

# **The Northern Plains Classis**

## **2021 Abstract of the Minutes**



Spring Meeting  
March 8th & 9th, A.D. 2021  
Eureka Reformed Church  
Eureka, South Dakota

Abstract Dedicated in Memory of Rev. Robert Grossmann  
August 7, 1937-January 14, 2021

This 36th abstract of the Northern Plains Classis of the Reformed Church in the United States is dedicated in thanksgiving to God for the life and ministry of Rev. Robert Grossmann, who served God's church with over fifty years of active ministry. Born at Eureka SD to Rev. Walter and Dorothy Grossmann, Robert received early education in Hosmer, SD and Shafter, CA public schools. He graduated University of California at Berkeley in January 1960, and Westminster Seminary in Philadelphia in 1963. He received a Doctor of Divinity from Whitfield Seminary and PhD from Reformed International Theological Seminary, both in Florida. Rev. Grossmann served RCUS churches at Pierre, SD, Artas and Herried, SD, Kansas City, MO, Mitchell, SD, Garner, IA, and Vermillion, SD, over a period of 52 years. He taught at Mid-America Reformed Seminary, Whitfield Seminary, Heidelberg Seminary and Reformed International Seminary, full-time and part-time, over the past 35 years. He served as RCUS Foreign Missions Committee member and chairman over the past 50 years, with travels to Kenya and the Congo in 1998 and 2004. In addition to authoring many articles and several books on Theology, Church History and Apologetics, he has also carried on a radio-preaching ministry for the past 51 years. Robert married Pauline Carman in 1962 with whom he has six children, Samuel (deceased), Jonathan, Dorthea (deceased), Lydia, Ruth and James. We give all the glory to the King of the Church for giving gifts to men and for giving gifted-men to His church (Ephesians 4:8-11).

## **Guideline for Giving**

Classical Dues:	\$6.00
Missions:	\$34.00
Mission Seed Fund:	\$8.00
Student Development Fund:	\$2.00
<b>Total:</b>	<b>\$50.00</b>

## **Officers of Classis**

President:	Rev. Hank Bowen
Vice President:	Rev. Paul Henderson
Stated Clerk:	Rev. James Grossmann
Treasurer:	Elder Matthew Fickbohm

## **Permanent Committees of Classis**

(Underline indicates Convener)

### **Auditing**

Haddock, Voytek, Aune

### **Camp**

Fickbohm, Lassley, Henderson, Haak

### **Candidates and Credentials**

Schwichtenberg, Snyder, Irwin

### **Christian Education and Publications**

Irwin, Haddock, Beck

### **Diaconal**

Voytek, Beck, Dockter, E. Mehlhaff

### **Executive**

Bowen, Grossmann, Fickbohm

### **Home Missions**

Lassley, Schwichtenberg, C. Mehlhaff, DeJong

### **Interchurch Relations**

Henderson, Irwin, Bowen, Haak, Brice

### **Assistant to the Clerk**

Haak

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## **Ministers of the Word**

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### **Churches in North Dakota**

**Ashley, ND 58413.....(701) 288-3265**  
**Salem RCUS**, 209 1st Ave SW (Mail: PO Box 345)  
Worship: 9 AM; SS: 10:15 AM.....Pastor: Dave Irwin  
Website: [www.facebook.com/SalemReformed](http://www.facebook.com/SalemReformed)  
Email: [SalemRCUS@gmail.com](mailto:SalemRCUS@gmail.com)

**Dickinson, ND 58601.....(701) 590-5935**  
**Grace RCUS**, 229 3<sup>rd</sup> Street East, Dickinson, ND 58601  
(Mail: PO Box 3501)  
Worship:10am; Bible Study: Sunday 5pm  
Pastor: Michael Voytek (wife, Rebecca)  
Website: [www.grcdickinson.com](http://www.grcdickinson.com)  
Email: [gracercusdickinson@gmail.com](mailto:gracercusdickinson@gmail.com)

**Minot, ND 58701.....(701) 340-7666**  
**Christ RCUS**, 234 14th Ave SD (South Apartment Building)  
(Mail: 1624 Foothills Rd, SW, Minot, ND 58701)  
Worship: 11:00am Pastor: Phil Poe (wife, Karen)

### **Churches in South Dakota**

**Aberdeen, SD 57401.....(605) 225-6120**  
**First RCUS**, 818 9th Ave. S.E.  
Worship: 9:00 am Sunday School:10:15am  
Pastor: Hank Bowen (wife, Patty)  
Website: [www.aberdeenreformed.com](http://www.aberdeenreformed.com)  
Email: [fristrcus@gmail.com](mailto:fristrcus@gmail.com)

**Eureka, SD 57437.....(605) 284-2392**  
**Eureka RCUS**, 310 F Ave. (Mail: PO Box 456)  
Worship: 9:00 am; Sunday School: 10:15 am  
Pastor: James Grossmann (wife, Michelle)  
Website: [www.facebook.com/EurekaRCUS](http://www.facebook.com/EurekaRCUS)



**Herreid, SD 57632.....(605) 437-2209**

**First RCUS**, 601 N. Main St. (Mail: PO Box 212)

Worship: 10:00 am; Sunday School 11:00 am

Pastor: Cody Schwichtenberg (wife, Angela)

Email: [codyrcus@gmail.com](mailto:codyrcus@gmail.com)

**Pierre, SD 57501.....(605) 224-8626**

**Hope RCUS**, 317 S. Garfield

Worship: 10:00 AM; Sunday School 11:30am

Pastor: Paul Henderson (wife, Tina)

Website: [www.hopercus.com](http://www.hopercus.com)

**Watertown, SD 57201.....(605) 881-4997**

**Covenant RCUS**, 15 12th Ave NE (Mail: 434 30<sup>th</sup> St. NW)

Worship 10AM Sunday School 11:30am

Pastor: Michael Lassley (wife, Amy)

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Email: [michael.lassley@icloud.com](mailto:michael.lassley@icloud.com)

## **Radio Programs of the Northern Plains Classis**

<b>Church</b>	<b>Radio Station</b>	<b>Time</b>
Aberdeen – Pause for Thought	KGIM – 1420 AM KDBX–107.1 FM	Sundays, 8:30 AM
Salem – Start the Week	KSJB – 600 AM	Sundays, 7:45 AM
Eureka – Worship Service	KOLY – 99.5 FM	Sundays, 9:00 AM

**Northern Plains Classis Sermon Audio Site:**

[www.SermonAudio.com/nprcus](http://www.SermonAudio.com/nprcus)

## **36<sup>th</sup> Annual Spring Meeting – March 8-9, AD 2021**

**Eureka Reformed Church - Eureka, South Dakota**

### **I. Services**

For the opening devotion, Rev. Hank Bowen opened in prayer, presented a devotion from Proverbs 9 entitled “*A Meal for Life or Death: Choose One!*,” singing Hymn 221, “I Heard the Voice of Jesus Say.”

On Monday evening at 7:30pm, the Classis met for a worship service with the congregation of Eureka Reformed Church of Eureka, South Dakota. Rev. Phil Poe conducted the worship service and Rev. Cody Schwichtenberg preached a sermon entitled “*Humble Hearts and Spiritual Gifts*” using Romans 12:1-8 as his text.

The Northern Plains Classis opened its session on Tuesday, March 9<sup>th</sup>, A.D. 2021 with a hymn 533 “What a Friend We Have In Jesus” accompanied by Elder Earl Mehlhaff on accordion and a devotion led by Rev. Michael Voytek from Exodus 15:22-27, entitled “*He Makes the Bitter Sweet.*”

### **II. Organization**

The 36<sup>th</sup> Annual Spring Meeting of the Northern Plains Classis convened at 1:25pm on Tuesday, March 8<sup>th</sup>, A.D. 2021, at Eureka Reformed Church of Eureka, South Dakota. President Paul Henderson called the assembly to order at 1:25pm. The roll was called following the devotion. There were eight ministers and seven elders present for a total of fifteen, a quorum. President Henderson defined the bar of the house as the first seven rows of the church; Elder Charles Dockter and Elder John Huizinga as tellers; and Rev. Cody Schwichtenberg as the *Reformed Herald* reporter.

Election of Officers: Election by ballot was held for men to serve in the following capacities: President: Rev. Hank Bowen; Vice-President: Rev. Paul Henderson; Stated Clerk: Rev. James Grossmann; and Treasurer: Elder Matthew Fickbohm.

### **III. Adoption of the Agenda, Orders of the Day, Special Orders**

The Agenda, Services, and Orders of the Day were adopted as presented by Classis President Henderson.

### **IV. Welcome & Seating of Fraternal Delegates; Welcome and Seating of Visitors**

Elder Vern Moos of the Salem Reformed Church, Ashley, North Dakota was seated in the bar of the house and given the privilege of the floor.

### **V. Reception of New Churches**

*There were no new churches to receive.*

### **VI. Reception of New Ministers**

*There were no new ministers to receive*

### **VII. Announcement of Standing Committees**

The chairman of the committee is underlined.

**Education, Publications, Student Aid, Services & Interchurch:** Rev. Irwin, C. Dockter, E. Mehlhaff

**Examinations and Licensure:** Rev. Irwin, Rev. Bowen, C. Mehlhaff, J. Huizinga

**Excuses:** Rev. Schwichtenberg, C. Dockter, E. Mehlhaff

**Finances, Benevolences, and Ministerial Aid:** M. Fickbohm, Rev. Grossmann, Rev. Voytek, M. Beck, J. Huizinga

**Judicial:** Rev. Henderson, Rev. Lassley, Rev. Voytek, J. Huizinga, J. Snyder

**Missions:** Rev. Lassley, Rev. Schwichtenberg, J. Snyder, C. Mehlhaff

**Nominations:** Rev. Voytek, M. Beck, M. Fickbohm

## VIII. Presentation of Overtures, Permanent Committee Reports & Communications

The Overtures, Permanent Committee Reports, and Communications were distributed to the Standing Committees.

### CANDIDATES AND CREDENTIALS COMMITTEE

Esteemed Brothers in Christ,

Your committee received a full written report of seminary progress and financial needs from David Voytek, first year student in the M.Div. program at Mid-America Reformed Seminary. David is making excellent progress in his studies. He plans to serve as a Summer intern at Aberdeen First Reformed Church (2021)

Your committee makes the following recommendations:

- 1 That Northern Plains Classis petition the RCUS Synod for the amount of \$9,960.00 for tuition for the 2021/2022 academic year as well as \$400 for books. The \$9,960.00 tuition fee to be sent directly to Mid-America Reformed Seminary. The \$400 book fund is to be sent directly to David.
- 2 That David be reimbursed in the amount of \$1,940 for the shortfall of this (2020/2021) academic year's tuition. The reason is that David was misinformed by MARS that the tuition for the 2020/2021 academic year would be \$8600. It turned out to be \$10,540 causing the \$1940 shortfall which David paid out of his own pocket.

Respectfully Submitted,

Rev. Phil E Poe; Rev. Cody Schwichtenberg; Elder James Snyder

### CHRISTIAN EDUCATION & PUBLICATIONS COMMITTEE

*Report of the Christian Education & Publications Committee of the Northern Plains Classis, RCUS*

*February 14, 2021*

The Committee conducted its business via e-mail between February 4th and 14th, 2021. Rev. William Haddock expressed a willingness to continue serving as the editor of the Northern Plains Chronicles for this year. Rev. Haddock submitted the following table of proposed due dates for reports to the Chronicles for the upcoming year.

Proposed due dates for reports to the Northern Plains Chronicles are as follows:

**ISSUE:**

March/April 2021

May/June 2021

July/August 2021

September/October 2021

November/December 2021

January/February 2022

**NEWS DUE DATE:**

May 6, 2021

July 8, 2021

September 9, 2021

November 11, 2021

January 6, 2022

March 10, 2022

**RECOMMENDATIONS:**

We, the Christian Education and Publications Committee of the Northern Plains Classis of the RCUS, propose the following recommendations to the Classis:

1. We recommend and nominate Rev. William Haddock to continue as the editor of the Northern Plains Chronicles for another one year term (March 2021 – March 2022).
2. We recommend that the Classis pay the editor of the Northern Plains Chronicles at least a \$200.00 stipend for the 2021 term.

Respectfully Submitted,

Rev. David Irwin; Rev. Philip Poe; Rev. William Haddock; Elder Matthew Beck

## DIACONAL COMMITTEE

Diaconal Committee of the Northern Plains Classis – R.C.U.S.

Report for the year 2020

Esteemed Brothers and Fellow Servants in Jesus Christ,

Your committee received no requests for diaconal assistance; therefore there was no need to meet.

We stand ready to serve when the need arises.

Respectfully Submitted,

Elder Matthew Beck; Elder Charles Dockter; Elder Earl Mehlhaff; Rev. Michael Voytek

## HEIDELBERG YOUTH CAMP COMMITTEE

Dear brothers,

Your joint committee met on Tuesday February 9<sup>th</sup>, 2021 to conduct the oversight of Heidelberg Youth Camp. We examined the evaluations of campers and staff collected during HYC 2020 and rejoiced in God's provision for another blessed year of edification and fellowship. This year brought the largest enrollment in recent history with 119 campers. Even with the growth we were blessed with excellent volunteers and no word of any illnesses following the event – praise the Lord!

The committee recommends the theme *Biblical Justice and Mercy*, with the following lesson and services:

*Day 1 – Theme: The God of Justice and Mercy*

*Lecture One: “What Does God Require?” – Micah 6:7-8 (Define justice, mercy, humility)*

*Lecture Two: “Loving Justice, Loving Mercy, & Walking Humbly with your God” – Romans 12*

*Sermon: “Justice and Mercy in Jesus Christ” – Romans 3:21-26.*

*Day 2 – Theme: The Church reflects God's Justice and Mercy*

*Lecture Three: “The Church of Justice and Mercy” – Ephesians 2:11-22*

*Lecture Four: “Justice and Mercy Shows No Partiality” – James 1:27 – 2:7 (For the Seniors: compare and contrast Biblical justice and the social justice movement)*

*Sermon: “Living as Doers of Justice and Mercy” – James 1:21 – 26*

*Day 3 – Theme: Walk humbly with your God!*

*Lecture Five: “Walking Humbly with your God” – James 4:1-10. (Apply humility to our relationships)*

*Lecture Six: “Wait for the coming of Jesus Christ the Judge” – Rev. 4-5.*

Your committee recommends the designation of the offerings collected during HYC 2021 for Grace Reformed Church of Dickinson, ND. The saints in Dickinson have purchased a church building in Dickinson, which the committee believes to be an excellent cause for HYC 2021 to support. We pray God will bless the outreach of Grace in Dickinson, even as He has provided this opportunity to purchase a physical location.

The committee notes the following dates for future camps: July 26-30, 2021, July 18-22, 2022, July 24-28, 2023, July 22-26, 2024, & July 21 -25, 2025.

Your committee brings the following recommendations:

Recommendation 1: That the budget and registration fees (attached) be adopted.

