

ABSTRACT
of the
MINUTES
for the
WESTERN CLASSIS

Reformed Church in the United States



28th Annual Session
March 5-6, 2013

Providence Reformed Church
Lodi, California

TABLE OF CONTENTS

2013 WESTERN CLASSIS DIRECTORY	3
Ministers.....	3
.....	3
Primarius Elders	4
Secundus Elders.....	5
Student Under Care.....	6
28 th ANNUAL WESTERN CLASSIS ROLL	7
INFORMATIONAL SUMMARY	8
DIRECTORY OF CONGREGATIONS	9
ABSTRACT OF THE MINUTES	13
SERVICES	13
ORGANIZATION	14
RECEPTION OF NEW MINISTERS AND CHURCHES	14
STANDING COMMITTEE APPOINTMENTS.....	14
PRESENTATION OF PERMANENT COMMITTEE REPORTS	15
A. Executive Committee of Classis	15
B. Missions.....	16
C. Christian Education.....	18
D. Candidates and Credentials.....	18
E. Interchurch Relations	19
F. Publications	21
G. Diaconal Ministries	21
H. Heidelberg West Camp.....	22
REPORTS OF OFFICERS	23
A. President’s Report on the State of the Church.....	23
B. Stated Clerk’s Report on the Minutes	27
C. Executive Committee of Synod	28
D. Treasurer’s Report	29
PARCOCHIAL REPORTS.....	31
A. Report of the Lancaster Congregation.....	31
B. Rev. Thomas Mayville.....	31
C. Rev. Jim West.....	34
D. Rev. Michael Voytek	36
E. Rev. Vernon Pollema.....	39
F. Rev. Douglas Schlegel.....	40
G. Rev. Frank Walker.....	42
H. Rev. Tracy Gruggett	44
I. Rev. Sam Powell.....	45
J. Rev. Paul Treick	48
K. Rev. Hank Bowen	49
L. Rev. Gil Baloy	50
M. Rev. Jonathan Merica.....	52
N. Rev. Eric Bristley.....	54
O. Rev. Gary Mancilas	56
P. Rev. Neale Riffert	57
Q. Rev. Paul Henderson.....	58
R. Rev. Gene Sawtelle.....	60
S. Rev. Dennis Roe.....	61
T. Rev. Lloyd Gross	64
CONSTITUTIONAL QUESTIONS FOR ELDERS.....	64
MEMBERSHIP AND FINANCIAL STATISTICS	65
REPORTS FROM CLASSIS’ FRATERNAL DELEGATES	65
ADDRESSES BY DELEGATES FROM OTHER REFORMED CHURCHES AND VISITORS ...	65

- REPORTS OF SPECIAL STUDY COMMITTEES66
 - A. The Doctrine of the Two Kingdoms.....66
 - B. Use of Instruments in Public Worship77
- REPORTS OF STANDING COMMITTEES78
 - A. Benevolences78
 - B. Missions.....78
 - C. Examination and Licensure.....79
 - E. Judicial.....79
 - F. Nominations.....80
 - G. Finances81
 - H. Excuses81
 - I. Overtures81
- MISCELLANEOUS REPORTS AND OTHER BUSINESS83
 - A. Expression of Appreciation to the Host Congregation (Overtures Report)..... 83
 - B. Adoption of Stated Clerk’s Report, Executive Committee’s Minutes, and Overtures
Committee’s Report..... 83
 - C. Other Business..... 83
- THE READING OF THE MINUTES83
- ADJOURNMENT83
 - A. Roll Call.....83
 - B. Devotions.....83
 - C. Close.....83
- MEMBERSHIP AND FINANCIAL STATISTICS86
- STANDING RULES OF THE WESTERN CLASSIS.....88
- INDEX OF POSITIONS AND RESOLUTIONS90

2013 WESTERN CLASSIS DIRECTORY*Ministers*

- Baloy, Rev. Gil** **Home (619) 697-0272**
 757 Maria Ave., Spring Valley, CA 91977
 Church (619) 460-1321
 E-Mail: gilbaloy@gmail.com
- Bowen, Rev. Hank** **Home (530) 549-5704**
 22452 Meadow Crest Lane, Palo Cedro, CA 96073
 Church (530) 365-6874
 E-Mail: rcushank@sbcglobal.net
- Bristley, Rev. Eric** **Home (530) 591-5382**
 660 N. Murdock Ave., Willows, CA 95988
 Office (530) 591-5371
 E-Mail: eric.rcus@gmail.com
- Gross, Rev. Lloyd** **Home (480) 854-3701**
 215 N. Power Rd. #453, Mesa, AZ 85205
 E-Mail: rcuslloyd@cox.net
- Gruggett, Rev. Tracy** **Home (661) 706-4544**
 7016 Rhone Dr., Bakersfield, CA 93308
 Church (661) 587-3723
 E-Mail: tgruggett@att.net
- Henderson, Rev. Paul** **Home (661) 746-6998**
 235 James St., Shafter, CA 93263
 Church (661) 746-6907
 E-Mail: hendorcus@yahoo.com
- Mancilas, Rev. Gary** **Home (530) 345-2732**
 #2 Woodminster Ct., Chico, CA 95926
 E-Mail: gmancilas@sbcglobal.net
- Mayville, Rev. Thomas** **Home (209) 502-7390**
 5513 Savage Ave., Riverbank, CA 95367
 Church (209) 523-3220
 E-Mail: thomasreformed@live.com
- Merica, Rev. Jonathan** **Home (209) 472-7941**
 9311 Snow Creek Circle, Stockton, CA 95212
 Fax (209) 472-7941
 E-Mail: jon_a_merica@yahoo.com
- Pollema, Rev. Vernon** **Home (661) 589-8680**
 8514 Sun Harbor Dr., Bakersfield, CA 93312
 E-Mail: vernpollema@sbcglobal.net
- Powell, Rev. Sam** **Home (530) 674-8797**
 9882 Garden Hwy, Yuba City, CA 95991
 Church (530) 674-8797
 E-Mail: sampowell365@gmail.com
- Riffert, Rev. Neale** **Home (903) 375-5266**
 122 Willow Ridge Circle, Sherman, Texas 75092
 Cell (903) 624-2547
 E-Mail: nemar4042@reagan.com or nriffert@yahoo.com
- Roe, Rev. Dennis** **Home (530) 272-6693**
 17355 Alexandra Way, Grass Valley, CA 95949
 Church (530) 273-4673
 E-Mail: pastor@rcgv.org
 Fax (530) 273-6280
- Sawtelle, Rev. Gene** **Home (530) 790-0929**
 1402 Stafford Way, Yuba City, CA 95991
 E-Mail: elgrande75@att.net
- Schlegel, Rev. Douglas** **(916) 690-4555**
 8135 Pixley Way, Sacramento, CA 95828
 E-Mail: Contramundum1517@gmail.com

Treick, Rev. Paul 4005 Masterpiece Dr., Modesto, CA 95357 E-Mail: triwheeler@aol.com	Home (209) 551-2407
Voytek, Rev. Michael 17874 Crimson Creek Dr., Rowland Heights, CA 91748 E-Mail: pastorvoytek@gmail.com	Home (626) 820-9390 Church (626) 820-9390
Walker, Rev. Frank 6121 Pine Vista Way, Elk Grove, CA 95758 E-Mail: DrFHWalker@gmail.com	Home (916) 320-0548
West, Rev. Jim 5216 Locust Avenue, Carmichael, CA 95608 E-Mail: jimwest3253@hotmail.com	Home (916) 488-5569 Church (916) 451-1190

Primarius Elders

Frias, Mr. Michael 510 Oakwood St., Tehachapi, CA 93561 E-Mail: MFrias@bak.rr.com	(661) 435-0620
Gohnauer, Mr. Jim 1265 Yosemite Dr., Chico, CA 95928 E-mail: jim@hignell.com	(530) 519-2283
Gross, Mr. Joe 840 J Street, Box 445, Williams, CA 95987 E-Mail: jsphgross7@gmail.com	(530) 473-2712
Johnson, Mr. Wayne 837 West Cove Way, Sacramento, CA 95831 E-Mail: wayne@theagency.us	(530) 424-0290
Lingenfelter, Mr. Wayne 18869 Arrowhead Dr., Lockeford, CA 95237 E-Mail: waymar1441@att.net	(209) 727-5735
Merkel, Mr. Derrick 7740 Campoy St., Fair Oaks, CA 95628 E-Mail: dmerk81@yahoo.com	(530) 524-7501
Mettler, Mr. Robert 123 Prospect Ave., Long Beach, CA 90803 E-Mail: rgmettler@earthlink.net	(562) 439-5392
Peery, Mr. Michael PO Box 1973, Cottonwood, CA 96022 E-Mail: michaelpeery@sbcglobal.net	(530) 347-9294
Spitzer, Mr. Ryan 5300 Muirfield, Bakersfield, CA 93306 Email: ryanryanspitzer@aol.com	(661) 871-6388
Van Houten, Mr. Earl 1904 History Way, Modesto, CA 95357 E-Mail: thepearl3@comcast.net	(209) 527-2474

-
- Wegis, Mr. Robb** (661) 654-0945
2612 Mountain Oak, Bakersfield, CA 93311
E-Mail: rwegis@grimmway.com
- White, Mr. Alfred** (619) 264-4400
6065 Nancita Court, San Diego, CA 92114
E-Mail: sawhite@sbcglobal.net
- Yeager, Mr. Daniel** (530) 632-1877
2177 Gold River Dr., Yuba City, CA 95991
E-Mail: dan.yeager@gmail.com

Secundus Elders

- Bowen, Mr. Ken** (530) 473-2755
837 I Street, Box 445, Williams, CA 95987
E-Mail: pegbowen@frontiernet.net
- Crook, Mr. Mark** (209) 599-6723
1633 Bainbridge Way, Ripon, CA 95357
E-Mail: 8Crooks@charter.net
- Davis, Mr. Matthew** (562) 696-1808
5813 Newlin Ave., Apt. A, Whittier, CA 90601
E-Mail: matthew.davis@charter.net
- DeYoung, Mr. Jerry** (209) 847-4830
10349 Rodden Rd., Oakdale, CA 95361
E-Mail: jerrylynette@msn.com
- Goehring, Mr. Greg** (209) 334-3651
741 Willow Glenn, Lodi, CA 95242
E-Mail: gregorygoehring@att.net
- Goehring, Mr. Ralph** (661) 665-1521
10900 Rockridge Way, Bakersfield, CA 93311
E-Mail: rjg5energy@sbcglobal.net
- Helseth, Mr. David** (530) 893-0277
420 Autumn Gold Dr., Chico, CA 95973
- Snow, Mr. Kurt** (916) 689-2395
9020 Carlisle Ave., Sacramento, CA 95973
E-Mail: kurt@gatewaymedia.us
- Reyna, Mr. Mark** (661) 726-0826
559 Woodington Dr., Lancaster CA 93535
E-Mail: markreyna@hotmail.com
- Stewart, Mr. Greg** (530) 751-2151
2495 S. Walton Ave., Yuba City, CA 95993
E-Mail: rcusstewart.greg@gmail.com
- Williams, Mr. Bob** (661) 823-4071
21531 Old Town, Rd., Tehachapi, CA 93561
E-Mail: bob_williams@earthlink.net

Student Under Care

Davis, Mr. Matthew	(562) 696-1808
5813 Newlin Ave. #A, Whittier, CA 90601	
E-Mail: matthew.davis@charter.net	
Merkel, Mr. Derrick	(530) 524-7501
7740 Campoy St., Fair Oaks, CA 95628	
E-Mail: dmerk81@yahoo.com	
Samul, Mr. Colin	(916) 719-9922
96 Rinetti Way, Rio Linda, CA 95673	
E-Mail: colinsamul23@gmail.com	

28th ANNUAL WESTERN CLASSIS ROLL*For the Classical Year beginning March 5, 2013*

Minister	Primarius Elder	Secundus Elder	Charge
Henry Bowen	Michael Peery		Faith, Anderson, CA
Tracy Gruggett	Rob Wegis	Ralph Goehring	Grace, Bakersfield, CA
Lloyd Gross	(Pastor Emeritus, Bakersfield)		Retired, Mesa, AZ
Gary Mancilas	Jim Gochnauer	David Helseth	Covenant, Chico, CA
Dennis Roe	Derrick Merkel	Greg Goehring	Covenant, Grass Valley, CA
Jonathan Merica	(Associate Pastor, Grass Valley)		Calvary Chapel, Stockton, CA
Vacant	Michael Frias	Mark Reyna	Grace, Lancaster, CA
Neale Riffert	(Pastor Emeritus, Lancaster)		Retired, Sherman, TX
Douglas Schlegel	Wayne Lingenfelter	Jerry DeYoung	Providence, Lodi, CA
Thomas Mayville	Earl Van Houten	Mark Crook	Trinity, Modesto, CA
Paul Treick	(Pastor Emeritus, Modesto)		Trinity, Modesto, CA
Jim West	Wayne Johnson	Kurt Snow	Covenant, Sacramento, CA
Frank Walker	(Associate Pastor, Sacramento)		City Seminary, Sacramento, CA
Guillermo Baloy	Alfred White		Covenant, San Diego, CA
Paul Henderson	Ryan Spitzer	Bob Williams	Ebenezer, Shafter, CA
Vernon Pollema	(Pastor Emeritus, Shafter)		Retired, Bakersfield, CA
Michael Voytek	Robert Mettler	Matthew Davis	Rehoboth, La Habra, CA
Eric Bristley	Joe Gross	Ken Bowen	Grace, Willows, CA
Sam Powell	Greg Stewart	Daniel Yeager	First, Yuba City, CA
Gene Sawtelle	(Pastor Emeritus, Yuba City)		Yuba City, CA

INFORMATIONAL SUMMARY

OFFICERS

President – Rev. Frank Walker
 Vice-President – Rev. Tracy Gruggett
 Stated Clerk – Rev. Hank Bowen
 Treasurer – Mr. Chris Fellersen

CLASSIS GUIDELINE FOR GIVING

(per communicant member)

Classis Dues	\$8.00
Benevolences	42.00
Home Missions	42.00
Publications	-----
Home Missions Building Fund	1.00
Heidelberg West Youth Camp	<u>3.00</u>
TOTAL	\$96.00

Treasurer: Mr. Chris Fellersen
 8675 Sleepy Hollow Dr., Elk Grove, CA 95624
 Ph. (916) 423-1741 E-Mail: cfellersen@cs.com

PERMANENT CLASSIS COMMITTEES

Indicates Convener

Executive Committee: F. Walker, H. Bowen, W. Johnson

Candidates and Credentials: D. Roe, G. Stewart (1 yr); F. Walker, R. Spitzer (2 yrs); D. Schlegel, B. Williams (3 yrs)

Christian Education in the Church: P. Treick, M. Reyna (1 yr); D. Yeager, M. Voytek (2 yrs); G. Mancilas, R. Goehring (3 yrs)

Missions: G. Baloy, P. Henderson (1 yr); D. Schlegel, M. Reyna (2 yrs); J. Gross, D. Helseth (3 yrs)

Interchurch Relations: V. Pollema, G. Baloy (1 yr); J. Merica, D. Merkel (2 yrs); A. White, E. Van Houten (3 yrs)

Publications: E. Bristley (1 yr); S. Powell (2 yrs); R. Mettler (3 yrs)

Diaconal: P. Henderson, R. Wegis (1 yr); L. Pollema, D. Roe (2yrs); Deacon Scott McAfee (3 yrs)

Heidelberg West Youth Camp: T. Gruggett, M. Voytek (1 yr); R. Wegis, K. Bowen (2 yrs); G. Stewart, M. Frias (3 yr.)

Two Kingdoms Study Committee: T. Gruggett, E. Bristley, P. Treick, J. West, D. Merkel, G. Uttinger.

Musical Instruments in Worship Study Committee: T. Mayville, S. Powell, E. Bristley, L. Pollema, R. Spitzer, K. Snow.

Baptism Study Committee: N. Riffert, R. Goehring, M. Voytek, W. Johnson

DIRECTORY OF CONGREGATIONS**ANDERSON, CA - Faith Reformed Church**

Church Location: 3291 Rupert Rd. (off Stinky Lane)
Church Mailing Address: PO Box 1973, Cottonwood, CA 96022
Church Phone: (530) 365-6874
Service Times: Sun. Sch. 9:30 AM; Worship 10:30 AM
Pastor/Wife: Hank Bowen/ Patty
Home Address: 22452 Meadow Crest Lane, Palo Cedro, CA 96073
Home Phone: (530) 549-5704 E-Mail: rcushank@sbcglobal.net
Church Web Page: www.faithrcus.org

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) 587-3723
Services: Worship 9:30 AM; Sun. Sch. 11:00 AM; Eve. Worship 3rd Sun. at 6:30 PM
Pastor/Wife/Children: Tracy Gruggett / Michelle / Samantha, Angela, Lydia, Corissa
Home Address: 7016 Rhone Dr., Bakersfield, CA 93308
Home Phone: (661) 587-3723 E-Mail: tmgruggett@att.net
Church Web Page: www.bakersfieldreformed.org

CHICO, CA - Covenant Reformed Church

Church Location: Meeting at 1877 Hooker Oak Ave. (Adventist Church Building: Turn East on East Ave; there will be two (2) roundabouts to Hooker Oak Ave; East Ave. will turn into Manzanita Ave. before first roundabout; proceed through first roundabout and stay on Manzanita Ave; proceed into second roundabout; turn right on Hooker Oak Ave; proceed through first stop sign; continue on to location at the Adventist Building; turn left into church parking lot.)
Church Mailing Address: P.O. Box 1612, Chico, CA 95927-1612
Church Phone: (530) 345-2732
Service Times: Sunday School 9:30 AM; Worship 10:30 AM
Mission Pastor/Wife: Gary Mancilas / Gloria
Home Address: 2 Woodminster Ct., Chico, CA 95926
Home Phone: (530) 345-2732 E-Mail: gmancilas@sbcglobal.net
Church Web Page Address: www.reformedchico.org

GRASS VALLEY, CA - Covenant Reformed Church at Grass Valley

Church Location: 407 W. Main St., Grass Valley, CA
Church Mailing Address: 407 W. Main St., Grass Valley, CA 95945
Church Phone/Fax: (530) 273-4673, fax (530) 273-6280
Service Times: Sunday: 9:30 AM - Bible Classes; Worship 11:00 AM.
Pastor/Wife: Dennis E. Roe / Julie
Home Address: 17355 Alexandra Way, Grass Valley, CA 95949
Home Ph.: (530) 272-6693 E-Mail: pastor@crcgv.org
Assoc. Pastor: Jonathan Merica (See Stockton - Calvary)
Church Web Page: www.crcgv.org

LA HABRA - Rehoboth Reformed Church

Church Location: 501 S. Idaho, Suite 120, La Habra (Between La Habra Blvd., & Lambert Rd.)

Church Phone: (626) 820-9390

Church Mail Address: 17874 Crimson Ct., Rowland Heights, CA 91748

Service Times: Worship 10:00 AM; Sun. Sch. 11:45 AM; Afternoon 1:30 PM; Evening Service 6:00 PM.

Pastor/Wife/Children: Michael Voytek / Rebecca / David, Timothy

Home Address: 17874 Crimson Ct., Rowland Heights, CA 91748

Home Phone: (626) 820-9390

E-Mail: pastorvoytek@gmail.com

Church Web Page: www.RehobothReformedChurch.org

LANCASTER, CA - Grace Reformed Church (Antelope Valley)

Church Location: 121 Carriage Lane, Suite 111, Lancaster, CA 93534

Church Mailing Address: 121 Carriage Lane, Suite 111, Lancaster, CA 93534

Church Phone: (661) 940-4669

Service Times: Sun. Sch. 9:45 AM; Worship 10:45 AM; Bible Study 6:30 PM

Pastor/Wife:

Home Address:

Home Phone:

E-Mail:

Church Web Page: www.gracereformedchurchlancaster.com

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 10:45 AM; Wed. Bible Study 7:00 pm.

Pastor/Wife: Doug Schlegel / Cheryl

Home Address: 8135 Pixley Way, Sacramento, CA 95828

Home Phone: (916) 690-4555

E-Mail: pastor@prclodi.com

Church Web Page: www.prclodi.com

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. 9:00 AM; Worship 10:00 AM; Bible Study 5:30 PM – First & Third Sundays; Hymn Sings every fifth Sunday at 5:30 PM.

Pastor/Wife: Thomas Mayville / Carolyn

Home Address: 5513 Savage Ave., Riverbank, CA 95367

Home Phone: (209) 502-7390

E-mail: thomasreformed@live.com

Church Web Page: www.trinitymodesto.org

SACRAMENTO, CA – Sacramento Covenant Reformed Church

Church Location: 2020 16th Avenue, Sacramento (from Fwy. 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 Fwy 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: Jim West / Elaine

Home Address: 5216 Locust Ave., Carmichael, CA 95608

Home Phone: (916) 488-5569 E-Mail: jimwest3253@hotmail.com

Assoc. Pastor/Wife/Children: Frank Walker / Christine / Jonathan.

Home Address: 6121 Pine Vista Way, Elk Grove, CA 95758

Home Phone: (916) 320-0548 E-Mail: drfhwalker@gmail.com

SAN DIEGO, CA - Covenant Reformed Church

Church Location: 49 3rd Ave., Chula Vista, CA (Take I-805 South. Go west on Hwy. 54. Get off at Highland Ave. Turn left at light on Highland Ave. Turn left on 3rd Ave. We meet at the CVPOA Building on the left hand side.)

Church Mailing Address: 757 Maria Ave., Spring Valley, CA 91977

Church Phone: (619) 460-1321

Service Times: Sun. Sch. 10 AM; Worship 11 AM; Lunch 12:30 PM; Bible Study 6:00 PM.

Pastor/Wife/Children: Gil Baloy / Maricar / Ezra, Ethan

Home Address: 757 Maria Ave., Spring Valley, CA 91977

Home Phone: (619) 697-0272 E-mail: gilbaloy@gmail.com

Church Web Page Address: www.CovenantRCUS.org

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: Worship 10:00 AM; Sun. Sch. 11:30 AM

Pastor/Wife/Children: Paul Henderson / Tina / Silas, Melinda, Travis, Amy

Home Address: 235 James St., Shafter, CA 93263

Home Phone: (661) 746-6998 E-Mail: hendorcus@yahoo.com

STOCKTON, CA – Calvary Reformed Chapel

Church Location: Clarion Inn, 4219 E. Waterloo Rd., Stockton

Church mailing Address: P.O. Box 692426, Stockton, CA 95269

Church Phone: (209) 470-7174

Service Times: Sun. Sch. 10:00 AM; Worship 11:00 AM

Mission Pastor/Wife: Jonathan Merica / Marsha

Home Address: 9311 Snow Creek Circle, Stockton, CA 95212

Home Phone: (209) 472-7941 E-Mail: jon_a_merica@yahoo.com

Church Web Page Address: www.calvaryreformedchapel.com

WILLOWS, CA - Grace Reformed Church

Church Location: 148 W. Sycamore St. (corner: Butte & Sycamore – Exit Hwy 162; head east, right on Butte to 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; Sun Bible Study - 6:00 PM

Pastor/Wife/Children: Eric Bristley / Kathleen / Matthew, Nathaniel

Home Address: 660 N. Murdock Ave., Willows, CA 95988

Home Phone: (530) 591-5382

E-Mail: gracercus@gmail.com

Church Web Page: gracercus.org

YUBA CITY, CA - First Reformed Church

Church Location: From Yuba City head south on Hwy. 99 12 miles. Turn left on Wilson Rd. to Garden Hwy. 1/2 mile north of Wilson Rd. on Garden Hwy.

Church Mailing Address: 9882 Garden Hwy., Yuba City, CA 95991

Church Phone: (530) 674-8797

Service Times: Sun. Sch. 9:30 AM; Worship 11:00 AM

Pastor/Wife/Children: Rev. Sam Powell / Susan / Kaerie, Margaret

Home Address: 9882 Garden Hwy., Yuba City, CA 95991

Home Phone: (530) 674-8797 E-Mail: sampowell365@gmail.com

Church Web Page: www.reformedyubacity.org

ABSTRACT OF THE MINUTES WESTERN CLASSIS

Reformed Church in the United States
28th Annual Spring Meeting
March 5-6, 2013
Providence Reformed Church, Lodi, California

Fear God and keep His commandments, for this is man's all. For God will bring every work into judgment, including every secret thing, whether good or evil.

Ecclesiastes 12:13-14

SERVICES

The Western Classis of the Reformed Church in the United States convened its 28th Annual Session at Providence Reformed Church in Lodi, California on Tuesday, March 5, 2013 at 1:00 PM with Rev. Douglas Schlegel welcoming the body, leading the body in prayer and the singing of *"I Love To Tell The Story."* Scripture was read from 2Corinthians 4:1-7 and a devotional was presented under the theme "A Light in the Darkness." Rev. Schlegel then closed in prayer.

The Tuesday evening worship service was held at 7:30 PM with Elder Wayne Johnson of Sacramento Covenant Reformed Church conducting the service. The Scripture reading was from 1Corinthians 16 and Rev. Paul Henderson, of Ebenezer Reformed Church, Shafter preached a sermon entitled, *"Final Commands for Waging a Victorious Warfare."* Following the service the congregation welcomed the delegates.

For the Wednesday morning devotion, Rev. Jonathan Merica led the body in the singing of *"I Greet Thee, Who My Sure Redeemer Art."* He then read 2 Chronicles 15:1-15 and presented a devotion under the theme, *"Covenanting to Seek God"* and closed in prayer.

Elder Wayne Lingenfelter led the body in the closing devotion, reading from Revelation 21:2-7 and then closing in prayer.

Each session was opened and closed with prayer to praise God and seek His blessing and guidance for this work of the Church. Following the reading of Parochial Reports, prayer was offered for the particular congregations and their pastors. At other times prayer was called for individuals and the needs of the congregations.

ORGANIZATION

Rev. Jim West, President of the Executive Committee of Western Classis, called the meeting to order at 1:24 PM on March 5, 2013. The Rev. Vernon Pollema led the body in prayer. The initial roll call showed sixteen pastors and eleven elder delegates present. The President declared a quorum was present and the meeting was opened for business. The Bar of the House was declared to be the first seven rows of pews. The President read the standing rules of the Western Classis as required in Standing Rule 5. Elder Earl Van Houten and Elder Robert Mettler were appointed as tellers for the meeting.

The following men were nominated and elected to office for this Classical year: Rev. Frank Walker, President; Rev. Tracy Gruggett, Vice President; Rev. Henry Bowen, Stated Clerk; and Elder Chris Fellersen, Treasurer.

The President appointed Rev. Sam Powell as reporter for the Reformed Herald.

The Agenda, Services, and Order of the Day were adopted.

FRATERNAL DELEGATES AND VISITORS

There were no fraternal delegates or visitors present from other bodies.

Elders Alfred White of Covenant RCUS, San Diego, Robert Mettler of Rehoboth RCUS, La Habra, and Ralph Goehring of Grace RCUS, Bakersfield were welcomed as first time elders.

RECEPTION OF NEW MINISTERS AND CHURCHES

Rev. Doug Schlegel was welcomed as a new minister added to the roll of Classis this past year. Elder Ryan Spitzer led the body in a prayer of thankfulness for the Lord's gift of this new minister.

STANDING COMMITTEE APPOINTMENTS

The President made the following appointments for the Standing Committees:

- A. Examination-Licensure: Walker, Roe, Yeager, Frias
- B. Excuses: Bristley, Lingenfelter
- C. Finances: Voytek, Mancilas, Gross
- D. Judicial: Riffert, Powell, Helseth
- E. Minutes of Synod: Treick, West, Merkel
- F. Missions: Schlegel, Henderson, Lingenfelter, White
- G. Nominations: Mayville, Johnson, R. Goehring
- H. Benevolence: Gruggett, Pollema, Van Houten, Spitzer
- I. Overtures: Merica, Bristley, Mettler

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 Permanent Reports, Reports of Officers, and Parochial Reports were read and if needed, acted upon or referred to the appropriate Standing Committees. The results of the Classis' actions to the various recommendations concerning these reports are printed in this Abstract as they were adopted.

