

# **The Northern Plains Classis**

## 2022 Abstract of the Minutes



Spring Meeting  
March 4th & 5th, A.D. 2022  
Grace Reformed Church  
Dickinson, North Dakota

This Abstract is Dedicated in Memory of Rev. Wesley Brice  
August 7, 1937-January 14, 2021

## **Rev. Wesley Edwin Brice**

This 37<sup>th</sup> 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. Wesley Brice, who served God's church with over 65 years of active ministry. Born on September 14, 1934, in Coffeetown, Kansas, his family moved to California when he was two years old. While attending Pacific Bible College, he went to an Assembly of God church where he met Ginger. He became Assistant Pastor there and graduated with a Bachelor of Arts from Highland College in 1962. He pastored the following churches before joining the RCUS - The Church of the Open Bible in Ramona, CA, Calvary Community Church in Santee, CA and Westminster Bible Church in North Hollywood, CA (a Bible Presbyterian church that became independent). In 1987 he was received into the newly formed Western Classis of the RCUS and Westminster Bible Church was received into the Classis and renamed Grace Reformed Church. It later moved to Lancaster, California. Rev. Brice also served RCUS churches in Kansas City, MO, Bentonville, AR, Dickinson, ND, and the RCUS mission work in Manhattan, MT. He loved serving the Lord and was always ready and anxious to share with others the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ. He continued to preach until the end, twice retiring, but was called back to service.

He married Lillian Virginia (Ginger) Brice August 1, 1954, in Azusa, California. The Lord blessed them with six children, Patty Lynn, Michael, Matthew, Theresa, Jeffrey, and Tracy. They were foster parents to several children over 20 years. The testimony of one church member conveys the impact of his ministry in his later years; "He started each sermon with 'Good morning, Dear Ones.' His voice was soft and full of love. His eyes would water, and his voice would break when he professed the sacrifice of Jesus Christ faithfully every Sunday. He was a kind, gentle soul." Rev. Wesley Edwin Brice went home to be with his Lord and Savior on Sunday, February 6, 2022, at the age of 87.

## **Guideline for Giving**

Classical Dues:	\$6.00
Missions:	\$24.00
Mission Seed Fund:	\$25.00
Student Development Fund:	\$2.00
Heidelberg Youth Camp:	\$3.00
<b>Total:</b>	<b>\$60.00</b>

## **Officers of Classis**

President:	Rev. Hank Bowen
Vice President:	Rev. Cody Schwichtenberg
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, Irwin, Roggenkamp

### **Christian Education and Publications**

Irwin, Haddock, Beck

### **Diaconal**

Voytek, Beck, Snyder

### **Executive**

Bowen, Grossmann, Fickbohm

### **Home Missions**

Lassley, Schwichtenberg, C. Mehlhaff, DeJong

### **Interchurch Relations**

Henderson, Bowen, Haak, Brice

### **Assistant to the Clerk**

Haak

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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 West, Dickinson, ND 58601

Worship:10am; Bible Study: Wednesday 7pm

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: vacant

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

**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: [firstrcus@gmail.com](mailto:firstrcus@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)

Website: [www.watertownrcus.org](http://www.watertownrcus.org)

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)

## **37<sup>th</sup> Annual Spring Meeting – March 4-5, AD 2022**

Grace Reformed Church - Dickinson, North Dakota

### **I. Services**

For the opening devotion, Rev. James Grossmann opened in prayer, presented a devotion from Revelation 21:1-27 entitled “Eternal Blessing Guaranteed,” singing Hymn 221, “I Heard the Voice of Jesus Say.”

On Friday evening at 7:00pm, the Classis met for a worship service with the congregation of Grace Reformed Church of Dickinson, North Dakota. Rev. Hank Bowen conducted the worship service and Rev. Dave Irwin preached a sermon entitled “*Humble Hearts and Spiritual Gifts*” using Habakkuk 1:1-6 & 12-13 as his text.

The Northern Plains Classis opened its session on Saturday, March 5<sup>th</sup>, A.D. 2022 with a hymn 520 “What a Friend We Have In Jesus” and a devotion led by Rev. Cody Schwichtenberg from Psalm 88, entitled “Finding Comfort in Psalm 88.”

### **II. Organization**

The 37<sup>th</sup> Annual Spring Meeting of the Northern Plains Classis convened at 1:25pm on Friday, March 4<sup>th</sup>, A.D. 2022, at Grace Reformed Church of Dickinson, North Dakota.

President Hank Bowen called the assembly to order at 1:25pm. The roll was called following the devotion. There were four ministers and five elders present for a total of nine, a quorum.

President Bowen defined the bar of the house as the first three center rows and the first two north rows of the church; Elder Matthew Fickbohm and Elder Dan Aune as tellers; and Rev. Dave Irwin 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. Cody Schwichtenberg; 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 Bowen.

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

Jacob Kuik, fraternal delegate of the Manitoba Classis of the Canadian and American Reformed Churches, 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, Elder Beck, Elder Fickbohm

**Examinations and Licensure:** Rev. Irwin, Elder Beck, Elder Fickbohm

**Missions:** Rev. Schwichtenberg, Rev. Grossmann, Elder Kappes

**Judicial:** Rev. Bowen, Elder Aune, Elder Roggenkamp

**Finances, Benevolences, and Ministerial Aid:** Elder Fickbohm, Rev. Voytek, Elder Kappes, Elder Beck

**Nominations:** Rev. Voytek, Elder Roggenkamp, Elder Aune

**Excuses:** Rev. Voytek, Elder Roggenkamp, Elder Aune

## 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

Northern Plains Classis (RCUS)

Candidates & Credentials Committee

February 11<sup>th</sup>, 2022

Esteemed brothers in Christ,

At the 36<sup>th</sup> Annual Meeting of the Northern Plains Classis, your committee was given two recommendations. First, *"That the Permanent Candidates and Credentials Committee explore and develop a program to identify, recruit, and nurture potential pastoral candidates within the NPC to help develop the next generation of RCUS pastors (2 Timothy 2:2)"* (2021 NPC Abstract pg. 32). Secondly, *"That the Permanent Candidates and Credentials Committee articulate a philosophy for the encouragement of Summer Internships by RCUS students within the NPC"* (2021 NPC Abstract pg. 32).

As preparation, your committee reached out to various RCUS supported seminaries and RCUS pastors. The information gathered helped in the development of the recommendations that will be brought forth at our upcoming meeting of Classis.

In January, your committee met via Zoom where we conversed and wrestled through each recommendation that was before us. We believe that what has been agreed upon by your committee meets what had been asked of us by Classis. Also at the meeting, Elder Jim Snyder gave an update on the pastoral search for Christ Reformed Church in Minot. There is a potential candidate being considered at the moment. CRC is also considering the possibility of hosting a summer intern if the pulpit remains vacant. In the meantime, pastoral duties are being shared by Elder Snyder and the other church officers.

As it pertains to our student under care David Voytek, he is excelling in his studies at Mid-America Reformed Theological Seminary. He also completed his first summer internship at First Reformed Church in Aberdeen. From David's written report and by those who have seen his progress, your committee can confidently say that he is getting an excellent education, and he is taking advantage of every opportunity given to him.

#### Recommendations

Concerning recommendation #3 of the 2021 NPC Abstract pg. 32, *"That the Permanent Candidates and Credentials Committee explore and develop a program to identify, recruit, and nurture potential pastoral candidates within the NPC to help develop the next generation of RCUS pastors (2 Timothy 2:2)"*, your committee brings the following recommendations.

**Recommendation #1:** Seek to identify and nurture potential pastoral candidates spiritually while they are young.

*Explanation:* Catechism class is a good place to start the identifying and nurturing process. As you nurture them in class, you might identify that they have a particular gift of understanding and articulating biblical doctrines as taught in the Heidelberg Catechism.

**Recommendation #2:** Encourage involvement in the local church when potential pastoral candidates are ready.

*Explanation:* Once potential pastoral candidates have been identified, they should be tested as much

as possible. Some ways to involve and test candidates may include joining the pastor on hospital and shut-in visits, opening and closing prayers during a Bible study or Sunday School, doing a devotional at a particular event, teaching a portion of Vacation Bible School, children's Sunday school, etc.

**Recommendation #3:** The pastor and spiritual council should clearly express to potential pastoral candidates that they see their spiritual gifts, appreciate them using those gifts in the life of the local church, and that they should consider the ministry.

*Explanation:* This should be done after a prayerful and patient process of examining candidates' gifts and abilities. By the church leadership's support and guidance, candidates will have a clearer sense of their potential calling, and they may be more willing to consider the ministry.

**Recommendation #4:** Encourage potential pastoral candidates to be students of the Word and familiarize themselves with the Bible as much as possible.

*Explanation:* Although other theological books can be helpful and profitable to candidates, no other book is more essential to the ministry than the Bible. What can be said of the apocryphal books in the Belgic Confession, can be said of other theological books, "All of which the Church may read and take instruction from, so far as they agree with the canonical books; but they are far from having such power and efficacy..." (Belgic Confession Article 6)

**Recommendation #5:** Encourage potential pastoral candidates to familiarize themselves with the documents of the RCUS including Three Forms of Unity, Directory of Worship, and the RCUS Constitution.

*Explanation:* This will help them to know what we hold to as a confessionally Reformed church as well as the practice and polity of the RCUS. As it pertains to the confessions, they will be the theological guardrails to prevent them from stepping out of bounds into error and heresy as well as protecting them from forcing man made laws upon the Scriptures.

**Recommendation #6:** Encourage potential pastoral candidates to read good theological books to prepare themselves for seminary.

*Explanation:* Such books can include but are not limited to: Calvin's *Institutes* or a good summary of the *Institutes* such as *Piety's Wisdom* by J. Mark Beach, Louis Berkhof's *Manual of Christian Doctrine*, John Murray's *Redemption Accomplished and Applied*, Edmund Clowney's *The Unfolding Mystery* and Clowney's *Called to Ministry*, J.I. Packer's *Knowing God*, Ursinus' *Commentary of the Heidelberg Catechism*, the RCUS' book *You Shall Be My People*, etc. Discretion should be made in recommending books so as not to overwhelm candidates. Start small and choose books based on their ability and comprehension. (Directory of Worship)

**Recommendation #7:** Encourage potential pastoral candidates to get an undergraduate degree, preferably a faithful Christian college with a robust pre-Seminarian program.

*Explanation:* Although a faithful Christian college is preferred, having some type of undergraduate training would be profitable for candidates as they prepare for seminary. An undergraduate degree is ordinarily required by seminaries, and it will help them to learn how to study, write papers, etc. The spiritual council's guidance and oversight is important in this area as poor theology and unbiblical ideas permeate even in colleges that go under the title "Reformed."

**Recommendation #8:** Encourage the local church to set aside funds to help potential pastoral candidates.

*Explanation:* A common obstacle for candidates is their financial challenges. By setting aside money either through a Seminarian fund or special offering, this will help relieve some of the financial burden (housing, travel, food etc.) on these candidates considering the ministry especially the 2<sup>nd</sup>-3<sup>rd</sup> career seminary students with a family.

**Recommendation #9:** That the Stated Clerk of classis forward these recommendations with explanations to the other classis clerks to be used as a reference if another classis should desire to explore and develop their own program to identify, recruit, and nurture potential pastoral candidates to help develop the next generation of RCUS pastors.

Concerning recommend #4 of the 2021 NPC Abstract pg. 32, "That the Permanent Candidates and Credentials Committee articulate a philosophy for the encouragement of Summer Internships by

RCUS students within the NPC", your committee brings the following recommendation:

**Recommendation #10:** That the philosophy for the Northern Plains Classis concerning summer internships be as follows:

Interns should have a well-rounded internship that covers a broad range of pastoral responsibilities that include but are not limited to: preaching, teaching Sunday school and Bible studies; interacting with youth such as participating and teaching at Heidelberg Youth Camp; interacting with various members in the congregation; evangelistic opportunities in their respective communities; witnessing important aspects of the ministry such as: baptisms, the Lord's Supper, weddings, funerals; doing visits at the hospital, with the elderly and shut-ins; leading devotionals at nursing homes; observing consistory and spiritual council meetings; and if possible observing a classis or Synod meeting etc. It is important for the pastor overseeing the internship to be in constant contact with the intern. This would include sharing pastoral insight and wisdom of the ministry as well as giving constructive criticism to show where the intern excels and needs improvement. The overseeing pastor should interact with and receive input from the congregation to help evaluate the gifts and abilities of the intern. The goal in such pastoral insight, critic and evaluation should be to build up the intern and to be a godly example to him that reflects the Lord Jesus Christ (1 Thessalonians 5:11; 1 Corinthians 4:14-17).

Since the Northern Plains Classis is relatively close geographically, the intern should interact with various pastors in the classis. Examples of this could be as follows: visiting with the intern in person, speaking with him on the phone, and inviting him to witness special occasions such as weddings, baptisms, or funerals. As the Proverbs stress in a variety of places, "*There is success and victory in a multitude of counselors.*"

**Recommendation #11:** That the NPC petition the 276<sup>th</sup> Synod of the RCUS for the amount of \$8,860.00 in tuition for student David Voytek for the 2022/2023 academic year as well as \$400.00 for books. (The \$8,860.00 for tuition is to be sent directly to Mid-America Reformed Seminary, and the \$400.00 for books is to be sent directly to David.)