Recommendation 2: That the theme of Biblical Justice and Mercy be adopted as the theme of HYC 2021.

Recommendation 3: That the offerings collected during HYC 2021 be designated to Grace Reformed Church of Dickinson, ND.

Recommendation 4: That the Northern Plains Classis request their Permanent Audit Committee to review the financial records for HYC 2021 and add this as an annual practice in the future.

Recommendation 5: That congregations take note of the registration deadlines for early registration (by May 31<sup>st</sup>) and final registration (no later than June 30<sup>th</sup>) and that congregation be encouraged to submit registrations as early as possible.

Representing the SCC: Rev. Jon Blair, Rev. David Fagrey, Rev. Lee Johnson, Rev. J.P. Mosley, Elder Dave Kimble, & Elder Warren Nuss

Representing the NPC: Rev. Hank Bowen, Rev. Michael Lassely, Elder Doug Haak, & Elder Matthew Fickbohm

### Heidelberg Youth Camp Financial Report and Proposed Budget

	2020	2020	Difference	2021
	<u>Budget</u>	<u>Actual</u>	<u>(under)/over</u>	<u>Proposed Budget</u>
<b>Opening Fund Balance (1/1/20)</b>		2,902.71		
<b>Revenue</b>				
Camp Fees (119 campers)	\$19,725	\$21,440.00	\$1,715	\$23,250
Donations	2,000	2,166.50	167	2,000
Worship Offering	1,000	1,934.38	934	1,000
Camp Store Sales	500	530.43	30	500
Interest		0.08		
<b>Total Revenue</b>	23,225	26,071.39		26,750
<b>Expenses</b>				
Camp Bob Marshal Rental	12,259	16,383.96	4,125	16,571 *
Camp Bob Sewage Surcharge	1,700	-	(1,700)	-
Food	4,400	5,314.47	914	5,500
T-Shirts & Counselor Gifts	3,000	1,955.20	(1,045)	2,800
Arts & Crafts	100	50.27	(50)	150
Supplies and Equipment	200	552.72	353	200

Administration	100	3.85	(96)	25
Camp Store Supplies	500	438.26	(62)	500
Designated offering recipient	1,000	1,934.38	934	1,000
<b>Total Ex-penses</b>	23,259	26,633.11		26,746
<b>Operating Gain (Loss)</b>		(561.72)		4
<b>Ending Fund Balance (12/31/20)</b>		\$2,340.99		

\* Rental cost: \$600 (kitchen use) +[\$22 (daily rate/person) X 4 (days) X 170 (people)] + 6.5% tax

**Proposed 2021  
Camper Fees:**

\$190 per camper if registration and fee received by June 1. (\$5 increase)

\$220 per camper if received June 1 or after. (\$5 increase)

No fee for adult volunteers.

Proposed budget is based upon 120 campers and 50 adults.

## INTERCHURCH RELATIONS COMMITTEE

Esteemed Brothers,

The Interchurch Relations Committee was providentially inactive this year due to the Covid pandemic. Arrangements had been put in place to visit the meeting of our brethren in the Canadian Reformed Churches when the Canadian border was shut down prohibiting travel between countries, and I believe their meeting was canceled for the same reason of lock-down.

There was notification of a meeting of the URC that was to take place in the Covenant East boundaries, which we typically will not attend given that a representative from CEC can take that on.

I am not aware of any Letters of Invitation being sent to our fraternal churches this year given the fact that travel restrictions still prohibit attendance between the meetings of our bodies.

Respectfully submitted,

Rev. Hank Bowen; Rev. Dave Irwin; Rev. Paul Henderson; Elder Doug Haak; Rev. Wesley Brice

## MISSIONS COMMITTEE

Northern Plains Classis (RCUS)

Missions Committee Report

February 15th 2021

Esteemed Brothers in Christ,

On February 14th, Rev. Michael Lassley and Elder Rod DeJong visited the congregation of Grace Reformed Church in Dickinson, ND to oversee the current health of the mission work; enjoying the impeccable hospitality Rev. Michael Voytek, his wife Rebecca, and their daughter Tabitha the evening of the 13th.

The following Lord's day Rev. Lassley and Elder DeJong attend worship and a fellowship meal in GRC's new building. Rev. Voytek conducted the worship service with Rev. Lassley preaching the

sermon. Afterwards we enjoyed fellowship and a delicious meal with the congregation before hosting a short meeting with the congregation, followed by a short meeting with the consistory.

During the worship service there were 30 visitors and 14 members for a total of 44 souls in all; consisting of many younger families who expressed thankfulness for the nurturing fellowship and solid biblical preaching and teaching they experienced at GRC.

During the meetings with both the congregation and consistory much gratitude was expressed to God for the generous prayer and financial support from the several sources which enabled the purchase of their new building, which is indeed very nice and accommodated the days worship, fellowship, meal, and meetings very well. Prayer requests included:

1. Prayer for the health and ministry of Rev. Wes and Ginger Brice serving in Montana.
2. Prayer for fruitful ministry among the many visitors.
3. Prayer for fruitful ministry among children and youth.
4. Prayer for difficulties involved with new and rapid growth of the church.
5. Prayer for fruitful ministry among those with non-reformed backgrounds.
6. Prayer for fruitful ministry to the Dickinson community; esp. the oil industry.
7. Prayer for grace, mercy, and peace among those with differing opinions on COVID, vaccines, etc...
8. Prayer for sustained health and wellness of the leadership and other serving members.
9. Prayer for the Lord to raise up a deacon for GRC.

Due to the COVID pandemic, last year was a difficult year in which GRC received an opportunity to purchase their own building; incurring \$243,800.00 in debt while retaining \$22,676.00 in savings (cash on hand). As noted above, although there is very promising growth within the church, most attending are visitors and from non-reformed backgrounds. Therefore, the consistory of GRC is requesting that support from Classis and Synod remain the same as last year to assist in meeting their budgeted offering of \$100,830.00 for the next classical year.

Being the only known Home Mission work with debt, the consistory of GRC also requested consideration for receiving the proceeds of the Annual Home Missions Day of Prayer for the purpose aiding in paying off the remainder of debt owed on the parsonage that was purchased for Rev. Wes and Ginger Brice (approximately \$24,000.00). Eliminating this debt from the budget of GRC would lower their annual expenses by \$5,738.00.

### **Recommendations**

Recommendation 1: That Classis provide missions support in the amount of \$9,100.00 for Grace Reformed Church of Dickinson, ND for the 2021 classical year (same as last year, no reduction).

Recommendation 2: That Classis overture the 248th Synod of the RCUS for home missions support for Grace Reformed Church of Dickinson, ND in the amount of \$7,400.00 for the 2021-2022 synodical fiscal year (same amount as last year, no reduction).

Recommendation 3: That Classis overture the 248th Synod of the RCUS for consideration of receiving proceeds of the Annual Home Missions Day of Prayer during the 2021-2022 synodical fiscal year.

Recommendation 4: That Classis continue to fund 75% of the cost for Ashley's radio broadcast, "Start the Week."

Respectfully Submitted,

Rev. Michael Lassley; Rev. Cody Schwichtenberg; Elder Rod DeJong; Elder Craig Mehlhaff

## **IX. Reports of Officers**

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

President's State of the Church Report  
36th Annual Meeting of the Northern Plains Classis

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Much esteemed brothers and blessed servants of the Lord Jesus Christ,

Psalm 61 sums up, in my humble opinion, what each of you expressed in your Parochial Reports for 2020, yea, and that which you are encouraged about for 2021.

*So we read: “Hear my cry, O God; Attend to my prayer. From the end of the earth I will cry to You, when my heart is overwhelmed; Lead me to rock that is higher than I. For You have been a shelter for me, a strong tower from the enemy. I will abide in Your tabernacle forever; I will trust in the shelter of Your wings. Selah*

*For You, O God, have heard my vows. You have given me the heritage of those who fear Your name. You will prolong the king’s life, his years as many generations. He shall abide before God forever. Oh, prepare mercy and truth, which may preserve him! So I will sing praise to Your name forever; that I may daily perform my vows.”*

Simply put then, from your reports God was the one you cried out to when your hearts were overwhelmed, when far from the regular services and duties, or far from your families and the trials they were experiencing, you all in your writings begged God to attend to your prayers, that is, not to just casually listen up, but to rather address and be directly involved with the things that were unfolding before your very eyes! This you did brethren, because you all expressed in your attitudes and your words that you needed more than what you were capable of, and could muster in and of yourselves, in dealing with all of these pressures, tensions, burdens, and changes, such that in each one of your reports it was easy to hear your request for your God to lead to you the rock that is higher than you!

Indeed it was easy to note in all of your reports that as you cried out and made your requests, that God was truly the foundation and the ground upon which you all stood and prosecuted the spiritual warfare as it was greatly hindered by the entire COVID 19 mess, and subsequent responses, and foolishness of those who never seemed to know exactly what they were doing. Yes, even as the election year progressed and we saw the very foundations of our society seemingly collapse in front of our eyes, from your blessed labors among God’s people, it was an encouragement to hear how that our God was surely a Rock for us all!

That God was therefore a shelter for Rev. Bowen in Aberdeen in the midst of personal trials, as well as for Rev. Voytek there on the mission field in Dickenson, with a host of families leaving! That God was a strong tower from the enemy for Rev. Lassley, as they had to deal with a variety of attacks from the adversary, dealing with a host of issues concerning this COVID menace, while Rev. Schwichtenberg fled to this strong tower often as he ministered to a people who themselves were experiencing a variety of attacks and difficult issues. It was evident as well that Rev. Irwin and Rev. Poe during these difficult days sought refuge in the presence of their God, yea, and to trust in God’s fatherly providence as they handled this virus and their own personal health issues with the strength and steadfastness, which can only come from the merciful throne of God! It was evident in Rev. Grossmann’s report, and surely felt in my own parochial report that this rock was our shelter, our refuge and our place of security even as our church’s activities were shut down, interrupted with all kinds of ‘new’ things, & as we were declared non-essential!

Men, brothers, was not our God absolutely faithful and true to His word as He heard and attended to our prayers, as we weathered this ‘storm’?! For all of you expressed a deep sense of His presence and a deep sense of His protection and preserving grace in dealing with this past year, which has indeed then, also affected your outlook for this new Classical year ahead! I heard no complaints, no whining, no giving in to the dread and fears of this nation, though they were certainly nipping at our ministering heels and tugging on our creaturely weaknesses and sins! Because of all of this, the state of the Northern Plains church family is safe and secure, as they, through your labors are being led to the Rock which is higher than them; to the shelter of those wings which speak of His covenantal mercies, in whom they may surely trust! So thank each of you for your faithfulness to His word, for placing your trust clearly upon His saving & sustaining grace, as well as expressing & thus offering up praise & adoration to His name, as you expressed your desire to perform your vows daily, faithfully & lovingly no matter what was happening all around you! To God be the glory, great things He hath done!

Respectfully Submitted,

Rev. Paul H. Henderson



**B. Stated Clerk's Report (Including Necrology)**

March 7<sup>th</sup>, A.D. 2021

Esteemed Brethren,

Thank you for the opportunity to serve you as your Stated Clerk over the course of the past year. I will be reporting on my labors since our 35<sup>th</sup> Annual Spring Meeting of Classis.

Duties Performed:

1. Completing the Minutes from the 35<sup>th</sup> Annual Spring Meeting of the Northern Plains Classis and will present them to the 275<sup>th</sup> Synod of the Reformed Church of the United States.
2. Prepared the Abstract of the 35<sup>th</sup> Annual Spring Meeting of Classis and will deliver copies of them to the churches of the RCUS at the Synod meeting held in Sioux Falls, SD.
3. Prepared the Statistical Report, Stated Clerk's Report, as well as any items needed for this meeting.

Correspondence Sent and Received:

1. Communication with the Grace Reformed Church, Dickinson, North Dakota requesting their answers to the Article 81 Constitutional Questions.
2. A letter from the Stated Clerk of Synod regarding the documents to be submitted to the churches prior to the next session of Synod.
3. Five items to the Stated Clerk of Synod:
  1. Statistical & Membership Report for the NPC
  2. Writ of Certification for Classis Delegates to the delegated 274<sup>th</sup> Synod of the RCUS
  3. Addresses of the Churches and Delegates of the NPC
  4. Report of Changes
  5. Six overtures from the NPC to the Synod of the RCUS
4. Three Executive Circulars to the Delegates of Classis sent via email.
5. Emails and correspondence to denominations with which we have fraternal relations, inviting them to our stated meetings.
6. Forms for Membership and Financial Statistics, as well as the Form for the Credentials of Elders to Classis to the churches of the NPC to be completed prior to our 36<sup>th</sup> Annual Meeting.

Respectfully Submitted,

James Grossmann

**Necrologies**

**Reinhold Dockter**

**Date of Birth:** September 26, 1925

**Died on:** June 02, 2020

Reinhold Dockter, former elder at Salem Reformed Church, passed from this life to be present with the Lord on Tuesday, June 2, 2020 at Wishek Living Center in Wishek, ND. He was 94 years old.

Reinhold "Reinie" Dockter was born September 26, 1925 at Venturia, ND on the family homestead to Fred J. and Martha (Pfahl) Dockter. Early on, he learned the ways and lore of farming near Venturia, North Dakota. He found great enjoyment in the challenge and unpredictability of prairie-land farming; through persistence and planning, he was able to help his childhood as well as his adult family thrive. Reinie grew up in the Venturia Reformed Church, and was confirmed on June 25, 1939.

On June 19, 1947, he married Lorraine Weisser at Ashley Baptist Church. They farmed several locations around McIntosh County, eventually settling near Ashley in 1960 where they lived and worked for over 40 years. Reinie kept very busy on the family farm, but also served on church committees and councils, as well as for the McIntosh County Agricultural Stabilization and Conservation Service (ASCS) board, and as director of Ashley Rural Fire Department. On February 19, 1977, Reinie was elected to the office of Elder, and served on the Consistory and Spiritual Council of

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Salem Reformed Church in Ashley, ND for 29 years (1977-2006). He remained true to the Reformed faith his entire life.

After retiring from farming in 2000, Reinie and Lorraine moved into Ashley where they enjoyed the supportive and close-knit fellowship of a small town. Reinie continued his interest in farming by keeping up with programs and developments, enjoying discussions on new methods, new seeds, and new equipment. He never ceased to be amazed at the new technologies that improved crop yields and reduced work hours.

Reinie is survived by his wife Lorraine and their children, Daryl (Deb) Dockter of Sioux Falls, SD and Janet (Gerry) VanKooten of Sterling, AK; five grandchildren, Karoline (Carl) Bootsma, Nathan (Sarah) Dockter, Daryn (Candace) Dockter, Crystal (Ben Coon) VanKooten and Kara VanKooten; 11 great-grandchildren, Carson Bootsma, Karrie Bootsma, Christian Bootsma, Emily Dockter, Jonathan Dockter, Brielle Dockter, Lydia Dockter, Solomon Dockter, Ezra Dockter, Sabrina VanKooten-Coon and Paul VanKooten-Coon. He was preceded in death by his parents, step-mother, Katherine (Martell) Dockter and five sisters, Viola (Reinhold) Diede, Wholla Dockter, Frieda (Ervin) Wiedenmayer, Lorraine (Marvin) Spitzer and Ruth (Otto) Nehlich.

