

**ABSTRACT**  
**of the**  
**MINUTES**  
**for the**  
**WESTERN CLASSIS**

Reformed Church in the United States



**35<sup>th</sup> Annual Session**  
March 3-5, 2020

Providence Reformed Church  
Lodi, California



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*Primarius Elders*

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*Secundus Elders*

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1633 Bainbridge Way, Ripon, CA 95357  
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559 Woodington Drive, Lancaster, CA 93535  
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*Licentiates*

There are currently no licentiates in the Western Classis

*Students Under Care*

- Curtis, Mr. Timothy** (916) 601-4501  
 1213 Live Oak Lane, Auburn CA 95603  
 E-Mail: matthew.davis@biblefreak.org
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*Treasurer*

- Schlegel, Mr. Nathan** (916) 607-1002  
 P. O. Box 898, Lodi, CA 95241  
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**34<sup>th</sup> ANNUAL WESTERN CLASSIS ROLL***For the Classical Year beginning March 5, 2019*

<b>Minister</b>	<b>Primarius Elder</b>	<b>Secundus Elder</b>	<b>Charge</b>
Tracy Gruggett	Todd Crabtree	John Guinn	Grace, Bakersfield, CA
Gary Mancilas	David Helseth	Jim Gochnauer	Covenant, Chico, CA
Vacant	Larry Lynch	Mark Reyna	Grace, Lancaster, CA
Neale Riffert	(Pastor Emeritus, Lancaster)		Retired, Lancaster, CA
Douglas Schlegel	Jerry DeYoung	Wayne Lingenfelter	Providence, Lodi, CA
Thomas Mayville	(Associate Pastor, Lodi)		Providence, Lodi, CA
Vacant	Robert Mettler	Clarence Goehring	Rehoboth, Los Angeles, CA
Vacant	Derek Reis	Mark Crook	Trinity, Modesto, CA
Paul Treick	(Pastor Emeritus, Modesto)		Retired, Modesto, CA
Dennis Roe			Retired, Newcastle, CA
Frank Walker	Nico Bouwkamp	Chris Fellersen	Covenant, Sacramento, CA
Jim West	(Pastor Emeritus, Sacramento)		Retired, Sacramento, CA
Guillermo Baloy	Alfred White		Covenant, San Diego, CA
Ruben Zartman	Ryan Spitzer	Eric Merz	Ebenezer, Shafter, CA
Valentin Alpuche	(Associate Pastor, Shafter)		<i>Valle de Gracia</i> , Shafter, CA
Vernon Pollema	(Pastor Emeritus, Shafter)		Retired, Bakersfield, CA
Jonathan Merica	(Associate Pastor, Modesto)		Calvary, Stockton, CA
Eric Bristley	Joe Gross		Grace, Willows, CA
Sam Powell	██████████	Greg Stewart	First, Yuba City, CA
Gene Sawtelle	(Pastor Emeritus, Yuba City)		Retired, Yuba City, CA

## INFORMATIONAL SUMMARY

### OFFICERS

President – Rev. Tracy Gruggett  
 Vice-President – Rev. Ruben Zartman  
 Stated Clerk – Rev. Douglas Schlegel  
 Treasurer – Mr. Nathan Schlegel

### CLASSIS GUIDELINE FOR GIVING

(per communicant member)

Classis Dues	\$11.00
Home Missions	\$92.00
Benevolences	\$11.00
Publications	\$1.00
Home Missions Building Fund	0.00
Heidelberg West Youth Camp	\$4.00
<u>Diaconal</u>	<u>0.00</u>
TOTAL	
	\$119.00

Treasurer: Mr. Nathan Schlegel  
 245 East Vine St., Lodi, CA 95240  
 Ph. (916) 607-1002 E-Mail: wctreasurer1@gmail.com

### PERMANENT CLASSIS COMMITTEES

Underline Indicates Convener

1. **Executive Committee:** T. Gruggett, D. Schlegel, J. DeYoung
2. **Candidates and Credentials:** F. Walker (3yr), T. Mayville (1yr), V. Pollema (1yr), N. Bouwkamp (1yr), E. Bristley (1yr)
3. **Christian Education in the Church:** R. Mettler (2yr), R. Zartman (2yr), L. Lynch (1yr), P. Treick (1yr)
4. **Missions:** G. Mancilas (3yr), J. West (3yr), D. Helseth (2yr), R. Williams (2yr), R. Zartman (1yr),
5. **Interchurch Relations:** J. Merica (3yr), D. Reis (3yr), R. Spitzer (3yr), M. Reyna (2yr), T. Lagomarsino (1yr), S. Powell (1yr)
6. **Publications:** R. Mettler (2yr), R. Zartman (2yr), L. Lynch (1yr), P. Treick (1yr)
7. **Diaconal:** Todd Crabtree (3yr), V. Pollema (3yr), V. Alpuche (2yr), N. Riffert (2yr), Deacon C. Hekman (1yr), G. Mancilas (1yr)
8. **Heidelberg West Youth Camp:** G. Baloy (3yr), Deacon C. Hekman (3yr), R. Williams (3yr), G. Stewart (2yr)

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**DIRECTORY OF CONGREGATIONS****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

Pastor/Wife/Children: Tracy Gruggett / Michelle / Samantha, Angela, Lydia, Corissa

Home Address: 7016 Rhone Dr., Bakersfield, CA 93308

Home Phone: (661) 706-4544 E-Mail: tgruggett@charter.net

Church Web Page: [bakersfieldreformed.org](http://bakersfieldreformed.org)

**CHICO, CA - Covenant Reformed Church**

Church Location: Meeting at 3612 Hicks Ln. (Seventh-day Adventist building). From CA-99 headed north, take Exit 389 toward Eaton Rd. (0.3 miles); turn right onto Eaton Rd. (0.0 miles), turn left onto Hicks Ln. (0.5 miles). From CA-99 headed south, take Exit 389 toward Eaton Rd. (0.3 miles), turn left onto Eaton Rd. (0.2 miles), turn left onto Hicks Ln. (0.5 miles).

Church Mailing Address: P.O. Box 1612, Chico, CA 95927-1612

Church Phone: (530) 345-2732

Service Times: Sunday Worship 10:30 AM

Pastor/Wife: Gary Mancilas / Gloria

Home Address: 701 E. Lassen Ave., Unit 168., Chico, CA 95973

Home Phone: (530) 345-2732 E-Mail: [gmancilas@comast.net](mailto:gmancilas@comast.net)

Church Web Page: [chicorcus.org](http://chicorcus.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) 965-3906

Service Times: Sun. Sch. 9:45 AM; Worship 10:45 AM

Pastor/Wife:

Home Address:

Home Phone: E-Mail:

Church Web Page: [lancasterreformed.com](http://lancasterreformed.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.  
Prayer Meeting 9:30 AM every first Sunday. Hymn-sing 9:30 AM every fifth Sunday.

Pastor/Wife: Doug Schlegel / Cheryl

Home Address: 8135 Pixley Way, Sacramento, CA 95828

Home Phone: (916) 690-4555 E-Mail: [contramundum1517@gmail.com](mailto:contramundum1517@gmail.com)

Church Web Page: [www.prcloidi.com](http://www.prcloidi.com)

Associate Pastor/Wife/Children: Thomas Mayville / Caroline

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

Home Phone: (209) 502-7670 E-Mail: [thomasreformed@live.com](mailto:thomasreformed@live.com)

**LOS ANGELES - Rehoboth Reformed Church**

Church Location: Call for location.

Church Phone: Rehoboth direct line: 562-991-5572 (Leave a message), Concordia

Lutheran: 562-991-5364 Rehoboth Ex: 101

Church Mail Address: 13633 - 183rd St., Cerritos, CA 90703 (church office)

Service Times: Worship 10:00 AM; Sun. Sch. 11:50 AM; Bible Study 6:30 PM Fridays

Pastor/Wife/Children: Rev. Jeff Munive (URCNA) – Temporary Supply

Home Address:

Home Phone: E-Mail:

Church Web Page: [RehobothReformedChurch.org](http://RehobothReformedChurch.org)

**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 – Second and Fourth Sundays; Hymn Sing every fifth Sunday at 5:30 PM.

Pastor/Wife:

Home Address:

Cell Phone:

Church Web Page: [trinitymodesto.org](http://trinitymodesto.org)

Assoc. Pastor: Jonathan Merica (See Stockton - Calvary)

**SACRAMENTO, CA – Sacramento Covenant Reformed Church**

Church Location: 2020 16th Avenue, Sacramento (from Hwy. 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 Hwy 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: Frank Walker / Christine

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: Norman Hall in Trinity Church, 3902 Kenwood Dr., Spring Valley, CA 91977

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

Church Phone: (619) 460-1321

Service Times: Sun. Sch. 11:30 AM; Worship 12:30 PM

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

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

Mobile Phone: (619) 948-8527 E-mail: sdrc2012@gmail.com

Church Web Page: 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; Fellowship 11:15 AM; Sun. Sch. 11:45 AM

Pastor/Wife/Children: Ruben Zartman / Heidi

Home Address: 13602 Foyers Falls, Bakersfield, CA 93314

Home Phone: (661) 447-3151 E-Mail: rzrcus@gmail.com

Assoc. Pastor: Valentin Alpuche (See *Valle de Gracia*)

Church Web Page: ebenezerreformed.org

**SHAFTER, CA - Valle de Gracia**

Church Location: 235 James Street, Shafter

Church Mailing Address: 235 James St., Shafter, CA 93263

Church Phone: (661) 910-2898

Service Times: Worship 6:00 PM

Pastor/Wife/Children: Valentin / Betty / Moises, Jade, Matias, Grace

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

Home Phone: (661) 910-2898 E-Mail: valpuche@gmail.com

**STOCKTON, CA – Calvary Reformed Chapel**

Church Location: 5380 West Lane, Stockton, CA 95210

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; Thurs. Bible Study 7:00 PM

Mission Pastor/Wife: Jonathan Merica / Marsha

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

Home Phone: (209) 472-794                      E-Mail: jon\_a\_merica@yahoo.com

Church Web Page: 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) 591-5382

Service Times: Sun. Sch. 9:00 AM (Sept. to June); Worship 10:00 AM;

Sun Bible Study - 5:00 PM

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

Home Address: 544 W. Laurel St., 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: Sam Powell / Susan

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

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

Church Web Page: reformedyubacity.org

## ABSTRACT OF THE MINUTES WESTERN CLASSIS

Reformed Church in the United States  
35<sup>th</sup> Annual Spring Meeting  
March 3-5, 2020  
Providence Reformed Church, Lodi, California

*Therefore God also has highly exalted Him and given Him the name which is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of those in heaven, and of those on earth, and of those under the earth, and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father (Philippians 2:9-11).*

### SERVICES

The Western Classis of the Reformed Church in the United States convened its 35<sup>th</sup> Annual Session at Providence Reformed Church in Lodi, California on Tuesday, March 3, 2020, at 1:00 PM.

Rev. Douglas Schlegel welcomed the body and led in the singing of *Come, Thou Almighty King*. Scripture was read from II Corinthians 4:1-7 and a devotional was presented under the theme “*Why Have We Come Together?*”

The Tuesday evening worship service was held at 7:00 PM with Rev. Ruben Zartman conducting the service. The Scripture reading was from Galatians 1:1-10 and Rev. Eric Bristley, of Grace Reformed Church, Willows, preached a sermon titled, “*The One Gospel of Christ.*”

The Wednesday morning devotion was led by Elder Matthew Davis who opened with the reading of Psalm 111 and led the body in prayer. He then led the body in a devotion upon that text. He closed by leading in the singing of “*Jesus Paid it All.*”

Elder Jerry DeYoung closed the meeting with the reading of Nehemiah 4:4-6 and I Timothy 4:12 and gave the sense of the passages. He then led the body in prayer.

Each session was opened and closed with prayer and song to praise God and seeking 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. Tracy Gruggett, President of the Executive Committee of The Western Classis, called the meeting to order at 1:26 PM on March 3, 2019.

The initial roll call showed 14 ministers and 9 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 six rows of pews. Rev. Gil Baloy, Elder Todd Crabtree, and Elder Derek Reis were appointed as tellers for the meeting.

The following men were nominated and elected to office for this Classical year: Rev. Tracy Gruggett, President; Rev. Ruben Zartman, Vice President; Rev. Douglas Schlegel, Stated Clerk; and Deacon Nathan Schlegel, Treasurer.

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

The Agenda, Services, and Order of the Day were adopted including a Special Order at 8:30 AM on Wednesday to hear an address from the fraternal delegate from the Canadian and American Reformed Churches.

### **FRATERNAL DELEGATES AND VISITORS**

The sole fraternal delegate present was Rev. Angelo Contreras representing the United Reformed Churches in North America (URCNA), Classis Pacific Northwest and was seated in the bar of the house. Rev. Jeff Munive (URCNA) was also present as a visitor.

Elder Matthew Davis of the former Covenant RCUS, Grass Valley, Elders Chris Fellersen and Wayne Johnson from Covenant RCUS, Sacramento, and Elders Mark Crook and John Heerema from Trinity RCUS, Modesto were present and seated in the bar of the house. Elder [REDACTED] was introduced as a first-time elder.

### **RECEPTION OF NEW MINISTERS**

No new ministers were received in the Western Classis this year.

### **STANDING COMMITTEE APPOINTMENTS**

The President made the following appointments for the Standing Committees:

- A. Benevolence: \*Baloy, Powell, Bakersfield, Willows
- B. Missions: \*Walker, West, Chico, Yuba City
- C. Examination and Licensure: \*Bristley, Treick, Lancaster
- D. Judicial: \*Mancilas, Zartman, Modesto
- E. Nominations: \*Pollema, Riffert, Rehoboth
- F. Finances: \*Shafter, Zartman, Lodi, Sacramento, Nathan Schlegel (*ex officio*)
- G. Excuses: \*Merica, San Diego
- H. Minutes: \*Mayville, San Diego

### **PRESENTATION AND REFERRAL OF OVERTURES, REPORTS, AND COMMUNICATIONS**

All pertinent overtures and materials were assigned by the Executive Committee and the Clerk distributed them 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**

Honorable Western Classis  
Reformed Church in the United States



The Executive Committee didn't have a lot of official business during this past year. This is reflected in the fact that the notice and agenda for the 35<sup>th</sup> meeting of classis was the first and only Executive Circular issued.

The Executive Committee did have one meeting on September 10, 2019 at Ebenezer Reformed Church at the request of Elder Robert Mettler who asked for assistance and guidance in the Rehoboth Reformed mission work. This was the second such meeting. The former was in the previous year. Those in attendance at this meeting were: Rev. Tracy Gruggett (President), Rev. Doug Schlegel (Stated Clerk), Rev. Ruben Zartman (Convener of the Home Missions Committee), Elders Ryan Spitzer, Jerry DeYoung, Robert Mettler, and Clarence Goehring.

The representatives of Rehoboth requested advice regarding the way forward in light of a possible call to Rev. Munive (ordained and serving in the URCNA), the ability to pay him, and the process to get him approved by the Western Classis to be a pastor in the RCUS. Other concerns mentioned were if the elders at Rehoboth could continue the gargantuan task of leading this small group especially in light of: 1) Elder Mettler's age and health, 2) The actual viability of the mission work with so few people in such an expensive area.

All in attendance strongly commended both Elders Mettler and Goehring for the work they have done and gave input on how to go forward with the calling and transfer to the RCUS of Rev. Munive. Both elders were encouraged to keep on as best as they can and that God does not expect more of them than what they can do and neither do we, the representatives of the Western Classis. They were informed that if they couldn't handle the work due to circumstances beyond their control, we would be supportive and take whatever steps were needed as time went on. They were also encouraged to feel free to contact the Executive Committee via phone or email for further assistance as time went on. Many email and telephone conversations took place subsequent to that meeting. Those in attendance also promised to uphold all persons involved in the Rehoboth work before our heavenly Father in prayer.

The elder serving on the Executive Committee has made unofficial visits to Rehoboth's services during the year to encourage them. Also, the clerk of the Western Classis provided pulpit supply when he was available and helped to make arrangements for another pastor to provide pulpit supply on a regular monthly basis.

Respectfully Submitted,

*Rev. T. Gruggett (president), Rev. D. Schlegel (stated clerk), Elder J. DeYoung*

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**Classis Action:** The report was adopted.

## **B. Permanent Home Mission Report**

Esteemed Fathers and Brethren:

This year, your committee's business was conducted primarily via conference call and email. Representatives from the Committee conducted in-person visits at each of the Mission Works.

**Rehoboth Reformed Church – Cerritos, CA**

(Rev. Ruben Zartman & Elder Raymond Williams – December 1, 2019)

During the congregational meeting that followed the worship service on the day of the visitation, two main questions were raised. First was what factors keep people returning to a small congregation without a pastor. The answers reflected a desire to meet with God, grow in love for Christ, enjoy the fellowship of true believers, worship without entertainment, and a loving church family. That final point was amplified in terms of appreciation for the warmth and ability to discuss deeper things, as well as people taking time to listen and give answers to questions. The historical rootedness and doctrinal depth of the Three Forms of Unity were also mentioned, as was Bible teaching that comes alive.

Some of those qualities, of course, are difficult to maintain in the absence of a pastor. And the lack of midweek activities is also an obstacle for some. The tenacity of the congregation is a testament to God's grace and the communion of the saints.

The second main question was what is required for the congregation to move forward. Here the need for a pastor was uppermost, although the need for additional men able to step into the office of elder and deacon is nearly as critical. In addition, the congregation will need to find a meeting place other than their current location when Cerritos Elementary School undertakes a remodelation, and would like to get ahead of that before the need becomes critical.

The parochial report will highlight other blessings enjoyed this year, but the frequent pulpit supply by Rev. Jeff Munive, of the URC has been a significant encouragement to the Consistory and the congregation. For at least the remainder of this year, he is available to continue serving at Rehoboth on the part-time basis, an arrangement which their current state of finances allows. Rev. Munive had been working in the hospital chaplaincy, but is eager to receive a call to serve as Minister of Word and Sacrament.

The work certainly remains viable at present. This is not to deny that there are real vulnerabilities in terms of a place to meet, adequate finances, and leadership. But there is also a very committed core group, visitors attending, positive developments in congregational life, and many blessings received and shared. Classical and Synodical dues have been sent in on time, and the zeal for the knowledge of God shown by many in the congregation is exemplary and inspiring.

At this point, the ability to persevere through 2020 seems as assured as any human plan can ever be. But is this enough to give a viable but vulnerable work opportunity to emerge into a place of greater stability? The work and witness of Rehoboth Reformed Church is valuable, and according to many in the congregation

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not at all easy to find elsewhere. The lack of a full-time pastor and the curtailment of activities beyond the Lord's Day worship service likely means that a few months are not long enough for the work of planting that usually precede the harvest.

If nothing additional can be done, the work should at least not be starved for support during these trying times. We request support from Classis in the amount of \$13,846 and from Synod in the amount of \$13,846 (the same level in each case as last year).

**VALLE DE GRACIA – Shafter, CA**

(Elder David Helseth – January 5, 2020)

This Western Classis Home Missions Committee report will repeat a few of the observations made a year ago. This reflects a consistency in the labors of everyone involved, and that is in itself encouraging.

Of primary concern to this committee and all involved, is the health challenge that Rev. Alpuche has been dealing with for sometime. His level of back pain from congenital spondylolisthesis has made it extremely difficult to carry out his ministerial duties. It seems all but certain that major surgery will be required, with possibly two months off duty for recovery. This has required the ERC consistory to make adjustments in how Valle de Gracia will move forward until Pastor Alpuche is able to return. The men of ERC are acting wisely in redistributing the duties to be carried out going forward, and eliminating activities that could be shelved for a season. We pray daily God will grant Valentin to be in the good care of the physicians, and the patience to prosper in a confining providence.

At this point of the report I will take the liberty to quote a line or two from the WCHM report of 2019. "It is my view" (and this reporters view) "that we would be hard pressed, humanly speaking, to see a more ideal situation for planting a new work than what we see taking place in the cooperative work at Valle de Gracia and Ebenezer Reformed Church." Let me also mention here the consistent support of Grace Reformed Church in Bakersfield.

During the year 2019, Rev. Alpuche's work schedule remained constant. For a full accounting of his labors in Shafter, I refer you to his parochial report in the Western Classis 2019 Abstract. The current membership consists of two families. Two additional families attend, but not consistently. The families that are members are vigilant in inviting others to services. Valle de Gracia began taking offerings in January 2019 and this has met with a good response from such a small congregation.

In such a report it is difficult to convey the genuineness and zeal of the men of ERC in their desire and commitment to see the mission work thrive in spite of hardships and discouragements. There is no flagging of their vision to see a Spanish speaking reformed church in their midst!

A three year budget was provided to review, and found in good order. As this was year five of Valle de Gracia some additional discussion may be expected regarding

the level of continued financial support. I refer to the 1987 Synod Abstract page 29 # 4 – *Is it right to expect a mission work to be self supporting in 5 years? Perhaps after 5 years a thorough examination of the work be made, and then let the Synod decide as to its future.*

The conviction of the WCHMC is that this is a work in progress and should continue under the care and support of Western Classis and The Synod of the RCUS. We request support from Classis in the amount of \$15,984, same as last year, and from Synod in the amount of \$17,760 also the same as last year.

### **Calvary Reformed Church – Stockton, CA**

(Rev. Dennis Roe – January 19, 2020)

It was my privilege to visit with Rev. Jonathan Merica, Elder Greg Goehring, and the members of Calvary Reformed Church at Stockton, California. I took the opportunity to openly discuss their view of the mission work of Calvary Reformed Church at Stockton (CRCS). Because of scheduling issues, I was the only member of the HMC to be able to attend this meeting. Also, CRCS is under the oversight of Trinity Reformed Church at Modesto. The Consistory at Trinity RCUS is without a minister of the Word, and so none of its Consistory members were present as they were needed for the services at Modesto.

The visit was very pleasant, and my wife and I were well received by the officers and congregation. Following the morning services we enjoyed a well supplied fellowship meal. The meal was followed by a meeting with the members present. At this meeting I was given the privilege to speak and lead a discussion on the state of the church with the members present.

After an introduction, Pastor Merica gave me charge of the meeting. I decided to give the members the opportunity to speak regarding their view of the church, its ministry, and future. Many of the people spoke up. It was encouraging to hear them attest with one voice how thankful they are for the faithful teaching and expository preaching of God’s Word by Pastor Merica. They noted that he sticks close to the text of Scripture in his preaching and teaching and how rare this is in the Stockton area. It was also stated how thankful they are for the sound doctrine expressed in the Reformed faith and creeds which they are receiving at CRCS. Others spoke of the deep love and fellowship that exists among the members, especially as exhibited by the example of Pastor and Mrs. Merica. It was evident there is good harmony, sweet fellowship, and a hope for the church’s future as expressed by its members. Finally, there has been numerical growth in the membership which is encouraging to all.

OBSERVATIONS: I had the privilege to worship with the saints at Calvary RCUS in the past and noted a number of improvements. Previously I found it a little difficult to locate the meeting place. This time there was a very visible sign out front identifying the meeting place for the church and then another sign for the church near the entrance. In addition, the foyer has been wonderfully improved revealing a welcoming décor. More importantly, the foyer is stocked with many excellent

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books and pamphlets of various subjects on the Christian faith available for visitors. Overall it is an attractive facility and adequate for the needs for the congregation at this time. Plus there is private and safe parking for the church and its visitors.

The first service was a Sunday School class, which started promptly at 10:00 a.m. Mrs. Merica teaches the class for children and the adult class was taught by Pastor Merica on the book of Judges. He gave an excellent presentation on the historical setting at the time of the Judges in chapter 11 and he provided handouts with detailed maps that were very helpful to elucidate the text.

We followed the S.S. class with a 15 minute break with coffee and donuts served by the ladies in the adjoining fellowship hall. The worship service began promptly at 11:00 a.m. Pastor Merica is preaching through 1 Corinthians and in this service gave an exposition of 1 Corinthians 15:12-19 titled, “The Necessity of The Resurrection.” The message was an excellent example of comparing scripture with scripture to substantiate the point that the resurrection of Jesus Christ is central to the gospel message. It was refreshing to observe that both the services were conducted decently and in order.

It should be noted that Pastor Merica and Elder Goehring often organize outreach endeavors, such as passing our tracts and church flyers, and are presently planning to have an information table introducing the church at a local swap meet. Stockton is a large city with a population of over 310,000. Certainly it has fields white for harvest and the church is critically needed to be a light in this large community.

