

**Synod of the Great Lakes
Meeting and Minutes
Convened at Second Reformed Church
Kalamazoo, Michigan
Sixty-Third Annual Session
May 7, 2018**

FORMATION OF THE SYNOD

Roll Call/Seating of Delegates

This Assembly of the Regional Synod of the Great Lakes (RSGL) was convened in the sanctuary of Second Reformed Church, 2323 Stadium Drive, Kalamazoo, Michigan on Monday, May 7, 2018. Delegates were asked to be seated and to introduce themselves to others seated around their table. President Judy Nelson called the meeting to order at 8:30 a.m. Attendance was taken by noting the nametags that were not picked up. The President declared that a quorum—a majority of the minister delegates and a majority of the elder delegates—was present. The delegates to this assembly meeting are listed below. The names of absent delegates were given to the Leave of Absence Committee.

GREAT LAKES CITY CLASSIS

Rev. Greg Brower, 36th Avenue, Grandville, MI, 49418
Mr. Chris Gleason, 2808 Morality Drive, Columbus, OH, 43231
Rev. George Grevenstuk, 3316 Burlingame Avenue, Wyoming, MI, 49509
Rev. Rich Huesinkveld, 3200 Delta River Drive, Lansing, MI, 48906
Mr. Larry Kleymeer, 3456 Minnie Avenue, Wyoming, MI, 49519
Mr. Andy LaBo, 25180 Mylor, Taylor, MI, 48180*
Mr. Tom Paarlberg, 7468 Kettle Lake Drive, Alto, MI, 49302*
Rev. Bud Pratt, 3060 Wilson Avenue SW, Grandville, MI, 49418

HOLLAND CLASSIS

Rev. Celaine Bouma-Prediger, 105 W 12th Street, Holland, MI, 49423
Rev. Jonathan Brownson, 238 W 15th Street, Holland, MI, 49423
Ms. Jane Dalman, 1194 Beach Drive, Holland, MI, 49423
Rev. David Lantz, 895 Ottawa Beach Road, Holland, MI, 49424
Ms. Judy Parr

MUSKEGON CLASSIS

Mr. Tony Dunn, 170 S Brooks Road, Muskegon, MI, 49415
Rev. Lary Jackson, 350 De Witte Lane, Grand Haven, MI, 49403*
Mr. Ron Matthews, 2062 E River Road, Muskegon, MI, 49415
Rev. Sandra Nikkel, 3769 Sehler Street, Conklin, MI, 49403*
Mr. Jim Smith, 6691 Minard, Muskegon, MI, 49442
Rev. Scott VanArendonk, 2495 Hathaway Court, Muskegon, MI, 49441
Rev. Steve Vander Woude, 2390 Ravenna Road, MI, 49451*

NORTH GRAND RAPIDS CLASSIS

Ms. Marla Lunderberg, 3697 Iris Drive, Grandville, MI, 49418
Rev. Adam Navis, 15469 Thornapple Drive, Rockford, MI, 49431*
Rev. Dr. Mara Joy Norden, 1047 Paradise Lake Drive, Grand Rapids, MI, 49546
Ms. Ellen Ormsby, 337778 Morse, Clinton Twp, MI, 48035*
Mr. Roger Scheele, 3118 Rickman NE, Grand Rapids, MI, 49505
Rev. Todd Schmidt, 4575 Remembrance Road, Grand Rapids, MI, 49505*
Mr. Ray Van Portfliet, 3391 English Hills Drive, Grand Rapids, MI, 49544*
Rev. Les Wiseman, 4025 Knapp Street, Grand Rapids, MI, 49525

NORTHERN MICHIGAN CLASSIS

Rev. Seth Bush, 45 Amber Road, Scottville, MI, 49454*
Rev. Dan DeVries, 4902 W. Macfarlane Road, Glen Arbor, MI, 49636*
Rev. Rick Eschenburg, PO Box 5, New Era, MI, 49446

Mr. Bert Jackson, 4872 South Ferris, Newaygo, MI, 49337*
Rev. Chip Sauer, 100 Oak Street, Charlevoix, MI, 49720*
Mr. Mik Sutton, 535 South Brye Road, Ludington, MI, 49431*
Ms. Janine Zwiebel, 5848 S. 142nd Avenue, Rothbury, MI, 49452

SOUTHWEST MICHIGAN CLASSIS

Mr. Gary Ausema, 751 Montrose, Kalamazoo, MI, 49008
Rev. Kevin Edlefson, 1940 Royce Avenue, Kalamazoo, MI, 49001
Rev. Jonathan Lam, 8161 South 24th Street, Kalamazoo, MI, 49408
Mr. John Medema, 7550 West WX Avenue, Schoolcraft, MI, 49087
Rev. Calandra Nevenzel, 7031 South 6th Street, Kalamazoo, MI, 49009
Rev. Jeff Wenke, 7200 Angling Road, Portage, MI, 49024

ZEELAND CLASSIS

Mr. Mike Boeve, 506 Castlemaine Drive, Holland, MI, 49423
Ms. Mary Beth Gernaat, 4855 Hide Away, Hudsonville, MI, 49426
Rev. Kurt Henry, 10376 Flech Street, Zeeland, MI, 49464*
Rev. Todd Krygsheld, 5275 Hidden Woods Land, Hudsonville, MI, 49426*
Mr. Jim Mulder, 7565 Ranson Street, Zeeland, MI, 49464*
Rev. John Nyitray, 6854 144th Avenue, Holland, MI, 49424
Rev. Brian VanderWege, 3995 N Lakeshore Drive, Holland, MI, 49424

*Second year delegate

CORRESPONDING DELEGATES

Dan Ackerman – Zeeland Classis Leader
Allison Dillion – Southwest Michigan Classis Clerk
Kayla Fik – Zeeland Classis Clerk
Tricia Leistra – Great Lakes City Classis Clerk
Larry Schuyler – Holland Classis Clerk / Leader

EXCUSED ABSENCE

Ken Eriks (Holland Classis) and Ron Morse (Muskegon Classis)

UNEXCUSED ABSENCE

Bob Lar – Southwest Michigan Classis
Michael Stewart – Southwest Michigan Classis
Terry Ebels – Zeeland Classis

Privilege of the Floor

The president made a number of introductions, including the prayer team for this Assembly. Since non-delegates do not have access to the floor, the following motion was made and seconded:

R-1

To grant the privilege of the floor to those employed as classis leaders, stated clerks, or RCA staff that are present, and those non-delegates and members of the RSGL task forces, committees, and ministry teams who have been asked to present reports to the Synod. (ADOPTED)

Limits to Debate

Since concern was expressed about the length of time required for discussion of the proposed overtures, the following motion was made and seconded:

R-2

To limit debate to two minutes for each delegate on any motion that comes before the Assembly. Following Robert's Rules, delegates may not speak more than twice to a single motion. If a delegate chooses to speak a second time, the time available will be limited to one minute." (ADOPTED)

Approval of the 2017 Assembly Minutes

The Minutes of the Assembly of the Synod of the Great Lakes that was held on May 1, 2017 are posted on the Great Lakes Region website on the Assembly Resources page and were mailed to anyone who requested a copy. The minutes were reviewed and approved for publication by the RSGL Executive Committee. One copy was made available at each delegate table at this meeting. The president asked for any additions or corrections to the minutes. Since none were offered, she declared that the minutes of the 2017 RSGL Assembly will stand approved as printed.