Respectfully Submitted,

Rev. Cody Schwichtenberg, Rev. David Irwin, Elder Jim Snyder

## CHRISTIAN EDUCATION & PUBLICATIONS COMMITTEE

*Report of the Christian Education & Publications Committee of the Northern Plains Classis, RCUS*  
February 7, 2022

Esteemed brothers in Christ,

The Committee conducted its business through a telephone conference call on February 1<sup>st</sup>, 2022. Rev. William Haddock has tendered his resignation as the editor of the Northern Plains Chronicles, and we are now looking for a new man to fill that position.

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

### RECOMMENDATIONS:

1. We recommend that a new editor for the Northern Plains Chronicles newsletter be nominated and elected by the Classis at this year's meeting, and that the man elected as the editor of the Northern Plains Chronicles serve for a one year term (March 2022 – March 2023).
2. We recommend that the Classis pay the editor of the Northern Plains Chronicles at least a \$250.00 stipend for the 2022 term.
3. We recommend the following proposed due dates for reports to the Northern Plains Chronicles, with the new editor being given the freedom to change these due dates if need be to suit his schedule:

### ISSUE:

March/April 2022

May/June 2022

### NEWS DUE DATE:

May 5, 2022

July 7, 2022

July/August 2022  
September/October 2022  
November/December 2022  
January/February 2023

September 8, 2022  
November 10, 2022  
January 5, 2023  
March 9, 2023

4. We recommend that the Classis authorize the Christian Education & Publications Committee of the Northern Plains Classis to investigate the reprinting of a hardback version of the Traditional Language edition of the Heidelberg Catechism, with the Committee reporting its findings back to Classis at the 2023 meeting.

5. We recommend that Rev. Haddock be commended by Classis for his past 15 years of service as editor of the Northern Plains Classis.

Respectfully Submitted, Rev. David Irwin, Rev. William Haddock, Elder Matthew Beck

## DIACONAL COMMITTEE

Diaconal Committee of the Northern Plains Classis – R.C.U.S.  
Report for the year 2021

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 Monday February 7th, 2022 to conduct the oversight of Heidelberg Youth Camp. As we considered our work, we were particularly blessed to enjoy the labors of the committee with both Rev. Henderson, who broke a hip only a week prior, and Rev. Johnson, who continues his stroke recovery. The committee examined the evaluations of campers and staff collected during HYC 2021 and considered God's provision through another year. This year, all attendees had the full week to record their thoughts on the evaluation, leading to many excellent thoughts and overall more detailed evaluations. This year again brought the largest enrollment in recent history with 135 campers. Yet again the camp was blessed with excellent volunteers, excellent meals, and blessed fellowship. The Lord provides!

The committee was blessed to receive six theme outlines from its members. Rev. Johnson had drafted three in the book of Daniel in late 2020 and Rev. Henderson submitted one more from Daniel and two topical outlines. After some very good discussion, your committee recommends the theme Life in the Exile, from the book of Daniel with the following lesson and services:

Lecture One: *"Taking a Stand in Faith"* – Daniel 1

Lecture Two: *"Taking a Stand Against Idolatry"* – Daniel 3

Sermon: *"Ancient of Days"* – Daniel 7.

Lecture Three: *"Avoiding Pride"* – Daniel 4

Lecture Four: *"Holding on to the Promises"* – Daniel 5

Sermon: *"Man Greatly Loved"* – Book of Daniel (an often repeated phrase throughout the book)

Lecture Five: *"Taking a Stand for Prayer"* – Daniel 6

Lecture Six: *"Never Apart from His Love"* – Book of Daniel.

Of particular note this year, the Committee is working to budget for known price increases. Camp Bob has increased their nightly rate by \$3/person/night. This translates to a \$12 increase per person. However, as we do not collect registration fees from our adult volunteers, it makes it challenging to recover that price increase (along with other known and projected price increases for food, shirts, etc.) without drastically increasing camper registration fees. The Committee determined our recommendation for this year is a \$15/camper increase, along with a suggested donation from congrega-

tions of \$20/adult volunteering from the congregation. Our hope is to increase the already generous giving of congregations so we do not have to pass the full cost of these increased costs to families. Your committee whole heartedly recommends the designation of the offerings collected during HYC 2022 for Rev. Lee Johnson to help offset his medical costs.

The committee notes the following dates for future camps: July 18-22, 2022, July 24-28, 2023, July 22-26, 2024, July 21-25, 2025, & July 27-31, 2026.

Your committee brings the following recommendations:

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

Recommendation 2: That the theme of Life in the Exile be adopted as the theme of HYC 2022.

Recommendation 3: That the offerings collected during HYC 2022 be designated for Rev. Lee Johnson to help with medical costs.

Recommendation 4: 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.

Representing the SCC: Rev. David Fagrey, Rev. Carl Gobelman, Rev. Lee Johnson, Rev. J.P. Mosley & Elder Dave Kimble

Representing the NPC: Rev. Paul Henderson, Rev. Michael Lassley, Elder Doug Haak, & Elder Matthew Fickbohm

**Heidelberg Youth Camp Financial Report and Proposed Budget**

	2021	2021	Difference	2022
	<u>Budget</u>	<u>Actual</u>	<u>(under)/over</u>	<u>Proposed</u>
				<u>Budget</u>
<b>Opening Fund Balance (1/1/21)</b>		3,319.39		
<b>Revenue</b>				
Camp Fees (135 campers)	\$23,250	\$25,880.00	\$2,630	\$27,675
Donations	2,000	2,549.00	549	3,500
Worship Offering	1,000	2,598.31	1,598	
Camp Store Sales	500	769.00	269	650
Interest		0.08		
<b>Total Revenue</b>	<u>26,750</u>	<u>31,796.36</u>		<u>31,825</u>
<b>Expenses</b>				
Camp Bob Marshal Rental	16,571	18,445.80	1,874	20,555 *
Food	5,500	6,201.59	702	6,500
T-Shirts & Counselor Gifts	2,800	2,815.24	15	3,316
Camp Store Supplies	500	613.57	114	650
Supplies and Equipment	200	1,095.34	895	200
Arts & Crafts	150	194.47	44	250
Administration	25	-	(25)	25
Designated offering recipient	1,000	2,598.31	1,598	
<b>Total Expenses</b>	<u>26,746</u>	<u>31,964.32</u>		<u>31,496</u>
<b>Operating Gain (Loss)</b>		<u>(167.96)</u>		<u>330</u>
<b>Ending Fund Balance (12/31/20)</b>		<u>\$3,151.43</u>		

\* Rental cost: \$600 (kitchen use) +[\$23 (daily rate/person) X 4 (days) X 170 (people)] + 6.5% tax  
 Note: Camp Bob increasing prices by \$3, to \$25 per person per night (\$12/person).

**Proposed 2022 Camper Fees:** \$205 per camper if registration and fee received by June 1.  
 \$15 increase)  
 \$225 per camper if received June 1 or after. (\$5 increase)  
 No fee for adult volunteers. Additional fundraising, recom-

mending

Congregations donate \$20/adult to help offset increased costs for 2022.

## INTERCHURCH RELATIONS COMMITTEE

Northern Plains Classis

March 8th, 2021

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

February 12th, 2022

Esteemed brothers in Christ,

On January 16th of 2022, Rev. Cody Schwichtenberg and Elder Craig Mehlhaff traveled to Dickinson, ND to evaluate Grace Reformed Church. The first thing to take note of is the new church building. The location of the building is right off a main road making it visible to all those passing by. The visibility is increased significantly more by the sign in the front and back of the building. The interior atmosphere of the building is warm and welcoming with plenty of room for fellowship.

The people who worshipped that Sunday were hospitable and welcoming toward the committee. The last time Cody and Craig visited Dickinson to evaluate the mission work was two years ago. Although there were a few familiar faces, it looked like an entirely different congregation. By talking with the visitors, you could tell that they had a desire to know God better and had a teachable spirit even if they had not fully embraced the Reformed faith yet. As Rev. Michael Voytek told the committee, "These visitors have brought a renewed sense of enthusiasm to the church." With the majority of these visitors being from Dickinson and not transplants from other locations, it does bring stability to the work as they are more likely to remain in the area.

Grace Reformed Church consists of 10 families bringing the membership total to 16 communicant members and 3 unconfirmed members. During the worship service, 9 of those 16 communicant members were present along with 24 visitors. As a whole, GRC has been blessed with generous givers as seen in the \$86,140.00 received from regular Sunday offering which exceeded what was budgeted.

With the blessings stated above, there have also been a variety of challenges. The loss of the Huizinga family has been a huge blow to both the leadership and congregation. GRC nominated and elected Rev. Wes Brice as an elder for a 1-year term, but sadly, our dear brother passed away in February. One final challenge must be noted. Although there has been a blessing of a whole host of new visitors, there has been a struggle to get a commitment from them to become official members.

As it pertains to outreach, members inviting people to worship is still the most successful approach for bringing in new visitors. Over \$1,200 was spent in local ads and google optimization. Along with these methods, they are also looking into possibly using the radio as a means for outreach.

Finally, three short term goals were articulated by the leadership of GRC.

1. Encourage visitors to become official members
2. Provide more opportunities for members to use their gifts in the local church.
3. Provide leadership development opportunities for prospective elders and deacons.



## Recommendations

Recommendation 1: That Classis provide missions support in the amount of \$5,700 for Grace Reformed Church of Dickinson for the 2022 classical year. (\$3,400 reduction)

Recommendation 2: That Classis overture the 276th Synod of the RCUS for home missions support for Grace Reformed Church of Dickinson in the amount of \$4,000.00 for the 2022-2023 synodical fiscal year. (\$3,400 reduction)

Recommendation 3: That Classis overture the 276th Synod of the RCUS for consideration of receiving proceeds of the Annual Home Missions Day of Prayer during the 2022-2023 synodical fiscal year.

Recommendation 4: That Classis continue to fund 75% of the costs 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

Northern Plains Classis

President's Report

March 4, 2022

Dear Brothers and Co-laborers in the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ,

It is in the grace of our God of all mercy that he has sustained us through another year. We are called to battle, and we have been engaged in a true spiritual battle amid a culture war driven by darkness and wickedness.

As I thought about your reports my mind was drawn to the words of Psalm 3 - *LORD, how they have increased who trouble me! Many are they who rise up against me. <sup>2</sup>Many are they who say of me, "There is no help for him in God." <sup>3</sup>But You, O LORD, are a shield for me, my glory and the One who lifts up my head. <sup>4</sup>I cried to the LORD with my voice, and He heard me from His holy hill. <sup>5</sup>I lay down and slept; I awoke, **for the LORD sustained me.***

*<sup>6</sup>I will not be afraid of ten thousands of people who have set themselves against me all around. <sup>7</sup>Arise, O LORD; Save me, O my God! For You have struck all my enemies on the cheekbone; You have broken the teeth of the ungodly. <sup>8</sup>Salvation belongs to the LORD. Your blessing is upon Your people.*

The history of the Northern Plains Classis reaches back to over a century ago when the Eureka Classis was formed on June 7<sup>th</sup>, 1911. Its first meeting was in Scotland, SD but it derived its name from the Eureka charge that had filed a protest against the Professor H. Meier of Mission House Seminary as teaching contrary to the Heidelberg Catechism. The name represents the commitment of this Classis to the defense of the Reformed biblical teaching as summarized in our catechism. Through the years it has been the history of the Classis in this region that has stood firm against the impact of unreformed, de-formed unionism.<sup>1</sup>

One hundred years ago this June, the Rev. John Grossmann was called and installed as the pastor of the Artas charge which would include Herried. Later his son, the Rev. Walter Grossmann would serve for eighteen years in Hosmer, SD. Then John's grandsons Peter would serve in Eureka, and Robert would serve in Artas and Herried. Today his great-grandson, James, has served in Ashley and now serves in Eureka. Together, the Artas and Herried charges were known as the Odesa charge which has an immediate significance in light of the invasion of Ukraine this past week and in particular the attack underway as we meet on the beaches of Odesa, the land from which our German-Russian forefathers migrated to this region. There is a strong Reformed influence in Ukraine even today as a result of our forefathers from the Palatinate moving there during the thirty years war several centuries ago.

As I reflected on the history that has brought us to this meeting, what is reflected in your reports,

<sup>1</sup> Rev. R.D. Stuebbe and Rev. Norman Hoeflinger, *History of the Eureka Classis, 1910-1985. Reliance Publishing Co., Green Bay, W. p. 19.*

in our current history, and the perspective of most of you is that the LORD has sustained his church, and he has sustained you, both your congregations and you personally. Over the past two years, dealing with the various constraints of Covid 19 has put tremendous pressure on pursuing our calling in the ministry of the gospel. The threat was serious, and many of us suffered illness and even loss of life of friends, family, and in our congregations and communities. Mandates and regulations from the State have compounded how we function as the church of the Lord Jesus Christ. We are called to preach the Word, to reach the lost, and to minister to those who are hurting and suffering.