PRESENTATION OF PERMANENT COMMITTEE REPORTS

A. Executive Committee of Classis

Esteemed Brothers in Christ,

Your Executive Committee accomplished the following work with five circulars in eight recommendations primarily dealing with the installation of ministers into newly organized churches.

Recommendation 1: That the installation service for officers of the Covenant Reformed Church of San Diego to be organized as an organized church of the Western Classis of the Reformed Church in the United States be set for Friday, May 11, 2012, 7:00 PM in San Diego, California. The installation committee is to consist of Rev. S. Henry (presiding), M. Voytek (charge to officers-elect) and F. Walker (charge to congregation).

Recommendation 2: That the call of Rev. Gil Baloy to be pastor of Covenant Reformed Church of San Diego be approved upon a proper call being issued at the April 29, 2012 organizational meeting which makes adequate provision for his support, and that this information be reported to the Classis prior to May 11.

Recommendation 3: That the call of Rev. Gil Baloy to be pastor of Covenant Reformed Church of San Diego be declared in order.

Recommendation 4: That the installation service for Rev. Gil Baloy be set for Friday, August 24, 2012, 6:30 PM in San Diego, California. The installation committee is to consist of Rev. S. Henry (presiding), M. Voytek (charge to pastor) and V. Pollema (charge to congregation).

Recommendation 5: That the call of Rev. Michael Voytek to be pastor of Rehoboth Reformed Church in La Habra, acceptance of the call and the resignation of Rev. Voytek as Associate Pastor of Ebenezer RCUS, Shafter, be declared to be in order.

Recommendation 6: That the installation service for Rev. Michael Voytek be set for Friday, November 9, 2012, 7:00 PM at Rehoboth RCUS, La Habra, California. The installation committee is to consist of Rev. Tracy Gruggett (presiding), Paul Henderson (charge to pastor) and Rev. Vernon Pollema (charge to congregation).

Recommendation 7: That the resignation of Rev. Scott Henry as Pastor of Grace RCUS, Lancaster, effective January 27, 2013 be declared to be in order and that, upon approval of the Western Classis, the pulpit of Grace RCUS, Lancaster be declared vacant.

Recommendation 8: That the following schedule for services be approved:

Tues. March 5: Opening Devotion at 1:00 PM -- Rev. Schlegel

Tues. March 5: Evening Service at 7:30 PM – Rev. Henderson, preaching; Elder Wayne Johnson, conducting.

Wed. March 6: Morning Devotion – Rev. Merica

Thurs. March 7: Morning Devotion – Rev. Baloy

Thurs. March 7: Closing Devotion -- Elder from Lodi

One objection was received from Elder Delegate Ryan Spitzer concerning Recommendation 8 with regards to the use of an Elder to officiate in a Public Worship Service of Classis. The Executive Committee discussed the Elder's concerns and believes there may be some merit in the objection that warrants Classis to take a look at the propriety of an Elder officiating the Classis' Worship Service in light of the dictates of the RCUS Directory of Worship.

Your Executive Committee was called upon to advise the Consistory of Trinity Reformed Church in Modesto on a matter of dispute regarding a request from some

within the Consistory for Rev. Thomas Mayville to resign as pastor of Trinity Reformed Church. The members of the Executive Committee attended two meetings of the Trinity Reformed Church Consistory and sought to render advice in relation to the bearing the RCUS constitution carried on the situation, as well as encouragement in hopes to effect a degree of reconciliation between the parties in dispute.

Herein is presented an accurate summary of your Executive Committee's activities over this past year.

Respectfully submitted,
Rev. J. West (pres.), Rev. H. Bowen (clerk), Elder J. Gross

Classis Action: The matter on Elders conducting Classis worship services was referred to standing Judicial. The remainder of the report was received and adopted.

B. Missions

Esteemed Fathers and Brothers:

The work of your committee this year mainly involved the Rehoboth Church, La Habra, California which was the only mission work that received support from Classis and Synod. Two members of the committee were able to visit Rehoboth Church. Our committee met on February 4th of this year.

We report the following:

Rehoboth Reformed Church, La Habra, California – The Rev. Voytek

Two committee members, Elder Jeff Jones and Elder Mark Reyna, visited Rehoboth Church, La Habra, California on Sunday, February 3rd, 2013.

We met with the consistory before the worship service and met with the congregation during the time normally set aside for Sunday school in order to discuss the state of the work at Rehoboth.

The meeting with consistory was primarily a discussion around finances and the search for a new facility. The consistory submitted four questions for committee considerations:

A. How do we go about requesting funding from the Western Classis Home Missions Building Fund?

B. Can the Western Classis Home Missions Building Fund be used to facilitate the long-term leasing of a building?

C. How can you as the Home Missions Committee assist us in raising the funds for a down payment to purchase a building above and beyond the Western Classis Home Missions Building Fund?

D. Will you recommend to the Synod Home Missions Committee that the RCUS Day of Prayer for Missions Offering this year be taken for Rehoboth Reformed Church?

The Sunday School meeting was led by Elder Jeff Jones. He began a time of questions and answers focusing on the following subjects: general information, demographic makeup of the congregation, facility, and church life.

Under general information we were provided with information on the average attendance and services offered by the church. The church holds both a morning and an afternoon worship service with time set aside for Sunday school and a noon-time fellowship meal in between the worship services.

Under the topic of the facility. It was noted that they are looking for a new location because their lease ends in May 2014.

Church life: we received a number of responses, all of them positive, focusing on the outlook and potential of the congregation. Also it was noted they have four elders (three active and one inactive) and one deacon, but were planning to ordain and install a second deacon next week.

Elders Jones and Reyna visited two properties the church is interested in after the noon meal. This concluded the visit to La Habra.

Classis Home Mission Committee Meeting: Our committee met via phone conference on February 4, 2013.

Our primary concern was the La Habra 2013 budget. The committee agreed it was not realistic to expect a \$17,000.00 deficit to be resolved by an aggressive increase in giving.

We believe that the Western Classis should continue support for Rehoboth Reformed Church, La Habra and that funding be increased to address the decrease in estimated income.

It was agreed to recommend a \$6,109.00 increase to \$26,500 in classical support and petition synod to increased support by \$6,109.00 to \$26,500.

Regarding the four questions, the committee did not have sufficient information on the procedures regarding the Classis Building Fund and, therefore, we were reluctant to make any recommendations regarding questions A and B (see above).

Question C is difficult to address because we were unsure whether it is within the charter of the WCHMC to assist the La Habra congregation in raising needed funds? The assumption is the WCHMC could possibly council the La Habra congregation on raising funds, but Western Classis would need to direct the committee to do so, since this committee cannot bind the actions of future committees.

Lastly, addressing question D, the committee was agreed we would recommend to the Synod Home Missions Committee that the RCUS Day of Prayer for Missions Offering for this next year be taken for Rehoboth Reformed Church

Future Home Mission Church Planting by the Western Classis: we agreed that our strategy should not change and we should continue to target one metropolitan area at a time and concentrate our energy and resources on that area until a self-sustaining church is established. Again, we agreed that the Western Classis set aside an Annual Day of Prayer for Western Classis Home Missions in the coming year. Furthermore, that the churches be encouraged to take a special offering on that day for Rehoboth Church, La Habra, California to be used by them in either securing a permanent facility or to enable them to rent an effective facility until a permanent one is found.

Recommendations:

1. That classical support for Rehoboth Reformed Church, La Habra, California in the amount of \$26,500 for the classical 2014 year be granted.
2. That the Western Classis petition the 266th Synod for mission support for Rehoboth Reformed Church, La Habra, California, in the amount of \$26,500 for the 2014 synodical year.
3. That the Western Classis set aside an Annual Day of Prayer for Western Classis Home Missions in the coming year. Furthermore, that the churches be encouraged to take a special offering on that day for Rehoboth Reformed Church, La Habra,

California to be used by them in either securing a permanent facility or to enable them to rent an effective facility until a permanent one is found.

Respectfully Submitted in Christ's Service,
*Elder Jeff Jones (chairman), Rev. Sam Powell, Rev. Tracy Gruggett
 Elder Mark Reyna, Rev. Doug Schlegel, Rev. Gil Baloy*

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

C. Christian Education

Esteemed Brethren:

Your Christian Education in the Church Committee received no instructions or projects from the Classis during the classical year. Therefore, the committee was not convened to conduct any business.

Respectfully submitted,
*Rev. V. Pollema (chairman), Rev. M. Voytek, Rev. P. Treick
 Elder M. Reyna, Elder J. Gross, Elder D. Yeager*

Classis Action: The report was received and adopted.

D. Candidates and Credentials

Esteemed Fathers and Brethren:

During the past Classical year, the Candidates and Credentials Committee oversaw the ministerial training of Mr. Derrick Merkel and received the requests of Mr. Matthew Davis and Mr. Colin Samul to come under care of Classis.

Mr. Merkel reports on the many changes that took place in his life and seminary education. As of the last meeting of Classis, he had taken two classes at Heidelberg Theological Seminary, where he had hoped to complete his theological studies. However, he later decided to switch to City Seminary for three reasons: its closer proximity to his hometown of Redding, its pastoral vision, and its academic quality. He enrolled at City Seminary in the fall of 2012 and since then has completed four courses totaling nine credits. He is currently taking five courses totaling twelve credits. Throughout his studies, he has demonstrated excellent scholarship. He also reports that he rejoices in the quality of instruction he is receiving.

Mr. Merkel's move to Sacramento involved other changes as well. One is that he transferred his membership to the Grass Valley congregation to have the oversight of a local church. Another is the Grass Valley congregation voted to install him as an elder.

Mr. Merkel takes advantage of opportunities to proclaim the grace of God. Since moving to Sacramento, he has exhorted five times (twice in Lodi and three times in Grass Valley) and has preached several times in City Seminary's chapel program.

Because City Seminary provides a full scholarship to RCUS students under care, the \$4800.00 that Mr. Merkel requested for tuition was not used. His only financial request this year is \$400 for textbooks.

Last year, Mr. Matthew Davis, an elder in the La Habra church, asked to come under care of Classis. This was not done; however, the Classis encouraged him to continue taking classes at Heidelberg Theological Seminary through its distance learning

program, work with Pastor Voytek to learn Hebrew (if possible), and consider taking more liberal arts courses. He reports that he audited several courses at Heidelberg, but because of job commitments there wasn't enough time to learn Hebrew or take additional undergraduate courses. He is at a place in his life where he is ready to make a commitment to full-time ministerial training, hoping to move to Sioux Falls later this year, and thus renews his request to be taken under care. Mr. Davis has the support of his Consistory in this.

Mr. Colin Samul transferred from Puritan Reformed Seminary to City Seminary a year and a half ago. When he came to Sacramento, he was a student under care of the OPC. Having bought a house and settled in the Sacramento area, at least for the time being, his elders encouraged him to join a local congregation. He and his family (wife and three children) are now members of Covenant Reformed Church in Sacramento. With this transition, he is also requesting to come under care of the Western Classis. His work at City Seminary has been outstanding, demonstrating great skill in communicating the Word of God. He also has the endorsement of the Sacramento Consistory.

Recommendations:

1. That Classis overture Synod to grant Mr. Merkel's request for \$400.00 for books for the forthcoming academic year.
2. That Mr. Davis and Mr. Samul be interviewed by the Standing Committee on Examinations with a view toward becoming students under care.

On behalf of the committee,
*Rev. F. Walker (chairman), Rev. D. Roe,
 Elder D. Helseth, Elder B. Williams, Elder G. Stewart*

Classis Action: The Report was referred to the standing Examinations and Licensure Committee

E. Interchurch Relations

Esteemed Fathers and Brethren,

It has been the desire of the Western Classis Permanent Interchurch Relations Committee to keep in contact with representatives of our fraternal churches, and to maintain a meaningful ecclesiastical fellowship with our Reformed brethren. Our contacts and communications have been maintained primarily through emailing, telephone calls and the U.S. mail. Invitations to attend our 28th Annual Western Classis were sent by U. S. mail and via email to the Stated Clerks or contact persons of our fraternal churches, inviting them to attend our 28th Annual Western Classis Meeting at Providence RCUS in Lodi, CA. Invitations to attend our Western Classis Meeting were sent to the Presbytery of Southern California of the Orthodox Presbyterian Church and to the Presbytery of Northern California & Nevada of the Orthodox Presbyterian Church. Invitations were sent to the Pacific Coast Presbytery of the RPCNA, the Classis Pacific East of the Canadian and American Reformed Churches of North America, the Classis Southwest, U.S. of the URCNA, and to the Classis Pacific Northwest of the URCNA. By God's grace, it is our desire to receive a fraternal delegate or a letter of greetings from these Presbyterian and Reformed Churches at the 28th Annual Western Classis Meeting on March 5-7, 2013. The time at which these delegates will address the Western Classis

will be determined by the call of the Moderator of the Western Classis. Preferably, Wednesday, March 6, 2013 will be a good time to hear from our fraternal delegates that are present.

The Western Classis Interchurch Relations Committee endeavors to keep costs of traveling within reason, while keeping in close contact with our fraternal brothers. The Classis Pacific East of the Canadian and American Reformed Churches in North America, has in the past agreed to alternate our exchange of delegates to every other year. On the year when a delegate is not present, we request of one another a letter of greeting. A hearty note of gratitude is due all those who served as fraternal delegates this year. Your service is greatly appreciated in attending the Presbytery/Classis meetings of our fraternal churches. The 2012-2013 fraternal delegates who attended Presbytery and Classis meetings of our fraternal churches, or when letters of greeting were sent in lieu of sending a delegate are as follows:

a) Last year the Classis Pacific East of the Canadian & American Reformed Churches sent to the Western Classis an invitation to attend their Classis meeting on February 23, 2012. Your chairman, after seeking out a volunteer, ended up attending. The Classis Pacific East of the Canadian & American Reformed Churches will not be sending a delegate to attend our 28th Western Classis Meeting, due to a scheduling conflict. Their Classis meeting is scheduled to convene on March 5, 2013, the very day the 28th Western Classis Meeting is scheduled to begin deliberations. They have agreed to send a letter of greeting to the 28th Western Classis.

b) Rev. Doug Schlegel was the Western Classis delegate to the Classis Pacific Northwest of the URCNA meeting on October 16, 2012, in Lynden, WA. Heartfelt fraternal greetings were extended to our brothers of the Classis Pacific Northwest of the URCNA.

c) The Western Classis delegate to the 2012 Spring meeting of the Presbytery of Northern California & Nevada, OPC was Rev. Jonathan Merica. The meeting convened at Covenant Orthodox Presbyterian Church in San Jose, CA on March 16-17, 2012. Fraternal greetings were given, and your delegate was warmly received. I also attended the Fall Stated meeting of the Presbytery of Northern California & Nevada, OPC which convened at First OPC in Berkeley, CA on September 21-22, 2012.

d) Rev. Michael Voytek attended the Presbytery of Southern CA, OPC on October 19-20, 2012. We are thankful for Rev. Voytek's presence on October 19, 2012 at the Presbytery Meeting as the delegate for the Western Classis of the RCUS.

e) The Classis Southwest U.S., URCNA convened in Santee, CA on September 18, 2012. We are thankful for the Rev. Gil Baloy's attendance at the Classis meeting as the delegate of the Western Classis, RCUS. The Classis Southwest U.S., URCNA also invited the Western Classis to attend their Classis meeting on February 26, 2013, but since we sent a delegate just five months previous, a letter of greeting was sent to our brothers of the Classis Southwest U.S.

f) The Pacific Coast Presbytery, RPCNA is having their next meeting scheduled for March 8-9, 2013 in Fresno, CA. The Convener of the Western Classis Interchurch Relations Committee plans to attend the Pacific Coast Presbytery, RPCNA meeting assuring them of our desire to strengthen our ecclesiastical fellowship.

We praise the Lord for the bond of our fraternal relationship with other Reformed and Presbyterian churches. Delegates representing the Western Classis will be given the opportunity to read their reports as a delegate when the Western Classis convenes on March 5-7, 2013. May God give us grace to nurture and cherish a closer ecclesiastical

relationship with our fraternal churches. *“The LORD bless thee, and keep thee: the LORD make his face shine upon thee, and give thee peace” (Numbers 6:24-26).*

Respectfully Submitted,
*Rev. Jonathan Merica, Chairman, Rev. T. Mayville,
 Rev. V. Pollema, Rev. G. Baloy, Elder D. Merkel,*

Classis Action: The report was received and adopted.

F. Publications

Esteemed Fathers and Brethren,

We received one item of business this year:

1. That the Permanent Publications Committee continue to prepare the history of the Western Classis Congregations project for publication (Abstract, page 74).

The committee was unable to do its work on the history of the congregations because it has not received the history of the congregations. We have received histories from Lodi, San Diego, Chico, Yuba City, Bakersfield and Willows.

We have received no others. We were consequently unable to do the work committed to us. A reminder was sent out and duly ignored.

Respectfully submitted,
*Rev. S. Powell (chairman), Rev. G. Mancilas, Rev. E. Bristley,
 Elder W. Lingenfelter, Elder D. Merkel*

Classis Action: The report was received and adopted.

G. Diaconal Ministries

Esteemed Brethren,

It has come to my attention that possibly I was thought to be the convener or chairman of the Diaconal Committee for Classis.

I did not note my name underlined and so I did not proceed as the convener, not that we had any business. Furthermore, no one's name is underlined in the 2012 Abstract of the Western Classis for the Diaconal Committee's convener.

It seems that we are a committee without a captain. Perhaps this is why nothing came our way. But knowing that you brothers love to have reports, I shall boldly step forward for our committee and report. And please do forward this report to whomever you deem necessary (especially those in need of more reports).

It is our report that we did not receive any communications or requests as a diaconal committee for the Western Classis, at least that I am aware of, not did we convene or conduct any business.

Respectfully submitted,
*Rev. D. Roe (chairman), Rev. P. Henderson, Elder L. Pollema,
 Elder J. Gochnauer, Elder R. Wegis, Deacon J. Vander Wal*

Classis Action: The report was received and adopted.

H. Heidelberg West Camp

Esteemed Brothers in Christ Jesus our Lord:

The 2012 camp came and went without much fanfare. All who participated in it seemed to have a good time learning, fellowshiping, playing, and enjoying the mid-mountain climate as the summer began. The preaching and teaching was solid, sound and lively; the activities were fun, challenging and very tiring. All in all, things were done with decency and order, except for the actions of the Director, which are always suspicious at best!

We thank each and every man, woman, and ‘child’ who helped make it a great camp experience. We can only hope and pray that more of our youth, as well as many of our adult members (moms and dads) will take advantage of this time provided for us through the Lord mercies. Yet we must not despise the day of small things. I (we) realize that spending one’s precious vacation time up at camp, serving our covenant young folk, may not always be a ‘real’ vacation, but by God’s grace, these times of being together will bear fruit in the years ahead as the RCUS and the Western Classis folk become more and more influenced and captivated by many other outside activities and pursuits.

Beginning Balance 1-01-12		\$380.96
Income:		
Guidelines received thru 12-31-12	\$3,542.00	
Camper Fee – 2012	\$4,240.00	
Allocated Interest Income	\$.73	
Total Receipts		<u>\$7,782.73</u>
Total Funds Available		\$8,163.69
Expenses:		
Master Graphics – 50 T-Shirts	763.36	
Rev. Paul Henderson – T-Shirts Deposit	100.00	
Camp Items (Activity Stuff)	314.90	
Shafter – Camp Food	1,819.61	
S. C. C. incl. Deposit-2013	5,400.00	
Todd Crabtree – Activity Items	106.95	
Total Expenses this year:		<u>8,504.82</u>
Ending Balance 12-31-11		(\$341.13)

Respectfully submitted,
*Rev. P. Henderson (chairman), Rev. T. Gruggett,
 Rev. M. Voytek, Elder M. Frias, Elder K. Bowen*

Classis Action: A motion was passed to set the Heidelberg Camp guideline at \$3.00. The report was adopted.

REPORTS OF OFFICERS

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

Dear Fathers and Brothers of the Western Classis,

As of the writing of this report (February 18) your President has not received even one half of your Parochial Reports (which were due on February 13 or before). This makes it difficult to know when to print out final copies before Classis meets. In the past, I have done something that would make John Foster Dulles proud—the brinkmanship of printing the President's Report *the day before* Classis. This year I resolved to complete the report much earlier. But like many of the best laid plans of mice and men, I failed to keep my resolution in order to “save the hides” of many of you.

This year I anticipated that many of your reports would be filled with doom and gloom. The sickly economy, the re-election of a statist to the White House, the desecrating juggernaut of Gay Marriage, and the spiritual and material struggles of some of our congregations are harbingers of spiritual storms and crestfallen hearts. But surprisingly, most of your reports were upbeat and positive. So, this weatherman was wrong again! The church of Corinth was certainly a church freighted with many problems, yet Paul wrote, “I thank my God always concerning you for the grace of God which was given to you by Christ Jesus” (1 Corinthians 1:4).

As for the 2012 Classis statistics: We had 696 communicants in 2012 versus 702 in 2011. We also lost by dismissal 114 compared to 25 in 2011 (a statistic that reflects the organization and transfer of members to new churches). We lost only two members by death in 2012, which may tell us that our total membership tilts toward the side of youth. The total number of unconfirmed members stands at 204. There were only two adult baptisms in 2012, which may reflect a lack of evangelism or a lack of successful evangelism toward the lost. The regular offerings were up 4.3% compared to 2011. And, the total receipts stand at \$1,847,285 (up 2.6% in a recovering but still ailing economy).

Concerning your reports: the Rev. Sam Powell praises God for the work of God's grace at First Reformed Church in Yuba City. The members of the church are very active in the life of the congregation, especially since Rev. Powell suffered physical maladies last year which took him out of the pulpit. To fill the pulpit void, he reports that retired minister Gene Sawtelle preached 12 times for him in 2012! The spiritual pulse of the church is strong, the gospel is preached, the sacraments served, and Church discipline is meted-out. He notes that he will be teaching Hebrew at City Seminary in the fall of 2013. He praises God for the love of the congregation and especially for the love and faithfulness of his Proverbs 31 wife.

Pastor Tracy Gruggett continues to rejoice in the preaching of the word of God's grace. But he tells of the agony of difficult judicial cases at Grace Reformed Church in which four members were judicially erased. In this respect, he calls last year his most difficult year. The church is considering expanding its music beyond the Trinity Hymnal and using a wider variety of musical instruments. Church evangelism was practiced in the spring and early summer months. He reports of the demise of Mrs. Marie Stuebbe, wife of the late Rev. Calvin Stuebbe, who was a true matriarch in the RCUS.

The Rev. Michael Voytek speaks of Rehoboth Reformed Church as enjoying a year of milestones. In 2012 the Chapel became an official church in the Western Classis with new elders and one new deacon. Communicant membership stands at 34 and the baptized

membership at 46. The church now has a functioning website to help broadcast the Reformed Faith. He asks us to pray that an additional 10 new families join the church so that the army of Christ is strengthened and the financial obligations of the congregation are met. Particularly, he underscores the distinct possibility that the congregation may have to vacate its current place of meeting in 2014. Thus the church is scouting another facility, which might even lead to lower monthly expenses. This is a matter of urgent prayer.

Pastor Doug Schlegel reminds us of the sanctifying impact of our parochial reports when he tells us that “we are part of a greater whole and stand shoulder-to-shoulder with other warriors who have the same goal.” Plus, writing our reports paves the way for self-examination and self-criticism, too. He praises God for his ordination to the ministry in March of 2012 and of his teaching and preaching ministry, together with his teaching assignment at the Mule Creek State Prison. The finances of Providence Reformed Church are greatly improved and the church hosts many visitors. As for evangelism, he points to the Internet and the church’s plan to evangelize in the Farmer’s Market this summer. His report teems with confidence and good cheer.

Pastor Paul Henderson remains upbeat about the advance of the Gospel at the Ebenezer Reformed Church in Shafter. He particularly zeros-in on the liberal giving of the congregation, which has resulted in the best financial health for the congregation in many years. He revels in the grace shown to the newly organized Rehoboth Church in La Habra, which organized after 14 years of oversight from Ebenezer Reformed. Undeterred by the “strain” of overseeing a mission work, he also says that Ebenezer is considering starting another mission work in the area or increasing its financial support to other mission churches.

Professor Frank Walker rehearses his work at City Seminary in Sacramento, where he is occupied in the Lord’s work for about two-thirds of his time (the other one-third at Covenant Reformed Church). He informs us that the seminary is now in its 13th year of operation and that the average attendance of thirty students per semester is a sign that the seminary’s emphasis on teaching the Bible fulfils a broad need across the denominational spectrum. The anecdote he tells (which he will convey in his parochial report) reminds us that the seminary trumpets the doctrines of the Reformed Faith.

Pastor Gary Mancilas notes that this is his 11th year at Covenant Reformed Church in Chico. He reviews the evangelism of the church, which was highlighted by a local newspaper agreeing to print articles on the Reformed Faith after years of rejection. The Church is now on benevolent aid from Classis and Synod and plans to make request again this year. Even though the church is small, it is a vibrant witness of the Reformed Faith in Chico.

Pastor Thomas Mayville grieves over some of the happenings at Trinity Reformed Church in Modesto this past year. He tells us about a “substantial minority” of church members leaving the church, including four officers of the congregation. As a result, average attendance dropped from 80 last year to 40 this year. Thus much of his time was expended dealing with this situation, which led to an increased passion to improve his preaching, leadership, and counseling. In spite of the so-called “Scottish revival,” the congregation ended the year in the healthiest shape in many years. Plus, the church added two new members in 2012. He reports that despair does not rule the day as many thriving RCUS churches have begun their ecclesiastical pilgrimage with smaller numbers. Consequently, the church is re-doubling its attempts to evangelize.

Pastor Hank Bowen dearly misses Elder Derrick Merkel who transferred his membership to our Grass Valley congregation thus reducing the number of elders at Faith Reformed Church in Anderson. But he also expresses his thankfulness for Classical and synodical aid in the support of the ministry there. He informs us of preaching 49 times last year and his adventures of teaching Apologetics at Heidelberg Theological Seminary. At the urging of Synod, the church now has a website that proclaims the gospel of the Reformed Faith. While the hits on the website have not been locally voluminous, nevertheless, the word is going out like never before.

Pastor Gil Baloy informs us of his ministerial work at home and abroad in the Philippines. At home, there have been several visitors at Covenant Reformed Church in San Diego, many of whom have joined the congregation. The visitors and new members have refreshed the congregation with their presence and enthusiasm for the Three Forms of Unity, particularly, the Heidelberg Catechism. During the week the “Midweek Oasis” (Bible study) continues to bless the membership, as several men have been appointed to speak on various topics. He tells us that he feels right at home in the RCUS.

The Rev. Jonathan Merica tells of the many evangelism efforts at Calvary Reformed Chapel in Stockton, including the church website, Google Ad words advertisement, etc, with the website being the king of the hill. There are many visitors that attend the worship services regularly. He is thankful to God for the help of Elder Greg Goehring who serves as both elder and treasurer. He requests prayer that the many evangelistic labors of the church will be blessed by God. He is also grateful that Calvary Reformed Chapel was able to submit Guidelines and Dues to the Western Classis and the Synod for 2012.

Pastor Eric Bristley is grateful to the Lord for the presence of God in the midst of Grace Reformed Church in Willows. The elders and deacons are very diligent in their work, the church is being edified, and there are several Bible studies available besides the preaching of the word each Lord’s Day. He has many teaching and committee irons in the fire—too numerous to mention. But he does ask us to pray for a Christ-centered resolution of a discipline case that has stricken the congregation for over six months.