Appointments of Standing Committees and Tellers

The following committees and tellers were appointed by the Executive Committee. The standing committees met before the assembly meeting to conduct their business.

Classical Minutes Committee

Celaine Bouma-Prediger, chair

Kurt Henry

Ron Matthews

Mik Sutton

Howard Moths (staff)

Resolution/Leave of Absence Committee

Chip Sauer, chair

Seth Bush

Jane Dalman

Ellen Ornsby

Doug McClintic (staff)

Study Committee

Not appointed

Tellers

Dan DeVries

Andy LaBo

Maria Lunderberg

Brian VanderWege

Jeff Wenke

Howard Moths (staff)

Presentation of New Business

The *Rules of Order* of the Synod of the Great Lakes allow for presentation of new business at this point in the agenda. No new business was presented.

Approval of the Agenda

The agenda for this meeting was printed at the beginning of the Assembly workbook. The motion was made and seconded from the floor:

R-3

To approve the agenda as printed. (ADOPTED)

OPENING WORSHIP

Judy Nelson opened the meeting with prayer. Judy introduced Suzanne Hart who welcomed the delegates and led the gathering in a responsive reading. The delegates sang the hymn, *The Church's One Foundation*. Suzanne led the assembly in a prayer of confession and words of assurance. Jonathan Brownson read Acts 1:1-14 and presented a call for a season of prayer and fasting. Jonathan introduced members of the prayer team for this Assembly. One of the members, John Orneé, read Matthew 18:19-20 and invited the delegates to pray together in triads. The delegates prayed the Lord's Prayer in unison and shared spontaneous prayers. Worship concluded with the signing of the hymn, *Speak, O Lord*.

PRESIDENT'S REPORT

Judy Nelson, reporting

As Judy presented her report, our vice-president, Bob VanderZwaag, took the chair.

One of the privileges and responsibilities of the President of the regional synod is to review the accomplishments of the classes within its bounds and report on it. I have read the reports on the state of religion from the presidents of the classes and offer this account.

Let's begin by entering in to God's Word Psalm 96:1-10a

1 Sing to the Lord a new song; sing to the Lord, all the earth. 2 Sing to the Lord, praise his name; proclaim his salvation day after day. 3 Declare his glory among the nations, his marvelous deeds among all peoples. 4 For great is the Lord and most worthy of praise, he is to be feared above all gods. 5 For all the gods of the nations

are idols, but the Lord made the heavens. 6 Splendor and majesty are before him; strength and glory are in his sanctuary. 7 Ascribe to the Lord, all you families of nations, ascribe to the Lord glory and strength. 8 Ascribe to the Lord the glory due his name; bring an offering and come into his courts. 9 Worship the Lord in the splendor of his[a] holiness; tremble before him, all the earth. 10 Say among the nations, "The Lord reigns."

This is the word of the Lord. Thanks be to God.

I was reflecting on this Psalm that has been referred to as the Psalm of the Great Commission, while at the same time considering the Classis presidents reports. I delighted in many of the comments I read there. It is incredibly encouraging to see the wide range of outreach and mission that is going on. In some classis, individual congregations are celebrating growth in diversity and outreach to neighborhoods and youth. Some are ministering to new groups of people, addressing mental health issues, and reaching out to the international community. Some are gaining new appreciation as churches within a classis are partnering together in order to add options for small and struggling churches. One Classis is asking how it's churches can partner, working together instead of independently to meet the greater needs of the community. Most are developing policies so that churches are safe places in an atmosphere of fear and even violence, for all who pass through their doors. All of this is missional, and it is evident that almost all Classes have a clear sense of call to participate in God's plan of redemption for a broken and hurting world. I believe, it is in this space where the church is most alive.

But, it is also clear in the reports that staying in that space is challenging. We know all too well how easily we can be distracted... even by good things and important issues. In the midst of the present and pressing we must be especially alert to what is peripheral, lest, one day our grandchildren know us as those who lingered in the respectable space of distracted ministry, instead of the imperative work of the gospel.

Having just traveled in Kenya and Ethiopia, my heart and eyes have been opened in a fresh way to human suffering, unimaginable deprivation and need. Not surprisingly, at times like this, one often experiences a fresh wind of the Spirit with the conviction that Jesus Christ, experienced through his body – the local church – is the true hope for the world and each person in it' With this in mind, one of my team members recalled the words of her father who served as a missionary and mobilizer; he repeatedly declared, "the imperative must outweigh the important". "The imperative must outweigh the important."

Could this mean, that the children stop dying of disease, deprivation and hunger? Would this be when there is a running well in every village? Could this refer to when men, women and children are no longer enslaved to benefit the pleasure and profit of the rich and ungodly? Could this also refer to young men and women around the globe having hope for a future? YES, it means all this, AND that all ears have heard and understood that they are created in the image of God, loved and valued and that Christ died, rose, lives now, and advocates for them.

Is this the imperative that Jesus was talking about when he was teaching his disciples in Matthew 25? After a series of parables, he came to the one that in many Bibles is called The Final Judgement. Jesus is describing to them when he comes to judge, making it clear that it is he that will separate the people. One group he calls sheep and the other he calls goats. Listen now as I read Matthew 25:34-36, *34 "Then the King will say to those on his right, 'Come, you who are blessed by my Father; take your inheritance, the kingdom prepared for you since the creation of the world. 35 For I was hungry and you gave me something to eat, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you invited me in, 36 I needed clothes and you clothed me, I was sick and you looked after me, I was in prison and you came to visit me.'*

We are all familiar with the disciple's confusion that follows and Jesus clarification that "when you did this unto the least of these, you did it unto me".

In this parable Christ distinguishes harshly. He says, when you fail to do these things, you have failed me and go away to eternal punishment. The intensity of this personally shakes me up.

Do we understand what separates the goats from the sheep? Or in other words, the ones that are blessed by God and inherit the Kingdom, and those who go away to eternal punishment? Let us not be so foolish to think that one's *position* on certain issues (politics, human sexuality, church planting vs revitalization... important as they may be) determines the status of 'sheep' or 'goat'. No, that is the work of Christ alone.

Let us not invest the best of our energies in taking positions on things that are simply important, but instead continue to be formed by Christ's posture towards the imperatives of our calling.

To borrow some insight from the wealth of our local resources and scholarship, Dr. Jamie Smith and Rev. Michael Gulker remind us (rooted in Paul's vivid depiction of Christ in Colossians chapter 1) that the issue is not whether more or better information can make one position or another victorious, but, rather "that the body of Christ has the [correct posture] and therefore requisite virtues to sustain the conversation" and work towards Christ's imperative mission in and to the world.