Most churches were forced to deal with controversy, conflict and even schism due to the difficulties of these times and that is unfortunate given that the body of Christ is to view everything from a perspective that we are one in the love of Christ and are made a family that is to have compassion and care for one another. What is reflected in your reports is a realization that the LORD has sustained us and is now restoring within our congregations a relative return to normalcy.

The membership of the Northern Plains Classis continues to experience a slow decline. In 2021 our total communicant membership again fell from 369 to 362. The Northern Plains Classis was established in 1987 with a total of twelve churches and 939 communicant members. Six of those original churches no longer exist. Today we are at eight churches and almost a third of the original members. Half of our congregations lost membership, two stayed the same, and two grew. Over our 35 year history, we have added two mission churches. We have transitioned from the largest classis in 1987 to the smallest in 2022 by a wide margin. Brothers, the Northern Plains Classis is at a crossroads and the path we commit ourselves to may determine our survival. Historically, a Classis should have as a minimum, ten charges.

Every pastor here knows that though we may be small in numbers we are not short on work. Whether we have a congregation of almost 100 or under 20, the workload within our congregations is very heavy. We are a busy lot! But that is our calling, brothers. We are co-laborers in Christ and I emphasize “laborers.” Sermons, Bible studies, catechism, nursing home chapels, and visitations, along with Classis and Synod committee work, or work on pursuit of higher degrees; oh, and by the way, try to fit in some time for the family. Many of you mentioned that you have not had a vacation for an extended period. The point is that our churches are being faithfully attended to by you men who are faithful in your calling almost to a breaking point.

However, our pastoral core is aging and we are short of pastors. Our church in Minot has aggressively been pursuing a qualified man to replace our dear brother Rev. Poe who retired in June, but without much success so far. With the ascending of our brother Rev. Brice last month after having preached for 66 years, this places even more pressure on the need to recruit and train a new generation of men who will feed the sheep and guard the flock of God. We have two more men in our Classis who are entering into the twilight of their years of pastoral ministry. Every Classis in the RCUS is seeking to fill empty pulpits, and this is the case in those denominations we have fraternal relations with as well. The laborers are indeed few.

We are thankful for our student, Mr. David Voytek, who was well received and exhibited tremendous gifts for the ministry over his summer internship in Aberdeen. He plans to serve this summer at Sacramento Covenant Reformed Church before he enters his senior year. Another of our sons of the Northern Plains Classis, Mr. Matthew Dawn is on schedule to graduate from Heidelberg Theological Seminary in May.

We praise God for this but we must continue to pray for the Lord to send the gifts of leadership into our churches. Many of you report the hope of men who are preparing to serve in the offices of the church as either deacons or elders. Others are in serious prayer because of a lack of men to serve in their church. We must recognize that tomorrow's deacons, elders and ministers are in today's Sunday School and Catechism classes. We need younger men to serve in our churches to help bring a perspective in this digital age of how to reach the younger generation with the gospel of God's grace.

Much of what has been stated up to this point may seem negative or even discouraging. I do not believe it is. I think that what you must see is that our course as the Reformed church in the Dakotas over the centuries has never been an easy one. There have always been battles to fight, challenges to meet, churches to plant. There has always been a struggle to have enough men to fill our pulpits. But God has sustained us and provided what was sufficient to keep forging ahead faithfully in propagating the preaching of the salvation that is found only in the name of Jesus.

We have hit a crossroads as the Northern Plains Classis that the status quo cannot be our course.

There are some in the RCUS who think we should just cash it in and be dissolved into the South Central Classis or some form of a central super Classis. I disagree and believe that would be a terrible loss for the history of the RCUS. But what is the solution? Well, we have to set about the task of planting churches within our boundaries.

As I read our Missions Report what struck me was that it was very minimal. It only spoke to interaction with and a focus on our one existing mission church. I understand that. It is what is necessary and easy. But we have to do more. Those who are to serve on the Missions Committee must recognize that they are charged with the task of saving our Classis. They must be about the work of identifying strategic places to plant new churches and coming up with a plan to seek out possible new opportunities.

The newly formed Communications Committee of the Synod has been actively seeking to generate leads for possible groups interested in beginning a Reformed Church. Two things have come out of this that should be referred to one of our standing committees for further development. The first will be an overture regarding appointing someone from the Classis to follow up on inquiries within the Northern Plains Classis territory. The overture recommends someone from the missions committee although historically such initial contact was carried out by the executive committee. The second is a proposal to pursue the development of the concept of a home-based mission program that may be a logical solution to our lack of both manpower and resources in developing possible church plants.

I feel it is necessary to speak to what happened with the boundary change between the South Central Classis and Northern Plains Classis in 2019 along the I90 corridor of Montana. I don't want to assign blame because everyone got the whole process wrong. When the opportunity for mission work in Manhattan arose the Classis was not made aware of the situation and so a committee was not sent to investigate and a report to the Classis. The communication between the two Classes was also improper and outside the authority of those involved. The recommendation at the Synod meeting was unconstitutional because the RCUS Constitution requires the consent of the Classis for their dissolution or the changing of their boundaries, and as Classis, we were caught off guard when the recommendation came to the floor of the Synod in 2019. We failed because we did not know our constitutions and so we failed to object. We also failed to appeal the decision the next year because we had yet to become aware of the constitutional requirement. In 2021 as a Classis, we overtured a back door kind of objection when we asked for the I-90 boundary to be adjusted. So where should we go now? In discussion with the Synod President in light of the constitutional violation, he has a concern that this not happen again in the future. As such, he recommended that the Northern Plains Classis overture the Synod to reconsider their decision of 2019 based on its unconstitutionality given the period for appeal has passed.

As your Classis President, I attended the funerals of two RCUS pastors, the Rev. Gene Sawtelle in Yuba City, CA, and the Rev. Wesley Brice in Manhattan, MT. A letter was sent on behalf of the Classis for the funeral of the Rev. Thomas Mayville as your President was recovering from Covid19. Both your President and Clerk were engaged in several meetings on the Special Committee to consider the boundaries of the Classes. We found this very frustrating as from the very start we felt we were backed into a corner defending the right for the Classis to exist as the Northern Plains Classis going forward. I am committed to the importance of the Classis continuation for both historical and strategic reasons. God has preserved and sustained our churches in the northern plains for over a century. I believe we should fight and labor to be that light that defends the great Reformed doctrines summarized in our beloved Heidelberg against any and all attacks of unreformed thought for another century.

On a final matter that has to do with the reality that it is always a challenge to cover the number of committee assignments with a minimal number of delegates. Last Classis we moved the Classis meeting from Monday and Tuesday to Friday and Saturday under the premise that this would help more elders to attend Classis. However, it appears that the opposite is the case. One of the elders it might have benefited would not have been here either way. Another church's delegates are not planning to be here for fear of travel in pending weather conditions. With a pulpit vacant and another pastor out with physical hindrances that leaves us having to be more creative than ever as to how we will get our work done. I anticipate that this issue too will be referred for consideration of a change to the Standing Rule, just to give our Clerk something to do.

Beloved delegates of the Northern Plains Classis, let us not be afraid or discouraged in all of these pressing circumstances but let us rest in the promise of God that His blessing is upon His people. Respectively submitted,  
Rev. Hank Bowen

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

February 28<sup>th</sup>, A.D. 2022

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 36<sup>th</sup> Annual Spring Meeting of Classis.

Duties Performed:

1. Completing the Minutes from the 36<sup>th</sup> Annual Spring Meeting of the Northern Plains Classis and presented them to the 276<sup>th</sup> Synod of the Reformed Church of the United States.
2. Prepared the Abstract of the 36<sup>th</sup> Annual Spring Meeting of Classis and delivered 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. A letter from the Stated Clerk of Synod regarding the documents to be submitted to the churches prior to the next session of Synod.
2. Five items to the Stated Clerk of Synod:
  1. Statistical & Membership Report for the NPC
  2. Writ of Certification for Classis Delegates to the 276<sup>th</sup> Synod of the RCUS
  3. Addresses of the Churches and Delegates of the NPC
  4. Report of Changes
  5. Nine overtures from the NPC to the Synod of the RCUS
3. One Executive Circular to the Delegates of Classis sent via email.
4. Emails and correspondence to denominations with which we have fraternal relations, inviting them to our stated meetings.
5. 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 37<sup>th</sup> Annual Meeting.

Respectfully Submitted, James Grossmann

## **Necrologies**

### ***Norman Schick***

Norman Schick at the age of 80, went home to be with the Lord on November 18, 2021, at the Linton Hospital with his wife by his side, after a year and a half battle with cancer and covid after-effects. Norman was born November 9, 1941 to Ella and William Schick. He grew up on a farm near Artas, SD. He attended country school until eighth grade and then worked for area farmers. On October 21, 1960, he married Carol Goehring. They moved to her family farm near Herreid SD. They raised 5 children, Dale, Jeffery, Susan, Russell and Sheila. Norman was a devoted father always making time to play with the kids. Norman and Carol worked together as partners on the farm for 61 years.

Norman enjoyed all the farm work from the cattle to farming. His favorite time of year was harvest, because operating the combine was something he truly loved. As a rule, he was the only one who drove the combine. Most days you would find Carol in the combine with him in the buddy seat. They did everything together. He was always "fixing" things from the time he was a young man. Norman worked on other people's vehicles in his younger years and as he worked on the farm over the years, he constantly tweaked farm equipment or whatever he could to make it better. Everything was done to perfection. When he wasn't busy on the farm, he had many things that brought him hap-

piness. Norman was active in the church as an Elder and Sunday school teacher for many years at the Herreid First Reformed Church. He also served on the Herreid Elevator board for several years.

When he was younger, he entered many tractor pull competitions winning several trophies. On occasion he would play the accordion along with Dale on the guitar just for fun. He mostly enjoyed spending time at home with his wife and family especially the grandchildren. In the more recent years, Norman and Carol spent lots of time cruising around in the John Deere Gator, checking crops and the cattle. Shortly before his death, he celebrated his 80th birthday with his family

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

**Office of the Stated  
Clerk Rev. Ruben Zartman  
13602 Foyers Falls Dr.  
Bakersfield, CA 93314  
[rzrcus@gmail.com](mailto:rzrcus@gmail.com)**

January 10, 2022

ATTN: Classes Clerks

RE: Minutes of Synod Report

Dear Brothers in Christ,

In reviewing the minutes of the 275<sup>th</sup> Synod, there is one item that requires action by the Classes, and several other matters of note:

1. The adopted recommendation of the Standing Judicial Committee (concerning Overture 3 from the South Central Classis, to amend Article 79 of the RCUS Constitution) will need to be acted upon by the several Classes in their respective meetings.

With reference to Overture #3 From South Central Classis to amend Article 79 of the RCUS Constitution:

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. 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.
4. 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.
5. 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.

[This overture was deemed non-essential business by the 274th Synod and was therefore left to be taken up by the 275th Synod.]

We concur with South Central Classis in their proposed amendments to Article 79. *[This recommendation passed with the required majority, but the Classes will need to vote on this constitutional amendment at their 2022 annual meetings.]*

(Abstract 2021:80–82)

2. The 276<sup>th</sup> Annual Session of the Synod of the RCUS is scheduled to meet May 16–19, 2022, at Salem-Ebenezer Reformed Church, Manitowoc, WI.
3. Both membership statistics and financial statistics should be according to the calendar year.
4. Please review the Standing Rules of Synod (2021 Synod Abstract, pp.91–94).
5. 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.
6. Please remember to send necrologies to the Synod clerk in time for Synod.
7. It should be observed that in the printed version of the 2021 Abstract there was an error in the statistics for Ebenezer Reformed Church, where the total members should have read

91 rather than 101. This will have an impact on the percent of change figure.

Respectfully submitted, Ruben Zartman; *Stated Clerk, RCUS*

*The Classis Voted Unanimously against ratifying the Amendment of RCUS Constitution Article 79.*

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

February 28, 2022

Esteemed Brethren,

One (1) circular was 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.

### **Volume 36, Number 1**

Distributed a proposed agenda and services for the 37<sup>th</sup> annual spring meeting of the Northern Plains Classis with one overture that was received according to standing rule 8.

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,

I want to open with this amazing thing the Apostle Paul proclaimed in **2Corinthians 2:14-15** *Now thanks be to God who always leads us in triumph in Christ, and through us diffuses the fragrance of His knowledge in every place. <sup>15</sup> For we are to God the fragrance of Christ among those who are being saved and among those who are perishing.*

In this statement, we as the church of Jesus Christ are to see ourselves as this fragrance of God's grace that is meant to bring and grow God's grace in this world. Our proper office in this world as the church is that of bringing the gospel for salvation. We are to be that fragrance to both those predestined unto life in Christ as well as destined to eternal death in their rejection of God.