My own parochial report finds me rejoicing in the grace of God that moved me to preach the gospel, now approaching 27 years in one church. Because of the longevity of my stay at Covenant Reformed, it may be an adventure to find a new shepherd at Covenant Reformed. In my resignation before the Consistory I pointed out that my longevity at Covenant Reformed can be attributed to two factors: first and foremost is the grace of God, without which the ministry would be impossible. And second, the persevering grace that God instilled in His people to bear my many infirmities.

As for current retirees from the pastoral ministry, the Western Classis has four: Paul Treick, Lloyd Gross, Gene Sawtelle, and Vernon Pollema. Although retirees are not required to write a report, nevertheless, I received ministerial reports from three: First, Pastor Gene Sawtelle prays that God would give us wisdom as we carry out the Lord’s business at this year’s Classis. He’s thankful for your prayers and reports that he preached several times in Willows and Yuba City this past year. The Rev. Paul Treick reports of preaching 24 times this past year. He reports that he has been asked to be advisor to the Consistory at Trinity Reformed Church in Modesto. He continues his work as editor of the *Reformed Herald* and has revised his book, *Faith of Our Fathers*. The Rev. Vernon Pollema also preached several times in 2012 and is once again supplying the vacant pulpit at Grace Reformed Church in Lancaster. And, the Rev. Neale Riffert is

thankful for forty-six years in the Gospel ministry. Pastor Riffert also speaks of preaching the gospel 50 of the 53 Sundays of 2012 in Sherman, Texas.

Without question the most taxing, difficult, surprising, grievous, heart-wrenching, and incredulous task of the Executive this year was to arbitrate the dispute at Trinity Reformed Church in Modesto. This was “complicated” by the fact that many involved in the dispute were close friends of yours truly. Nevertheless, personal friendship did not blind us to the truth of the gospel and to what we saw as the central remedy of the dispute. After two lengthy sessions with the Consistory and ex-Consistory members, we had hopes that the complainants would hold on and bear with what they perceived to be the infirmities of the Pastor. But this was not to be. Even though the lion’s share of the criticisms were unwarranted and even petty, the complainants saw fit to leave the church, taking with them nearly 50% of the congregation. Some of these were faithful, seasoned, Christ-centered officers, who love the Reformed Faith! How can this be? The suddenness of what happened, together with a complete change of mind of the once enthusiastic complainants towards their pastor reveals the difficulty of keeping church unity in the bond of peace.

With regard to Home Missions, your President notes the dilemma of Rehoboth Reformed Church in the Los Angeles Basin, as they face the possibility, if not probability of relocation. Your President notes from Michael Voyek’s report that the new church is considering to buy a building, with the hopeful prospect of reducing its monthly expenses. If they choose to buy, they will need a dramatic infusion of cash either from their secret Swiss Bank Account (!), or from a golden goose on the outside. Your President notes that the Missions Building Fund has been dormant for years and would like us to consider deleting the word *missions* as the heading of the Fund. In this way, we could release these monies for newly established churches (such as Rehoboth Reformed Church, etc) who do not own their own building. This is especially true of churches that occupy key locations in metropolitan areas.

Your President also notes with grief the short stay of the Rev. Scott Henry at Grace Reformed Church in Lancaster. While initially alarmed that Mr. Henry’s pastorate there was too short for him to be let go (especially since he was the ideal pastor for that work), nevertheless, your President does not have a corner on the wisdom of God and His mysterious providential ways. Let us remember (as Matthew Henry said) that we must be married more to the ministry than to our congregations. That he was a Ten-Point Calvinist and ideal for our Classis did not help. Your President notes that Pastor Henry continued to help perfect the Two Kingdoms Theology report even after he was received into a new Classis. We will miss him dearly and need to pray for a replacement who will also be a “man after God’s own heart.”

Recently, your President learned a new expression: to be *galactically stupid*. To be *galactically stupid* means to have something regularly in front of you that you do not see. For example, Lois Lane was galactically stupid because she did not recognize Clark Kent to be superman. Likewise, let us not be unaware of the importance of our church websites. If we want the word to go out and our churches to prosper we must make it a priority to perfect our church websites often. A website is not a place of entertainment, it’s a spiritual armament.

Last year’s Classis approved the formation of a committee to study the Two Kingdoms theology and to report back this year with recommendations. Because some of the report was written late in the day, the Committee saw fit to ask for additional time to perfect its conclusions. Some may ask why the Two Kingdoms theology should be

studied at all since it may not be influencing our churches? The answer is that it *is* making headway in the Reformed world so that if the aphorism that “what goes around comes around” is true, we would be forced to deal with it eventually. Besides, your President believes that it *is* influencing our fraternal churches. And what influences them influences us.

At last year’s Classis meeting there was an animated debate about the ministerial credentials of the Rev. Neale Riffert and whether his credentials more properly belong to the South Central Classis. Although your President was not impressed with all the pro and con arguments, he flagellated himself after the meeting because he did not mention Rev. Riffert’s contributions to the Western Classis. I make this point because even if a credible case can be made that his credentials belong in another Classis, nevertheless, his value for us here is such that we should fetter him with Classis chains for our own benefit and edification! (Your President has learned that the irregular call that he received within the boundaries of another Classis was rescinded.)

My final note concerns my decision not to re-run for the Presidency of Classis. The last 14 years have been quite a ride for me as your President! And when I say “ride,” I mean that almost in the Disneyland since of the term. Even though there is a great deal of work involved in being Classis President, the flipside is to be able to stand before Classis and adjudicate a meeting where every delegate is bent on doing the will of God and glorifying Christ our Lord. What a joy! I have been “entertained” by your wisdom, your righteousness, and your respect and love (not to mention your good humor, too!). From a standpoint of learning the ropes of Reformed Church government together with conducting a meeting where everything is done decently and in good order, serving as your Classis President has been a veritable Harvard education. Being Classis President has been a great joy and I heartily recommend it to each of you (even though it may seem a formidable challenge). When you first become Classis President it is like walking to your own execution; you stagger to the front and sheepishly receive the gavel from the clerk. Your first thought is: “What do I do now?” But when you leave the President’s chair to join your colleagues, the walk is just as long, if not longer. I praise God for your vote of confidence over the past 14 years!

Respectfully submitted,
Pastor Jim West

Classis Action: The sentence regarding the removal of the word “Missions” from the Missions Building Fund was referred to the Standing Missions Committee for consideration. The report was then received, and adopted. It is to be spread upon the Abstract of the Minutes, and submitted to the Reformed Herald for publication. The body moved to express its deep gratitude to Rev. Jim West for his many years of faithful and steady leadership as President of the Western Classis.

B. Stated Clerk’s Report on the Minutes

Esteemed Brothers in Christ,

The minutes of the 27th Annual Meeting of the Western Classis were typed, indexed, and placed in a permanent binder along with all reports, overtures, and pertinent information. According to the Synod’s Committee on the Minutes of Classis, the minutes were corrected as needed.

There were 250 copies printed and bound. All of the congregations of the RCUS

were hand delivered the required number of copies at the Synod meeting saving the Classis the mailing costs. The cost of printing the Abstract was \$664.21 or \$2.66 a copy.

The President's Report on the State of the Church was printed in the Abstract and in the *Reformed Herald*. Eight overtures from the Western Classis along with copies of the supporting documents for information were sent to Synod for consideration. They were acted upon and reported in the Synodical Abstract of the 266th Annual Session. The other required information regarding delegate's credentials, church directory and changes to the roll of ministers was sent to the Synod Clerk. A summary of all financial matters approved by the Classis was sent to the Treasurer.

There were several changes in matters pertaining to the roll of the Western Classis. The Rev. Scott Henry was dismissed to the South Central Classis. The Rev. Michael Voytek resigned as Associate Pastor of Ebenezer Reformed Church in Shafter to become the pastor of the newly organized Rehoboth Reformed Church in La Habra, and Rev. Gil Baloy resigned as Associate Pastor at Sacramento Covenant Reformed Church to become the pastor of the newly organized Covenant Reformed Church in San Diego. Rev. Douglas Schlegel was ordained and installed as the pastor of Providence Reformed Church in Lodi.

I want to thank those who sent me their parochial and permanent reports in MS Word format as it is a tremendous help in expediting the printing of the Abstract. Your clerk can think of nothing further to report.

Respectfully submitted,

Rev. Henry P. Bowen

Stated Clerk, Western Classis, RCUS

Classis Action: The report was received and adopted.

C. Executive Committee of Synod

Dear Brothers in Christ,

In reviewing the minutes of the 266th Synod, there are some items that the Classes should take note of:

1. Classes should take note of the corrections that should be made to their minutes as adopted by the Synod (266th Abstract, pp. 84-86).
2. Both membership statistics and financial statistics should be according to the *calendar* year.
3. That the Stated Clerk of each Classis regularly provide the webmaster, in electronic form, an updated roll of ministers, elders, and churches following their spring Classis meeting.
4. Synod has declared that Council Bluffs, Iowa is in the South Central Classis.
5. The Classes are reminded that the 267th Annual Session of the Synod of the RCUS is scheduled to meet May 20-23, 2013, at Salem Ebenezer Reformed Church, Manitowoc, WI.

Respectfully submitted,

David Fagrey, Stated Clerk

for the Executive Committee of Synod

Classis Action: The report was referred to the Minutes of Synod Committee.

D. Treasurer's Report

BALANCE SHEET
As of December 31, 2012

	12-31-12	12-31-11	CHANGE
ASSETS:			
Cash	186,220.28	177,470.42	8,749.86
TOTAL ASSETS	186,220.28	177,470.42	8,749.86
LIABILITIES:			
Accounts Payable	0.00	0.00	0.00
TOTAL LIABILITIES	0.00	0.00	0.00
SURPLUS (DEFICIT)	<u>186,220.28</u>	<u>177,470.42</u>	<u>8,749.86</u>
TOTAL LIAB & SURPLUS	<u>186,220.28</u>	<u>177,470.42</u>	<u>8,749.86</u>
FUND BALANCES:			
General	9,709.03	10,471.91	(762.88)
Missions Building Fund	147,884.58	146,565.77	1,318.81
Missions	11,996.34	13,212.44	(1,246.10)
Benevolence	13,405.32	3,250.09	10,155.23
Publications	3,596.14	3,589.26	6.88
Heidelberg Camp	<u>(341.13)</u>	<u>380.96</u>	<u>(722.09)</u>
TOTAL FUNDS	<u>186,220.28</u>	<u>177,470.42</u>	<u>8,749.86</u>

INCOME STATEMENT FOR YEAR ENDED DECEMBER 31, 2011

INCOME	1-01-12	Dues	Bldg. Fund	Missions	Benev	Publ	Camp	Total
Faith -Anderson	23	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
Grace-Bakersfield	131	1,450.50	145.00	7,250.00	6,870.00	0.00	435.00	15,950.50
Covenant-Chico	19	120.00	0.00	683.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	803.00
Covenant-Grass Valley	50	882.00	28.00	644.00	588.00	0.00	98.00	2,240.00
Grace-Lancaster	34	360.00	36.00	1,800.00	1,656.00	0.00	108.00	3,960.00
Providence-Lodi	25	200.00	0.00	0.00	481.00	0.00	0.00	681.00
Trinity-Modesto	63	536.00	134.00	3,082.00	2,814.00	0.00	469.00	7,035.00
Covenant-Sacramento	162	1,296.00	324.00	7,452.00	6,804.00	0.00	1,134.00	17,010.00
Ebenezer-Shafter	101	808.00	202.00	4,646.00	4,242.00	0.00	707.00	10,605.00
Grace-Willows	32	426.00	65.00	1,522.00	1,390.00	0.00	227.00	3,630.00
First -Yuba City	52	676.00	104.00	2,392.00	2,184.00	0.00	364.00	5,720.00
F&M Bank-int Alloc		<u>20.05</u>	<u>280.81</u>	<u>25.31</u>	<u>6.23</u>	<u>6.88</u>	<u>0.73</u>	<u>340.02</u>
TOTAL INCOME	692	<u>\$6,774.55</u>	<u>\$1,318.81</u>	<u>\$29,496.31</u>	<u>\$26,835.23</u>	<u>\$6.88</u>	<u>\$3,542.73</u>	<u>\$67,974.52</u>

EXPENSES STATEMENT

Stated Clerk Expenses:			
Gratuity 2012-13 Clerk			\$1,000.00
Abstract and Mailing			644.21
			\$1,664.21
Executive Committee Expenses:			
Classis Meeting-March 2012			3,906.05
Candidates/Credentials Committee Expense			0.00
Executive Committee Travel			1,127.27
Office Supplies/Postage			69.34
			5,102.66
Benevolences:			
Faith -Anderson			6,000.00
Covenant-Chico			930.00
Grace-Lancaster			3,450.00
Covenant-San Diego			6,300.00
			16,680.00

Inter-Church Relations:			
Travel-Delegate to Pacific East – CanRC	266.20		
Travel-Delegate to OPC-SoCal	24.75		
Travel-Delegate to OPC-NoCal	78.03		
Travel-Delegate to URC	401.58	770.56	
Home Missions:			
Covenant Reformed-Chico	10,230.00		
Rehoboth – LA Basin	20,256.91		
Committee Expense	255.50	30,742.41	
Heidelberg Camp:			
Camp Expenses	8,504.82		
Camp Fees Received	(4,240.00)	4,264.82	
Publications:		<u>0.00</u>	
TOTAL EXPENSES		<u>\$59,224.66</u>	
INCOME FOR YEAR			<u>8,749.86</u>
CASH ON HAND 12-31-11			\$177,470.42
CASH ON HAND 12-31-12			<u>\$186,220.28</u>

INCOME STATEMENT BY FUND

FUND:	General	Missions Bldg Fund	Missions	Benevolen	Publicat	Heid. Camp	Total
INCOME:							
Giving	\$6,754.50	\$1,038.00	\$29,471.00	\$26,829.00	\$0.00	\$3,542.00	\$67,634.50
Allocated Interest	<u>20.05</u>	<u>280.81</u>	<u>25.31</u>	<u>6.23</u>	<u>6.88</u>	<u>0.73</u>	<u>340.02</u>
Total Income	\$6,744.55	\$1,318.81	\$29,496.31	\$26,835.23	\$6.88	\$3,542.73	\$67,974.52
EXPENSE:							
Stated Clerk	1,664.21						1,664.21
Exec. Committee	5,102.66						5,102.66
Inter Church	770.56						770.56
Benevolences				16,680.00			16,680.00
Home Missions			30,742.41				30,742.41
Homes Missions Bldg			0.00				
Publications					0.00	0.00	
Heidelberg Camp-Net						<u>4,264.82</u>	<u>2,745.48</u>
Total Expense	<u>7,537.43</u>	<u>0.00</u>	<u>30,742.41</u>	<u>16,680.00</u>	<u>0.00</u>	<u>4,264.82</u>	<u>59,224.66</u>
Income (Loss) Yr.	<u>(\$762.88)</u>	<u>\$1,318.81</u>	<u>(\$1,246.10)</u>	<u>\$10,155.23</u>	<u>\$6.88</u>	<u>(\$722.09)</u>	<u>\$8,749.86</u>
Balance 12-31-11	\$10,471.91	\$146,565.77	\$13,212.44	\$3,250.09	\$3,589.26	\$380.96	\$177,470.42
Balance 12-31-12	\$9,709.03	\$147,884.58	\$11,966.34	\$13,405.32	\$3,596.14	(\$341.13)	\$86,220.28

Respectfully submitted,
Chris Fellersen

Classis Action: The report was received and referred to the Standing Finances Committee.

PARCOCHIAL REPORTS

A. Report of the Lancaster Congregation

Esteemed Fathers and Brothers,

In this past year, the congregation at Lancaster has had the privilege of hearing Reverend Scott Henry faithfully preaching the word of God almost every Lord's day. On four occasions we celebrated the Lord's supper. Our Sunday school consists of five age groups: pre and beginning readers, pre-catechism, catechism, post-catechism, and adults, with an average total attendance of thirty members.

The biggest change this year is that we are presently without a pastor. The congregation has had mixed feelings about this matter, but the consistory is striving to remind God's people that in his Providence we are "to be patient in adversity, thankful in prosperity, and for what is future have good confidence in our faithful God and Father." I pray that God would work in us a greater appreciation of and love for those men who are called to be ministers of the word.

We are truly thankful and rejoice in that there are faithful ministers, active and retired, who have committed themselves to filling the pulpit at Lancaster. A special note is Reverend Vernon Pollema who has on so many occasions come to our aid. His preaching, teaching and counsel from the word of God is invaluable. May God continue to bless him and Betty for their sacrifice and love.

As a consistory, we are trying to redistribute the work load amongst ourselves so as to be more affective with less confusion and things being left undone. Over all, we are rather new to the work and have much to learn. We ask for your forgiveness and covet your prayers. We are also currently in the process of seeking a pastor to fill the vacancy.

We at Lancaster are greatly indebted to Western Classis for the love and support you have shown us here. It is our desire to be more diligent in going forward with the work that is set before us that Christ may be glorified and his church edified.

Respectfully submitted,
Elder Michael Frias

Classis Action: The report was referred to Standing Benevolence.

B. Rev. Thomas Mayville

Beloved fathers and brothers of the Western Classis,

Article 81 of the RCUS Constitution states in part, *the parochial report shall contain a full account of the spiritual and temporal condition of the charge and of the labors of the pastor.* . . . Most of you are aware by now, to some degree, that the temporal condition of the Modesto charge at the end of 2012 is distressing. Because this report will be published in the Abstract, it is difficult for me to decide how to carry out the requirement of Article 81 in terms of what to put in print, and which details to explain to you in the question and answer period following the delivery of the report at Classis. For posterity, it is probably wise to give a brief account of the spiritual and temporal struggles at Trinity Reformed these last twelve months. I will attempt to *love, speak honestly, and confess the*

truth; also, insofar as I can, defend and promote my neighbor's good name. I will also do my best in this report to suppress any attempts at self-defense.

In the Spring of 2012, a substantial minority in the congregation was convinced that I should resign due to what they considered inadequate preaching, teaching and leadership. I asked the Executive Committee of the Western Classis to help us through this controversy. The Consistory, including some inactive elders and our Pastor Emeritus met with the Executive Committee twice. By August, I was ready to give my consent to three of the four active elders, and one of the three deacons to resign for the good of the congregation. It appeared that I *would* resign October 31, and stay on salary perhaps until January. But when the announcement of my impending resignation was made, and it became clear that a majority of the congregation was opposed to my resignation, the request from the Spiritual Council for my resignation was withdrawn. Sadly, four officers decided to discontinue working with me and the Executive Committee and abruptly left the congregation in September. Other families followed.

The Consistory was reduced to one elder and two deacons. The diminished congregation elected two inactive elders and an inactive deacon to assist. One deacon, greatly disappointed with the attempt to have me resign, finished out his term in January and left on good terms with his wife and two children. He is open to the possibility that he may return to us some day. Recently two families have been dismissed to the URC in nearby Ripon. One of the former officers has requested dismission for his family to a CRC in Ripon. Another family and an individual member have not been attending since these events took place in September. To make matters worse, we have lost faithful families due to relocation to Iowa, Salinas, San Jose and Rocklin due to employment, marriage and college. Whereas we often had 80 in attendance last year; this year we are averaging about 40 souls per Sunday.

Of course, the spiritual condition of the charge has been affected by these events. By the time you hear this report, a letter censuring the four departed officers will have been read to the congregation. Sadness, hurt, and righteous anger amongst the remaining members is understandable. Some of those who left have been friends for twenty years. Yet, the 50 plus generation, including several founders of the congregation, are positive as we together look forward in faith that Christ is able to rebuild TRC. On the other hand, several in the younger generation are torn, having lost friends they grew up with and playmates for their toddlers. Due to the actions of their parents, the catechism class, which had five catechumens, is no more. We have lost twenty-two children and youth between the ages of newborn and eighteen. Only three children remain between ages one and five.

With all of this, the younger generation finds it hard to hang on. Yet, as I write, this very evening a reorganized Youth Group is getting together for their first activity under the direction of a newlywed couple. A Young Adult Fellowship for those 40 and under is planning their first get together under the leadership of one of the deacons and his wife. A Sunday School class for the toddlers is in the works.

The Adult and High School/College Sunday School classes are well attended. The older generation is encouraging the younger generation to stand fast and move forward. The unity of the congregation is a blessing to us all.

Regarding my pastoral labors, a great deal of my time and efforts have been expended first, seeking to improve my preaching, teaching, leadership and counseling; and secondly, to help the congregation weather the storm since August.

I would be remiss if I did not mention Pastor Treick's assistance to hone my pastoral skills, and in helping both the Consistory and Spiritual Council through these stormy seas. I preached twice per Sunday until the end of November. In December, the Consistory decided to change from an evening worship service to Bible Studies on the first and third Sunday evenings monthly, with a hymn sing every fifth Sunday. I administered the Lord's Supper quarterly and had the privilege of baptizing two covenant infants and one adult. I taught membership classes for two new members and taught the Confirmation Class weekly until the end of the school year in August. Sunday mornings I taught the Adult Sunday School class. For Classis, I did what I could as chairman of the Musical Instruments in Worship Committee, and taught at the Heidelberg West Camp. For Synod, I served the Kenya Subcommittee of the Foreign Ministries Committee. This included regular phone and email communication with Kenyan Pastors and the professor at Knox Theological College, Mbale, Uganda. At this point, please allow me to make a plea to the churches of Classis. We have lost our coordinator for the annual rafting trip. Our diminished congregation is unable to undertake the coordination of this wonderful event. If your congregation can do so this year, please let me know as soon as possible. Perhaps this year we could forgo the meal at the end of the trip, or eat out together.

Concerning 2013 and beyond; ironically, in 2012 we experienced the worst year numerically since 1989. Yet, financially, by the grace of Christ and through the sacrificial giving of His people, we have ended the year in the best shape, perhaps ever, in the 27 year history of TRC! The Consistory is convinced that with our budget surplus and my ten percent reduction in salary, we can continue financially another two years if the present membership does not diminish. Even better, in spite of this upheaval, the Lord added three members in 2012 and we will soon witness the addition of two covenant infants! He also brought a URC elder with his wife from the east coast to sojourn with us for a while, though they may move east in the spring. A former inmate and his son have been regularly attending and love the reformed faith. We pray that a member's mother may be inclined to join us this coming year.

Though pruned and diminished, I am hopeful that our Lord Jesus Christ has given TRC an opportunity to rebuild and move forward. In 1989 there were 17 founding members of TRC. The founders were few, some with little children with few playmates and friends. In time, the Lord blessed Trinity with over 100 members. Many thriving RCUS churches have started out smaller than we are now. May the Lord be pleased to rebuild TRC. May this be an opportunity for us to learn and grow. May our Lord grant that others, including the children and grandchildren of second generation Trinity Reformed members, will come to experience the blessings they have enjoyed at TRC. Many disillusioned and dissatisfied Christians in Stanislaus and San Joaquin counties *still* need a life boat they can jump into where the Scriptures and Reformed Creeds are taught without apology. Young families still need a place where their children can be a part of the Confirmation program which blessed and strengthened the previous generation. Christian families in our counties need a church where youth can become strong reformed Christians who will be willing and able to hold the line for orthodoxy, unwilling to drift away from six day creation, and into weekly communion among other issues of the day.

With the help of our Sovereign Lord, we will engage in outreach and evangelism this year. With the help of the congregation, we plan to use Facebook and a website to introduce folks and friends to TRC. *Then the master said to the servant, 'Go out into the*

highways and hedges, and compel them to come in, that my house may be filled (Luke 14.23). May the Master be pleased to add souls to TRC from outside our membership in 2013. May He bring friends for our youth, our young adults, and their children. Please join us in praying about this regularly in 2013. May the Lord bless us as we seek to use every opportunity He gives us to invite folks to Trinity Reformed.

With brotherly affection for you all,
Rev. Thomas Mayville

Classis Action: Take note.

C. Rev. Jim West

Dear Fathers and Brothers,

My Christmas this past December was crowned by listening to George Frederic Handel's *Messiah* betimes as I drove up and down the highways. I mention this because one aria in particular was used of the Lord to remind me of the privilege and beauty of preaching the Gospel. The text is Isaiah 52:7: "How beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of him who brings good tidings, who proclaims peace, who brings good tidings of good things, who proclaims salvation, Who says unto Zion, "Thy God reigneth!" The musical accompaniment, the loveliness of his soprano voice, and especially the grandeur of the words reminded me of the beautiful gospel that God has called me to preach. It made my Christmas a very merry Christmas and prepared me for the challenges of a very happy new year.

This past calendar year I executed my normal duties of preaching, teaching, and counseling without remarkable fanfare. This includes teaching the catechumens, tutoring disciples on the Internet, teaching Hermeneutics at City Seminary, and writing a New Membership Class book which is currently being revised. There were several baptisms last year, all of them of infants. I conducted one wedding and continue to lead the men each Wednesday morning in a study of Calvin's *Institutes*. We spent some quality time studying Calvin's views on the kingdom of God as Calvin is cited by the Two-Kingdom theologians as supporting their view that God governs His church by His written law and that He governs the civil magistrate by natural law. The Two Kingdom idea is that God does not call upon us to redeem the culture for Christ. The argument is that the Common Kingdom is governed by the terms of God's covenant with Noah in Genesis 9, while the Spiritual kingdom of Christ (the Church) is governed by the Abrahamic covenant, which is redemptive. The Two Kingdom view also teaches that the famed Cultural Mandate of Genesis 1:26-28 is obsolete.

This past year saw me continue preaching through the Book of *Acts* (I am now in the middle of Acts 25). I am also nearing the completion of preaching on every book of the Bible, a ministry I started well over a year ago. There are pros and cons of attempting a project like this. The obvious pro is that it gives us a well-rounded view of the Bible instead of my pushing my own hobby horses. On the other hand, a certain amount of distortion enters the picture. For example, I preached one sermon on the book of Isaiah and then another on the book of Nahum. Obviously, there is distortion if you spend just as much time on Nahum as Isaiah since Isaiah is sixty-six chapters while Nahum is three. Nevertheless, the project has been good for my soul and [I hope] edifying for the people of God.

Also, Mr. Colin Samul of our own congregational ilk has applied to be a Student Under Care of the Western Classis. If my math is correct, and assuming Mr. Samul continues his studies and graduates, he will be the fourth ministerial candidate filtered through our Church. This is not to mention the Rev. David Paul Fagrey and the Rev. Jimmy Hall, who both served here as Summer assistants. In addition, we may have another ministerial candidate also in the offing next year. Thus the Lord has graciously blessed our congregation with future preachers of the gospel.

My New Membership Class book is nearly complete. It is called *Confessing the Christ of the Reformed Faith*. All that is needed is to add some review questions at the end of each chapter. What is unique about the New Membership Class book is that every distinctive doctrine of the Reformed Church in the United States is spelled-out and defended.

I am very busy doing the work of the Lord at City Seminary, as one-third of my time is devoted to theological education. When I retire, I hope to continue on in this capacity, with perhaps even more classes than what I teach now. Last year I taught Hermeneutics; this semester it is Soteriology. I have assigned three textbooks: Louis Berkhof's *Systematic Theology*, John Murray's *Redemption, Accomplished and Applied*, and Edwin Palmer's book on *The Holy Spirit*. The students are godly, motivated, and theological chatter boxes! The lectures are bathed in Reformed theology. We are not hiding the doctrines of the Reformation under a bushel.

In the previous year we also witnessed the addition of one new elder and one new deacon in our congregation. We praise God for gracing us with Mr. Kurt Snow and Mr. Jonathan Opie, as they not only responded favorably to the Lord's call, but have thrown themselves hook, line, and sinker into the work.