So, as we move ahead celebrating what God has done and hoping for what is yet to come, let's ask ourselves, "are we extending energy into what we deem as important *positions*?" Or, are we allowing the Holy Spirit to form our *posture* towards the imperative of loving all of the world sacrificially, humbly, and patiently as Christ did and will do until the day of His return?

May our prayer always be, let our hearts be broken by the things that break the heart of God. And, let the imperative calling to our Church, not be outweighed today or any day by the important. Amen

The report of the president is automatically referred to the Executive Committee for further consideration.

ELECTION OF THE PRESIDENT

The current vice-president, Bob VanderZwaag, was presented as the sole candidate for the office of president. Delegates used the provided ballots to vote as required by the Rules of Order. Bob VanderZwaag was elected as President of the Synod of the Great Lakes on the first ballot.

EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE REPORT

Judy Nelson, reporting

Summary of Actions Taken in the Past Year

The *Rules of Order* of the Regional Synod of the Great Lakes (RSGL) state that among other duties, the Executive Committee shall "administer the affairs of the Regional Synod between sessions of the assembly." Since the 2017 Assembly meeting, the Executive Committee has met three times. A summary of each meeting is printed below. All meetings were held in the large conference room of the Synod of the Great Lakes with the exception of the fall retreat on November 3-4, 2017, which was held at the DoubleTree Hotel in Holland, MI.

At the June 27, 2017 meeting, the committee:

- welcomed new members elected by the 2017 RSGL Assembly and Jami Alferink who was appointed by Zeeland Classis following the election of Bob VanderZwaag as vice-president.
- approved the RSGL Assembly Minutes of May 1, 2017 for publication.
- evaluated the RSGL Assembly held on Monday, May 1, 2017.
- set the date for the 2018 Assembly on Monday, May 7, 2018.
- affirmed the Regional Executive Strategic Goals for 2017-2018 presented by John Messer.
- tabled the offer for the purchase of the regional synod part of the RCA Regional Center, and offered a lease to the GSC for a portion of our office space.
- engaged in Bible Study following the Accountability Principal AP1.a.1. based on Jeremiah 29 and the book by Richard J. Mouw, *Uncommon Decency: Christian Civility in an Uncivil World* (2010).
- scheduled an Executive Committee retreat for Friday night, November 3, and Saturday, November 4, 2017.
- engaged in prayer for the leadership of the RCA, including congregational, classis, regional synod, and General Synod leaders, including specific prayer for John Messer, our new Regional Executive.

At the November 3-4, 2017 meeting, the committee:

- welcomed Suzanne Hart as a new member, following her appointment by the Southwest Michigan Classis.
- engaged in prayer, team building, and discussing the mission and vision of the regional synod. Friday night was dedicated to biblical reflection, worship, and communion with God and each other.
- discussed the vision frame for the regional synod (Mission, Motives, Map, Measures) and the future of Luminex. More information on Luminex is available at luminexusa.org.
- considered the role of the regional synod in relationship to the commissioned pastor program, to provide some consistency in standards and practices.
- talked about ways to increase communication within the regional synod. John Messer is calling together leaders from each classis on a regular basis for that purpose and attending as many classis meetings as possible within our region.

- considered ways to expand our specialized transition ministry for churches without lead pastors, and to develop a strategic prayer initiative.
- voted to give a “yellow light” approval of the expansion of Luminex as proposed by Doug McClintic and John Messer.
- designated a housing allowance for the members of the staff of the Regional Synod of the Great Lakes for 2018.
- developed a list of potential candidates to replace Jennifer Jackson as an at-large member of this committee.
- received word that Scott Lockers was hired to take the place of Art Wiers who retired on February 1, 2018 as a member of the regional synod staff.
- voted to support a new campus ministry movement that will multiply leaders for existing churches and new church plants with a \$5,000 grant as seed money for the startup of this initiative funded from our reserves.
- discussed R 17-18, 2017 approved by General Synod: “To request that the GSC as well as each classis and regional synod engage in discussion at its next stated meeting around the future of the Reformed Church in America in light of our current state of contention and division...” The classes are implementing this decision, and individual members are invited to participate in the prep work and survey that can be found at: <http://discussion.rca.org>. Any discussion at the regional synod Assembly in May will be redundant and too late to influence the outcome of this discussion so we are not planning to sponsor a conversation.
- appointed Judy Nelson to serve as our regular delegate to the 2018 General Synod.

At the March 12, 2018 meeting, the committee:

- welcomed Jen Holmes Curran following her nomination to fill the at-large member vacancy after the resignation of Jennifer Jackson.
- received a report from John Messer focusing on transformation for the benefit of those we serve. He talked about the expansion of Luminex, which has been complicated by the change in service providers and limited funds.
- discussed the meaning of the phrase “reasonable and timely” in the *Book of Church Order* (2017 BCO, 1.III.2.3, p. 61) and ways to fulfill the requirement in our conversations regarding the formation of new classes in our region.
- monitored the performance of the Regional Synod Executive by reviewing two written reports: Regional Executive Strategic Goals for 2017, as of March 1, 2018 (based on strategic goals statement, approved by Executive Committee June, 2017), and the Luminex 25 Vision (July 1, 2015 - June 30, 2025) noting where progress (or compliance) has been made, and other significant accomplishments not in the 2017 goals.
- monitored the work of the RSGL Executive Committee by completing a self-evaluation form which was distributed in advance of the meeting along with the Guiding Principles (the source of the items listed in the self-evaluation form), focusing on Devotion to Prayer and the Word of God, Community Research and Missional Engagement, Church Feedback, Mission Assessment, and Governing Style.
- reviewed the reports from the RSGL Finance Committee including the 2018/2019 proposed budget and 2019 Assessment.
- affirmed the importance of the Finance Committee to the operation of the regional synod and agreed that we should form a committee of 5-7 members, with as wide a representation as possible, but allowing for more than one member from a classis.
- voted to nominate Jennifer Holmes Curran to serve a two-year term on the RSGL Executive Committee beginning on June 1, 2018.
- appointed corresponding delegates to the 2018 General Synod. John Messer will be attending as our (corresponding) regional executive. Jami Alferink and Laurel Kempkers agreed to serve as the women corresponding delegates. Karsten Weeldreyer agreed to serve as our youth delegate.
- nominated candidates for the office of vice-president of the regional synod, giving consideration to the suggestions for vice-president from the classis clerks from the list of classis delegates to the 2018 RSGL Assembly.
- voted to recommend three overtures to the General Synod to the 2018 Regional Synod Assembly meeting that were suggested by the officers of the regional synod as ways to address the divisions within the RCA. (*See the list of overtures in the separate report of the RSGL Executive Committee.*)

NOMINATIONS AND ELECTION

Nomination of RSGL Executive Committee Members

The 2017 Assembly of the Synod of the Great Lakes voted to approve amendments in the RSGL Rules of Order (approved in a first reading by the 2016 Assembly) so that each of its classes nominates one representative to the RSGL Executive Committee to be approved by the Assembly. The changes to the nomination of members to serve on the RSGL Executive Committee include the following main points:

- Nine members of the Executive Committee (not counting officers) will be elected in staggered three-year terms. A balance shall be maintained between ministers of Word and Sacrament and non-ministers on the committee.
- One member will be nominated by each of the seven classes in our region for approval at the Assembly meeting as needed. Each classis shall certify that they have considered a wide range of candidates, in response to the request of the regional synod for diversity.
- In addition, the RSGL Executive Committee will nominate two at-large members for approval by the Assembly, as needed, to ensure a balance of leadership gifts, ethnic/gender/age perspectives, and other skills as may be helpful on the Executive Committee.
- Terms begin on June 1 and end on May 31. Should any of the members resign or otherwise vacate their position, the classis (or the RSGL Executive Committee in the case of an at-large member) nominates a new person to serve the remainder of the unexpired term for election at the next Assembly meeting.