As I think about our calling, beloved, we are a sweet-smelling aroma like the incense which ascended up into heaven before the throne of God out of the temple in Jerusalem. Those who are the members of our churches are to reflect the love and the grace of God by lives that seek to be pleasing unto God. They are that witness of the power of our Lord Jesus that brings salvation through the good news of his redemption. Jesus describes the church as the light which is set on a hill to give light to the whole world. We strive to see that as our calling at First Reformed Church. Our faith is a living faith before the whole of our community.

The year 2021 may best be described as a year of adjustments. The world around us struggled with how to function normally in an abnormal environment. Masks, shut-downs, difficulties with traveling, and just general concerns about health issues produced an anxiousness about what we should and should not do. And yet life went on. Many in our congregation did get Covid, including me the week of easter. But by God's grace, no one was hospitalized and all recovered. Many around us were not so fortunate, but it was a reminder that we must live our lives to and before the God of all grace in the present, for tomorrow we might die.

It was with sorrow I laid to rest a mentor and father in the Lord at the beginning of 2021. Rev. Robert Grossmann lived a life wholly unto the Lord and as Paul instructed Timothy to train men up in the faith, so Rev. Grossmann trained me to be the pastor I am today. He now rests in the cemetery

in Hosmer in the family plot. In a small way, you might say that Rev. Grossmann was a child of the Aberdeen congregation, seeing that it was his father that was one of the men instrumental in the start of First Reformed Church when Bob was but a child. But the mark of men like his father is still imprinted upon who we are as a Reformed Church.

A year later, my father-in-law the Rev. Wes Brice entered into the Lord's glory after 66 years of ministry having battled cancer for the past four years and recently succumbed to his second go-round with Covid 19. He had been preaching the past three years in a start-up work in Manhattan, Montana, and preached faithfully up to three weeks before his death. Rev. Brice had been an associate pastor of First Reformed while supplying our mission work in Dickinson, ND. He is largely responsible for moving that work in a positive direction and enabling the congregation to call Rev. Voytek as their missionary and organizing pastor.

In August of 2023, First Reformed Church will celebrate its 75<sup>th</sup> anniversary as a church. Plans are already being made to bring praise to God for his blessing over the years, and prayers for a continued fervency in serving him for years to come. As we reflect upon our longevity we must also nurture an environment of change to be faithful in our witness in this and to the next generation. We are committed to preserving and perpetuating the strengths of our German Reformed heritage, but we must not live in the past. We are called to be that gospel fragrance among those who are being saved and among those who are perishing.

While many may view 2021 as the year of Covid, we might view it as the year of Livestream. Doors opened that only a couple of years ago we would not have considered. Now we have a new media center. At the beginning of 2022, our social media center went online and as such answered my prayers to be free from setting up laptops and my phone before beginning services. Even as the disciples said it is not right for them to leave the preaching of the word and prayer for the people to serve tables, so I am glad that I will not have to be setting up social media before I enter the pulpit. We have Josh Wurgler and our youngest deacon Andrew Wanner to thank for their investigation and labor in leading this project. A couple of years ago the consistory undertook involving younger men in leadership who better understand the younger generation that need to receive the gospel. May the Lord continue to provide for us a new generation of men zealous to be engaged in the ministry of First Reformed Church.

We are also blessed by many of the ladies in our congregation who step forward and volunteer to fulfill needs they see that improve the overall presentation of our church. Whether it is landscaping outside or decorating inside, organizing functions, and Bible studies, we are blessed with Christian ladies who serve diligently and faithfully.

The list has grown too large to mention all that is done by the consistory, SS teachers, VBS volunteers, project contributors to improve the church, fellowship organizers, music facilitators, camp counselors, and drivers, and the list goes on. The minister may preach and teach but it is the members who truly are active in the ministry of Christ that are essential to the life and success of the congregation.

The Lord is blessing First Reformed Church with sustained growth. This past year we added seven communicant members. With the passing of Emma Martel, our oldest member who was hitting 102, we lost one member. I was thankful to brother Irwin for stepping in at the last moment to cover for me for Emma's funeral, as she died as soon as Patty and I had arrived for a week's vacation with family in Deadwood. We added Zach Ehnes and Micah Kranzler through confirmation. Kensi Eckhoff was added through adult baptism, and there are plans for her marriage to Caleb Kranzler this coming October. Our communicant membership now stands at 98 with 53 families and over 20 in our Sunday School. There are six students in the catechism class this year with one on schedule to be confirmed. We have several others who are regular visitors.

It is a general principle that once a church fills to about 80% that it will stop growing. We have hit that point, and yet we are still growing. The last time we had Lord's Supper all of our pews were full but the front row, which I fondly refer to as the "anxious benches" where no one ever occupies. We have reached the point where discussions are underway about the suitability of our facility going forward, particularly given the limitations in classrooms and a properly sized fellowship hall, and the need to maybe obtain a larger facility. Our current building has served the congregation well but does hamper some aspects of how we function.

We were blessed by the work of our student under care, Mr. David Voytek this past summer. He



was with us for eleven weeks and preached on ten Lord's Days. He also did an excellent job in our Coffee Chat presenting studies on Critical Race Theory, and the Books of Jonah and Ruth. We met often and he interacted well with the congregation and consistory. Various members of the church submitted evaluations of his preaching which improved noticeably over the summer, though he demonstrated good confidence and ability in opening God's Word. The one area that he was unable to engage in the way he hoped was visiting. But this was due to the Covid precautions.

David's presence did give me a much-needed break. The plan was to make significant progress on my doctorate, but in the end, I can say I made some progress. The lesson is that one should leave town when on a sabbatical. I am continuing my course work through Heidelberg Theological Seminary and am beginning work on my writing project which will focus on positive aspects in preaching a gospel of grace. I taught the Introduction to Apologetics at HTS last Fall on Monday mornings, and to the Philippines through zoom on Friday evenings. This Spring I am engaged in teaching Applied Apologetics on Monday mornings.

The preaching of the word is going forth faithfully through the ministry of First Reformed Church. I preached 43 times in Aberdeen, plus the Ashley Missionfest, and our own Missionfest. Last year our Missionfest was canceled when the speaker backed out at the last moment due to Covid concerns, and so we scheduled to have him return this year. But as we came to the week, he again expressed concerns. So rather than cancel Missionfest, I served as our Missionfest speaker. We are excited about our coming Missionfest on October 8<sup>th</sup> and 9<sup>th</sup> this year as Dr. Alan Strange will be our guest. We are working on potentially this becoming a Reformation Conference with two sessions on Saturday and finishing with worship on Sunday morning.

I preached at the Heidelberg Camp and spoke at the Conference in Eureka on the Great Commission in the local church. I also enjoyed great participation with the Tuesday Wings hockey chapels where I finished walking about 18 players through the Gospel of John. This season I have about eight players going through the Book of Romans. In the Men's Early Risers Bible Study we finished *The Whole Christ* by Sinclair Ferguson and are currently going through a book by J. Gresham Machen entitled *Things Unseen* on ministering the gospel amid the rise of liberalism and modernism.

In conclusion, with what confidence and hope do we look forward to 2022. We do so in the confidence that through Christ, the grace of God may continue to stir within our hearts a zeal for the ministry of the gospel, and that as we seek to be light in our community, God will use us as instruments of his grace to add to the church those who are being saved.

Your pastor,

Rev. Hank Bowen

## Parochial Report of Rev. James Grossmann

Esteemed Fathers and Brothers,

The world around us continues to divide over the smallest differences and be at each others' throats because of those divisions. God tells us that "love will cover a multitude of sins" (1 Peter 4:8). As God's church, we must be unified around what is most important, the cross of Christ and we must build one another up because of the love which we have for one another, despite differences. We have this love because God first loved us. He loved us in spite of having far greater problems with us and our sins than we have with one another.

It continues to be an honor for me to serve as Minister of the Word at Eureka Reformed Church. I have preached for 50 Sunday worship services. We celebrated the New Year, Good Friday, Ascension Day, and Thanksgiving with special services of worship. My sermons have been largely in series format from the books of Matthew, Romans, Deuteronomy, Colossians, and I Kings. We were able to resume monthly worship services and bring shut-in communion to our members at the Eureka Nursing Home. We have had numerous difficulties keeping our Adult Sunday School and Sunday Evening Bibles Studies going.

Over the past year, we lost five members to death. The following entered into their eternal rest: Lela Fischer, on June 28; Malinda Ladner, on August 15; Deloris Mehlhaff, on September 16; June Kauk, on October 26; and Leo Ackerman, on January 9, 2022. We baptized two babies this year, Clara Neifer on June 13th, and John Bentz on November 21st. With these changes, we have 98 Com-

municant and 11 baptized members.

We have celebrated the Lord's Supper four times this year. As noted above, we had the opportunity to provide shut-in communion to our shut-ins in June, October, and December.

We were able to resume holding our annual Vacation Bible School this summer. We hosted 27 students! Thank the LORD! We are very grateful for those who have contributed their time and efforts to make this possible. It is an opportunity to minister the Gospel to the youth of our community. Please join me in praying for the young people who have been attending and for the opportunity to bring the Gospel to our community again this summer.

Our Sunday School now consists of 13 students: 11 young men and two young women. We added two of those young men to our Catechism class this year for a total of five. Please pray for these young people as they study the basics of the Christian faith.

At our annual meeting, it was decided to host a seminary student internship this summer. At this point, we are planning to have Dave Johnson, a student at HTS. This should be a blessing for us as a congregation. We have a memorial fund that was designated for seminary students, the interest from which will cover at least half of our cost.

My labors for classis have returned to a more normal level this year. At the synodical level, with the passing of my father, I have taken a much more active role in interacting with the United Reformed Churches in the Congo. Especially in sending them diaconal assistance. I have also served on a special committee to consider changing the classes boundaries which required quite a bit of meeting. As always, I pray that I have accomplished an acceptable job for the glory of our Savior and 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.

Sincerely in Christ,  
Rev. James Grossmann

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

Beloved brothers and fellow servants of the Lord Jesus Christ,

The Proverbs declare: "The preparations of the heart belong to man, but the answer of the tongue is from the LORD." "A man's heart plans his way, but the LORD directs his steps (and falls!) 16: 19."

So, back in 2015-2016, while at Shafter, CA serving the saints of Ebenezer Reformed Church, there was a sense (right or wrong), that I was going to finish my service there as a minister, in a kind of relaxed, easy-going, and very profitable manner. Things were going well, families were growing, new additions on the horizon, but along with that "sense", came an overwhelming other sense, that I was going to go the way of the folks in Malachi's day, whom my O.T. Seminary professor described as "fat, sassy, and satisfied!" Such that I began to ask the Lord about the possibility of serving, one more charge whereby I might be of use and for sure, not succumb to the "cruise control", or "hang on till I can afford to retire" attitude of service. So yes, I wanted to be challenged, stretched, and still viable and growing in my Christian pilgrimage as an "older man", as well as, of course, as a minister of the Word and prayer! After the last five years, and the last two years, in particular, okay in the last nine months, my dear Lord has certainly heard and answered my concerns and prayers in regards to growing "fat, sassy, and satisfied!" Covid in May—Heart attack in October, and to top it all off, a broken or fractured right femur/hip in January and thus 6-12 weeks of rehab!

So brothers it is with these thoughts and reflections in mind, that I present the physical and spiritual condition of the Hope Reformed saints, as well as an account of my pastoral duties, pursuits, and endeavors.

Let me begin then with a breakdown of our church family. As of this writing, we have 16 males (13 adults and 3 boys), 16 females (13 adults, 3 girls), and one boy or girl in the womb! 2- 80-year-olds, 2- 70's, 6- 60's, 4- 50's, 1- 40, 5- 30's, 4- 20's, and 8 under 20 years of age. Now, six of these folks are visitors who came somewhat regularly. We also recorded two dismissions, whereby we lost one and gained one. So we are thankful for our small fellowship and grateful for the visitors who continue to worship with us and hopefully will join with us in due time.

Now brethren, as the year began (2021) we were all truly excited for these new visitors, as well as, a family of five, and a family of three, who had become regular attendees, and were moving to-

ward membership! Many questions were asked, much prayer was offered, meals were enjoyed, and all seemed to be going well for about eight months, until in God's "hard" providence, all but five of the 13 visitors left! The reasons were varied, but the results were very, very, disappointing and discouraging. We all thought that our Lord was finally granting our requests for growing! Yet we all knew and still know that it is always our Lord who gives the increase to our efforts of planting, watering, and the like.

As to our finances, we did well, even though we will take a little hit with the departure of those visitors. Still, even so, the congregation sent some encouraging words to yours truly when they approved a blessed raise for him! They also, at the annual meeting reviewed our "advertising" methods and decided to pursue putting more of it into our website and Facebook, as well as other avenues, instead of the local paper! As always we do look in faith for our God to continually provide for us and bless our efforts, even as we hold ourselves accountable to Him, and His work here at Hope.

On an upbeat note, we have two men who are interested in serving as Deacons! This is quite a blessing as we have been at a significant disadvantage not having Deacons! Wherefore after a time of study and further reflection upon the high honor of serving as a Deacon, they will give further consideration as to whether or not they do indeed desire this office.