Statistically, our church held its own last year in a diseased economy. Whereas some congregations in Sacramento were taking financial hits up to 50% or more, we were largely spared those shock waves. My salary was paid on time, as it has been for the past 26 years. I praise God for the faithful giving of God's people and for their encouragements as I preach the gospel. Nevertheless, I cannot say that our cash reserves are at an all time high, but still, we are not sweating great drops of blood either.

As to membership statistics, we have 61 unconfirmed members and a total of 198 baptized members in all. Recently, we received two additional communicants and their children so that our total membership is once again over two-hundred. There were three baptisms last year and the Lord's Supper was served twelve times. The total number of elders and deacons is eleven, with two ministers. Yes, we have a Sunday School that covers all ages from age two to fifteen. By the grace of God we were able to fulfill all the Classical and Synodical guidelines.

As for evangelism, the church engages in neighborhood evangelism. We pass out tracts when we carol during the Christmas season; we also roll out the red carpet with a summer barbeque, inviting the whole neighborhood. Many come to the barbeque, engage in conversations that are both secular and spiritual, but thus far only a few have frequented the worship services on Sunday morning.

With regard to Confirmation, the elders recently decided to contact all the catechumens who have finished the course of instruction, but who have not yet professed Christ as their Lord and Savior before the elders and congregation. Making such contact is nothing unusual, except that the plan is for two elders instead of the whole Spiritual Council to interview the catechumens. It seems that many catechumens are terrified at

having to meet with the whole Spiritual Council, so that perhaps a more conversational style in a “friendlier” setting would make them more willing to make a public profession of faith (if that is their heart’s desire). Already two catechumens have come forward to confess Jesus Christ in the presence of the elders.

I did only a little preaching outside the pale of our own congregation last year. Except for preaching at Providence Reformed Church in Lodi (early this year) and at the Orthodox Presbyterian Church in Castroville last year, all the preaching was on my home turf. Even though the call of God always trumps my personal comfort, the older I get the more resistant I am to leaving town for any reason.

As for significant congregational issues one of the most pressing pertains to some of our young men as they search for a calling in life, complete their education, and in some cases, battle pornography. To combat this sin, some of them meet for prayer and fellowship, where they can mutually exhort one-another. The disturbing thing is the accessibility of pornography today and how vulnerable young men are to it. Of course, this is an old allurements and even Timothy, an evangelist filled with God’s Spirit, was commanded “to flee youthful lusts.”

I would be remiss if I did not mention the departure of Elder Doug Schlegel from our midst. Doug was ordained to the gospel ministry on March 30, 2012 at Providence Reformed Church in Lodi. This was not only a major event for Elder Schlegel, but also for City Seminary, as he was our first graduate to be ordained in the Reformed Church in the U.S. We praise God for his many faithful years of service in our congregation! Many years ago we discussed the possibility of his entering the ministry over a Jamba Juice in the open air. After he completed seminary, was examined, licensed, and ordained, we revisited that “historic location” to duplicate our culinary feat.

With regard to ministerial aid, there are several unanswered questions, especially about medical insurance. Thus I have chosen not to request Synodical ministerial aid until my economic situation becomes clearer.

In closing let me ask for your prayers as I continue to labor through September. My heart wants to race ahead to the end of September so that I am sometimes unsettled and distracted by what I call “the eschatology of retirement.” I am finding that the more I age, the more difficult it is to compose sermons (and preach them too, especially when there are two to do). While my physical frame seems to be robust and healthy, the mental part of me confirms the second law of thermodynamics. Yet, there is still kingdom-work for me to do. And, this work must be performed with joy, energy, and perseverance.

Respectfully Submitted,
Rev. Jim West

Classis Action: Take note. Elder David Helseth led the body in prayer for the reports on the Lancaster congregation, Rev. Mayville and Rev. West.

D. Rev. Michael Voytek

Esteemed Fathers and Brothers in Christ,

“Great is the LORD, and greatly to be praised in the city of our God, in His holy mountain. Beautiful in elevation, the joy of the whole earth, is Mount Zion on the sides of the north, the city of the great King” (Psalm 48:1-2). “The LORD loves the gates of Zion more than all the dwellings of Jacob. Glorious things are spoken of you, O city of God!”

(Psalm 87:2-3). *“You are all fair, my love, and there is no spot in you”* (Song of Solomon 4:7). Such are the thoughts of God toward His beloved bride, the Church. He has spared no expense to redeem her from the slave market of sin. He has presented her to Himself spotless and pure, arrayed with a gown of righteousness, clean and white. He has placed upon her head many crowns of glory. She is called “Hephzibah” because she is His greatest delight in all the world. She is the apple of His eye, He shelters her under the shadow of His wings. She is safe and secure in His love. No one shall be able to separate her from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord. Such are the promises of God concerning us. Take courage therefore; *“Have I not commanded you? Be strong and of good courage; do not be afraid, nor be dismayed, for the LORD your God is with you wherever you go”* (Joshua 1:9).

2012 was a year of milestones for Rehoboth Reformed Church. We began the year as Rehoboth Reformed Chapel under the loving oversight of the consistory of Ebenezer Reformed Church, Shafter, California. Through God's grace and blessing and in answer to the prayers of the saints of the RCUS, the chapel was organized into a self-governing church in September and I was elected and installed as pastor in November. In addition to the faithful service of elder Clarence Goehring, the Lord added two new elders, namely Robert Mettler and Matthew Davis and one new deacon Frank Krall to serve the body of Christ here in La Habra. We have a fully functioning spiritual council and consistory. It should be added that in January of 2013 at the first annual congregational meeting, Mr. Javier Villagran was elected as deacon. With his ordination and installation last Sunday (February 10th), the consistory now consists of three active elders and two active deacons. Praise the Lord!

Furthermore, we are reminded in the Book of Acts that it is the Lord who adds to His church (see Acts 2:47 & Acts 5:14), so we give glory to the Lord for His additions to our church family. Last year we witnessed the profession of faith of 10 new communicant members (including one profession of faith through baptism) and the baptism of four covenant children. Also in January of 2013, we received three covenant youth into communicant status through the confirmation of their faith. We also thank the Lord for the blessing of new visitors, some of whom are planning to attend a new member's class that will begin later this month. It is true that we did not receive by transfer all of the members of Ebenezer Reformed Church that have been counted as belonging to Rehoboth Reformed Chapel in previous years (one family moved to Pennsylvania, three families transferred to other Reformed or Presbyterian churches and one communicant member is still on the rolls at Ebenezer RCUS under discipline). Thus our communicant membership stands at 34 and the baptized membership at 46 (as of January 1st, 2013).

One of the areas of major concern for us as a mission work of the Western Classis and the Synod is the responsibility to reach our community with the gospel. It is encouraging to recall that in answer to your prayers for us, we have seen the willingness of member families to open their homes to host outreach Bible studies or to take and distribute invitation cards. Also we enjoyed the food, fun and fellowship at the outreach picnics held once a month at a local park during the summer. Another effective outreach tool has been the internet. When I arrived in 2011, the Rehoboth Reformed Chapel website was for all practical purposes almost non-existent. Through the efforts of a number of individuals including elders Matthew Davis and Robert Mettler, we now have a new and more effective website established. Furthermore, we realized that we were practically invisible when a search for "Reformed Church" and even "Rehoboth

Reformed Church" was entered in the major internet search engines such as BING, YAHOO, and GOOGLE. With some effort, we were able to increase our visibility and we have been blessed by the presence of recent visitors due in part to this endeavor. It is my hope and prayer that we will continue to look for opportunities to reach our community with the life-giving gospel.

Part of the purposes of the parochial report is to answer the question of whether the church maintains the three marks of the true church as delineated in the Belgic Confession (Article 29). I am happy to report and the elders can confirm that those marks are faithfully maintained at Rehoboth Reformed Church. Concerning the first mark (the preaching of the pure doctrine of the gospel), it has been my desire and goal to be faithful in the proclamation of the whole counsel of God as revealed in the Holy Scriptures. By God's grace, I was able to complete a sermon series started in 2011 from the Apostle Paul's letter to the Philippians. I also preached from the book of Ruth and from I Corinthians chapter 13 and Galatians chapter 5 on the fruit of the Spirit. In November, I began a sermon series from the Gospel according to Luke. During the Sunday school hour, besides the faithful labor of three members who teach the younger children and youth, elder Carl Esparza volunteered to teach an in depth study on the Ten Commandments that took almost the whole year to complete. He recently began a series on "Biblical Apologetics" or "How to Give an Answer to Everyone Who Asks." I continue to teach a Bible study on Sunday afternoon and the same study on Sunday evening. We have been working through the book of Genesis with a dual purpose of covering the material as well as in developing personal Bible study skills. Another very important part of the teaching ministry of the church that should be mentioned is the confirmation preparation of the youth of the congregation. It is my joy to report that our current confirmation class stands at four covenant youth, having recently graduated three youth. Concerning the second and third marks of the true church, I am pleased to report that they are being faithfully maintained as well. The Lord's Supper was celebrated six times last year. The elders faithfully guard the Lord's Table through the interview of those visitors who request to join with us and will follow that up by sending a notice of participation to the visitor's church. They function as shepherds among the flock and guardians of the gospel.

What are the challenges that we face as we continue to serve the Lord in this new year. Our greatest need, desire, and goal is to glorify God and enjoy Him forever. One of the most critical ways that we can fulfill this purpose is through continued spiritual and numerical growth. We have been specifically asking the Lord for the addition of ten new families. Please pray for the Lord's blessing as we seek to be found faithful in shepherding God's flock and reach out to the lost in this vast ocean of lost souls in the Los Angeles Basin. Pray also for wisdom for the consistory as we seek to establish effective means of outreach and ministry. We are also facing a financial challenge this year to increase the amount of tithes and offerings to offset the reduction of financial support from one RCUS church. The present members of the church faithfully give for the support of the church. Please pray with us for the addition of more families that will be able to add the needed resources.

Another great need is for a new place to meet for worship and ministry. Our lease of the current building will be up in May of 2014. Furthermore, the landlord has been contacting us regularly to inquire on our search for another facility. We have heard that they are planning to possibly turn our suite into a dental office and would like to see us vacate as soon as possible. We have been working with two different realtors and have

visited a number of properties that are either for sale or lease. The good news is that we are discovering that we can possibly reduce our costs and improve our visibility and accessibility in the process. The difficulty is that we currently do not have the financial resources to move to a new facility. We met with the Western Classis Home Missions Committee in early February and submitted a list of questions concerning how we should go about acquiring a new place of worship. We look forward to their response as well as in receiving the guidance of the Lord through the delegates of the Western Classis when we meet in March of this year. Please pray for the consistory as we seek to find the best facility to meet our needs and enable us to be even more effective in the ministry that God has called us to fulfill.

I want to take this opportunity to express our appreciation for the members and officers of Ebenezer Reformed Church in Shafter who have faithfully ministered to the flock here at Rehoboth. They have gone the extra mile and continue to do so. May the Lord richly bless them. The same could be said for the members and officers of the churches of the Western Classis. As you well know, this mission work has been struggling to establish itself as a church for a number of years. If it were not for the patience and faithful support and encouragement of the other churches and individual members of the RCUS, the work would have probably failed.

I will close with an encouraging word from the Lord that was recorded by the prophet Isaiah; *“For Zion’s sake I will not hold My peace, and for Jerusalem’s sake I will not rest, until her righteousness goes forth as brightness, and her salvation as a lamp that burns. The Gentiles shall see your righteousness, and all kings your glory. You shall be called by a new name, which the mouth of the LORD will name. You shall also be a crown of glory in the hand of the LORD, And a royal diadem in the hand of your God. You shall no longer be termed Forsaken, nor shall your land any more be termed Desolate; but you shall be called Hephzibah, and your land Beulah; for the LORD delights in you, and your land shall be married. For as a young man marries a virgin, so shall your sons marry you; and as the bridegroom rejoices over the bride, so shall your God rejoice over you”* (Isaiah 62:1-5).

Your fellow bondservant in Christ,
Rev. Michael Voytek

Classis Action: Take note.

E. Rev. Vernon Pollema

Esteemed Brethren:

As I sit down before my computer to write this report, I am wondering what I should write or even if I am required to write a report. According to Article 81 of the Constitution of the RCUS: “At the spring meeting every pastor shall present a written parochial report and full statistical report, and every minister, though without a charge, a report of his labors. . . . The parochial report shall contain a full account of the spiritual and temporal condition of the charge and of the labors of the pastor. . . .” Since I am retired, I cannot account for the spiritual and temporal condition of a charge or congregation, but as a minister without a charge, I am to report on my labors. Although that appears uncomplicated, Article 88 would imply that honorably retired ministers are exempt from this requirement.

Although retired and this past year being the most uneventful since retirement, nevertheless, I do have some labors I can report. I have supplied the pulpits of the two local congregations, Ebenezer in Shafter and Grace in Bakersfield. I continue to serve on the board of Heidelberg Theological Seminary in Sioux Falls, SD and was honored to deliver the convocation address at the beginning of the current academic year. On Sept. 30, 2012, I was the Missionfest speaker at a former charge, Emmanuel Reformed Church, Sutton, NE. I participated in two installation services on behalf of Classis: that of Rev. Gil Baloy, Aug. 24, 2012, Covenant Reformed Church, San Diego, CA and of Rev. Michael Voytek, Nov. 9, 2012, Rehoboth Reformed Church, La Habra, CA. Presently, I am again supplying the vacant pulpit at Grace Reformed Church, Lancaster, CA.

With regard to my health, I continue to do well. The diabetes remains under control through oral medication. My PSA number indicates no residual prostate cancer.

The Lord has been faithful in His provision for me and my wife through the supplemental ministerial aid we receive. We praise God for the generosity and care of His people in this provision for us.

Respectfully submitted,
Rev. Vernon Pollema

Classis Action: Take note.

F. Rev. Douglas Schlegel

Esteemed Fathers and Brothers,

In Isaiah 49:9-10, the prophet declares, "Remember the former things of old: for I am God, and there is none else; I am God, and there is none like me, declaring the end from the beginning, and from ancient times the things that are not yet done, saying, My counsel shall stand, and I will do all my pleasure...." The year of 2012 was a year of beginnings and endings at Providence Reformed Church and for my labors there. In all the events of the past year I can attest to the obvious fact that the hand of our Sovereign God has preserved His people and directed their affairs according to His own good counsel. It is my pleasure to report to you the details of those beginnings and endings.

The practice of submitting parochial reports is, in my opinion, a good practice for a number of reasons. It reminds us that we are not merely lonely, and sometimes wounded warriors but rather, that we are part of a greater whole and stand shoulder-to-shoulder with other warriors who have the same goal. It also provides a regular opportunity for self-evaluation and even some sanctified self-criticism. But how does one evaluate the spiritual condition of a particular congregation and the successes or failures of its pastor? One thing I know is that stunning numerical growth or financial abundance, while a blessing, are not objective standards by which to evaluate these things.

March 30 saw one of the endings and beginnings. The long road of seminary education and Classis examinations terminated in my ordination to the gospel ministry. The congregation of Providence is to be commended for their unflinching encouragement in my preparations. I administered the Lord's Supper for the first time two days later and have done so monthly from that time. During the course of the year I completed preaching through the book of Colossians (a total of 25 sermons), preached a ten part series on the covenants, began preaching through the book of I Peter, and preached numerous sermons suitable to holidays and other occasions. I also was invited to

proclaim God's Word at Sacramento Covenant Reformed and baptized my grandson on that occasion. I also regularly teach a mid-week Bible Study, Church History during Sunday School and Catechism during the week. The ministry of the Word is well received and I am especially encouraged by the growth and participation of the mid-week Bible Study entitled, *Fuel for Living*.

I am also continuing to go to Mule Creek State Prison on a regular basis. I had thought that my visits with one of the inmates was bearing fruit, but was greatly saddened when that relationship ended. But God, in His mercy, provided another contact and I have been meeting with him. This new contact will likely provide a beginning for Providence Reformed. The inmate will, Lord willing, be released in the Spring of next year after being incarcerated for 25 years and has expressed the intent of joining with us at Providence. He is also encouraging me to pursue a "brown card" so that I can have fuller access to minister to the dozen or so Christian inmates of a Reformed persuasion at Mule Creek. I am prayerfully considering this, but do not want to begin something that I will be unable to do.

Statistically, the past year appears to be nearly static, but this is definitely not the case. Those who were erased or dismissed were replaced by others and the participation and enthusiasm is much greater now. Financially, we are no longer awash in red ink and, apart from the cost of recovering from a flooded basement, more or less broke even. This is a glorious ending. The congregation is very faithful and generous in giving.

With our limited resources, we attempt to make our presence known in Lodi and the surrounding area. Most of the visitors we see find us through our internet presence and it is the most cost-effective way to publicize the ministry of the church. This, and the participation in some civic events, provides us with some good visibility and we are planning to participate in the Farmer's Market this summer. We hope to have a booth there in order to engage with the heavy foot traffic. When we see visitors and they are willing to provide contact information, I follow-up with a letter and occasionally a phone call. Many of the visitors do not return and I wonder what the causes are. The congregation is unfailingly friendly and engages with visitors. I have to assume that there is some other issue, but I have yet to determine what it is. We are unashamed of the gospel and our Reformed heritage of worship and doctrine.

An expression of that Reformed heritage is found in the Canons of Dort, Fifth Head of Doctrine, paragraph 14. Concerning the perseverance of saints it reads, "And as it has pleased God, by the preaching of the gospel, to begin this work of grace in us, so He preserves, continues, and perfects it by the hearing and reading of His Word, by meditation thereon, and by the exhortations, threatenings, and promises thereof, and by the use of the sacraments." It is my pleasure to report that, even in a year of many endings and beginnings, the assurance that the faithful preaching of the Word and the right use of the sacraments is, and ought to be, central to the life of the church is alive and well at Providence Reformed. By that standard, the work and growth continues at Providence Reformed to the glory of God alone.

Respectfully Submitted,
Rev. Douglas Schlegel

Classis Action: Take note. Elder Wayne Johnson led the body in prayer.

G. Rev. Frank Walker

Congregation of the Lord Jesus Christ:

Everyone whose heart has been changed by the grace of God sings the same song. Psalm 89:1 says, *I will sing of the mercies of the LORD for ever: with my mouth will I make known Thy faithfulness to all generations.* Our song is the eternal song of the triumph of God's mercy and faithfulness over our sin. Not only is it a privilege to sing that song, but it's an even greater honor to proclaim it week to week from this pulpit and day to day in the seminary classroom.

I am now almost halfway through my thirteenth year as associate pastor of Covenant Reformed Church. During that time, I've seen a lot changes in membership and in officers. But the biggest change is yet to come. When I arrived, Pastor West was just beginning his fourteenth year. He will soon be retiring from the active pastorate, but not from an active ministry of the gospel, since he plans to continue teaching in the seminary. I'm not altogether certain of this though, since he once said that in retirement he would grow a beard and sit on the beach in Monterey. In any case, his retirement will have a tremendous impact on the church.

For the most part, I'll let Pastor West comment on the state of the church. However, I should at least report on my own labors. I preached a total of forty-three Lord's Day sermons at Covenant Reformed Church, plus an additional four at Providence Reformed Church in Lodi. One of last year's highlights was to give the charge to the pastor-elect when our brother Doug Schlegel, a graduate of City Seminary, was ordained to the gospel ministry. I have no doubt that he will serve the Lord well in this office, and that others will follow in his footsteps. Other than preaching, I also taught the adult Sunday school class for the first half of the year, wrapping up our study of the gospel of Mark, and engaged in counseling and oversight as needed. Moreover, I served on the Candidates and Credentials Committee of the Western Classis, and the Executive and Website Committees of Synod.

When Covenant Reformed Church called me as associate pastor in 2000, it was with the understanding that my work would be allocated one-third in the church and two-thirds in the seminary, with Pastor West's work being exactly the opposite. Thus, Pastor West has assumed most of the pastoral duties, while I have focused more of my time and energy on the work of the seminary. This is an arrangement that suits me well and from which I derive great joy.

Not too long ago, one of our students told me a story that shows how the seminary has already affected other churches. When he started taking classes many years ago, he quickly developed a childlike excitement for the "new doctrines" he was hearing. Of course, the doctrines weren't really new; it's just that he had never heard them before. In any case, he wanted to go back to his church and tell everyone what he had found. I cautioned him to take it very slowly, warning him that many sincere Christians, and particularly church leaders, are not quite ready for the whole truth. Instead, he asked his pastor to evaluate a term paper that he had written, which, judging from the title, was probably for one of Pastor West's classes. In any case, his pastor read the paper but didn't say anything. The next Sunday, during the morning worship service, he waved the paper before the congregation and said, "If anyone wants to believe what's in this paper, he should find another church." For the next few years, the student had no contact with his former pastor. After about five years, the pastor called him on the telephone and said,

“Brother, I need your help.” The student said, “What do you mean?” He replied, “I’ve become Reformed.” That pastor ended up going to a different Reformed seminary and is now preaching in a Reformed church.

False teaching can throw a church out of whack in a very short period of time. Paul wrote to the Galatians, *I marvel that ye are so soon removed from him that called you into the grace of Christ unto another gospel* (Gal. 1:6). But positive change tends to come much slower. A student from a non-Reformed background took classes at an unassuming seminary in Sacramento. I doubt that he will ever be a pastor himself; but having learned the truth, he influenced and continues to influence many others. Churches with which we have zero direct contact benefit from our labors. How can we not say with Paul, *Notwithstanding, every way, whether in pretence, or in truth, Christ is preached; and I therein do rejoice, yea, and will rejoice* (Phil. 1:18)?

The Lord has blessed the Sacramento congregation with the wherewithal to offer a seminary program. We have gifted and enthusiastic teachers, men with vision, the support of a local church, adequate facilities, and so much more. The fact that we maintain about thirty students from semester to semester shows that the need is there, and the testimony of our students confirms that our approach of emphasizing the Bible is successful. Most of the students in my current Reformation History class come from non-Reformed backgrounds, but they’re excited about the Reformation because I started the semester by explaining how their churches benefited from the Biblical courage and conviction of the Reformers.

There may be some who think that operating a seminary is a side-ministry, a distraction from what we really should be doing. I take the opposite position, believing that more churches should follow our example. The pattern of ministers training ministers is clearly taught in 2 Timothy 2:2, where Paul wrote, *and the things that thou hast heard of me among many witnesses, the same commit thou to faithful men, who shall be able to teach others also*.

I don’t know how long Covenant Reformed Church will be faithful to the Word of God, although I hope and pray that it will be a very long time. Nor do I know how long the Reformed Church in the United States will stand firmly on the Scriptures. Our denomination was almost destroyed once already. But this I know, that, even if our congregation and/or denomination are consigned to the dust bins of history, the work that we have done and continue to do will bear fruit far out of proportion to our meager efforts.

I rejoice in the ministry to which God has called me, even though I lament every day that I’m not a better preacher, pastor, teacher, counselor and so forth. But I understand also that all the gifts belong to Jesus, who distributes them by his Spirit as he sees fit, and I am content for him to use me in whatever way he chooses. I pray that the ministry of the Word as proclaimed both by Pastor West and myself, as well as by his yet unknown successor, will transform the Sacramento congregation from grace to grace, making each individual more like our wonderful Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ.

In Christ’s eternal love,
Rev. Frank Walker

Classis Action: Take note.

H. Rev. Tracy Gruggett

Esteemed Fathers and Brethren,

Paul said to the Ephesian' elders, *And now, brethren, I commend you to God, and to the word of his grace, which is able to build you up, and to give you an inheritance among all them which are sanctified* (Acts 20:32-33). Only the Word of God saves souls, only the Word builds up and sanctifies. I thank God for your unwavering commitment to His Word of Grace. To be a part of a church that is committed to Bible preaching and teaching is a wonderful privilege.

Ministry of the Word: This year the Word was ministered much as it always has been at Grace Reformed Church. The Word was preached each Lord's Day. In the early part of the year I finished preaching through the book of Ephesians. I preached a short series on the book of Job, and Isaiah, as well as a series on the short General Epistles, 2 & 3 John and Jude. In Sunday school we finished a study of the book of Ezekiel. I taught on the topic of "Vocation." And we began a study of the "Farewell Discourses" in John's Gospel, which are still under way. I also write a monthly article for our church newsletter.

Sacraments: The sacraments were administered faithfully. The Lord's Supper was served four times and the Sacrament of Baptism was administered to two covenant youths. We have the congregation fill out cards indicating that they took the Lord's Supper. We confirmed two covenant youth in May.

Oversight: During the year, we exercised oversight through the regular preaching, teaching and Sunday interaction. Both the Consistory and Spiritual Council met regularly to conduct the business of the church. Visits were conducted through the pastor's regular visitation of the elderly and on a case by case basis. Over lunch I regularly meet with members of the congregation, sometimes specifically for counseling. Three members were suspended from the Lord's Supper. Four members were judicially erased. The Spiritual Council was deluged by several discipline cases which were time consuming, heart breaking, and distracting. Consequently, 2012 has been the most difficult year of my ministry thus far. I believe that our visitation with the congregation was lacking in 2012. We need to grow in faithfulness in this area.

Worship: Worship services were conducted once on Sundays, with occasional services on Good Friday and Christmas day. Attendance is usually very high. We confessed the faith using the Heidelberg Catechism. There were readings of the law of God. And usually we sang three hymns, sometimes four. Music in the church is a live issue in the hearts of our people. There is a strong desire to expand our music beyond the Trinity hymnal. I have used other hymns and songs from the Gettys and from an outstanding website called churchworks.com. These are both new and fit well within the current of Reformed hymnology. I have also used an acoustic guitar to accompany the piano on some Sundays.

Fellowship: The congregation exhibits a friendly and a welcoming spirit. We have two fellowship meals per month. Yet in my judgment hospitality with each other and with visitors needs improvement. I reported last year that there was a desire to see some small group Bible studies start up in the church. The Consistory agreed to this in 2012 and put together a plan to implement two groups. These seem to be off to a good start so far. Our ladies get together for a monthly "Women of Grace" meeting. And there are other occasions for get-togethers as well. We conducted a men's retreat in

October with about a dozen men at a guest ranch along the central coast. Rev. Jim Sawtelle was our featured speaker, and he also spoke at our missionfest service that same weekend.

Evangelism: A street-fair booth was set up several times during the spring and early summer months in which we gave out brochure and booklets. In the later part of the year, I tried to promote Christmas Day and also the preceding Sunday (the day of our Christmas program) as invitation days—days that we go out of our way to invite friends and family to attend. Otherwise most evangelism is done through the regular preaching of the Word. We also redesigned our website, which is now completed. Nevertheless, the Lord has not added to our number for quite some time. We have not had a new member's class since the summer of 2010.

Care for the Poor and Needy: The congregation took special offerings once a month that either went to RCUS causes or to local ministries. The congregation gives well especially to support RCUS works or ministers, a point for which I have been very grateful.

We saw the departure of one of our beloved saints, Marie Stuebbe, wife to Rev. Calvin Stuebbe. She had a strong faith and regularly attended worship even up to her final weeks in the world.

My family is doing well. We are very busy. Our oldest, Samantha, is a sophomore in high school. Angela is thirteen and in the eighth grade. Lydia and Corissa are in fourth and third grades respectively. Michelle teaches fifth grade.

As for myself, my commitment to the Word of God grows through the trials of Biblical ministry. I am excited to preach, teach, and counsel the word to Grace Reformed Church. I am not discouraged, but enthusiastic about the ministry of the Word at Grace Reformed Church. May God continue to bless Grace Reformed Church and all the churches of the Western Classis.

Respectfully submitted,
Rev. Tracy Gruggett

Classis Action: Take note.

I. Rev. Sam Powell

Esteemed fathers and brethren,

A man's heart deviseth his way: but the LORD directeth his steps (Proverbs 16:9 KJV). O LORD, I know that the way of man is not in himself: it is not in man that walketh to direct his steps (Jeremiah 10:23 KJV).