I highly commend the continued support of CRCS. Please pray for God’s blessing on Rev. Merica’s labors in the Word and prayer among the saints at CRCS. Pray for God to bless his and the members’ critical work of reaching the spiritually needy in the Stockton area. Likewise pray for the Lord to raise up more leaders from the church body to help bear the work of overseeing the flock of God.

We request support from Classis in the amount of \$17,955, and from Synod in the amount of \$18,525, the same amount as the previous year.

### **BUILDING FUND DISCUSSION – Conference Call**

(Elders Raymond Williams & David Helseth, Revs. Jim West & Ruben Zartman – January 17, 2020)

Pursuant to the mission assigned to your committee at Classis 2019 to “study the feasibility and desirability of expanding the use of the monies currently in the Mission Building Fund with the possibility of financing our mission works in ways other than “brick and mortar” and bring recommendations to the 2020 Classis meeting.” (2019 Western Classis Abstract, p.70) the question of what to do with the Home Missions Building Fund was seriously researched and considered by email and conversation even prior to the conference call.

The chief matter of concern was how it is possible to remain faithful to our

covenantal responsibility to administer these funds in keeping with the generous intent of those who donated them, in light of the fact that every year puts the fund further away from being able to do anything very significant towards the purchase or construction of a building suitable as a meeting place for a mission work.

If the communicant members who paid the varying guidelines over the years gave the funds for buildings, then that is a solemn trust to be honored. Yet allowing the money to be eroded by inflation while it lies unused is not wise stewardship, nor is it a proper discharge of the responsibilities of that solemn trust. Barring a substantial infusion of additional cash, therefore, which alone would allow the fund to function fully and properly as a building fund, two main ideas emerged that seemed to satisfy the terms of our responsibility.

The first was to expand the purposes for which the fund may be used, limiting it to the infrastructure needs of mission works in a way that allows them to have a really functional meeting place for worship. Therefore such items as the rental cost of a place to meet; renovations or repairs to an existing place of worship; or major items needed for it to function properly, such as a piano, organ, pews or chairs, would all fall broadly under the umbrella of allowing a mission work to have a properly functioning meeting space.

It was recognized that this could quite likely lead to the eventual depletion and disappearance of the fund, but it is better for the seed to be planted than to be put in a barn to be eaten up the invading mice of inflation and do no good to anyone.

Failing that, the second legitimate option that the current committee could envision would be to forward the funds available to Synod, to aid mission works throughout the United States with their building needs. Those dollars could go further in some other parts of the country, or could make a substantial contribution when joined with other sources of funding.

The following facts seem to make clear that something should be done:

- Classis has a serious obligation to honor the intention of the communicant members and congregations that have contributed to this fund.
- The Home Missions Building Fund (HMBF) has close to \$150,000.00 distributed among 3 CDs and earning no more than 0.20% interest on any portion of it.
- The HMBF is over 30 years old and 3 disbursements have been made from it.
- The rate of inflation and the value of real estate mean that in terms of actual purchasing power the value of the HMBF is declining quite steeply year by year.
- The guideline has been set at a placeholder value of \$1 from 2010-2013 and at \$0 from 2014-2019.
- The amount currently available is of very little value in terms of facilitating the purchase or construction of a building in the California real estate market.

- Allowing the given fund to lie unused and shrinking is dishonoring to the intention of the donors to it.

**Recommendations:**

1. That the request for classical support for Calvary Reformed Church in the amount of 17,955.00 for the 2021 calendar year be approved.
2. That Western Classis overture the 274<sup>th</sup> Synod for mission support for Calvary Reformed Church in the amount of \$18,525.00 for the 2020-2021 Synodical year.
3. That the request for classical support for Rehoboth Reformed Church in the amount of \$13,846.00 for the 2021 calendar year be approved.
4. That Western Classis overture the 274<sup>th</sup> Synod for mission support for Rehoboth Reformed Church in the amount of \$13,846.00 for the 2020-2021 Synodical year.
5. That the request for classical support for Valle de Gracia Reformed Bible Church in the amount of \$15,984.00 for the 2021 calendar year be approved.
6. That Western Classis overture the 274<sup>th</sup> Synod for mission support for Valle de Gracia Reformed Church in the amount of \$17,760.00 for the 2020-2021 Synodical year.
7. That the Western Classis designate April 19, 2020, as a day of prayer for home missions, and that its congregations be encouraged to take up a special offering to assist the work of Calvary Reformed Church in Stockton.
8. That Western Classis take action to better steward and deploy the monies of the Home Missions Building Fund, as follows:
  - A. That steps be taken as quickly as possible to place the monies currently available in the Home Missions Building Fund into a money market account or similar investment vehicle that will provide significant liquidity, while also providing some protection against the ravages of inflation.
  - B. That the use of this fund to assist Western Classis mission works with securing a meeting place or with major purchases that significantly enhance the life of the congregation be approved with the following directives:
    - I. That the name of the fund be changed to the Western Classis Home Missions Assistance Fund.
    - II. That any request for the use of such funds shall be carefully considered by the Diaconal Committee of the Western Classis prior to being proposed to Classis.
    - III. That the use of this fund be limited to mission works of the Western Classis.
    - IV. That no more than \$50,000.00 be disbursed in answer to any request, and that no mission work make more than one approved request per

calendar year.

V. That congregations are encouraged, although not required, to pay back the monies disbursed in the event that the Lord would bless them with financial stability following their receipt of these monies.

VI. That monies from the Assistance Fund shall *not* be used for expenses that are also addressed by the primary Home Missions Fund.

Respectfully submitted,

*Rev. Ruben Zartman (chairman), Elder David Helseth, Elder Raymond Williams, Rev. Dennis Roe, Rev. Jim West*

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

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### C. Christian Education in the Church (Including Heidelberg West Youth Camp)

#### Christian Education in the Church Report

Esteemed Brothers,

Your committee received no instructions or requests from the Western Classis during this past year. The committee, therefore, was not convened nor conducted any business.

Respectfully Submitted

*Paul H Treick, Chmn., Matthew Davis, Reuben Zartman, Larry Lynch*

#### Heidelberg West Youth Camp Report

The 2019 HWYC was a great success, campers totaled 43 and staff numbered 29 for a total of 72 participants. The camp theme was the “Fruits of the Spirit” with instruction broken down to Junior and Senior age groups with various pastors of Western Classis providing the instruction. It was an edifying time for all who were able to sit in on the teaching and participate in fellowship around God’s Word.

Mr. Raymond Williams had his first year as camp director and did a very good job. Much appreciated was support from Reverend Gruggett, as a past director of the camp. Our activity director, Mr. Heckman, and the cooking staff provided not only great entertainment and activities but, wonderful food as well, in addition, many thanks are deserved for all of the camp staff who freely gave of time and effort in making the camp run so smoothly. As has been stated in previous camp reports; it is our prayer that our faithful God would continue to use the camp for the edification of His covenant children.

As a work of the Western Classis, the camp committee would again plead with our pastors to support the camp in every way possible in your local congregations. We are certainly a long way from the largest camp of 133 campers but hopefully the camp is on an upswing and will be growing this year, your support is critical to its success.

Financially, the camp is on very solid ground, the Profit and Loss statement shows the camp at about \$1,500 in the positive and may allow us to look at the possibility of a camp tee shirt this year.



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This year's camp theme is taken from the hymn "Take my life and let it be". Lessons will come from three main points; Living the gospel, Giving the gospel and Loving the gospel.

This brings me to a subject that needs to be addressed concerning the camp policies/rules of 2004. The 2019 camp had 8 campers from the OPC, 6 from La Mirada and 2 from Roseville, the potential for more is pretty good, we also had 1 counselor from the La Mirada OPC. This is not in conformity with the camp rules and policies. Camp Policies number 5 states that "Absolutely no person shall serve as a cabin counselor, or as a member of the camp staff who is not a member in good and regular standing with their home church in the RCUS". The Permanent Heidelberg West Youth Camp Committee would like to recommend that Policy #5 be amended to include "and churches with which we have a fraternal relationship".

Our one and only recommendation would be the policy #5 for Heidelberg West Youth Camp be amended to read as follows;

#### Recommendation #1

Absolutely no person shall serve as a cabin counselor, or as a member of the camp staff who is not a member in good and regular standing with their home church in the RCUS or in any church with which we have a fraternal relationship.

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**Classis Action:** Regarding the Christian Education in the Church Report, Take Note. The recommendation of the Heidelberg West Youth Camp Report was referred to the Standing Judicial Committee.

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### D. Candidates and Credentials

Esteemed Fathers and Brothers,

In the past year, your committee has communicated by email and phone along with personal contacts with the men under its oversight. We rejoice that our Lord has brought an increased number for us to support and oversee. Of our two students under care, Matthew Davis and Paul Liberati, Matthew is now requesting licensure. A commitment for pulpit supply at Rehoboth Reformed Church was answered by Rev. Jeffrey Munive of the URCNA, although he is not seeking to transfer his credentials to the Western Classis of the RCUS at this time. Tim Curtis is requesting to be taken under care while he serves the congregation at Modesto. Two younger men, DeMauri Young and Deonte Walters, are requesting to be taken under care while serving the church in Sacramento and studying at City Seminary.

#### Matthew Davis

In October 2019, the committee received Matthew Davis' report that he had completed the course requirements at City Seminary, graduated, and received his Bachelor of Divinity degree. He also requested that his completed internship as a combination of his time at CRC Grass Valley and CRC Sacramento under Rev. Jim West be accepted as the completion of his required internship for the committee and the Western Classis. He expressed his thankfulness to his instructors at City Seminary Sacramento, the Candidates and Credentials Committee, and the many in the RCUS who have been praying for him

and his wife Daniella. He gave all glory to God and is looking forward to serving at our Lord's pleasure and will for many years to come.

His past year was filled with many challenges as well as an abundance of blessings and gifts from the Lord. Matthew was privileged to proclaim the gospel ten times to CRC Grass Valley before the closing of the church doors. Presently he is overseeing the care of the property, working with realtors and handling the church's finances until the conclusion of the sale and the disbursement of the proceeds in accord with the decisions of the body. With no expressed desire to see a continuation of the church in the Auburn area (which the CRCGV congregation had been considering), all efforts to begin a startup have been shelved and all web and social media groups have been canceled. He was invited to preach four times at Covenant Reformed Church Sacramento, and twice at Grace Reformed Baptist Church in Placerville, CA.

Despite requiring back surgery in April 2019, Matthew was able to complete the remaining credits for the Casimir College portions of the City Seminary curriculum, and in September 2019 received a Bachelor of Divinity degree from City Seminary. Grace Reformed Church in Lancaster reached out in September asking if he would entertain the possibility of a call to Lancaster. At their request, he spent two weeks in Lancaster preaching four sermons, teaching a midweek Bible study and four adult Sunday School classes. Ultimately no call was offered.

While Matthew has fully recovered from his back surgery, Daniella developed severe pain and underwent a back surgery in December which she is presently recovering from. In the Lord's providence they underwent and recovered from a combined five surgeries in the past three years. He reported that they remain focused on praising God even in the midst of trials and rejoice in having the means to have these problems treated. He has been working online sales and combined with his wife's state disability has been able to make ends meet. With the intention to stand for Licensure Examination at the 2020 Classis meeting, he has been studying and preparing since October 2019.

### **Timothy E. Curtis**

In October 2019, the committee received a letter from Trinity Reformed Church in Modesto, requesting that Timothy E. Curtis be received as a Student Under Care by the Western Classis. Although initially there was accompanying news that there may be a request for a Licensure Exam at the 2020 Western Classis meeting, the committee was informed that at this time such is not being requested.

### **Rev. Jeffrey Munive**

In January 2020, the committee was informed by Elder Mettler of Rehoboth Reformed Church that they were considering extending a call to Rev. Jeffrey Munive, ordained minister in the United Reformed Church in North America. Rev. Munive will be at Classis to give the delegates an opportunity to get to know him and will be accompanied by members of the Rehoboth consistory. At an election for Pastor held during a congregational meeting at Rehoboth on January 26, 2020, Rev. Munive was duly elected and called to serve as pastor. In response, Rev. Munive submits the following request to the Western Classis with the consent of the Rehoboth Consistory:

Dear Delegates of the Western Classis of the RCUS,

After spending time in prayer and counsel I am submitting a proposal regarding the nature of my work at Rehoboth Reformed Church in Cerritos, CA. I propose that I remain as a pastoral intern for the rest of the year, thereby foregoing the process of Classis examination in 2020. My main concern is regarding the long-term viability of Rehoboth. As a husband and a father, I have to think about the wellbeing of my family. I don't wish to be put in a difficult position if Rehoboth were to close down for any reason thus leaving me without work. By remaining in the URC, I don't have to transfer back by being re-examined. Although we move forward in faith trusting that our God is more than capable to bless our efforts, I want to proceed slowly and with caution. I do not wish to reject the call that I have received from Rehoboth but rather *delay it for a year*. If the Lord blesses Rehoboth with signs of growth, I will be more than happy to reevaluate and potentially pursue my classis examination in 2021.

With this proposal let me be clear as to my intentions. I intend to fully embrace the challenges and the needs of this congregation. I understand my responsibilities are to preach, teach, and counsel faithfully according to the Word of God and within the doctrinal bounds of our confessions. Just as this congregation has embraced me into their family, I intend to embrace them with the loving leadership and accountability of Christ who is the Head of His church. With this proposal it will relieve me of my concern so that I can focus on the work of the ministry.

In His Service, Rev. Jeffrey Munive

### **Paul Liberati**

In February 2020, our Student Under Care Mr. Liberati reported that in the past year he has continued in his studies at City Seminary of Sacramento and in his service at Covenant Reformed Church, Sacramento. In terms of his seminary training, he maintained his regular pace in taking two or more classes per semester while he continues to work steadily toward the completion of the Divinity program. To this end, he also requests that the Western Classis overture Synod in his behalf for \$450 to help with book costs for the coming academic year. He indicated that at this point no tuition assistance is needed.

In his labors at Covenant Reformed Church, Paul has continued in his duties of preaching in CRCS' Sunday evening services, teaching the catechumens, as well as engaging in various forms of outreach ministry. This year, he started a Bible study on the campus of Sacramento City College, and by the Lord's blessing, these have been very well attended. Therefore, in view of God's mercy, he requests that the brethren of the Western Classis continue to pray for him, that God would continue to provide him with the strength and wisdom he needs in preparing for the ministry, "that God in all things may be glorified through Jesus Christ" (1 Pet. 4:11).

### **DeMauri Young and Deonte Walters**

In January and February 2020, the committee received two separate letters from the Spiritual Council of Covenant Reformed Church of Sacramento, in which they requested that Messrs. DeMauri Young and Deonte Walters be received as Students Under Care of the Western Classis. DeMauri and Deonte have been attending CRCS for a couple of years and joined Covenant Reformed in July 2019. Both brothers in Christ have taken classes at

City Seminary of Sacramento and want to study for the ministry to serve in the RCUS. CRCS' Spiritual Council voted to heartily recommend to the Committee that both DeMauri and Deonte be taken as Students Under Care of the Western Classis.

**Recommendations:**

Based on these communications, your committee makes the following recommendations:

1. That **Elder Matthew Davis** be examined for licensure by the 35th session of the Western Classis in the following areas for 20 minutes per area and that he be granted the opportunity to preach before the Classis in Lodi, CA. Matthew has completed the following written portions of his examination: exegetical paper, theological paper, and the written sermon. These are available for your review at this meeting. We ask that his licensure, if approved by Classis, will be pending three items: written language exams in Greek and Hebrew, and Catechism memorization.

Prolegomena and Scripture	20 minutes
Doctrine of God	20 minutes
Doctrine of Man and Sin	20 minutes
<i>Questions from the floor</i>	
Doctrine of Christ's Person and Work	20 minutes
The Holy Spirit and Soteriology	20 minutes
Doctrine of the Church	20 minutes
<i>Questions from the floor</i>	
Doctrine of the Last Things	20 minutes
Apologetics, Christian Worldview	20 minutes
History of Philosophy and Theology	20 minutes
<i>Questions from the floor</i>	
Church History	20 minutes
English Bible	20 minutes
Hermeneutics	20 minutes
<i>Questions from the floor</i>	
RCUS Standards	20 minutes
RCUS History	20 minutes
Practical Theology (Practica)	20 minutes
<i>Questions from the floor</i>	

2. That the Western Classis, on behalf of Student Under Care **Paul Liberati**, overture the Synod of the RCUS for \$450 to help with book costs for the coming academic year.

3. That the Western Classis grant the request of the Rehoboth Consistory that **Rev. Jeff Munive** minister as regular supply for Rehoboth Reformed Church in Cerritos as he assesses the work, urging him to commit to receiving their call and move through the process of reception as a minister of the RCUS by Classis 2021. (See Article 91, RCUS Constitution)
4. That **Timothy E. Curtis** be interviewed for 20-30 minutes regarding his Christian life and calling into the ministry, and subsequently be received as a Student Under Care by the Western Classis.
5. That Messrs. **DeMauri Young** and **Deonte Walters** be interviewed for 20-30 minutes each concerning their Christian life and calling into the ministry, and subsequently be received as Students Under Care by the Western Classis.

Respectfully submitted,

*Rev. Eric Bristley (chairman), Rev. Vernon Pollema, Rev. Thomas Mayville, Elder Joe Gross, Elder Nico Bouwkamp*

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

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## **E. Interchurch Relations**

Esteemed Brothers in Christ,

The Permanent Interchurch Relations Committee of the 34th Annual Session of the Western Classis of the RCUS was given a mandate to study the matter of growing the church. The motion that was adopted by Classis reads as follows: “That the Western Classis direct the Permanent Interchurch Relations Committee to take up the issue of church growth and report to the 2020 Classis meeting.” (See the Western Classis Abstract, Page 20) The Permanent Interchurch Relations Committee has completed a study paper on “The Issue of Church Growth,” which has been submitted to the 35th Annual Session of the Western Classis. Your committee has endeavored to compose the study paper in a manner that would be in full agreement with the Holy Scriptures, and the RCUS Confessional Standards.

The Western Classis Permanent Interchurch Relations Committee has been blessed this past year with success in communicating with our fraternal churches. Our communications with a couple of our fraternal churches has improved. Regarding the Classis Southwest U.S. of the URCNA, your chairman did receive notification to send a Western Classis delegate to their Classis. We are grateful that Rev. Gil Baloy was able to attend the Classis Southwest U.S meeting in Anaheim, CA. Also, we rejoice in receiving an invitation to attend the Pacific Coast Presbytery of the Reformed Presbyterian Church of North America. We are grateful to Rev. Sam Powell, who has helped to nurture our relationship with the Pacific Coast Presbytery by participating in the ordination service of Colin Samul. Rev. Powell was given the honor of delivering a charge to the congregation in Colin Samul’s ordination service.

Your committee continues to maintain communications with our fraternal churches. Your chairman of the Western Classis Permanent Interchurch Relations Committee has notified

each of our fraternal churches concerning our 35th Annual Western Classis Meeting which is scheduled for March 3-5, 2020. We have endeavored to send delegates to the Presbytery and Classis meetings of our fraternal churches, when feasible. If our delegates were not able to attend a meeting, then a “Letter of Greeting” has been sent as a token of our sincerity in maintaining a close fraternal bond in our ecclesiastical relationship.

**The Western Classis fraternal delegates who attended meetings of our fraternal churches and “Letters of Greeting” that were sent to fraternal churches are as follows:**

1. The Spring Stated Meeting of the Presbytery of Northern California & Nevada (OPC), convened on March 15-16, 2019 at Sovereign Grace Community Church, OPC in Hughson, CA. Rev. Jonathan Merica attended the Friday evening meeting and delivered a fraternal delegate greeting.

2. The Pacific Coast Presbytery of the RPCNA convened on April 5, 2019 at the Great Basin RPCNA in Reno, NV to ordain Colin Samul for the gospel ministry. Rev. Sam Powell attended the ordination service and was given the honor to deliver the message for the charge to the congregation.

3. The Canadian Reformed Churches convened their Classis Pacific East on June 3, 2020. A letter of “Letter of Greeting” was sent to the Classis Pacific East meeting in lieu of sending a Western Classis fraternal delegate.

4. The Fall Stated Meeting of the Presbytery of Northern California & Nevada (OPC), convened

on September 20-21, 2019 at Covenant Orthodox Presbyterian Church in San Jose, CA. A letter of “Letter of Greeting” was sent to the Presbytery meeting in lieu of sending a Western Classis fraternal delegate.

5. The Classis Pacific Northwest of the URCNA convened their Classis Meeting on September 24, 2019 at Visalia, CA. Rev. Jonathan Merica attended the Classis Pacific Northwest meeting and delivered a fraternal delegate greeting.

6. The Classis Southwest U. S. of the URCNA convened their Classis Meeting on September 24, 2019 at Christ’s Reformed Church in Anaheim, CA. Rev. Gil Baloy attended the Classis Southwest U. S. meeting and delivered a fraternal delegate greeting.

7. The Third Stated Meeting of the Presbytery of Southern California of the OPC, convened on

October 18-19, 2019 at Harvest Orthodox Presbyterian Church in San Marcos, CA. A “Letter of Greeting” was sent to the Presbytery meeting in lieu of sending a Western Classis fraternal delegate.

8. The Pacific Coast Presbytery of the RPCNA convened on October 18-19, 2019. A letter of “Letter of Greeting” was sent to the Presbytery meeting in lieu of sending a Western Classis fraternal delegate.

We praise the Lord for the ecclesiastical fellowship we are privileged to have with our fraternal churches. Let us keep them in our prayers as we labor together to uphold the light of God’s Word in this dark and evil world. May God give us all His mercy to persevere in

righteousness and truth by the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ. It is our prayer that the Lord will continue to bless our fellowship with all our fraternal churches, and that we may know more fully the meaning of Psalm 133:1 which says, “...how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity!”

Respectfully Submitted,

*Rev. Jonathan Merica, Chairman, Rev. Sam Powell, Elder Ryan Spitzer, Elder Mark Reyna, Elder Tom Lagomasino, Elder Joe Gross*

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**Classis Action:** Take Note.

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## **F. Publications**

Esteemed Brothers,

Your committee received no instructions or requests from the Western Classis during this past year. The committee, therefore, was not convened nor conducted any business.

Respectfully Submitted

*Valentín Alpuche, Larry Lynch, Gary Mancilas, Eric Bristley*

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**Classis Action:** Take Note.

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## **G. Diaconal Ministries**

Esteemed Brothers,

Your committee received no instructions or requests from the Western Classis during this past year. The committee, therefore, was not convened nor conducted any business.

Respectfully Submitted

*Valentín Alpuche, Neale Riffert, Gary Mancilas, John Guinn, Deacon Chris Hekman*

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**Classis Action:** Take Note.

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## **REPORTS OF OFFICERS**

### **A. President’s Report on the State of the Church**

Esteemed Fathers and Brethren,

The Lord gives to His church ministers and elders, calling them to protect and transmit the authoritative deposit first delivered to the apostles (1 Cor. 15:1-6). Christ requires that this deposit of true doctrine be entrusted to faithful men who are also able to teach others (2 Tim. 2:2). With Timothy they are to guard what was committed to their trust (1 Tim. 6:20); and to teach it as thoroughly equipped men of God (2 Tim. 3:16-17). They will give an account for their stewardship by being examined according to stricter standards (Jas. 3:1). God has not given this sacred trust to all believers, but to a few faithful men of the church, whose lives are significantly changed by virtue of this trust. Beloved fathers and brothers, our Lord has entrusted to us this ministry of the gospel. We shall all give an account of our

work before our Lord on the final day; and then, after our works have been tested in the refining fires of Christ's gracious judgment, we shall know what kind work our labors will have been. His judgment is not only pure, but purifying. Having read the reports of your labors over the past year, in which I see so many men faithfully working, I cannot help but think that these labors will be approved on that Day. They are not seen by the world or by much of the church, but they are seen by Him.

### Ministers and Elders

All ministers or elders gave on account of their labors. In some instances, circumstances made things more difficult than is normal. Rev. Sam Powell relates the above-normal strain in ministry due in part to the "harrowing" sickness of his daughter, Margaret. Dr. Frank Walker reports of being overwhelmed by his workload, resulting in his cutting back some of his teaching load at City Seminary. In the latter half of the year, Rev. Valentine Alpuche was hampered by severe back pain, which he continues to experience. The elders in Cerritos labor faithfully on behalf of their congregation. They are faced with many tough decisions and have sought the counsel of Classis.