Reinie enjoyed good company, good stories, and a good pinocle game. His was a life well-lived with an abiding faith in God.

Funeral services for Reinhold were held on Saturday, June 6, 2020 at Salem Reformed Church with Rev. David Irwin officiating. *“The memory of the righteous is blessed.”* (Proverbs 10:7a)

## **Vern Ochsner**

Vern Ochsner, 84, of Herreid, SD went home to be with the Lord on Wednesday October 14th, 2020 at the Walworth County Care Center in Selby, SD. Vern was born on the family farm to Emanuel P. and Dorthea (Heinz) Ochsner on July 29, 1936. He attended the Quenzer One-room Farm School for 8 years and graduated from Herreid High School in 1954. He graduated from the National School of Business in Rapid City, SD in 1956. He served in the US Army from 1956 until he was honorably discharged in 1958. Vern was united in marriage to Ethel J. Hofer on June 30, 1959 at the Peace Lutheran Church in Herreid. They made their home on a farm ten miles northeast of Herreid, farming from 1959 through retirement in 2002. They traveled to all 50 States and many countries abroad while spending winters in Arizona.

Vern was involved in numerous local community organizations and often participated with Leadership responsibilities. He was a member and 84th president of the Herreid Jaycees from 1959 through 1971. He was a life-time member of the Artas and Herreid Reformed Churches. He served as Sunday School Teacher, Superintendent, Church Treasurer, and Elder. He attended many Classis and Synod meetings. He was a long-time member of the Herreid Equity Exchange and served as Chairman of the Board. He was Chairman and member of the Campbell County Bank Board of Directors for many years. He was a member of the Campbell County Crop Improvement organization. He was a member of the Herreid Senior Citizens and also Board President. He was also a member of the Campbell County Fire District and served as Vice Chairman since the formation of the local district. He was Vice Chairman of the Linton Community Hospital Board. Vern was very active in the Centennial Committee and all School Reunion committees over the years.

Vern was grateful for having shared his life with Ethel for 61 years. His children Jodie (Jeff) Holm of Denison, IA, Shirley (David) Dalueg of New Ulm, MN, Keith Ochsner of Phoenix, AZ, and Steven (Barbara) Ochsner of Fort Collins, CO. Eight grandchildren: Jessmyn Holm, Joshua Holm, Brooke (Justin) Dauer, Megan Dalueg, Samuel Ochsner, Kate Ochsner, Alexander Ochsner, and Allison Ochsner. His grandchildren were the love of his life, yet in life and in death, his only comfort was that he belonged to his faithful Savior Jesus Christ.

## **Tom Ochsner**

Thomas Nils Ochsner, 66, died suddenly on Friday, Oct. 2, 2020, in Aberdeen when a train collided with the trailer on the grain truck he was driving. He was rescued from the truck and taken to Avera St. Luke's Hospital, but he died shortly thereafter. Tom's life was characterized by his unwavering faith in one day meeting his Savior face to face, which comforts his family greatly.

Tom was born in Eureka in 1954 on April Fools' Day, a fact he enjoyed (and made use of) throughout his life. He grew up with his parents and three siblings on a farm near Herreid, where he

raised lambs and was active in 4-H. He graduated from Herreid High School with the Class of 1972. While a Yellowjacket athlete, he was a basketball player and earned medals at the SD State Track Meet. After graduating from the South Dakota School of Mines in 1976 with a degree in Mining Engineering, he took several engineering jobs before landing in San Antonio, Texas.

He met Bonnie, the love of his life, who became his wife a week before Christmas in 1981. He never tired of telling the story of how they met and married, and part of that story is he warned Bonnie that she was marrying a farmer at heart. Thus, she wasn't entirely surprised when Tom said he wanted to take over the farm after having followed his engineering work through Nevada and New Mexico and back to Texas. They moved to Herreid from Texas with their two children in June of 1992.

Tom was active in his church and community while his children grew up there; limited examples include serving on the school board and as a church elder at First Reformed Church (Herreid). He farmed there until 2008 when he again took up engineering in Riverton, Wyo. He once again took up farming in 2017 when he and Bonnie relocated to Aberdeen.

His life was characterized above all by his extraordinary capacity for unequivocal friendship, to him as natural as breathing. He was the friend of the friendless, encircling the outsider with his warmth, compassion, storytelling, joviality, occasional bossiness and his wealth of fishing rods. He was perceptive, but also created a sense of belonging and inclusion in his active world by instinct, emboldening his children and others by example. Around him, people felt that they belonged, no matter where else they didn't belong. He will be sorely missed by the expansive network of people he befriended.

Tom is survived by his wife of nearly 40 years, Bonnie; two children: Sarah (Silvio Reichmuth) Ochsner and Jordan (Haruna Miyagawa) Ochsner; two siblings: Robert (Sue) Ochsner and Kristi Ochsner; one granddaughter, Alva Reichmuth; one sister-in-law, Veronica Lachappelle; eight nieces; and one nephew.

## C. Report of the Executive Committee's Report of Synod

Office of the Stated Clerk

Rev. David Fagrey 5626 Haines Ave Rapid City, SD 57701 dfagrey@gmail.com

January 14, 2021

ATT: Classes Clerks RE: Minutes of Synod Report

Dear Brothers in Christ,

In reviewing the minutes of the 274th Synod, there are several items that the Classes should take note of, but none that require action by the Classes:

1. Since last year's Synod Meeting convened as a delegated assembly, via Zoom, as per our agreement according to Executive Circular 273.3, that "a delegated body should restrict itself only to necessary business," we took action only on such items as required our attention before the 2021 Synod.
2. The 275th Annual Session of the Synod of the RCUS is scheduled to meet May 17-20, 2021, at Trinity Reformed Church, Sioux Falls, SD.
3. The following two overtures from the 274th Synod were postponed until the 275th Synod Meeting:

a. According to Standing Ecumenical, Recommendation 2 (see 2020 Synod Abstract, page 74): "That Overture #22 be tabled until the 2021 meeting of the RCUS Synod. Seconded and carried."

**[Overture #22:** The SCC overtures Synod that membership in ecumenical organizations and fraternal relations be re-evaluated by the Permanent Interchurch Relations Committee and re-affirmed by Synod once every three years. Grounds: 1) This is how the Synod operates in other areas such as continuing support for Seminaries; 2) This allows the Synod to be able to discuss openly the benefits, merit, or shortcomings of the relationships, which currently is unavailable. 3) This provides an active element of oversight for and participation in these bodies and relationships. 4) Synod ought not approve things by passing a budget for a committee. 5) Every Synod has the right to re-evaluate past Synodical decision, it is especially important when it comes to

membership in other bodies.]

b. According to Standing Judicial, Recommendation 1 (see 2020 Synod Abstract, pages 78-79), “That Overture #23 [to establish a permanent Communications committee] be postponed until the 2021 Synod meeting.

**[Overture #23: Esteemed Fathers and Brothers,**

The undersigned delegates respectfully overture the following:

1. That the Synod establish a permanent Communications Committee to work with the other committees of synod to communicate to the general membership and to the world at large about the work of the RCUS. The general scope and work shall be as follows:

a. The Communications Committee shall work with the other committees of Synod to develop and disseminate materials that may be used by our local congregations to promote the work of the RCUS, such as missions, benevolences, and giving.

b. The Communications Committee shall, as appropriate, publish this content on the RCUS website and through social media.

c. The Website Committee will become a subcommittee within the Communications Committee. The RCUS website design, content, and maintenance duties, along with any integration with the other digital initiatives of the church, will be under the oversight of the Communications Committee.

d. The Communications Committee shall designate from its members two pastors and two elders who will approve the content of the website and social media communications.

(NOTE: it is understood that content already committed to by Synod, such as statements from the Bible, our confessions, and our constitution, do not need specific approval. The precise way these may be posted, however, requires pastoral wisdom and strategy, for which this team would be responsible. Furthermore, this team would be the funnel through which other submitted content would flow--such as updates on RCUS missions, benevolence opportunities, events, etc.)

2. That the Communications Committee build upon the work of the Special Strategic Planning Committee in seeking the best communications platforms for internal communications among RCUS leadership, as well as the broader membership. One of these platforms should be suitable for the committees of Synod and the Classes to securely store and share documents, and serve as a clearing house for synodical and classical work.

3. That the Communications Committee be permitted to recruit additional advisory members from our congregations who have expertise in websites and social media.

4. That the Communications Committee be responsible for raising its own funding this year.

Rev. Kyle Sorensen; Rev. Dan Schnabel; Rev. Doug Schlegel

4. The following two overtures, deemed unnecessary business by the 274th Synod, will be taken up by the 275th Synod:

a. **Overture #15:** The SCC overtures Synod to amend Article 79 of the RCUS Constitution as follows:

Current Article 79:

The annual meeting of a Classis shall be opened with religious services, including the preaching of a sermon by the President, or by one of its members designated by him or by the Classis, after which the roll shall be called; if a quorum is present, the officers for the ensuing year shall be elected, and the business shall proceed according to the Rules of Order prescribed by the Synod.

Proposed changes:

The annual meeting of a Classis shall be **preceded by a prayer of invocation** and opened with religious services, including the preaching of a sermon by the President, or by one of its members designated by him or by the Classis, after which the roll shall be called; **the roll being called**. If a quorum is present, the officers for the ensuing year shall be elected, and the business shall proceed according to the Rules of Order prescribed by the Synod. **Classis shall conduct religious services either during or before its annual meeting, which shall include** the preaching of a sermon by the President, or by one of its members designated by him or by the Classis.

Amended Article 79 would read as follows (above changes included):

The annual meeting of a Classis shall be preceded by a prayer of invocation and opened with the roll being called. If a quorum is present, the officers for the ensuing year shall be elected, and

the business shall proceed according to the Rules of Order prescribed by the Synod. Classis shall conduct religious services either during or before its annual meeting, which shall include the preaching of a sermon by the President, or by one of its members designated by him or by the Classis

Reasons:

1. The goal of this amendment is to allow the Classes greater liberty when scheduling required religious services for their annual meetings, rather than requiring that a service be scheduled to begin the meeting.
2. There are occasions when it may be convenient for a Classis to begin its annual meeting with an afternoon or morning session; e.g., when a licensure examination is on the agenda. However, afternoons and mornings are usually not the best times to schedule worship services since many members of the host church are not available to attend. The proposed amendment would permit greater flexibility to the Classes to open their meetings and conduct business in the afternoon or morning, and still schedule an evening worship service as is typical.
3. By helping the Classes conduct their business in a more timely and efficient manner, the proposed amendment will potentially save money by preventing business from spilling into an additional day, eliminating the need for increased lodging costs.
4. The amendment resolves a logical difficulty in Article 79's current wording. The article states that the annual meeting "shall be opened" with a religious service; however, is it logically consistent to suggest that a Classis meeting can begin before the presence of a quorum has been determined? Current practice argues that the answer to this question is no, since at present a Classis delegate may miss the entire opening service and not be considered late to the meeting, provided he is present for the roll call. This observation illustrates what is already implicitly understood: that Classis meetings in fact open only when the roll is taken and a quorum has been determined. The amended article clears up the difficulty, yet without eliminating the option of scheduling a worship service before the opening roll call.
5. It is appropriate for men of God to call upon the Lord before attending to the business of His church, which is why the amended article calls for a prayer of invocation to be offered before the opening roll is taken.
6. The proposed amendment still requires religious services to be conducted as part of the annual meeting of Classis, and does not require any Classis to discontinue its current practice of scheduling a worship service before the meeting.

b. **Overture #16:** "That the NPC overture the 274th Synod of the RCUS to reconsider the Yes answer in the **Standing Judicial Committee Report of the 273<sup>rd</sup> Synod in recommendation 1**. *Grounds:* This answer is problematic in several ways in that it seems contradictory to the principle of mutual submission to the positions of the RCUS as decisions of the Synod. We believe that the discussion of this was inadequate when it came to the floor due to circumstances and that given the implications and magnitude of this issue there needs to be a more deliberative consideration."

**Standing Judicial Committee Report of the 273<sup>rd</sup> Synod, recommendation 1 (2019 Synod Abstract, pages 72-73):** "Regarding overture 21 from Covenant East Classis, requesting "That Synod make a ruling on the following question: may a church take an action or make a change to its constitution that is contrary to a position of the RCUS?" We answer Yes, but with this explanation:

- a. The constitution of a congregation must be in accordance with the Constitution of the RCUS (Article 10). The Constitution is "the fundamental law for government, doctrine, worship and work" within the RCUS and has "binding authority on all its members, congregations and judicatories." (Preamble to the Constitution)
- b. To be strictly binding upon the whole church, a position of the RCUS must first be approved by a two-thirds vote of the Synod at a stated meeting and ratified by the Classes pursuant to Article 104. See the RCUS Position Paper "The Authority of Position Papers" adopted by the Synod (Abstract 2000:48-50), which states in part, "Should the RCUS desire to make a position strictly binding, it must use the process spelled out in Article 104."
- c. Nevertheless, positions of the RCUS are not to be ignored. Adopted recommendations

of position papers are “authoritative advice to the members” of the RCUS, serving as the RCUS’ “understanding of Holy Scripture and our subordinate ordinances.” Furthermore, the decisions made at Synod, including decisions to adopt position paper recommendations, “set precedents by which we determine what we believe and how we will act together as a mutually submissive confessing body.” (from the “Authority of Position Papers”) As recommendation 2 of that report states, “the expectation should be that when a matter relating to a position taken comes to the judicatory, the adjudication will be consistent with the position taken.”

d. Since the Bible requires that our submission be in the Lord, and since the covenant of membership in the RCUS binds a congregation to the rest of the RCUS, and the covenant of ordination vows binds the church officers to the decisions and authority of the church, when a congregation or its officers believe a position of the RCUS is in error they have the privilege and responsibility to call the RCUS to revisit a position by providing Biblical, confessional, and constitutional arguments through the normal overture process. (See Article 22, Article 49, The 5th vow at the installation of elders and deacons).”

5. Both membership statistics and financial statistics should be according to the calendar year.

6. Please review the Standing Rules of Synod (2020 Synod Abstract, pp.84-87).

7. 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.

8. Standing Ministerial Aid recommendation 8 (2013 Synod 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.

9. 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.

10. Please remember to send necrologies to the Synod clerk in time for Synod.

Respectfully submitted,

David Fagrey

Stated Clerk, RCUS

## D. Executive Committee's Report on the Minutes

Esteemed Brethren,

Three (3) circulars were sent out this past year and the following is a summary of that business. Because no objections were received to the circulars, all the recommendations brought by the Executive Committee became actions of the Classis. We are also including the Executive Committee’s answers to the pertinent Judicial Recommendations of the Northern Plains Classis 2020.

