregation shall be submitted to the Classis for approval* before the charter is presented to the civil authorities. A charter shall not be approved that does not bind the congregation to be an organic member of the Reformed Church in the United States, and to be governed by its Constitution and laws. *Article 10* reads: *Each congregation shall adopt a Constitution and By-laws for its own government. Such Constitution and By-laws must be in accordance with its charter and with the Constitution of the Reformed Church in the United States, and Must be approved by its Classis.* *Article 9* the Constitution of the congregation must be approved before it is submitted to the civil authorities. The goal here is to become an *incorporated body*. *Article 9* The charter must bind the congregation to the Reformed Church in the United States. In the second (*Article 10*), the congregation must have a Constitution for its own government that accords with the Constitution of the Reformed Church in the United States. Both of these articles envision Classical approval of a congregation's Constitution *prior* to its incorporation and membership in the RCUS. Nothing is stated about further Classical approval of Constitutional amendments within its own fold. Thus, a reasonable deduction is that the intent of Articles 8-10 was limited to *the initial adoption* of Constitutions and was not to exceed that jurisdiction—A *prima facie* reading of the RCUS Constitution would suggest that something so basic as constitutional amendments of a local church would have been addressed immediately after the statements in Articles 8-10. However, nothing like this appears. The RCUS Constitution certainly does not envision that a congregation must stand *eternally* *bound* once she has adopted her own Constitution.

There are other things that must be factored into the question of Constitutional revision and the question of whether such revisions should always be approved by Classis.

First, the past history of the RCUS implies a measure of trust in the integrity of each church to formulate and ratify its own amendments. This trust is founded on the premise that a Reformed congregation in the RCUS is indeed Reformed. This trust is grounded in a charitable assessment of each church to make amendments that do not challenge or contradict Reformed practice and Reformed doctrine. This has always been the practice of the RCUS. It would seem that unless there has been a discernible trend on the part of several congregations to adopt principles and practices that are contrary to our Reformed heritage, that our past practice has been working well, The Classis needs to trust the congregations that God is working in them. Paul left the churches to the care of the Lord (Acts 14:23). There, local churches were commended to the Lord after they were established by the apostle. It requires trust on our part that the Lord will preserve them and that His grace will be working in them to that end.

Secondly, while Classis does approve constitutions of new churches, it does not approve amendments to the same. An amendment is just that: it merely amends the more voluminous whole. Amendments are usually designed to clarify, or to perfect what is already there. Usually, a new constitution implies a new church—, an amendment implies that the older, veteran church is seeking to be more Reformed (e.g., *"the Reformed Church must always be reforming"*). Amending a constitution is, after all, not adopting a new creed.

Third, all of the Constitutions of our churches have already been approved, One of the articles approved by Classis is the right of each church to formulate its own amendments without seeking the official imprimatur of Classis. Probably none of the constitutions of the churches in the Western Classis have provisos allowing the individual church to create an entirely new Constitution. Why not? Because the creation of a new constitution was not envisioned. The creation of an entirely new constitution implies the creation of a new church.

Fourth, it would seem that to require a local church to wait for Classis to approve a constitutional change, either violates or reduces the covenant commitment that Classis has already made to that church. Classis, would in effect, be changing the rules, reneging on its commitment. Classis, of course, has the right to change the rules (especially if there is a momentous insight from the Word of God), but do we really want to tell our churches that we no longer trust them to modify their own constitutions? Let us not forget that individual

churches already have weighty responsibilities such as electing elders and deacons, exercising the keys of the kingdom in church discipline, etc, that do not require direct Classical approval beforehand. One reason for the liberty of the congregation in these areas is because of the good trust of Classis. How far do we want to go in regulating the affairs of local churches?

This brings us to a fifth consideration. If the amendment to a church's constitution is suspect or strays from Reformed government and practice, then let grievances be filed in the courts of the church. This is the Matthew 18 approach. Knowledge about improprieties in the Anderson Constitution or the constitution of any other congregation should be adjudicated in the courts of the Church if they cannot be repaired privately.