I highlight only a few of the difficulties that some of our ministers and elders face. To be sure, we all experience many frustrations and difficulties throughout the year. But through it all, the men see to it that the job is done. In fact, for most of the ministers and elders, the reports demonstrate that ministries were attended to with steady faithfulness and commitment to Word and Sacrament ministry. Typical of the reports would be that of Rev. Gary Mancilas who relates the number of times he preached (49) and what books he preached from, as well as his keeping of church records, his teaching the men's Bible studies, overseeing the adult Sunday, preparing the youth for conformation and much more. As I say such accounts were typical of the reports. Again Rev. Ruben Zartman remarks that he preached on 78 occasions. He also conducted Bible studies, Sunday school classes, membership and confirmation classes, and engaged in many other ministry related activities. I am glad to say that these were typical of all the reports. In addition to his regular labors, Rev. Gil Baloy, spent a month in the Philippines working with students for ministry in that country's budding reformed churches. Also, operating as chairman of the Kenya subcommittee of the RCUS Foreign Missions Committee, Rev Thomas Mayville went to Kenya and served the churches there for three weeks.

We are thankful for the retired ministers who are still willing and able to serve the church. Rev. Paul Treick helps at Trinity Reformed Church. Though not able to preach, he has served in other ways including that of administering the Lord's Supper. Rev. Vern Pollema assisted three churches: Bakersfield, Lancaster, and Cerritos. Rev. Neal Riffert helped in the Lancaster congregation. One of the highlights of his past year was going to Newton, Wisconsin, where he, Rev. Paul Treick, and Rev. Herman Van Stedum were honored by the congregation of Salem Ebenezer Reformed Church. In 1970 these three men were all examined on the same day at a special meeting of Classis held at this congregation. We are thankful to the Lord for these servants, for their willingness to serve, and ability to do so. Rev. Jim West and Rev. Gene Sawtelle also helped in their respective congregations.

I am thankful to the Lord that he has given to His church men conscientious to do the work He has called them to do.

### Congregations



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As to the congregations, I will give a few general observations and single out some highlights.

In every charge the Word of God was preached and taught according to the program set out by each congregation. Even the three churches without pastors received the official ministry of the Word and Sacraments. This is the strongest indication of the Lord's grace among us. In every church there was a good and solid emphasis on instruction of both adults and of the youth. God's people were fed. Where needed, church discipline was carried out. Every congregation demonstrated a concern to grow spiritually and to reach the lost with the gospel. Almost all the reports reflect growth in love and fellowship.

In October, Ebenezer Reformed Church in Shafter celebrated its 100<sup>th</sup> year anniversary. The celebration extended to parts of three days. As part of the ceremonies the congregation held a conference which included several guest speakers. Grace Reformed Church of Bakersfield is remodeling the interior of the church. The church now meets in the fellowship hall for worship during the construction phase. This project is due to be completed this Summer. The Chico congregation will soon be confirming six catechumens. One family was added to the membership of Valle De Gracia. In addition, Rev. Alpuche has begun an elder course with one of its members. Rev. Powell reports that the church in Yuba City is doing well. He writes, however, that "2019 has been particularly difficult. [with a] Heart-wrenching divorce, families moving away, and illness upon illness." Trinity Reformed Church of Modesto continues to receive the ministry of student, Mr. Tim Curtis. According to Elder Derek Reis, the church is doing well spiritually. The congregation engages in worship, Bible studies, book discussions, and other forms of ministry. Fellowship is strong and sweet; there is a family closeness felt by everyone.

The brethren of Grace Reformed Church, Lancaster, reports that the church carries on its ordinary ministry. The Word and Sacraments were administered. The elders are faithful, and church discipline, though painful, is being carried out. Retired ministers continue to step in and help. Due to a financial setback, the elders have shifted their focus to finding a man who will help support himself by working outside the church. Time will tell if they will be able to find someone. Our hope and prayer is that the Lord will lead these brothers to finding such a man.

The brethren of Rehoboth Reformed Church continued to live and labor without a pastor. This puts a large strain upon the two elders. The two largest needs before the congregation concern acquiring a new pastor and whether they will have faithful men assume the offices of the church once the current officers step down. Both matters are undecided, and the prospects for new men to become elders or deacons is slim. However, the prospect of calling a minister is a possibility.

### Finances

In terms of numerical gains or losses, of the thirteen churches in Classis, seven reported growth in communicate members. Two churches remained at the same number. Four churches sustained losses. While I am glad to see these increases, I am concerned that the gains were so minimal. In terms of the aggregate, the numbers are down from last year. Communicate members decreased from 560 to 557; baptized membership dropped from 748 to 741. These are not significant losses compared to the totals of last year, but they continue the negative trend that we have seen for quite some time. An implication of these

losses is that the financial burden to maintain guidelines falls on fewer members. One happy exception to this trend is the growth of Covenant Reformed Church of Sacramento. They added new members as well as average of 30 visitors each Sunday. Dr. Walker reports that the nursery is bursting at the seams.

Classis Treasurer, Deacon Nathan Schlegel, continues the tradition of tell-it-like-is reporting. He reports that eight of thirteen churches sent in all guideline amounts, which reasonably may be the largest number that we can expect. Nevertheless, we ended the year in the red, a deficit of about \$1700.00. During the year, some of the funds were in deficit status, so monies had to be drawn from the Home Missions Building Fund. He researched ways that we could invest some of the monies of the building fund and has proposed that we put a large portion into a money market account through Raymond James. He suggests that 10% of the earned interest be paid back to the building fund with the rest distributed across the remaining funds. It should be noted that Home Missions Committee recommends something similar. The same committee proposed that this fund be renamed and repurposed for mission-oriented needs beyond that of financing buildings. This is an important matter, and we need to think it through very carefully.

Finally, I want to remind you to meet the Classis deadlines for permanent reports. Late reports put an unnecessary strain on the stated clerk. For instance, he enters the numbers for the statistics report manually. When reports come in late, he cannot complete the work he needs to do in a timely fashion. This year, particularly, many parochial and permanent committee reports came in late. Let's do a better job next year. Let us carry out our Classis duties with skill and love for the brothers.

Fathers and brothers, while there are some discouraging realities, there are even more things to be encouraged about! The faithful ministries detailed in the reports demonstrate that Lord is indeed blessing the churches of the Western Classis. The deposit is being protected and transmitted by faithful men. May the Lord who dwells in unapproachable light pour His Spirit and gifts upon us in the year to come.

Respectfully submitted,

*Tracy Gruggett*

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**Classis Action:** The report was adopted. A motion was made to have it spread upon the Abstract of the Minutes of Classis, and to submit it to the *Reformed Herald* for publication.

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## **B. Stated Clerk's Report**

Esteemed Brothers in Christ,

The past year has been a relatively quiet year for your clerk regarding his specific duties. I would like to express by gratitude for the trust given to me. Below you will find a summary of my activities.

The minutes of the 34<sup>th</sup> 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. The Abstract of the minutes was sent to the RCUS Website.

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The President's Report on the State of the Church was printed in the Abstract and in *The Reformed Herald*. Required information regarding delegate credentials, church directory and changes to the roll of ministers was sent to the Synod Clerk. Per action of the classis in 2019, no abstracts were printed nor distributed other than electronically. You clerk printed a personal copy which will eventually be added to the official records of the Western Classis.

There was only one Executive Circular sent during the year: 34:1 – The proposed services and agenda for this meeting.

There were two changes to the roll of the Western Classis. First, Rev. Richard Stetler's credentials were transferred to the Covenant East Classis and receipt of the transfer was received on May 17<sup>th</sup>, 2019. The other was the passing into glory of Rev. Lloyd Gross. As of this date I have not received any necrologies for 2019 other than that for Rev. Gross. If there are necrologies, please submit them as soon as possible. Of the remaining members of the former Covenant Reformed Church in Grass Valley, one recently passed into glory and another family, which lives in a fairly remote location, is regularly attending a solid non-denominational congregation in their area. I have been in contact with them and they will inform me if and when they desire to have their membership moved. I also was contacted by Michael Peery of the former Faith Reformed Church in Anderson regarding members from that congregation. It was their intention to join the OPC work in Redding and I provided him with letters attesting to the nature of their erasure and commending them to the care of that congregation.

Lastly, I would like to address the matter of printing abstracts. I must confess to being surprised by the action last year (modifying Standing Rule 9) and had not given it any previous thought as such. Upon reflection, I want to make the following observations: 1) The amount of labor on the part of the clerk is not significantly impacted either way. The abstracts still need to be created regardless of whether or not they are commercially printed. Sending the abstracts to the churches of the Western Classis is a relatively easy task. The matter of workload for the clerk was an argument made in favor of not printing the abstracts. 2) The abstracts of the Western Classis are much different than those produced by other classes. For example, we publish the complete parochial reports while the other classes do not. The abstracts we produce are essentially complete records of the proceedings except for the parliamentary aspects and the text is arranged differently than the minutes proper. If the Western Classis wished to instruct the clerk to produce a slimmer abstract, that is also an option. Personally, I like the idea of having a more public record of the parochial reports. 3) The clerk would, according to the original standing rule, print and send approximately ten copies of the abstract to each congregation in the Western Classis and three to each of the congregations in the rest of the denomination. If the classis were to instruct the clerk to provide five or six to each congregation and electronic versions to the rest of the denomination, that would significantly cut costs even though the per copy cost is somewhat greater. I am providing these observations and suggestions because I know that there are numerous delegates who want us to revisit last year's decision. If the delegates would like a real-time cost of printing 150-60 copies, the (Christian) printer is a few blocks away and I can solicit a quote and return with it during the meeting.

Respectfully submitted,

*Rev. Douglas L. Schlegel, Stated Clerk, Western Classis, RCUS*

**Classis Action:** The report was adopted.

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### C. Minutes of Synod

Dear Brothers in Christ,

In reviewing the minutes of the 273rd Synod, there are some items that the Classes should take note of:

1. Regarding the Minutes of Classis Committee, I sent our hard copies of the errors needing correcting to the Classis clerks; and did not publish these in the 2019 Synod Abstract.
2. In regards to the presentation of the Permanent Web-Site Committee Report, a motion from the floor, which was seconded and carried, (lines 191-192 of Synod Minutes) was inadvertently left out of the 2019 Abstract. It should have been Recommendation #3 of the Report: *“That 5Q be looked into to manage the RCUS website and possibly each church’s web-site if they so choose.”* I corrected the error in the electronic version of the 2019 Abstract. Please accept my sincere apologies for this error.
3. Regarding article 84 of the RCUS Constitution, Classis clerks need to remember that “Classis shall forward to Synod its actions concerning ministers from other denominations, and also provide a resume regarding the new minister. The confirmation of a new minister from another denomination may be accomplished by executive circular at the request of Classis, provided that the resume and the actions of Classis be included in the circular.” When a man from the RCUS is ordained between Classis and Synod, the Classis clerk needs to notify the Synod Clerk, and then the Synod Clerk automatically includes him on the Roll of Synod.
4. Both membership statistics and financial statistics should be according to the calendar year.
5. Standing rules #2 and #3 which respectively read: “The statistics of the Classes for the calendar year shall be forwarded to the Stated Clerk of Synod May 1”; “The writ of certification for delegate elders shall be forwarded to the Stated Clerk May 1.”
6. 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.
7. Standing Ministerial Aid recommendation 8 (2013 Abstract page 76), that pursuant to Article 28 of the RCUS Constitution, Classes shall not consider a pastoral call letter as “adequate support” to the temporal needs of the called pastor, unless retirement is addressed and funded in the terms of the call.
8. That treasurers of the various churches be reminded to comply with Synod standing rule 8 with regard to designating for which fund the monies delivered to the RCUS are to be attributed.
9. Please remember to send necrologies to me in time for Synod.

10. The Classes are reminded that the 274th Annual Session of the Synod of the RCUS is scheduled to meet May 11-14, 2020, at Trinity Reformed Church, Sioux Falls, SD.

Respectfully submitted,

*David Fagrey*

Stated Clerk, RCUS

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**Classis Action:** Take Note.

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#### **D. Treasurer's Report**

Esteemed Fathers and Brothers of the Western Classis:

It has been my honor and privilege to serve as your treasurer for the past year. I would like to start by taking a moment to express my gratitude to Chris Fellersen. Not only has he been a tremendous help to me as I take on these responsibilities, but he has, since my early childhood, been a shining example of diligence and work ethic. Thank you.

You all see before you the numbers for the year. I will point out a few highlights that deserve your attention so you are properly armed with the facts.

1. The classis as a whole was in the red by \$1,752.78
2. The interest earned for the year on roughly \$170K was a total of \$153.20
3. The Home Missions fund was negative \$5,015.10 for the year. That is after a special anniversary collection for \$1,780, or else it would have been in even worse shape.
4. 8 of 12 congregations were able to pay their guidelines in full. As a side note, this was an encouragement to me, and I am also grateful to you all for the use of the remittance form. It really does help. Also, after consulting with Chris on historical precedent, I do not believe that we can reasonably expect higher participation than this in any given year.

My biggest conclusion looking at these numbers, is that we are spending too much money and budgeting for what we are not receiving and cannot reasonably expect to receive. It would be fiscally irresponsible to maintain a plan of deficit spending.

One of my first tasks was to research a better way to invest the funds that the classis currently has. Currently the money is at any given point in the checking account, a money market account

through F&M Bank, and a number of 1 year CD's also through F&M Bank. From my research, I present you the following options:

1. We can leave things as they are. Based on the rate of inflation, and the meager \$153.20 in total interest earned, I view this option as burying our talent in the sand.

2. We can try to find CD's with another financial institution that may possibly get us close to a 1% return for a 5 year term. In this scenario, the money would earn some interest, but it would not be liquid, and the penalty for withdrawal would be steep.

3. I had a meeting with Raymond James through F&M bank. We can move the money to a Fidelity money market account called FNSXX through Raymond James investment firm. This account would be tied to our current bank account and the details are:

- a. The money is daily liquid with no penalties or minimums for transfer or removal of funds
- b. The interest rate fluctuates and mirrors the current Fed interest rate about 1% lower. Last year the yield was 2.23%, the current rate for the last week, as of this writing, was 1.71%, and the expected return this year is 1.5%-1.75%
- c. Almost all of the money invested in the money market account is in a combination of CD's and treasury notes, and the Morningstar Risk Category is a 1 on a scale of 1-10. In layman's terms, there is no more risk to this account than where our money currently resides.
- d. Disbursements are made monthly from this account

There has also been some discussion as to the purpose and function of the Home Missions Building Fund. As to the ethical question of whether or not the fund should be used for any other purpose save that for which it was intended, namely assisting in the purchase or construction of a church facility, I will leave that to the body to discuss. From a fiscal standpoint, I think it necessary to advise the body of some of the realities. When the budget is created, it is for the year. Money goes out and comes in throughout the course of the year, and the books and allocated funds are reconciled at the end of the year. Without any capital at our disposal, the solvency of the classis is non-existent for much of the year. The budget is annual, the dues and guidelines are annual, and if we waited for the money to be cash in hand for each fund before making payments, most of our mission churches would have to wait until December or January to receive the bulk of their support. So one of the primary functions of this money has been to allow us to support our mission churches, so that they in turn can make their rent payments, pay their pastors, etc....

With all of the above information in mind, I am making the following recommendations.

1. That we invest \$125,000 into the Fidelity money market account mentioned above, and that the rest of the classis funds be placed in the checking account.
2. That the interest paid from this investment be used in the following way:
  - a. 10% of the interest paid be placed back into the HMBF

b. That the remaining 90% be distributed proportionally amongst the other funds in accordance with our guidelines.

In my opinion, this would help to address a great number of our concerns moving forward about not only the use of the HMBF, but also the interest earned on the capital in our possession and the finances of the classis as a whole. I commend all of these matters to your review, and I hope and pray that the Lord be honored and glorified in my service to His church.

Respectfully submitted:

*Nathan L Schlegel*

**BALANCE SHEET**

As of December 31, 2019

<b>ASSETS:</b>	<u>12-31-19</u>	<u>12-31-18</u>	<u>CHANGE</u>
Cash	170,178.23	172,084.67	(1,906.44)
<b>TOTAL ASSETS</b>	170,178.23	172,084.67	(1,906.44)
<b>LIABILITIES:</b>			
Accounts Payable	0.00	0.00	0.00
<b>TOTAL LIABILITIES</b>	0.00	0.00	0.00
<b>SURPLUS (DEFICIT)</b>	170,178.23	172,084.67	(1,906.44)
<b>TOTAL LIAB &amp; SURPLUS</b>	170,178.23	172,084.67	(1,906.44)
<b>FUND BALANCES:</b>			
General	2,091.24	1,825.92	265.32
Home Missions Building Fund	149,272.27	149,272.27	0.00
Home Missions	8,512.99	13,535.75	(5,022.76)
Benevolence	246.45	856.45	(610.00)
Diaconal	9,634.51	6,908.51	2,726.00
Heidelberg Camp	420.77	(314.23)	735.00
<b>TOTAL FUNDS</b>	<u>172,084.67</u>	<u>165,033.27</u>	<u>7,051.40</u>

**INCOME STATEMENT FOR YEAR ENDED DECEMBER 31, 2019**

	C. M. 1/1/2019	Dues	Bldg. Fund	Home Missions	Benevolence	Diaconal	Heid. Camp	Total Per Church
<b>INCOME:</b>								
Grace Reformed-Bakersfield	109	1,199.00	0.00	9,265.00	1,090.00	436	545.00	12,535.00
Covenant Reformed-Chico	19	209	0	450	0	450	0	1,109.00
Covenant Reformed-Grass Valley	10	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Grace Reformed-Lancaster	34	374	0	2,890.00	340	136	170	3,910.00
Providence Reformed-Lodi	15	198	0	1,360.00	160	64	58	1,840.00
Rehoboth-Los Angeles	30	363	161	2,805.00	330	132	165	3,956.00
Trinity Reformed-Modesto	28	308	1,390.00	2,380.00	280	112	140	4,610.00
Covenant Reformed-Sacramento	150	1,650.00	0	12,750.00	1,500.00	600	750	17,250.00
Covenant Reformed-San Diego	30	0	0	200	200	200	100	700
Ebenezer Reformed-Shafter	60	660	1,780.50	5,100.00	600	240	300	8,680.50
Grace Reformed-Willows	32	352	0	1,040.00	320	128	160	2,000.00
First Reformed-Yuba City	57	627	2,000.00	4,845.00	570	228	285	8,555.00
American Reformed Church-WA		0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Canadian Reformed-Chilliwack		0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Farmers & Merchants Bank-Int Allocated		1.88	134.38	7.66	0.22	8.67	0.37	153.2
<b>TOTAL INCOME</b>	<b>574</b>	<b>5,941.88</b>	<b>5,465.88</b>	<b>43,092.66</b>	<b>5,390.22</b>	<b>2,734.67</b>	<b>2,673.37</b>	<b>65,298.70</b>

**EXPENSES STATEMENT**

Stated Clerk Expenses:								
Gratuity 2019-20 Clerk			1,000.00					
Abstract and Mailing			50.52		\$1,050.52			
			-----					
Executive Committee Expenses:								
Classis Meeting-March 2019			4,056.70					
Treasurer Expense			328.63					
Executive Committee Expense			238.83		\$4,624.16			
			-----					
Inter-Church Relations Expense					0.00			
Benevolences:								
Trinity Modesto			6,000.00		\$6,000.00			
			-----					
Diaconal:					0.00	0.00		
					-----			
Home Missions:								
Calvary – Stockton			20,451.00					
Rehoboth – Los Angeles			14,574.96					
Hispanic Mission – Shafter			15,984.00					
Home Missions Committee Expense			429.30					
Special Offering Allocation (General)			(1,780.50)		\$49,658.76			
			-----					
Home Missions Building								
Special Offering					\$1,780.50			
Synodical Pass Through					\$2,000.00			
Heidelberg Camp:								
Heidelberg Camp Expenses			7,813.00					
Less: Heidelberg Camper Fees Received			(5,875.00)		\$1,938.00			
			-----					
<b>TOTAL EXPENSES</b>					<b>\$67,051.94</b>			
<b>INCOME FOR YEAR</b>							<b>(\$1,753.24)</b>	
<b>CASH ON HAND 12-31-18</b>							<b>\$172,084.67</b>	
<b>CASH ON HAND 12-31-19</b>							<b>\$170,331.43</b>	



**INCOME STATEMENT BY FUND**

<b>FUND:</b>	General	Missions Bldg Fund	Missions	Benevolence	Diaconal	Heidelberg Camp	Total
<b>INCOME:</b>							
Giving	5,940.00	5,331.50	43,085.00	5,390.00	2,726.00	2,673.00	65,145.50
Allocated Interest	<u>1.88</u>	<u>134.38</u>	<u>7.66</u>	<u>0.22</u>	<u>8.67</u>	<u>0.37</u>	<u>153.20</u>
Total Income	5,941.88	5,465.88	43,092.66	5,390.22	2,734.67	2,673.37	65,298.70
<b>EXPENSE:</b>							
Stated Clerk	1,050.22						1,050.22
Exec. Committee	4,624.00						4,624.00
Inter Church							0.00
Benevolences				6,000.00			6,000.00
Home Missions			51,439.26				51,439.26
Home Missions Bldg.		5,331.50	-3,331.50				2,000.00
Diaconal							0.00
Heid. Camp-Net						<u>1,938.00</u>	<u>1,938.00</u>
<b>Total Expense</b>	<u>5,674.22</u>	<u>5,331.50</u>	<u>48,107.76</u>	<u>6,000.00</u>	<u>0.00</u>	<u>1,938.00</u>	<u>67,051.48</u>
<b>Income (Loss) Yr.</b>	<u>267.66</u>	<u>134.38</u>	<u>(5,015.10)</u>	<u>(609.78)</u>	<u>2,734.67</u>	<u>735.37</u>	<u>(1,752.78)</u>
<b>Balance 12-31-18</b>	<b>\$1,825.92</b>	<b>\$149,272.27</b>	<b>\$13,535.75</b>	<b>\$856.45</b>	<b>\$6,908.51</b>	<b>\$(314.23)</b>	<b>\$172,084.67</b>
<b>Subtotal 12-31-19</b>	<b>\$2,093.59</b>	<b>\$149,406.65</b>	<b>\$8,520.65</b>	<b>\$246.67</b>	<b>\$9,643.18</b>	<b>\$421.14</b>	<b>\$170,331.89</b>
<b>Balance 12-31-18</b>	<b><u>\$2,093.59</u></b>	<b><u>\$149,406.65</u></b>	<b><u>\$8,520.65</u></b>	<b><u>\$246.67</u></b>	<b><u>\$9,643.18</u></b>	<b><u>\$421.14</u></b>	<b><u>\$170,331.89</u></b>

Respectfully submitted,

*Nathan L. Schlegel*

**Classis Action: The report was adopted.**

**PAROCHIAL REPORTS**

**A. Rev. Valentin Alpuche**

Esteemed Fathers in the faith of Jesus Christ,

We are blessed and privileged to be able to preach and teach the Gospel to the Spanish-speaking community in Shafter, CA. The Lord is always faithful and He has always helped us to do our ministry. In times of discouragement we find encouragement in His promises. In times of weakness His power is manifested in us. His grace is always sufficient for us. Church plant work or missionary work is not easy at all, but our God is the Almighty One who never forsakes nor abandons us. This is a list of all the activities we do in order to build up the body of believers and also reach out to the community:

1. Every Sunday at 6pm we have a worship service.
2. Every Monday at 6pm, Rev. Zartman and I teach theology lessons and I am currently teaching an elder training course to a member of our congregation who is a candidate to become an elder. This is an important step in the building up of Christ's body in our mission work.
3. Every Tuesday at 7pm I teach citizenship lessons to Spanish-speaking people in Shafter. I began this class last year, and to this date two students have become

American citizens. I have been able to meet new people every time through this class, and also I have had the opportunity to present the Gospel to some of them.