### **Volume 35, Number 1**

The Northern Plains Classis approved the Synodical circular recommendation that the 2020 meeting of the Synod of the RCUS be as a delegated body via teleconference, beginning May 18, 2020 at 10am.

The Revs. Henderson, Lassley, and J. Grossmann and elders Snyder, DeJong, and Earl Mehlhaff were to represent the Northern Plains Classis.

Constitution Article 81 answers were noted from the Grace Reformed Church, Dickinson, North Dakota.

### **Volume 35, Number 2**

Elder Craig Mehlhaff replaced Elder Snyder as one of the three Northern Plains Elder Delegates to the 2020 delegated RCUS Synod.

### **Volume 35, Number 3**

Distributed a proposed agenda and services for the 36<sup>th</sup> annual spring meeting of the Northern Plains Classis with two overtures that were received according to standing rule 8.

**With Regard to the Judicial Committee Recommendations:****Recommendation # 1** from Judicial Committee of Northern Plains Classis 2020

*“That the Executive Committee add to the Executive Committee Report a summary of the interaction with the South Central Classis what transpired with particular regards to those issues impacting the boundaries of the Northern Plains Classis.”*

Seeing that the Executive Committee did not address this recommendation during the 2020 year with a Circular, we will include it in our summary of this year’s Executive Committee Report.

To begin with let me say as chairman of the Committee the main communications came through me, from the Executive Committee of Synod, (Rev. Fagrey, Clerk), as they first contacted me, as well as with the Home Missions Chairman of Synod, (Rev. Harvey Opp), and the South Central Classis President, (Rev. Travis Grassmid).

I received a few emails and phone conversation communicates with the others. **See “Attached Emails” [# 1 - # 2 - # 3]** I am thankful to Elder Fickbohm for sending these to me, as I had deleted them!

As you can easily read, I was made aware of the proper way to go about this matter, [#1 Paragraph 4] but for some reason I did not follow the recommendation, as I personally sought to convince the Executive Committee to permit the SCC to pursue this investigation into the Montana group, WITHOUT CIRCULARIZING IT. Eventually they agreed and the rest is history as we know it.

Forgive me for not heeding the actual process recommended by the RCUS Synod, and as promoted by the SCC President, as they both wanted our Classis Home Missions Committees to talk about it; and then circularize it for a decision by each respective Classis.

I, and yes we, the Executive Committee were in error as we short-circuited this process and thus, brought about the resulting Judicial recommendation and request for a summary of how this all took place.

Thank you to Rev. Hank Bowen for seeing the error of the Executive Committee and for apprising us of the proper authority and jurisdiction of the Executive Classis of the Northern Plains in regards to pursuing Mission possibilities.

**Recommendation # 3** of Judicial Committee NPC 2020 meeting to Executive Committee:

*“That given the shrinking borders of the Northern Plains Classis, the limited opportunities and resources to increase the number of congregations within our territory, and the fact that the two congregations and now a mission work that should be in the Northern Plains Classis have been designated in the SCC, we would encourage the NP Executive Committee to work on a proposal to synod for them to consider expanding the boundaries of the NP Classis to include the whole of the Dakotas.”*

Here is our proposal:

The Northern Plains Classis overtures the 2021 Synod of the RCUS to expand the boundaries of the Northern Plains Classis to include the whole of the Dakotas.”

Respectfully Submitted,  
The Executive Committee

**E. Treasurer's Report and Auditing Committee Report**

*See the Appendix of this Abstract for the Treasurer's Report.*

**X. Parochial Reports of Ministers****Parochial Report of Rev. Hank Bowen**

Beloved Congregation of First Reformed Church,

In **Ecclesiastes 7:13–14**, the preacher records this thought: *Consider the work of God; For*

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who can make straight what He has made crooked? <sup>14</sup>In the day of prosperity be joyful, But in the day of adversity consider: Surely God has appointed the one as well as the other, so that man can find out nothing that will come after him.

We are called to consider that all that befalls us, the good and the bad, come according to God's will and design. In this, we learn to view all things as the work of God which is fulfilled in every circumstance that we are subjected to. It becomes our challenge not to allow worldly circumstances to undo us, but to trust and to rest in the promises of God. Let us be mindful of the words of Saint Paul who encouraged us to remember that *all things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to His purpose* (Rom. 8:28).

The circumstances of 2020 have brought great challenges to the life of the church. It is not often that I dwell on personal struggles, but this year began with one of the greatest of personal struggles for me and my family. But God is good and spared my daughter and her family to wholeness. Others in our congregation suffered loss, some through sickness and some through tragedy. In this, we have been pressed to resign ourselves to the will of God who promises to comfort hurting hearts.

Covid has pressed us in on every side, physically, socially, politically, and even religiously. There is a shift in the freedom and liberty in America and I suspect that the times may be changing in terms of how the church may pursue the spread of the gospel. For now, we must press on and look to the example of Saint Peter who when told to go and not preach Christ, responded that he would obey God first.

When Covid hit and many churches shut their doors, some willingly and some under government restriction, First Reformed Church's consistory determined to take a different course. The services were made available on Facebook live but we also continued to have our doors open for those who desired to gather as the assembly of God's people. Those who came were encouraged to socially distance; everything was sanitized weekly and people were urged to do what they felt comfortable with. The average attendance dropped from about 80 to 20-25 with the lowest on Easter morning at 11. But soon people began wandering back in when they realized people were coming to worship in the church. Some were cautious and stayed home which was good particularly for our older members who were more vulnerable to this virus. In all the congregation is to be commended for their patience, wisdom, and understanding with each other through this challenge. It is the mark of being in Christ that we love one another with understanding. Many congregations throughout the country have had to deal with divisions over being shut down, wearing masks, and other things that are simple challenges from Covid that deserve patience and understanding within the body of Christ.

The impact that has been experienced has been minimal in some regards. Our VBS and Missionfest were canceled due to concerns surrounding Covid; we have not been able to visit the nursing home or hold our chapels, but new ways were found to meet some of those things that were lost. This has resulted in the expansion of our ministry reach. One might think that the minister would have less work with the Covid restrictions, but it has been the opposite.

We expanded the Coffee Chat and Live streaming services from a Sunday only to a daily 30-minute live stream Monday through Thursday and Sunday. This has put more pressure on my time for the preparation and delivery of these ministries. But that has been a good thing that seems to be yielding really good fruit in the lives of many within the congregation as well as many who have become regular in participation from other parts of the country.

But this has made it necessary to deal with technical needs to pull this off. So far this has been handled with devices that deliver but at a low level of sophistication demanding a great deal of my attention. Because of the positive way this new ministry impacted what we do at First Church, a Social Media Committee was created to make this more effective going forward. The three-person committee researched what is needed and are implementing equipment upgrades that will soon be in place. This coming year we have also contracted with Adapt Church Media to upgrade our website to a WordPress format to give us greater flexibility and presentation. The website has been an active tool for the congregation with about 2,500 hits this past year. I am thankful to the Consistory who have committed the necessary resources to meet these pressing needs and bring them into current standards.

Given the many hindrances of 2020, Patty and I were unable to take any vacations. This resulted in my preaching 52 of the 54 services. The elders did graciously fill in for me on two Sundays in November when I had my hip replaced. God was gracious in a quick recovery that went well. We



began the year finishing our study of the Sermon on the Mount, spent the Summer on Psalm 26 through 33, and then ended with a series on understanding the nature of trials from James 1, followed by an Advent series on Luke 1 and 2. The change to a Christmas Eve Service from Christmas morning was welcomed and saw a good attendance.

I was able to provide 52 radio programs produced for Pause for Thought heard for 15 minutes every Sunday morning on AM 1420 at 8:30. Because of my hip, I did not participate at the Heidelberg Camp, but the congregation did contribute a special offering to the camp as well as sending two counselors and several campers.

The Covid situation has also increased the participation in the Wings Chapels because players are not allowed jobs this year. Since they are all at the rink with nothing to do after practice the Chapels have averaged 15-18 players each week going through the Gospel of John. In the past, the group has been 6-8 players. Many have also noted that 12-15 players are joining in prayer after the game before leaving the ice and some players from other teams have begun to join them. This has drawn the attention of the crowd of fans in such a way the Lord is using this as a unique way of witness.

Our Coffee chat was by design a focus on the New Testament chronologically that was greatly expanded from too short of a time to cover the week's readings on Sunday morning to about 30 minutes for each reading Monday through Thursday with the last reading on Sunday morning. This has been enjoyed by usually about ten while live-streaming but then usually by the evening averages about 50. For 2021 we are working our way through the Old Testament history books a chapter per session.

Changes in our membership included two baptisms with the birth of Lincoln Wanner and Bjorn Wurgler. Olivia Morlock did an excellent job on her confirmation exam, and Tom and Bonnie Ochsner were added to our membership. We were greatly saddened by the tragic and untimely death of Tom in early October. His funeral evidenced the close alliance of the Northern Plains Classis as I ministered the funeral service in Herried followed by Dr. Robert Grossmann doing the committal service of his dear friend. Eileen Burrer was also called home to be with the Lord in February. Two members were dismissed to other congregations.

The success of our ministry here at first would not be possible without those who use their gifts for the benefit of all of us. This includes everything from the diligence of some faithfully cleaning the building, mowing the lawns, and seeing the snow is cleared for Sunday; others doing things almost daily around the building, or providing beautiful arrangements for the pots as we come in the front door; a couple of our ladies regularly and seasonally decorate the church; Elders Craig Mehlhaff, Bruce Kappes, and Doug Haak capably fill the pulpit when needed; Elder Kappes also diligently stays on top of the financial aspects of the ministry; still others faithfully engage our young members in Sunday School, and the excellent ministry of music from our organist and pianist each week assist us in our corporate singing.

In 2021 the consistory has committed to having student David Voytek serve a ten-week internship which I will be around to oversee. During this time I will be on a sabbatical to focus on work for my DMin through Heidelberg Theological Seminary that I resumed in 2010 after taking a break due to the time constraints in assuming the Aberdeen charge.

I will end by saying that even in the strain that has complicated the circumstances of ministry at First Reformed Church in 2020 I believe the body of Christ has grown even closer as a congregation and we have witnessed the goodness of God even in and through this time of struggle.

Your pastor,  
Rev. Hank Bowen

## **Parochial Report of Rev. Dave Irwin**

Dear brethren in Christ Jesus,

While we have lost many saints in our community and in our church over the last year and a half, yet both the Church and the march of history goes on. We find in God's history, times of blessing, and times of judgment. According to **Isaiah 57:1-2**, one of the signs of approaching judgment is when God removes an unusually high number of His saints from this world in a short period of time. This, among many other changes we see around us, can lead us to expect a very trying period

of time for Christians in our nation, and God, in His mercy, has removed many believers before a time of judgment falls. Yet, God promises that times of judgment and hardship are not forever. There is a tomorrow, and there will be a future time of blessing, forgiveness, restoration, and healing. The wicked will be dealt with by His own methods, and the humble righteous will survive and even thrive. Those who grab power and seek to suppress righteousness may appear successful for a season, but God promises that they will have no blessing, no lasting presence, no peace, and no rest. We, as God's people through faith in Christ Jesus, must endure with patience whatever the coming days ahead may bring. In dark times, we can be a beacon of light and hope for those around us. And, we must endure with the knowledge, the expectation, and the hope, that God will preserve both the Gospel and His church in this world (Psalms 100:5 & 117:2), and will gather all His saints into His kingdom when this world is at its end. As we are told in **Isaiah 57:21**, there will be no peace for the wicked; but we who believe, having been justified through faith, already have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ (Rom. 5:1).

It has been my honor and privilege to serve the flock of Christ at Salem Reformed Church in Ashley, ND through the year 2020. As minister of Word and Sacrament, I have led an estimated 46 worship services in our church this past year, including our New Year's Day and Christmas program services. We missed 7 in-person worship services due to Covid-related shut downs in late March, April, and early May. However, during that time, I created 7 video worship services to air over the local cable TV channel during our time of closure, and attempted a live-stream devotional service on Easter Sunday. Sunday morning sermons this past year mostly covered the Gospel of John chapters 17 through 21 and Paul's Epistle to the Philippians. We celebrated the Lord's Supper three times in the past year (March 1, July 19, and October 25). There were no baptisms, no weddings, and no confirmations in 2020. We held adult Sunday School an estimated 15 times, alternating between Genesis and Romans. I officiated over at least 15 funeral services in 2020, including for church members Louise Dockter on April 18 and Reinhold Dockter on June 6.

Outside of church, I estimate that I held around 10 or so Bible studies and somewhere around 3 to 5 chapel services at the Nursing Home, most of which occurred in the first quarter of the year, before the covid pandemic closed off access to Ashley Medical Center. I conducted a minimum of at least three sets of end-of-life visitations at AMC after the covid shut-downs. Most of Ashley's community services were canceled in 2020, but I did get to preach at the community Thanksgiving service, and led the Salvation Army bell-ringing campaign. I did not preach at any other church's MissionFests this past year. We broadcast 52 "Start the Week" radio programs over KSJB-AM 600 in 2020, with 36 being new, original programs and 16 being repeats. The programs focused mostly on passages from Mark, the Psalms, Matthew, and the major Old Testament Prophets.

We lost two members through death this past year (Louise Dockter and Reine Dockter). No new members were joined to our church in 2020, and none were erased from our rolls.

With the Lutheran and Baptist churches in town being without pastors for much of the year (especially during the Covid-19 crisis), and the other church's pastors living out of town, I have served much of this year in the role of "the village parson," which is one reason why I've performed so many funerals. I count it a privilege and a pleasure to be able to serve the needs of not only the congregation of Salem Reformed Church, but also of the other Christians in the Ashley area. I look forward to continuing to serve the Ashley congregation in 2021.

Grace and Peace in Christ –

Rev. David B. Irwin

## **Parochial Report of Rev. Michael Voytek**

Fathers and Brothers in Christ,

As I have meditated on the biblical discipleship manual known as the book of James, I noted the exhortations to exercise patience and to persevere in the faith. Consider the following, "*My brethren, count it all joy when you fall into various trials, knowing that the testing of your faith produces patience. But let patience have its perfect work, that you may be perfect and complete, lacking nothing. If any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask of God, who gives to all liberally and without reproach, and it will be given to him. But let him ask in faith, with no doubting, for he who doubts is like a wave of the sea driven and tossed by the wind. For let not that man suppose that he will re-*

ceive anything from the Lord; he is a double-minded man, unstable in all his way.” (James 1:2-8) and “Therefore be patient, brethren, until the coming of the Lord. See how the farmer waits for the precious fruit of the earth, waiting patiently for it until it receives the early and latter rain. You also be patient. Establish your hearts, for the coming of the Lord is at hand. Do not grumble against one another, brethren, lest you be condemned. Behold, the Judge is standing at the door! My brethren take the prophets, who spoke in the name of the Lord, as an example of suffering and patience. Indeed, we count them blessed who endure. You have heard of the perseverance of Job and seen the end intended by the Lord – that the Lord is very compassionate and merciful.” (James 5:7-11). In the second passage, James used the metaphor of farming to remind us that the farmer must exercise patience over time and may face various trials (drought, disease, insects, etc.) that come as he or she waits to reap the harvest. We will keep this instruction in mind as we consider what God has done among the saints of Grace Reformed Church this past year and as we look forward to the future.