I had many plans and goals at the beginning of 2012. In the intricate fabric of my life I had woven an ambitious tapestry of good intentions. My devised steps were a panoply of the accoutrements of a well-ordered life, and I had begun my voyage through the coming year earnestly and enthusiastically.

But however well we plan our way, it is the Lord that directs the steps. How quickly does our sovereign God ground our unwary ships on the shoals of His good providence! In my case, a ruptured bowel served to teach me the frailty of the flesh and the strength of our God.

In February, I was admitted to the hospital for an emergency colostomy, which effectively put me out of commission for several months. I was able to return to

preaching in six weeks, but as of this writing, I am still not as productive as I would like to be.

In October, the colostomy was reversed, again taking me out of the pulpit for four weeks. I thank God for healing, and my strength is slowly returning. I am under doctor's orders to refrain from all straining and heavy lifting for at least a year.

But the work of God's kingdom continued, since it is done by Jesus Christ through the Holy Spirit in spite of human frailty. Rev. Gene Sawtelle was able to fill the pulpit during my convalescence, and we saw many visitors throughout the year.

The word of God was faithfully and solemnly proclaimed each Sunday, by an ordained and qualified minister of the RCUS. This may sound strange to say, for by God's mercy we have been blessed with faithful Reformed ministers since the founding of this church. But this is becoming increasingly rare. We must be overwhelmingly thankful for His astounding providence. We must also be thankful to faithful elders who refuse to compromise the solemnity of the pulpit.

Rev. Gene Sawtelle preached 12 times in 2012: twice while I was traveling to Synod, and the rest due to my illnesses. I preached 41 times. I began and completed a series through the books of 1 and 2 Thessalonians, and began a series on 1 Peter. Interspersed between them were various sermons of various topics.

In the adult Sunday School class, I finished an exposition of the law of God and began a series of studies through the minor prophets, completing Joel and Amos (Hosea was completed several years back). During my incapacitation, the elders of the church presented a series of videos on marriage by Paul David Tripp entitled *What Did You Expect?*

Elder Greg Stewart continued teaching the young people through *Study Helps on the Heidelberg Catechism*; Morgan Opie is teaching Bible History to the elementary aged children; and Cindy McMillan has started a Sunday school class for the 2-4 year olds. It is a wonderful blessing to see our covenant youth brought up in the doctrines of true faith! Wednesday night Bible study was discontinued for the year.

The Sacraments of the Church were faithfully administered according to the Scriptures and the constitution and creeds of the RCUS. The Lord's Supper was served 12 times, either by me or by Rev. Sawtelle. Baptism was administered to Allison Opie, the covenant daughter of Michael and Morgan Opie.

Church discipline was faithfully exercised according to scripture and the constitution. Although it is painful, yet we know that God is holy, and has also called His church to holiness. His goodness far exceeds ours and we trust in him to bring good out of every trial.

But the kingdom of heaven is not only shut by the preaching of the gospel and Christian discipline, it is also opened. We were greatly blessed with new communicant members this past year. MJ Massicotte was received into membership by transfer from the RPCNA, and then he was removed to Afghanistan where he is serving his country in the Air Force. We continue to pray for his safe return. My daughter Kaerie Powell and Silas Ochsner, the son of James and Jenette Ochsner, were received into full communicant membership by confirmation on December 23, 2012. Kaerie is also the daughter of my wife, Susan Powell, but there was no way that I could see to grammatically or stylistically fit that into the previous sentence. Kaerie is also the granddaughter of Bud and Penny Powell and Dorman and Kay Savage; Silas is the grandson of Gene and Sharon Sawtelle and Ewald and Elsie Ochsner. God promised

Abraham that he would be a God to him and to his seed after him; every day we still see this promise fulfilled.

God has blessed us even further with the addition of a new Elder. Dan Yeager was ordained to office on February 5, 2012. Both Dan and his family have been a tremendous blessing to us all.

We continue to operate a site at SermonAudio.com. We currently have 236 sermons available for download, either on computer or on mobile phone. CD's of sermons are also made, as needed.

I continue in my role as chairman of the Synodical Publications and Promotions Committee. We have changed the format of the Reformed Herald to bimonthly, 24 pages, instead of monthly 12 pages. We print them locally at a significant savings for the denomination. We are also in the process of printing Heidelberg Catechisms. Currently available at Amazon.com are *The Three Forms of Unity*; *Study Helps on the Heidelberg Catechism*; and *The Constitution of the Reformed Church in the United States*.

We are also putting the final touches on the paper *Promoting a Biblical Sexual Morality* which concludes two years of work. As soon as it is approved by Synod, we will proceed to publishing it.

For the Classis, I serve as the chairman of the Publications Committee, and serve on both the Missions Committee and the Committee to Study the Use and Place of Musical Instruments in Worship. These committees have taken very little time this year, for various reasons.

Due to my limitations this past year, I was unable to attend Classis or Heidelberg West Youth Camp. I sorely missed these opportunities. I was, however, able to attend Synod in Rapid City, which was a very enjoyable and productive time.

I have accepted an appointment to the position of Associate Professor at City Seminary, and will begin teaching Hebrew in the fall of 2013.

My dear wife Susan continues to astound me. A young man has his dreams; a young woman her charms. The bards of the age sing of nymphs and shepherdesses, summer days and golden bands; they wax eloquent of roses newly opened and the mysteries of love. But until you have seen a woman cheerfully nurse a man with a ruptured bowel, changing colostomy bags, taking care of every medical need, and continuing to keep the house orderly, clean and sober, you have not even scratched the surface of love. A woman who can keep her good humor and never lose that look of tenderness even through that which makes men blanch and weep is a wife to envy and emulate. In my recollection, she only blanched once, in circumstances that we said we would never speak of again. She vowed “in sickness and in health”, and has kept her vow – not begrudgingly, not bitterly, but with tremendous faithfulness and tenderness. *Whoso findeth a wife findeth a good thing, and obtaineth favour of the LORD* (Proverbs 18:22).

When a man has found a wife, the honeymoon does not end, but grows each day, opening love as spring opens, touching skillfully, mysteriously, her first rose. e.e. cummings wrote of it, but never found it. *Many daughters have done virtuously, but thou excellest them all* (Proverbs 31:29).

It continues to be a tremendous privilege to serve God at Yuba City and in Western Classis. I wish to be very careful and not overstep my bounds, but the work of the church is a collective work. We have a tremendous task ahead of us. We have the glorious privilege of working in God's kingdom. There is much to be done and we all need each other. I can't help but feel at times that the work of the Classis and Synod “take a back

seat” in some minds, and this should not be. When we wait until two or three weeks before our meeting is scheduled to begin discussing the issues in our committees it is impossible to give them the weight that is due them. Other work that I have before me on various committees cannot be done because emails are unanswered, work assigned is left undone without explanation, phone calls are not returned and deadlines are not met. Remember the Christ who calls us to diligently give heed to our business, not only as pastors, but as Christ’s sheep. We cannot teach others to work hard for their daily bread if we neglect duty ourselves.

Yours in Christ and in great affection,
Rev. Sam Powell

Classis Action: Take note. Elder Alfred White led the body in prayer.

J. Rev. Paul Treick

Esteemed brothers in Christ,

It never ceases to amaze me that God has placed such a precious treasure as His gospel in an “earthen vessel”. But as Paul explains in that wonderful and encouraging chapter of II Corinthians “that the excellence of the power may be of God and not of us” (4:7). By His power and for His glory we all labor. While we as pastors and elders are clay pots entrusted with great treasure, we are humbled even more by that fact that God, the potter has formed us from the clay to serve His needs. We did not form ourselves, but we are God’s clay pots. Thankfully, the potter has absolute power over the clay and the treasure within. By that power we are able to join with John in saying, “He must increase, but I must decrease.” (Jn. 3:30)

It has been a pleasure to serve my Lord again over the past year, even though some of my work is diminished from the actual pastorate. I must say that I long for the pulpit, but the weakness of the flesh regulates this. I was able to preach 24 times during the past year and teach Sunday School at least six times, for which I am grateful. I filled pulpits in several OPC churches: in Sunnyvale, Sonora, Modesto, Hughson, Hanford, and Navato. For the RCUS, I also preached in Lodi, Stockton, and Modesto. The one thing I have really enjoyed is to meet the saints in all these congregations and, along with my wife Karen, develop good friendships.

During the last several months, due to difficulties in my home church in Modesto, I have been asked to serve as advisor to the Consistory and Spiritual Council. I gladly attend as many of these meetings as possible, although this is the part of the pastoral ministry that I miss the least. We have a good consistory restored after the departure of several officers, and are looking forward to a positive and increased outreach to the city.

My health has diminished this past year, but mostly it is bearable and does not totally interfere with my work. With my hands crippling up more, I find I make a lot more typos than usual. I’m not complaining, as many have much more to deal with than I do. I also am very thankful for Karen, my faithful wife of 45 years, and our children and their families who love the Lord. We also are thankful for the monthly Ministerial Aid which the RCUS gives us in our retirement.

I have kept busy with editing the *Reformed Herald*. Response to the larger bimonthly issue has been mostly positive. I also completed a revision of my book *Faith of Our Fathers*. It still needs some better font setting and then it will be ready to publish

again. When completed, it should appear on Amazon, but not with the spiral binding. I did some work on the Answer Key to *Our God and His People in the New Testament* workbook, but it is a large undertaking and will take time accordingly. Mostly, my time in reading has been spent in two areas – the Heidelberg Catechism doctrine and history, and the new Two-Kingdoms doctrine that is spreading across the Reformed community recently. What a tremendous blessing it is to have the Three Forms of Unity as a basis for our doctrine in the RCUS. And what a light they shed on all the latest theological movements! Brothers, let us study and teach them without fail or fear.

God has formed us as clay pots so the glorious gospel light may far outshine us. Praise God that He continues to use us in His church which is the “pillar and ground of the truth.” May God give us wisdom and boldness in a morally decadent society to boldly proclaim one and only hope of salvation through the shed blood of Jesus. All might fail around us, but God’s strength is within us. May God bless the Western Classis of the RCUS as she continues to stand for the Reformed faith. As we look ahead, let us not forget to look backwards to the shoulders of our fathers on which we stand.

Sincerely yours in Christ,
Rev. Paul Treick

Classis Action: Take note.

K. Rev. Hank Bowen

Beloved Brothers,

This coming July marks ten years of serving as the pastor of Faith Reformed Church. Over that time the membership has declined slightly from what was already a small group. Among the current members there are only three who were not here when I arrived. That speaks to the faithfulness of the others who continue on in their faithfulness and support of the ministry at Faith Reformed Church year after year.

Attendance on Sunday mornings ranges from 25 to 30. The income of the church reflects a tremendous commitment by this small flock, but our overall income dropped slightly as a couple of our older members have moved into senior care and are no longer in a position to contribute financially to the church. The congregational giving along with the denominational aid just covers all of our basic operating expenses.

Our communicant membership fell from 22 to 20 this past year. Elder Derrick Merkel transferred to the Grass Valley congregation after entering Sacramento City Seminary. After performing the wedding of my daughter, Bethany to Mark Opp in August, she became a member of the Sioux Center URC where they live while Mark finishes his senior year at Dordt College. One senior member is now living in Sacramento with her family due to her declining health, and another member has been living in Oregon for over a year to care for an ailing daughter.

On the other side of things, one family, who has been in attendance for some time, is being received into membership. I had the privilege of performing their wedding following service this past year. They come as a blended family with three covenant youth from high school to grade school ages.

Acting upon the permanent Diaconal Committee’s recommendation, all of Faith Reformed Church’s sermons are now available at sermonaudio as well as linked to the Faith RCUS website. We have had several hundred downloads over the past six months,

however, most come from outside of California, with only a handful within our geographical area. While it is exciting to see a greatly increased hearing audience, our hope is to see the membership grow. Accomplishing this feat remains an elusive project.

Faith Reformed Church is extremely grateful to both the Classis and Synod for their continued financial support of the ministry here in Anderson. We are convinced that this is an important place to have a presence in the proclamation of the Reformed faith. Effort is continually made to evangelize the lost and be a faithful witness to the saving grace of God within our community. Without the benevolent aid it would be very difficult for the church to meet its obligations.

I preached 49 times this past year and am now teaching the Adult Sunday School class on the Sacrifice of Praise. I taught Apologetics at Heidelberg Theological Seminary during a two week session last March. Elder Merkel exhorted on those Sundays I was gone. Derrick did an excellent job finishing up his teaching of our morning adult Sunday School on the Heidelberg Catechism. He continued his distance learning through Heidelberg Theological Seminary in the spring. He moved to Sacramento toward the end of summer to take up studies at City Seminary. His absence leaves a hole in our leadership, but we are very thankful to the great addition he brought to our congregation while he was here.

My responsibilities as the clerk of Classis continue to make the first quarter of the year make me feel like I am killing a five on three penalty, with all that is involved in getting ready for Classis and then pulling the Minutes and Abstract together. This is compounded by the fact that I am the umpire assigner for about 1,000 high school baseball and softball games in my area over a three month period.

I also currently serve on the Synod Home Missions Committee. Generally, I continue to pray, preach and trust in Lord to work in the hearts of all those for whom Christ laid down His life as He builds His kingdom here upon earth.

Respectfully submitted,
Rev. Hank Bowen

Classis Action: Take note.

L. Rev. Gil Baloy

Esteemed Brothers in Christ,

Last year, on the Lord's Day prior to the start of Classis, six families comprised of 21 people showed up at our church doorstep. They originated from my former congregation, the Puritan Evangelical Church of America. The "troop reinforcements" came at a critical time when we were preparing to organize as a church of Classis. It is providential that earlier in January Vern Pollema, Matt Powell, and myself helped to organize a new church in Caluan, Laguna, for the United Covenant Reformed Church in the Philippines. This time, it was our turn in San Diego on August 31, 2012 with the help of a committee made up of Revs. Vern Pollema, Michael Voytek and Scott Henry. While we did not have any new officers ready in the wings then, we hope to have a new elder and a new deacon by the time of Synod in May.

God's Word has been faithfully preached in the morning worship service through all of 2012. I was able to complete a study on The Sermon on the Mount, a series on the doctrine of the Church, and topical sermons on "Christian Bond Slavery." When it is my

turn in our monthly joint Worship Evening Service at the local RPNCA church, I preach from the Heidelberg Catechism, like the practice in the old Christian Reformed Church.

On the other evenings in the month we explored the doctrines of Church Government and Church Discipline, and the topics of “Christian Liberty” and “Effectual Prayer.” Instruction was provided for the new group from the Three Forms of Unity and the RCUS Constitution. A number of them expressed a new-found love for the Heidelberg Catechism. They appreciate the simplicity of our Constitution, and the fact that we actually use it in the counseling and discipline of the church. I have no doubt it was a refreshing review for the regular members. So far our membership has increased by six: three by letter of transfer, two by profession of faith and baptism, and one infant baptism. The Lord’s Supper was celebrated 11 times.

Our Sunday School department has grown in size to justify creating two new classes and adding two new teachers as well. Two brethren joyfully assist me in the weekly rest home ministry. That has freed me to be a substitute teacher in the Sunday School, such as when my wife Maricar returned to the Philippines for a family reunion during the recent holiday season. I conducted no confirmation or catechism class. That may change this year with three potential students.

The Wednesday “Midweek Oasis” continues to be a blessing to those able to attend. I taught principles of apologetics and evangelism, biblical counseling and a related study entitled “A Ministry of Encouragement.” Each month several men are assigned to talk on various topics geared to our youth, e.g. “Struggling to Put God First,” and “The Importance of a Daily Quiet Time.” At the end of each lesson, we break up into small prayer groups and cover a prescribed list of prayer requests. A few of the sisters continue to meet for weekly prayer like Lydia and company used to do each Sabbath by a river on the outskirts of Philippi (Acts 16:13-14).

The counseling workload has increased last year. In one case, when Maricar and I chauffeured a mother and her child to seek legal counsel, we were stalked by her husband. It took police intervention to avert further trouble. In another case, we assisted the RPCNA pastor in trying to counsel a couple with three children who are former members of his church. Outstanding discipline cases were kept to a minimum: no judicial erasures or ex-communications. Our homeless attendee Tom Cox now is undergoing “Over-the Road” truck driving training with CE England Global Transportation. It was almost three years ago that Tom came to us through our ministry in Balboa Park.

For your information, we transformed our monthly meeting into a Gospel Preaching Service with three who preach and three other men who give their testimony. The messages are interspersed with Scripture recitation, a choir singing hymns like “Amazing Grace” and “Fountain Filled with Blood,” and at least one solo with guitar accompaniment. The preaching is directed to our congregation rather than to the passers-by. It is interesting to note that we have more outside listeners, with a few who actually sit in on the meeting, when we do that. Also, we have a more inter-active tract table with a sign, “Intelligence Test,” and spiritual surveys, quizzes and tracts to offer curiosity-seekers. This has opened up discussion with professing Christians about the Reformed Faith and opportunities to present the gospel.

The brethren love to fellowship and they love to eat. So they look for every occasion to do both, like Memorial Day, Independence Day, and the Lord’s Day (52 count them!). Last summer, a good number of our congregation joined brethren from four other RCUS churches in Southern California for a picnic at Silverwood Lake. None of our group

camped overnight, but we did enjoy the better part of that Saturday in hearty Christian fellowship. In the fall, we relaxed at a campout at nearby Carlsbad Beach. Then there was our annual New Year's Fellowship when we open up our "Prayer Time Capsule" and read the anonymously written prayer requests from the previous year. As one new-comer aptly observed, it is much better to recount our heavenly Father's "bright streaks of providence" than to hear CNN, NBC and even Fox News lament the sad lives of the rich and famous and the passing of world's notorieties.

I continue to serve in several committees: Home Missions, Interchurch Relations and Heidelberg West Youth Camp Committees in Western Classis, and the Foreign Ministries Committee of Synod as the chairman for the Philippines Sub-Committee with two brothers. We saw the retirement from the work force of Alfred White and another member, my cousin, Cely Gamalindo. It is a blessing that Alfred has more time to help out in the work of the ministry. Cely returned to the Philippines to care for her aging mother Esther, who is my father's oldest sister. Esther never became a member with us, but has since professed faith in Christ as recorded on video by Maricar in her recent visit. Also, I rejoice in reporting that my father has called on the Lord recently. It was the fruit of the ministry of an older Filipino pastor and his wife who visited my folks' home in the Monterey Peninsula. Do pray for my mother who suffers from Alzheimer's and Parkinson's Diseases, and that God would give the family wisdom in her future care. She continues to maintain a profession of faith now for several years.

I want to express special heartfelt thanks to the Sacramento Covenant Reformed Church. Its pastors, elders and deacons have watched over our flock with much pastoral love, prayer and support for the past twelve years. What would we have done without these dear brethren during our sojourning as a missionary congregation? May the Lord bless them mightily and cause His smiling face to shine upon them all! Time and again, I am encouraged to hear from pastors and other brethren in churches throughout the Western Classis and RCUS who make it a point to inform us of their praying for us. I cannot agree more with one parochial report last year: "We are certainly convinced that the RCUS is the best church home we could have." Finally, I thank God for our faithful church family here, and my own family which will always be my "first flock." I cannot do the ministry without their support.

Your Calvary Bond Slave,
Gil Baloy

Classis Action: Take note. Elder Derrick Merkel led the body in prayer.

M. Rev. Jonathan Merica

Esteemed Brothers in Christ,

It is encouraging to know that as we labor together in the kingdom of God, we labor together with God. He gives us His grace and strength to labor for His glory. Through Him we can do all things, and we must humbly confess as the Psalmist in Psalm 127:1, "*Except the LORD build the house, they labour in vain that build it: except the LORD keep the city, the watchman waketh but in vain.*" We praise God that His hand of blessing is with us as we labor to build the congregation of Calvary Reformed Chapel in Stockton.

The primary focus in the ministry of Calvary Reformed Chapel is to preach and to teach the Word of God. Several visitors that have attended our services stated they were

looking for a church where the Word of God is preached because that's not what they were getting at their former church. We are reaching out to the people of the community by our web site, Google Ad words advertisement, and our Stockton Yellows Pages advertisement. Most people learn about us through our web site. When visitors attend, we endeavor to obtain their contact information, and follow up is made either by letter or telephone calls. Literature is made available to our visitors on our literature table, so that visitors may obtain a greater knowledge of the Reformed faith.

This past year I have been given the responsibility in the Western Classis to be convener of the Permanent Interchurch Relations Committee. It is my duty to insure Western Classis delegates attend the meetings of our fraternal churches. It is also my delight to work with Rev. Dennis Roe, as Assistant to the General Secretary and Assistant to the Field Chairman of the Westminster Biblical Missions work in Pakistan.

We are pleased for those that have ministered from the pulpit of Calvary Reformed Chapel in my absence this past year. Rev. Paul Treick, Rev. Frank Walker and Rev. Sal Solis of the OPC ministered God's Word to the congregation of Calvary Reformed Chapel in my absence. Calvary Reformed Chapel is deeply indebted to the labors of Elder Gregory Goehring in his spiritual oversight, and in assisting in the administration of the Lord's Supper. Calvary Reformed Chapel celebrated the Lord's Supper eight times this past year. Elder Goehring also serves as Treasurer of Calvary Reformed Chapel. He faithfully gives an accurate account in managing of the churches financial matters. We praise the Lord that Calvary Reformed Chapel was able by God's grace to submit guidelines and dues to the Western Classis and the RCUS Synod for 2012.

As of the end of the year 2012 there are 15 communicate members and two non-communicate members at Calvary Reformed Chapel in Stockton. There are two candidates in membership class. We are thankful for the several visitors who are attending regularly. Calvary Reformed Chapel in Stockton is continuing to proclaim the gospel, and to invite visitors to come to hear the Word of God. In our Sunday School class we are benefitting from a doctrinal study from the Belgic Confession. With new members and visitors we want all who worship with us to learn more and more of the articles of the Christian faith. As we pray "Thy kingdom come, Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven," may God give us grace to live up to our fullest potential in these areas.

Calvary Reformed Chapel has expanded its ministry in Stockton by monthly donations to the Stockton Rescue Mission. Many needy people in the Stockton area are aided by the work of the Stockton Rescue Mission. We are continuing to proclaim the gospel, and to invite visitors to come to hear God's Word. The Lord has answered our prayers in sending more frequent visitors.

Please pray for Calvary Reformed Chapel that our Lord Jesus Christ will be pleased to pour out His grace and Spirit upon our labors for His kingdom and glory that we may bring forth fruit pleasing to God. I offer heartfelt thanksgiving to God for the strength and grace He has given in the past in prospering the work of Calvary Reformed Chapel. God has given us "all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ Jesus" (Eph. 1:3). He gives us love and unity that bonds us together with Him and with each other. May our gracious God receive all of the honor, praise and glory in the work for His kingdom as we labor together for His glory. Amen!

In Christ's love for His Glory,
Rev. Jonathan Merica

Classis Action: Take note.

N. Rev. Eric Bristley

Fathers and Brothers in the Lord Jesus Christ,

I thank God for sustaining, strengthening, preserving, and building up the saints at Grace Reformed through His power this past year. I see God at work among us—developing Christian maturity which results in increasing fellowship and service.

The Lord has used Sunday worship and fellowship to cause us to grow together. He has blessed our gathering as I led the congregation in worship and prayer with the assistance of the elders. I have been preaching through Colossians this year in the morning service, emphasizing union with Christ in the Christian life and soterological ethics. We used the Belgic Confession and other creeds with a week-by-week brief explanation of the Heidelberg Catechism. Special services were held for Good Friday, Reformation Sunday and Christmas, as well as our monthly celebration of the Lord's Supper. We have been blessed with a number of our young ladies accompanying our singing of "psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs."

Our evening fellowship at 6 pm continued to be a rich time of singing, corporate prayer, and meditation on God's Word. We have been encouraged to see the Lord answer many concerns and requests brought to Him at these times. I have continued a study of Luke's Gospel, enhanced with Powerpoint presentations, although we took a summer detour to study the Life of Isaac. Elder Bowen led us in song and shared his insights and concerns from time to time. Elder Gross shared meditations from the Word and led us in our prayer time.

I have enjoyed teaching the class for young adults where we completed a study of Christian marriage and family. I also taught a special summer class during the Sunday School hour on the study of the Bible, the history of the text, and continued into the fall with how to interpret the Bible. I am encouraged also by the Women's Bible Fellowship, which continued their study of Ephesians each month, and a Young Couples Bible Study which met regularly to study J. I. Packer's *Knowing God*.

My pastoral labors in overseeing the flock of God have also been exercised, in partnership with the elders, in visiting with members, making numerous phone calls, and giving counsel and discipline. There have been times of sickness, surgery, and bereavement for our church family where I was privileged to minister God's promises, comfort, and grace. The Spiritual Council met each month in Williams at the home of Elder Bowen. The elders demonstrate a deep concern for the spiritual needs of every member. For the past six months, we have been involved in a serious discipline case and do covet your prayers for this individual. We have begun, and in the coming year plan to continue to implement regular family visitation. I have also been emphasizing the need for an understanding and practice of biblical, nouthetic counseling to the congregation.

It has been a great joy to labor with all the elders and deacons in serving the church together in the Consistory. I thank the Lord for each of our elders and deacons, their spiritual gifts, faithful service, and spirit of brotherly unity. Elder Joe Gross has served very ably as clerk and John van Tol as our faithful treasurer. I spent a number of months in a deacon's training program with one of our younger men, Jonathan van Tol and rejoice with the church in his recent ordination as deacon. John Benningfield provides faithful care of the church property. The Lord preserved our facility last summer when a gas leak threatened to bring disaster. Consequently, we installed new heating and air-conditioning at some expense.

I taught a membership class on Tuesday evenings last summer, and we had the distinct joy of welcoming three men into communicant membership in October. Presently, I am teaching a class on church membership for our young people.

Various events were held throughout the year to provide opportunities for fellowship. In addition to our monthly Fellowship Meals after communion, the congregation enjoyed a Valentine's dinner, two summer church picnics, a Reformation Day celebration, and our annual Christmas party.

I serve on the Publications Committee of the Western Classis and a special committee to examine the matter of the use of instruments in worship, for which I wrote a substantial report. This report grew out of special study for a series of sermons on Colossians 3:16. I had the opportunity to teach the high school-age young people at Camp Heidelberg West in June. I also attended the meeting of Synod and served on Committees for Publications and Promotions and on a sub-committee for Sunday School curriculum this past year. I also continued to work with editor Rev. Paul Treick to design and produce the *Reformed Herald* (now bi-monthly). Additionally I worked on a 2013 edition of the Heidelberg Catechism which updates the scripture references to the New King James version. I also have the task of overseeing the denominational records as well (archivist), which will be housed in a safe location in our building.

Evangelism is an area that continues to be on our hearts. We are continuing in prayer for growth and are reaching out to family and friends. The promotion of the church included the website and development of our downtown window display. I continued my involvement with Middle East Reformed Fellowship (MERF) and Westminster Biblical Missions during the past year. Yet I must confess that I have not done as much promotion of foreign missions as I should.

Our church facility is a great blessing, and yet it can be developed for greater usefulness. The consistory has embraced a vision to make it more serviceable for growth. We will develop areas for a nursery, Sunday school classes, Bible studies, and community outreach. Hence we are employing an architectural firm to help us develop a master plan. This will include plans to house the denominational archives as well.

I continued to teach as a faculty member of City Seminary in Sacramento, four courses—Christian Anthropology, Christian Worldview, Introduction to Apologetics, and Modern Cults. I also attended a number of faculty meetings and met with students.