4. Every Wednesday we have a Bible study for adults and children. We are studying the Manual of Christian Doctrine by Louis Berkhof.
5. I record for our radio program which runs every Sunday at 9am. Through our radio program a lot of people have listened to the teaching of God's Word. Many people have called through the years, and one family come to our mission work after they listened to our program.
6. During spring and summer I set up a "Gospel table" across the street from an elementary school to distribute Bibles, Catechisms, and Gospel tracts to parents and children. This has also been a good way to meet people in the community.
7. Our ministry is not only local, but way beyond Shafter. Through my translation work of reformed literature a lot of Spanish-speaking Latinos in America, Central and South America are able to read sound reformed literature. I have been translating for more than ten years already, and I have translated a variety of books and authors. I am currently translating "Our Reasonable Faith" by Herman Bavinck. I am also revising and editing translations done by other Christians in Latin America. You can find all the books I have translated here: [www.clir.net](http://www.clir.net) I take the opportunity to let you know that I translated "The Faith our Fathers" by Paul Treick. It is a commentary on the canons of Dort. There are more fine books written by RCUS pastors that can be of great benefit to the Spanish-speaking Christian community around the world if they were in Spanish. This is a ministry that is constantly needed. May our Lord direct part of our efforts to this important ministry.

Respectfully submitted,

*Rev. Valentín Alpuche*

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**Classis Action:** Take note

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**B. Rev. Gil Baloy.**

Esteemed Brothers in Christ,

"The fruit of the righteous is a tree of life; and he that winneth souls is wise." (Proverbs 11:30) More of a concerted effort is being made by the Consistory to see us bear the three marks of the true Church in our congregation. As one of its shepherds, I observe that our people more and more desire fruit in their lives produced by those marks of the faithfully preached Word, administration of the sacraments and church discipline.

We start the Lord's Day with a brief "opening exercise" of Scripture reading and prayer. Sunday School is available for all of the basic age groups. Soon, our Deacon Jeremy Smith will start a class for the young adults. In the adult class, I have covered a study on Christian worship and its historical, theological and spiritual roots. Presently, we are on the subject of Evangelism focusing on John Blanchard's booklet Ultimate Questions as an excellent witnessing tool. We have an unusually large meeting hall at a local PCUSA campus of

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Trinity Presbyterian Church. It is a constant reminder of the Lord's purpose: "that my house may be filled." (Luke 14:23)

Right before the start of the worship service, a memory verse is recited to hide God's Word in our hearts. This is followed by our confessing the Nicene Creed, meditation and silent prayer. The preaching involved the exposition of John's Gospel, a mini-series on Psalm 23, and sundry passages suitable for special occasions like Father's Day, Mother's Day, Christmas and Easter, Thanksgiving, and even Lord's Supper messages. Wednesday Bible Study held in our home bi-weekly has been an edifying coverage of each of the 150 Psalms. One doctrine/membership course was completed which yielded two new members by profession of faith. I am waiting (praying) for the Lord to send more new families with potential students for our Sunday School and Catechism Class. The Word went out when I officiated at two weddings of believers, including that of Ben and Laura Foster who are our newest family addition! A third big event was the celebration of the 50th Wedding Anniversary of our Deacon Angel and Emelita Lontoc with the renewing of their covenant vows. Also, the church received blessing from the ministries of Rev. Dennis Roe, Mr. Yevgeni Koh, Elder Alfred White, Mr. Luke Friedly and Pastor Emeritus David Linden on the occasions of my absence. Indeed, "variety is the spice of life."

The Lord's Supper was served nine times. There were no baptisms this year. The ministry of the Keys are the preached Word with the application of verbal church discipline. "Preach the word; be instant in season, out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort with all long suffering and

doctrine." (2 Timothy 4: 2). Other "preventative measures" are Biblical counseling and pastoral and elders' annual visitation. And, finally, there is the formal process required for unrepentant sin in the life of Christ's Church. Last year, there was no formal discipline carried out of this nature. We hope to have other elders soon to aid in the ministry of the Word and prayer. We have the nomination of one good prospect in the "batter's box" now, who we hope will step up to the plate of service this year.

I continue to serve on the Foreign Ministries Committee of Synod. One month was spent in the Philippines last summer as the traveling companion of Dr. Maynard Koerner and "RCUS facilitator" for Heidelberg Theological Seminary. It is hoped that 2021 will yield the first "bumper crop" of graduates to fill pulpits of Reformed churches in the land. Also, I serve on the Heidelberg West Youth Camp Committee of Western Classis. While I have not been attending the camp of late owing to my involvement in the Philippines, I am grateful to fall back on a dozen or so years of camp experience. I represented our Classis at one stated meeting of the Southwest Classis U.S. of the URCNA held at Christ Reformed Church in Anaheim. Lastly, Elder Alfred White and I are serving on the board of Reformed Gospel Ministries (RGM), which actively promotes the true gospel in evangelistic outreach efforts, seminars, conferences and through tract and literature distribution.

The pastor's basic living needs are being met according to the faithful giving of God's people. The deacons are necessary for the ministry of prayer and the work of mercy among the people of God. They should proactively seek to acquaint themselves with the needs of members, gather and manage the offerings and their careful distribution, so that no one is lacking. I can thankfully say that our two deacons faithfully discharge their duties. We have been involved with some homeless professing Christians and are happy to report of the intake of two such men into the "East County Transitional Living Center." It is a

rehabilitation center focused on providing shelter and a job for them based on Biblical discipleship. Toward the end of the year, I joined my wife Maricar in returning (again for me) to the Philippines to bury her mother.

We are gradually expanding our corporate witness by an invitation insert in our weekly bulletin to go out to a local college or university, or, if class is out, to Balboa Park. There we do one-on-one personal evangelism, occasional open air preaching, and manning a tract table with a sign “Got Prayer?” We hope to see a regularly held outreach to our neighbors in the vicinity of the church. Members are encouraged to invite others to our meetings. Like a Christian song teaches, “They will know that we are Christians by our love.” So, more fellowship is in order. “Let brotherly love continue.” (Hebrews 13:1) We still have our common meal on the Lord’s Day, Wednesday night Bible study, our Men’s Fellowship, our Women’s Fellowship (not to mention Saturday Ladies Prayer), our annual Harvest Dinner and Talent Show (always a hit with many visitors), and a few other events centered around the Bible and food!

Our Covenant church family solicits prayer for itself that God would bestow His blessing upon it in order that we may be more and more conformed to His will and strengthened in our faith and service to our Savior. We look to our Head Jesus Christ to grant purity, unity and peace, by which we may serve God more acceptably with reverence and godly fear in His Church. “And let us not be weary in well doing: for in due season we shall reap, if we faint not.” (Galatians 6: 9)

Respectfully submitted,

*Pastor Gil Baloy*

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**Classis Action:** Take Note.

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### **C. Rev. Eric Bristley**

“Therefore, since we have this ministry, as we have received mercy, we do not lose heart. But we have renounced the hidden things of shame, not walking in craftiness nor handling the word of God deceitfully, but by manifestation of the truth commending ourselves to every man’s conscience in the sight of God.”—2 Corinthians 4:1–2

The ministry of serving Christ in His church is a special calling given by the only Head of the Church. As quoted above, it is a result of God’s mercy. For this reason, I do not lose heart, because Christ employs me to build his church. Because of this I reject all false treatments of Scripture in order to handle the word of God with the greatest respect and care. The real effectiveness of my ministry depends on the Holy Spirit applying the truth of his Word to the hearts and lives of the saints. I thank God not only for the calling that he has given me, but that he provides all the means necessary to accomplish it, and the results that he has chosen to give in the building of his Kingdom.

Gathering as the fellowship of the saints on Sunday continues to be a great blessing. I rejoice in seeing God’s people grow together in their work of faith, their labor of love, and their patience of hope in our Lord Jesus Christ in the sight of our God and Father (1 Thess. 1:3). At the start of the year I preached a series on the role of men and women in the church from the Pastoral Epistles. This was followed by a study of Genesis 2 and 3 on the creation

of the first man and woman and their fall into sin. Afterwards I completed the series on Hebrews chapter 13. Upon the advice of the Consistory I began a new series on the Gospel of John for Sunday morning. Special services were held on Good Friday, Easter, Reformation Sunday, and Christmas, as well as our monthly celebration of the Lord's Supper. Our Sunday Evening Fellowship continues with corporate prayer, singing, and Bible study. We shifted from studying the Psalms to a Bible study format on Ephesians.

God continues to bless our Christian education program each Sunday morning. Our Primary Class is ably taught by Angela Gross to our growing group of the youngest children. I have been teaching a class for the grade school children, focusing on the way of salvation in the Gospel of John and memorizing appropriate Catechism Q&As. The Adult Class is skillfully led by Elder Gross who has been teaching on the post-exilic prophets in historical context. He is to be commended for engaging in a difficult but rewarding study of the Book of Zechariah. I am thankful for our elders' and deacons' ongoing commitment to Christ's kingdom and faithful service to our congregation. We are blessed to have men who oversee the spiritual and physical needs of the congregation so ably and faithfully. They have cared for God's people and maintained our large building.

Our monthly Men's Fellowship has been studying Louis Berkhof's Systematic Theology, sharing the meaning and application of the attributes of God. These times have been a great blessing to our men and a way for iron to sharpen iron. Our "Women of Grace" Bible Fellowship is working through Nancy DeMoss Wolgemuth's book, *Adorned*. Those who attend report great spiritual blessings flowing from their fellowship. These and other meetings are signs of healthy congregational life and a growing love for God's Word.

In the broader church I serve on the Candidates and Credentials committee for the Western Classis, the Synodical Committee on congregational voting, and manage the denominational archives. At City Seminary in Sacramento I taught four courses in 2019: Church Education and Discipleship, Applied Apologetics, the Doctrine of God, and the Christian Worldview. I continue to serve on the board of Westminster Biblical Missions.

I thank God for his saints at Grace Reformed Church and the fact that he promises that "I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me" (Phil. 4:13).

An undershepherd of Christ, the only Head of the Church,

*Eric D. Bristley, Pastor*

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**Classis Action:** Take note. (Elder Davis led the body in prayer.)

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#### **D. Rev. Sam Powell**

Esteemed fathers and brethren

As I began to write this report, I scanned my previous reports as I usually do. The last 13 years that I have spent in Western Classis have been a whirlwind of growth, pain, loss, triumph, victory, and unfathomable emotions. It seems to me that this is what bearing burdens, sanctification, growth in grace, and being a member of Christ means.

Paul wrote,

And whether one member suffer, all the members suffer with it; or one member be honoured, all the members rejoice with it. Now ye are the body of Christ, and members in particular. (1Cor. 12:26-27)

We have rejoiced when new families came to worship with us. And over the years, we went through what felt like an amputation when families left. Some left because the jobs left. Some left because they just drifted over the years. Some left for reasons of their own. But every amputation is painful, and I feel the loss deeply.

The year began when our elder Dan Yeager, called me and told me that his wife was leaving him. After trying to counsel, trying to listen, trying to help in every way that I could, the whole family left the congregation, and the divorce proceeded. A blow like that is hard to recover from, and I am not sure that I have yet.

Each year, I am astounded at the strength of God as me or my family suffer one rare, potentially deadly disease after another. We have been struck with cancer, Ehlers Danlos, CRPS, ruptured bowels, herniated disks – I could go on, but I would bore myself. Eventually tragedy simply becomes a statistic, and as you list everything by name, you soon hear yourself and start to believe that maybe you are simply making it up. But then you lived through it, and you didn't go mad.

And it is not just my family; our congregation as a whole has been struck particularly hard these past few years: cancer, fibromyalgia, broken bones, cancer, more cancer, surgeries, hip replacements, chronic pain...

And we look for seasons of richer grace, but they seem elusive. 2019 has been particularly difficult. Heart-wrenching divorce, families moving away, and illness upon illness.

Paul wrote,

9 And he said unto me, My grace is sufficient for thee: for my strength is made perfect in weakness. Most gladly therefore will I rather glory in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me.

10 Therefore I take pleasure in infirmities, in reproaches, in necessities, in persecutions, in distresses for Christ's sake: for when I am weak, then am I strong. (2 Cor 12:9-10)

Paul's description of himself is certainly one that I would dearly love to say of myself. Although I am learning that God's grace is sufficient, and that he is strong in weakness, I cannot say that I take pleasure in infirmities. I have my highs and lows, my ups and downs. The human spirit is not easily defined as the flesh struggles with the spirit and the mind of faith struggles with the questions of suffering.

This past year, my daughter was rushed to the hospital with a virus that went to her brain. Without treatment, the mortality rate is over 70 percent, and the hospital did not treat it for 10 days. When they finally got what it was, Maggie was flown by helicopter to UC Davis and hovered between life and death for 2 more weeks. How does one even describe their labors with something like that? All in all, we spent 6 weeks in the hospital and most likely have years of therapy to go. But the doctors are already astounded at her progress. Whatever the future brings, we know that God will not leave us nor forsake us, for he is faithful.

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I thank God for technology – that I am able to communicate wherever I am, whether it is by a hospital bed, in a Speech Therapist waiting room, or in the cafeteria at the doctor’s compound. For the most part, I am able to keep up.

This year, I ask myself “what I should say?” The constitution states that I am to give a report of my labors. So I can do that:

I finished a series of sermons through the three epistles of John and started a series on Ephesians. I periodically was able to do evening Bible studies through the book of Luke and the law of God. For Sunday School class I taught through Isaiah and Exodus and did a small series of studies on the doctrine of the church.

The gospel was preached each Sunday. Rev. Sawtelle filled the pulpit in my absence: twice for my absence to Synod, and 3 times while I was in the hospital. There were no vacation Sundays.

I travel to East Sacramento weekly for catechism class and conduct new members classes in Yuba City.

The Sacrament of the Lord’s Supper was administered 12 times, and there was one infant baptism. Church discipline was administered as faithfully as sinful, complicated and hurting humans can.

Weddings and funerals were conducted. The church continues to gather together in ordinary ways in ordinary places. And I guess that is what it is really about, isn’t it? A taste of something far better to come, a feast of rich food and wine on the lees.

Our long time treasurer, Steve Moore, retired this year and he will be greatly missed. His commitment, support, and labor over the years, as well as the faithful giving and diligence of so many others, have been used by God to establish a congregation in Yuba City. But that congregation is getting older. The next generation now needs to take the place of the previous generation, and I am very thankful to God that he is raising up the next generation to do just that. Ben and Katie Dodson will be taking over the finances for the congregation; Silas and Hannah Ochsner diligently take care of the property; Michael and Morgan Opie host fellowships and serve the church in ways too numerous to mention without forgetting some of them. Through the work and diligence of these families and others that God is bringing in, we are confident that God will preserve, defend, and gather his saints in this community for years to come.

The officers of the church work tirelessly in incredibly difficult circumstances. Greg Stewart continues to serve faithfully as elder while also caring for his dear wife, fighting cancer. [REDACTED] commutes from East Sacramento in his diligence for the congregation. Bud Milam and Michael Opie give of themselves over and over in a congregation struggling with so many concerns and needs.

We look through our tears and our discouragement and see Christ on the throne. His way is on the sea. How can we follow the footsteps or say, “What are you doing?”

All we can do is wait. And so we wait.

I think of my dear wife sitting day and night week after week, waiting at our daughter's bedside. Her patience and faith continues to astound me. She gave more of herself than she had to give and her health suffered as a result.

All in all, I think that 2019 is the year that I started to learn that only God can make things straight, only God can grow the church, only God can soften a heart. Only God can heal the sick.

Only God feeds the deer and the leviathan and humbles the proud heart.

What we do is wait. Sometimes that waiting is on the chair next to your daughter's hospital bed. Sometimes the waiting is while your wife is having yet another nerve block. Sometimes it is sitting quietly and listening to the tears and anger and heartache and knowing that you can't say the right thing, you can't do the right thing. That you don't know what pill to give or what verse to read. When they say, "Pastor, what do I do?" and you have no idea....

Only then does one really learn to wait. You read about it in books. You know it in your mind.

But it is another thing to sit by the bed not knowing if she will live or die. Or sit in the study and not know if they will repent or flee.

Or preach again not knowing what will happen.

A report of my labors? I preached to dry bones, cried out for help, and learned to wait.

Respectfully submitted.

*Rev. Sam Powell*

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**Classis Action:** Take note.

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**E. Rev. Tracy Gruggett**

Esteemed Fathers and Brothers,

I have completed my twelfth year as pastor of Grace Reformed Church at Bakersfield, the second longest ministry behind that of Rev. Robert Stuebbe. Whether I will reach the twenty-year mark as he did, is, of course, a matter completely up to the Lord. Right now, Michelle, and I are settled in it for the long haul. I praise our sovereign Lord for the privilege and many joys I have in serving this congregation.

As to an account of my labors in 2019. I preached the Word 48 about times, taught the adult Sunday on most Lord's Days. I held women's Bible study twice a month for much of the year. One Thursday a month, I met with men as part of a book study. I taught catechism classes throughout the school year. My wife, Michelle, held a weekly women's Bible in the early Summer. I served the Lord's Supper four times. There were no baptisms during the year. I have increased my administrative activities. Administrative work can be a bit off-putting sometimes, so that I haven't approached it with much verve. But after reading some good materials about the importance of the minister attending to his administrative duties I move to more intentional embrace of these responsibilities. What I find is that they



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don't seem to end. I also served on the Executive Committee of Classis, and on the Christian Education Committee of Synod.

In terms of member additions and subtractions, the Lord added to our number two families. And we have taken two more families in this January, and this was on top of the four families that entered membership in 2018. We even have had the privilege of re-opening our nursery for the little ones. All this is very positive since we have experienced something of a dearth of new members in previous years. We have a somewhat odd situation of couple very much wanting to join our members as Baptists. But this is deal-breaker. They still attend and we are praying and hoping that they will have a change of conviction. Interacting with this couple has compelled to restudy the doctrine of infant baptism which has served not only to refresh, but to confirm my convictions on this matter. There were no confirmations in 2019, but we are anticipating two covenant youth to be confirmed in May of this year. We did see one family leave the church. And a long-time saint, David Stuebbe went to the be the Lord. There was one case involving one judicial erasure.

Much of our attention and planning have been focused on an interior remodel project. This has proven to be a large undertaking and the progress has been slower than expected. But as of right now, the momentum has picked up and construction is well underway. We are currently meeting in the fellowship hall of the church facilities, a little cramped but sufficient for our needs. We anticipate finishing the project by the Summer of 2020. Among other things this remodel involves reversing our sanctuary. The new front entry will be from the parking lot area, and one will step into a large lobby. The large majority of the congregation is excited and looking forward to the final product.

Late in the year, the Spiritual Council authorized the formation of service teams or committees for the women of the congregation to serve in. Our "Women of Grace" group had essentially faded and died out. But several ladies wanted to see some kind of women's ministry formed in its place. We have service committees/teams in working in several areas of church life. Each team has a dedicated function: Nursery, Fellowship Events, Decorating, Care and Compassion Meals, Outreach. These are all under the auspices of the Spiritual counsel.

The congregation has a strong and growing connection to the Bakersfield Pregnancy Center. This center is one of the largest and most successful in the country. It sees on average nearly 400 clients a month. These are usually young women and men who are vulnerable to having abortions. The center provides a variety of services, the most notable of which is a free ultra-sound. Usually, when one of these women sees her baby, she chooses to have it. Two of our church members are board members, and two others serve on the volunteer staff. I am currently taking steps to become one of their "male advocates." These are men who seek to mentor the young men who come in with their girlfriends or wives.

On a different note, Rev. Vern Pollema, his wife, Betty, and I were able to fly to Phoenix to attend the funeral of Rev. Lloyd Gross. Rev. Gross was Betty's brother. Rev. Pollema performed the committal service, and I was given opportunity to speak about my relationship with Lloyd at the reception. As you might expect it was a God honoring funeral, and Claire, the children, and grandchildren were comforted with the gospel of our Lord. Prior to this, in October, the elders permitted me to go and visit Lloyd and Claire. I had a wonderful time fellowshiping with them for a few days.

On a final note, the congregation continues to stand with mission work in Shafter, voting this past January to maintain financial support at the current level of another year.

In my opinion, things seem, by God's grace, to have taken a turn at Grace Reformed Church. For a few years if not more we have been in some ways static. But we are starting to see new fruit and new joy in the congregation. Overall the brothers and sisters are being fed by God word and their faith confirmed by the sacraments. For this and many other things, I am very thankful to our covenant God for His wondrous grace in Christ Jesus our Lord.

Respectfully Submitted,

*Rev. Tracy Gruggett*

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**Classis Action:** Take note.

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#### **F. Elder Larry Lynch – Grace Lancaster**

**“Remember therefore from where you have fallen; repent and do the first works, or else I will come to you quickly and remove your lampstand from its place—unless you repent.” -Revelation 2:5**

Dear Brothers:

As we reflect on the last several years and where we are today as a congregation, we are thankful that the Lord hasn't removed our lampstand. We are grateful for the Lord's grace for causing us to carefully consider our past and devote ourselves to works of love for our Savior, Jesus Christ. As we do so, we are waiting on the Lord to bring us a season of growth, where we can be a viable and vibrant Reformed Church in the Antelope Valley.

We had a financial setback this past fall. With a family moving to Texas, this caused our tithes and offerings to drop sharply, and it changed the focus of the elders a bit. As we look for prospective pastoral candidates, we are now looking for a tent maker; someone who is willing and able to find a good paying job to support his income as a pastor. We are thankful that we have saved \$40,000 in our pastor savings fund, but this would quickly dissipate if we took on a full-time pastor without a significant amount of support. This also would rapidly place us back to where we financially started a few years ago.

We are hopeful for the future of our congregation. We have three young couples who are dedicated to serving in the church. One of the couples has their first child due in June. Mark Reyna and I are also very thankful to the Lord because we each have a son that is on track to be confirmed in June. Our hearts are overwhelmed by the Lord's Covenant blessings.

In the meantime, and as always, we are thankful for the preaching, teaching, and the administration of the Lord's Supper that we have received this year from Rev. Vern Pollema and Rev. Neale Riffert. We are thankful for their love and support. By God's grace, the Lord's Supper was served five times this year and 32 of our 33 members participated.

Please keep us in your prayers as we have several church discipline issues set before us. Even though we don't have a full-time pastor, it doesn't mean the counseling and church

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discipline issues stop. Please pray for repentance on behalf of those who are running from the Lord and please ask the Lord to give us wisdom as we handle these situations.

In Christ's Service,

The Spiritual Council of Grace Reformed Church of the Antelope Valley

*Elder Mark Reyna, Elder Larry Lynch*

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**Classis Action:** Take note. (Elder White led the body in prayer.)

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### **G. Elder Robert Mettler – Rehoboth Los Angeles**

Esteemed Brethren in Christ,

In the past year we, at Rehoboth, were concerned with assuring that we would continue to have faithful proclamation of the Word from the pulpit each Sunday. With thankfulness we can report that we were blessed to have had an ordained minister of the Word preach every Sunday. Of concern, however, was the necessity of having pastors from denominations other than the RCUS 45% of the time. We had 11 different pastors fill the pulpit during the year, which is not the most desirable situation for a mission work. This posed a problem of presenting the distinctive of the RCUS both to new members and to visitors. The Heidelberg Catechism was used each Lord's Day as part of the service, however, by all of the pastors, for which we are thankful.

We, as a congregation, were able to continue to assemble and to carry out the marks of a true church, although imperfectly, according to Article 29 of the Belgic Confession namely:

- 1) Preaching of the pure gospel according to the Word of God;
- 2) Administration of the sacraments as instituted by Christ;
- 3) Exercise of discipline as shepherds in acknowledgement of Jesus Christ as the Head of the Church.

During the year we saw normal cycles of life in His covenant community.

There was one funeral conducted.

We celebrated Holy Communion 5 times, led by pastors of the RCUS.

We saw two covenant youth brought into communion with the body through the rite of confirmation.

We had the uniting in holy matrimony of two of our members.

Although we as a congregation are spread out over 1300 square miles of the metropolitan Southern California area and have members and visitors from 15 different cities we had a faithful average attendance of 27 souls each Sunday during the year which included members and family, visitors, supply pastors and their families.

Encouragement also came from Sermon Audio reports that there were numerous downloads of sermons from all parts of the world that had been posted by Rehoboth. We do not know who accessed these sermons but we do have the assurance that God's Word is

going forth to the world from this place.

The 2019 year is behind us and we now face new challenges in 2020.

We anticipate the loss of two members because of relocation, but we also have faithful visitors who have expressed a sincere desire to join the church here at Rehoboth. Our hope and prayer is that we might see an increase in our numbers this year. We have a temporary supply pastor Rev. Jeff Munive (URCNA) to conduct services and to preach God's word each Sunday. Rev. Munive preached, led the Adult Sunday School class, and conducted Sunday services 19 times in 2019 and has been well received by the congregation. We do have concern that all of our elected officers, both Elders and Deacon will have exhausted their terms of office at the end of 2020. We do not, as of now, have in sight candidates to fill those offices after 2020. Our trust and prayer is that our Heavenly Father will, according to His promise, provide for His Church, the Body of our Savior Jesus Christ.