We could use the opening line of the book “A Tale of Two Cities” by Charles Dickens to describe the crazy events of 2020. “It was the best of times, it was the worst of times, it was the age of wisdom, it was the age of foolishness, it was the epoch of belief, it was the epoch of incredulity, it was the season of Light, it was the season of Darkness, it was the spring of hope, it was the winter of despair, we had everything before us, we had nothing before us, we were all going direct to Heaven, we were all going direct the other way.” We, as a nation, started out the year with great hope and then COVID-19 struck, and our world will not be the same. We at Grace Reformed Church felt the impact of this virus as our growth and outreach was hindered. In the political sphere we witnessed the attempted impeachment of the president of the United States and an election near the end of the year that possibly will result in an economic downturn. “It was the worst of times.” Yet, at the same time, the Lord has sustained us spiritually and financially. Furthermore, through the sacrificial giving of the church members as well as supporting churches and individuals, our Lord enabled us to purchase a building that has been a great blessing in so many ways. “It was the best of times.”

Throughout the year, the Lord blessed us with the fruit of His Word through the preaching and teaching ministry of the church. For example, on Sunday mornings, we began to work through select portions of Genesis and Exodus in a series titled “Back to Basics.” During the Sunday evening bible study, we have had lively discussions on a variety of topics as well as covering the points brought up in the sermons. Another important part of the teaching ministry of the church that should be mentioned is the confirmation preparation of the youth of the congregation. It is my joy to report that our current confirmation class stands at six youth who are diligently pursuing a deeper understanding of the truth as well as preparing to make a credible profession of faith.

In 2020 we experienced some gains (two families are currently attending the new members class) and some losses (one family requested to be removed from the membership of the church). Thus, our membership statistics for the end of the year show a net loss of three communicate members and 4 baptized children. At the same time, despite the COVID virus, the Lord has seen fit to bless us with many visitors including four families with children of various ages. On January 24<sup>th</sup> of this new year, we had 19 visitors and on January 31<sup>st</sup> we had 23 visitors attend the morning worship services. Please pray that the Lord will add these visitors to the church for the sake of the advance of the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ and for the lost souls in our communities and the world. Also please pray for the raising up of church officers, especially deacons (unfortunately during the year our only deacon resigned and left the church). To this end, the Spiritual Council has been in discussion about initiating a leadership training class to encourage development of maturity and service in the congregation.

On that note, our Lord has blessed the church through the exercise of the gifts of the members of the church such as the weekly snacks and monthly shared lunch and the weekly maintenance of the facility. I would be remiss if I failed to mention the great contribution of Nick and Justin Huizinga in providing computer equipment, expertise, and the faithful recording of the sermons to enable us to broadcast the preaching of the Word of God to the ends of the earth. Furthermore, Susan Huizinga and David Voytek blessed us with the exercise of their musical gifts to assist us in our worship of God. With David now attending seminary at MARS, please pray that the Lord would provide a replacement to assist Susan in this ministry. There are many others who have faithfully served Christ and His church through their prayers, financial giving, and service of love and mercy.

Another aspect of the ministry that the Apostle Paul mentioned in his charge to the Ephesian

elders recorded in Acts chapter 20 was that of oversight of the flock. This responsibility includes both the faithful proclamation of the Gospel, the proper administration of the sacraments and Christian discipline (Belgic Confession, chapter 29). I am pleased to report that the Spiritual Council takes this responsibility very seriously, being zealous to guard and protect the flock. The Lord's table is properly guarded, with all visitors who desire to partake interviewed prior to the service. Furthermore, the elders are in the process of visiting each member family in fulfillment of their pastoral responsibilities.

As we have been challenged in the past by our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ to be His witnesses throughout the whole world (Acts 1:8), we have faithfully attempted to be lights and witnesses to the lost both far and near. We do so through our website ([grcdickinson.org](http://grcdickinson.org)), Facebook presence, the mailing of invitation postcards to the surrounding neighborhood, the advertisement in the Dickinson Press and the phone directory, and the uploading of the sermons on [sermonaudio.com](http://sermonaudio.com). Please pray for the Lord's blessing in this important area of outreach.

On a personal note, last year your servant taught one student at City Seminary in Sacramento (independent study) and three students of Heidelberg Theological Seminary (Old Testament Poetics and Prophets). He is also currently pursuing a Doctor of Ministry degree with Heidelberg Theological Seminary. He not only serves on two committees of the classis, but also on the Synod Foreign Ministries Committee as well as on the board of Reformation Gospel Ministries. Please pray for the Lord's grace in these endeavors.

I will close with the blessing that the Apostle Paul gave to the believers at Corinth; "*Finally, brothers, rejoice. Aim for restoration, comfort one another, agree with one another, live in peace; and the God of love and peace will be with you...The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ and the love of God and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all*" (2 Corinthians 13:11, 14).

Your fellow bondservant in Christ,  
Rev. Michael Voytek

## **Parochial Report of Rev. James Grossmann**

Esteemed Fathers and Brothers,

2020 has been a year of trusting God's providence through new situations. This has been a year where accomplishing one third of normal takes three times as long. Many ministry leaders have been overwhelmed by the extra work this year. I am reminded of Proverbs 6:6-8, "Go to the ant, you sluggard! Consider her ways and be wise, Which, having no captain, Overseer or ruler, Provides her supplies in the summer, And gathers her food in the harvest." No matter what is going on in the world around us, we are called to faithfully labor as God's servants in this world and He will use us as a part of His witness in this world.

It has again been an honor for me to serve as Minister of the Word at Eureka Reformed Church over the past year. I have been blessed to preach for 50 Sunday worship services. Some of these were services designed to provide worship over KOLY either during inclement weather or due to COVID. We sought to provide an opportunity to worship for all of our congregation through the methods God has given us. Our New Year service was snowed out. We celebrated Good Friday and Easter with services over KOLY. We worshipped together on Ascension day, Thanksgiving, and Christmas. We also hosted 2 weddings and 1 baptism this year. My sermons have been largely in series format from Mark, Isaiah, Matthew, Titus, Deuteronomy, the Armor of God (Ephesians 6), and I Kings. Due to the pandemic, we have been providentially hindered from our normal practice of holding worship at the Eureka Health Care center since February. Again, due to the pandemic, we were hindered from holding Sunday evening Bible Studies. We took some weeks off of Adult Sunday School, but have resumed in recent months. We have concluded our study of Forgiveness and have been working through a study on prayer.

Over the past year, we have lost four members to death: Wilbert Schnabel's funeral was held March 12<sup>th</sup>. Edmund Opp's funeral was held July 21, led by Rev. Irwin. Hulda Opp's funeral was held September 30<sup>th</sup>. Blake Mehlhaff's funeral was also held September 30<sup>th</sup>. With these changes, we stand at 99 communicant members and 9 baptized members.

We have celebrated the Lord's Supper three times this year, however, we were unable to offer

shut-in communion to our members due to concerns about COVID. The percent of our eligible membership which participated in the Lord's Supper was drastically reduced due to these issues.

Again, due to COVID, we were unable to hold our Annual Vacation Bible School. I have encouraged prayer that we will be able to hold VBS this coming summer.

Our Childrens Sunday School consists of 11 young men and two young women. Our Catechism class continues with 3 young men. We continue in prayer for blessing through these responsibilities to train our young people in the basics of the Christian faith.

One area that suffered this year is my labors as Stated Clerk of the Northern Plains Classis. It was not until recently that I finally produced a the 2020 Abstract, I will have them available in hard copy form at this meeting. I still need to finish up the official minutes of our 2020 Classis meeting.

We continue to support a student in the Philippines through Heidelberg Theological Seminary. I have not personally made much progress on my path toward my Doctor of Ministry degree this year. I hope to focus back on this in the coming year.

As always, I pray that I have accomplished an acceptable job for the glory of our great savior and for the extension of His Church. On all of these items, I request your prayers that I may be able to balance my labors for Classis and Synod with faithfully ministering to God's Church in Eureka.

I rejoice that many of our have joined in reading through the Bible a second time over a 2-year period. I continue to challenge God's people to read it faithfully.

I also continue my challenge to consistent in prayer. God uses our prayers to bring about His will in His world. Our shut-ins specifically need prayer at this time. As your pastor, I rely on prayers for guidance and understanding as I bring God's word. I seek prayer for our youth Prayer for opportunities of outreach into the community. Prayer for our denomination. Prayer that God would use our Radio broadcast of our worship services to spread His Gospel into our surrounding area. Prayer that we would be able to hold VBS in the coming year. Prayer that God would use our Mid-Winter conference and the other opportunities He supplies to bring His Gospel into this community.

God has indeed been faithful to us as a congregation through the new situations of 2020. May He richly bless Eureka Reformed Church in 2021.

Respectfully Submitted,  
James Grossmann

## Parochial Report of Rev. Cody Schwichtenberg

Esteemed brothers in the Lord Jesus Christ,

As I write this report, I am reminded of the statement from the Heidelberg Catechism, "*All things come not by chance, but by His fatherly hand.*" This is a truth that has comforted me over this past year. It has been a year of adversity for the body of Christ in Herreid and abroad. If it were not for the truth that God is in control and is using trials for our good, we all would have been crushed under the weight of this unusual year. If I could describe this year, I would say that it was a roller-coaster full of ups and downs with a few twists and turns sprinkled in.

Let me start with the downs on this wild ride of 2020. Immediately following classis last year, our church shut down for 2 months. There was so much uncertainty with Covid-19 that the consistory believed that this was the best course of action. After we opened up in the middle of May, it took until February of 2021 to have nearly all our members back in worship at the same time. With the shutdown, we did not have our annual activities and educational opportunities. I would say the children were hurt by this the most as they missed out on a 2 months of their catechism classes along with vacation bible school and our Reformation Day party. Along with the youth, the elderly were hit pretty hard. Members are still locked down and are unable to see loved ones or have regular worship services. Even those that allow visitation are restricted by time and contact. It is not the same talking with them 12 feet apart and having a clear shower curtain separating the elderly and their family members. We also had two members John and Vern Ochsner die during the lockdown which I was unable to see during that time. All this breaks my heart, yet I am reminded, "*All things come not by chance, but by His fatherly hand.*"

Now to the ups on the Covid Coaster. If all I saw was the bad of 2020, I would be in the wrong as we have seen the mercy and grace of God in the midst of trial. We did have many members who were sick (including our eldest member), yet all except one recovered from the illness. That in of itself is evidence of God's fatherly hand. Though stressful, members of our church have been gracious to one another. There were certainly differences of opinion, each members strived to not judge one another nor start divisions. No one is saying, "I am a masker" or "I am a non-masker." As we pressed on, the Lord added to our number as a church. Brady and Faith Vander Vorst joined in July, which I had the privilege of baptizing Brady and his daughter Hadley. Then the Lord blessed them with another child Lainey at the end of December. Then a month and a half later, Matt and Corrina Beck were blessed with their third child Maecie MaryAnn Beck. As a pastor, I am excited to baptize these two little ones in the coming months. All this fills my heart with joy knowing, "*All things come not by chance, but by His fatherly hand.*"

Although it was an unusual year, there were still plenty of opportunities to preach the Gospel of Jesus Christ. In our normal services, I preached a series on Samson and up to Chapter 12 in the Book of Romans. In Bible Study, we went through Ephesians and are currently walking through Revelation. In Sunday School, we have been considering biblical hermeneutics while putting it in practice by reading through the Book of Exodus. Outside the normal services and studies, I was able to be a part of two missionfest services. One missionfest was in Sioux Falls, and the other was in Garner. A few other ministry activities included a monthly radio devotional, various articles in our local newspaper, and a few church services in some nearby Reformed churches.

What else can be said, but to give thanks to our God for His providence and caring heart toward His people? "*Whatever evil He sends upon us in this troubled life, He will turn to our good; for He is able to do it, being Almighty God, and willing also, being a faithful Father.*"

Respectfully Submitted,  
Rev. Cody Schwichtenberg

### **Parochial Report of Rev. Phil Poe**

Esteemed Brothers in Christ,

What used to be called Harvest Reformed Church now has a new name – Christ Reformed Church. The vote for the new name came at a Special Meeting of the congregation in September. Everyone now seems happy with our new name.

I believe God has blessed Christ Reformed Church with a solid Consistory. Elder Jim Snyder and Deacons Elton Dockter and Sam Hoverson are men of integrity who sincerely care about the Lord's Church. I thank God for such men who take their offices seriously according to the Scriptures. When I am not able to be in the pulpit due to vacation time or illness, the congregation (and I) am thankful for Elder Snyder's ability and willingness to fill-in. Our two deacons are very conscientious about their duties. These are things that contribute to the well-being and happiness of the church. God be praised that I have been able to enjoy these pleasant circumstances for the past eleven years.

In early 2020 we began meeting in a new place. It is located in an apartment building that has a chapel built into it, complete with Sunday School rooms, kitchen, and storage space. We share the space with a small Lutheran church – Faith Lutheran. We meet for worship at 11:00 and we cover up the Lutheran trappings until the service is over at which time we courteously restore the Lutheran look. So far the arrangement has been a happy one.

Our worship is usually completed by 12:15 at which time we break for fellowship and snacks. Around 12:30 we convene our Bible School classes. We currently have only three classes: small children (ages 3-9) taught by Karen Poe; older children (ages 10-18) taught by Elton Dockter; post-high school (taught by the Pastor). As you can see, this is not a good arrangement in terms of age grouping for the children. The class rooms are packed out due to the size of the classes. Recently we have been blessed with several new families with children. If a couple more families with chil-

dren show up, where will we put everyone? Obviously, we will need more teachers and more space. I still believe that Christ Reformed Church in Minot needs her own building in order to grow and serve the Lord's people more adequately. All in God's time.

Right now, I am preaching through the Book of Revelation on Sunday mornings. In the Adult Bible class I continue to teach Old Testament History. We are presently in I Samuel, dealing with the lives of Saul and David.

My current Confirmation Class includes Isaac Dockter, Joel Milam, Carissa Poe and Kelcie Poe. They are good students of theology, and all four are doing quite well in their memory work. The parents are very supportive which is a big help.

In 2020 we received into the membership Mario and Ivy Garza who transferred by letter from the Reformed congregation in Mexico where they also use the 3 Forms of Unity. We recently have four new families visiting.