Not counting our Regional Executive (Synod Minister), the chairperson of the Finance Committee, and the four elected officers of the regional synod, the classes are currently represented by the following people on the RSGL Executive Committee, listed with the year that their term on office expires. Also listed are the two at-large members of the Executive Committee, bringing the total number to nine.

Classis	Committee Members (class)
Great Lakes City	Dan Sewell (2020, 2 nd term)
Holland	Glenda McKinley (2019, 1 st term)
Muskegon	Greg Stamm (2020, 2 nd term)
Northern Michigan	Mik Sutton (2018, elected 2017, eligible for 2 terms)
North Grand Rapids	Billy Norden (2019, 1 st term)
Southwest Michigan	Suzanne Hart (2018, just appointed, eligible for 2 terms)
Zeeland	Jami Alferink (2018, elected 2017, eligible for 2 terms)
At-Large	Laurel Kempkers (2019, 1 st term)
At-Large	Jen Holmes Curran (2020, 1 st term, if elected this year)

The Northern Michigan Classis nominates **Mik Sutton** for a three-year term, beginning on June 1, 2018. Mik was elected at the 2017 RSGL Assembly to serve a remaining one-year term of office. Mik grew up near Ludington, Michigan, attended Mason County Central Schools, West Shore Community College, Western Michigan University (BS, MA in special education), and Grand Valley State University (MA educational leadership). He worked in the field of special education for 32 years, and retired to enter the RCA Commissioned Pastor program. He has served as Pastor of Intercession and Care at Mason County Reformed, Senior Pastor at Grant Reformed, and Senior Pastor at Sugar Ridge Church of the Brethren. Mik has served on the Northern Michigan Classis Board, the Regional Synod Executive Committee, the Words of Hope Board of Direction, and has been a delegate to two General Synods. Mik is currently serving as an elder at Mason County Reformed Church. He is finishing a one year term on the Regional Synod Executive Committee, is a member of the Regional Synod Strategic Prayer Team, and runs a home-based prayer outreach ministry. Mik is married to Polly, they have five children, four grandchildren, three great grandchildren, and are members of Mason County Reformed Church.

R-4

To elect Mik Sutton for a three-year term on the RSGL Executive Committee, beginning on June 1, 2018, as the representative from Northern Michigan Classis. (ADOPTED)

The Southwest Michigan Classis nominates **Suzanne Hart** for a three-year term, beginning on June 1, 2018. Suzanne was appointed by the classis within the last year to serve the one-year unexpired term of Curry Pikkart. Suzanne Hart grew up in upstate New York at the First Reformed Church, Wynantskill, NY. She attended Hope College, where she met her husband Kevin. They were married in 1991. After college, she

went to grad school at Binghamton University to pursue a PhD in English, but after two years realized that both she and Kevin were being called to ministry. They attended New Brunswick Theological Seminary together and graduated in 1997. They co-pastored the Federated Church of Kerhonkson, NY and the Reformed Church of Three Bridges, NJ. Suzanne also served on the Denominational Youth Team for many years, and as the RCA Call Waiting Coordinator, working to lift up the vocation of ordained ministry before the denomination, and helping those struggling to discern their call. She ran the Call Waiting program for youth and college delegates at General Synod for five years. After taking several years off from full time ministry to focus on family, Suzanne has recently returned to be on staff at Second Reformed Church, Kalamazoo, MI where she is the Pastor for Transformational Ministries. Suzanne and Kevin have four children: Elizabeth (and Dan), Benjamin (16), Nathan (12), and Anna (8). They have two grandsons, Isaac (4), Elijah (1) and were recently blessed by the birth of a granddaughter, Katherine Elizabeth, on February 19. Suzanne enjoys being outdoors, particularly in the mountains of her home state, and near the Michigan shore, and time spent with family.

R-5

To elect Suzanne Hart for a three-year term on the RSGL Executive Committee, beginning on June 1, 2018 as the representative from the Southwest Michigan Classis. (ADOPTED)

Zeeland Classis nominates **Jami Alferink** to serve for a full term, beginning on June 1, 2018. Jami was appointed by the classis to serve the one-year unexpired term of Bob VanderZwaag after his election at the 2017 Assembly as the vice-president of the regional synod. Jami Alferink grew up at Central Park Reformed Church in Holland, Michigan. After graduation from Holland High School, she attended Hope College and graduated in 1997. During her time at Hope College she was a camp counselor at Cran-Hill Ranch for her first two summers of college and then ran a school-aged summer program at a local Christian daycare the final two summers of college. In September of 1997 Jami joined the staff at Jamestown Reformed Church as their full-time youth director. She now is employed as their Church Life and Kids Hope USA Director. She married her husband, Eric, in December 1999. They currently reside in Zeeland and enjoy travelling as well as all things associated with summer in the great state of Michigan. In her spare time Jami enjoys her book club, playing guitar and spending time with family and friends.

R-6

To elect Jami Alferink for a three-year term on the RSGL Executive Committee, beginning on June 1, 2018 as the representative from the Zeeland Classis. (ADOPTED)

The RSGL Executive Committee nominates **Jennifer Holmes Curran** to serve a two-year term beginning on June 1, 2018, in response to the resignation of Jennifer Jackson as an at-large member of this committee. Jen was born and raised in Edmonton, Alberta. She received a Bachelor of Commerce at the University of Alberta before studying theology at Regent College and Calvin Theological Seminary. Jen began to discern a call to ministry shortly after coming to know Christ at age 16. In the years that followed, a burden for the poor and marginalized developed as an integral part of that calling. She has been deeply shaped by her involvement in Jacob's Well, a community that lives out of a storefront in Vancouver's downtown east side. Just after graduating from seminary, Jen served the young people of Church of the Servant (CRC) in Grand Rapids, where she developed a ministry for young adults and filled in as interim youth pastor. Since 2011, Jen and her husband Tony have co-pastored New Hope Community Church in Hart, Michigan. New Hope is a funky little church that seeks to be intentional about including those who sometimes do not feel comfortable at more traditional churches. She has a heart for reconciliation across all kinds of dividing lines, restorative justice practices and preaching. Jen and Tony are also kept busy by their three small children, Oscar, Hazel and Mae.