As individual members we know:

**.....that all things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are the called according to His purpose. For whom He foreknew, He also predestined to be conformed to the image of His Son, that He might be the firstborn among many brethren. Moreover whom He predestined, these He also called; whom He called, these He also justified; and whom He justified, these He also glorified. (Romans 8:28-30)**

We take great comfort in the words recorded in the Epistle to the Romans 8:31-39:

**If God be for us, who can be against us? He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him also freely give us all things? Who shall lay anything to the charge of God's elect? It is God that justifieth. Who is he that condemneth? It is Christ that died, yea rather, that is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us. Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? As it is written, For thy sake we are killed all the day long; we are accounted as sheep for the slaughter. Nay, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him that loved us. For I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in CHRIST JESUS OUR LORD.**

We, in instruction from Proverbs 3:5-6, as a part of the Holy Catholic Church, by His grace:

**Trust in the Lord with all your heart, And lean not on your own understanding; In all your ways acknowledge Him, And He shall direct your paths.**

We continue in our prayers for the Lord to bestow His blessing on the congregation at Rehoboth Reformed Church according to His good will.

Respectfully submitted,

*Elder Robert Mettler,*

Rehoboth Reformed Church

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**Classis Action:** Take note.

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## H. Rev. Gary Mancilas

Esteemed Brethren,

It is with thankfulness to God that He has ordained that a Reformed presence remain in the city of Chico another year, as Covenant Reformed Church (CRC) has received God's blessings and presence. With the Psalmist, we have rejoiced "for unto thee, O Lord, do I lift up my soul" (Psalms 86:4) giving thanks to God for the times He has, through our Lord Jesus Christ, graciously and profoundly touched our lives. This walk of faith for the congregation has been realized in spiritual growth, which has been evidenced by its members through their generosity to the church and toward one another, "with all lowliness and meekness, with longsuffering, forbearing one another in love; giving diligence to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace" Ephesians 4:2-3.

As pastor of CRC since 2002, it is my continued duty and honor to give an account of my labors and of the spiritual and temporal condition of the charge; and with confidence, I submit that proper attention was given to my charge and to my constitutional obligations. It is by the faithfulness of God that the ministry of the Word and Sacraments continues to be central all these years and that the congregation continues to be blessed with a full complement of elders and deacons and with the temporal necessities each Lord's Day for worship and fellowship.

It is by the grace of God that at age 72 I am enabled to continue to serve in His church, by devotedly teaching and preaching the principles of the Reformed Faith according to the Scriptures and Confessions. With respect to the responsibility of the office of "Minister of the Word," my pastoral charge was entered upon with the expectation of God's blessings on His church. Endeavoring to discharge my pastoral duties, careful attention was given to my primary responsibility of the proclamation of the Gospel. On forty-nine Lord's Days, sermons were continued on the exposition of the book of Ecclesiastes, interspersing sermons throughout the year focused on the Lord's Supper, denominational special days of prayer and fasting and missions, calendared holidays, Christian stewardship, tithing, and a Reformation Sunday topic. Secondary duties were keeping church records, teaching men's Bible studies for a portion of the year, superintending adult Sunday school classes, attending and managing personal and elders' visitation, counseling members, and teaching preparatory instructions on The Heidelberg Catechism for our covenant children under age twelve. It is with great anticipation that I look forward to the up-coming confirmation class for possibly six covenant youth. Along with the support of the elders, spiritual nurture for the congregation was consistently provided, elders' visitations were performed for all members, Christian discipline was exercised according to the constitution, and the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper was properly administered in accordance with the Confessions and the Constitution. While absent from the pulpit on three Lord's Days for vacation, the elders provided pulpit supply. With regard to denominational work, I was appointed to the Western Classis Publications and Diaconal Committees and the Synodical Archives Committee.

The Spiritual Council and Consistory continue to be loyal and steadfast. Currently, the Consistory is organized with two acting elders and two acting deacons. The elders have

honorably watched over the spiritual interests of the congregation, and the deacons have reliably attended to the temporal affairs of the congregation.

With regard to the spiritual condition of the congregation, God's mercies and faithfulness were evident in the life of the congregation. It is their pastor's observation that the members have fulfilled their obligations as Church members. The congregation's dedication is recognized in their observance of the RCUS Day of Prayer and Fasting, the Western Classis Annual Day of Prayer for Home Missions, the RCUS Annual Day of Prayer for Home and Foreign Missions, the sacraments and ordinances of the visible church, in their serving in the church through their gifts, talents, and resources, and in their receiving their pastor and officers with high esteem and Christian love.

With regard to the temporal condition of the congregation, that the church may be edified, with perseverance the deacons attended to the temporal affairs of the congregation. Constitutionally, they assisted and supported the elders of the congregation and promoted its general welfare. Labor was performed among the members in making known to them the needs of the church. Financially, the members' giving remains sacrificial and exemplary. In order to promote fellowship among members and visitors following worship, a monthly fellowship meal is held, and the diaconate appointed a family each Lord's Day to provide refreshments and to greet members and visitors. The church members responded with commitment and met their responsibilities.

Our congregation experienced a relocation in 2019, and at this writing we are expecting another. Since 1993, CRC had rented the Chico Seventh-day Adventist (SDA) facility for worship, meetings, and fellowship. To bring to your remembrance, in 2010 the Chico congregation hosted the Western Classis meeting. Because of the rising liability insurance premium payments and rental fees, we would be unable to afford the SDA facility; therefore, in May the Consistory set a meeting with the SDA to negotiate a lower rental fee. At said meeting, we were informed that they would not be renewing any User Agreements. An availability opened at the Chico Veterans Memorial Hall. Although we have been worshipping at this location, the search for a more suitable location has continued. At the time of this writing, final negotiations and paperwork are in progress to rent the Chico Spanish Seventh-day Adventist facility. The SDA congregation has welcomed us, and they are willing to rent the facility at a cost we can afford.

In closing, as a congregation we acknowledge and are thankful for the numerous blessings of our God. Even during the trials of the church and the relocation, the members have demonstrated a commitment to the Reformed Faith and rest assured on the promises of our Heavenly Father that, for the sake of Christ, He will work all things according to His own sovereign purposes. For this reason, the saints rejoice and lift up their souls giving thanks to our God in the Lord Jesus Christ.

Respectfully submitted in Christ,

*Rev. Gary Mancilas*

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**Classis Action:** Take note.

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## **I. Rev. Thomas Mayville**

Beloved fellow Elders and Pastors of the Western Classis

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As I report on my labors these past 12 months I am very thankful for the brotherhood we enjoy as delegates of the Western Classis. As Associate Pastor at Providence, Lodi, I leave the reporting on the state of the congregation to Pastor Schlegel. Our Chief Shepherd has given me many opportunities to minister to Christ's Church since Classis 2019.

These twelve months our Lord has used me to preach 20 times, 14 of those times were in Western Classis churches at Lodi, Cerritos and Willows. I preached twice at two Reformed Fellowship Church of Kenya churches and four times at the Modesto OPC church. Eight of those times I administered the Lord's Supper. I am very thankful to the Western Classis Consistories who have given me this wonderful opportunity to serve their congregations. Also, I have been blessed to help shepherd the Rehoboth Consistory and congregation through the process of finding a pastor.

At Providence Lodi I also conduct the worship service once per month prior to Pastor Schlegel's preaching. I taught the adult Sunday School about half the time. I attend the meetings of the Consistory and Spiritual Council and chaired the meetings a couple of times. Almost everywhere I have preached I have had opportunities to counsel God's people. It has been my privilege and honor again this year to serve on the Candidates and Credentials Committee and as chairman of the Kenya Subcommittee of the Foreign Ministries Committee. For three weeks I served our denomination by visiting the Free Reformed Fellowship churches in Kenya with Elder Jerry De Young.

In addition to this missionary work, I continue to help prosecute missions on three continents in an RCUS supported organization: Westminster Biblical Missions. My work is primarily for the field in Punjab Province, Pakistan, and secondarily as Assistant General Secretary helping with missions in Mexico, Romania and Nepal.

I am hopeful to continue in the service of the RCUS at Providence Lodi for the next 6 or 7 years until retiring from the active duties of the ministry, God willing. I continue to offer my services to all the Western Classis Consistories for pulpit supply whenever and wherever needed.

May God bless the churches of the Western Classis for His glory, honor and praise; and for the good of His sheep.

In Christ's service,

*Pastor Thomas Mayville*

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**Classis Action:** Take note. Elder Lynch led the body in prayer.

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## **J. Rev. Jonathan Merica**

Esteemed Brothers in Christ,

Our gracious Heavenly Father through our Lord Jesus Christ has blessed Calvary Reformed Chapel in Stockton "with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ Jesus." (Eph. 1:3) To God be all the glory for establishing our Reformed congregation in Stockton so that we may declare the gospel in a very needy community. We are especially thankful for the kind and loving oversight of Trinity Reformed Church in Modesto, CA. We thank them for demonstrating their Christian love toward us and in their generous offering to us

on the Western Classis annual day of prayer. Further, we thank them for the prayerful support they have bestowed upon us. We are greatly humbled by their love and generosity in their prayerful support for God's blessing upon our labors. This past year 2019, we have consistently prayed for a spiritual harvest of souls in both our congregations to join in membership. We are continuing to pray for a spiritual harvest in 2020.

The ministry of the Word at Calvary Reformed Chapel focuses upon a faithful proclamation of the Word of God. It is our goal to faithfully teach and preach expositional sermons from both the Old and New Testaments for the edification and strengthening of the faith of God's people. Your servant has preached 52 Lord's Days in 2019. Currently in the worship service I'm preaching through the book of First Corinthians and in the Sunday School class I have been doing an expositional studies through the book of Judges. In our Thursday evening Bible Study we are doing an expositional study in the gospel of John. The sermons preached at Calvary Reformed Chapel are accessible on [www.sermonaudio.com](http://www.sermonaudio.com) and at our website at [www.calvaryreformedchapel.com](http://www.calvaryreformedchapel.com). We are very grateful for the labors of Steve Mason and Will Gray in recording the sermons and uploading the sermons each week to Calvary Reformed Chapel's website. To God be all glory that the Word of God is well received by our church members and visitors. From the time we began Sermon Audio to the present the total number of sermons downloaded worldwide are 8,923.

It is the desire of Calvary Reformed Chapel to continue to be faithful in teaching and preaching the Word of God. We are also edified in the receiving of the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper. The sacrament of the Lord's Supper was administered 12 times (once per month) in the previous year of 2019. We praise God for this means of grace!

We have been utilizing our internet ministry by posting a brief devotional thought five days a week on our website, [www.wordpress.com](http://www.wordpress.com) and on our Church Facebook page. Our Bible study, Sunday school and worship service texts and sermon titles are posted on Facebook five days a week (each week) and are sometimes augmented with a "Facebook Boost." This past year we have been placing a brief devotional on video. In 2019 we have employed other means of outreach through handing out church brochures in a variety of locations throughout the Stockton area. Our church members are encouraged to distribute our church fliers in various parts of the city and to invite area residents to our services.

To God be the glory for bringing visitors to Calvary Reformed Chapel this past year of 2019. Our visitors for 2019 were about thirty-one and approximately sixteen were not family related to our church members. Among our visitors last year, the Lord has blessed us with one new member in 2019. We were blessed to receive Yolanda Aguirre as a new church member by means of her "Profession of faith." Yolanda's parents, Peter and Mary Capper, are charter members of Calvary Reformed Chapel.

Your servant keeps busy with matters related to Interchurch Relations for the Western Classis. I have attended meetings of fraternal churches for the Orthodox Presbyterian Church, and the Canadian Reformed Churches in North America. I also sent "Letters of Greeting" to several other churches with whom we have fraternal relations. Our Western Classis Interchurch Relations Committee was given the task of composing a study paper on the "Issue of Church Growth" which has been submitted to the 35th Session of Western Classis. It is our hope that the Lord will bless this paper in furthering the Kingdom of God and in glorifying the name of the Lord.



Please remember to pray for us. Pray that the Lord will direct our paths to reach many lost sinners for Christ by faithfully witnessing the gospel. Pray that the Holy Spirit will bless the ministry of the Word to all the hearts of those who attend Calvary Reformed Chapel, and pray that God will grow our congregation by bringing new families to join in Church membership with our congregation this year.

The verse of Scripture by which we hope to chart our course for the coming year is found in Micah 6:8, “He hath shewed thee, O man, what is good; and what doth the LORD require of thee, but to do justly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God?”

May God bless our labors for His glory, and for the advancement of the kingdom Jesus Christ.

In Christ’s love for God’s glory,

*Rev. Jonathan Merica*

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**Classis Action:** Take note.

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### **K. Elder Derek Reis – Trinity Modesto**

Esteemed Fathers and Brothers in the Lord Jesus Christ,

Trinity Reformed Church continues to grow spiritually through the exhortation of God’s Word every Sunday, the teaching in Sunday School class, the proper administration of the sacraments, the Trinity Reformed Church book club, the ministering amongst the brethren, and through prayer. Our strength isn’t in numbers but in our obedience and relationship with our Lord. The dedication of the congregation is to be commended. Every congregant uses their gifts and talents from the Lord to further strengthen Christ’s church. Trinity Reformed Church continues to grow closer together as a family built on the solid foundation of God’s faithfulness and love. We continue to be one of only two truly Reformed churches in the Modesto area. It is in this that we see our greatest reason to continue to labor within the lives of each other and in sharing the treasure of the Gospel with those around us.

This past year seminary student Tim Curtis has exhorted from the pulpit every Sunday except on occasions where Rev. Paul Treick, Rev. Jim West, or Rev. Fritz Harms of the URC has filled the pulpit. We are pleased to share that both Tim Curtis and his wife Debbie have been received into membership at Trinity through the transfer of their membership from the PCA. They have been a wonderful addition and we praise the Lord for His continued blessing of our congregation and for bringing the Curtises to Trinity this past year. Trinity continues to have guests attend periodically and one particular gentleman who attends regularly. These guests are spoken with and invited to join in with us. We look to the Lord to add to our numbers and to continue to bring guests to Trinity.

Rev. Treick faithfully leads Sunday School unless travel or health interfere, in which cases Elder Crook or Elder Reis have led. Sunday School is attended by the whole congregation and has been a great blessing for the membership as God’s Word fuels the conversation and interaction among all attending. Discussions are lively and meaningful. On many occasions it has come to the Elder’s ears that the congregants wish Sunday School could just be a little longer due to the blessings received from such fellowship.

The Trinity Reformed Church book club is still going strong. It has added another leader to the rotation as Tim Curtis has led a few studies. The book club is well attended and recently was moved from the congregant's homes to the church to provide more room for guests to come. The book club has been going through the *Glorious Body of Christ* by R.B. Kuiper. The book club meets on the 2nd and 4th Sundays of the month at 5:30pm. It is not uncommon for these meetings to end close to 9pm. The fellowship is greatly cherished and the book club shares in a meal. Currently the leaders consist of Rev. Paul Treick, Elder Mark Crook, Elder Derek Reis, John Heerema, and Tim Curtis. Each leader brings a different style to the study and the conversation and discussion builds the church toward unity and a deeper love for our Lord.

A great blessing to the members of Trinity has been Calvary Reformed Church in Stockton. Rev. Merica and Elder Goehring have been a tremendous blessing to the Consistory and Spiritual Council. Their wisdom and leadership are to be commended. The members of Calvary exercise their faith with openness, strengthening those they interact with. It brings us great joy to work in the Lord's vineyard alongside these brothers and sisters in Christ.

The ladies of Trinity Reformed Church continue to meet monthly. The meetings are led by Karen Crook and are a blessing to the body at Trinity. We are thankful to the ladies of Trinity for their collective hospitality, support, love of true doctrine, commitment to their husbands, and most importantly, their love for the Lord. Karen Trieck should also be recognized for her work in leading the children's Sunday School class. The ladies at Trinity are shining examples of disciples of Christ to each other, strengthening the faith of one another through example and friendship and have been a wonderful blessing to the youngest of ladies in the congregation.

The gentlemen of Trinity must also be mentioned for their dedication to their wives, the pure teaching of scripture, proper doctrine, discipleship, and love for the Lord. Trinity doesn't have a formal discipleship structure in place. However, the men leave each other's company being built up in the faith. Through discussions on theology or the newest religious fad, the brothers at Trinity interact with the greatest respect and love toward one another. The singular purpose is the preeminence and glory of our Lord.

Trinity Reformed Church is a dedicated family whose main purpose and life is to serve the Lord together. There are areas in which Trinity still needs to grow and we will continue to pray without ceasing for the Lord to strengthen us in these areas. However, this is a report in which we reflect on the past year. As I look at the portion that our loving Lord has given to Trinity to partake of, I cannot complain. The Lord is good and His portions are sufficient in their seasons. We are strong if we have the Lord and Trinity Reformed Church has the Lord. We are thankful for the support from Classis, Synod, and individual members of the RCUS body. "What then shall we say to these things? If God is for us, who can be against us?" Romans 8:31. God is for us, He is for Trinity, the Western Classis, and the RCUS. May all praise be to the triune God of the universe.

Respectfully Submitted,

*Elder Derek Reis*

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**Classis Action:** Take note.

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**L. Rev. Vern Pollema**

Esteemed Brethren:

*“The days of our lives are seventy years; And if by reason of strength they are eighty years, yet their boast is only labor and sorrow; For it is soon cut off, and we fly away”* (Psalm 90:10). These words took on added significance for my wife and me as we observed and celebrated our eightieth birthdays this past November. We are thankful to God for health and strength given for continued labor and the blessing and enjoyment of family, who were responsible for the celebration of our 80<sup>th</sup> birthdays. As the years accumulate, so too, sorrows, as was the case with the loss of our dear brother, Lloyd Gross, who now rejoices in the presence of the Lord, awaiting the glad reunion day. As the years accumulate, the brevity of life becomes more real, *“for it is soon cut off, and we fly away.”*

My ministerial labors this past year have diminished, consisting largely of supplying the vacant pulpit and teaching the adult Sunday School at Grace RCUS, Lancaster, CA, at least once a month, and in the pastor’s absence and/or illness, supplying the pulpit at Grace RCUS, Bakersfield, CA. I continue to enjoy and am appreciative of the opportunity to remain active in the preaching and teaching of God’s Word minus the other responsibilities of the work of the ministry.

I also continue to serve on permanent committees of Classis and Synod and on the board of Heidelberg Theological Seminary, Sioux Falls, SD, where there are currently 12 Master of Divinity students at various levels. Besides Dr. Maynard Koerner, there are several part-time faculty teaching courses, mostly accomplished via distance learning. The board recently appointed the Rev. J. P. Mosley who will be joining Dr. Koerner as a full-time professor in Sioux Falls. Presently, there are 13 men enrolled in the Doctor of Ministry program. Two men will be graduating following the spring semester: Mark Bertrand, PCA pastor in Sioux Falls, having completed course work for the MDiv. Degree; and the Rev. J.P Mosley to receive the DMin. Degree. In the Philippines Extension of HTS, work is being done with about 60 students. The teaching is done at two centers (two islands) equipped with TVs where the students meet on Saturdays to watch video for one course in the AM and one in the PM, proctored by Philippine pastors Napoleon (Nap) Narag and Vic Bernaldes of the Pearl of the Orient Covenant Reformed Church. Dr. Koerner and another faculty member plan to travel to the Philippines in June to teach and speak at pastors’ conferences. The first graduates are anticipated in June of 2121. This may well become the foreign mission field and outreach of the RCUS.

My wife and I are deeply grateful for the Lord’s financial provision through the supplemental ministerial aid we receive each month due to the generous care and love of His people. We remain in relatively good health as we observe 54 years of blest wedded life. My PSA number continues to indicate no cancer. My A-1c number (diabetes) remains at an acceptable level. Praise the Lord! During our retirement years, we continue to experience the joy and blessing of our grandchildren, celebrating their birthdays, graduations, awards, and interacting with them in their various school and sports activities, and, especially, being all together for worship and meals on the Lord’s Day excepting those presently away at college. We praise God for *“satisfying us early with His mercy, making us to rejoice and be glad all our days! . . . Let Your work be shown to Your servants, and your glorious power to their children. Let the favor of the Lord our God be upon us, and*

*establish the work of our hands upon us; yes, establish the work of our hands” (Ps. 90:14, 16, 17).*

Respectfully submitted,

*Rev. Vernon Pollema*

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**Classis Action:** Take note. (Elder Spitzer led the body in prayer.)

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**M. Rev. Neale Riffert**

Esteemed Brothers:

“I will bless the Lord at all times; His praise *shall* continually *be* in my mouth.  
My soul shall make its boast in the Lord....” – Psalm 34:2a

Along with Mary Elizabeth, and Neale Jr., we had been greatly blessed the past year, for which we give heartfelt praise to the Lord. With our family scattered from the west to the east our contact with them is usually by phone or texting, or Skype or Facebook, and while thankful that such technology is at hand, there is no substitute for a good old hug and an in person smile, and kiss. We don’t get to see them very often, but in the past year the Lord in His goodness and grace blessed us with visits from our each of our daughters.

Keren was here twice once in the spring to register her son Zeke at Biola University in L.A. And once again in late August to bring Zeke back to start his studies. At that time she brought her oldest son, Alex along. Alex is doing Graduate work at USC, San Diego.

Naomi and John came to celebrate their 25th Anniversary with us. Larry took us all to the beach (on a cold rainy day in July, (almost unheard of in California) but we loved being together in the Motel and dinners, just catching up with what was happening in Texas.

Faith and Bryan along with their two daughters, Joanna, and Abby (who just turned 18) spent time with us and Idie. We had a great time playing games and just enjoying each other’s company.

In late September we returned to Newton Wisconsin at the invitation of the Salem Ebenezer Reformed Church for a Special Ministry Celebration honoring myself, Paul Treick, and Herman Van Stedum, “the three Amigos,” all of whom were examined for the ministry at special session of the Reformed Church in the United States, Eureka Classis, held at the church on June 24<sup>th</sup>, 1970. They thought it best for all parties involved to celebrate our “50 years” of ordained ministry in the RCUS around the 49.3 year mark.

The Classis session was quite memorable, often referred to as the “long night” as the session did not end until around 3:20 A. M. The first examination was of Paul Treick, son of the Salem Ebenezer congregation. His exam began about 9:15 in the morning and continued to about four in the afternoon. He was examined, licensed, and ordained all in the same day. My exam started shortly after 4:00 P. M. There was break for dinner and the ordination service, and continued continued about 8:15 P. M. until around 10:30 P. M. Herman Van Stedum’s began shortly after and lasted until the session ended at 3:20 in the morning. Those were the days!

We had a wonderful time with our friends in a congregation that I served for twelve years. It was a great time enjoying the fellowship with the saints, visiting with the Sorenson family, worshiping with brothers and sisters. On the Saturday we were there Mary Elizabeth was invited to join with some ladies for a little coffee clatch. The same day arrangements had been made by old friends to have some of Junior's schoolmates come to their place to spend an afternoon with him, so I took him there, and watched as he beamed with joy. What a treat for him.

We had an evening of camaraderie, joy, and laughter with the Treicks, Van Stedum, and Ray and Juanita Schnabel (they drove the Van Stedums to Wisconsin). They also treated us to dinner at Luigi's Italian Restaurant.

It was a great visit for all of us. The only downside was it was all too short.

Without minimizing these blessings, or the joy that they brought us, they were yet topped when our first grandson, Justin and his wife Sarah gave us the news of the birth of their beautiful baby daughter, Charlotte Klazinga. They live in Pennsylvania. It's an old expression that "what goes around comes back around." Both Mary Elizabeth and I were born and raised in Pennsylvania. It's official we are Great-grandparents! We will bear the honor humbly (snicker, snicker).

I continue to help out in the Grace Reformed Church, Lancaster where I can, and am thankful for the strength that God gives me day by day.

I am thankful that for the years our Gracious Lord has given to Mary Elizabeth and I, and Lord willing, we will celebrate our 60<sup>th</sup> wedding anniversary in August.

What a blessing to be with you at this 35<sup>th</sup> Annual Session the Western Classis.

I will bless the Lord at all times. His praise shall continually be in my mouth.

Respectfully, in Christ,

*Neale R. Riffert*

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**Classis Action:** Take note.