God does not want us to grow weary in well-doing nor rest in past accomplishments, but, "forgetting those things which are behind and reaching forward to those things which are ahead," to "press toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus" (Phil. 3:13-14). We need to watch and pray that the evil one will not undermine the unity and peace we have in Christ. Christ calls us to be vigilant and to redeem the time because the days are evil (Eph. 5:15). "But thanks *be* to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ. Therefore, my beloved brethren, be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that your labor is not in vain in the Lord" (1 Cor. 15:57-58).

In the name of our Covenant-keeping, Triune God,
Rev. Eric Bristley

Classis Action: Take note.

O. Rev. Gary Mancilas

Esteemed Brethren,

The RCUS Directory of Worship instructs that, “The purpose of public worship is the glory of God.” Therefore, we believe that the ultimate purpose of the church is to glorify God through the Lord Jesus Christ; and that by the power of the Holy Spirit, members of the church are to faithfully labor within the principles afforded them in the Scriptures and our confessions. As I offer an account of my labors and the spiritual and temporal condition of the charge, I am reassured by the words of the Apostle Paul that the church belongs to the Lord Jesus Christ, and her growth and spiritual development rests solely upon God, who gives the increase. Meanwhile, the church must avail herself of the means of grace and faithfully labor by planting and watering in the kingdom of God, waiting upon the Lord to spiritually and temporally prosper her (I Corinthians 3:5-9).

In addition to the information reported in the 2012 Membership Statistics, I provide the following brief account: Although the status of Covenant Reformed Church is no longer a Home Mission work, the mandate of the church remains the same. As such, your servant reports that the congregation continues to fulfill its biblical commission, to glorify God in worship, and that the officers continue to nurture the organic and spiritual growth of the Body of Christ. This February marks my eleventh year serving this congregation. I have discharged my pastoral duties by providing instructions in the adult Sunday school class, in teaching the Men’s and Ladies’ Bible studies, and in personal visitations and counseling sessions. In my fifty-one Lord’s Days sermons, the preaching of the Gospel focused mainly on the Book of Ecclesiastes and the Gospel of Luke. Regarding the Sacraments, the Lord’s Supper was administered on the first Lord’s Day of each month and Holy Baptism was administered twice for two covenant family infants. Moreover, through the preaching of the Word of God, I have exhorted the members to avail themselves of the dispensed *means of grace*. Denominationally, my labors on behalf of Classis and Synod include serving on the Permanent Publications Committees.

Presently, the Consistory functions with its pastor, two elders and one deacon. The Spiritual Council continues to watch faithfully over the spiritual interests of the congregation. Serving the congregation, our elders perform family visitation, assist with instructional classes, supply the pulpit when the pastor is on vacation, teach the adult Sunday school class when required, and visit and pray over the sick. They continue in their faithful oversight of the preaching and teaching of God’s Word and the administration of the Sacraments. The Holy Spirit, through the preaching of the Word, disciplines the body of Christ and produces spiritual growth.

In addition to continued outreach efforts in promoting the church and the Reformed Faith mentioned in previous parochial reports, the church promotion committee has provided each family with a promotion packet containing *Reformed Herald* and *Leben* magazines; and CRC church information cards and *The Marks of the True Church* tract cards, to be stuffed in the magazines. Members are asked to distribute the magazines to businesses or professional business offices of their choice soliciting to display the magazines in the waiting area on their magazine table. For follow-up purposes, the committee requested feedback from participating church members. Also, in March 2012, the local newspaper, after years of rejection, began publishing submitted articles on the Reformed faith. The newspaper editor enthusiastically urged the church to continue to submit articles for publication on a regular basis. Since then, the five articles published

have resulted in three visitors attending the Lord's Day worship services on different occasions.

In closing, the congregation has kept the strong vision and hopes that the Lord would grant the resources to continue our work in Chico by increasing our membership. Until the Lord adds the adequate resources to His church, it remains dependent upon the financial support of our denomination and is currently requesting benevolent aid from both Classis and Synod. Nevertheless, the congregation recognizes that the viability of the church falls on its members and its financial responsibility to sustain itself. Notwithstanding this great responsibility, as a small congregation the church continues to demonstrate its effectiveness by a Reformed presence in Chico. In appreciation, the Consistory conveys to the denomination that we are most grateful to those who have offered their love, support, concern, and prayers. In the providence of God, the financial status of the church continues to be in God's hands; and we wait upon God to bless the church with the needed resources.

Respectfully submitted in Christ,
Rev. Gary Mancilas

Classis Action: Take note. Elder Earl Van Houten led the body in prayer.

P. Rev. Neale Riffert

Esteemed Brothers:

In June of this year I will enter my 46th year in the ministry of the gospel of Christ. Though retired or semi-retired or perhaps somewhat retired, and sometimes just plain tired, nonetheless I continue to rejoice in the wonderful grace of Jesus, and in all the blessings this unworthy servant has received from His hands throughout the course of my years.

The work in Sherman, Texas is still ongoing, but we've had some setbacks during the course of the past year, losing two of our families, one, our daughter Idelette and her husband Larry, returned to California and were dismissed to care of Grace Reformed Church, Lancaster, and another family moved to Melissa (in Texas) and are presently attending a mission congregation of the PCA. Though this has been tough on us, we are still holding our own, and are earnestly praying that God in His grace will provide an open door for a reformed witness in Sherman.

Christ the King Reformed Church continues to meet for worship each Sunday in the Hampton Inn, and also for Bible Study on Thursday evenings, and the Men's Fellowship Breakfast continues to meet each Wednesday morning.

I've preached 50 of the 53 Sundays of 2012. We spent two Sundays in South Carolina visiting our daughter Faith and her family, and attending the high school graduation of our oldest grandchild. While there we worshiped with the Redeemer Presbyterian Church (OPC) in Charlotte, N.C. in which Faith, Bryan and family are members.

The only other Sunday that I didn't preach was in September when Rev. Michael McGee, Grace Reformed, Mitchell came to Sherman to visit the congregation, and join us in the administration of the Lord's Supper. He conducted the worship service that Sunday.

We covet your prayers for the work in Sherman, for myself, Mary Elizabeth, and Neale Jr. We're all doing okay, but have some health issues. Mary Elizabeth battles against some arthritis in her knee, that slows her walking pace, especially on steps, and Neale Jr. continues to have digestive difficulties believed to be related to acid reflux, but without any successful remedy to date.

On leaving last year's Classis session, I was greatly surprised when the desk clerk at the Motel told me that someone paid my bill, so I would like to express my hearty thanks to the anonymous and generous party. And our family would like to express our thanks for the ministerial relief that we receive from the Synod—our lifeline, and I humbly ask the Western Classis to petition the Synod for continued support for the 2013-2014 Synodical year. What a blessing this is to us.

"Let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith, who for the joy that was set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of God" – Hebrews 12:2.

Respectfully submitted,
Rev. Neale Riffert

Classis Action: The report was referred to Standing Benevolence.

Q. Rev. Paul Henderson

Dear Elders and Ministers of the Western Classis RCUS, in the Lord Jesus Christ,

Here we all are, one year later, another day richer, another day wiser, and perhaps, another pound heavier! Well, Lord willing we are all a little bit richer and wiser in the things of the Lord, but sometimes I wonder; because it seems so often, that when I come to these here parochial reports, that all is the same, not much has changed, and the good fight of faith is ever raging, both within and without the charge of which I am stationed. Yes, truly, there are always many so-called ups and downs that have happened throughout the year, both the "good and bad," the "yes and no," or, as our beloved catechism put it, simply, the "...herbs and grass, rain and drought, fruitful and barren years, meat and drink, health and sickness, riches and poverty,..." they all do indeed come! Thankfully, in all of them, and through all of them, our heavenly Father has worked His goodness and mercy, and I, along with the congregation have come through them all, with the blessed confidence, that all these things, "... *came* not by chance, but by His Fatherly hand H.C. # 27."

Wherefore as in last year's report, so also in this year's report, in regards to the temporal and spiritual conditions of Ebenezer, and of my pastoral labors, I remain ever confident in, as well as truly thankful for, God's unfailing mercies and His sustaining love!

First then, in regards to the temporal or financial condition of Ebenezer: This little part of the precious Bride of Christ continues to be very solid financially as the saints faithfully and cheerfully give back to the Lord His due. Though we spent more on church property, building maintenance and improvements this year than any year previous, (\$41,000 plus), the statement at the end of the year was even better than the previous year! Brothers, we just can't out give God no matter how hard we try. It just 'ain't going to happen!

Thankfully and joyfully then, the Deacons continue to administer and distribute the collections of the church, seeing that they are well spent. As a small body of Christ, the congregation through her officers have helped or contributed a little in the way of finances and care to a few of our other churches. I praise God for Ebenezer's willingness to continue to look for ways to help others in need. They have done well. Thankfully and joyfully as well, the Elders continue to serve with all humility and are ever hoping to improve upon their tasks as under-shepherds among the flock; for they continue to provide the loving, yet, firm discipline and care over the flock which He has purchased with His own blood.

The Spiritual Council meetings are often filled with sober discussions, sound comments, and hopefully some wise decisions, along with at times, some good light-hearted laughter. Our family visitations are always in need of encouragement, and we continually seek improvement to get them all accomplish in one year. Wherefore, we, as a Spiritual Council do believe that the body in general is spiritually healthy, and is still seeking to remain faithful unto the faith of our fathers. The need for continual growth and sanctification is always a concern with us, and we must continue to place our hope and confidence upon the unshakeable foundation of Jesus Christ proclaimed, for the means of grace, as set forth in our Confessions and commanded in God's Word and embraced heartily by our members, are still the stay and ground upon which God will build His *one* kingdom, yea, His one, holy, catholic, Church, preserving & increasing her faith, as well as her numbers!

The Confirmation classes and Sunday school classes are progressing in a fairly decent manner. The elders have thus far taught through the Gospel according to Mark, and the Acts of the Apostles with our confirmation folk, and will this year, begin going through Kuiper's Church History book.

Also this year, yours truly completed another good year in regards to Heidelberg West Church Camp. Though there have been a few 'hiccups' along the way, all things seem to be pointing to another great camp! Please note the new dates: June 17 — 21. I have also enjoyed serving on a couple of Committee's and have found them always enjoyable, though my contributions are very minimal.

In regards to our oversight in the life and times of Rehoboth Reformed Church, these duties came to an end this year, with Rehoboth becoming its own particular church, and with the 'official' calling of Rev. Michael Voytek as their 'official' pastor! It was a pleasure bringing the charge to their new pastor. The labors accomplished by our Lord, through His saints here at Ebenezer, over these past 14 plus years have been amazing and really, a blessing for the Ebenezer folk. We pray the Lord's richest blessings upon our Rehoboth sister, and we know that as the days go by, He will surely add to their numbers, and grace to their hearts!

As to further account for my spiritual labors in the pastorate, I provide the following brief description: The sermons and Bible studies are prepared weekly; The Epistle of I Peter was finished, and a series on Psalm 23 followed; then, it was a mixture of various passages, ending up with a series on the Be-Attitudes. The adult Sunday school time was filled with much discussion of the sermons, and other various passages and material in Scripture. Our time of Fellowship after the Worship service, and thus, our Sunday school class attendance, has remained fairly consistent throughout the year. Everyone seems to enjoy this time of fellowship, and the ladies of the church always fill us with an abundance of good food, tasty snacks and wonderful drinks! We also have a Hymn Sing

and Study on the first three Sunday evenings of the month. The Shafter Rest Home Service has been faithfully carried out among the "least of Christ's brethren." This year for Mission-fest, our guest speaker was Dr. Cornel Venema, president of Mid-America Reformed Seminary. His sermons were very lively, timely, and very encouraging!

As to the future: Ebenezer will be seeking to either begin a new mission work in the area, and/or continue to support other mission works with our bountiful resources in a greater measure. The officers and the members are truly interested in being 'mission-minded,' as well as supportive of our sister church's and their needs. Wherefore we hope to be closer to deciding upon a clear direction with these plans in the near future. We are very open to the Lord's leading in these matters.

This year we also rejoiced together as a church family as we saw Shelby Kirschenmann become Mrs. Shelby Parsons, as her husband Jeff said "I do," and also became a member here at Ebenezer! We love to see our young folk happily married in the Lord!

On a somewhat sadder note for us as a church family, we did lose a dear sister to the Church Triumphant this past November, as sister Lavelle Bender, wife of Clarence Bender was led home to be with her Lord, to dwell with Him, in His house forever!

All in all, though at times we all sense and know the pressures and evil influences of our enemies as they seemingly close in around us, and though the days in which we live are still ever so perilous and evil, as in days gone by, we also sense or 'feel,' know, believe and trust that He who is within us is greater than he who is without. Wherefore our eyes are ever upon our God, for it is in Him that we place our trust, and thus look to for sustaining grace and energizing power, as well as sound and steady strength to carry us through these sometimes difficult days. Indeed, our God is still on the throne, governing as He sees fit, and for that we are very pleased and joyful, and honestly, are ever seeking to remain content!

In between all of these duties, I also enjoy being the husband of a wonderful God-fearing wife, and the father of four wonderful, ever being sanctified covenant young'ins!

The Lord bless thee, my brothers, and may He make you and your loved ones to walk upon the high places and enjoy the pleasures that are forever at His right hand!

Respectfully submitted,
Rev. Paul Henderson

Classis Action: Take note.

R. Rev. Gene Sawtelle

Esteemed Brothers:

Greetings in the name of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. May God give you wisdom to carry out the very important work of the church during this year's classis sessions. May God continue to give you His grace and Holy Spirit so that you can be given to the ministry of the Word and prayer and serve Him and others in His church.

"For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved. How then shall they call on Him in whom they have not believed? And how shall they believe in Him of whom they have not heard? And how shall they hear without a preacher? And how shall they preach, except they be sent? As it written, How beautiful of the feet of them that preach the gospel of peace, and bring good tidings of good things!" Romans 10:13-15. I

pray that God will continue to raise up faithful laborers for the harvest and new home mission congregations throughout the RCUS.

My wife and I thank you for your prayers, and we thank God's people in the RCUS for the ministerial aid that we receive.

By God's grace I have been able to preach the Word of God in Yuba City and Willows, CA several times this past year. As we serve our faithful God and heavenly Father let us heed Luke 17:10, "So likewise ye, when ye shall have done all those things which are commanded of you, say, We are unprofitable servants: we have done that which was our duty to do."

Respectfully submitted,
Rev. Gene Sawtelle

Classis Action: Take note. Elder Joe Gross led the body in prayer.

S. Rev. Dennis Roe

Esteemed Brothers in Christ:

I thank God for giving me the privilege to serve Him and you in the 29th year of my pastoral ministry and my 18th year in Grass Valley. I offer the following report regarding my service to Christ and our congregation:

I. THE MINISTRY OF THE WORD: I finished a series of expositions through the book of Acts, and then began a new series from the Gospel of Matthew on the "Teachings of Jesus Christ." I preached a number of messages for special occasions during the year. I also had the privilege to preach for the "Mission-Fest" services at Ebenezer Reformed Church at Shafter, California.

Our Sunday morning worship attendance averages thirty to forty souls in attendance. We have been blessed with a few visitors this past year. I continue to pray for the Lord to sanctify and add to His church those He is calling to saving faith in Jesus.

The average attendance at our Sunday morning Bible classes is about fifteen to twenty people. Sadly, our young people's Bible classes have diminished to only five or six children and sometimes less. Nevertheless, we press on in providing instruction for whatever the number of children may be, not wanting to neglect any opportunity to nurture them in Word of God.

We did not have a catechism class this past year. This is the first time in nearly thirty years of ministry in the RCUS that I have not had catechumens. It does indeed seem strange. I hope I can resume teaching a class soon.

We held a number of special services throughout the year. We also enjoyed having Dr. Henry Krabbendam, Rev. Sardar Din and Mr. Derrick Merkel as guest speakers.

I continue to serve as Dean of Students for City Seminary at Sacramento where I help the students develop and map out a program for their course of studies and provide personal counseling to them when needed. I also returned to teaching for the seminary this past fall. It was my privilege to teach a class on a survey of the Old Testament.

This past year in our congregation I provided private and family counseling sessions. I continue to regularly call upon members and non-members in their homes and when hospitalized. Please pray for the Lord's blessing my pastoral counseling and visits.

II. THE MINISTRY OF THE SACRAMENTS: It was my privilege to conduct the service for the Lord's Supper twelve times. We were blessed with two baptisms of

covenant children in 2012. I was again privileged to baptize one of my grandchildren, Graham Ashby Johnson, was born to our youngest daughter Joanna, and her husband Nathan. Yes, nepotism is alive and well in the RCUS. Nathan is the son of the notorious Elder Wayne Johnson. May the Lord continue to bless these children and their families.

III. THE MINISTRY OF THE KEYS: I have to say our membership changes in 2012 were very difficult. We lost quite a few members this past year that were all dearly loved by those of us who remain. These changes can be difficult, but especially for a smaller congregation. Not only has this been difficult for us to adjust to emotionally, but we also face the financial impact of this loss which is compounded by the weak economy. It is our Adversary's work to throw his fiery darts (Eph.6:16) of discouragement. Please pray for the Lord to strengthen us, both spiritually and materially. Pray for the Lord to add to His church those who are being saved.

The Spiritual Council has placed one of our members under discipline. This involves the father of a family of nine and is very trying upon the family. Please pray for God's Spirit to bring about his repentance.

Our Spiritual Council and Consistory continue to assist Pastor Merica's efforts in church planting in Stockton. We thank God that He has added to the church at Stockton and that they are more able to provide for Pastor and Mrs. Merica's material needs. Let us pray that the Lord will continue to add to His church. We all share in the blessing of Pastor Jonathan and his wife Marsha's faithful labors at Calvary Reformed Chapel.

IV. MISC. DUTIES AND ACTIVITIES: I think I served on the Diaconal Committee for the Western Classis in 2012. There was no business conducted and so it did not take much of my time. My service at a Synodical level was limited and that is probably a good thing for Synod.

It was my privilege to conduct a memorial service for the Veterans for the 3rd Squadron, 4th U.S. Cavalry at Ft. Campbell, Kentucky (the home of the 101st Airborne Division) in May of 2012. The reunion is scheduled for June 2014 in San Antonio, Texas. The Lord willing I will continue to serve as the 3rd/4th Cavalry's chaplain.

I continue to labor as General Secretary for Westminster Biblical Missions. In this capacity I work with all the fields. I made no international trips in 2012. I traveled once to Wisconsin for a board meeting and missed one Sunday service because of that trip. I continue to maintain the missions' web site, post the missionary newsletters online, and work with Rev. Merica in promoting WBM's ministry in Pakistan.

The biggest change, with the congregation's approval, is that I plan to spend more time promoting the mission fields of WBM. At our annual business meeting, the membership approved, as recommended by our Consistory, and necessitated by our financial situation, that I be allowed to be away for mission work up to twelve weeks a year. This also means I will be taking a deduction in my salary and benefits provided by the congregation. I am agreeable to this as I think it will help both the mission and our church at this time. Westminster Biblical Missions is giving me a small salary to help compensate for my labors. However, the Mission is not flush with funds either. I have labored with WBM for nearly thirty years. I have never raised funds for my own salary. So that will be something that I will need to do. However, I was reminded by one of our board members, that really I am raising funds for the mission so that I can better serve it and all our fields. Please pray for me in this regard brothers. I approach this new endeavor with not a little fear and trepidation.

V. CONGREGATIONAL ASSESSMENT: I thank the Lord for the privilege to serve Christ another year as pastor at Grass Valley. 2012 was a difficult year for our

congregation in many ways. It has been difficult for us to see our brothers and sisters in Christ leave us for whatever reason. We thank God that none of the departures were bitter or out of strife. However, this has made it to be a challenging year ahead. We have to ask ourselves, “What does the LORD have in store for us?” Some have even asked, “Should we continue as small as we are?” Well as the saying goes, “When the going gets tough, the tough get going!” Of course, this is not to say it is by our strength or doing alone, but the LORD does call His people to fight the good fight of faith (*1 Timothy 6:12*). I know the Prince of Darkness does not want a faithful Reformed church, in doctrine and practice, in Grass Valley. I exhorted our church to strive with me to give the Devil a hard time by continuing to proclaim Christ’s glorious gospel of grace to this world.

I thank God that there is an excellent spiritual climate, if one may call it such, at Covenant RCUS at Grass Valley, and a clear commitment to the Reformed Faith, even that faith once delivered unto the saints. I have heard some comment they are committed to the church even if we have to sell the building and meet in our homes. Hearing those kinds of words are tremendously encouraging to your servant’s heart.

Let me be abundantly clear, I am committed to the church and to the people of God at Grass Valley. As the Lord gives me strength, I will press on and serve as their pastor as long as I am able. As the Apostle Paul wrote to Timothy, “*You therefore must endure hardship as a good soldier of Jesus Christ (2 Timothy 3:3)*.” Pray for us to “endure” together as the Church of the Lord Jesus Christ, purchased with His precious blood! For, “*we are more than conquerors through Him who loved us (Romans 8:37)*.”

Regarding my fellow officers and co-laborers in Christ, I give thanks to God. Even though our dear Steve Wilbur had to move many miles away for employment, he continues his faithful long distance service as an elder and our treasurer, joining us in our Consistory and Spiritual Council meetings via Skype and e-mail. I thank God for Pastor Jonathan Merica for his labors in the Word and prayer and for his service as clerk for the Consistory and Spiritual Council at our congregation. I thank God for Elder Greg Goehring who, though newly married and the father of a newborn daughter, continues his faithful labors for the Saints at Stockton and Grass Valley. And then recently, I thank God for providing more faithful men to serve our congregation. Mr. Derrick Merkel, formerly an elder at Faith RCUS at Anderson, and Mr. Chris Case, both recently were elected to serve as officers, elder and deacon respectively, have stepped forward to serve at a critical time in our congregation’s life. They are a great encouragement to the saints at Covenant RCUS at Grass Valley and to me.

I thank the saints at Covenant Reformed, and the Western Classis who are my dear brothers and sisters in Christ for your love and encouragement to me in the work of the Lord at Covenant Reformed, at City Seminary, and with Westminster Biblical Missions.

I will continue to pray for and encourage all my fellow laborers in the Gospel of the Reformed Church in the U.S. I am praying specifically that your hearts will not grow weary in well doing in these difficult times. Please pray for me to stay faithful in preaching Christ, His death, His burial, and His resurrection and thus doing the work of an evangelist. *Sola Deo Gloria!*

I Remain Your Servant in Christ,
Rev. Dennis E. Roe

Classis Action: Take note.

T. Rev. Lloyd Gross

Rev. Vernon Pollema gave an oral report on the health of the Rev. Lloyd Gross.

Classis Action: Elder Ralph Goehring led the body in prayer.

Rev. Pollema led the body in prayer regarding the failing health of Calvin Goehring and his family as Calvin is in the last days of his life.

CONSTITUTIONAL QUESTIONS FOR ELDERS

The President addressed the Questions of Article 81 of the Constitution to the Elder Delegates of each congregation. The answers are as follows:

1. Are the doctrines of the gospel preached in your charge in their purity, agreeably to the Word of God? All answered yes.
2. Is careful attention given to the instruction of the youth for confirmation, the reception of members into the Church, and the Christian nurture of the members? All answered yes.
3. In providing spiritual nurture for the congregation:
 - a. Is visitation faithfully performed? All answered yes with the exceptions of Bakersfield, Sacramento and Yuba City who answered no, and Grass Valley, Lancaster, Shafter, and Willows who said needs improvement.
 - b. Is Christian discipline faithfully exercised according to the Constitution? All answered yes.
4. Are the sacraments of Holy Baptism and the Lord's Supper properly administered in accordance with the Constitution? All answered yes.
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 yes, except for Anderson, Chico, Grass Valley, Lancaster, and Lodi who answered no.
 - b. Are these monies sent promptly to the Classis Treasurer? All answered yes except Anderson and Lancaster who answered no.
 - c. Are the apportionments for the Synod paid according to the Guidelines for Giving? All answered yes, except for Anderson, Chico, Grass Valley, Lancaster, and Lodi who answered no.
 - d. Are these monies sent promptly to the Synod treasurer? All answered yes except Anderson, and Lancaster who answered no.
6. Are the Church records properly kept? All answered yes, except Lancaster who answered no.
- 7a. Is the temporal contract between minister and people fulfilled in your charge? All answered yes.
- 7b. Is the temporal contract between minister and people adequate to meet his temporal needs? All answered yes.

MEMBERSHIP AND FINANCIAL STATISTICS

The Stated Clerk provided a table of statistics. It appears in the Appendix.

Classis Action: The report of Membership and Financial Statistics was received and adopted.

REPORTS FROM CLASSIS' FRATERNAL DELEGATES

Rev. Merica reported on his visit to the 2012 Spring Stated Meeting of the Presbytery of Northern California & Nevada OPC which convened at Covenant OPC in San Jose, CA on March 16-17, 2012.

Rev. Merica reported on his visit to the 2012 Fall Stated Meeting of the Presbytery of Northern California & Nevada OPC which convened at Covenant OPC in Berkeley, CA on September 21-22, 2012.

Rev. Baloy reported on his visit to the Southwest Classis of the URCNA, which convened on September 18, 2012, at Christ United Reformed Church in Santee, CA.

Rev. Schlegel reported on his visit to the Northwest Classis of the URCNA, which convened on October 16, 2012, at Covenant United Reformed Church in Lynden, WA.

Rev. Voytek reported on his visit to the 2012 Fall Stated Meeting of the Presbytery of Southern California OPC which convened at Branch of Hope, OPC in Torrance, CA on October 19-20, 2012.

Rev. Merica reported on his visit to the Classis Pacific East of the Canadian & American Reformed Churches which met on February 23, 2012.

Classis Action: Take note.

ADDRESSES BY DELEGATES FROM OTHER REFORMED CHURCHES AND VISITORS

There were no fraternal delegate representatives at this Classis meeting.

Rev. Merica read a letter sent by the Classis Pacific East of the Canadian Reformed Churches wherein they apologize in their failure to send a fraternal delegate to our 2013 Classis meeting due to their oversight of the date of our Classis and as such they scheduled their Classis at the same time.

Classis Action: The Stated Clerk was directed to write to the clerks of those regional bodies, with the exception of the Canadian and American Reformed Churches, in which we have fraternal relations expressing our disappointment with their continual negligence in sending representatives to our meetings, and to encourage them to please be diligent in sending delegates. The Clerk was also instructed to send a letter to the Synod Interchurch Relations Committee informing them of the absence of delegates from the above stated bodies for an extended time.

REPORTS OF SPECIAL STUDY COMMITTEES

A. The Doctrine of the Two Kingdoms

Dear Fathers and Brothers,

The 2012 Classis voted that a special committee be established to study “The Doctrine of the Two Kingdoms” and to report back this year “with specific recommendations on how to respond to this teaching.”

As of this writing (February 1, 2013) which is late in the day, most of the Committee members have fulfilled their assignment to spell-out the features of the Two Kingdoms theology. One of the members has since moved on to another Classis, reducing our Committee membership from five to four. As of this writing, studies of the writings of Meredith G. Kline, Dr. David VanDrunen, and Dr. Michael Horton have been submitted to your chairman to review and to include into our report. Committee members were asked to study the original sources and not to rely heavily upon the comments of Professor John Frame in his book, *The Escondido Theology*. Some of the members of the Committee, besides studying the original sources have even sat under the instruction of the Two Kingdoms principals at Westminster Theological Seminary (in Philadelphia) and Westminster Seminary California.

The goal of the Committee is to summarize the Two Kingdoms theology, not to distinguish the fine differences that may exist between the Two Kingdoms theologians. Thus the purpose of this report is more informational than critical. Yet, our report does ask important questions about Two Kingdoms theology, especially in areas where there is ambiguity.