R-7

To elect Jennifer Holmes Curran for a two-year term on the RSGL Executive Committee, beginning on June 1, 2018 as an at-large member. (ADOPTED)

2018 Presidential Candidate (our current vice-president)

Bob VanderZwaag was born and raised in the Holland/Zeeland, MI area, and has been a part of Community Reformed Church of Zeeland since 1978, serving as a youth leader, Sunday School/Catechism teacher, deacon, elder, search committee chairperson, Kids Hope USA Program Director, and a number of other committees. Currently he serves as as President of the Michigan County Social Services Association, a state-wide organization representing Department of Health and Human Services county board members from across the state. Bob recently retired after 41 years in the field of education, serving in the Zeeland Public Schools,

at Cornerstone University, and most recently as the Administrator of Borculo Christian School in Zeeland, MI. Bob graduated from Grand Valley State Colleges (University) in 1973, and received a MA degree from Michigan State University in 1981. Bob has been married to his wife Sandy for 40 years, has three adult children, and is further blessed by six grandchildren – all of whom live within 25 miles of the VanderZwaag homestead.

2018 Vice-Presidential Candidates (nominated by the RSGL Executive Committee)

Greg Brower grew up in Third Christian Reformed Church in Zeeland, MI. Attending Christian schools from kindergarten through college, he came to faith his Sophomore year at Calvin College. After graduation, he worked at Herman Miller, earned an MBA from Indiana University, and worked for a while as a consultant in Chicago. While living in Chicago, he felt a call to ministry after an encounter with a homeless person. He met his wife, Rachel, while attending Western Theologically Seminary in Holland and they were married in 2001. His first call was to New Hope Community Church in Aurora, CO where their first child, Ethan, was born. After 2 years, they returned to Michigan to serve Zion Reformed Church in Grandville, where over the past 13 years they have seen the church develop an outward focus, join in supporting and helping launch three new churches, begin multiple neighborhood ministries, and grow younger. Greg enjoys hiking in the mountains, kayaking on Lake Michigan, camping with his family, and watching a good basketball game. He and Rachel have four children: Ethan (8th grade), Noah (6th grade), Caleb (3rd grade), and Eliana (kindergarten).

Rick Eschenburg grew up in St. Paul's U.C.C. in Warren, Michigan. After a two-year journey with the Heidelberg Catechism, he professed his faith in Jesus. He began to discover just how deep the Father's love is during his freshman year at Ohio State University, surrendering himself to the call of God in 1975. Having been re-directed by the Spirit of God, Rick transferred to Eastern Michigan University to finish his degree, meet his future wife, Mariann, and spend three intensive years in discipleship ministries through Campus Crusade for Christ. Two weeks after Rick & Mariann were married in 1979, they traveled east so that he could begin seminary at Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary. He received his M. Div. from G.C.T.S. and began ministry by simultaneously pastoring three rural churches (United Methodist & U.C.C) in northern Vermont for 10 years. Feeling ill-equipped to care for the "whole person" Rick completed a D. Min. in Marriage & Family through Eastern Baptist Theological Seminary in Philadelphia in 1992. Upon receiving a call as an Associate Pastor at Grace Reformed Church in Holland, MI, Rick engaged in the classis process and had his ministerial standing transferred into the RCA in 1993. His pastoral emphasis at Grace and beyond has always been the establishment of a discipleship process, that we might continue to fulfill the mandate of GO! Make Disciples. In 2001, Rick received a call to direct Marketplace Ministries in Grand Rapids, which he did for the next five years. In 2006 Spring Branch Community Church, a large non-denominational church in Virginia Beach issued a call to Rick to serve as a teaching Pastor while overseeing spiritual formation. While in Virginia, Rick was engaged by the CSBV (conservative Southern Baptists of Virginia) helping them to evaluate and process the emotional health of their new church plant pastors. This also led to a relationship with a new church plant in Virginia Beach, Essential Church. In 2011, Rick and Mariann returned to Michigan to pastor the New Era Reformed church with a mandate to make disciples, love the community, and pray that the Lord of the harvest would send laborers! For the last two years twice each month, Rick has been fasting and prayer-walking through the communities of Oceana County asking the Lord to do just that. Rick and Mariann love to walk the dunes of West Michigan, and kayak together when the lake is quiet. They have three adult and married children Luke (Madeline), Hillary (Phil), Emily (Phil) whom they love to gather with and celebrate life together!

Dan Sewell grew up in the Parkview Reformed Church in Fairview Park, Ohio, and went to Cran-Hill ranch in 1969 where he met both Christ and his future spouse, Karen (Toppen). They were married in 1975 and served with Young Life in several Northeastern cities before their growing family caused them to return to Fairview in 1984 to pursue a career in insurance, maintaining a volunteer ministry with YL and the Parkview Church. When Parkview became vacant in 1989, Dan and the church entered into a one year contract as pastor that eventually evolved into a call. In 1992, the Parkview and Riverside Reformed Churches "married" to form the New Hope Church, where Dan continues to serve. In 2011, New Hope purchased a large furniture store in Fairview Park that they have transformed into an expansive ministry headquarters that is increasingly utilized for Christ-centered ministry serving the local community and beyond. Dan has a MAT from Fuller Seminary, enjoys rare opportunities for good fishing and erratic golf, and is privileged to use his musical gifts as part of the worship team at New Hope. He and Karen have four daughters, Katie (& Justin), Jessica (& Jim), Lauren, and Michelle, and are blessed with four granddaughters: Lorelei, Holly, Lucy, and Eliana, with another girl grandbaby arriving in May.

ELECTION OF THE VICE-PRESIDENT

Greg Brower, Rick Eschenburg, and Dan Sewell were nominated by the Executive Committee as candidates for the office of vice-president. Nominations for the regional synod vice-president were opened from the floor. No additional nominations were made. Following the first ballot vote, the names of Greg Brower and Rick Eschenburg were presented for the second ballot. Greg Brower was elected to the office of Vice-President on the second ballot.

REGIONAL EXECUTIVE REPORT

John Messer, reporting

John Messer presented an oral report on the work of the regional synod along with the written report below.

One year ago, I came to the Great Lakes Regional Synod with a very favorable perception of the character and focus of the region. The missional effectiveness and solid work in leadership development and church planting were apparent—even from Iowa. Luminex gave me insight into the priorities and capacity of the Great Lakes to accomplish what it says it values: Developing leaders who start and strengthen churches. The optimistic confidence I had in the people of RSGL when I arrived has grown this past year. As we worked together I've come to know some of you, become acquainted with more of you, and desire to grow deeper with all of you.

That said, I want to express my appreciation to a few people who made my transition significantly smoother than it might have been. Doug McClintic has been a wealth of knowledge about pretty much everything RSGL. His depth of knowledge, wisdom and partnership in the gospel are indispensable to me.

Art Weirs built a solid foundation of transition ministry on which we can expand to serve more churches during the most influential times in congregational life. Scott Lokers is building on the foundation Art left us. He's developing transition pastors and building a transition ministry team to meet the growing demand healthy, highly effective leadership through transitions. Mike Gafa provided great leadership development to the region and steered Luminex to provide great resources to leaders and churches. I am very thankful.

And finally, I am grateful to the only person who knows more about this region than Doug—our operations manager, Alison DeBoer. She really does keep the synod working and is the person who makes it possible for Doug, Scott and I to do our jobs.