It is important that Classis not be wrongly accused of creeping socialism or of committing errors of enthusiasm, or of attempting to micro-manage the internal affairs of a congregation. There is a one and the many relationship between Classis and its churches. There are things that Classis cannot do without violating the individuality of a church, likewise, there are things that the RCUS must do to indicate that we are indeed the Reformed Church (singular) in the United States. Is the Western Classis prepared to send a signal to the individual churches that we do not trust them to amend their own constitutions?

It is conceded that a church that replaces its own constitution with an entirely new one (or that makes wholesale changes), has made a decision that might warrant the presentation of its new constitution before Classis prior to congregational approval. Strictly speaking, our committee was not called upon to address this possibility. Nevertheless, we do acknowledge the danger of a church making so many wholesale changes in the name of amendments that its constitution becomes virtually new."

A particular church that legislates amendments that are contrary to the Reformed Faith would seem to be an anomaly. Do we allow ourselves to be inspired by an anomaly? Must the faithful churches be strenuously regulated because of the recklessness of a maverick pastor, consistory, or congregation? Also, the history of denominations in the 20th Century has been one of apostasy and unbelief. Are we not assuming too much, that is, that the RCUS *will always* be true to the Gospel? *What happens to individual congregations that are true to the Faith when and if the Classis goes apostate?* We seem to be assuming that the potential enemy is always the maverick congregation instead of the Classis or Synod.

From the standpoint of the Classis, what is needed from the congregations is submission. That is, the churches should not make changes in their constitutions that contradict the RCUS Constitution. If the churches were knowledgeable about the content of the RCUS Constitution and submitted to it, then the problems would be reduced to the vanishing point. There are legal means to change the Constitution of the RCUS and these need to be exercised (if someone thinks a certain article is errant). We have no evidence that constitutional anarchy is pandemic in the Western Classis, or in the RCUS for that matter. Therefore it can be argued that there is little urgency to require churches to submit constitutional amendments to Classis before they are brought to the congregation for a vote.

POSSIBLE SAFEGUARDS

In terms of a less intrusive means of promoting good Reformed government, Classis might ask more questions when the Constitutional Questions are asked. Another option is to review the records of the churches, especially the Consistory minutes. This is the way that Synod has oversight over the Classes. The records of the annual meeting of the church might also be summoned and placed in the hands of the Judicial Committee of Classis for review. Also, why cannot changes in local congregations be reported by the pastors in their parochial reports? The RCUS Constitution allows questions from the floor regarding parochial reports. The parochial report would seem a natural forum for information about constitutional changes in a pastor's charge. Also, the Secretary of the Congregation could report constitutional amendments directly to the Stated Clerk of Classis. This latter would be neater and cleaner- a *separate document* would be placed into the hands of the Clerk.

If Classis is of a mind to ask the congregations to submit all proposed amendments to Classis for approval, it would be better to overture the Synod to amend its Constitution. As it stands right now, the RCUS Constitution allows individual churches to make their own amendments without prior approval.

Your committee makes the following recommendations

1. Recommendation 1: That each church of the Western Classis send an updated copy of its Constitution to the Stated Clerk of Classis this year, and whenever it is amended.
2. Recommendation 2: That the Secretary of the Congregation inform the Classis via letter to the Stated Clerk of any amendments to its Constitution.

Respectfully submitted,
Jim West (chm.), Dale Clark, Ryan Spitzer, Paul Treick, Richard Elliott

Classis Action: Recommendation 1 carried: *That each church of the Western Classis send an updated copy of its Constitution to the Stated Clerk of Classis this year, and whenever it is amended.*
Recommendation 2 was amended and adopted as follows: *That the Secretary of the Congregation inform the Classis via letter to the Stated Clerk who will indicate in his Clerk's Report any amendments in its Constitution.*

REPORTS OF STANDING COMMITTEES

The following motions and their dispositions reflect the final form of the motions, including all amendments which may have been made to the committees' recommendations and any additional motions which may have come from the floor relative to the committees' report. Unless otherwise noted, the motions were adopted by the Classis.