So with these things in mind, here is a snapshot of Hope's activities:

We continue to have our monthly potlucks, which are most enjoyable. We continue our practice of celebrating the Lord's Supper, every other month. Five or so families take turns cleaning the church. Others of us try to keep the outside looking decent.

We enjoyed a Graduation celebration with one of our high school members, Miss Melinda Henderson.

Nine of us enjoyed the Heidelberg Youth Camp in July, with our own, Matt and Heather Fickbohm leading the charge!

We also enjoyed a fun-filled Fourth of July Ice Cream – Social – hot dogs and brats, homemade ice cream, unique games for the children, and a hymn sing to boot!

In September, we enjoyed Mr. Matthew Dawn as our Mission fest speaker! It is so good to hear God's Word faithfully preached!

This year we had a Reformation Hymn Sing; read excerpts of Katherine Luther and ate heartily!

A Thanksgiving Eve Service was held and much appreciated!

Sadly, our annual Christmas program was canceled due to colds, flu, and sore throats! Therefore overall, Hope Reformed had a good year, a tough year, as well as a year when their pastor was "struck down" for a total of nine Sundays! I thank God that He directs the course of our lives and continues to care for His people through all the changing scenes of life!

As to my pastoral duties, pursuits, and endeavors, I submit the following:

6. I have been preaching a series through Acts, interspersed with sermons from the Psalms, and other passages including the yearly Easter, Christmas, and other "event" sermons. On Sunday mornings the children are in Sunday School and the adults gather for fellowship and friendly conversation. We "instituted" this so that our members might be given more of an opportunity to interact with both the visitors as well as with one another. On Sunday evenings we met for a brief Hymn Sing and Study of the covenant practice of "Infant Baptism." The youth had fellowship downstairs with Matt and Heather Fickbohm.

7. On Wednesday evenings we continued with studies on I and II Thessalonians. We did take a two-month summer break.

8. Our Catechism Class consists of one young lady who is doing really well, even though her teacher is her Dad!

9. I was pleased to lead the Hymn Sing and Talent Show at camp this year; taking it relatively easy the rest of the time.

10. I was privileged to be the Mission fest Speaker for our brethren in Watertown in September.

11. As usual, I spent more time with visitors as well as visiting the sick and infirmed on a need-to-need basis.

12. I have been reading a variety of books and begun to formulate a book I have been wanting to write for a while. I have read: *Beowulf*, *Letters of Samuel Rutherford*, *Letters of John Calvin*, *The Glorious Body of Christ*, *Broken- Down House* by Paul David Tripp, *Moses: Typical Mediator of the Old Testament* by Bernie Woudenberg, John Flannigan's *Brotherband and Royal Ranger series*, and

*Fortunate Son, My life, My Music* by John Fogerty.

Now with the arrival of my heart attack and a broken hip, things the last four months have waned as far as my pastoral duties. It truly has been a time of serious reflection, study, and evaluation! I am very thankful to God that Elder Fickbohm has filled the gap masterfully and faithfully, and has shown his love for God's sheep! Pastor Emeritus Haddock has also faithfully stepped up to the plate when needed. My wife and family have also been a very big, big, help to me in my times of affliction though it certainly has tested us all.

As we make our plans for the New Year, we hope for growth numerically and of course spiritually! For surely, how can there not be elect sinners in Hughes County, in Pierre, and Ft. Pierre? Therefore, may God work in us a desire to not only see ourselves fed, nourished, and cared for, but also and especially, to see sinners, of all kinds, broken, messed up, hurting, hungry, and lost all saved by Jesus Christ! May we, in our hearts, plan our ways, even as the Lord directs our steps in the way we should go! Move O Lord, move! Hear our pleas!

Respectfully,  
Paul H. Henderson

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

(February 2022)

Dear Fathers and Brothers in Christ Jesus,

In Isaiah 43:1-5, God promises to bring His people Israel through the deep waters and to give up whole entire nations for their sake. We see in the Gospel that God brings us through not only the waters of baptism but through the deep waters of the trials of our lives as well. And while God does not sacrifice and give nations like Egypt, Ethiopia, and Seba for us, yet the Father does give in our place something even more grand – the life of His only begotten Son in our place, given as a ransom for many, as Jesus Himself tells us in [Mark 10:45](#). Through His electing love and the redeeming sacrifice of Christ, God claims us as His own, and therefore He calls on us to trust Him and to not fear, though we go through fire and the deep waters. He has promised to bring us safely to the destination and the destiny which He has planned for us before the world began.

After the previous crazy year of ministry in 2020, the year 2021 seemed to bring a lot more stability, though it had struggles and challenges of its own. There were many health issues among our members, but all have weathered their storms and are still among us. The life of the fellowship slowly edged back to feeling normal again – for example, we had two or three potlucks in 2021, including Missionfest's dinner – none of which had happened in the previous year.

It has been my honor and privilege to serve as the pastor at Salem Reformed Church through the year 2021. As minister of Word and Sacrament, I led an estimated 53 worship services in our church this past year, including Ascension Day, our Christmas carol program, and Christmas Day services. We canceled one service, our 2021 New Year's Day service, due to my having COVID at the time. One or two of our services this past year were elder-led. Sunday morning sermons in 2021 included the books of Esther, Ruth, and I Thessalonians, plus a series of topical sermons between Easter and Father's Day, and a Christmas holiday series on "Why Jesus Came." We celebrated the Lord's Supper three times this past year – on March 21, July 25, and October 31. We also held an estimated 16 or 17 adult Sunday School classes, focusing mostly on the middle chapters of Romans and Genesis. Our Missionfest was on November 14, with Rev. Hank Bowen as our guest preacher. We had no baptisms, nor any confirmations this past year. There were no weddings or funerals held in the church in 2021. We did not gain nor lose any members in 2021.

Outside of the church, I preached and conducted Sunday services at least four times for our church in Herried, SD, five times at Hope Reformed Church (ARC) in Westfield, ND, one Sunday Lord's Supper service for our church in Minot, ND, and once for our neighbors across the alley at the Ashley Baptist Church (that's eleven total, not counting funerals).

With all the COVID closures and re-openings and re-closings, I lost track of how many Tuesday

morning Bible studies I led at the nursing home, and I still have not been able to do as many one-on-one nursing home or hospital visitations as I had been used to performing in previous years, but I did conduct seventeen (17) Friday afternoon chapel services at the Ashley Medical Center. At least four of those chapel services at the nursing home were memorial services for the 13 or so residents who had passed away during the lock-downs. While we had no funerals in our church last year, I did officiate at six funerals for non-church members in 2021 – three in Ashley, one in Ipswich & Hosmer, SD; one in Eureka, SD, and one in Minot, ND.

I also worked with the Ashley Ministerial Association in planning community events, such as the Thanksgiving week community worship service and the Salvation Army bell-ringing campaign over the Christmas season.

In other ministry works, we aired 52 radio programs over KSJB AM 600 in Jamestown this past year through our “Start the Week” broadcast that airs on Sunday mornings at 7:45 am. I estimate that 29 of those programs were brand new productions, 23 were reruns or repeats of previous programs. Between church services, chapels, funerals, and new radio programs, I preached a total of 110 sermons in 2021.

With both the Lutherans and the Baptists in Ashley now having new pastors, and with more steady and reliable ministry available to them, I did not perform as many funerals and visitations for their members as I had done in 2020. Much of my ministry outside of our church shifted from Ashley out to other communities, such as Westfield and Minot. I did a lot more ministry-related traveling than in previous years. 2021 was my second year in a row with no vacation time.

In the previous year of 2020, extra effort was spent focusing on getting the Body of Christ in my immediate community through a difficult crisis where many non-Reformed believers in Ashley had no pastor of their own. This past year (2021), it was a call to spend more energy on the surrounding communities while still caring for the church congregation and the nursing home population in Ashley. I am tired, but we are called on to make hay while the sun still shines (“...for the night is coming when no man may work.” – *John 9:4b*). 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 the other Christians in the Ashley area and beyond. And, it is a joy to open the doors of God's house for God's people so they can gather for worship on the Lord's Day.

Grace and Peace in Christ –

Rev. Dave Irwin

## Parochial Report of Rev. Michael Lassley

Fathers and brothers of the Northern Plains Classis,

One year ago the body of Christ at Covenant Reformed gathered together at this time and prayed that the Lord would grant us not to forget the inconveniences and sufferings which he had brought us through in 2020, a year in which our church along with the entire world was unsettled by the COVID pandemic. Our prayer then was that instead of forgetting, God would cause us to remember... to remember his sovereignty and the sufficiency of his grace through it all, that rather than fear and grumbling, we would instead rejoice, and grow in endurance, in character, and hope; so that dropping hands would be lifted up, weak knees would be strengthened and crooked paths made straight; that through it all, we would be even better equipped to know God through Jesus Christ and glorify him in all that we do at the end of 2021 than we were at its beginning... in our worship, in our teaching, in our nurturing, and in reaching out to the world with the gospel... for the sake our Lord Jesus Christ, for the sake of his church, and the common good of all people.

Looking back in consideration of the grace in which we now stand one year after having made such a prayer... we praise God for answering that prayer beyond what we could have ever imagined...

For Winston Morgan Barthel, born April 13th... delivered safe and sound in his parent's car by his

father Ben somewhere along the road between home and the hospital. For Madilynn Jo and Meka-lynn Ann Bentz, twins born October 5th... safe and sound, a little over 5 lbs. each; just minutes before Ashley their mom was able to be boarded on an airplane for an emergency flight to a hospital in Sioux Falls for what was expected to be a c-section.

For the steadfast love and faithfulness of our covenant-making and keeping God at work in the parents of these covenant children — Ben & Chelsea and Tom & Ashely, who brought these, their children before the Lord and his church in faith so that they would receive the sign and seal of holy baptism and be raised in the Reformed faith.

For the grace of perseverance in the confirmation of Melody Lassley and Jeremy Stout to communing membership. For the grace of perseverance in the graduation of Emma Lassley from home-school and entrance into college.

For the grace of joyful and willing service of so many among our membership and some even from without — for our pianist Ben Barthel and guest Eloise Faulk who assisted us from time to time by playing the piano; for members: Joshua Waldorf with singing; Silas Henderson with live streaming; for Seth Lassley with greeting, set up, and sound; Jena Henderson, Emma, Melody, and Seth Lassley with nursery; of Jeff Stout, Paula DeJong, Amy Lassley, Jena Henderson, and Emma Lassley in helping to shepherd the Covenant Life groups; for Gisele Stout with leading the women's fellowship and book studies.

For the new women's monthly prayer and planning meetings and the many blessings they prayed down upon the church this past year; from the flowers, wreaths, and welcome table to working with the school to keep the sanctuary clean and picked for our worship services; from the planning of meals to bless families during hard times as well as for every celebration small and large throughout the year... from simple times of fellowship following the Sunday service and the monthly fellowship meals to baby showers, the Valentines dinner, Mission Fest, the Harvest Party, the Reformation Celebration, and the Christmas party, etc, etc... but most of all for their prayers — prayers for the membership of the church (present and future); prayers for elder Rod DeJong, deacon Paul Maassen, and myself... for the love of them all for our Lord Jesus Christ and his church... for these we praise our good and gracious God.

For new pew Bibles, church signs, welcome cards, and wireless audio equipment. For the privilege and honor of not only praying for but financially supporting the Reformed Church in the Congo in central Africa, the Reformed Faith and Life Ministries in France and Africa, the training of Reformed pastors in the Philippines, building debt reduction and growth of the Grace Reformed Church in Dickinson, ND and not one but two wheelchairs for Hope Haven Ministries.

For the Spirit and Word of the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ... which this past year sustained, reformed, and conformed us more and more into the image of Christ Jesus from the seventh through the twelfth chapters of Isaiah, the entirety of the letter to the Philippians, Ephesians chapter six, Romans chapter eight, and 1 Peter chapter one, before rounding out the year with an Advent series that touched upon passages from the books of the prophets Jeremiah, Malachi, Zephaniah, and Micah.

For the grace to have gathered and worshipped this past year on Good Friday, Thanksgiving Eve, and Christmas Eve, and the blessing of having Rev. Paul Henderson and his family for Mission Fest. For the grace of men's and women's fellowship around the Confessions of St. Augustine and Nancy Guthrie's *The Lamb of God* and *The Promised One* respectively and the beginning of a men's breakfast fellowship on Thursday mornings.

For eighteen NT lessons from R.C. Sproul's *Dust to Glory* series spanning the Gospel's and Acts, a deep dive into John's account of the gospel, and God's Growing Church from Great Commissions Publishing, in the adults, teens, and elementary Covenant Life groups respectively. For the study of Psalms one through eighteen during mid-week Bible studies. The book of Job during C.R.Y.F., and overviews of the books of Malachi; Proverbs, Psalms, Ecclesiastes, Matthew, Luke, John, and half of the book of Acts along with twenty-one chapters of *The Church in History* during our mid-week C.R.Y. F. and Confirmation groups; including two students who completed 86 of 129 chapters of the Heidelberg catechism workbook along with the memorization of a significant portion of the 129 questions with the anticipation of becoming confirmed in 2022.