Ministry emphases in 2017

- Initiated and implemented the Strategic Prayer Initiative RSGL. Strategic prayer is our first priority. The goal is to equip and encourage strategic prayer throughout the region by identifying equipping prayer coordinators to facilitate prayer and implementing quarterly strategic prayer gatherings for networking, learning, and encouragement in prayer.
- Created and implemented the Apprenticing video series for use in churches/Classes. As a Luminex resource, Apprenticing provides a tool to assist church leader to develop the one-on-one relationships which are the basis of discipleship and/or leadership development. Regional facilitators are available to assist in implementing apprenticing in your church.
- Developing the next generation of Classis and Synod leaders. Through one-on-one and group processes, we are developing younger leaders for increasing roles in leadership of Classes and the region. The goal is to develop teams of highly capable leaders available to their congregations, Classes, and regional groups to provide training, mentoring and coaching to become higher capacity, increasingly effective leaders and churches. To engage this process, contact the regional synod office.
- Improving strategic communication in RSGL. We want to ensure our communication processes overcome barriers and improve the ability to listen and speak for all parts of the region. This include ensuring communication timelines are planned to include listening/feedback prior to final communication.
- Adopted strategic ministry focal points: Radical hospitality; Apprenticing and leadership development; Church and leadership transitions; and Multiplication and church planting

On May 1, 2017, I was asked [again] the question “Will you use all of your abilities to further the mission of the church? My answer was “Yes. Absolutely!” And so, I remind myself what I said yes, absolutely, to:

Jesus said, “All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. ¹⁹ Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, ²⁰ and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you.”

“Gentlemen, this is a football.”

Back in the days of Vince Lombardi, the Green Bay Packers had a most interesting beginning to pre-season training. All the players knew that at the first team meeting the coach would waste no time getting straight to the point. Many of the men, half Lombardi's age and twice his size, were openly fearful, dreading the encounter. The coach did not disappoint them. In fact, he delivered his message in one of the great one-liners of all time. Lombardi walked to the front of the room, took several seconds to look over the assemblage in silence, held out a pigskin in front of him, and said, "Gentlemen, this is a football." In only five words, Lombardi communicated his point: We're going to start with the basics and make sure we're effective in all the fundamentals.

Ladies and gentlemen, this is our mission!

The Great Commission can be summarized by inclusion (go), transformation (baptize), and obedience (teach to obey). Becoming a disciple of Jesus means dying to your old life and walking in newness of life in Christ. Baptizing acknowledges inclusion as God's covenant people, and the transformation that comes with new life in Christ through his covenant with us (Romans 6:3-4), freeing us for obedience (Galatians 5:13; 1 Peter 2:16).

This is important; these are the fundamentals: Inclusion means we go to all people, no matter what differences we have, including them in our lives rather than expecting become just like us before we can serve them. Transformation means the life change that occurs in Jesus Christ. When we serve others, it is not just for the sake of service, it is for the opportunity to know Christ deeply, "transformingly," so that we become more like him. The point of Christian community is not just to be together for emotional comfort; we join together in community for the purpose of increasing transformation and obedience. We learn, we grow, we encourage and pray...together in Christ, so we become more like Christ, obeying all that he commanded.

The Great Commission—inclusion (go), transformation (baptize), and obedience (teach to obey)—is what we are to do. The Great Commandment gives us the way in which we accomplish it: Love the Lord your God with all your heart, soul, mind and strength...and your neighbor as yourself (Mark 12:30-31). It is essential to remember that what matters is not just what we do, but also how we do it. In fact, sometimes how we do something is more important than what we do. We cannot separate the Great Commission and Great Commandment.

Looking forward:

We will continue to prioritize the basics:

Strategic prayer: For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms. (Ephesians. 6:12)

We will develop leaders who start and strengthen churches:

- Apprenticing, mentoring, coaching
- Developing leadership pathways
- Church planting, ministry planting, outreach, and evangelism

More than ever, we must be willing to take risks to advance the Kingdom of God.

- Risking popular approval to stand for grace and truth. Risking reputation to reach out to the least and the lost, no matter who they are, no matter where they are.
- Risking reputation and status to be counter-cultural, standing for Christ and the message that true transformation happens only through relationship with him, when that message is increasingly culturally unpopular.
- Risking the familiar to pursue the unknown, to the place God is calling us, with no guarantee of success, in simple obedience, for the sake of others.

As a regional staff, we are committed to developing risky leaders: 10,000 Kingdom Risks by 2025. We will lean into our mission of developing leadership to start and strengthen churches by identifying and engaging other risky leaders, young and old, who want to advance the gospel and build the kingdom wherever God leads us. In the future we will also examine restructuring for better aligned leadership and ministry. We will investigate the possibility of budget-based assessments (at the Classis-regional level). And we will continue to seek out relationships with groups of likeminded Christians with whom we can partner to fulfil the Great Commission the Great Commandment way. Next year I look forward to sharing some of the risks we have taken for Christ and his Kingdom and what God accomplished through them. Grace and Peace.

BREAK

OVERTURES AND JUDICIAL BUSINESS COMMITTEE

Russell Camp, Reporting

The Overtures and Judicial Business Committee (OJBC) of the Regional Synod of the Great Lakes (RSGL) met on August 17, 2017 to consider the appeals filed by Phil and Diane Forner (Forners) in response to the actions of the Zeeland Classis. First, the committee considered a new appeal regarding the May 16, 2017 decisions of Zeeland Classis “to adopt and affirm the report of the Zeeland Classis Overtures and Judicial Business Committee dated April 11, 2017, and adopt the first stated recommendation of the ZCOJB to administratively move the Forners’ RCA membership without the input and consent of the Forners.”

The OJBC reviewed the record of the case as submitted by the Zeeland Classis and additional papers submitted by the Forners and decided that the June 24, 2017 Forner appeal is without merit, and dismissed the appeal without a hearing. This action is reported to the Assembly of the Synod of the Great Lakes, but this decision is considered the final action of the regional synod in response to this appeal.

The OJBC reviewed two other pending appeals submitted by the Forners, one that was reported to the May 4, 2015 Assembly of the Synod of the Great Lakes against the action of the Zeeland Classis not to hear and decide the appeal of Spring Valley Church’s “understanding” of the BCO, and an appeal of the decision of Zeeland Classis and its Overtures and Judicial Committee not to hold a hearing as ordered in the remand of the General Synod. The OJBC decided that both of these appeals were resolved by the subsequent actions of the classis, and voted to dismiss these two pending appeals without a hearing. This action is reported to the Assembly of the Synod of the Great Lakes, but this decision is considered the final action of the regional synod in response to these appeals.

The decision of the OJBC to dismiss the appeals above without a hearing was reported to the parties in the case (Zeeland Classis and the Forners) on August 30, 2017. On September 25, 2017, Phil and Diane Forner filed an appeal of this action with the General Synod Commission on Judicial Business. On January 16, 2018, the Commission on Judicial Business (CJB) sent a notice to all the parties in the appeal stating that “the CJB found the appeal to be frivolous and clearly without merit, and therefore dismissed the appeal without a hearing.” This action will be reported to the 2018 General Synod.