A. Examination and Licensure Committee

1. That the congregations of the Classis be encouraged to make use of Rev. Steve Larson's availability for a call to work among Hispanic people in the Santa Ana region of the Los Angeles Basin. Take Note.
2. That Classis overture Synod to provide student aid for the 1999-2000 academic year as follows: Paul Henderson (\$3000 tuition and \$250 books to study at MARS. Chris Caughey (\$7560 tuition and \$250 books to study at WTSCA.
3. That Classis grant permission for E. Zane Wood to study at Sangre de Cristo Seminary, with the understanding that this is not a seminary listed by Synod as worthy of receiving benevolent aid, and without Classis taking a position on the acceptability of its total program.
4. Take note that E. Z. Wood's request for book money in the amount of \$500 is not in accord with Standing Rule #16.
5. That Student Under Care, John Sawtelle, be encouraged to work closely with the Spiritual Council of his home church, to the end that he may find occasion to serve the kingdom of Christ, rest in the fellowship of the covenant community and, as the Lord may provide, find harmony in faith and practice with the Reformed Church in the United States to the end that he may present himself for licensure to the gospel ministry at such a time as he is prepared to do so.
6. That the ordination examination of Gary Mancilas be declared satisfactory.
7. That Scott Henry be interviewed on the floor of Classis with the purpose of coming under care. Mr. Scott Henry presented himself before the body, was introduced by Rev. Walker and answered some questions posed by the committee chairman and the body.
8. That Scott Henry be placed on the roll of Students Under Care of Classis.
9. That the ordination examination of Tom Mayville be declared satisfactory.
10. That the ordination examination of Steve Richert be declared satisfactory.

B. Excuses Committee

1. That Elders Goehring and Jones be granted excuses from the 14th Annual Meeting of Classis.
2. That Elder Peery be granted an excuse for Thursday, March 11 from 3:00 PM to the end of business.
3. That Rev. Jay Fluck be granted an excuse for Thursday, March 11, from 5 PM to the end of business.

C. Finances Committee

1. That travel expenses be paid in the following manner:

Rev. Dale Clark	120 miles	\$24.00	
Rev. Jay Fluck	Airfare	184.00	
Rev. Jay Fluck	280 miles		56.00
Mr. Gary Mancilas	1064 miles	212.80	
Mr. Thomas Mayville	130 miles	26.00	
Rev. Jonathan Merica	370 miles	74.00	
Rev. Dennis Roe	304 miles	60.80	
Rev. Robert Sander	572 miles		114.40

Rev. Gene Sawtelle	260 miles		52.00
Rev. Frank Walker	900 miles		180.00
Rev. Jim West	316 miles		63.20
Mr. Steven Wilbur	380 miles		76.00
Mr. E. Zane Wood	1070 miles	214.00	
Mr. Chris Fellersen	354 miles		<u>70.80</u>
<u>TOTAL</u>		\$1408.00	

2. That Mr. E. Zane Wood be reimbursed \$193.60 (one hundred ninety three and sixty cents) for housing expense.

3. That the *Classis Guideline for Giving* (per communicant member) in the 1999-2000 Classical year be as follows:

Classical Dues	\$10.00
Benevolences	\$52.00
Home Missions	\$63.00
Publications	00.00
Building Fund	00.00
Heidelberg Youth Camp	<u>00.00</u>
TOTAL	\$125.00

D. Judicial Committee

1. Your committee was asked to determine Rev. Fluck's present status in light of objections to Synodical Circular in which the Western Classis petitioned the Synod for \$1,430 per month in benevolent aid for the ministerial work in the L. A. Basin.

After reviewing the Executive Circular 13:4, your committee concluded that Recommendations 1-5 were properly circularized and approved by the Western Classis. These recommendations are as follows:

Recommendation 1: That the Western Classis establish a home mission work in the L. A. Basin.

Recommendation 2: That the Western Classis provide \$1,430 per month beginning November 1, 1998, for Home Mission support to the L. A. Basin work.

Recommendation 3: That the Western Classis petition Synod for \$1,430 per month in benevolent aid for the mission work in the L. A. Basin beginning November 1, 1998.

Recommendation 4: That Rev. Jay Fluck be approved by the Western Classis as the Stated Supply for the L. A. Basin work.

Recommendation 5: That Grace Reformed Church in Bakersfield, California, be requested to take oversight of the L. A. Basin work.