For becoming a little better known in our community, after submitting several articles this past spring for publication in our local newspaper; and while there were only a few slots available to do

this in 2022; Covenant Reformed will be regularly represented at City Council meetings by praying at their meetings several times throughout this coming year.

Last but by no means least, for the grace of God's bountiful support and supply this past year in excess of \$1,500.00 over our expenses, which were a little more than \$8,000.00 over our 2021 budget a mere 1.5% decrease in annual giving — and that, after the erasure and/or departure of 16 commuting members last year. All glory to God and may this be an encouragement to you... it's not our compromise that God requires to sustain and lead his church through hard times... but only and ever our faithfulness. Amen, and Amen.

Indeed, as we consider this amazing grace in which we stand here at the end of 2021 and the beginning of 2022, let us praise God and commit ourselves to faithfulness and prayer even more in 2022 than ever before... faithfulness and prayer for one another, for our local churches, for the R.C.U.S., for our progress in sanctification, for our maturity and conformity to Christ, for our holiness before God, for an even greater knowledge of God through Christ and even greater opportunities to glorify him... in our worship, our teaching, our nurturing, and reaching — in our churches, our families, our vocations, and our recreations, etc, etc... in all that we do in 2022.

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

## Parochial Report of Rev. Cody Schwichtenberg

Esteemed Brothers in Christ,

In 2020, we faced the Covid storm that threw our lives into turmoil. For many, we may have felt like the disciples on the Sea of Galilee. We looked at our circumstances, ran to Jesus in prayer, and said, "*Lord, save us! We are perishing!*" Like what Jesus did to the storm on the sea, so has He calmed the storm of 2020.

If I could describe 2021, it would be "a busy calm." What I mean by this is that, although last year was calm, it was also extremely busy. Do you agree with this description? In 2020, it felt like all our plans were put on hold, but then at the turn of the year, it returned to business as usual. As a result, we had to get reacclimated to the normal busyness of life. That is what happened for First Reformed Church. We saw the return of Bible Study, Vacation Bible School, and our annual Reformation Day party. I felt the exhaustion of the work and labor of putting on such events. I thank the Lord for my wife and all those who volunteered to help, for it took off some of the weight of my ministerial duties.

As I was writing this, I almost forgot to mention the two baptisms (Macie Beck and Lainey Vander Vorst), the two confirmations (Kaden Sayler and Alexis Goehring), and the one funeral (Norman Schick) that were performed in 2021. Along with the labors of the local church, more work was required of me than I'm accustomed to for Synod and Classis.

One burden the Lord lifted in 2021 was our financial need. Due to generous giving, we took in over \$320,000 in general offerings and over \$32,000 in building fund offerings. I am reminded of the Apostle Paul's words in 2 Corinthians 8:6-8, "*But this I say: He who sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and he who sows bountifully will also reap bountifully. So let each one give as he purposes in his heart, not grudgingly or of necessity; for God loves a cheerful giver. And God is able to make all grace abound toward you, that you, always having all sufficiency in all things, may have an abundance for every good work.*"

There were three results of God's grace through the means of this cheerful giving. First, we were able to give more generously to those in need. Secondly, we were able to meet both the Synod and Classis dues which has not happened in years. Thirdly, we now have the ability to make renovations to the church building without incurring debt.

As it pertains to preaching and teaching, I finished my sermon series on Romans and am nearing the end of a series on Psalm 119. We completed our Bible study on Revelation in the spring, and we are currently walking through the book *Gentle and Lowly* by Dane Ortlund in Sunday School.

I would like to mention two events this past year that seemed inconvenient to me but providentially turned out to be a great blessing from God. First, due to the Covid bug hitting the church, we had to move our Christmas program from a Sunday to a Wednesday. As a result, we had one of the biggest turn outs ever for a program that filled nearly every pew. Secondly, due to an injury to one of

our house cats, we had to take three trips to the veterinarian clinic in Mobridge. As a result, a young family of three began regularly attending Sunday worship.

As I draw near to my 7<sup>th</sup> year at First Reformed Church, let me give you what I plan to focus on in the years to come if the Lord permits.

1. I plan to preach through more Old Testament narratives to refresh the congregation on both familiar and unfamiliar stories in the Bible.
2. I plan to focus on the development of the leadership in the church whether that be current or future officers.
3. I plan to find ways to better understand the spiritual well-being of the congregation so that I might be a better pastor and counselor.
4. I plan to be more diligent in using the opportunities that the Lord gives me as it pertains to outreach and evangelism.

I pray that the Lord will grant me success and focus unto His glory so that First Reformed Church will be stronger and healthier for the years to come! This will be my prayer for First Reformed Church as well as all the congregations of the Northern Plains Classis in 2022 *“...that He would grant you, according to the riches of His glory, to be strengthened with might through His Spirit in the inner man, that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith; that you, being rooted and grounded in love, may be able to comprehend with all the saints what is the width and length and depth and height—to know the love of Christ which passes knowledge; that you may be filled with all the fullness of God”* (Ephesians 3:16-19).

Respectfully Submitted,

Pastor Cody Schwichtenberg

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

Fathers and Brothers in Christ,

In January of this year (2022), I began to preach through the book of Joshua. In many ways the challenges that Joshua and his generation as well as the generations that followed him faced (i.e., the period of the Judges) are the same that we face today. Compare the summary of the times of the Judges to what is going on in our sin-cursed world. *“In those days there was no king in Israel; every-one did what was right in his own eyes”* (Jdg. 21:25 NKJ). In light of the difficulties and discouragement that sin and its effects as well as the spiritual warfare that besets us daily, the Lord’s words to Joshua are given to strengthen us to stand in this evil day. *“Be strong and of good courage, for to this people you shall divide as an inheritance the land which I swore to their fathers to give them. Only be strong and very courageous, that you may observe to do according to all the law which Moses My servant commanded you; do not turn from it to the right hand or to the left, that you may prosper wherever you go. This Book of the Law shall not depart from your mouth, but you shall meditate in it day and night, that you may observe to do according to all that is written in it. For then you will make your way prosperous, and then you will have good success. **“HAVE I NOT COMMANDED YOU? Be strong and of good courage; do not be afraid, nor be dismayed, for the LORD your God is with you wherever you go”*** (Jos. 1:6-9 NKJ). Let’s keep this word of exhortation in mind as we consider what God has done among us this past year and look forward to the future.

As I begin to write about what has transpired at Grace Reformed Church this past year, the words of Solomon came to mind. He wrote, *“To everything there is a season, A time for every purpose under heaven: A time to be born, and a time to die; A time to plant, and a time to pluck what is planted... a time to gain, and a time to lose...”* (Eccl. 3:1-6). In January and February of 2021, we experienced a time of gain. We grew to an average of 25 to 30 visitors per Sunday including several families with small children. Most of them have continued with us. We had up to three families attending new member’s classes although we have not yet added any new members. At the same time, we experienced loss when elder John Huizinga took a new job that required him to move to Michigan and the rest of his family moved with him. It was a great loss of a wonderful founding family, but the Lord has a season and a reason for everything that happens to us. Please pray that the Lord will continue to add to the church family here for the sake of the advancement of the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ and for the lost souls in our community and the world. Also please pray for the



raising up of elders and deacons.

Throughout the year, the Lord has blessed us with the fruit of His Word through the preaching and teaching ministry of the church. For example, on Sunday mornings, we completed the series from the books of Genesis and Exodus 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 as well as other topics. The goal was twofold, to enable the congregation to gain a deeper knowledge of the Word of God and to equip them to be able to study the bible on their own. In addition, in September we began to meet on Wednesday evenings to study the Gospel of Mark. Many of those who have attended have expressed their appreciation for what they are learning. Although the confirmation class has not resumed after the summer, the youth continue to prepare to make a public profession of their faith.

We have also been blessed by God 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. Of special note this year, many of the members and visitors worked diligently to repaint the outside of the church building (we have received many compliments as to how it now looks) and to repair the wall in the basement to prepare for the annual Northern Plains Classis meeting in March. We have also been blessed by volunteers that have worked diligently to record the sermons, teach Sunday school, and assist in playing the piano during the worship service. Please pray that the Lord would provide additional volunteers for these important ministries. There are many others who have faithfully served Christ and His church through their prayers, financial giving, and service of love and mercy. Speaking of financial giving, I have been greatly encouraged by what the Lord has done through the church members and visitors as well as through the members and churches of the RCUS. As reported in the proposed three-year budget, we were able to retire over \$21,000 in debt on the church building and the parsonage and at the same time, we ended the year with an increase in savings.

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. Furthermore, the elders are in the process of visiting each member’s 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 advertisement in the Dickinson Press and the phone directory, and the uploading of the sermons on [sermonaudio.com](http://sermonaudio.com). The monthly reports can be found on the bulletin board in the fellowship area, and it is exciting to see the impact that we are having across the nation and around the world. We also have invitation postcards, gospel tracts, and other literature available for you to use to invite others to the church. Please pray for the Lord’s blessing in this important area of outreach as we are still receiving support as a mission congregation of the Northern Plains Classis and the Synod of the Reformed Church in the United States.

I would like to conclude this brief report with an exhortation from Psalm 67. God has abundantly blessed us at Grace Reformed Church of Dickinson and the Northern Plains Classis as a whole this past year and it is my prayer that He will continue to do so in the coming years. With these blessings come responsibility and we need to take this to heart. God has a purpose in blessing us, and it is not necessarily for ourselves. In the first two verses of Psalm 67, we read the following: “*God be merciful unto us and bless us; and cause his face to shine upon us. That thy way may be known upon earth, thy saving health among all nations.*” Here we learn that God blesses His people in order that others would come to know Him and His salvation. We are blessed to be a blessing to others. Will we grasp this truth and run with it to the glory of God, or will we fall into the same sin that plagued Israel throughout her long sojourn here on earth? May God grant us the grace to fulfill His purposes. Amen.

Your fellow bondservant in Christ,

Rev. Michael Voytek

### **Elder Report of James B. Snyder (Minot)**

Greetings in the name of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ! Grace, mercy, and peace be to you all! This past year, 2021, has been a year of many changes for our congregation. We also established a new church website with thanks to Molly Hoverson for doing that and a shout-out to Jeff Milam for his assistance as well. Another change was that Elton Dockter, a deacon, was elected and ordained as an elder at our congregational meeting in May of 2021. He was later installed into that office. We continued to meet at our new location in the Park South apartments for our second year, although we are still looking for a possible building to purchase.

Sadly, Rev. Phil Poe retired on June 30<sup>th</sup> of his pastoral office at CRC after 11 years, on June 30<sup>th</sup> and he and Karen moved back to Ohio a week later. We truly miss their being part of our church family! We were in contact with Rev. Jimmy Hall, an RCUS pastor without a current call and he was very interested in a possible call to CRC. We had him and his wife Stephanie come to Minot on August 1<sup>st</sup> for a trial sermon. CRC voted to call him and after considering the call Rev. Hall felt he had to decline the call to work on some family issues. Over the many months, we had contacted various men in the RCUS to see if they would be interested in a call to CRC and all have declined. We are currently in conversation with Rev. Brett Mahlen, an OPC minister, about a call to CRC. We'll have to see what God's Providence brings about in due time.

CRC welcomed Todd Scott into church membership in 2021 and has enjoyed fellowship with him as part of our church family. We have had a number of regular visitors join us for worship each Sunday and appreciate their presence with us. During this past year, we continued with our monthly Lord's Supper and fellowship meals until the Poe's left. We had Rev. Hall administer the Supper in August and had Rev. Dave Irwin come here in November to preach and administer the Supper (we also had Rev. Irwin come here to conduct a funeral for the Dockter family in August). We plan to continue our monthly fellowship meals and hope to have a pastor come to Minot to administer the Supper in the new year. In 2021 we chose not to have a mission fest or our annual picnic due to Covid-19 illnesses and a family tragedy in the Dockter clan. We hope to resume those two events in 2022.

Elder Snyder has been exhorting the congregation on various topics each Sunday and taught from the Canons of Dort as well. Next year we'll be back to the Heidelberg Catechism. Elder Dockter has been teaching the youth in the catechism program and Deacon Sam Hoverson has been teaching a Sunday School class on the book of Romans. Thanks to these men for their dedicated service to CRC. Molly Hoverson has been leading the Ladies Study group and went through R.C. Sproul's book, "What is Reformed Theology". The Men's study was going through a Michael Horton book, "Ordinary".

Thanks to Jeff Milam for recording the Sunday Service and posting that to Sermon Audio each week! Thanks to Diana Dockter, Cherise Dockter, and Jeremy Dockter for being our pianists throughout the year! And thanks to all the ladies and their ministry of hospitality for meals, quilts, preparing the parsonage for visitors, and cleaning up afterward! We did have our annual Reformation party celebrating our Reformed heritage with a game night and finger foods. We had a Thanksgiving Day worship service with a fellowship meal afterward. We also had our annual Christmas party with fun games, finger foods, and our white elephant gift exchange. It was a lot of fun as usual!