Sam Hoverson was ordained to the diaconate. Together we went through Berkhof's Systematic Theology. Sam is a thorough student of Bible and Theology and eager to serve.

On March 1, 2020 Ethan Dockter and Savannah Milam were confirmed as confessing members of Christ Reformed Church.

I am happy to say that our missions giving continues. In addition to denominational giving, we sent \$1,000 to Nap Narag in the Philippines for relief from Covid lockdown and typhoon damages. We also help support Westminster Biblical Missions and Nap Narag with additional monthly congregational giving. I am very thankful that CRC is able and willing to be involved in Missions overseas. God is faithful and makes all grace abound!

August 30, we enjoyed Mission Fest with Rev. Mike Voytek as the preacher for two services. The Mission Fest afternoon offering was \$1,000 for the work in Dickinson. The Consistory matched with another \$1,000 from our Diaconal Aid Fund.

In December, I suffered a mini-stroke (TIA) with 2 days in the hospital. Thankfully, there was no serious damage. They discovered that I am a diabetic which condition caused the stroke. However, through changes of lifestyle (therapy, diet and exercise) I am about back to normal. The only seeming residual effect is lower energy and tiredness that I didn't use to experience.

Karen and I have been discussing possible retirement for several months leading up to my stroke. At the age of 73, a stroke, a diabetic condition and family needs in Ohio, we believe the time has come to retire. This fact was announced at the Annual Meeting on February 7. My last Sunday will be around June 27, 2021. We have a great deal of planning and work to do so please keep us in your prayers.

I can truly say that my eleven years in Minot have been very pleasant. This church really is a family and love abounds. It has been a joy and an honor to serve here!

Remember the consistory in your prayers as they begin the search for a new minister. May God continue to be glorified in the future of Christ Reformed Church!

Respectfully Submitted,  
Rev. Phillip Edwin Poe

## **Parochial Report of Rev. Paul Henderson**

**Esteemed Soldiers in the Lord's Army:** Hope began the year as most years begin, with the "hope" for growth for all of us, that is, for His kingdom to come—both within our hearts & with additions of families or individuals to our church family. (H.C.123) Well brothers, the growth as far as numbers go was easy, but the growth within, who knows? For at times I "felt" we all did, but at other times, it seemed it was back to square one! Yet I suppose when one is in the midst of the battle, in the middle of spiritual warfare and is being ever sanctified, it is difficult to discern or gage one's actual spiritual growth! Yet, I know the Lord will have His way! He will see His own beloved children grow!

Now to be sure, I am not going to rehearse the entire year, except to say that after suspending 'in-person' worship services for six weeks, and the other activities for over ten (10) months, we did the whole Facebook internet thing, & survived! No, we cannot know the extent of the influence or help this has been to our members, or to the others outside our little fellowship, but we pray the Lord

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will continue to use it for His glory and the strengthening of saints in many other places as long as our Lord permits! We have since February 7th, returned to a full schedule of activities. AM Sunday Worship & Sunday school for the covenant children, and fellowship time for the adults. Sunday PM Youth Fellowship activities for our younger children, as well as an Adult study using Rev. Robert Booth's work entitled: "*Children of the Promise: A Biblical Case for Infant Baptism*". On Wednesday Evenings we are currently going through I Thessalonians. Elder Fickbohm and I also conducted visitations to our members over the last couple of months. Of course there were the regular visits, lunch outings and what not as they were needed. I was privileged to provide Burial services for two saints who were not members of the church but who were, neighbors and friends.

I preached through the second half of Ephesians [*Armor of God*] – Psalm 23 [*10 sermons-using Phillip Keller's help!*] – Ruth [*Perhaps my favorite series of all!*], various Psalms & other selective passages; and have been going through the Book of Acts, [*a truly relevant book for our times!*]

Now as far as the actual numbers go, we '*broke even*' in regards to communicant members, even as we gained one new blessed 'non-communicant' member! Thus, we lost one communicant member by transfer & gained one by profession of faith! Mr. Silas Henderson married Miss Jena Lassley and they now reside in Watertown and are members of Covenant Reformed Church.

Mr. Lane Nelson, after his bout with cancer and many treatments, became a member of Hope by profession of faith in November! As noted above, we also gained a new covenant child with the birth of Miss Evangelina Faith Fickbohm on July 1<sup>st</sup>, daughter of Matt & Heather Fickbohm. *{Please note, that though Mrs. Irene Olivier's moving to Brandon will not be recorded in this year's statistics, we do recognize her absence among us & wish her the best as she sets out on this new adventure}* Furthermore, we were tremendously blessed with the marriage of two of our members, Mr. Dylan Mehlhaf & Miss Amber Van Otterloo on September 4<sup>th</sup>! We are so thankful to the Lord that the Mehlhaf's have made their home here in Pierre!

Thankfully, Elder Matt Fickbohm was also elected as Elder for another three years at our 2020 January meeting! Matt & I continue to carry on the Lord's business with regular [almost] monthly meetings. We both continue to pray to the great Head of the Church to raise up other qualified men to serve as officers here at Hope, as we have been without another Elder for two years now, and Deacons for about 6 plus years! Matt '*Quadruples*' as Elder-Deacon-Treasurer, as well as Youth Fellowship coordinator with Heather's help!

Another highlight of the year for our congregation, (Pastor Henderson & family, as well as Elder Fickbohm), was that Heidelberg Youth Camp was held in July, in the midst of the pandemic! The number of campers and counsellors increased, and by God's grace, not one COVID case was reported during or after that week, though there was a couple of bruised or cracked ribs reported! We praise our Lord for this special time of fun, fellowship and blessed time of concentrated study! We also praise our Lord for the labors of our Co-Directors, Matt & Heather Fickbohm, even as they are already making plans for 2021! We look forward to having Heather back with us this summer if the Lord wills!

I would be remiss if I did not give thanks to the Lord for Tina, my wife, and Melinda, my daughter, who have graciously continued to assist us in worship with their beautiful piano playing! Likewise the church was blessed with a new "quilt" banner in the Fellowship Hall which was quilted by Ferne Haddock – It has the words "Alpha & Omega" from Rev. 1: 8!

Wherefore one thing is for sure, our Sovereign Lord and Savior has remained steadfast and faithful through it all, and has been our refuge, help and stay or high tower. As Psalm 94 reminds us, "*Blessed is the man whom You instruct, O LORD, and teach out of Your law, that You may give him rest from the days of adversity, until the pit is dug for the wicked. For the LORD will not cast off His people, nor will he forsake His inheritance.*" {Vss. 12-14}

So in light of the current state of things within this nation after the COVID 19 attack, as well as the unusual and messed up 'political' response it garnered; then also with the election fiasco and trouble we have all witnessed; along with the upgrade in attacks on free speech and a labeling of all dissent, as belonging to 'domestic terrorists' or enemies of the current Executive or Federal state, Hope Reformed, I believe, is doing well!

So fellows soldiers in the Lord's army, what about the year ahead? What is the future of the church family here in Pierre? Indeed, only our heavenly Father truly knows all of the particulars! But, seeing that He not only knows, but also that He has ordained and therefore by His providence,



continues, with His almighty, everywhere present power, to uphold and govern all things, yea, & all creatures as it were, by His hand, such that herbs and grass, rain and drought, fruitful and barren years, meat and drink, health and sickness, riches and poverty, *peace and persecutions*, yea, that all things come not by chance, but by His Fatherly hand, (*Heidelberg Cat. Answer 27*), **WHAT HAVE WE REALLY TO FEAR IN THIS WORLD? NOTHING!**

Only that we should fear the Lord and His holy Name! That is, *we should all humble ourselves under His mighty hand, that He might exalt us in due time, casting our care upon Him, knowing that He truly cares for us!* (1 Peter 5: 6, 7)

In Christ's love,

Rev. Paul H. Henderson

### **Parochial Report of Rev. Michael Lassley**

Fathers and brothers of the Northern Plains Classis,

I believe it would be safe to say that for most people the world over, 2020 was a year of unprecedented inconvenience and suffering; and so, a year along with all of its inconveniences and sufferings for which many are glad to see pass into history and out of mind. However, it would be unfortunate for the Church to do so.

Unfortunate if we were to fail to remember how God's grace was sufficient for us, and how his power was made perfect in weakness. (2 Cor 12.9)

Unfortunate if we were to fail to remember to "boast all the more gladly of our weaknesses, so that the power of Christ may rest upon us." (2 Cor 12.9)

Unfortunate if we were to fail to remember and "rejoice in our [inconveniences and] sufferings, knowing [all the more, that such inconveniences and] suffering produces endurance, and endurance produces character, and character produces hope, and hope does not put us to shame because God's love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit who has been given to us." (Rom 5.3-5)

That 2021 might be a year when dropping hands are lifted up, weak knees strengthen, and paths straightened... that what is lame may not be put out of joint, but rather healed. (Heb 12.12-13) That regardless of whatever our Lord sovereignly brings upon us in 2021, be it through prosperity or adversity, we might be more prepared and less hindered in our calling to take up our crosses follow Christ; all the more willing and ready in 2021 to be inconvenienced and suffer for the sake of him who by his own inconvenience and suffering has saved us and for the sake of all those for whom he has called and commissioned us to make disciples wherever and through whatever he leads us.

Rather than simply forgetting 2020 with all of its inconveniences and sufferings... let us remember.

Among the body of Covenant Reformed Church we remember the grace given us in the preaching of the final fourteen chapters of Acts, the first few chapters of Isaiah and teaching through the final 12 articles of the Belgic Confession of Faith, the Apostle's and Athanasian Creeds, and a series of sermons from the first and second chapters of Luke to commemorate the first Advent of our Lord.

We remember the grace given us in working through the epistles of 1st Corinthians, Philippians, and the Psalms during Bible studies, an overview of the O.T. in our adult Covenant Life and Confirmation groups, the gospel of John in our teen Covenant Life group, instruction in Loving Jesus & Growing in God in our youth Covenant Life group, teaching through book Ecclesiastics and most of the book of Job in Covenant Reformed Youth Fellowship, and instruction in evangelism and seeing Christ in the O.T. in our men's and women's ministries respectively.

We remember this gracious and sovereign providence of God who preserved us in the faith during a year of unprecedented inconveniences and suffering... we remember the sufficiency of his grace and the perfection of his power in our weaknesses and we boast and rejoice, that he is not only our sanctuary and only comfort in body and soul both in life and death... but that through such inconvenience and suffering, he also blessed us to be a blessing and comfort to others in body and soul, both in life and death. For this reason, we boast and rejoice all the more in the steadfast love and faithfulness of our Lord whose hope has not put us to shame.

We remember the COVID pandemic and the subsequent events that unfolded across the entire world, directly impacting our community and congregation along with many of yours in mid-March.

We remember the grace by which our entire congregation were not only physically blessed by not contracting the novel virus and even more spiritually blessed due to the benefit of the necessity of learning and employing live-streaming technology's, which continue to bless us still today; enabling us to reach more people with the gospel and regularly welcome visitors who report of having rst learned of Covenant Reformed Church through such services.

We remember, that even though the world and parts of the church were rocked with conspiracy, fear, and dread throughout 2020 brought about by the inconveniences and sufferings associated with the pandemic... the civil government's conflicting responses, the medical professional's conflicting recommendations, the media's conflicting reports, and the publics conflicting reactions... all exponentially compounded by the rhetoric of an extremely divisive election year.

Despite of all this, we remember the rock upon which our house is built, whose Spirit and Word preserves his Church and makes her to stand firm; commands her... not to "call conspiracy all that this people calls conspiracy, not fear what they fear, nor be in dread. But the LORD of hosts, him you shall honor as holy. Let him be your fear, and let him be your dread." (Isa 8.12–13); a word by which we wait and hope in him rather than joining the choirs of conspiracies, fears, and dreads of those who choose to build their houses upon shifting sand.

We also remember that above being blessed physically and spiritual in such a year of unprecedented inconveniences and suffering, we were blessed to pour ourselves out materially as well...

- blessed not only to exceed our church's annual expenses by \$58.00
- but also to generously maintain our annual support of Heidelberg Theological Seminary's ministries in the Philippines...
- to monetarily support the Gideons International in the distribution of Bibles.
- to monetarily help in carrying the burdens of the Pearl of the Orient Covenant Reformed Church in the Philippines...
- and for the first time in the history of Covenant Reformed Church, to monetarily help carry the burdens of Reformed Faith and Life ministries in South Africa and France...
- and also to monetarily help a sister church in our Classis with the purchase of their own building... all while managing to increase our own building fund as well.

All of this in a year of unprecedented inconvenience and suffering... in which Covenant Reformed Church saw one family move with a job change, two more families ask to be removed from our membership, and two more families simply leave... 14 communing members (two of which were elders) and six non-communing children, 20 in all.

Yet, we were blessed... blessed to pray for and rejoice over the baptism of another covenant child (Beau Bentz), blessed to pray for and rejoice over Mission Fest sermons from Rev. James Grossmann, blessed to pray for and rejoice over the expectation of yet another brand new covenant child (baby Barthel), blessed to pray for and rejoice over another wedding of two covenant children (Silas & Jena Henderson), and blessed to pray for and rejoice over the Lord's addition of three communing members into the body of Christ at Covenant Reformed Church (Tom Bentz, Silas Henderson, & Adam Sytsma).

At the end of this year of unprecedented inconvenience and suffering... we reflect and remember... we are blessed... and continue to be blessed; to be brought further into the book of Isaiah; blessed to begin anew our study of the Heidelberg catechism and the ancient confessions and creeds of the one, true, holy, catholic church into which we (precious and chosen of God) are being built; blessed to be brought further into the books of Job and the Psalms; blessed to be further instructed in an overview of the N.T.; blessed to continue to be instructed in evangelism; blessed to be shown more of Christ in the O.T.; blessed to continue to study God's word and to grow in God's grace; blessed by new visitors, etc, etc... we continue to be blessed... merely of grace and only for the sake of Christ's merits... just as our good and gracious God has revealed to us in his word and through his gospel.

My prayer for Covenant Reformed Church in 2021, the churches of the Northern Plains Classis, the whole of the Reformed Church in the United States, and the whole of the church the world over is this... that no matter what the Lord should inconvenience us with or cause us to suffer in 2021... this ministry of his word, would continue to cause us to remember, the reality of the one, true, absolute, triune, personal, good, and sovereign God and Jesus Christ whom he has sent, and the Holy Spirit whom they have sent... into the darkness of this world... not merely to bless us his people

but to make of us a blessing... in body and soul, both in life and death.

May the Lord, GOD of hosts (Adonai - our sovereign God, YHWH (our personally present & covenantally faithful God of infinite resources far beyond what even heaven and earth can even imagine), the Holy One of Israel, bless us and cause us to remember and never to forget that we have been blessed, are being blessed, and will someday soon be blessed beyond our wildest imaginations... to love him and be with him and one another forever.