The fact that the Synod failed to approve the requested funds for Recommendation 3 does not nullify what the Western Classis approved. Therefore Recommendations 1, 2, 4, and 5 remain in force.

The implications of this finding are as follows:

1. That the work in the L. A. Basin is a classical home mission.

2. That Classis has obligated itself to forward support in the amount of \$1,430 per month beginning November 1, 1998. To date this amounts to \$5,720. Of this amount Rev. Fluck has received \$3,750 in diaconal aid, leaving a difference in the amount of \$1,970.

3. Rev. Jay Fluck is serving as Stated Supply for the L. A. Basin work.

4. Grace Reformed Church in Bakersfield is requested to oversee this work.

E. Minutes of Synod Committee

1. Your committee found only one item that is needful for the Western Classis to take note of C that is found in the recommendations of the standing Ecumenical Committee of Synod (see Abstract, p. 49, XV. B. Ecumenical, #5). The item reads as follows: That Synod encourage the various classes to initiate the exchange of observers with the URCNA Classes.

F. Missions Committee

1. That the letter of Mr. Richard Elliott's resignation from the WCHMC be referred to the Standing Nominations Committee at this Classis meeting.
2. That the Executive Committee of the Western Classis investigate the prospect of the San Diego work.
3. Take Note of a recommendation from the Permanent Home Missions Committee of the Western Classis regarding the proposal from the Synodical Home Missions Committee of setting the Classis Guideline for funding of home missions works, so that our Classis gives serious consideration to funding new home mission works in our classis with a view to keeping the support at a level per communicant member that is as close to equitable as possible in comparison to the other classes of Synod.

Grounds:

1. That each Classis has a greater interest and commitment to the home missions works within its bounds.
2. Each Classis has a better understanding of the financial needs of a work funded within its classical boundaries.
3. To alleviate the disparity between missions guidelines among the various classes. For example a classis that could fund a work within their classis at a rate of 90 percent would lower the Synodical Guideline for all the classes to allow the various classes to open new works. A classis that is already funding a classis home mission work to the fullest extent they are able, are also being asked by Synod to fund works outside of their classis in areas where little or no money is coming from the local classis.
4. That the Western Classis supply \$10,500 from the Home Missions fund to support the Chico home mission and that Western Classis overture Synod to provide \$10,500 to support the Chico Home Mission.
5. That the Western Classis designate May 2, 1999 as a day of prayer for the L. A. Basin mission work and that the churches of the Western Classis be encouraged to devote a May 2nd offering to the support of this new work, and that the Western Classis from the anticipated proceeds of these offerings, continue to provide \$1,430 per month for the period from March 1 to May 31, 1999.
6. That the Western Classis overture the Synod to provide support to the Western Classis Home Mission in the L. A. Basin in the amount of \$10,500 and that the Western Classis supply from Home Missions funds an additional \$23,820.

G. Nominations Committee

The roster of the Permanent Committees and their members were approved by Classis and this list appears at the beginning of this Abstract on the **INFORMATIONAL SUMMARY** page.

H. Benevolences Committee

1. That the Western Classis petition Synod for ministerial aid in the amount of \$1,200 per month for Rev. Robert Sander.
2. That Western Classis petition Synod for ministerial aid in the amount of \$800 per month for Mrs. Marie Stuebbe.
3. That the Western Classis petition Synod for ministerial aid in the amount of \$800 per month for Mrs. Vivian Stuebbe.
4. That the Western Classis provide \$500 per month financial aid for Grace Reformed Church, Lancaster, CA, and that the Western Classis petition Synod for \$1,000 per month financial aid.
5. That the Western Classis petition Synod for ministerial aid in the amount of \$800 per month for Mrs. Marjorie Duckett.
6. That the Western Classis provide \$22,680 in Benevolent support to Faith Reformed Church, Anderson, and petition Synodical Benevolences to provide \$13,320 to support the Anderson Church.

I. Overtures Committee

The Overtures Committee handled fifteen overtures that came to the committee. A summary of these overtures and their dispositions is as follows:

1. A letter from the Synodical Home Missions Committee regarding the level of support on the Classis level. Referred to Missions Committee.