The OJBC has considered a number of complaints and appeals from the Forners since 2012, and three related OJBC actions were appealed to the General Synod. We are hopeful that the most recent opinion of the CJB will bring an end to the appeals.

Overtures and Judicial Business Committee: Russell Camp, Irv Boersen, Diane Maodush-Pitzer, Jared Van Noord, Susan Vogel-Vanderson, and Case VanKempen. (The Zeeland Classis representative recused himself, and did not participate in the hearing of these appeals.)

STARTING AND STRENGTHENING CHURCHES BY DEVELOPING LEADERS

Doug McClintic and Scott Lokers, reporting

Doug McClintic, the Church Multiplication Catalyst of the regional synod, presented a written and oral report. He reported that we continue to make significant progress toward our church starting goal of 25 new churches and 25 missionary church planters by 2025. Parent Churches and Classes in partnership with Luminex (the missional arm of the Regional Synod of the Great Lakes) have started seven churches with nine in progress. Five churches have been organized. Nine missionary planters have been sent, with five in progress. One great joy has been working with RCA Disability Service, CRC Disability Services, RCA Global Mission and Door International to pioneer the concept of a deaf-led church planting effort in West Michigan.

Scott Lokers, the Transition Ministry Catalyst of the regional synod, presented a written and oral report. He explained what makes our approach to transition ministry unique – the team aspect of support and accountability. All our team members have experience and a proven track record as quality pastoral leaders. In addition, they are all trained and coached on a regular basis. The transition ministers are able to adapt their approach to a variety of situations with the goal of increased fruitfulness. The team approach provides Christ-centered preaching, facilitating the pastoral search process, investing in leaders, clarifying mission, vision, values, staffing for the vision, and conflict resolution. Scott invited the delegates to contact him if they are interested in learning more.

TABLE DISCUSSION: FUTURE OF THE RCA

We reserved an hour in our agenda for a discussion of the future of the Reformed Church in America. John Messer, our Regional Executive, introduced this discussion with the questions of regarding the preferred future of the RCA and what are we willing to do to get there. The delegates started their discussion with prayer. After 45 minutes representatives from some of the tables shared what came out of this conversation with the whole assembly.

LUNCH AND FELLOWSHIP TIME

A prayer of blessing was offered by Mik Sutton before lunch was served to all the delegates and guests.

PROPOSED OVERTURES TO THE 2018 GENERAL SYNOD From the Executive Committee of the Synod of the Great Lakes

In their meeting on March 12, 2018, the Executive Committee voted to recommend that the 2018 RSGL Assembly adopt the three overtures to the General Synod below that were suggested by the officers of the regional synod. The committee voted to include the number of votes for and against the overtures in this report to the Assembly. The presentation of the overtures included a role play for and against the overtures, thirty minutes for discussion around tables, and additional time for debate from the floor. A secret ballot was provided for voting on these overtures. [*The Great Lakes Catechism on Marriage and Sexuality mentioned in Overture C is attached as an appendix to these minutes.*]

Overture A – The Transfer Of A Regional Synod To Another Denomination

The RSGL Executive Committee voted by a vote of 8 in favor to 3 opposed to recommend Overture A below for adoption by the 2018 Regional Synod Assembly.

R-8 To approve Overture A below and send it to the 2018 General Synod:

The Regional Synod of the Great Lakes overtures the General Synod to instruct the Commission on Church Order propose amendments to the RCA Book of Church Order for consideration at the 2019 General Synod to allow the General Synod to transfer a regional synod to another denomination.

Reasons:

1. The RCA Book of Church Order includes a process for the transfer of a church in Chapter 1, Part II, Article 10, but contains no similar process for the transfer of a classis or regional synod.
2. Since the amendments approved by the 2016 General Synod that were aimed at finding a constitutional way forward on the issue of gay marriage did not receive the required vote of the classes, this issue will continue to be debated in General Synod meetings.
3. The RCA remains deeply divided over an issue that cannot be easily resolved. We believe that this division will cause many churches to consider filing petitions for permission to withdraw from the denomination.
4. When a region finds itself with a large number of churches filing petitions for withdrawal from the RCA, it would be best to have a constitutional way for the churches to remain together and transfer as a group to another denomination.

Overture B – For a Grace-Filled and Orderly Re-Alignment

The committee voted by a vote of 8 in favor to 3 opposed to recommend Overture B as amended below for adoption by the 2018 Regional Synod Assembly.

R-9 To approve Overture B below and send it to the 2018 General Synod:

The Synod of the Great Lakes overtures the General Synod to create and authorize a task force with representation from each of the regional synods to research potential futures (courses of action) in order to recommend steps toward implementation of a grace-filled and orderly re-alignment that will include the possibility of our churches, classes, and regional synod uniting with other Reformed bodies.

Reasons:

1. The RCA has not found a constitutional way forward on the issues that separate us.
2. Without a resolution of the divisive issues, the denomination may have to endure endless judicial actions
3. If no effective action is taken, we expect that large numbers of churches will leave the RCA, and many of our church plants will choose not to organize as RCA churches.

4. This overture is designed to implement a process that may bring peace to the church sooner rather than later. Planning for a positive future of unity and peace is better than watching our denomination fragment into many pieces. Our ability to be honest and clear about where we stand, even if in different places, is a gift and an aid for the mission of the church.

Overture C – To commend the Great Lakes Catechism on Marriage and Sexuality

The committee voted by a vote of 5 in favor to 4 opposed to recommend Overture C below for adoption by the 2018 Regional Synod Assembly.

R-10 To approve Overture C below and send it to the 2018 General Synod:

The Synod of the Great Lakes overtures the General Synod to commend the Great Lakes Catechism on Marriage and Sexuality for reflection, study, and response by RCA churches and classes for the next five years as a means of deepening our understanding of the biblical teaching on human sexuality and finding a pathway toward unity in mission and ministry through the possible adoption of a new standard of unity following this period of study.

Reasons:

1. Creeds and confessions are not meant to be exhaustive statements of everything that Christians believe and practice. Rather, as church history unfolds and issues are raised, confessions are written as the church seeks to interpret and apply Scripture faithfully. For example, the need for a Christological creed arose precisely because people began saying new things about Jesus' identity that didn't fit with Scripture. So why don't we already have a creed or confession about marriage? In part, because it simply hasn't been an issue until recently.
2. It is hard to think of a topic that has maintained more agreement throughout church history than defining marriage as between a man and woman and condemning all forms of same-sex sexual activity. Orthodox, Roman Catholic, and Protestant thinkers have been united on their views on this subject until the last few decades, as deeper divisions developed in how we read and interpret Scripture and what discipleship and transformation by Christ actually look like.
3. The 2017 General Synod approved R 17-29 (2017 MGS, p. 161) that states: "To affirm that the Heidelberg Catechism Q&A 108 and 109 categorically states that God condemns 'all unchastity,' which includes same-sex sexual activity, and that faithful adherence to the RCA's Standards, therefore, entails the affirmation that marriage is between one man and one woman." A better and more permanent solution to our disagreements about God's design for marriage will be to move toward the adoption of a confessional statement on marriage and sexuality.
4. The Belhar Confession, the newest standard of unity of the Reformed Church in America, was adopted by General Synod in 2009 and ratified in 2010 after a period of study as a means of deepening the RCA's commitment to dealing with racism and strengthening its ecumenical commitment to the Uniting Reformed Church in Southern Africa and other Reformed bodies. Adoption of a doctrinal statement on human sexuality will help to bring clarity to the church's teaching on human sexuality and will strengthen our ties with our ecumenical partners who share a commitment to defend a traditional view of marriage.