We look forward to a new year knowing that our Gracious God in His sovereign providence will provide for us all things necessary for body and soul! We pray that He will bring the right man to be our new pastor in due time and give us the patience to wait on Him. We pray that God will use CRC in the gathering of His lost elect sheep in this area and that all of us will grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ and that we will stand fast in these dark days.

To God alone be the glory!

Respectfully submitted,

James B. Snyder, Elder

Christ Reformed Church, RCUS

## 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 written answers received from Ashley which 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.**
- 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 Elder from Pierre and Ashley 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**

Fraternal Delegate Jacob Kuik addressed the body on behalf of Classis Manitoba of the Canadian and American Reformed Churches.

## **XVI. SPECIAL ORDER**

The Classis held a Round Table Discussion during the standing Missions Committee presentation on the topic “Classis Boundaries and Missions Strategy.”

## **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, & Interchurch**

Your committee received the following items: Report of the Interchurch Relations Committee, Report of the Permanent Christian Education & Publications Committee, Report of the Camp Committee.

Your committee makes the following recommendations:

- 1) With regard to the Interchurch Relations Committee Report, take note.
- 2) With regard to Recommendation #1 of the Permanent Christian Education & Publications Committee Report, that an election be held for the office of Editor of the Northern Plains Chronicle to serve from March 2022 – March 2023 and that, before the electing ballot be cast, any man nominated indicate his ability and willingness to perform the duties of the position.
- 3) With regard to Recommendation #2 of the Permanent Christian Education & Publications Committee Report, that a stipend of \$250 be paid to the Editor of the Northern Plains Chronicle.
- 4) With regard to Recommendation #3 of the Permanent Christian Education & Publications Committee Report, that the delegates take note of the proposed tentative due dates for publication of the Chronicle and strive to submit information to the Editor. Take note.
- 5) With regard to Recommendation #5 of the Permanent Christian Education & Publications Committee Report, that Rev. William Haddock be commended for his 15 years of service as Editor of the Northern Plains Chronicle and that an Editor’s Note be included in the March/April 2022 edition as such. Take note.
- 6) With regard to Recommendation #4 of the Permanent Christian Education & Publications Committee Report, that the Permanent Christian Education & Publications Committee be authorized to investigate the reprinting of a hardback version of the Traditional Language edition of the Heidelberg Catechism and report its findings to the 38<sup>th</sup> Annual Spring Meeting of the Northern Plains Classis.
- 7) With regard to Recommendation #1 of the Camp Committee Report, that the budget and registration fees be adopted.
- 8) With regard to Recommendation #2 of the Camp Committee Report, that the theme “Life in Exile” be adopted as the them for HYC 2022.
- 9) With regard to Recommendation #3 of the Camp Committee Report, that the offerings collected during HYC 2022 be designated to the medical costs of Rev. Lee Johnson.
- 10) With regard to Recommendation #4 of the Camp Committee Report, that the delegates of the Classis take note of the Early Registration deadline of May 31<sup>st</sup> and the Final Registration deadline of June 30<sup>th</sup> and strive to submit registrations as timely as possible. Take note.
- 11) That a \$3 guideline for support of Heidelberg Youth Camp be established for fiscal year

2022.

- a. Grounds: The Director of HYC was approached by a delegate of the South Central Classis with the idea of establishing a guideline for this year to help offset inflating costs, particularly with respect to Camp Bob rental fees (see Committee Report). The Camp Committee's goal in setting the rates for HYC is to keep the registration as low as possible to allow as little financial burden on our families as possible. We likewise believe that HYC is an excellent tool for engaging the youth of our denomination to strengthen their relationship with the Lord, their fellow reformed believers, and thereby the RCUS. We therefore believe it is appropriate for our congregations to consider this subsidization of a small part of the cost for 2022 as a work of training up and retaining our young people.

Respectfully submitted, Rev. David Irwin, Elder Matthew Beck, Elder Matthew Fickbohm

## **B. Examinations & Licensure**

Your committee received the following items: Report of the Permanent Candidates & Credentials Committee, Student Report of Mr. David Voytek

Your committee makes the following recommendations:

- 1) With regard to Recommendations #1 - #8 of the Permanent Committee Report, that the Recommendations and Explanations be commended to each Spiritual Council for prayerful consideration and action.
- 2) With regard to Recommendations #1 - #8 of the Permanent Committee Report, that the Recommendations and Explanations be adopted as the "Northern Plains Classis Philosophy On Raising Up Pastors Among the Congregations."
- 3) With regard to Recommendation #9 of the Permanent Committee Report, that the NPC Stated Clerk be directed to forward Recommendations #1 - #8 to the Stated Clerks and Conveners of the Candidates and Credential Committees of our sister Classes.
- 4) With regard to Recommendation #10 of the Permanent Committee Report, that the Recommendation be adopted as the "Northern Plains Classis Philosophy on Internships" and it be reviewed by any charge taking on the responsibility of an internship, incorporated into the students internship, and that a report be submitted to the Classis by the overseeing pastor reporting on how this Philosophy was fulfilled.
- 5) With regard to Recommendation #11, that the Stated Clerk be directed to overture the Synod of the RCUS for tuition for Mr. David Voytek for the 2022/2023 academic year in the amount of \$8,860 to be sent directly to Mid-America Reformed Seminary and \$400 for books to be sent directly to Mr. Voytek.
- 6) With regard to Mr. David Voytek's student report, that the Classis offer prayer on behalf of Mr. Voytek and congregations be reminded to continue to uphold him in prayer.

Respectfully submitted, Rev. David Irwin, Elder Matthew Beck, Elder Matthew Fickbohm

## **C. Missions**

Your Committee brings the following recommendation

Recommendation 1: That Classis provide missions support in the amount of \$5,700 for Grace Reformed Church of Dickinson for the 2022 classical year. (\$3,400 reduction)

Recommendation 2: That Classis overture the 276th Synod of the RCUS for home missions support for Grace Reformed Church of Dickinson in the amount of \$4,000.00 for the 2022-2023 synodical fiscal year. (\$3,400 reduction)

Recommendation 3: That Classis request the Northern Plains Classis' delegates on the 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 2022-2023 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 costs for Ashley’s radio broadcast, “Start the Week.”

Recommendation 5: That the Missions Guideline be set at \$24 (\$10 decrease) and the Missions Seed Fund Guideline be set at \$25 (\$17 increase).

Recommendation 6: That the Permanent Missions Committee pursue and develop a home-based missions program that will help in the establishment of possible church plants in the Northern Plains Classis

Recommendation 7: That the Permanent Missions Committee consider setting up missions classes with pastors who have experience doing missions.

Respectfully Submitted, Rev. Cody Schwichtenberg, Rev. James Grossmann, Elder Bruce Kappes

## **D. Judicial**

**Recommendation 1.** With regards to Item #5: That the Classis forward on the overture of the Hope Reformed Church to change Synod Standing Rule 5 with this change to the proposed language: “The Treasurer shall reimburse the reasonable lodging of the delegates of each congregation participating in the required meetings of the Synod.”

**Recommendation 2.** With regards to Item #6: That the Classis forward on the overture of the Hope Reformed Church to change Synod Standing Rule 10 with this change: That the language in Recommendation 1 “Such amendment to include: followed by 1) and 2) be stricken (Grounds: the Permanent Committee Report would be handled by the Standing Committee).

**Recommendation 3.** With regards to Item #7: That the NPC establish the following Standing Rule 17 – The Executive Committee President along with the Home Missions Chairman are charged with overseeing the contact with groups expressing interest in forming an RCUS church within the Northern Plains Classis.

**Recommendation 4.** With regards to the referral from the President’s Report on Standing Rule 2, we recommend that the first Friday in March be amended to the first Tuesday in March.

**Recommendation 5.** With regards to the referral from the President’s Report regarding the change to the Boundaries by the RCUS Synod in 2019 we recommend that Classis overture Synod to reconsider that action on the grounds that it was a violation of Article 100 of the RCUS constitution requiring that a Classis give its consent before it can be dissolved or have its boundaries changed. Grounds: The Classis was unaware that this matter was coming before the Synod until the recommendation was on the floor of Synod. Discussions by an Executive Committee of a Classis do not constitute the consent of the Classis. Nor does permission to investigate the possibility of a mission work equal permission to change the boundary.

Respectfully submitted, Rev. Hank Bowen, Elder Dan Aune, Elder David Roggenkamp

## **E. Finances, Benevolences, and Ministerial Aid**

Your committee received the following items: Item #2 : Overture from Covenant RCUS on behalf of Mrs. Debbie Syms; Item #8: Overture from Grace RCUS on behalf of Mrs. Wes Brice; Item #10: Overture from Hope RCUS on behalf of Mrs. Lena Jones; Overture from Christ RCUS on behalf of Rev. and Mrs. Phil Poe; Report of the Permanent Diaconal Committee; Report of the Auditing Committee; 2021 NPC Treasurers Report.

The following reimbursement requests: Hope (Fickbohm), \$268.20; Eureka (Roggenkamp), \$216.00; Salem (Irwin), \$195.30; First Herreid (Schwichtenberg), \$175.50; and First Aberdeen (Bowen), \$270.00

Your committee makes the following recommendations:

- 7) With regards to Item #2, that the NPC Stated Clerk be directed to overture Synod of the RCUS for ministerial aid of \$23,160 annually (same as prior year) on behalf of Mrs. Debbie Syms.
- 8) With regards to Item #8, that the NPC Stated Clerk be directed to overture the Synod of the RCUS for ministerial aid of \$19,200 annually (a reduction of \$7,560 previously re-

- quested for the couple) on behalf of Mrs. Wes Brice, including also the cover letter indicating the Standing Committee's support for the amount requested.
- 9) With regards to Item #10, that the NPC Stated Clerk be directed to overture Synod of the RCUS for ministerial aid of \$10,800 annually (a reduction of \$1,200) on behalf of Mrs. Lena Jones.
  - 10) With regards to the Ministerial Aid for the Poes, that the NPC Stated Clerk be director to overture the Synod of the RCUS for ministerial aid of \$20,400 annually (no change) on behalf of Rev. and Mrs. Phil Poe.
  - 11) That the Classis budget \$600 for Sermon Audio for 2022 and that pastors be encouraged to use this resource.
  - 12) With regards to the Permanent Diaconal Committee Report, take note.
  - 13) That the following recommendations from the Auditing Committee Report be adopted:
    - a. That the Treasurer's books be declared in order. Take note.
    - b. That the Heidelberg Youth Camp Treasurer's books be declared in order. Take note.
    - c. That Elder Matthew Fickbohm be commended for his work as Treasurer. Take note.
  - 14) That the 2021 Treasurers Report be adopted.
  - 15) With regards to the reimbursement requests for the Spring Meeting, that all be granted in the total amount of \$1,125.
  - 16) That the dues for 2022 be set at Classical Dues: \$6 (no change) and Student Development Fund: \$2 (no change). Along with the previously adopted guidelines, the total of dues and guidelines would be \$60 (\$10 increase).

Respectfully submitted, Rev. Michael Voytek, Elder Matthew Beck, Elder Bruce Kappes, Elder Matthew Fickbohm

## F. 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:	<u>Haak</u>
Auditing:	<u>Haddock</u> , Voytek, Aune
Camp:	<u>Fickbohm</u> , Lassley, Henderson, Haak
Candidates & Credentials:	<u>Schwichtenberg</u> , Irwin, Roggenkamp
Christian Education & Publications:	<u>Irwin</u> , Haddock, Beck
Diaconal:	<u>Voytek</u> , Beck, Snyder
Home Missions:	<u>Lassley</u> , Schwichtenberg, C. Mehlhaff, DeJong
Interchurch Relations:	<u>Henderson</u> , Bowen, Haak

Respectfully submitted,  
Rev. Michael Voytek; Elder David Roggenkamp; Elder Dan Aune

## G. Excuses

Recommendation #1: That the following delegates be excused from all meetings of classis – Elder Rod DeJong, Rev. Michael Lassley, Elder Jim Snyder, Rev. Paul Henderson, Elder Vern Moos, and Elder Charles Dockter.

Recommendation #2: That the following delegate be excused from a portion of the meetings of classis – Rev. David Irwin.

Respectfully submitted,  
Rev. Michael Voytek; Elder David Roggenkamp; Elder Dan Aune

## **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 37<sup>th</sup> Northern Plains Classis sincerely thank the beloved saints of Grace Reformed Church of Dickinson, North Dakota for their Christian love and hospitality in hosting us. We will remember the gracious provision which God has granted through your generosity. Thank You!"

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

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

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

On Saturday morning, March 5<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**

Elder Fickbohm moved that the Classis adjourn to the 38<sup>th</sup> Annual Spring Meeting of the Northern Plains Classis to begin on March 2<sup>nd</sup>, A.D. 2023 at 1:00pm (CST), at First Reformed Church of Herreid, South Dakota.

The Classis adjourned at 1:06pm on March 5th, A.D. 2022.