2. Request for excuse for Lodi's Primarius delegate. Take note.
3. Request from Rev. Robert Sander for continued Ministerial Aid and an expression of gratitude. Referred to Benevolences Committee.
4. Letter from Providence Reformed Church of Rock Springs, WY, indicating interest in joining the Western Classis. Take Note.
5. Letter from Greg Born requesting resignation from the Heidelberg Youth Camp Committee. Referred to Nominations for information.
6. Letter from E. Zane Wood indicating that he has been accepted by Sangre de Cristo Seminary. Referred to Examination and Licensure Committee.
7. Request for excuse for Primarius and Secundus delegates from Grace Reformed Church, Bakersfield. Referred to Excuses Committee.
8. Letter from Grace Reformed Church of Bakersfield expressing gratitude and requesting Ministerial Aid from Synod for Vivian Stuebbe and Marie Stuebbe.. Referred to Benevolences Committee.
9. Request from Grace Reformed Church, Lancaster requesting continued Synodical support. Referred to Benevolences Committee.
10. Letter of gratitude from Mrs. Marjorie Duckett and requesting continued Synodical Ministerial Aid. Referred to Benevolences Committee.
11. Request from Michael Peery for excuse from the session after 3:00 PM Thursday. Referred to Excuses Committee.
12. Request from Rev. Jay Fluck for excuse from the session after 5:00 PM on Thursday. Referred to Excuses Committee.
13. Request from Steve Wilbur for excuse from the session after 9:00 PM on Thursday. Referred to Excuses Committee.
14. A request for rites of Ordination and Installation for Gary Mancilas as pastor of Grace Reformed Church of Lancaster. The service to be held on April 18, 1999 at 6:00 PM with the committee consisting of Rev. Vernon Pollema, Rev. Frank Walker, and the Consistory of Grace Reformed Church. The Classis granted this request.
15. A request for rites of Ordination and Installation for Thomas Mayville as pastor of Grace Reformed Church of Willows. The service is to be held on March 23, 1999 at 6:30 PM with the committee consisting of Rev. Neale Riffert, Rev. Gene Sawtelle, Rev. Jonathan Merica, and the Consistory of Grace Reformed. The Classis granted this request.

MISCELLANEOUS REPORTS AND OTHER BUSINESS

A. Expression of Appreciation to the Host Congregation

The Western Classis adopted the following statement of appreciation to Faith Reformed Church of Anderson, the host of this year's meeting.

ABrothers and sisters in Christ of Faith Reformed Church of Anderson,

*We, the delegates of the 14th Annual Session of the Western Classis, RCUS want to thank you for your warm and gracious hospitality. There was a veritable groaning of the tables as they strained to hold the largess of your larders. So delicious and abundant was the food, so plentiful the snacks that one of the delegates was heard to say, **Al** came here weighing 195 pounds. I now weigh 200 and none of your business pounds!@Thanks for your labor of love. We thoroughly enjoyed more than adequate accommodations, and our fellowship with you in the gospel was especially sweet.@*

B. Adoption of the Stated Clerk's Report, Executive Committee's Minutes, and Overture Committee's Report

The Stated Clerk's Report, the Executive Committee's Minutes, and the Overture Committee's Report were all adopted.

READING OF THE MINUTES

The minutes were typed, printed, distributed, and read at the beginning of business on Wednesday and Thursday and at the close of business on Thursday evening. All corrections were made and final approval was given to the minutes.

ADJOURNMENT

The 14th Annual Meeting of the Western Classis, RCUS, was adjourned to the 15th Annual Meeting of the Western Classis to meet March 7-9, 2000 at Providence Reformed Church of Lodi. The 14th Annual Meeting was adjourned at 10:12 PM on Thursday, March 11, 1999.

A. Roll Call

The closing roll call showed ten ministers and six elder delegates present.

B. Devotions

Elder Greg Stewart of Yuba City led in the closing devotions. He read the Scriptures from II Timothy 3:16-4:7, gave a brief exhortation and led in prayer.

C. Apostles= Creed, Lord=s Prayer, Benediction, and Doxology

The President thanked the delegates for their good cooperation and led the assembly in the recitation of the Apostles= Creed, and the Lord=s Prayer. He pronounced the Benediction and led in the singing of the Doxology.