The Committee also did not evaluate the claim that the Two Kingdoms position is a faithful representation of orthodox Calvinism as defined by the genius of Geneva himself. If Classis wants us to do a creedal study of this subject and to report back next year, we are willing to comply. At least one Committee member believes that the creeds of the Reformed Church do not teach the Two Kingdoms viewpoint as defined by its champions. Calvin’s dedication of his *Institutes of the Christian Religion* to Francis I of France, together with some of his statements in the ‘Institutes’ about the necessity of having a “Christian government” (*Institutes of the Christian Religion*, Book IV, Chapter 3:20) seem antithetical to the Two Kingdoms viewpoint. But that is a topic for another day.

After our Committee was formed last year we met immediately after Classis and agreed to study the views of three of those who are in the vanguard of the Two-Kingdoms ‘Movement.’ Accordingly, our report will place a zoom lens on their work in order to ascertain ‘where they are coming from’ and whether we want to explore their writings further in case there is serious error that will injure God’s people.

I. MEREDITH KLINE AND THE TWO KINGDOMS

Dr. Kline’s views on the Two-Kingdoms Theology are stated in his book, *Kingdom Prologue*. Yet, Kline does not use the Two-Kingdoms terminology often. He prefers to articulate the distinction with the expression ‘two cities.’ The holy theocratic city of God and the unholy, common, and profane city of man. These two cities are categorically different according to divine design.

Kline’s theology is one of sharp distinctions. He divides up the world after the Fall using a cult/culture distinction and a sharp holy/common distinction. These distinctions correspond to each other as cult goes with ‘holy’ and culture corresponds to common

(unholy, profane). For Kline ‘unholy’ is not a moral category but has to do with the objective state of a thing, action, person, or place. The city of God is the cultic city and is holy. The city of man has to do with the culture and is unholy. Frame summarizes Kline’s cult and culture distinction as follows: “Kline....sets forth a very sharp distinction between cult (formal worship) and culture (man’s other activities, set forth in the cultural mandate of Genesis 1:28)” (*The Escondido Theology*, p. 169).

Kline’s view of the ‘two cities’ is intrinsic to his understanding of Redemption History and its goals. Basically God created man to be his prophet, priest, and king, to engage in the Cultural Mandate. And this Mandate involved advancing God’s holy theocratic kingdom on the earth. The situation in the Garden of Eden was that of a theocracy. Cult and culture were one structurally and religiously. But with the Fall of Man, came sin, a common curse, and man was thrust from Eden. The Edenic theocracy was no more. In his curses upon Adam, Eve, and the Serpent, God did not set forth his curse but all instated Common Grace. The purpose of this grace was to be a restraint upon the curse. Kline writes: “The positive benefits realized in a measure through this restraint on the effects of sin and the curse are not the eternal blessings of the holy, heavenly kingdom that comes to the elect through God’s saving grace in Christ, but they are blessings—temporal blessings that all men experience in common by virtue of their remaining part of the continuing world order” (*Kingdom Prologue*, p. 95). Such grace is established for an interim period to mitigate or offset the curse so that God can carry out his redemptive program to save his elect and reestablish his holy theocracy.

Concerning God’s curse Kline says that “...the Lord pronounced a temporal, common curse rather than an ultimate judgment against the generality of mankind (Genesis 3:16-19).” Countervailing this curse is common grace with its benefits. He tells us that “The positive effects [of common grace] realized in a measure through this restraint on the effects of sin and the curse are not the eternal blessings of the holy, heavenly kingdom that comes to the elect through God’s saving grace in Christ, but they are blessings—temporal blessings that all men experience in common by virtue of their remaining part of the continuing world order” (p. 95).

As an act of grace God appointed a city, a common grace city for the general good of mankind. He says that “It would not be a theocratic, covenant city with an institutional integration of culture and cult” (p. 95). Built by fallen man, it “would be a common city, temporal, profane, and it would exist under the shadow of the common curse” (p. 101). Complete expression of the common grace city comes after the judgment of the Noachian Flood, and it came in a covenant form as recorded in Genesis 8:21-9:17.

However, the judicial structure of the State was communicated orally in Genesis 4:15. There God says, “Then the Lord said to him, ‘Not so! If anyone kills Cain, vengeance shall be taken on him sevenfold.’ And the Lord put a mark on Cain, lest any who found him should attack him.” This means that God’s vow of vengeance would descend on the head of anyone who murdered Cain. For Kline the vengeance would be exacted by those authorized to do so; i.e., the State. This verse [Genesis 4:15] establishes an order of justice and becomes the virtual charter for the city of man. Two verses later the State comes in view when Cain builds a city. This is the first instance of the city of man (Genesis 4:17).

So in the land of Nod a city was made, a common grace city, that should be viewed positively. Man may turn the city to evil, but its origins, purpose, and basic structure are meant for good (pp. 102-103). This city has a remedial role in a fallen world. The original

theocratic city (Genesis 1:28) had a variety of functions which remained operative before the Fall. In the postlapsarian situation these functions have been modified for the purpose of curbing or offsetting the evil of man and the curse of God upon that evil. The curse is an exile-curse; man is consigned to a life of vagrancy rather than fellowship in the garden-city with God and his fellows. But the postlapsarian city offsets this curse providing now a protective function as well as hospitals, welfare, and corrective functions, performed by the government, instituted with Cain as recorded in Genesis 4:15-17.

It should be noted that Kline sees in the original Cultural Mandate the formation and structuring of the city of God. After the Fall, however, God has instituted a separate city which Kline calls the city of man. This means that for Kline the city of man does not carry out the original dominion mandate. He writes: "The common culture that is the direct fruit of common grace is not itself identifiable with the holy, Sabbath-sealed redemptive kingdom of God."

"Another way of saying this is that common grace culture is not itself the particular kingdom that was mandated under the creational covenant. Although certain function and institutional provisions of the original cultural mandate are resumed in the common grace order, these now have such a different orientation, particularly as to objectives, that one cannot simply and strictly say that it is the cultural mandate that is being implemented in the process of common grace culture."

After explaining the city of man, Kline then compares it to the kingdoms of Satan and of God (pp. 104-106). The city often takes on a bestial nature. Kline means that the common grace city of man is usurped by Satan. Its bestial character alludes to the Beast of the book of *Revelation*. Satanic control does not undermine, however, this city's legitimacy. For it is a "structure founded on the common grace ordinance of the creator" (*Kingdom Prologue*, page 104). It must not be identified with demonic powers that often usurp it, as some do. Christians, who belong to the heavenly city, can serve in those functions that bear the sword (here Kline opposes Christian pacifism).

While the city/state of man (the common grace city) cannot be identified with the demonic power that often captures it, and thus it cannot be called the city of Satan, etc, nor can it ever be identified with the kingdom of God (page 104). This thought is slightly qualified, as Kline means "in an institutional sense." That is, institutionally and structurally, the common-grace city cannot be identified with the Kingdom of God. It is structurally and institutionally common, profane. To attempt to sanctify the city of man at the institutional and structure level is to be involved in a category mistake. For Kline's attempts to do so are very common and constitute serious errors (*Kingdom Prologue*, page 104). Yet, Kline does not explain why this is a serious error. He only explains: "In the midst of the threatening world environment to which man is exposed through the common curse, the common grace city offers the hope of a measure of temporal safety, but it does not afford eternal salvation. It should not therefore be identified with the holy kingdom of God, which is the structural manifestation of that salvation" (*Ibid*, page 105). There is a boundary between the common grace culture and the holy kingdom of God that must be respected.

This is a divinely instituted order as Kline expresses in the following statement: "If we listen to what the Word of God says specifically about the institutions in question, we discover that with the emergence of the religious antithesis, the Lord God, in the interests of his redemptive purposes, sovereignly revised the original structure of things, brings into being within the arena of earthly history an interim world order which involved the

holy/common distinction as one of its fundamental features. In particular he established the institution of the state as a non-holy structure under the principle of common grace. The sphere of the state, though not exempt from God's rule and not devoid of the divine presence (indeed, though it is the scene of God's presence in a measure of common blessing), is nevertheless, not to be identified as belonging to the kingdom of God or sharing in it holiness (*Kingdom Prologue*, page 106)." So the common grace city in the interim before the Fall and the eschaton is not theocratic in terms of status and structure.

In Kline's understanding in the interim postlapsarian world, God has instituted a cult and culture boundary that must not be transgressed either by the State or by the citizenry. In other words, the State does not engage in cultic activity and the citizenry (including officials of the State) are not to work toward making the State engage in cultic structures or function. This is to mix the holy with the profane. The State belongs to the realm of 'culture,' to the 'common and profane.' Yes, all cultural activities are to be carried out in devotion to the Lord from the heart, but to institute the kingdom of God is not the State's job. Kline writes "[any] cultic activity on the part of the state, if it is not in confession of the living God, is, of course, idolatrous. But even if it is in acknowledgment of the God of the Christian faith, it is guilty of a monstrous confusion of the holy kingdom of God with the common, profane city of man" (page 111). The State is forbidden to undertake the cultic function of the covenant community. Nor can it execute the discipline of the covenant cultus. It cannot use its power and sanction to compel obedience to the first four commandments of the Decalogue. But it is not to hinder 'the holy covenant institution in the fulfilling of its peculiar mission..." (Ibid, page 111).

Concerning the relationship between the common-grace state with the cultus (covenant community), Kline says that "the common state is designed by God to provide a supportive framework for the life and mission of God's covenant people, in keeping with the fundamental purpose of common grace to make possible a general history within which God's redemptive program might unfold" (Ibid, page 111).

Two questions arise: What are we to make of the role of the nation of Israel and its legislation? For Kline, Israel is a holy theocratic kingdom that was typological of the heavenly city. It was a temporary arrangement. Its laws and structure belong to that Covenant situation. It was a holy cultus, where cult and culture were united for a period. As a nation it pointed to the future eschatological kingdom, the ultimate holy theocracy. But God's New Covenant people do not belong to the Old Covenant, the structure of which has been abrogated. As with the ancients, we belong in the common grace realm. We have more affinity with the covenant people of the early Genesis record than we do with the nation of Israel, *structurally speaking*. The following quotes address the issue:

"In fact with regard to the form and function of the redemptive community and its relationship to the world and its institution that ancient community offers a parallel in some respect closer to the church of our age than does the Israelite whose history...stands nearer in time to ours" (Ibid, page 100).

The second question is: What is the standard of the common-grace city? Certainly, the city of man can be governed by the general regulations of Genesis 9. Also, his argument that the first Four Commandments of the Mosaic law are not to be forced upon the common-grace State imply that the final six may be. This probably means that Kline would discourage our enshrining the words "In God we trust" on our currency and coinage and might even be troubled by the phrase "One nation under God" in the flag salute. On the other hand, we ask that if Genesis 9 is the standard of the common-grace

state, then the civil magistrate could not only appeal to Genesis 9, but argue for capital punishment on the basis of the image of God in man (Genesis 9:6). These deductions seem to flow from the logic of his position. Interestingly, we do not find Kline advocating Natural Law nor criticizing it for that matter.

The importance of Kline is that he is arguably the “grandfather” of the Two Kingdoms Doctrine that we see today. This means that Two Kingdoms theology is not new (For a more critical analysis of Kline, we direct you to John Frame’s comments in *The Escondido Theology*, pp. 166-181).

II. DAVID VAN DRUNEN AND THE TWO KINGDOMS

Dr. David VanDrunen, who occupies the Robert B. Strimple Chair of Systematic Theology at Westminster Seminary California, has written a great deal about the Two Kingdoms viewpoint and is arguably its principal engine and popularizer. In his book *Living in God’s Two Kingdoms*, David VanDrunen asks two questions that strike the core of the Two-Kingdoms controversy. His first is—will our cultural products adorn the eternal city? His second question is—will our restorative works be included in “the new heavens and the new earth?” VanDrunen’s unequivocal answer to both is *no*. The negative answer leads him to think that contemporary conversations about Christianity and its connection to this fallen world are currently on the wrong track. He argues that Christians ought to realize that our cultural labors in the current world are temporary and will eventually pass away when Jesus returns; however, our spiritual labors in the Church will endure forever. Thus, our labors should be focused on the spiritual needs of the Church, rather than transforming the world. VanDrunen writes: “Our cultural activities do not in any sense usher in the new creation.” And again he writes: “Cultural activity remains important for Christians, but it will come to an abrupt end, along with this present world as a whole, when Christ returns and cataclysmically ushers in the new heavens and the new earth” (*Living in Two Kingdoms*, p. 28).

VanDrunen sees the Two Kingdoms theology as a direct alternative to a theological movement known as neo-Calvinism. He paints neo-Calvinism (which has its roots in the theology of Herman Dooyeweerd and Abraham Kuyper) with broad strokes since he understands it to be the predecessor of two contemporary, albeit problematic, theological movements—the emerging (or emergent) Church and the New Perspective on Paul. According to VanDrunen, these modern brands of neo-Calvinism are problematic because they place too much emphasis on transforming the culture of this world. According to VanDrunen, they fail to realize that this world, along with its culture will inevitably pass away when Christ returns to usher in His heavenly kingdom.

In the Two Kingdoms theology, the Church makes up one kingdom while the world comprises the other; the former is a spiritual kingdom, while the latter is a “common kingdom.” The primary concern is how these two kingdoms relate to one another. The Two Kingdoms formula is actually quite simple as it contrasts Adam with Christ, the Noachian covenant with the Abrahamic Covenant, and then draws implications from these in order to determine how we ought to live as Christians in God’s two kingdoms.

Adam was originally given a mandate which he was supposed to accomplish—to exercise dominion over the earth (Genesis 1:26-28). According to VanDrunen, this was a Cultural Mandate. It was commissioned by God and had a reward connected to it. If Adam successfully completed this Cultural Mandate, then God would have transferred him directly into a new kingdom; in a sense, Adam’s cultural labors would have earned him a place in the new kingdom. This new kingdom would have even surpassed the sinless paradise that the Garden of Eden was prior to the Fall. Unfortunately, Adam failed

in his task and did not complete this mandate. However, Jesus succeeded where Adam originally failed. Not only did Jesus pay the penalty for Adam's sin, but he also completed Adam's original task. Thus, Jesus alone is the second Adam.

Much of the difference between neo-Calvinism and the Two Kingdoms theology centers on the nature of Christ's redemptive work. Neo-Calvinists tend to think that Christ's redemption allows Christians to continue to labor according to the Cultural Mandate that was given to Adam prior to the Fall. They essentially view Christians as little Adams and think that Adam's original position in creation has been regained by Christians because of Christ's redemption. However, VanDrunen explains that only Jesus regained Adam's position, not Christians. Furthermore, Jesus completed the labor that was left incomplete by Adam. This being the case, for Christians, creation has not been regained in redemption, but rather a "new creation" has been gained. Yet, this "new creation" has not arrived in full, but is eagerly awaited by Christians in Christ's return. Adam's cultural labors would have ushered in the new kingdom, but Adam failed. Yet, Jesus fulfilled those labors, thus earning Christians a heavenly citizenship. In order to put this into better perspective, the nature of two covenantal kingdoms should be explained.

VanDrunen singles out two distinct covenants that correspond to the two kingdoms. The Noachian Covenant corresponds to the common kingdom, whereas the Abraham Covenant corresponds to the heavenly kingdom. According to VanDrunen, the Noachian Covenant governs all people (believers and unbelievers alike), while the Abrahamic Covenant has jurisdiction only over the Church. The Noachian Covenant is concerned with cultural things that Christians share in common with unbelievers, things such as education, vocation, and politics. Alternatively, the Abrahamic Covenant is concerned with spiritual things (i.e. salvation, etc) which pertain exclusively to the Church. While Christians occupy both kingdoms, their labors should be focused on the spiritual things that pertain to the Church.

This discussion about Adam and Jesus, covenants and kingdoms, has tremendous implications concerning how we live as Christians and interact with the common kingdom. VanDrunen expresses that it is the life and ministry of the Church, not the cultural life and activities of the common kingdom, which ought to be the focal point of the Christian. The affairs of human cultural are temporary and provisional. When Jesus returns the common kingdom and its affairs will come to an abrupt end, but the Church will endure forever. Thus, the focus of Christians should be on the Church, not the common kingdom because it is passing away and is not concerned with spiritual things; the Christian life is comprised of waiting for Christ's return, as the Bible even calls us *pilgrims* and *sojourners* in this world.

Now, some difficulty arises concerning the common kingdom since the Bible is not always clear in explaining how Christians should live in it. For instance, questions like what school should a Christian attend? What job should one work at? What person should one vote for? These are not clearly articulated in the Bible. For this reason, an individual Christian should have liberty to pursue education, vocation, and politics as he sees fit, and as long as his intentions are to glorify God through his labors; however, the Christian is not commanded to transform the world through his labors in the common kingdom. According to VanDrunen, neo-Calvinism tends to lord its view of cultural transformation over other Christians. The neo-Calvinist tries to transform the education system, the workplace, and even politics so that all areas of the common kingdom become distinctively Christian. Yet, VanDrunen sees no biblical mandate for this neo-Calvinistic

vision of creating a single Christian society. But he assures us that this is not to say that a Christian's labors within the common kingdom are unimportant. On the contrary, VanDrunen argues that they are very important; however, our spiritual labors in the Church are more important since they will be brought into the heavenly kingdom, whereas our cultural labors in the common kingdom will not be brought into it. VanDrunen writes: "Therefore Christians are not called to pursue cultural activities as a way of attaining the world-to-come, nor should they expect the products of their cultural labors to survive into the new creation" (*Living in God's Two Kingdoms*, p. 71).

A key text for VanDrunen is 1 Timothy 6:7, which reads, "We brought nothing into the world, and we cannot take anything out of the world." Thus, what VanDrunen means by the word "products" seems to be material. He tells us that "Our earthly bodies are the only part of the present world that Scripture says will be transformed and taken up into the world-to-come.... Asserting that anything else in this world will be transformed and taken up into the world-to-come is speculation beyond Scripture" (*Living in God's Two Kingdoms*, p. 71).

VanDrunen sees the Two Kingdoms theology as a Biblical alternative to the neo-Calvinistic theology of the emerging (or emergent) Church as well as that of *The New Perspective on Paul*. He understands these brands of neo-Calvinism are inaccurate depictions of Christ's redemption. He tells us that neo-Calvinism "emphasizes the centrality of Christian cultural work as a means of building the kingdom of God and anticipating the new creation" (*Living in God's Two Kingdoms*, p. 23). They view redemption as creation regained, meaning that Christians occupy a position (or office) similar to that of Adam prior to the Fall. However, VanDrunen thinks that Christ has already accomplished Adam's original cultural mandate; thus, creation has not been regained through redemption, but a new creation has been gained; a new creation that is not yet here in its entirety. Furthermore, the two kingdoms correspond to two covenants. One covenant—the Noachian—is concerned with governing the Common Kingdom, which is inhabited by both believers and unbelievers. This kingdom is focused on secular things such as education, vocation, politics, etc., things shared by believers and unbelievers, but also things that will ultimately vanish when Christ returns. The other covenant—the Abrahamic—is concerned with governing the Church, which is populated by believers. Since Christians are not expected to accomplish Adam's Cultural Mandate, and since the Common Kingdom that is shared with unbelievers will eventually pass away, Christians should focus their cultural labors in the Church rather than trying to transform the Common Kingdom because such a transformation will not last, but the labors done in the Church will endure forever.

As for how the common kingdom is to be governed, VanDrunen states that it is not to be done by the Scriptures (alone?). He boldly writes: "The church attends to the business of the redemptive kingdom and does not trample on the authority of common kingdom institutions. Unlike these other institutions, its authority derives from the Scriptures *alone*" (*Living in God's Two Kingdoms*, p. 31).

He writes that objectively "the standards of morality and excellence in the common kingdom are ordinarily the same for believers and unbelievers: they share these standards in common under God's authority in the covenant with Noah" (*Living in God's Two Kingdoms*, p. 31).

Yet, even though VanDrunen drives home the point that we are not called "to take up the original cultural mandate per se, yet God calls us "to obey the cultural mandate as given in *modified form to Noah* in Genesis 9" (*Living in God's Two Kingdoms*, p. 164).

He does not say too much about what this “modified form” of Genesis 1:26-28 includes or excludes. He seems to restrict it to the command to be fruitful and to multiply, that is, “to exercise dominion on earth” in a procreational sense only. Probably his use of the word *dominion* includes the command to exercise the death penalty for murder, too (Genesis 9:6).

III. MICHAEL HORTON’S TWO KINGDOMS VIEWS

Dr. Michael Horton has not written extensively on the Two-Kingdoms Theology; most if not all of his lectures and articles about 2K seem to be his defense against caricatures of the 2K perspective by those militant to the position. He also tries to clarify the issue by disowning that there is such a thing as “Escondido theology,” pointing out that the President of Westminster Seminary California is a Kuyperian neo-Calvinist. Horton also argues that on the most important points that the Kuyperian position and 2K theology are agreed.

Like David VanDrunen, Michael Horton also affirms that “all things are under Christ’s personal dominion” (*The Christian Faith*, p. 26). He opposes the idea that a valid civil order must be based on the Bible. He maintains that natural law and common law are complementary since “the work of the law is written in the heart” of every man (Romans 2:16-17). This “Canon of natural law” is engraved on every human being (*The Christian Faith*, p. 152). He says that “God is King in status, but will one day be king eschatologically in all the earth” (*The Christian Faith*, page 540). Most if not all of his use of the word *kingdom* is reserved for the Church since there is the kingdom of grace (the Church) and the kingdom of glory (which is the Church in the future) (*The Christian Faith*, p. 537). He interprets the words of Revelation 11:15 which speak about the kingdoms of this world becoming the kingdoms of the Lord and His Christ to refer to the ushering in of the kingdom of glory. He also emphasizes that God’s kingdom is “not a kingdom we are building” but “receiving” (*The Christian Faith*, p. 543). Pressing the “already-not yet” focus of Scripture, Horton argues that the kingdom is coming, but also has come (Ibid, 544). So, “Wherever the King is present, His kingdom is present also” (Ibid, 547). Yet, he seems unwilling to apply the word *kingdom* to the State or any cultural activity outside of the Church. One reason is because “In this era Christ’s kingdom doesn’t overthrow the kingdoms of this age” (Ibid, p. 973).

One reason that Christians are not transformers of this world is because Scripture identifies us as “strangers and pilgrims.” Horton so presses this metaphor that the cover of his book on systematic theology pictures two pilgrims, shrouded in darkness, making their way thru life on blackened soil. In fact, the sub-title of his book reads, “A Systematic Theology for Pilgrims on the Way” (our emphasis). Accordingly, Two Kingdoms theologians depict the Christian as a sojourner, traveling to a religious shrine (“the kingdom of glory”). For Horton, the figure of a sojourner complements his theology better than a triumphant king on the earth who “occupies” until Christ’s Second Advent (Luke 19:13). Horton does not balance his emphasis of “pilgrims on the way” with other New Testament emphases, such as our being kings and priests who fight God’s battles on the earth (Revelation 5:10).

Dr. Horton refers to all rulers of this world as “secular rulers” (Ibid, p. 713) and these secular rulers are not to be directed by the Church (Ibid, p. 896). To prove this, he cites the *Westminster Confession of Faith* in Article 32.1-2, which states that the Church must not direct the State “...unless by way of humble petition in cases extraordinary...” (Ibid, page 889). His conviction is that the Church does not direct “secular affairs” (Ibid,

page 896). These “secular affairs” are issues that relate to the old Cultural Mandate, not the Great Commission of Matthew 28. Horton writes: “Nowhere in the New Testament is the Great Commission fused with the cultural mandate. Rather than offer a blueprint for establishing Christ’s kingdom through cultural, political, or social power, Paul’s instructions for daily conduct of believers in civil society seem rather modest:...” (Ibid, p. 713).

Again, he writes: “Christians are not distinguished from non-Christians, which is to say, are not holy—because they show love and kindness to their neighbor, defend justice, and care for the environment. These are obligations of the law of creation that Christians recognize in their conscience together with non-Christians. It is only the gospel that marks believers as holy, and it is only the preaching of the Gospel and its ratification in baptism and Communion that generate a city of light in a dark world” (Ibid, p. 719).

Again he writes: “The calling of the Church is not to witness to its own piety or to transform the world into Christ’s holy kingdom” (Ibid, p. 868).

The impact of the Church upon the State is not supposed to be direct, according to Horton. The era that we live in is the “era of common law measured by equity to which believers and unbelievers are bound in secular friendship” (Ibid, p. 973). This means that our attitudes toward unbelievers are determined by Common Grace. Horton writes: “All places are common....” (Ibid, p. 961). For Horton this means that Christians are to “influence” the world without transforming the world. The goal of transforming the world is “the heresy of Constantinianism” (Ibid, p. 973). As to how to distinguish how we are to influence but not to transform, Horton says that “Christians may appeal to general principles of justice and love of neighbor, but not to Israel’s national covenant” (Ibid, p. 973). Horton even argues that “Theology does not provide a normative theory of politics, or even address every area of moral concern” (Ibid, p. 105)

The leading features of the Two Kingdoms theology are:

1. 2K theologians reject the so called “neo-Calvinism” of men like Abraham Kuyper, in so far as they think that the Lord does not call the Church (nor individual Christians) to engage in distinctly Christian cultural and institutional transformation.
2. 2K theologians believe that their view saves the Church from interfering with the civil magistrate in the name of dominion and saves the secular world from self-destruction by emphasizing the preserving character and laws of the Noachian covenant.
3. Christians are not called by God to transform the world via the Cultural Mandate of Genesis 1:26-28.
4. Christians are but strangers and pilgrims, so that we should not emphasize cultural activities.
5. Only the Church is holy; except for the kingdom of glory, all else is profane and unholy.
6. The world outside of the Church is governed by the Noachian Covenant of Genesis 8 and 9.
7. The standard that is to govern the common kingdom is not God’s inscripturated law, but natural law.
8. The standard that governs both Christians *and* unbelievers in the common kingdom is “ordinarily the same” (*Living in God’s Two Kingdoms*, p. 31).
9. Christ has fulfilled the first Adam’s commission so that the Church today is no longer expected to obey that Commission.

10. The Great Commission and the Cultural Mandate are two different things, as Christ's command to teach "whatsoever things I have commanded you" excludes the Cultural Mandate.
11. If the State acknowledges the God of the Christian faith, she is guilty of a monstrous confusion of God's holy kingdom and the common.
12. Neither the State, nor anything else outside the Church is the holy kingdom of God.
13. Eschatologically, Christ's kingdom will not overthrow the kingdoms of this age until His Second Coming.
14. The goal of the Church to transform the world is "the heresy of Constantinianism."
15. Christian theology does not address every area of moral concern.
16. The Gospel does not contain the Cultural Mandate.
17. The common kingdom is not to be governed by an appeal to anything in God's national covenant with Israel.
18. God's covenant with Noah and his descendents reinstates the Cultural Mandate, but at best, only in a modified form.
19. Christ has so fulfilled the Cultural Mandate that God has given us in an entirely new creation. The old creation mandate that Adam was commanded to implement is in the main, or totally obsolete.

Some of our concerns and questions about the Two Kingdoms theology are as follows:

1. That the command to exercise dominion in Genesis 1:26-28 is missing in Genesis 9, does not have to mean that God has cancelled the Cultural Mandate. Its absence is explained by other reasons, especially since the *priority* was for man to be fruitful and multiply so as to repopulate an earth that was depopulated by the Flood. Moreover, that God does not repeat a command does not mean that the command has fallen by the wayside or been nullified.
2. If life outside the Church is to be governed by natural law under the Noachian Covenant, then it would seem that the culture outside the Church must appeal to the written laws of Genesis 8-9, where God commands man to be fruitful, to multiply, and to execute murderers.
3. If the Noachian covenant alone preserves the world, then the State would have to acknowledge the God of the Bible as the true God since God made man "in his own image" (Genesis 9:6). Moreover, the God of *Genesis* is Triune (Genesis 1:26-28; 3:22; 11:3; 18:1-3). It is not clear whether Two Kingdom theologians believe that the Church has the express duty to tell the State that it must read and implement the Noachian laws of Genesis 8-9.
4. The expectation of verses like Psalm 2:10-12 is that kings *as kings* and judges *as judges* would "Kiss the Son" and serve the Lord in their respective callings. The thought that their service to Christ should be private instead of public seems foreign to the text. Kline's view is that the State must not baptize or implement any cultic structure, thus implying that stamping "In God we trust" on our coins, or making a pledge to "one nation under God" is improper and "monstrous." Neo-Calvinists (as they are called) would quote Calvin who explained Psalm 2:10-12 as God not ordering "... them [kings and judges] to lay aside their authority and return to private life, but to make the power with which they are invested subject to Christ, that he may rule over all" (*Institutes of the Christian Religion*, Book IV, Chapter 20:5).