### **A. Roll Call**

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

### **B. Devotions**

Elder Aune closed the meeting by reading from Luke 19:1-9 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 31st, 2021**

	2021	2020	
	Total	Total	Change
Current Assets:			
Cash	\$ 42,462	\$ 35,590	\$ 6,872
Certificates of Deposit			
Classical	1,000	1,000	-
Mission Seed Fund	6,806	6,789	16.90
Total Assets:	50,268	43,379	
Current Liabilities:	-	-	
Total Net Assets	\$ 50,268	\$ 43,379	

**The Notes to these financial statements are integral to the statements.**

**Northern Plains Classis  
Statement of Activities  
Year Ended December 31st, 2021**

	2021	2020
Dues:	Total	Total
Classical Fund	\$ 2,226	\$ 1,945
Home Missions Fund	12,371	10,932
Missions Seed Fund	6,322	3,690
Student Development Fund	962	
<b>Total Dues Revenue:</b>	21,881	16,567
<b>Other Income:</b>		
Interest: Classis	6	22
Interest: Foundation CD	17	68
<b>Total Other Income:</b>	23	90
<b>Total Income:</b>	21,904	16,656
<b>Expenses:</b>		
Home Missions:		
Grace RCUS - Dickinson	9,100	9,100
Start the Week Radio	2,574	2,574
Travel - Classical Mission Oversight	109	-
Sermon Audio	599	579
<i>Total Home Missions:</i>	12,382	12,253
<i>Meetings:</i>		
Spring Meeting Mileage	976	853
<i>Total Meetings:</i>	976	853
<i>General Operating:</i>		
Stipends - Standing Rule 13	900	900
Chronicle Editor	200	1 200
Abstracts - Printing & Mailing	200	2 200
General	356	-
<i>Total General Operating:</i>	1,656	1,300
<b>Total Expenses:</b>	<b>\$ 15,014.40</b>	<b>\$ 14,406</b>
Change in Net Assets:	\$ 6,889	\$ 2,250
Net Assets, Beginning of Year (As of Deceember 31st)	43,379	41,129
Net Assets, End of Year	\$ 50,268	\$ 43,379

**The Notes to these financial statements are integral to the statements.**

**Northern Plains Classis  
Statement of Fund Balance  
Year Ended December 31st, 2021  
FUND**

	Home	Mission	Student		2021	2020
Classis	Missions	Seed	Development	Total	Total	Total
<b>Beginning Cash</b>	\$ 20,272	\$ 7,863	\$ 7,455	\$ -	\$ 35,590	\$ 33,408
Beginning CD	1,000	-	6,788	-	7,788	7,720
Total Beginning	21,272	7,863	14,243	-	43,379	41,128
Income:						
Dues	2,226	12,371	6,322	962	21,881	16,567
Interest	6	-	17	-	23	90
<b>Total Income</b>	2,232	12,371	6,339	962	21,904	16,656
Expenses:						
Grace Reformed	-	9,100	-	-	9,100	9,100
Start the Week	-	2,574	-	-	2,574	2,574
Travel	976	109	-	-	1,085	853
Stipends (SR 13)	900	-	-	-	900	900
Sermon Audio	-	599	-	-	599	579
Abstracts	200	-	-	-	200	200
NPC Editor	200	-	-	-	200	200
Various Exp.	356	-	-	-	356	-
<b>Total Expenses</b>	2,632	12,382	-	-	15,014	14,406
Ending Cash	19,872	7,852	13,777	962	42,463	35,590
Ending CD	1,000	-	6,805	-	7,805	7,788
<b>Total Ending</b>	\$ 20,872	\$ 7,852	\$ 20,582	\$ 962	\$ 50,268	\$ 43,379

**The Notes to these financial statements are integral to the statements.**

**Northern Plains Classis  
Notes to the Financial Statements  
Year Ended December 31st, 2021**

**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 17th, 2022 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:

						<u>Payment</u>	
<u>Fund</u>	<u>Amount</u>	<u>Date of Issue</u>	<u>Maturity</u>	<u>Renewal</u>	<u>Annual yield</u>	<u>Frequency</u>	<u>Interest Treatment</u>
General	\$ 1,000.00	March 23, 2021	March 23, 2022	Automatic	0.20%	Every 3 months	Deposited to General Fund
Foundation	\$ 6,788.36	March 23, 2021	March 23, 2022	Automatic	0.20%	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 2021:

<u>Congregation</u>	<u>Members</u>	<u>Type of Dues</u>	<u>Remitted</u>	<u>Full Remittance</u>	<u>(Variance)</u>
Aberdeen	90	Classical	\$ 540	\$ 540	\$ -
		Home Missions	3,060	3,060	-
		Missions Seed	4,074	720	3,354
		Student Dev.	400	180	220
Ashley	19	Classical	126	114	12
		Home Missions	471	646	(175)
		Missions Seed	168	152	16
		Student Dev.	42	38	4
Dickinson	19	Classical	114	114	-
		Home Missions	646	646	-
		Missions Seed	152	152	-
		Student Dev.	38	38	-
Eureka	99	Classical	594	594	-
		Home Missions	3,366	3,366	-
		Missions Seed	792	792	-
		Student Dev.	198	198	-
Herried	45	Classical	270	270	-
		Home Missions	1,530	1,530	-
		Missions Seed	360	360	-
		Student Dev.	90	90	-
Minot	38	Classical	228	228	-
		Home Missions	1,292	1,292	-
		Missions Seed	304	304	-
		Student Dev.	76	76	-
Pierre	20	Classical	120	120	-
		Home Missions	680	680	-
		Missions Seed	160	160	-
		Student Dev.	40	40	-
Watertown	39	Classical	234	234	-
		Home Missions	1,326	1,326	-
		Missions Seed	312	312	-
		Student Dev.	78	78	-
		Classical Total	2,226	2,214	12
		Home Missions Total	12,371	12,546	(175)
		Missions Seed Total	6,322	2,952	3,370
		Student Development Total	\$ 962	\$ 738	\$ 224

Respectfully Submitted, Matthew Fickbohm Treasurer, Northern Plains Classis

## 2020 Membership & Financial Statistics

	Aberdeen	Ashley	Dickinson	Eureka	Herried	Minot
Number of Elders	3	2	1	3	1	1
Number of Deacons	3	2	0	3	2	2
Communicants Last Year	90	19	19	99	45	38
Received – Confirmation	2	0	0	0	2	0
Received – Transfer	0	0	0	4	0	0
Received – Profession	7	0	0	0	0	1
<b>Total Received</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>Total Old &amp; New</b>	<b>99</b>	<b>19</b>	<b>19</b>	<b>103</b>	<b>47</b>	<b>39</b>
Lost – Dismissal	0	0	3	0	0	2
Lost – Erasure/Discipline	0	0	0	0	0	0
Lost – Death	1	0	0	5	1	0
<b>Total Lost</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>Total Communicants This Year</b>	<b>98</b>	<b>19</b>	<b>16</b>	<b>98</b>	<b>46</b>	<b>37</b>
Unconfirmed Members	19	1	3	11	9	8
Total Baptized Members	117	20	19	109	55	45
Number of Families	53	15	10	65	27	20
Children in Sunday School	20	0	3	13	4	9
Adults Baptized Last Year	1	0	0	0	0	0
Infants Baptized	2	0	0	2	2	0
<b>Total Baptisms this Year</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>0</b>
Members' Lord's Supper	84	16	19	67	40	39
Lord' Supper Observed	4	3	5	4	4	8
Receipts – Sunday Offerings	\$168,414	\$44,398	\$86,140	\$121,632	\$302,113	\$81,465
Receipts – Special Offerings	\$15,147	\$6,034	\$1,400	\$2,048	\$51,140	\$10,359
Receipts – Other Sources	\$0	\$5,040	\$37,174	\$1,151	\$22	\$2,742
<b>Total Receipts</b>	<b>\$183,561</b>	<b>\$55,472</b>	<b>\$124,714</b>	<b>\$124,831</b>	<b>\$353,275</b>	<b>\$94,566</b>
Budgeted Synodical Funds	\$20,520	\$4,523	\$4,684	\$24,764	\$13,033	\$9,064
Budgeted Classical Funds	\$4,500	\$807	\$950	\$4,950	\$2,250	\$1,900
Non-Guideline Causes	\$8,301	\$500	\$1,200	\$2,728	\$1,607	\$6,598
Non-RCUS Benevolences	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$1,000	\$4,965	\$0
Other General Expenses	\$127,840	\$53,684	\$115,122	\$84,666	\$66,822	\$68,300
<b>Total Disbursements</b>	<b>\$161,161</b>	<b>\$59,514</b>	<b>\$121,956</b>	<b>\$118,108</b>	<b>\$88,677</b>	<b>\$85,862</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	\$320,000
Property Improvements	\$6,019	\$0	\$2,786	\$11,398	\$1,082	\$8,887
Present Property Debts	\$0	\$0	\$224,167	\$0	\$0	\$0
Debt Paid Last Year	\$0	\$0	\$21,207	\$0	\$0	\$0
Synod Giving per Communicant	\$228	\$238	\$247	\$250	\$290	\$239
Classis Giving per Communicant	\$50	\$42	\$50	\$50	\$50	\$50
<b>Total RCUS per Communicant</b>	<b>\$370</b>	<b>\$307</b>	<b>\$360</b>	<b>\$328</b>	<b>\$375</b>	<b>\$462</b>

	Pierre	Watertown	Totals 2020	Totals 2021	Difference
Number of Elders	1	1	15	13	-2
Number of Deacons	0	1	14	13	-1
Communicants Last Year	20	39	379	369	-10
Received – Confirmation	0	0	3	4	1
Received – Transfer	1	1	4	6	2
Received – Profession	0	2	5	10	5
<b>Total Received</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>8</b>
<b>Total Old &amp; New</b>	<b>21</b>	<b>42</b>	<b>391</b>	<b>389</b>	<b>-2</b>
Lost – Dismissal	1	0	6	6	0
Lost – Erasure/Discipline	0	14	6	14	8
Lost – Death	0	0	10	7	-3
<b>Total Lost</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>14</b>	<b>22</b>	<b>27</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>Total Communicants This Year</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>28</b>	<b>369</b>	<b>362</b>	<b>-7</b>
Unconfirmed Members	6	12	70	69	-1
Total Baptized Members	26	40	439	431	-8
Number of Families	12	12	200	214	14
Children in Sunday School	4	8	64	61	-3
Adults Baptized Last Year	0	0	1	1	0
Infants Baptized	0	1	6	7	1
<b>Total Baptisms this Year</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>1</b>
Members' Lord's Supper	20	28	72.63%	86.46%	13.84%
Lord' Supper Observed	4	6	34	38	4
Receipts – Sunday Offerings	\$62,544	\$81,892	\$659,869	\$948,598	\$288,729
Receipts – Special Offerings	\$3,638	\$1,855	\$39,984	\$91,621	\$51,637
Receipts – Other Sources	\$507	\$0	\$103,955	\$46,636	-\$57,319
<b>Total Receipts</b>	<b>\$66,689</b>	<b>\$83,747</b>	<b>\$803,808</b>	<b>\$1,086,855</b>	<b>\$283,047</b>
Budgeted Synodical Funds	\$1,973	\$9,156	\$86,895	\$87,717	\$822
Budgeted Classical Funds	\$1,000	\$1,950	\$16,567	\$18,307	\$1,740
Non-Guideline Causes	\$650	\$1,855	\$17,980	\$23,439	\$5,459
Non-RCUS Benevolences	\$628	\$0	\$1,316	\$6,593	\$5,277
Other General Expenses	\$59,939	\$69,244	\$645,512	\$645,617	\$105
<b>Total Disbursements</b>	<b>\$64,190</b>	<b>\$82,205</b>	<b>\$768,270</b>	<b>\$781,673</b>	<b>\$13,403</b>
Value of Church Buildings	\$112,000	\$0	\$1,047,000	\$1,047,000	\$0
Value of Parsonage	\$105,000	\$200,000	\$754,000	\$824,000	\$70,000
Property Improvements	\$12,033	\$2,393	\$23,053	\$44,598	\$21,545
Present Property Debts	\$0	\$0	\$243,800	\$224,167	-\$19,633
Debt Paid Last Year	\$0	\$0	\$7,083	\$21,207	\$14,124
Synod Giving per Communicant	\$99	\$235	\$229	\$238	\$8
Classis Giving per Communicant	\$50	\$50	\$44	\$50	\$6
<b>Total RCUS per Communicant</b>	<b>\$181</b>	<b>\$332</b>	<b>\$320</b>	<b>\$351</b>	<b>\$30</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 Thursday in March and shall meet each day until all business regularly brought before it has been disposed. (2009, 2021, 2022)
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), the Treasurer two hundred dollars (\$200.00), and Northern Plains Chronicle editor (\$250) for the Classical year. (2008, 2013, 2014,

2022)

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)
17. The Classis Executive Committee President along with the Home Missions Chairman are charged with overseeing the contact with groups expressing interest in forming an RCUS church within the Northern Plains Classis. (2022)