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## **N. Rev. Doug Schlegel**

Esteemed Fathers and Brothers,

As I look back at the last calendar year, there was a certain sense of normalcy and steady rhythm which could characterize the life of Providence Reformed Church. I recognize and acknowledge that this is no small blessing! While there is much work to be done, much has been accomplished. This is true regarding the pulpit ministry, the week-to-week instruction, the physical building, and in the interpersonal relationships among the members. We have grown a little, and we have also grown a little. Yes, I repeated myself. Let me explain.

We have received a few new members and we have enjoyed our normal activities and gatherings, and attendance at the stated worship services, Sunday School, and the midweek Bible study is near 100% each week. This is a wonderful part of the life of this little church and I am very thankful for it. But all of this would simply be a form of a religious social

club if other things were absent. What are those things? James asks us to meditate upon and answer the following question. “Who is wise and understanding among you?” He asks that question in the context of those who bore the name “Christian” and yet did not exhibit Christian virtues in their life in the church. That is, all of their supposed wisdom did not penetrate real life to any positive effect and one could argue it was to the hurt of the church and themselves. After posing the question, James proceeds to exhort the church:

“Let him show by good conduct that his works are done in the meekness of wisdom. But if you have bitter envy and self-seeking in your hearts, do not boast and lie against the truth. This wisdom does not descend from above, but is earthly, sensual, demonic. For where envy and self-seeking exist, confusion and every evil thing are there. But the wisdom that is from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, willing to yield, full of mercy and good fruits, without partiality and without hypocrisy. Now the fruit of righteousness is sown in peace by those who make peace.” (James 3:13-18)

It is my judgment that not only have we grown numerically, but also in the application of the truth, as it is in Christ, to life both individually and corporately. This does not mean that there is no room for growth – there is – but it also means that the congregation of Providence Reformed Church has grown in both ways.

During 2019, I preached at Providence Reformed 44 times, twice at Rehoboth in Cerritos and twice at Covenant in Sacramento. I did not travel to Eastern Europe on behalf of Westminster Biblical Missions as has been my custom in recent years. I still serve as the Field Chairman and have served for nearly two years as the President of the Board. I greatly desire to return, but I wait on the Lord’s will and the resources to do so. During my absences, our Associate Pastor, Thomas Mayville, ably took the reins. It is a great blessing to have him by my side and I am confident that he is a blessing to the whole congregation. He has been a great help in the work and has been a trustworthy counsellor to me and others. The pulpit ministry, for my part, was primarily in the Gospel of John. I began the year in chapter 7 and ended in chapter 11. Along the way, I preached a 7-part series on the theology of suffering. I am very grateful for the positive feedback I received. While feedback is not an infallible guide, it can indicate whether or not a congregation is being fed and edified. I am also gratified that as the sermons are posted on Sermon Audio, there are approximately 350 downloads each month. While we have not seen any fruit locally, the Consistory views this as a ministry to the greater church. Very soon we anticipate posting videos of the sermons as well. Streaming is beyond our reach at this point, but we plan to do so when we are able.

My duties in the adult Sunday School Class have been shared with Rev. Mayville and when I have taught, I continued the worldview study of the book of Job. The midweek Bible study continues a slow survey of the Old Testament. I must confess that it is going much slower than I anticipated and desired. Because of this, I am considering taking a break when I finish the Pentateuch or Judges. I am concerned about getting too bogged down.

The congregation has also been faithful in ministry to one another. All of us have been praying and seeking to minister to a particular family and one member in particular who received a terminal cancer diagnosis. The congregation ought to be commended for the love shown to this family and sister during this trial. We have grown a little in this and we have all groaned a little too. Indeed, the exhortation of James has been manifested in the life of the church.

Another indication of the life and health of the church is those who often work quietly and sometimes behind the scenes. For being a small congregation, we have those who faithfully serve the Lord's people in using their musical talents. There are those who quietly provide snacks and goodies for our after-service fellowship. There are those who quietly labor in cleaning and beautifying the church. There are those who give sacrificially to the work and ministry of Providence Reformed Church. There are those who serve as officers and in doing so give so much of themselves. I believe that those who serve and work in the church quietly and often anonymously are a good barometer of the health of a congregation. If I am correct, we are healthy, indeed.

Lastly, as of January, I have begun a course of instruction in the doctoral program at Heidelberg Theological Seminary. While the classes began last month (after the scope of this report), it has been long in planning and prayerful consideration. By late 2019, it had become apparent that I would be able to pursue this degree and I am moving ahead with the encouragement of the Consistory. As a matter of practical consideration, it means that going forward, I will be out of the pulpit more for the next few years. I am thankful to the Consistory for making this possible in both the terms of my call and for the financial aid I am receiving from generous benefactors. The congregation has been given the opportunity to consent to this change (or not) and they have graciously consented.

In summary, the life of the congregation is good; the gospel is received with gladness; the sacraments are celebrated in solemn joy; visitors are greeted warmly; and the love of Christ is shown among us and before the world. This is true heavenly wisdom in action. Soli Deo Gloria!

Respectfully Submitted,

*Rev. Douglas Schlegel*

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**Classis Action:** Take note.

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## **O. Rev. Paul Treick**

Esteemed Brothers in Christ,

“Grace to you and peace from God the Father and our Lord Jesus Christ, who gave Himself for our sins, that He might deliver us from this present evil age, according to the will of our God and Father, to whom be glory forever and ever. Amen.” What a beautiful salutation Paul gives to the Galatians and to us! That greeting is immediately followed by a sharp warning not to pervert the Gospel by seeking to please men, but simply to reveal the glorious Gospel of God's grace unto salvation. I hope those words will always mark us as pastors and elders, who are simply stewards and heralds of the Gospel.

This Parochial Report is from a retired pastor. The word “parochial” is an adjective with two different meanings. The first refers to “pastoral” work, but the second meaning appears to be quite different. It refers to being “narrow-minded.” Parochial need not mean narrow-minded or closed-minded as we are sometimes accused of. These two adjectives can have a good relationship. I see the pastoral or parochial work to be narrowly confined to the teachings of the Word of God entrusted to our care – no broader, no narrower – just the whole counsel of God. I believe that is what Paul is telling the Galatian church also.

I still regard myself as involved in pastoral work, howbeit in different ways. I am thankful to be able to contribute to the work of the church as my health allows. Yes, the curse of “bulletinitis” continues as I choose the hymns and prepare the bulletins each week. Each Lord’s Day begins with a 15 minute prayer-time – beseeching God’s grace on our congregation and the needs of many outside of our congregation. This time is a mixture of joy and humility – joy in the fellowship and salvation of Christ, and humility to know that we cannot even begin to worship without the wisdom, guidance, and mediatorship of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Except for rare occasions, I teach the adult Sunday school class each week where we have very good discussions and are growing in the grace and the knowledge of God’s Word. Twice a month we have a Sunday evening supper followed by a Bible Study for an hour and a half. We are presently going through R. B. Kuiper’s Glorious Body of Christ. All the men take a turn leading the study. I attend the Consistory and Spiritual Council meetings (joining with Calvary Chapel of Stockton) each month. I also conduct the Lord’s Supper and administered one baptism this past January.

Our congregation is blessed to have Mr. Tim Curtis, a student for the ministry, exhort for us on a regular basis. He and his wife joined our congregation in September and he has overtured the Classis to come under the Care of Classis, which I hope will be addressed at this meeting.

My own preaching has been pretty rare. Of note, I preached in Manitowoc, Wisconsin, on September 29, in which the church there so generously invited the “three amigos” (Van Stedum, Riffert, and myself who remain close friends) to celebrate our 50th year since our examination for the RCUS ministry. It was a heart-warming day, especially as it was in my home church. I am so thankful for that weekend in beautiful Wisconsin. After that weekend, Rev. Riffert and I participated in the annual meeting of Reformed Faith and Life held at Mid America Reformed Seminary. In November, I also preached in Grand Rapids, Michigan, at the funeral of my mother-in-law Ruth Batts. I love preaching, but it is sometimes difficult with breathing issues, since conditions each day is not the same.

I regret having missed the last (and my first) Classis meeting and then the Synod meeting because of sickness. The spirit was willing, but the flesh is weak. I am thankful to God for renewed health. My good wife plays a part in that making sure that I eat well and exercise so I don’t just petrify.

Karen and I are especially grateful for the ministerial support that we receive from the Synod funds. With their essential help we are able to keep a balance between income and expenses each month. California is not ideal for retirement due to its high costs, yet we stay because our children are here and we will rely on them more and more in the days to come.

In closing, I want to thank the Lord for His watchful care over my wife and me. We are thankful to be a part of the RCUS and the congregation in Modesto. May God bless this Classis meeting, heeding the admonition that the Gospel we declare be only and the whole Gospel of God, as bondservants of Jesus Christ.

Respectfully submitted,

*Rev. Paul H. Treick*



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**Classis Action:** Take note. (Elders DeYoung and Crabtree led the body in prayer.)

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**P. Rev. Frank Walker**

Esteemed Fathers and Brothers:

The calendar year 2019 marked my first complete year as the sole pastor of the Sacramento congregation. It was a busy year. At times — especially in the spring — I have to admit that I felt overwhelmed, even to the point of frustration and anxiety. One positive effect of this was that it drew me to pray even more fervently. I prayed, as Paul did for the Thessalonians, that our God would count [me] worthy of this calling, and fulfil all the good pleasure of his goodness, and the work of faith with power: that the name of our Lord Jesus Christ may be glorified in [me] ... according to the grace of our God and the Lord Jesus Christ (2 Thess. 1:11–12).

When I assumed the pastoral role, I had hoped that it wouldn't affect how much I do in the seminary. But in the spring I found myself working sixty to eighty hours a week and was embarrassingly dissatisfied with what I was accomplishing in the church. When I expressed my concern to the elders, they instructed me to cut back on my teaching duties. This has been a huge help. I am also grateful for the assistance of Mr. Paul Liberati, who is working as a full-time intern in the Sacramento church. He has done an excellent job, while at the same time continuing his seminary studies.

For the second year in a row, our statistics show a net growth in communicant members of seven, which is noteworthy in light of the fact we dismissed two, excommunicated two, and erased five. But the best news of all is that our nursery is bursting at the seams, so to speak. Between September of last year and August of this year, we will have welcomed thirteen new covenant children into the congregation.

In the last two years, our overall weekly attendance has increased by about 30 percent, prompting the Consistory to establish a Planning Committee to look into the short-term and long-term needs of the congregation. The number of non-members in attendance has increased significantly. The weekly average for the last six months of 2017 was 12. That number increased to 22 in 2018. Last year it was 30, with several Sundays peaking in the mid-40s.

While our growth in numbers looks good for the future, we are, of course, even more diligent to see the congregation grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. To that end, it should be noted with much gratitude that our elders are, I believe, among the very best. We also have many committed Sunday school teachers, Bible study leaders, VBS leaders and teachers, musicians, and so forth. Our people are hospitable — not just on the Lord's Day, but throughout the week as well. We open our homes to each other and genuinely enjoy each other's fellowship. It's such a sweet thing to see and also a reason to give thanks to our God, who welcomes us into his household of faith.

The preaching of the Word went forth each Lord's Day in 2019. The Lord's Supper was celebrated twelve times, and baptism was administered as needed. We also ordained one new deacon. This year we are hoping to add at least two more. Just as exciting is the fact that we have several men who believe that the Lord may be calling them into the gospel ministry. At this Classis meeting, you may be asked to consider three of them: Mr. Deonte

Walters, Mr. DeMauri Young and Mr. Melado McDonald. Mr. McDonald has a strong desire to plant a Spanish-language Reformed congregation in the Sacramento area.

As our congregation moves toward its fiftieth anniversary (in 2021), we note that several of our members continue to struggle with health concerns, mostly as a result of age. This means that we must also look at ways to meet the needs of an aging congregation. Our deacons are currently considering various ways to minister to them.

As for my labors in 2019, I preached almost every Sunday morning and a few Sunday evenings. I officiated at one wedding. I engaged in numerous other counseling situations throughout the year, tried to keep up with visitation, chaired Spiritual Council and Consistory meetings, worked with the elders on various disciplinary issues, and taught a membership class in the fall that was literally “standing room only.” In the seminary, I taught several classes: four weekly courses and five by independent study. I also served a fourth term as President of our Synod. Because I felt overwhelmed, I had seriously considered asking that my name not be placed in nomination last year. However, our elders strongly encouraged me not to.

Overall, my health remains good, though my PSA is high and being monitored. The doctor will reassess my situation this April. At the present time, he considers the possibility of cancer to be fairly low.

Have I yet come to the place where I’m satisfied with what I’m able to accomplish? Not even close. There’s always something that can and should be done. But I do what I can and am more than satisfied with my God and Savior, and trust him completely to do his work in and through me. I am overjoyed to be a member of the Sacramento congregation and honored to be its pastor.

In the service of Christ,

*Frank H. Walker*

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**Classis Action:** Take note.

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**Q. Rev. Ruben Zartman**

Fathers and Brothers,

The 100th anniversary of Ebenezer Reformed Church took place in 2019. In October we enjoyed an anniversary dinner, a conference, and a specially well-attended worship service. It was a blessing to have participation from the local community and other churches of the RCUS, and we were very grateful for all who came and for the special speakers (Revs. Valentín Alpuche, Jay Fluck, Jim West and Drs. Walker and Koerner).

God’s faithfulness was exhibited to us again over the course of the year in multiple ways. It was a tremendous joy, in conjunction with Valle de Gracia, to welcome a new family into membership, their children brought for baptism, and to see Christ keeping the promise to build His church. God faithfully keeps his promise to be God to us and to our children, and so we were also able to baptize three children born into the church during the course of the year. Our baptized membership numbers rose by five. We lost three communicant members (two relocation erasures and one death), but with the addition of two at Valle de Gracia, the numerical decline was just from 61 to 60.

We instituted a pre-service prayer meeting on Sunday mornings, and it has been very encouraging to see the Lord's faithfulness in answered prayer. At the last Classis meeting, I mentioned to Rev. Merica that it was very unusual to get unrelated visitors, due to our location. After he prayed for us and we began to pray together about this matter, we have had more weeks with visitors than without. Even in the cases where a visitor never returns, we are grateful for the opportunity and encouraged by the demonstration that the Lord can bring people in to small congregations with what may seem like many disadvantages.

In terms of my own labors, I was able to preach on 78 occasions between Ebenezer, Valle de Gracia, Rehoboth Reformed Church, our local nursing home, and a few miscellaneous locations. The Lord is faithful to feed His sheep in the rich pastures of His word. In addition, Bible studies, Sunday School, membership, and confirmation classes, a book club, and individual interactions have given many opportunities to see our faithful God sustaining His people through a variety of trials, and producing loyal devotion and steadfast service in them.

We look forward to hopefully confirming several of the young people in our congregation in 2020, are grateful for expectant mothers among our members and repeat visitors, and eager to serve the Lord in a second century of congregational life. We are keenly aware of our weakness in faith, vulnerability to temptation, and unworthiness to serve our great King. As we remember that we stand in grace, however, we are encouraged to persevere and ask the Lord to make us faithful in undertaking the labor and demonstrating the marks of the true church.

Respectfully submitted,

*Rev. Ruben Zartman*

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**Classis Action:** Take note. (Elder Helseth led the body in prayer.)

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## CONSTITUTIONAL QUESTIONS FOR ELDERS

The Stated Clerk 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 except for Bakersfield, Los Angeles, and San Diego which answered needs improvement, and Yuba City which answered no.
  - 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 Chico, San Diego, and Willows which answered no.
  - b. Are these monies sent promptly to the Classis Treasurer? All answered yes except San Diego which answered no.
  - c. Are the apportionments for the Synod paid according to the Guidelines for Giving? All answered yes, except Chico, Lancaster, Lodi, San Diego, and Willows which answered no.
  - d. Are these monies sent promptly to the Synod treasurer? All answered yes except San Diego which answered no.
6. Are the Church records properly kept? All answered yes except Willows which answered needs improvement.
  - 7a. Is the temporal contract between minister and people fulfilled in your charge? All answered yes except Lancaster and Los Angeles, which answered not applicable.
  - 7b. Is the temporal contract between minister and people adequate to meet his temporal needs? All answered yes except Lancaster which answered not applicable, and Lodi, Los Angeles, and San Diego which answered no.

### **MEMBERSHIP AND FINANCIAL STATISTICS**

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

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**Classis Action:** The Report of Membership and Financial Statistics was adopted.

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### **REPORTS FROM CLASSIS' FRATERNAL DELEGATES**

Esteemed Brothers in Christ,

The Permanent Interchurch Relations Committee of the 34th Annual Session of the Western Classis of the RCUS was given a mandate to study the matter of growing the church. The motion that was adopted by Classis reads as follows: "That the Western Classis direct the Permanent Interchurch Relations Committee to take up the issue of church growth and report to the 2020 Classis meeting." (See the Western Classis Abstract, Page 20) The Permanent Interchurch Relations Committee has completed a study paper on "The Issue of Church Growth," which has been submitted to the 35th Annual Session of the Western Classis. Your committee has endeavored to compose the study paper in a manner that would be in full agreement with the Holy Scriptures, and the RCUS Confessional Standards. [The study paper appears after this report.]

The Western Classis Permanent Interchurch Relations Committee has been blessed this past year with success in communicating with our fraternal churches. Our communications with a couple of our fraternal churches has improved. Regarding the Classis Southwest U.S. of the URCNA, your chairman did receive notification to send a Western Classis delegate to their Classis. We are grateful that Rev. Gil Baloy was able to attend the Classis Southwest U.S meeting in Anaheim, CA. Also, we rejoice in receiving an invitation to attend the Pacific Coast Presbytery of the Reformed Presbyterian Church of North America. We are grateful to Rev. Sam Powell, who has helped to nurture our relationship with the Pacific Coast Presbytery by participating in the ordination service of Colin Samul.

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Rev. Powell was given the honor of delivering a charge to the congregation in Colin Samul's ordination service.

Your committee continues to maintain communications with our fraternal churches. Your chairman of the Western Classis Permanent Interchurch Relations Committee has notified each of our fraternal churches concerning our 35th Annual Western Classis Meeting which is scheduled for March 3-5, 2020. We have endeavored to send delegates to the Presbytery and Classis meetings of our fraternal churches, when feasible. If our delegates were not able to attend a meeting, then a "Letter of Greeting" has been sent as a token of our sincerity in maintaining a close fraternal bond in our ecclesiastical relationship.

The Western Classis fraternal delegates who attended meetings of our fraternal churches and "Letters of Greeting" that were sent to fraternal churches are as follows:

1. The Spring Stated Meeting of the Presbytery of Northern California & Nevada (OPC), convened on March 15-16, 2019 at Sovereign Grace Community Church, OPC in Hughson, CA. Rev. Jonathan Merica attended the Friday evening meeting and delivered a fraternal delegate greeting.

2. The Pacific Coast Presbytery of the RPCNA convened on April 5, 2019 at the Great Basin RPCNA in Reno, NV to ordain Colin Samul for the gospel ministry. Rev. Sam Powell attended the ordination service and was given the honor to deliver the message for the charge to the congregation.

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3. The Canadian Reformed Churches convened their Classis Pacific East on June 3, 2020. A letter of "Letter of Greeting" was sent to the Classis Pacific East meeting in lieu of sending a Western Classis fraternal delegate.

4. The Fall Stated Meeting of the Presbytery of Northern California & Nevada (OPC), convened

on September 20-21, 2019 at Covenant Orthodox Presbyterian Church in San Jose, CA. A letter of "Letter of Greeting" was sent to the Presbytery meeting in lieu of sending a Western Classis fraternal delegate.

5. The Classis Pacific Northwest of the URCNA convened their Classis Meeting on September 24, 2019 at Visalia, CA. Rev. Jonathan Merica attended the Classis Pacific Northwest meeting and delivered a fraternal delegate greeting.

6. The Classis Southwest U. S. of the URCNA convened their Classis Meeting on September 24, 2019 at Christ's Reformed Church in Anaheim, CA. Rev. Gil Baloy attended the Classis Southwest U. S. meeting and delivered a fraternal delegate greeting.

7. The Third Stated Meeting of the Presbytery of Southern California of the OPC, convened on

October 18-19, 2019 at Harvest Orthodox Presbyterian Church in San Marcos, CA. A "Letter of Greeting" was sent to the Presbytery meeting in lieu of sending a Western Classis fraternal

delegate.

8. The Pacific Coast Presbytery of the RPCNA convened on October 18-19, 2019. A letter of “Letter of Greeting” was sent to the Presbytery meeting in lieu of sending a Western Classis fraternal delegate.

We praise the Lord for the ecclesiastical fellowship we are privileged to have with our fraternal churches. Let us keep them in our prayers as we labor together to uphold the light of God’s Word in this dark and evil world. May God give us all His mercy to persevere in righteousness and truth by the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ. It is our prayer that the Lord will continue to bless our fellowship with all our fraternal churches, and that we may know more fully the meaning of Psalm 133:1 which says, “. . . how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity!”

Respectfully Submitted,

*Rev. Jonathan Merica, Chairman*

### **“The Issue of Church Growth”**

At the 34th Annual Session of the Western Classis of the RCUS, the matter of growing the Church was addressed and a motion was adopted and reads as follows: “That the Western Classis direct the Permanent Interchurch Relations Committee to take up the issue of church growth and report to the 2020 Classis meeting.” (2019 Western Classis Abstract, Page 20) The mandate of the committee and the purpose of this report is to “take up the issue of Church growth” in our congregations in a manner that is in full agreement with the Holy Scriptures, and the RCUS confessional standards.

In addressing the issue of growing the Church of our Lord Jesus Christ, our primary acknowledgment is that the Lord grows His Church as declared in Psalm 127:1, which says, “Except the LORD build the house, they labor in vain that build it:” and also in the New Testament, Acts 2:47 says, “And the Lord added to the Church daily such as should be saved.” Although God calls His people to labor in growing His Church; yet, it is the Lord, Who builds and increases His church. The Apostle Paul was called of God to be a co-laborer with the Lord as he declares in 1 Corinthians 3:5-9 saying, “Who then is Paul, and who is Apollos, but ministers by whom ye believed, even as the Lord gave to every man? I have planted, Apollos watered; but God gave the increase. So then, neither is he that planteth anything, neither he that watereth; but God that giveth the increase. Now he that planteth and he that watereth are one: and every man shall receive his own reward according to his own labor. For we are laborers together with God: ye are God's husbandry, ye are God's building.”

In the Reformed Church in the United States, the congregations grow as individuals are received into church membership in various ways. Adults who have been baptized are received into a local church body by making public profession of faith. Also, adult believers who are church members in a congregation with whom the RCUS has fraternal relations, are received into church membership by a letter of transfer. Further, covenant children of parents who are members in an RCUS congregation are received into church membership by the sacrament of baptism. In each case of receiving an adult member into the church, membership classes should be conducted according to the new member’s level

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of understanding of the reformed faith. Further instructions in the reformed faith are to be given, if necessary.