Stated Clerk, western Classis, RCUS

**APPENDIX TO THE
ABSTRACT OF THE
MINUTES**

**MEMBERSHIP
AND
FINANCIAL STATISTICS**

**STANDING RULES
OF THE
WESTERN CLASSIS**



MEMBERSHIP AND FINANCIAL STATISTICS

P STANDING RULES OF THE WESTERN CLASSIS P

1. Classical dues shall be paid not later than the first day of December of the current year. (=89)
2. The Parochial Reports and Reports of Statistics shall be submitted at least three (3) weeks before the Spring Meeting of Classis; the Parochial Reports to the President of the Executive of Classis ; the Statistics to the Stated Clerk of the Executive of Classis. (=87)
3. The writ of certification for Delegate Elders shall be forwarded to the Stated Clerk two (2) weeks before the session of Classis.
4. All congregations shall present an accurate report on confirmation instruction, Sunday School and weekday school. The period of instruction shall, if possible, be so extended that the pupils memorize and are able to recite the entire Catechism before Confirmation. The course of instruction shall include Bible history, Catechism, Bible readings and the study of the books and contents of the Bible; also, singing Psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs.
5. The Standing Rules shall be read immediately after the defining of the Bar of the House.
6. If pastors, elders, and members of congregations request information from the Executive Committee of Classis concerning constitutional matters and procedures, as provided in Article 91, the answer shall, if the request is in order and in written form, be presented to the parties concerned only in written form and relevant only to the item in question. This correspondence shall be part of the official minutes of the Executive Committee.
7. The Treasurer shall reimburse travel in behalf of Classis, or for delegates to Classis, at twenty (\$.20) per running mile, per vehicle. (=90)
8. The monies sent to the Treasurer shall be made out in check form and shall be designated for which fund and how much for each fund.
9. The Stated Clerk of Classis shall prepare an Abstract of the Classical Minutes and shall send a copy to each delegate to the Classis plus six (6) additional copies to each charge within sixty (60) days after Classis. The Stated Clerk shall receive a gratuity of four hundred (\$400) per year. (=91)
10. The Classis shall have Permanent Committees as follows: Executive, Missions, Christian Education in the Church, Candidates and Credentials, Interchurch Relations, Publications, Diaconal Ministries, and Heidelberg West Youth Camp. The Standing Committee on Nominations each year is to nominate men to serve on these committees. (=97)
11. The complete Classis statistics shall be made a part of the minutes at the spring meeting of Classis.
12. Nominations for all officers of Classis shall be made by secret ballot. All names appearing on the nominating ballot shall be candidates, and if there is not an election on the first ballot, only the names of the two highest totals of votes shall be candidates until there is an election.
13. Every charge that will not have an Elder Delegate at the Spring Meeting of Classis shall, before the date of the meeting, send in the answers to the questions placed before the elders according to Article 81 of the Constitution of the Reformed Church in the United States. This copy shall be signed by all elders of the charge, and sent to the Stated Clerk.
14. The report and recommendations of the Permanent and Special Committees of Classis shall be completed and mailed to the Consistories of all the churches at least three (3) weeks prior to the meeting in which these recommendations are being made to Classis.
15. The religious services of Classis shall be prepared by the Executive Committee, and these proposed services shall be circularized before Classis. (=90)

16. Students for the Ministry of the Reformed Church in the United States shall be urged by Classis to attend only such seminaries as are listed as institutions receiving benevolent monies from the Reformed Church in the United States. Only students who attend institutions so listed shall be eligible for student aid while preparing for the Christian ministry.

17. It shall be the practice of Classis before ordaining candidates for the ministry to require an internship for them to be spent with a pastor who has served in the Reformed Church in the United States for at least five (5) years. During this internship, particular emphasis shall be placed on learning the distinctives and practices of the Reformed Church in the United States. This internship requirement may be fulfilled either before or after the candidate has received a call or is licensed.

18. Overtures sent to the Stated Clerk of Classis two (2) weeks in advance of Classis shall be circularized, but overtures may be submitted to Classis at any time. (~~90~~)

19. Only male members who have reached the age of twenty-one, or who are male heads of a household, shall constitute the voting membership of the congregations of the Classis. (~~97~~)