On behalf of saints of Covenant Reformed Church,  
The Rev. Michael Lassley

## XI. CONSTITUTIONAL QUESTIONS TO ELDERS

The President asked the Elder delegates that were present the Constitutional Questions from Article 81 of the Constitution of the Reformed Church in the United States. The following are the questions that were read and the answers that were given:

1. *Are the doctrines of the Gospel preached in your charge in their purity, agreeably to the word of God?* **All Elder delegates 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 Elder delegates answered Yes.**
- 3a. *In providing spiritual nurture for the congregation, is visitation faithfully performed?* **All Elder delegates answered Yes, with the exception of the Elder from Pierre who answered No.**
- 3b. *In providing spiritual nurture for the congregation, is Christian discipline faithfully exercised according to the Constitution?* **All Elder delegates answered Yes.**
4. *Are the sacraments of Holy Baptism and the Lord's Supper properly administered in accordance with the constitution?* **All Elder delegates answered Yes.**
- 5a. *In providing for the furtherance of Christian stewardship, are the apportionments for the Classis paid according to the Guidelines for Giving?* **All Elder delegates answered Yes, with the exception of the Elders from Ashley and Pierre who answered No.**
- 5b. *In providing for the furtherance of Christian stewardship, are these monies sent promptly to the Classis treasurer?* **All Elder delegates answered Yes with the exception of the Elders from Herreid who answered No.**
- 5c. *In providing for the furtherance of Christian stewardship, are the apportionments for the Synod paid according to the Guidelines for Giving?* **All Elder delegates answered Yes with the exception of the Elders from Ashley, Herreid, and Pierre who answered No.**
- 5d. *In providing for the furtherance of Christian stewardship, are these monies sent promptly to the Synod treasurer?* **All Elder delegates answered Yes.**
6. *Are the church records properly kept?* **All Elder delegates answered Yes.**
- 7a. *Is the temporal contract between minister and people fulfilled in your charge?* **All Elder delegates answered Yes.**
- 7b. *Is the temporal contract between minister and people adequate to meet his temporal needs?* **All Elder delegates answered Yes.**

## XII. REPORT OF NUMERICAL & FINANCIAL STATISTICS

See the Appendix of the Abstract for this Report.

### **XIII. READING OF THE STANDING RULES**

*The Standing Rules were not read due to a motion to suspend the reading of the standing rules.*

### **XIV. REPORTS FROM CLASSIS FRATERNAL DELEGATES**

*There were none to report.*

### **XV. ADDRESS AND/OR REPORTS OF FRATERNAL DELEGATES & VISITORS**

*There were none to address the body.*

### **XVI. SPECIAL ORDER**

The Classis held a Round Table Discussion on Tuesday Morning at 10:00 am for discussion on the topic “Assessment and discussion of the events of 2020 and the need to prepare for further restrictions against the church.”

### **XVII. REPORTS OF STANDING COMMITTEES**

*Please Note: All recommendations in the Standing Committee reports appear in their final, amended form, and were adopted unless otherwise indicated.*

#### **A. Education, Publications, Student Aid, Services & Inter-church**

The committee received three reports from: The Christian Education & Publications committee, the Interchurch Relations Committee, and the Heidelberg Youth Camp Committee.

Your Committee makes the following recommendations:

Recommendation #1: We recommend and nominate Rev. William Haddock to continue as the editor of the Northern Plains Chronicles for another one year term (March 2021 – March 2022).

Recommendation #2: We recommend that the Classis pay the editor of the Northern Plains Chronicles a \$200.00 stipend for the 2021 term.

Rev. Irwin moved Recommendation #3: That the HYC budget and registration fees (attached) be adopted.

Recommendation #4: That the theme of Biblical Justice and Mercy be adopted as the theme of HYC 2021.

Recommendation #5: That the offerings collected during HYC 2021 be designated to Grace Reformed Church of Dickinson, ND.

Recommendation #6: That the Northern Plains Classis request their Permanent Auditing Committee to review the financial records for HYC 2021 and add this as an annual practice in the future.

Recommendation #7: Take Note: That congregations take note of the registration deadlines for early registration (by May 31st) and final registration (no later than June 30th) and that congregations be encouraged to submit registrations as early as possible.

Rev. David Irwin, Elder Earl Mehlhaff, Elder Charles Dockter

#### **B. Examinations & Licensure**

Recommendation #1: That Northern Plains Classis petition the RCUS Synod for the amount of

\$9,960.00 tuition for student David Voytek for the 2021/2022 academic year as well as \$400.00 for books.

Recommendation #2: That the RCUS Synod be petitioned to reimburse student David Voytek in the amount of \$1,940.00 for a shortfall in tuition for the 2020/2021 academic year.

Recommendation #3: That the Permanent Candidates and Credentials Committee explore and develop a program to identify, recruit, and nurture potential pastoral candidates within the Northern Plains Classis to help develop the next generation of RCUS pastors (2 Timothy 2:2).

Recommendation #4: That the Permanent Candidates and Credentials Committee articulate a philosophy for the encouragement of Summer Internships by RCUS students within the Northern Plains Classis.

Recommendation #5: That the Northern Plains Classis add a \$2.00 guideline for student development. (The primary idea would be that this aids summer internships, but that there is flexibility if some other need arises).

Respectfully Submitted,

Rev. Dave Irwin, Rev. Hank Bowen, Elder Craig Mehlhaff, Elder John Huizinga

### **C. Excuses**

Your committee received the following: Item 7 an excuse from Elder Rod DeJong and an excuse from Elder John Huizinga.

Recommendations:

Recommendation #1: That Elder Rod DeJong be excused from all meetings of Classis.

Recommendation #2: That Elder John Huizinga be excused from Monday night and Tuesday meetings of Classis.

Respectfully Submitted,

Rev. Cody Schwichtenberg, Elder Charles Dockter, Elder Earl Mehlhaff

### **D. Finances, Benevolences, & Ministerial Aid**

Your committee received the following items:

Item #2: Overture from Grace RCUS on behalf of Rev. and Mrs. Wes Brice.

Item #3: Overture from Christ RCUS on behalf of Rev. and Mrs. Phil Poe.

Item #5: Overture from Hope RCUS on behalf of Mrs. Lena Jones.

Item #6: Overture from Covenant RCUS on behalf of Mrs. Debbie Syms.

Report of the Permanent Diaconal Committee

Report of the Auditing Committee

2021 NPC Treasurers Report

The following reimbursement requests: Hope (Fickbohm) - \$117.00; Grace (Voytek) - \$216.00; Grace (Huizinga) - \$189.00; Christ (Snyder) - \$210.60; Salem (Irwin) - \$28.80; Covenant (Lassley) - \$151.20; First Aberdeen (Bowen) - \$63.00.

Your Committee makes the following recommendations:

Recommendation #1: With regards to Item #2, that the NPC Stated Clerk be directed to overture the Synod of the RCUS for ministerial aid of \$26,760 annually (same as prior year) on behalf of Rev. and Mrs. Wes Brice.

Recommendation #2: With regards to Item #3, that the NPC Stated Clerk be directed to overture the Synod of the RCUS for ministerial aid of \$20,400 annually on behalf of Rev. and Mrs. Phil Poe.

Recommendation #3: With regards to Item #5, that the NPC Stated Clerk be directed to overture the Synod of the RCUS for ministerial aid of \$12,000 annually (same as prior year) on behalf of Mrs. Lena Jones.

Recommendation #4: With regards to Item #6, that the NPC Stated Clerk be directed to overture the Synod of the RCUS for ministerial aid of \$23,160 annually (same as prior year) on behalf of Mrs. Debbie Syms.

Recommendation #5: That the Classis budget \$600 for Sermon Audio for 2021 and that pas-

tors be encouraged to use this resource.

Recommendation #6: with regard to the Permanent Diaconal Committee report. Take Note.

Recommendation #7: That the following recommendations from the Auditing Committee report be adopted:

a. That the Treasurer's books be declared to be in order. Take note.

b. That Elder Matthew Fickbohm be commended for his work as Treasurer. Take note.

Recommendation #8: That the 2021 Treasurers Report be adopted.

Recommendation #9: With regards to the reimbursement requests for the Spring Meeting, that all be granted in the total amount of \$975.60.

Recommendation #10: That the dues for 2021 be set at Classical Dues: \$6 (\$1 increase), Missions Guideline: \$34 (\$4 increase), \$8 for the Missions Seed Fund (\$2 decrease), and \$2 Student Development Fund (new).

Respectfully Submitted,

Rev. James Grossmann, Rev. Michael Voytek, Elder Matthew Beck, Elder John Huizinga, Elder Matthew Fickbohm

## **E. Judicial**

Esteemed Brothers,

Recommendation #1: That the Northern Plains Classis amend standing rule #2 by replacing "second Monday in March" with "first Friday in March."

Recommendation #2: from the Executive Committee's summary of the interaction with the South Central Classis what transpired with particular regards to those issues impacting the boundaries of the Northern Plains Classis. Take Note.

Recommendation #3: That the Northern Plains Classis overture the 2021 Synod of the RCUS to restore the original boundaries of the Northern Plains Classis to include all churches and potential mission works north of I-90.

Rev. Paul Henderson, Rev. Michael Lassley, Rev. Michael Voytek, Elder John Huizinga, Elder James Snyder

## **F. Missions**

Recommendations:

Recommendation #1: That Classis provide missions support in the amount of \$9,100.00 for Grace Reformed Church of Dickinson, ND for the 2021 classical year (same as last year, no reduction).

Recommendation #2: That Classis overture the 248th Synod of the RCUS for home missions support for Grace Reformed Church of Dickinson, ND in the amount of \$7,400.00 for the 2021-2022 synodical fiscal year (same as last year, no reduction).

Recommendation #3: That Classis request the Northern Plains Classis' delegates on the 248<sup>th</sup> Synod Home Missions Committee recommend that Grace Reformed Church of Dickinson, ND receive the proceeds of the Annual Home Missions Day of Prayer during the 2021-2022 synodical fiscal year, for the purpose of helping pay off debt. (Cf. 1995 Synod Abstract, Recommendation #4. p. 138-139 for grounds.)

Recommendation #4: That Classis continue to fund 75% of the cost for Ashley's radio broadcast, "Start the Week."

Rev. Michael Lassley, Rev. Cody Schwichtenberg, Elder James Snyder, Elder Craig Mehlhaff

## **G. Nominations**

Recommendations:

1. That the following nominations be approved (underlined name is the convener of the committee):

Executive:	<u>Bowen</u> , Grossmann, Fickbohm
Assistant to the Clerk:	Haak
Auditing:	<u>Haddock</u> , Voytek, Aune
Camp:	<u>Fickbohm</u> , Lassley, Henderson, Haak
Candidates & Credentials:	<u>Schwichtenberg</u> , Snyder, Irwin
Christian Education & Publications:	<u>Irwin</u> , Haddock, Beck
Diaconal:	<u>Voytek</u> , Beck, Dockter, E. Mehlhaff
Home Missions:	<u>Lassley</u> , Schwichtenberg, C. Mehlhaff, DeJong
Interchurch Relations:	<u>Henderson</u> , Irwin, Bowen, Haak, Brice

Respectfully submitted,  
Rev. Michael Voytek; Elder Matthew Beck; Elder Matthew Fickbohm

## **XVIII. MISCELLANEOUS REPORTS AND OTHER BUSINESS**

### **A. Expression of Appreciation to the hosting congregation**

That the following expression of thanksgiving be printed in the abstract and in this Sunday's bulletin. "The Delegates of the 36<sup>th</sup> Annual Meeting of the Northern Plains Classis do truly thank our gracious God and Father for your excellent service of love, which you expressed for us, as you provided delicious meals, delectable snacks, and plenty of fresh coffee while we conducted our labors! Thank You from the bottom of our hearts. May our Lord return His blessings down upon you all! In Christ's Love and Ours!"

### **B. Adoption of the Stated Clerk's Report and Executive Committee's Minutes**

The Stated Clerk's Report and Executive Committee's Minutes were all adopted by the Northern Plains Classis.

## **XIX. Reading of the Minutes**

On Tuesday morning, March 8<sup>th</sup>, the minutes on part of the previous session were read and corrected. The President declared the minutes from the previous session to be approved as read and corrected.

At the end of the business meeting, the minutes for the day were read and corrected. The President asked, "Shall the minutes be now approved?" Since there were no objections, he declared the minutes approved as corrected.

## **XX. Adjournment**

Rev. Voytek moved that the Classis adjourn to the 37<sup>th</sup> Annual Spring Meeting of the Northern Plains Classis to begin on March 4<sup>th</sup>, A.D. 2022 at 1:00pm (MST), at Grace Reformed Church of Dickinson, North Dakota.

The Classis adjourned at 2:26pm on March 9<sup>th</sup>, A.D. 2021.

### **A. Roll Call**

The final roll call showed eight ministers and six elders present for a total of fourteen, a quorum.

**B. Devotions**

Elder E. Mehlhaff closed the meeting by reading from Ephesians 2:1-10 and prayer.

**C. The Apostles' Creed, Lord's Prayer, Benediction and  
Doxology**

The Assembly stood and united in reciting the Apostles' Creed and the Lord's Prayer. The President pronounced the Benediction and lead the Assembly in the singing of the Doxology.