5. The idea that the Bible does not address every moral concern is contrary to the doctrine of the Sufficiency of Scripture.

6. The idea that only the Church or the kingdom of glory is holy seems a severe limitation of holiness, since other things (such as food—Mark 7:19, Acts 10:15; 2 Timothy 4:5) have been cleansed and sanctified by Christ. Plus, the civil magistrate in Romans 13:4 is called “the minister of God” for us for good. He is the agent of God’s wrath to mete out God’s justice. Although the word *holy* is not used in Romans 13, Paul’s assessment of the civil magistrate squares with John Calvin’s view that the civil magistrate is “the most sacred, and by far, the most honorable, of all stations in moral life” (*Institutes of the Christian Religion*, Book IV, chapter 4). (See also Isaiah 45:1.) Certainly God’s institution of marriage is “holy wedlock” for everyone (*Heidelberg Catechism* 108). We could even argue that since all men are in the image of God in the *broad sense*, that all men are holy (Genesis 9:6; James 3:9).

7. Another question concerns the impact of natural law upon the common kingdom. Two Kingdoms theologians teach that natural law is sufficient to govern human life outside the Church, but do so without factoring-in the extent of man’s Fall and total depravity. They cite Romans 2:14-15, but have not grappled with the problem that natural law without God’s inscripturated law to enlighten it, is not an infallible moral guide.

8. Our concern about the Two Kingdoms viewpoint is that it might turn the Church into a ghetto in a world crying out for truth and justice. Two Kingdoms theologians teach that our labors in the common kingdom or city of man are unnecessary and wrong if we are trying to impose the expired Cultural Mandate. If this assessment is correct, then all work outside the body of Christ is unholy, common-kingdom work. Although it is still claimed that our work is very important and that God commands us to fulfill our secular callings, it would seem that the quality of our vocations is impaired, if not adulterated if our “secular” work is not in *some* sense holy.

9. Another ambiguity in the Two Kingdoms viewpoint concerns the reward of Christian work, which will result in God’s “Well done, thou good and faithful servant.” VanDrunen tells us that none of our “products” will accompany us to heaven. Our resurrected body is all that we take with us. But the issue is not “products,” the real issue is the good works done in every sphere of our lives. The issue is not whether our products follow us to heaven; the issue is whether all our good works (in the cultural sphere, too) follow us (Revelation 14:13).

10. That Christ fulfilled the Cultural Mandate does not mean that we who are “in Christ” by faith alone are exempt from its summons for obedience. That He fulfilled it could mean that He filled it with new meaning and enables us by His grace and Spirit to fulfill what Adam failed to fulfill.

CONCLUSION: Since much of the debate about the Two-Kingdoms theology concerns neo-Calvinism and its belief that the Cultural Mandate is fully in force, your Committee makes the following recommendation:

Recommendations:

1. That the Special Committee to study the Two Kingdoms viewpoint continue for another year in order to perfect the conclusions of this report.
2. That the Special Committee include within the report a discussion of “The Role of the Cultural Mandate in Reformed Theology,” and its connection with the Two Kingdoms doctrine, and present their work at the 29th Annual Meeting of Classis.

3. That the Nominations Committee appoint a replacement for the Rev. Scott Henry, who has transferred to another Classis.

Grounds:

#1 The report was dispatched late. Also, the Committee needs time to assure itself that its observations are correct and that we are not misrepresenting the Two Kingdoms theologians (observations and comments from the floor of Classis would be helpful at this time).

#2 Much debate concerns the relationship between the Cultural Mandate and the Great Commission. For example, while Horton and VanDrunen argue that the Cultural Mandate is not in force and is not included in the Great Commission, so called neo-Calvinists argue that it is “republished” (John Frame) in Genesis 9 and included in the Great Commission. Although there are many features of the Two Kingdoms theology, its conviction that the Cultural Mandate is obsolete occupies a central position.

Respectfully submitted,
*Rev. Jim West (Chairman), Rev. Tracy Gruggett,
 Rev. Scott Henry, Elder Derrick Merkel, Elder Greg Stewart*

Classis Action: The recommendation was passed and the report was adopted.

B. Use of Instruments in Public Worship

Esteemed Fathers and Brothers

Your Committee had great difficulty in meeting, primarily due to the extreme circumstances your Committee Chairman experienced this year. However, due to the diligence of two of our committee members especially, we were able to make some progress. Classis erected this special *committee to study the place and use of instruments in our public worship services as set forth in the Bible, our Confessions, and the RCUS Directory of Worship and to report back to the 2013 Spring Classis meeting with their findings*. We report to you three of the main headings we have been discussing

1. The oversight of music, including instrumentation, in the worship service.
2. Biblical principles of worship which affect the use of various instruments and style of music in public worship
3. A variety of musical instruments are suitable to accompany worship music.

Recommendation:

That the Special Committee to study the place and use of instruments in our public worship services finish their work this Classical year, submit their finished report to the 2014 Classis, and that the delegates be encouraged to interact with the Committee in the coming 12 months.

Respectfully submitted,
*Rev. Thomas Mayville, (Chairman), Rev. Sam Powell,
 Rev. Eric Bristley, Elder Ryan Spitzer, Elder Lowell Pollema*

Classis Action: The recommendation was approved and the report was adopted.

REPORTS OF STANDING COMMITTEES

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

A. Benevolences

1. That the Western Classis petition the 267th Synod RCUS for ministerial aid for Mrs. Betty Sanders in the amount of 1,300 per month for the 2013 synodical year.
2. That the Western Classis petition the 267th Synod RCUS for ministerial aid for Rev. and Mrs Gene Sawtelle in the amount of \$1,800 per month for the 2013 synodical year.
3. That the Western Classis petition the 267th Synod RCUS for ministerial aid for Mrs Marjorie Duckett in the amount of \$1,000 per month for the 2013 synodical year.
4. That the Western Classis petition the 267th Synod RCUS for ministerial aid for Rev. and Mrs Paul Treick in the amount of \$1,200 per month for the 2013 synodical year.
5. That the Western Classis petition the 267th Synod RCUS for ministerial aid for Rev. and Mrs Vern Pollema in the amount of \$1,000 per month for the 2013 synodical year.
6. That the Western Classis petition the 267th Synod RCUS for ministerial aid for Rev. and Mrs Neale Riffert the amount of \$1,800 per month for the 2013 synodical year.
7. That the Western Classis grant benevolent aid to Grace Reformed Church, Anderson in the amount of \$500 per month for the Classical year, and that the Western Classis petition the 267th Synod RCUS for benevolent aid in the amount of \$500 per month for the 2013 synodical year.
8. That the Western Classis grant benevolent aid to Covenant Reformed, Chico in the amount of \$837 per month for the Classical year 2014 beginning January 1st, and that the Western Classis petition the 267th Synod RCUS for benevolent aid in the amount of \$837 per month for the calendar year 2014 beginning January 1st.
9. That the Western Classis grant benevolent aid to Grace Reformed, Lancaster in the amount of \$225 per month for the Classical year 2013 and that the Western Classis petition the 267th Synod RCUS for benevolent aid in the amount of \$225 per month for the 2013 synodical year.
10. That the Western Classis grant benevolent aid to Trinity Reformed, Modesto, in the amount of \$1,500 for the purpose of constructing and maintaining a church website for the next twelve months.
11. That the Western Classis grant benevolent aid to Covenant Reformed Church, San Diego in the amount of \$600 per month for the classical year.

B. Missions

1. That the Classis provide support for Rehoboth Reformed Church, La Habra, CA in the amount \$26,500 for the 2014 Classical year.
2. That the Classis petition the 26th Synod for mission support in the amount of \$26,500 for the 2014 Synodical year.
3. That the Classis set aside November 10, 2013, as a day of prayer for Rehoboth Reformed Church, La Habra. Furthermore, that the churches of the Western

Classis be encouraged to take a special offering on that day to be used by Rehoboth Reformed Church to establish or augment a building fund for the purpose of purchasing a permanent meeting place.

4. That the Classis commission the Permanent Home Missions Committee to present a proposal for the criteria and method of disbursement and repayment of funds disbursed from the Home Missions Building Fund and that they propose clear procedures for that disbursement at the 2014 Spring Classis meeting.

C. Examination and Licensure

1. That Classis overture the Synod of the RCUS for \$400.00 for books for student under care Mr. Derrick Merkel for the forthcoming academic year.
2. That Mr. Matthew Davis be taken as a student under care of the Western Classis of the Reformed Church in the United States.
3. That Mr. Colin Samul be taken as a student under care of the Western Classis of the Reformed Church in the United States.

D. Minutes of Synod

In reviewing the minutes of the 266th Synod there are some items the Classis should take note of:

Item 1: Classes should take note of the corrections that should be made to their minutes as adopted by the Synod (266th Abstract, pp. 84, #2). The Clerk of the Western Classis has made these corrections.

Item 2: Both membership statistics and financial statistics should be according to the calendar year.

Item 3: That the Stated Clerk of each Classis regularly provide the webmaster, in electronic form, an updated roll of ministers, elders, and churches following their spring Classis meeting.

Item 4: Synod has declared that Council Bluffs, Iowa is in the South Central Classis.

Item 5: The Classes are reminded that the 267th Annual Session of the Synod of the RCUC is scheduled to meet May 20-23, 2013, at Ebenezer Reformed Church, Manitowoc, WI.

Item 6: Consistories receiving Synodical Benevolent Aid should review the 266th Synod Abstract, page 80, #11.

E. Judicial

1. [Tabled] That the Western Classis adopt the following statement: The Directory of Worship states:
 1. Only an ordained minister may pronounce the benediction or salutation, preach the Word, and administer the Sacraments.
 2. Under ordinary circumstances, the minister of the Word should lead the congregation in corporate prayer, and do the reading of the Word.
 3. All other elements of worship may be led by an elder under the authority of the spiritual council.
 4. An elder may exhort in the absence of the minister.
2. That the constitution amendments for Rehoboth Reformed Church be approved with the following exceptions:
 1. Under recommendation 1F, delete the third "the" before "ministry."

2. Under recommendation 2, replace the comma after "constitution" with a period, and delete everything after it.
3. That the request from Covenant Reformed Church of Sacramento be answered by erecting a special committee to examine the practice of adult baptism following a period of instruction in light of article 185 of the constitution and report at the Spring, 2014 meeting of Classis.
4. That each congregation be encouraged to provide funds for the lodging of their own delegates for Classis travel. If there are special circumstances, the local consistory can request a special consideration from Classis on an as-needed basis.
5. That the pulpit of the Covenant Reformed Church of Sacramento be declared to be vacant as of September 30, 2013. That Rev. West's resignation is in order.

F. Nominations

1. That the Permanent and Special Committees be as follows (The underlined name indicates the convener):

Executive Committee: F. Walker, H. Bowen, W. Johnson

Candidates and Credentials: D. Roe, G. Stewart (1 yr); F. Walker, R. Spitzer (2 yrs); D. Schlegel, B. Williams (3 yrs)

Christian Education in the Church: P. Treick, M. Reyna (1 yr); D. Yeager, M. Voytek (2 yrs); G. Mancilas, R. Goehring (3 yrs)

Missions: G. Baloy, P. Henderson (1 yr); D. Schlegel, M. Reyna (2 yrs); J. Gross, D. Helseth (3 yrs)

Interchurch Relations: V. Pollema, G. Baloy (1 yr); J. Merica, D. Merkel (2 yrs); A. White, E. Van Houten (3 yrs)

Publications: E. Bristley (1 yr); S. Powell (2 yrs); R. Mettler (3 yrs)

Diaconal: P. Henderson, R. Wegis (1 yr); L. Pollema, D. Roe (2yrs); Deacon Scott McAfee (3 yrs)

Heidelberg West Youth Camp: T. Gruggett, M. Voytek (1 yr); R. Wegis, K. Bowen (2 yrs); G. Stewart, M. Frias (3 yr.)

Two Kingdoms Study Committee: T. Gruggett, E. Bristley, P. Treick, J. West, D. Merkel, G. Uttinger.

Musical Instruments in Worship Study Committee: T. Mayville, S. Powell, E. Bristley, L. Pollema, R. Spitzer, K. Snow.

Baptism Study Committee: N. Riffert, R. Goehring, M. Voytek, W. Johnson

G. Finances

1. That travel expenses be paid for the 25th Annual Session of Western as follows:

Name	Mileage	Amount	Airfare	Total
Gil Baloy	@ .45		186.70	186.70
Hank Bowen	388 @ .45	174.60		174.60
Eric Bristley	@ .45		198.64	198.64
David Helseth	250 @ .45	112.50		112.50
Gary Mancilas	@ .45		37.40	37.40
Thomas Mayville	@ .45		81.00	81.00
Robert Mettler	772 @ .45	347.40		347.40
Vernon Pollema	490 @ .45	220.50		220.50
Sam Powell	390 @ .45	175.50		175.50
Neale Riffert	@ .45		528.00	528.00
Dennis Roe	90 @ .45	40.50		40.50
Paul Treick	240 @ .45	108.00		108.00
Michael Voytek	760 @ .45	342.00		342.00
Jim West	100 @ .45	45.00		45.00
Alfred White	900 @ .45	<u>405.00</u>		<u>405.00</u>
TOTAL		1,883.00	1,031.74	\$3,043.24

2. That the Treasurer's Report for December 31, 2012 be adopted.
 3. That the Guidelines for Giving for the 2013-2014 Classical Year be as follows:

Classis Dues	\$8.00
Benevolences	42.00
Home Missions	42.00
Publications	-----
Home Missions Building Fund	1.00
Heidelberg West Youth Camp	<u>3.00</u>
TOTAL	\$96.00

H. Excuses

1. That the request for excuse from all of the sessions of Classis, due to employment, be granted to Elder Michael Peery.
 2. That the excuse of Rev. Gary Mancilas from the March 5 session before 5:30 pm due to use of public transportation be granted and that he be encouraged to plan more carefully in the future.
 3. That the request for excuse from Elder Ralph Goehring from the March 5 session due to care for an ailing father be granted.

I. Overtures

1. That the overtures 1-15 be referred as specified:
 1) Request for continued ministerial aid from Mrs. Betty Sander (To Benevolence).
 2) Request for continued ministerial aid for Pastor Gene Sawtelle and his wife, Sharon, from the Consistory of First Reformed Church, Yuba City, CA (To Benevolence).

- 3) Request for continued ministerial aid for Mrs. Marjorie Duckett from the Consistory of Covenant Reformed Church, Sacramento, CA (To Benevolence).
- 4) Request for benevolent support from the Consistory of Faith Reformed Church, Anderson, CA (To Benevolence).
- 5) Request for benevolent support from the Consistory of Covenant Reformed Church, Chico, CA (To Benevolence).
- 6) Request for benevolent support from the Consistory of Grace Reformed Church, Lancaster, CA (To Benevolence).
- 7) Request from Michael Peery to be excused from the entire session of the 28th Annual Session of the Western Classis from Faith Reformed Church, Anderson, CA (To Excuses).
- 8) Request from the Consistory of Covenant Reformed Church at Sacramento CA, regarding the retirement of Rev. Jim West from the pastorate at Sacramento Covenant Reformed Church (To Judicial).
- 9) Rehoboth Reformed Church of La Habra, CA according to Article 10 of the RCUS Constitution submits changes to their church Constitution for Western Classis approval (To Judicial).
- 10) Covenant Reformed Church of Sacramento, CA requests the Western Classis to create a study committee to examine the relationship time and order of conversion to baptism and formal membership in the local church (To Judicial).
- 11) Request for continued ministerial aid for Rev. Paul Treick and his wife, Karen, from the Consistory of Trinity Reformed Church, Modesto, CA (To Benevolence).
- 12) Request for benevolent support to Trinity Reformed Church in Modesto, CA for construction and maintaining a church website (To Benevolence).
- 13) Request from Trinity Reformed Church in Modesto, CA to create a Standing Rule to help subsidize lodging for Classis delegates (To Judicial).
- 14) Request for continued ministerial aid for Rev. and Mrs. Vernon Pollema from the Consistory of Grace Reformed Church, Bakersfield, CA (To Benevolence).
- 15) Request for benevolent support for Covenant Reformed Chapel in San Diego, CA from the Consistory of Covenant Reformed Church, San Diego, CA (To Benevolence).
2. Request from Rev. Gary Mancilas to be excused from the session of Tuesday, March 5, 2013 of the 28th Annual Session of the Western Classis, CA (To Excuses).
3. Request from Elder Ralph Goehring to be excused from the session of Tuesday, March 5, 2013 of the 28th Annual Session of the Western Classis, CA (To Excuses).
4. That the following statement be adopted and printed in the bulletin of the Providence Reformed Church, Lodi, CA: “We the delegates of the 28th Annual Session of the Western Classis express to you, the members of Providence Reformed Church, Lodi, CA our heartfelt gratitude for hosting us, your servants in Christ. We have been abundantly blessed by your loving hospitality and Christian fellowship. Your care for us and the delicious cuisine you provided were greatly appreciated. We are thankful for you, and praise our gracious God for your work of faith and labor of love.”

MISCELLANEOUS REPORTS AND OTHER BUSINESS

- A. *Expression of Appreciation to the Host Congregation (Overtures Report).*
- B. *Adoption of Stated Clerk's Report, Executive Committee's Minutes, and Overtures Committee's Report.*
- C. *Other Business*

Classis Action: All of the above reports were adopted.

THE READING OF THE MINUTES

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

ADJOURNMENT

At 10:20 PM the 28th Annual Session of the Western Classis was adjourned to the 29th Annual Meeting of the Western Classis to convene at Sacramento Covenant Reformed Church on Tuesday, March 4, 2014 at 1:00 PM.

- A. **Roll Call** – The roll call was taken at the beginning and end of each business session. The closing roll showed seventeen ministers and twelve elders present.
- B. **Devotions** – Elder Wayne Lingenfelter led the body in a closing devotion from Revelation 21:2-7 and closed in prayer.
- C. **Close** - The President led the delegates in the confession of our catholic faith through the Apostles' Creed and in the Lord's Prayer. He then pronounced the Benediction and all joined in the singing of the Doxology.

Rev. Henry P. Bowen
Stated Clerk of the Western Classis

APPENDIX

to the

ABSTRACT

of the

MINUTES

MEMBERSHIP

and

FINANCIAL

STATISTICS

STANDING RULES

of the

WESTERN CLASSIS

MEMBERSHIP AND FINANCIAL STATISTICS

2012 Western Classis Statistics	Faith Anderson	Grace Bakers- field	Covenant Chico	Covenant Grass Vly Stockton	Rehoboth LaHabra	Grace Lancaster	Provi- dence Lodi
1. No. of Elders	1	4	2	3	3	2	3
2. No. of Deacons	1	4	1	0	1	3	3
3. Comm. Last Year	23	131	19	50	0	34	25
4. Rec'd by Confirm	0	2	0	0	0	4	0
5. Rec'd by Letter	0	2	0	2	34	4	3
6. Rec'd by Prof.	0	0	0	6	0	1	3
7. Tot. Received	0	4	0	8	34	9	6
8. Tot Old/New Mbr	23	135	19	58	34	43	31
9. Lost by Dismissal	3	0	0	17	0	3	1
10. Lost Eras/Disc	0	5	4	0	0	4	4
11. Lost by Death	0	1	0	0	0	0	0
12. Total Lost	2	6	4	17	0	7	5
13. Comm. this Yr	20	129	15	41	34	36	26
14. Unconfirm. Mbr.	2	45	8	13	12	7	5
15. Total Bapt. Mbr.	22	174	23	54	46	43	31
16. No. of Families	12	55	8	17	19	17	15
17. No. of S.S. Child.	3	36	0	9	11	7	0
18. Adult Baptisms	0	0	0	0	1	0	0
19. Infant Baptisms	0	2	1	1	4	0	0
20. Total Baptisms	0	2	1	1	5	0	0
21. No. Rec. LS	24	112	15	48	34	34	28
22. Times LS.Served	12	4	12	12	6	4	11
23. Reg. Offerings	49,383	216,392	33,160	116,146	91,802	74,040	50,858
24. Special Offerings	0	26,679	1,640	2,268	4,303	3,023	1,812
25. Other Sources	12,000	14,495	27,750	322	60,764	9,148	12
26. Total Receipts	61,383	257,566	62,550	118,736	156,869	86,211	52,681
27. Giv. to Syn Guidl.	0	28,284	938	3,254	0	0	466
28. Giv. to Clas Guidl	345	15,950	800	2,240	3,045	0	681
29. RCUS non-budget	0	11,708	374	0	0	0	0
30. Non-RCUS cause	0	11,663	0	7,676	0	0	1,219
31. Other Expenses	61,253	158,122	55,310	95,710	145,160	107,692	50,146
32. Total Expenses	61,598	205,537	57,442	108,880	148,205	113,692	52,512
33. Val. of Ch. Bldg.	400,000	600,000	0	219,125	0	0	258,544
34. Parsonage	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
35. Impr on Prop'ty	0	10,000	0	0	0	0	0
36. Pres Prop'ty Deb	0	0	0	17,584	0	0	0
37. Debt Pd Last Yr	0	0	0	3,800	0	0	0
38. Syn guidl/comm	0	216	55	65	0	0	19
39. Clas guidl/comm	15	121	47	45	105	0	27
40. Tot. RCUS/Com	15	337	102	223	105	0	46

Trinity Modesto	Covenant Sacto*	Covenant San Diego	Ebenezer Shafter	Grace Willows	First Yuba City	2012 Totals	2011 Totals	% Chg	Calvary Chapel Stockton
2	5	1	3	2	3	34	35	-2.9	1
2	6	1	6	3	2	33	34	-2.9	0
67	162	0	101	32	52	696	702	-.86	11
0	1	0	0	0	2	9	10	-10	0
2	4	22	0	0	1	74	12	517	2
1	9	2	11	3	0	36	24	50	4
3	14	24	11	3	3	119	46	159	6
70	176	24	112	35	55	815	748	9	17
14	36	0	44	0	0	118	25	372	2
0	3	0	2	0	1	23	25	-8	0
0	0	0	1	0	0	2	6	-66.7	0
14	39	0	47	0	1	142	56	154	2
56	137	24	66	35	54	673	692	-2.8	15
12	61	3	9	14	13	204	225	-9.3	2
68	198	27	75	49	67	877	917	-4.4	17
28	67	13	37	15	29	332	332	0	9
11	48	7	9	8	11	160	176	-9.1	3
1	0	0	0	0	0	2	0	200	0
2	3	2	0	0	1	16	22	-27	0
3	3	2	0	0	1	18	22	-18	0
66	137	24	65	35	54	679	643	5.6	14
4	12	11	4	12	12	116	99	17.2	8
99,098	253,216	52,763	197,930	104,356	112,355	1,451,499	1,391,960	4.3	41,886
399	69,755	1,761	11,174	1,210	35,199	159,223	134,343	18.5	0
3,912	94,540	9,756	3,779	96	0	236,574	272,656	-13.2	322
103,399	417,511	64,280	212,883	105,662	147,554	1,847,285	1,799,959	2.6	42,208
10,913	27,988	4,156	14,112	5,992	8,966	105,069	93,376	12.5	2,721
7,035	14,805	2,205	7,560	3,630	5,720	64,016	67,247	-4.8	1,470
399	7,573	1,372	6,923	0	25,967	54,316	22,160	145	0
0	11,222	1,062	0	11,154	0	43,996	47,939	-8.2	5,673
85,253	361,378	57,246	175,974	94,232	80,860	1,528,336	1,550,798	-1.5	23,474
92,687	422,966	66,041	204,569	105,385	121,513	1,761,027	1,781,865	-1.2	33,338
350,000	358,433	0	500,000	500,000	305,000	3,491,102	3,531,408	-1.1	0
0	0	0	150,000	0	123,000	273,000	645,000	-57.7	0
1,600	13,884	0	24,213	0	4,200	53,897	61,142	-11.5	0
7,000	0	0	0	0	0	24,584	35,384	-30.5	0
12,600	0	0	0	0	0	16,400	53,983	-69.6	0
162	199	197	196	187	172	Avg. 113	Avg. 100	13	247
105	105	105	105	113	110	Avg. 77	Avg. 82	-6.1	134
267	357	368	397	300	781	AVG. 254	Avg. 195	30.3	897

*includes City Seminary

STANDING RULES OF THE WESTERN CLASSIS

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 Committee of Classis; the Statistics to the Stated Clerk of the Executive Committee of Classis. The statistics of the home mission congregation are to be included in the overseeing church's statistics when the congregation submits them to the clerk of Classis. ('87, '07, '09)
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 on behalf of Classis, or for delegates to Classis, at forty-five cents (\$.45) per running mile per vehicle." ('07, '12)
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 one thousand dollars (\$1,000.00) per year. ('91, '10)
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)
20. All ministers licensed and ordained in any of the other Classes of the RCUS desiring to accept a call to a congregation of the Western Classis will undergo an examination in Orthodoxy and Purity of Intent. Such examination will take place either before the whole Classis or before the Committee on Candidates and Credentials, as that Committee shall determine in each case. If the examination is before the Candidates and Credentials Committee alone, the recommendation of the Committee must be approved via Executive Circular. ('01)

INDEX OF POSITIONS AND RESOLUTIONS

BENEVOLENT AND DIACONAL AID

Guidelines: Three Year Budget Required – 09:75

CANDIDATES AND CREDENTIALS

Examinations on the Floor – 10:80

Memorization of Catechism for Candidates - 08:78

Partial Licensure Exams – 09:76

Theological Training for Ministers - 86:71

CONSTITUTION

Art. 113, 114, 118, 119 - 05:72

Borrowing Elders - 05:74

HEIDELBERG WEST YOUTH CAMP

Camp Policies and Rules - 04:27

Fee Reduction for children of camp staff - 04:26

Insurance Certificate by each congregation - 04:26

INTERCHURCH RELATIONS

Fraternal Delegates to visit once a year - 87:90

Limitation of reports by delegates - 04:80

JUDICIAL

Bar of the House, Who may be seated - 88:124

Current Constitutions to be filed with Clerk - 98:74

Elders Officiating at Classis Worship Services - 13:80

Minister's membership in local church - 86:78

Permanent Committee Work by Mandate Only – 09:76

Procedure to Amend Local Constitution - 99:74

KJV or NKJV use in Classis - 87:91, 90:4

MISCELLANEOUS

Guidelines for Biblical Reconciliation - 88:122

MISSIONS

Kenya Economic Development Fund Formation - 07:73

New Mission Churches through Existing Churches – 09:74

Strategic Five Year Plan Requirement – 09:74, 75

SPECIAL POSITIONS TAKEN

Hyper-preterism - 97:74

PUBLICATIONS

Pricing Policy - 97:28 (3)

Royalty Policy - 97:28 (2)

SPECIAL STUDIES

Harold Camping - 04:85

View of the Church - 03:75

Return of Christ in 1994 - 93:67

Operation Rescue - 90:28

Paedocommunion - 03:72, 04:83

Survey of Catechism Practice - 99:18

Two Kingdoms Doctrine - 13:66