The result of the secret ballot on the proposed overtures to the General Synod was:

R-8 Overture A was DEFEATED by a vote of 22-37.

R-9 Overture B was APPROVED by a vote of 32-26.

R-10 Overture C was APPROVED by a vote of 32-26.

FINANCE COMMITTEE REPORT

Alison DeBoer, reporting

Our Finance Committee is the other one of two permanent administrative committees whose members are appointed directly by the classes within our region. Alison DeBoer, the RSGL Operations Manager who meets with the Finance Committee, presented the report below.

During the past year, the Finance Committee dealt with the following issues:

- Reviewed and approved some changes in the 2017/18 budget.
- Reviewed the investment manager's report on earnings for 2017, and the current portfolio with the Synod's investment manager.
- Reviewed the financial statements for the year ended September 30, 2017.

- Updated the Minimum Salary Guidelines and Schedule for Ministers of Word and sacrament for 2019.
- Updated voluntary compensation guidelines for church staff of SGL churches for 2019.
- Reviewed and recommended approval of the Ministry Fund Budget and assessment for 2018/19, to the Executive Committee.
- Reviewed the financial statements for the quarter ended December 31, 2016.

Compensation Guidelines

Our committee is recommending a 1.75% increase for 2019 in comparison with the 2018 compensation guidelines for ministers of Word and Sacrament.

R-11

To approve the proposed 2019 Compensation Guidelines for Ministers of Word and Sacrament and recommend them to the classes within our region. (APPROVED)

The Executive Committee requested that we annually review and update the voluntary guidelines published to assist churches in setting reasonable compensation guidelines for certain other church staff members. We have completed that review and have recommended a 2.0% change from the 2017 guidelines.

R-12

To approve the proposed 2019 Church Staff Salary and Benefits Guidelines and recommend them to the churches to be implemented on a voluntary basis. (APPROVED)

2017/18 Budget

Our committee reviewed the needs and requests for the Ministry Fund budget for 2018/19. The Finance Committee looked at each budgeted line item with the purpose of determining if there are ways to lower the costs. In light of the economic conditions, and the fact that many of our congregations and classes are struggling to do ministry, the 2018/19 Ministry Fund Budget reflects the fiscal responsibility to control operational and programmatic costs.

We also have experienced a steady decline in confessing membership in recent years. The committee decided to propose the 2018/19 budget assuming a loss of 334 confessing members. The committee believes that this would be a realistic and conservative approach for estimating the 2019 assessment.

The proposed 2018/19 budget reflects this estimate and proposes an increase of \$0.50. This budget reflects minimal salary increases and changes in uses of consultants.

Ministry Fund

The 2019 proposed assessment of \$20.00 in our regional synod represents an increase of \$0.50 over 2018, and will continue to be one of the lowest of the RCA's regional synods.

R-13

To approve the 2018/19 Ministry Fund Budget and the \$20.00 per confessing member assessment for 2019.

Finance Committee: Chuck Brower, chair (ZEE), Linda Jacobs (HOL), Vacant(NGR), Bob Zielinski (GLCC), Cindy Lowman (SWM), Vacant (NMI), Alison DeBoer (staff).

Classical Minutes Committee

Celaine Bouma-Prediger, reporting

We reviewed the minutes of the classes within our region (Great Lakes City Classis, Holland Classis, Muskegon Classis, North Grand Rapids Classis, Northern Michigan Classis, Southwest Michigan Classis, and Zeeland Classis) and found them to be complete. The minutes submitted included their regular and special sessions were received and most of the requirements were met. The committee members completed feedback forms that will be sent to each classis Stated Clerk.

Resolutions/Leave of Absence Committee

Chip Sauer, reporting

The committee recommended approval of the following resolutions:

R-14

To thank Dean Van Farowe for his four years of service on the Synod of the Great Lakes Executive Committee as vice president, president, past president, and past past president.

R-15

To thank Russell Camp for his eight year of service as chair of the Overtures and Judicial Business Committee.

R-16

To thank Irv Boersen for this eight years of services as vice-chair of the Overtures and Judicial Business Committee.

R-17

To thank Jared Van Noord for this seven years of service on the Overtures and Judicial Business Committee.

R-18

To thank Tim Vink for his four years of service on the Overtures and Judicial Business Committee.

R-19

To thank Second Reformed Church for making its facility available for this year's Assembly.

The resolutions were approved by a round of applause.

Excused and Unexcused Absences

The following delegates were absent without excuse from the 2018 Assembly meeting: Bob Lar and Micheal Stewart from the Southwest Michigan Classis; Terry Ebels from the Zeeland Classis. Ken Eriks (Holland Classis) and Ron Morse (Muskegon Classis) were granted excused absences.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

Delegates were asked to turn in their evaluation forms and reimbursement forms for the Assembly meeting. Delegates were given the opportunity to recycle their nametags, three-ring binders, and workbook papers.

READING OF THE JOURNAL

Howard Moths read the minutes of this session by title: *The 63rd Annual Session of the Synod of the Great Lakes Minutes, Convened at Second Reformed Church of Kalamazoo, Michigan, May 7, 2018*. The Executive Committee will review and approve the minutes before publication and after that they will be available of the regional synod website.

SEATING OF THE NEW OFFICERS

Judy Nelson invited the past-president, Branson Parler, to come forward to seat the newly elected officers. Branson invited Bob VanderZwaag, the newly elected president, and Greg Brouwer, the newly elected vice-president to come forward. Branson congratulated them on their election and formerly seated them as officers.

CLOSING PRAYER

Bob VanderZwaag took over as the presiding officer. He asked for prayer for Bill VerHulst, the Treasurer of the region. He closed the Assembly meeting with prayer.

ADJOURNMENT

The motion was made, seconded, and carried to adjourn this Assembly of the Synod of the Great Lakes. The meeting was adjourned at 3:28 p.m.

Rev. Howard H. Moths
Stated Clerk, Regional Synod of the Great Lakes

Documents that appear in the Appendix:

Balance Sheet and Income Statements

Staff Report: Scott Lokers, Transition Ministry Catalyst

Staff Report: Doug McClintic, Church Multiplication Catalyst

Great Lakes Catechism on Marriage and Sexuality

2019 Compensation Guidelines for Ministers of Word and Sacrament

2019 Church Staff Salary and Benefit Guidelines

Synod of the Great Lakes Ministry Fund – 2018/2019 Budget