Respectfully Submitted,

Rev. James W. Grossmann, Stated Clerk



# APPENDIX

## Treasurer's Report

### Northern Plains Classis Statement of Financial Position Year Ended December 31<sup>st</sup>, 2020

	<b>2020</b>	<b>2019</b>	
	<b>Total</b>	<b>Total</b>	<b>Change</b>
Current Assets:			
Cash	\$35,590	\$33,408	\$ 2,182
Certificates of Deposit			
Classical	1,000	1,000	-
Mission Seed Fund	6,789	6,721	68.12
Total Assets:	<u>43,379</u>	<u>41,129</u>	
Current Liabilities:	<u>-</u>	<u>-</u>	
Total Net Assets	<u>\$43,379</u>	<u>\$41,129</u>	

**Northern Plains Classis Statement of Activities  
Year Ended December 31<sup>st</sup>, 2020**

	<b>2020</b>	<b>2019</b>
<b>Dues:</b>	<b>Total</b>	<b>Total</b>
Classical Dues	\$ 1,945	\$ 3,788
Home Missions Dues	10,932	14,692
Missions Seed Fund	<u>3,690</u>	<u>1,895</u>
<b>Total Dues Revenue:</b>	<b>16,567</b>	<b>20,375</b>
 <b>Other Income:</b>		
Interest: Classis	22	36
Interest: Foundation CD	<u>68</u>	<u>129</u>
<b>Total Other Income:</b>	<b>90</b>	<b>165</b>
<b>Total Income:</b>	<b><u>\$ 16,656</u></b>	<b><u>\$ 20,540</u></b>
 <b>Expenses:</b>		
<i>Home Missions:</i>		
Grace RCUS - Dickinson	\$ 9,100	\$ 10,800
Start the Week Radio	2,574	2,574
Sermon Audio	<u>579</u>	<u>479</u>
<i>Total Home Missions:</i>	<b><u>12,253</u></b>	<b><u>13,853</u></b>
<i>Meetings:</i>		
Spring Meeting Mileage	<u>853</u>	<u>911</u>
<i>Total Meetings:</i>	<b><u>853</u></b>	<b><u>911</u></b>
<i>General Operating:</i>		
Stipends - Standing Rule 13	900	900
Chronicle Editor	200	200
Abstracts - Printing & Mailing	200	200
General	<u>-</u>	<u>133</u>
<i>Total General Operating:</i>	<b><u>1,300</u></b>	<b><u>1,433</u></b>
<b>Total Expenses:</b>	<b><u>\$14,406.10</u></b>	<b><u>\$ 16,198</u></b>
 Change in Net Assets:	\$ 2,250	\$ 4,342
Net Assets, Beginning of Year (As of December 31st)	<u>41,129</u>	<u>36,786</u>
Net Assets, End of Year	<b><u>\$ 43,379</u></b>	<b><u>\$ 41,129</u></b>

**Northern Plains Classis Statement of Fund Balance  
Year Ended December 31<sup>st</sup>, 2020**

	FUND				
	Home	Mission	Classis	2020	2019
	Missions	Seed	Business	Total	Total
Beginning Cash	\$ 9,185	\$ 3,765	\$ 20,459	\$ 33,408	\$ 29,195
Beginning CD	-	6,720	1,000	7,720	7,591
Total Beginning	9,185	10,485	21,459	41,128	36,786
Income:					
Dues	10,932	-	1,945	12,877	18,480
Seed Fund Dues	-	3,690	-	3,690	1,895
Interest	-	68	22	90	165
Total Income	10,932	3,758	1,967	16,656	20,540
Expenses:					
Grace RCUS - Dickinson	9,100	-	-	9,100	10,800
Start the Week	2,574	-	-	2,574	2,574
Travel	-	-	853	853	911
Stipends (SR 13)	-	-	900	900	900
Sermon Audio	579	-	-	579	479
Abstracts	-	-	200	200	200
NPC Editor	-	-	200	200	200
Supplies	-	-	-	-	133
Total Expenses	12,253	-	2,153	14,406	16,198
Ending Cash	7,863	7,455	20,272	35,590	33,408
Ending CD	-	6,788	1,000	7,788	7,720
Total Ending	<u>\$ 7,863</u>	<u>\$ 14,243</u>	<u>\$ 21,272</u>	<u>\$ 43,379</u>	<u>\$ 41,129</u>

**Northern Plains Classis Notes to the Financial Statements  
Year Ended December 31<sup>st</sup>, 2020**

Note 1: The Classis operates on a calendar year fiscal year (January 1 - December 31).

Note 2: Beginning in calendar year 2012 the Classis implemented accrual basis accounting. Accrual basis accounting focuses on matching expenditures and revenues of the period to which they pertain. The financial activity of the Classis through January 23<sup>RD</sup>, 2021 was evaluated to determine to which period the transaction applied.

Note 3: Accrual basis accounting includes the recognition of revenue not yet received and an amount determined to be uncollectible. As the Classis requires all dues to be received no later than

November 30th, no recognition of dues not received is deemed necessary and has, therefore, not been performed.

Note 4: The Classis holds two Certificates of Deposit with BankWest of Pierre, SD. The terms of each are as follows:

Fund	Amount	Date of Issue	Maturity	Renewal	Annual yield	Payment Frequency	Interest Treatment
General	\$1,000.00	23, 2020	March	23, 2021	Automatic	0.60%	Every 3 months Deposited to General Fund
Foundation	\$6,720.82	23, 2020	March	23, 2021	Automatic	0.60%	Every 3 months Deposited to General Fund

Note 5: The Classis collects dues from congregations for both Home Missions and Classical Funds. The following schedule reports the dues actually received from congregations for 2020:

Congregation	Members	Type of Dues	Remitted	Full Remittance	(Variance)
Aberdeen	91	Classical	\$455	\$455	\$-
		Home Missions	2,730	2,730	-
		Missions Seed	910	910	-
Ashley	21	Classical	105	105	-
		Home Missions	290	630	(340)
		Missions Seed	210	210	-
Dickinson	22	Classical	110	110	-
		Home Missions	660	660	-
		Missions Seed	220	220	-
Eureka	103	Classical	540	515	25
		Home Missions	3,240	3,090	150
		Missions Seed	1,080	1,030	50
Herried	49	Classical	250	245	5
		Home Missions	1,500	1,470	30
		Missions Seed	500	490	10
Minot	34	Classical	190	170	20
		Home Missions	1,140	1,020	120
		Missions Seed	380	340	40
Pierre	20	Classical	100	100	-
		Home Missions	202	600	(398)
		Missions Seed	-	200	(200)
Watertown	39	Classical	195	195	-
		Home Missions	1,170	1,170	-
		Missions Seed	390	390	-
<b>Classical Total</b>			1,945	1,895	50
<b>Home Missions Total</b>			10,932	11,370	(438)
<b>Missions Seed Total</b>			\$3,690	\$3,790	\$(100)

Respectfully Submitted,  
 Matthew Fickbohm,  
 Treasurer, Northern Plains Classis

## 2020 Membership & Financial Statistics

	Aberdeen	Ashley	Dickinson	Eureka	Herried	Minot
Number of Elders	3	2	2	3	1	1
Number of Deacons	3	2	0	3	2	2
Communicants Last Year	91	21	22	103	49	34
Received – Confirmation	1	0	0	0	0	2
Received – Transfer	2	0	0	0	0	2
Received – Profession	0	0	0	0	2	0
<b>Total Received</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>Total Old &amp; New</b>	<b>94</b>	<b>21</b>	<b>22</b>	<b>103</b>	<b>51</b>	<b>38</b>
Lost – Dismissal	1	0	0	0	4	0
Lost – Erasure/Discipline	1	0	3	0	0	0
Lost – Death	2	2	0	4	2	0
<b>Total Lost</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>0</b>
<b>Total Communicants This Year</b>	<b>90</b>	<b>19</b>	<b>19</b>	<b>99</b>	<b>45</b>	<b>38</b>
Unconfirmed Members	19	1	4	9	9	8
Total Baptized Members	109	20	23	108	54	46
Number of Families	44	15	10	62	26	20
Children in Sunday School	22	0	0	13	4	12
Adults Baptized Last Year	0	0	0	0	1	0
Infants Baptized	2	0	0	1	1	0
<b>Total Baptisms this Year</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>0</b>
Members' Lord's Supper	67	16	22	48	32	38
Lord' Supper Observed	4	3	3	3	3	11
Receipts – Sunday Offerings	\$135,327	\$51,326	\$64,531	\$150,439	\$55,374	\$74,620
Receipts – Special Offerings	\$2,148	\$4,565	\$1,800	\$0	\$8,955	\$10,908
Receipts – Other Sources	\$0	\$5,023	\$88,728	\$0	\$2,972	\$5,282
<b>Total Receipts</b>	<b>\$137,475</b>	<b>\$60,914</b>	<b>\$155,059</b>	<b>\$150,439</b>	<b>\$67,301</b>	<b>\$90,810</b>
Budgeted Synodical Funds	\$23,570	\$4,116	\$5,192	\$28,070	\$5,150	\$8,404
Budgeted Classical Funds	\$4,095	\$605	\$990	\$4,860	\$2,250	\$1,710
Non-Guideline Causes	\$3,194	\$1,000	\$1,800	\$0	\$1,355	\$5,380
Non-RCUS Benevolences	\$75	\$0	\$0	\$1,000	\$0	\$32
Other General Expenses	\$89,266	\$44,763	\$145,719	\$100,197	\$61,639	\$79,136
<b>Total Disbursements</b>	<b>\$120,200</b>	<b>\$50,484</b>	<b>\$153,701</b>	<b>\$134,127</b>	<b>\$70,394</b>	<b>\$94,662</b>
Value of Church Buildings	\$350,000	\$25,000	\$270,000	\$250,000	\$40,000	\$0
Value of Parsonage	\$0	\$45,000	\$29,000	\$100,000	\$25,000	\$300,000
Property Improvements	\$6,822	\$0	\$1,500	\$0	\$1,063	\$0
Present Property Debts	\$0	\$0	\$243,800	\$0	\$0	\$0
Debt Paid Last Year	\$0	\$0	\$7,083	\$0	\$0	\$0
Synod Giving per Communicant	\$259	\$196	\$236	\$273	\$105	\$247
Classis Giving per Communicant	\$45	\$29	\$45	\$47	\$46	\$50
<b>Total RCUS per Communicant</b>	<b>\$339</b>	<b>\$272</b>	<b>\$363</b>	<b>\$320</b>	<b>\$179</b>	<b>\$456</b>

	Pierre	Watertown	Totals 2019	Totals 2020	Difference
Number of Elders	1	2	15	15	0
Number of Deacons	0	2	14	14	0
Communicants Last Year	20	39	389	379	-10
Received – Confirmation	0	0	2	3	1
Received – Transfer	0	0	2	4	2
Received – Profession	1	2	11	5	-6
<b>Total Received</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>-3</b>
<b>Total Old &amp; New</b>	<b>21</b>	<b>41</b>	<b>404</b>	<b>391</b>	<b>-13</b>
Lost – Dismissal	1	0	4	6	-2
Lost – Erasure/Discipline	0	2	16	6	-10
Lost – Death	0	0	5	10	5
<b>Total Lost</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>25</b>	<b>22</b>	<b>-3</b>
<b>Total Communicants This Year</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>39</b>	<b>379</b>	<b>369</b>	<b>-10</b>
Unconfirmed Members	6	14	78	70	-8
Total Baptized Members	26	53	457	439	-18
Number of Families	10	13	211	200	-11
Children in Sunday School	4	9	74	64	-10
Adults Baptized Last Year	0	0	0	1	1
Infants Baptized	1	1	4	6	2
<b>Total Baptisms this Year</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>3</b>
Members' Lord's Supper	18	27	93.93%	72.63%	-21.30%
Lord' Supper Observed	4	3	47	34	-13
Receipts – Sunday Offerings	\$54,201	\$74,051	\$624,463	\$659,869	\$35,406
Receipts – Special Offerings	\$2,579	\$9,029	\$38,209	\$39,984	\$1,775
Receipts – Other Sources	\$22	\$1,928	\$88,762	\$103,955	\$15,193
<b>Total Receipts</b>	<b>\$56,802</b>	<b>\$85,008</b>	<b>\$751,434</b>	<b>\$803,808</b>	<b>\$52,374</b>
Budgeted Synodical Funds	\$1,723	\$10,670	\$89,597	\$86,895	-\$2,702
Budgeted Classical Funds	\$302	\$1,755	\$21,031	\$16,567	-\$4,464
Non-Guideline Causes	\$275	\$4,976	\$11,560	\$17,980	\$6,420
Non-RCUS Benevolences	\$209	\$0	\$7,767	\$1,316	-\$6,451
Other General Expenses	\$57,243	\$67,549	\$606,136	\$645,512	\$39,376
<b>Total Disbursements</b>	<b>\$59,752</b>	<b>\$84,950</b>	<b>\$736,091</b>	<b>\$768,270</b>	<b>\$32,179</b>
Value of Church Buildings	\$112,000	\$0	\$777,000	\$1,047,000	\$270,000
Value of Parsonage	\$105,000	\$150,000	\$765,000	\$754,000	-\$11,000
Property Improvements	\$12,033	\$1,635	\$119,963	\$23,053	-\$96,910
Present Property Debts	\$0	\$0	\$29,884	\$243,800	\$213,916
Debt Paid Last Year	\$0	\$0	\$7,838	\$7,083	-\$755
Synod Giving per Communicant	\$86	\$274	\$230	\$229	-\$1
Classis Giving per Communicant	\$15	\$45	\$54	\$44	-\$10
<b>Total RCUS per Communicant</b>	<b>\$115</b>	<b>\$446</b>	<b>\$314</b>	<b>\$320</b>	<b>\$6</b>

***Standing Rules******Organization***

1. The Standing rules shall be read during the session of Classis.
2. That the Northern Plains Classis hold its annual meeting on the first Friday in March and shall meet each day until all business regularly brought before it has been disposed. (2009, 2021)
3. The worship services of Classis shall be prepared by the Executive Committee, and these proposed services shall be circulated before Classis.
4. 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 with the two highest totals of votes shall be candidates until there is an election.
5. Every charge that will not have an elder delegate at the yearly Spring meeting of Classis shall, before the date of the meeting, send the answers to the questions placed before the elder according to Article 81 of the Constitution. This copy shall be signed by all the elders of the charge, and sent to the Stated Clerk.

***Correspondence***

6. The statistics, Credentials of Elders to Classis and the Mailing Addresses of Delegates to Classis shall be forwarded to the Stated Clerk by February 1st. (2010, 2012)
7. The reports and recommendations of the Permanent and Special committees of Classis shall be completed and mailed or emailed to the Consistories of all the Churches by February 15th before the Spring Meeting of Classis. Parochial reports from all Ministers and Licentiates are to be sent to the President by February 15th before the Spring Meeting of Classis. Excuses for these requirements are to be made by written request to the Executive Committee of Classis by the chairman of the committee involved, at least two weeks before the meeting of Classis. (2012, 2014)
8. Overtures sent to the Stated Clerk of Classis four weeks in advance of Classis shall be circularized, but overtures may be submitted to Classis at any time.
9. 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 in written form and relevant only to the item in question.
10. All documents submitted to Classis be written on sheets of white paper measuring 8.5 inches wide and 11 inches long. (2005)

***Financial***

11. The Classical dues shall be due on the first of November and are to be paid not later than the 30th of November of the current year. (2013)
12. The monies sent to the Treasurer shall be made out in check form to "Northern Plains Classis," and shall be designated for which fund and how much for each fund.
13. The President of Classis shall receive two hundred dollars (\$200.00), the Stated Clerk shall receive five hundred dollars (\$500.00), and the Treasurer two hundred dollars (\$200.00) for the Classical year. (2008, 2013, 2014)
14. Travel reimbursement shall be paid only to those delegates whose congregations have

paid the Classical dues in full to the Classis Treasurer, and those delegates who have attended all sessions or have been properly excused by Classis.

15. The Treasurer shall reimburse travel to and from Classis, or for Classis business, at the mileage rate established by the Synod in its standing rules. When distance and time require public travel on public transportation to and from Classis, or for Classis business, they shall be granted full fare. (2007, 2017)

**Examinations**

16. It shall be the practice of the Classis before ordaining candidates for the ministry and before installing ordained ministers from other denominations, to require no less than an eight month internship for them under the supervision of a pastor of the Classis who has served in the Reformed Church in the United States for at least five years. During this internship particular emphasis shall be placed upon learning the peculiarities and practices of the RCUS. This internship requirement may be fulfilled either before or after the candidate has received a call or is licensed. (2010)