I. God has ordained the growth of His Church in both the Old and the New Testaments.

A. The Lord has ordained the growth of His Church in the Old Testament.

1. When God established His covenant with Abraham, He promised to greatly multiply the seed of Abraham. The LORD said, “That in blessing I will bless thee, and in multiplying I will multiply thy seed as the stars of the heaven, and as the sand which is upon the sea shore; and thy seed shall possess the gate of his enemies; And in thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed; because thou hast obeyed my voice.” (Genesis 22:17-18)

2. Although it was the revealed will of God to further enlarge His kingdom in the Old Testament by bringing Israel into the promised land; yet, because of Israel’s unbelief they suffered setbacks in advancing the kingdom of God. One of the great setbacks occurred when Moses sent twelve men into Canaan to spy out the promised land. Ten of the twelve men who were sent to scout out the “promised land” returned with a negative report and rejected God’s revealed will to conquer the Canaanites. They said in Numbers 26:31, “We be not able to go up against the people, for they are stronger than we.” But Caleb in Numbers 26:30 said, to “the people before Moses . . . Let us go up at once, and possess it; for we are well able to overcome it.” Because Caleb trusted God’s Word, the LORD said, “My servant Caleb, because he had another spirit with him, and hath followed me fully, him will I bring into the land where into he went; and his seed shall possess it.” (Numbers 26:24)

3. The “nay-saying” Jews in Israel did not trust in the LORD, for the LORD promised He would give them the land of Canaan if they would obey the command to go up and to conquer the Canaanites. Therefore, judgment was upon all Israel for their unbelief. God’s judgment upon Israel for their unbelief was that they were destined to die in the wilderness. However, Joshua and Caleb were not in agreement with their unbelieving generation. Rather, Joshua and Caleb believed God’s promise and they went into Canaan to conquer the Canaanites and they prospered. So also, in the New Testament, growing the Church of Jesus Christ requires the ambitious faith of Caleb, who said, “Let us go up at once, and possess it; for we are well able to overcome it.” The saints of the New Testament must have an obedient faith that responds to the Great Commission of Christ by saying, let us go “. . . therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world. Amen.” (Matthew 28:19-20)

4. After Moses, many of the inspired writers of Old Testament Scripture spoke of the growth of the New Testament Church which is comprised of all nations.

a. The Prophet Isaiah in Isaiah 11:9 says, “They shall not hurt nor destroy in all My holy mountain: for the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the LORD, as the waters cover the sea.” Also, Psalm

22:27 says, “All the ends of the world shall remember and turn unto the LORD: and all the kindreds of the nations shall worship before thee.” Our Lord makes it abundantly clear that in the “last days” (the New Testament era) His Church shall have small beginnings, but will be established and grow up in all the earth so that the Church will eventually reach all the nations of the earth “as the waters cover the sea.”

b. Psalm 72:8, 17-19 is a prophecy of the growth of the New Testament Church into all nations. That is, the Lord, “. . . shall have dominion also from sea to sea, and from the river unto the ends of the earth. His name shall endure forever: his name shall be continued as long as the sun: and men shall be blessed in him: all nations shall call him blessed. Blessed be the LORD God, the God of Israel, who only doeth wondrous things. And blessed be his glorious name for ever: and let the whole earth be filled with his glory; Amen, and Amen.”

B. The New Testament Church growth includes believers from all nations.

1. Our Lord Jesus Christ revealed the divine will of God to grow His Church in His parable of the mustard seed, which sets forth an analogy of a small mustard seed to parallel the small beginnings of the Church to its growth extending all over the earth. In teaching His disciples in Matthew 13:31-32, the Scripture says, “Another parable put He forth unto them, saying, The kingdom of heaven is like to a grain of mustard seed, which a man took, and sowed in his field: Which indeed is the least of all seeds: but when it is grown, it is the greatest among herbs, and becometh a tree, so that the birds of the air come and lodge in the branches thereof.” William Burkitt says the application of this parable to the growth of the Church is that, “Our Saviour's design in this parable is, to shew how the gospel, from small and little, from unlikely and contemptible beginnings, shall spread and increase, fructify and grow up; like a mustard seed, one of the smallest grains, grows up to a considerable tallness; so also . . . the gospel shall spread and increase, nations and countries becoming Christians.”

2. Also, in Matthew 16:18 Christ declares to Peter, that He is the Builder of His Church saying, “. . . thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my Church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it.” Our Lord's declaration should strongly motivate every believer to go forth with the gospel in the power of the Holy Spirit with the assurance we shall go “forth conquering, and to conquer” by prayer and the preaching of the Word. Our mission to grow the Church is commanded by Jesus Christ, when He said, “Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost.” (Matthew 28:19) When we speak of Church growth, the emphasis is not upon numbers at all costs, or following pragmatic notions that “the end justifies the means” and presume to grow Christ's Church with worldly or fleshly means. We must be faithful to the Word of God in every aspect of receiving new members into the Church and in disciplining new converts. The Lord will effectually call all His elect to salvation by true repentance and faith through the faithful preaching of the true gospel. In the book of Acts, the Apostles saw the



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Church growing by the means of 1) praying together in one accord with fervent prayer, 2) faithfully preaching the gospel revealed in the Word of God, 3) trusting in the power of the Holy Spirit to apply the gospel, 4) and persevering through severe persecutions. It was by means of fiery persecutions, that the Apostles were frequently upon their knees praying in one accord for the salvation of sinners. The Apostles' method of fervent and frequent prayers, coupled with faithful preaching of the gospel by the power of the Holy Spirit was a cycle often repeated in their gospel ministry as recorded in the Acts of the Apostles.

3. If we would experience greater growth of the kingdom of God in the New Covenant, we must beseech the Lord to bestow the divine power of the Holy Spirit in the work of evangelism and outreach. Jesus says in Acts 1:8, "But ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you: and ye shall be witnesses unto me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judaea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth." The Apostle Paul attributed his success in the application of the gospel to the working of the Holy Spirit. The Apostle Paul said, "For our gospel came not unto you in word only, but also in power, and in the Holy Ghost, and in much assurance; as ye know what manner of men we were among you for your sake." (1 Thessalonians 1:5) In the work of our evangelism today, we should be able to truthfully say with Paul, "Our gospel came not unto sinners in word only, but also in power, and in the Holy Ghost, and in much assurance." If we are unable to make this same declaration with Paul, let us repent and plead with the Lord to empower us with the Holy Spirit to effectually minister the gospel.

4. If we would see our Lord's Church growing, we must pray for the Lord to send "faithful ministers with zeal and diligence in preaching the glad tidings of the gospel to a lost world." (William Burkitt) The Apostle John in the Revelation 14:6 declares the impact of zealous ministers preaching the gospel saying, "I saw another angel fly in the midst of heaven, having the everlasting gospel to preach unto them that dwell on the earth, and to every nation, and kindred, and tongue, and people." William Burkitt in commenting on Revelation 14:6 says, "Here St. John has another vision of an angel flying in the midst of heaven with great swiftness, which interpreters apprehend to signify the faithful minister's zeal and diligence in preaching the glad tidings of the gospel to a lost world. The title given to the gospel of Christ is called the 'everlasting gospel:' so it is, partly in regard of its Author the Everlasting God, partly because it promises and offers everlasting life; but chiefly, because it was preached from the beginning of the world, and shall continue to the end of the world, and never be abrogated, as the legal administration was."

5. As we set out to grow the Church of our Lord Jesus Christ we must (especially amidst the 21st Century apostasy within the visible Church) labor to grow the Church according to the practice set forth in the Holy Scriptures. Using alternative styles of worship to conform to the contemporary and more modern methods for the sake of Church growth is neither an acceptable practice; nor is that method to be tolerated. We must not capitulate to the flesh or the world for the sake of drawing large crowds. The modern and contemporary Church Growth movement suggest that to grow the Church, it is needful to avoid the traditional

practices of worship amongst many other fallacies. These suggestions are patently false. Those who resort to fleshly ideas and practices in worship, may attract a large crowd of people, but it will no longer be a true body of Christ, which glorifies the Lord. Dr. Larry Spargimino, Ph.D. highlights five fallacies of the Church Growth movement found in the Prophetic Observer in an article titled, "The Megafall of the Megachurch," found in the April 2007 issue, (Vol. 4, No. 4). Dr. Larry Spargimino identifies the five fallacies of the Church Growth movement as follows:

- 1) God's will for every Church is numerical growth.
- 2) The needs and opinions of lost people should determine the strategy of the Church.
- 3) The lack of adequate Church growth worldwide proves the need for a new reformation.
- 4) Man's "sacred need" for self-esteem will bring this new reformation.
- 5) Appeal to man's "felt needs," (that is, to his earthly and fleshly existence in this world.)

Let it be the resolve of every orthodox congregation, that any one of the five fallacies (above) in gospel outreach is unbiblical and unlawful; therefore, all faithful churches must reject all five fallacies in growing the Church of our Lord Jesus Christ.

II. Growing the Church is the work of Almighty God, through Jesus Christ as Mediator and by the grace and power of the Holy Spirit.

A. God is the Builder of His Church and He adds members to Christ's body and continues to add new members by His divine power. The Lord adds to His Church such as He effectually calls to salvation.

1. In Zerubbabel's rebuilding the temple of the Old Testament, Zerubbabel was reminded it was not by the might or power of man that the temple would be rebuilt. In Zechariah 4:6 the Word of God came to Zerubbabel saying, "Then he answered and spake unto me, saying, this is the word of the LORD unto Zerubbabel, saying, Not by might, nor by power, but by my spirit, saith the LORD of hosts." It was by the might and power of the Holy Spirit that the temple of the Old Testament was rebuilt. So also, in building or growing the New Testament Church, Paul gives the glory to God for the building of Christ's Church. Paul says in 1 Corinthians 3:6, "I have planted, Apollos watered; but God gave the increase." The increase of church members is the work of God.

2. Our Lord taught His disciples that just as He made them to catch an abundance fish by obeying His Word, so also the disciples through Christ's power shall gather an abundance of the souls of men by God's grace. Luke says in Luke 5:4-7, 10, "Now when he (Jesus) had left speaking, he said unto Simon, Launch out into the deep, and let down your nets for a draught. And Simon answering said unto him, Master, we have toiled all the night, and have taken nothing:

nevertheless, at thy word I will let down the net. And when they had this done, they enclosed a great multitude of fishes: and their net brake. And they beckoned unto their partners, which were in the other ship, that they should come and help them. And they came, and filled both the ships, so that they began to sink . . . And Jesus said unto Simon, Fear not; from henceforth thou shalt catch men.” As Peter was called to catch men, the Church of Jesus Christ is also called to gather in lost souls by preaching the gospel. May it be our desire as the hymn writer who wrote, “We long to see Thy Churches full, that all the chosen race, may with one voice and heart and soul, sing Thy redeeming grace.” Certainly, we desire to see our churches full as the disciples’ net was filled with fish, but more importantly we also desire to be obedient to the Word of the Lord in growing the church.

3. In applying the Lord’s words to Peter, “from henceforth thou shalt catch men,” John Gill says, “the meaning of Christ’s words is thou shalt cast the net of the Gospel, and be the happy instrument of drawing many persons out of the depths of sin and misery, in which they are plunged, into the way of life and salvation; and which was greatly verified, in the conversion of three thousand at one cast, under Peter’s sermon in Acts 2:41.” Let it be our desire, as Christ’s disciples, to be instruments of drawing many souls into the way of salvation.

B. Although we are co-laborers together with our Lord Jesus Christ, we must never forget, it is the Lord Jesus Who builds His Church. In Matthew 16:16-18, when the Apostles were asked by Jesus who is the Christ, “. . . Simon Peter answered and said, Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God. And Jesus answered and said unto him, Blessed art thou, Simon Barjona: for flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but my Father which is in heaven. And I say also unto thee, that thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it.” In this passage of Scripture, Christ is saying to Peter that he must preach that Christ is the Rock or foundation of our salvation, if he would see lost sinners added to the church.

III. In growing the church the people of the Lord must be assiduously engaged in fervent prayer for ministers to preach the gospel and for sinners to be saved.

A. In Acts 1:12-14, we read that the Apostles and others disciples went into an upper room to pray; then a great harvest of souls followed at Pentecost, so that many were added to the Church. The Scripture says, they returned “unto Jerusalem from the mount called Olivet, which is from Jerusalem a Sabbath day’s journey. And when they were come in, they went up into an upper room, where abode both Peter, and James, and John, and Andrew, Philip, and Thomas, Bartholomew, and Matthew, James the son of Alphaeus, and Simon Zelotes, and Judas the brother of James. These all continued with one accord in prayer and supplication, with the women, and Mary the mother of Jesus, and with his brethren.”

B. In praying for the growth of the Church, our Lord specifically directs believers to pray for faithful gospel ministers to be sent into the spiritual harvest saying, “Pray therefore to the Lord of the harvest, that he will send forth laborers into his harvest.” (Matthew 9:38) John Calvin emphasizes the need to pray for faithful ministers saying, “As no man will of himself become a sincere and faithful minister of the gospel, and

as none discharge in a proper manner the office of teacher, but those whom the Lord raises up and endows with the gifts of his Spirit, whenever we observe a scarcity of pastors, we must raise our eyes to him to afford the remedy. There never was greater necessity for offering this prayer than during the fearful desolation of the Church which we now see everywhere around us.”

IV. We learn from the book of Acts that the primary means of church growth is by preaching and by praying for the application of the power of the Holy Spirit upon the preaching of the Word of God.

A. In Acts 2:37-42 it is declared that a multitude of 3,000 were added to the Church by Peter’s preaching the same gospel message that is to be preached by Ministers of the Word today. The Scripture says that after sinners heard Peter preach, “They were pricked in their heart, and said unto Peter and to the rest of the apostles, Men and brethren, what shall we do? Then Peter said unto them, Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost. For the promise is unto you, and to your children, and to all that are afar off, even as many as the Lord our God shall call. And with many other words did he testify and exhort, saying, Save yourselves from this untoward generation. Then they that gladly received his word were baptized: and the same day there were added unto them about three thousand souls. And they continued steadfastly in the apostles’ doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers.”

B. In Acts 3:19-4:4 five thousand were saved by Peter’s preaching in the power of the Holy Spirit. He said to them, “Repent ye therefore, and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out, when the times of refreshing shall come from the presence of the Lord; And he shall send Jesus Christ, which before was preached unto you: Whom the heaven must receive until the times of restitution of all things, which God hath spoken by the mouth of all his holy prophets since the world began. For Moses truly said unto the fathers, A prophet shall the Lord your God raise up unto you of your brethren, like unto me; him shall ye hear in all things whatsoever he shall say unto you. And it shall come to pass, that every soul, which will not hear that prophet, shall be destroyed from among the people. Yea, and all the prophets from Samuel and those that follow after, as many as have spoken, have likewise foretold of these days. Ye are the children of the prophets, and of the covenant which God made with our fathers, saying unto Abraham, And in thy seed shall all the kindreds of the earth be blessed. Unto you first God, having raised up his Son Jesus, sent him to bless you, in turning away every one of you from his iniquities.” Further in Acts 4:1-4 we read, “And as they spake unto the people, the priests, and the captain of the temple, and the Sadducees, came upon them, being grieved that they taught the people, and preached through Jesus the resurrection from the dead. And they laid hands on them, and put them in hold unto the next day: for it was now eventide. Howbeit many of them which heard the word believed; and the number of the men was about five thousand.”

C. In Acts 13:46-49 the Lord turned the Gentiles unto the faith and they were added to the church, when they believed the gospel preached unto them. The Scripture says, “Then Paul and Barnabas waxed bold, and said, It was necessary that the word of God should first have been spoken to you: but seeing ye put it from you, and judge

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yourselves unworthy of everlasting life, lo, we turn to the Gentiles. For so hath the Lord commanded us, saying, I have set thee to be a light of the Gentiles, that thou shouldest be for salvation unto the ends of the earth. And when the Gentiles heard this, they were glad, and glorified the word of the Lord: and as many as were ordained to eternal life believed. And the word of the Lord was published throughout all the region.”

D. Acts 16:1-5 says by the means of peaching the churches were established in the faith, and increased in number daily. Luke says of the Apostle Paul, “Then came he to Derbe and Lystra: and, behold, a certain disciple was there, named Timotheus, the son of a certain woman, which was a Jewess, and believed; but his father was a Greek: Which was well reported of by the brethren that were at Lystra and Iconium. Him would Paul have to go forth with him; and took and circumcised him because of the Jews which were in those quarters: for they knew all that his father was a Greek. And as they went through the cities, they delivered them the decrees for to keep, that were ordained of the apostles and elders which were at Jerusalem. And so were the churches established in the faith, and increased in number daily.”

E. In Berea many believed Paul’s preaching of the gospel, and afterward they searched the Scriptures themselves. Acts 17:10-13 says, “And the brethren immediately sent away Paul and Silas by night unto Berea: who coming thither went into the synagogue of the Jews. These were more noble than those in Thessalonica, in that they received the word with all readiness of mind, and searched the scriptures daily, whether those things were so. Therefore many of them believed; also, of honourable women which were Greeks, and of men, not a few. But when the Jews of Thessalonica had knowledge that the word of God was preached of Paul at Berea, they came thither also, and stirred up the people.”

F. In Acts 19:8-10;18-20 the Apostles mightily preached the gospel and many believed. The Scripture says of the Apostle Paul, “And he went into the synagogue, and spake boldly for the space of three months, disputing and persuading the things concerning the kingdom of God. But when divers were hardened, and believed not, but spake evil of that way before the multitude, he departed from them, and separated the disciples, disputing daily in the school of one Tyrannus. And this continued by the space of two years; so that all they which dwelt in Asia heard the word of the Lord Jesus, both Jews and Greeks. And many that believed came, and confessed, and shewed their deeds. Many of them also which used curious arts brought their books together, and burned them before all men: and they counted the price of them, and found it fifty thousand pieces of silver. So mightily grew the word of God and prevailed.”

V. Spiritual growth is essential for growing a congregation. The church grows spiritually by preaching of the Word of God, praying for church members and maintaining sincere love for one another.

A. By preaching the Word of God the saints grow in the graces of love and holiness. The Apostle Paul says in 1 Thessalonians 3:12-13, “And the Lord make you to increase and abound in love one toward another, and toward all men, even as we do toward you: To the end he may stablish your hearts unblameable in holiness before God, even our Father, at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ with all his saints.” Also,

in Ephesians 4:11-15 the Apostle Paul says, “And he gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers; For the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ: Till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ: That we henceforth be no more children, tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the sleight of men, and cunning craftiness, whereby they lie in wait to deceive; But speaking the truth in love, may grow up into him in all things, which is the head, even Christ:”

B. The Apostle Paul “prayed always” for the spiritual growth of the church members at Thessalonica. In 2 Thessalonians 1:11 he says, “Wherefore also we pray always for you, that our God would count you worthy of this calling, and fulfil all the good pleasure of his goodness, and the work of faith with power:” Also, Paul thanked the Lord that the Thessalonican church members received the Word, and that the Word was effectually working in them. In 1 Thessalonians 2:13 the Apostle says, “For this cause also thank we God without ceasing, because, when ye received the word of God which ye heard of us, ye received it not as the word of men, but as it is in truth, the word of God, which effectually worketh also in you that believe.”

C. In growing a congregation it is essential to maintain a fervent love for one another. Our Lord Jesus Christ said in John 13:35, “By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another.” Also, the Apostle John says in 1 John 4:11-13, “Beloved, if God so loved us, we ought also to love one another. No man hath seen God at any time. If we love one another, God dwelleth in us, and his love is perfected in us. Hereby know we that we dwell in him, and he in us, because he hath given us of his Spirit.”

So then, if we would have a love pleasing to God, we are to imitate love for one another as it was exemplified in Acts 4:32-35, which says, “. . . the multitude of them that believed were of one heart and of one soul: neither said any of them that ought of the things which he possessed was his own; but they had all things common. And with great power gave the apostles witness of the resurrection of the Lord Jesus: and great grace was upon them all. Neither was there any among them that lacked: for as many as were possessors of lands or houses sold them, and brought the prices of the things that were sold, and laid them down at the apostles' feet: and distribution was made unto every man according as he had need.”

VI. In growing the Church of the Lord Jesus Christ it is necessary to disciple Church members.

A. In Acts 16:4-5, it is said of Paul and Timothy’s follow up that “as they went through the cities, they delivered them the decrees for to keep, that were ordained of the apostles and elders which were at Jerusalem. And so were the churches established in the faith, and increased in number daily.”

B. The Apostle Paul follows up with the spiritual state of the saints at Thessalonica saying in 1 Thessalonians 4:1-12, “Furthermore then we beseech you, brethren, and exhort you by the Lord Jesus, that as ye have received of us how ye ought to walk and to please God, so ye would abound more and more. For ye know what commandments

we gave you by the Lord Jesus. For this is the will of God, even your sanctification, that ye should abstain from fornication: That every one of you should know how to possess his vessel in sanctification and honour; Not in the lust of concupiscence, even as the Gentiles which know not God: That no man go beyond and defraud his brother in any matter: because that the Lord is the avenger of all such, as we also have forewarned you and testified. For God hath not called us unto uncleanness, but unto holiness. He therefore that despiseth, despiseth not man, but God, who hath also given unto us his Holy Spirit. But as touching brotherly love ye need not that I write unto you: for ye yourselves are taught of God to love one another. And indeed ye do it toward all the brethren which are in all Macedonia: but we beseech you, brethren, that ye increase more and more; And that ye study to be quiet, and to do your own business, and to work with your own hands, as we commanded you; That ye may walk honestly toward them that are without, and that ye may have lack of nothing.” VII. Solid church growth requires a fervent zeal for evangelism and outreach efforts to bring new visitors and members into the church. A. The Church of Jesus Christ is commanded to continue to fulfill the Lord’s Great Commission to make disciples of all nations. (Matthew 28:18–20).

B. Ministers of the Word must manifest biblical qualifications and possess a passion for the work of missions. (Acts 15:37-41)

C. In growing a congregation, church members must also have a passion for saving lost souls, and equipped to witness the gospel of salvation through Christ. (John 4:28-30)

D. God’s people must continue in fervent prayer for God’s blessing in bringing souls to Christ and bringing in new visitors. (Colossians 4:2-4)

VIII. Church growth requires the spread of the gospel message through effective outreach as well as faithful follow-up with visitors.

A. Outreach and evangelism may be exercised by a variety of means such as using the following media: Church website, Sermon Audio, Facebook, Instagram, Messenger and other social media. (Romans 11:13-14; I Corinthians 9:20-25)

B. Evangelism requires “planting and watering,” and “sowing and reaping” of the gospel, if a spiritual harvest is to be reaped. (I Corinthians 3:5-10; Psalm 126:5-6)

C. Church members need to be personally engaged in witnessing the gospel. The Elders of each congregation need to provide instructions for church members on how to witness the gospel to the unbeliever. (Acts 8:26-40)

D. The church should extend deeds of hospitality and mercy to those outside the faith as a practical means of witnessing the gospel. (Acts 3:1-11)

E. Adequate records of visitors should be maintained, visitor follow-up phone calls should be made, and “Thank You” letters should be sent to new visitors. (Hebrews 13:1-3)

F. In order to keep in contact with visitors a weekly church newsletter is a prudent means of keeping visitors apprised of church activities. (2 Corinthians 2:3)

IX. Those professing faith in Jesus Christ are to be encouraged to become members of the church.

A. If necessary, membership classes should be established for those interested in joining the church. (I Corinthians 12:12-27)

B. A commitment to the Word of God and the reformed creeds is to be emphasized to new members. (I Timothy 4:13-16)

C. New members should be encouraged to exercise their gifts and to give their tithes for the support of the church. (Romans 12:4-13)

X. Growing the church requires overcoming hindrances that may inhibit the continual growth of the church.

A. One of the chief hindrances in growing the church is unbelief in the hearts of those desiring to see the church to grow. The Scripture in Matthew 18:38 says, that Jesus “did not many mighty works there because of their unbelief.”

B. Some endeavor to grow the church by offering “traditional” and “contemporary” worship services, separately. In practice, this shall prove to be not only a hindrance to church growth, but may well destroy the congregation altogether. Matthew 12:25 says, “And Jesus knew their thoughts, and said unto them, Every kingdom divided against itself is brought to desolation; and every city or house divided against itself shall not stand.” The Apostle Paul speaks against division in the church in 1 Corinthians 3:3-4 saying, “For ye are yet carnal: for whereas there is among you envying, and strife, and divisions, are ye not carnal, and walk as men. For while one saith, I am of Paul; and another, I am of Apollos; are ye not carnal?”

C. We should never hinder the work of growing the church by despising the day of small beginnings as is illustrated in Zerubbabel’s work to build the house of God. Zechariah 4:9-10 says, “The hands of Zerubbabel have laid the foundation of this house; his hands shall also finish it; and thou shalt know that the LORD of hosts hath sent me unto you. For who hath despised the day of small things? for they shall rejoice, and shall see the plummet in the hand of Zerubbabel with those seven; they are the eyes of the LORD, which run to and fro through the whole earth.”

D. When strife, contention and bitterness arise within a congregation, church growth will be greatly hindered. Therefore, the Elders must emphasize repentance and reconciliation of members one to another, so that all members may learn to love one another. (Isaiah 58:1-14)

E. Do not allow unrepentant sin in life or doctrine within the body of Christ. Not only is there a risk that church growth be hindered, but also, the Lord may “remove the candlestick of the church,” altogether. That is, the church will cease to exist. (Revelation 2:1-3:22)

[There was no point “F” in the original report]

G. Do not deviate from sound biblical teachings and practices as declared in Scripture and in the confessions of the church. (Acts 2:42-47)

H. Maintain evangelistic zeal by motivating church members to become involved in the work of missions. (I Corinthians 9:12-23)



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I. Do not compromise biblical methods in growing the church, such as are used by the Church Growth movement. (I Corinthians 9:24-27)

XI. In growing the church, the goal is to bring the overall character of church life into conformity with the Word of God.

A. Rev. John S. Shaw, (who serves as the General Secretary for the Committee on Home Missions and Church Extension in the OPC) states there are five essential commitments in order to have a Biblical character of church life. (Rev. John S. Shaw, *Evangelism in the Local Church*, The Committee on Christian Education, OPC) The five essential commitments are as follows:

1. “The life of the church begins with a commitment to corporate worship.”
2. “The life of the church includes a commitment to the ordinary ministry of the Word and sacraments.”
3. “The life of the church includes a commitment to the ordinary ministry of prayer.”
4. “The life of the church includes a commitment to fellowship, hospitality, and mercy.”
5. “The life of the church includes a commitment to testimony. That is, “The Lord calls certain men as pastors, with a special responsibility to preach and teach. Yet we should be careful to recognize the responsibility of every believer to know and even to articulate the gospel.”

B. In Ephesians 4:16 the Apostle Paul describes a functioning church life with Christ, the Head, as a, “whole body fitly joined together and compacted by that which every joint supplieth, according to the effectual working in the measure of every part, maketh increase of the body unto the edifying of itself in love.” That is, as Matthew Poole says, all members are “in the right place and order, both in respect of Christ the Head, and of the members respectively. Some are eyes, some ears, some hands, some feet. . . etc.”

XII. Based upon the preceding Scripture texts for biblical outreach and evangelism in growing a church, there are six guidelines to be honored and followed.

A. First, in addressing the issue of growing the church of our Lord Jesus Christ, our chief acknowledgment is that the Lord grows His Church as declared in Psalm 127:1, which says, “Except the LORD build the house, they labor in vain that build it.” Also in the New Testament, Acts 2:47 says, “And the Lord added to the church daily such as should be saved.”

B. Secondly, growing the church is the work of Almighty God through Jesus Christ as Mediator and by the grace and power of the Holy Spirit.

C. Thirdly, in growing the church we must follow the example and principles of the Apostles found in the book of Acts. First of all, church growth must begin with fervent prayer by believers. Secondly, there must be an empowerment by the Holy Spirit. Thirdly, the empowering by the Holy Spirit and faithful preaching of the gospel is

God's ordinary means in saving souls. Fourthly, effectual preaching often results in suffering severe persecutions. By following the example given by the Apostles in the book of Acts we will have a growth that is pleasing to the Lord.

D. Fourthly, in growing the church the pure gospel of the Apostles must be preached. The Apostle Paul declares the essence of the true gospel message, saying in I Corinthians 15:3-4, "For I delivered unto you first of all that which I also received, how that Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures; And that he was buried, and that he rose again the third day according to the scriptures." This gospel message is to be preached by ministers of the Word today. When Peter preached the true gospel, Acts 2:37-39 says, "They were pricked in their heart, and said unto Peter and to the rest of the apostles, Men and brethren, what shall we do? Then Peter said unto them, Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost. For the promise is unto you, and to your children, and to all that are afar off, even as many as the Lord our God shall call."

E. Fifthly, when developing evangelistic outreach in the church, God's people must rest entirely upon the Holy Scripture for an acceptable methodology in evangelism and outreach. God's people must follow the 'regulative principle' in both the means to evangelize and in the strategies implemented to grow the Church of Jesus Christ. When Paul said in I Corinthians 9:22, "To the weak became I as weak, that I might gain the weak: I am made all things to all men, that I might by all means save some," the Apostle Paul is not encouraging "pragmatic evangelism." Paul's words are not to be understood as legitimizing all means. When Paul made the statement of being all thing to all men, he is saying the means to evangelize is multi-faceted and must remain within the bounds of Scripture.

F. Sixthly, we must resist the idea that if biblical evangelism is not producing the rate of growth we desire, that we may resort to the strategies of the Church Growth movement. The Apostle Paul warns Timothy against the use of unlawful means in doing the Lord's work. In II Timothy 2:5 Paul says to Timothy, "If a man also strive for masteries, yet is he not crowned, except he strive lawfully." So also, if we would be successful in growing the church, we must "strive lawfully."

In conclusion, it is to be affirmed in growing the church that the implementation of novel ideas or using new methods to evangelize not supported by Holy Scripture is totally unacceptable in the Church. In addressing "the issue of church growth" it is well to ask and to answer a very important question. It should be asked, "Are we exercising 'tried and proven' methods for biblical outreach and church growth to its fullest potential?" In other words, we know we are using proper biblical means for outreach, but why is the church not growing? The answer to this question we may never know, but what we do know is that we must persevere in following our Lord's command in Matthew 28:19-20. That is, we are to "Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world. Amen."

Recommendation one: That the report on "The Issue of Church Growth" be received and distributed for the edification of the churches of the Western Classis.

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Respectfully Submitted,

*Rev. Jonathan Merica (Chairman), Rev. Sam Powell, Elder Ryan Spitzer, Elder Mark Reyna, Elder Tom Lagomarsino, Elder Joe Gross*

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**Classis Action:** The classis took note of the report of classis' delegates. The classis received the report on church growth and directed its distribution for the edification of the churches of the Western Classis.

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### **ADDRESSES BY DELEGATES FROM OTHER REFORMED CHURCHES AND VISITORS**

Rev. Contreras of the URCNA, Classis Pacific Northwest, brought greetings from that federation. Rev. Merica responded on behalf of the Western Classis.

Rev. Merica read a letter of greeting from the Canadian and American Reformed Church at Chilliwack, British Columbia, and on behalf of their Classis Pacific East.

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**Classis Action:** Take note.

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### **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**

Recommendation #1. That the Western Classis Overture the 274th Synod of the RCUS for ministerial aid for the following persons during the 2020-21 synodical year in the following amounts per month:

Rev. Treick	\$1,200.00
Rev. Roe	\$1,500.00
Rev. West	\$1,500.00
Rev. Riffert	\$2,000.00
Rev. Sawtelle	\$2,000.00
Rev. Pollema	\$1,000.00

Recommendation #2. That the Western Classis grant benevolent aid to Trinity Reformed Church, Modesto, California, in the amount of \$475.00 per month for the 2020 classical year, and that the classis petition the Synod of the Reformed Church in the United States for \$450.00 per month benevolent aid for the next synodical year beginning July 1, 2020.

#### **B. Missions**

Recommendation #1. That the Western Classis designate April 19, 2020, as a day of prayer for home missions, and that its congregations be encouraged to take up a special offering to assist the work of Calvary Reformed Church in Stockton.

Recommendation #2. That the request for classical support for Calvary Reformed Church

in the amount of \$16,159.50 for the 2021 calendar year be approved.

Recommendation #3. That Western Classis overture the 274th Synod for mission support for Calvary Reformed Church in the amount of \$16,672.50 for the 2020-2021 Synodical year.

Recommendation #4. That the Western Classis overture the Synod to make a full assessment of the viability of the Rehoboth work.

Recommendation #5. That the request for classical support for Rehoboth Reformed Church in the amount of \$13,846.00 for the 2021 calendar year be approved and be made available contingent upon a positive synodical viability review.

Recommendation #6. That Western Classis overture the 274th Synod for mission support for Rehoboth Reformed Church in the amount of \$13,846.00 for the 2020-2021 Synodical Year.

Recommendation #7. That the request for classical support for *Valle de Gracia* Reformed Bible Church in the amount of \$15,984.00 for the 2021 calendar year be approved.

Recommendation #8. That Western Classis overture the 274th Synod for mission support for *Valle de Gracia* Reformed Church in the amount of \$17,760.00 for the 2020-2021 Synodical year.

### **C. Examination and Licensure**

Recommendation 1. To add a special order to examine Elder Matthew Davis for licensure immediately after the morning devotions on Wednesday, March 4

Recommendation 2. That the Western Classis, on behalf of Student Under Care Paul Liberati, overture the Synod of the RCUS for \$450 to help with book costs for the coming academic year.

Recommendation 3. That the Western Classis grant the request of the Rehoboth Consistory that Rev. Jeff Munive minister as regular supply for Rehoboth Reformed Church in Cerritos as he assesses the work, urging him to commit to receiving their call and move through the process of reception as a minister of the RCUS by Classis 2021. (See Article 91, RCUS Constitution).

Recommendation 4. That Timothy A. Curtis be received as a student under care by the Western Classis.

Recommendation 5. That Mr. DeMauri Young be received as a Student Under Care by the Western Classis. Move Adoption.

Recommendation 6. That Mr. Deonte Walters be received as Students Under Care by the Western Classis. Move Adoption.

Recommendation 7. That Matthew Davis be commended to Covenant Reformed Church, Sacramento, for the development and use of his gifts.

Recommendation 8. That Timothy A. Curtis be examined for licensure by the Western Classis at a Special Fall Meeting with the date determined by Executive Committee Circular at Trinity Reformed Church, Modesto, California.

## D. Judicial

Recommendation #1. That Classis amend Standing Rule 10 to read:

“The members of the Permanent Christian Education in the Church and the Permanent Publications Committees be the same men and that the Stated Clerk provide this information in the Standing Committee Folder at the Classis Meeting.

Recommendation #2. Absolutely no person shall serve as a cabin counselor, or as a member of the camp staff who is not a member in good and regular standing with their home church in the RCUS or in any church with which we have a fraternal relationship.

## E. Nominations

Recommendation #1. That the Permanent Committees be as follows (the underlined name indicates the convener).

1. **Executive Committee:** T. Gruggett, D. Schlegel, J. DeYoung
2. **Candidates and Credentials:** F. Walker (3yr), T. Mayville (1yr), N. Bouwkamp (1yr), E. Bristley (1yr)
3. **Christian Education in the Church:** R. Mettler (2yr), R. Zartman (2yr), P. Treick (1yr), L. Lynch (1yr)
4. **Missions:** D. Helseth (2yr), R. Williams (2yr), R. Zartman (1yr), J. West (3yr), G. Mancilas (3yr)
5. **Interchurch Relations:** M. Reyna (2yr), T. Lagomarsino (1yr), S. Powell (1yr), J. Merica (3yr), D. Reis (3yr), R. Spitzer (3yr)
6. **Publications:** R. Mettler (2yr), R. Zartman (2yr), P. Treick (1yr), L. Lynch (1yr)
7. **Diaconal:** V. Alpuche (2yr), N. Riffert (2yr), V. Pollema (3yr), Deacon C. Hekman (1yr), T. Crabtree (3yr)
8. **Heidelberg West Youth Camp:** G. Stewart (2yr), Deacon C. Hekman (3yr), G. Baloy (3yr), R. Williams (3yr).

## F. Finances

Recommendation #1. That all committees seeking classis funds consult with the Standing Finances Committee before bringing the proposed request to the floor.

Recommendation #2. That Classis print 160 copies of the Western Classis Abstract of the 35<sup>th</sup> Annual Meeting at a cost of \$480.00. Move Adoption. Seconded. Carried.

Recommendation #3.

A. That steps be taken as quickly as possible to place the monies currently available in the Home Missions Building Fund into a money market account or similar investment vehicle that will provide significant liquidity, while also providing some protection against the ravages of inflation.

1. That we invest \$125,000 into the Fidelity money market account mentioned above, and that the rest of the classis funds be placed in the checking account.
2. That the interest paid from this investment be used in the following way:

- a. 10% of the interest paid be placed back into the HMBF.
- b. That the remaining 90% be distributed proportionally amongst the other funds in accordance with our guidelines.

B. That the use of this fund to assist Western Classis mission works in the purchasing or construction of a new church building/facility be expanded to include the possibility of loaning up to \$50,000 to other mission works within the RCUS with a 4% rate of return for the same use.

[The classis directed the clerk to notify the clerks of the other classes regarding this action (Item “B”).]

Recommendation #4. That the following travel expenses be approved.

Name	Mileage	Amount	Lodging/Other	Total
Todd Crabtree	@.45	\$220.50		\$220.50
David Helseth	@.45	\$109.80		\$109.80
Tom Mayville	@.45	\$100.00		\$100.00
Robert Mettler	@.45	\$340.20		\$340.20
Sam Powell	@.45	\$118.80		\$118.80
Neale Riffert	@.45	\$315.00		\$315.00
Frank Walker	@.45	\$59.40		\$59.40
Jim West	@.45	\$78.30		\$78.30
Ruben Zartman	@.45	\$218.70		\$218.70

**TOTALS** **\$1,560.70** **\$1,560.70**

Recommendation #5. That the Classis Guidelines be set at the following level per communicant member.

	<u>2019</u>	<u>2020</u>
Classis Dues	\$11.00	\$11.00
Missions	\$85.00	\$92.00
Benevolence	\$10.00	\$11.00
Publications	\$11.00	\$1.00
Missions Building	\$0.00	\$0.00
Heidelberg West	\$5.00	\$4.00
Diaconal	\$4.00	\$0.00
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>\$115.00</b>	<b>\$119.00</b>

### G. Excuses

Recommendation #1. That the excuses of Reverends Sam Powell, Valentin Alpuche and Elders Joe Gross, Greg Stewart and [REDACTED] be granted.

### H. Minutes

Recommendation #1. That the minutes be approved as corrected by the Standing Committee.

## MISCELLANEOUS REPORTS AND OTHER BUSINESS

### A. Expression of Appreciation to the Host Congregation.

“Beloved Congregations of both Providence Reformed Church of Lodi, Trinity Reformed Church of Modesto, and Calvary Reformed Chapel, Stockton, we the delegates of the 35th Annual Session of the Western Classis of the RCUS express our sincere gratitude for the warm welcome, loving and generous Christian hospitality, and sweet fellowship we received, during which time you co-hosted our 2020 Spring meeting. We will remember your gracious provision. Even as we have been blessed by this cheerful service, we recognize in it the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ. May our God richly bless you as you are empowered by His grace, and let us go forth and bear fruit that will last forever.”

### B. Adoption of Stated Clerk’s, and Executive Committee’s Reports.

### C. Other Business

The fee for the Heidelberg West Youth Camp was set at \$125 per camper.

### D. Adoption of Standing Minutes Committee Report

The Draft Minutes were reviewed by the Standing Committee on Minutes of Classis and returned to the stated clerk for revision. These revisions were entered and then published as the Revised Minutes. The stated clerk read aloud the final items of business for which there was no time to complete this review process. After accepting further corrections, the President declared the minutes approved as corrected.

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**Classis Action:** All of the above reports were adopted unless otherwise noted.

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## ADJOURNMENT

### A. Roll Call

The roll call was taken at the beginning of each business day. The closing roll showed 14 ministers and 10 elders present, for a total of 24.

On Thursday, March 5<sup>th</sup> at 4:35 PM the 35th Annual Meeting of the Western Classis was adjourned to the 36th Annual Meeting of the Western Classis to convene at Trinity Reformed Church, Modesto, California, and jointly hosted by Providence Reformed Church, Lodi, on Tuesday, March 2nd, 2021 at 1:00 PM.

### B. Devotions

Elder DeYoung led the body in a devotion from Nehemiah 4:4-6 and I Timothy 4:12. Elder DeYoung 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. Douglas Schlegel*  
*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

2019 Western Classis Statistics	Grace Bakersfield	Covenant Chico	Covenant Grass Vly	Grace Lancaster	Providence Lodi	Rehoboth Los Angeles	Trinity Modesto/ Stockton	Covenant Sacramento
1. No. of Elders	3	2	0	2	2	2	3	5
2. No. of Deacons	3	2	0	1	1	1	0	4
3. Comm. Last Year	109	19	0	34	15	30	28	150
4. Rec'd by Confirm	0	0	0	0	0	2	0	0
5. Rec'd by Letter	2	0	0	0	3	0	2	7
6. Rec'd by Prof.	2	0	0	0	0	0	1	9
7. Tot. Received	4	0	0	0	3	2	3	16
8. Tot Old/New Mbr	113	19	0	34	18	32	31	166
9. Lost by Dismissal	0	0	0	3	0	4	0	2
10. Lost Eras/Disc	2	0	0	1	0	6	0	7
11. Lost by Death	1	0	0	0	0	1	0	0
12. Total Lost	3	0	0	4	0	11	0	9
13. Comm. this Yr	110	19	0	30	18	21	31	157
14. Unconfirm. Mbr.	17	18	0	2	1	2	14	76
15. Total Bapt. Mbr.	127	37	0	32	19	23	45	233
16. No. of Families	47	10	6	17	10	11	20	82
17. No. of S.S. Child.	10	0	0	2	1	1	9	68
18. Adult Baptisms	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
19. Covenant Baptisms	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	5
20. Total Baptisms	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	5
21. No. Rec. LS	86	17	N/R	28	18	22	30	157
22. Times LS.Served	4	12	N/R	5	12	5	16	12
23. Reg. Offerings	\$225,288	\$47,067	\$3,520	\$61,767	\$56,645	\$74,940	\$84,408	\$370,657
24. Special Offerings	\$5,436	\$2,203	\$248	\$9,407	\$500	\$2,061	\$2,548	\$68,100
25. Other Sources	\$15,372	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$5,160	\$28,588	\$55,073	\$924
26. Total Receipts	\$246,096	\$49,270	\$3,768	\$71,174	\$62,305	\$105,589	\$142,029	\$439,681
27. Giv. to Syn Guidl.	\$28,111	\$1,087	\$0	\$2,223	\$3,087	\$8,238	\$7,000	\$38,022
28. Giv. to Clas Guidl	\$12,535	\$916	\$0	\$3,910	\$1,840	\$3,956	\$3,220	\$17,250
29. RCUS non-budget	\$16,418	\$150	\$0	\$845	\$0	\$2,461	\$4,832	\$21,661
30. Non-RCUS cause	\$895	\$0	\$0	\$400	\$0	\$0	\$800	\$15,314
31. Other Expenses	\$160,063	\$45,389	\$11,271	\$54,377	\$55,675	\$60,825	\$115,180	\$277,237
32. Total Expenses	\$217,127	\$47,542	\$11,271	\$61,755	\$60,602	\$75,480	\$131,032	\$369,484
33. Val. of Ch. Bldg.	\$600,000	\$0	\$220,000	\$0	\$350,000	\$0	\$473,000	\$389,043
34. Parsonage	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0
35. Impr on Prop'ty	\$51,834	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0
36. Pres Prop'ty Deb	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0
37. Debt Pd Last Yr	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0
38. Syn guidl/comm	\$258	\$57	\$0	\$73	\$206	\$275	\$250	\$253
39. Clas guidl/comm	\$115	\$48	\$0	\$129	\$123	\$132	\$115	\$115
40. Tot. RCUS/Com	\$524	\$113	\$0	\$202	\$296	\$489	\$538	\$513

Covenant San Diego	Ebenezer Shafter/ ValleGra	Grace Willows	First Yuba City	2018 Totals	2017 Totals	% Chg	Calvary Chapel Stockton	Valle de Gracia Shafter
1	3	1	2	26	29	-10.34	1	0
2	4	2	2	22	22	-0-	0	0
28	61	29	57	560	573	-2.27	17	4
0	0	0	0	2	9	-77.78	0	0
0	0	0	0	14	13	7.69	0	0
2	2	0	1	17	24	-29.17	1	2
2	2	0	1	33	46	-28.26	1	2
30	63	29	58	593	619	-4.20	18	6
0	1	0	5	15	18	-16.67	0	0
0	1	0	0	17	20	-15.00	0	0
0	1	0	1	4	7	-42.86	0	0
0	3	0	6	36	45	-20.00	0	0
30	60	29	52	557	574	-2.96	18	6
8	25	13	7	183	174	5.17	10	10
38	86	42	59	741	748	-0.94	28	16
17	35	13	28	296	300	-1.33	14	3
8	11	10	6	126	120	5.00	5	0
0	0	0	0	0	3	-100	0	0
0	5	2	1	13	11	18.18	0	2
0	5	2	1	13	14	-7.14	0	2
30	58	29	50	525	556	-5.56	17	6
9	6	12	12	105	114	-7.89	12	2
\$77,059	\$191,024	\$82,718	\$156,095	\$1,431,188	\$1,400,912	2.16	\$47,062	\$10,643
\$0	\$7,910	\$0	\$1,774	\$100,187	\$131,015	-23.53	\$227	\$0
\$1,882	\$48,250	\$912	\$0	\$156,161	\$155,981	0.12	\$39,998	\$72,144
\$78,941	\$247,184	\$83,630	\$157,869	\$1,687,536	\$1,687,908	-0.02	\$87,287	\$82,787
\$300	\$16,530	\$3,084	\$12,996	\$120,678	\$108,897	10.82	\$4,250	\$1,000
\$700	\$8,680	\$2,000	\$6,555	\$61,562	\$66,374	-7.25	\$1,955	\$460
\$0	\$4,589	\$0	\$10,400	\$61,356	\$52,407	17.08	\$922	\$40
\$135	\$480	\$3,300	\$0	\$21,324	\$27,270	-21.80	\$0	\$0
\$76,821	\$230,314	\$77,869	\$123,806	\$1,288,827	\$1,145,310	12.53	\$83,107	\$79,726
\$77,956	\$260,593	\$86,253	\$153,757	\$1,552,852	\$1,515,932	2.44	\$90,234	\$81,226
\$0	\$500,000	\$500,000	\$343,677	\$3,375,720	\$3,368,979	0.20	\$0	\$0
\$0	\$200,000	\$0	\$139,055	\$339,055	\$286,328	18.41	\$0	\$0
\$0	\$0	\$0	\$2,500	\$54,334	\$40,826	33.09	\$0	\$0
\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	-0-	\$0	\$0
\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	-0-	\$0	\$0
\$11	\$275	\$106	\$250	Avg. \$183	Avg. \$190	-3.68	\$250	\$250
\$25	\$144	\$69	\$126	Avg. \$104	Avg. \$116	-10.34	\$115	\$115
\$36	\$496	\$175	\$395	Avg. \$343	Avg. \$397	-13.60	\$419	\$375

## NECROLOGIES



### LLOYD HARRY GROSS

On Wednesday, December 18, 2019, the Lord called LLOYD HARRY GROSS to his eternal rest in Christ at the age of 86 years. He leaves his dear wife of 61 years, Claire, daughter Joy and Phil Grotenhuis, son Joel and Dawn Gross, son Jonathan and Lisa Gross, and son Justin and Tami Gross, 17 grandchildren and 7 great-grandchildren.

He was born Oct. 27, 1933 to Henry and Hulda Gross and was raised on the family homestead in Hosmer, South Dakota. He attended a one room country school, Hosmer High School, Northern State College, and Westminster Theological Seminary. He married Claire Wolfram in 1958, and began a life of pastoring congregations in the Reformed Church of the United States: Upham, N. Dakota; Lincoln Valley, N. Dakota; Minot, N. Dakota; Garner, Iowa; Sutton, Nebraska; and Bakersfield, California. He and Claire retired in Mesa, Arizona. It was his great delight, during his life and even in retirement to preach the Gospel of sovereign grace in Jesus Christ his blessed Lord and Savior as long as health permitted.

He had no greater earthly joy and blessing than his wife Claire, his children and grandchildren and great-grandchildren, and to see God's covenant blessings unfold. He often quoted, "I have no greater joy than to hear that my children walk in truth." These were, in fact, the last words son Justin quoted to him, minutes before his departure. He prayed daily that his family, whom he loved so deeply, will continue to walk in the truth and love of God in Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior.

"Blessed are they that die in the Lord, they rest from their labors." Rev. 14:13.

## 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. Any member may move to have the Standing Rules read after the defining of the bar of the house. Passage of the motion shall require a simple majority vote. ('15)
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 email a PDF copy to each delegate to the Classis within 60 days. A pdf copy shall be sent to the Webmaster of the RCUS to be made available on the RCUS website. The Stated Clerk shall receive a gratuity of 1,000 dollars per year. ('91, '10, 19)
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<sup>1</sup>. The Standing Committee on Nominations each year is to nominate men to serve on these committees.<sup>2</sup> ('97)

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<sup>1</sup> At the 33<sup>rd</sup> Regular Spring Meeting of the Western Classis ('18), the Permanent Heidelberg West Youth Camp Committee was reorganized as a sub-committee of the Permanent Christian Education in the Church Committee.

<sup>2</sup> At the 35<sup>th</sup> Annual Classis meeting the following policy was adopted: “That the members of the Permanent Christian Education in the Church and the Permanent Publications Committees be the same men and that the Stated Clerk provide this information in the Standing Committee Folder at the Classis Meeting.”

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. Special Committees writing study papers are to complete and submit their work to the consistories of all the churches by January 1. ('15)
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)

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