

**REGIONAL SYNOD OF THE GREAT LAKES
MEETING AND MINUTES
Convened using Zoom Videoconferencing
Sixty-fifth Annual Session
May 4, 2020**

FORMATION OF THE SYNOD

Roll Call/Seating of Delegates

This Assembly of the Regional Synod of the Great Lakes (RSGL) was convened using the Zoom videoconferencing app on Monday, May 4, 2020. Delegates were asked to sign in early and register their attendance using the Chat feature in Zoom. President Greg Brower called the meeting to order at 9:06 a.m. 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. *designates a second-year delegate.

GREAT LAKES CITY CLASSIS

Mr. Mark Black, 6800 Loomis Road, DeWitt, MI, 48820
Mr. Josh Boyer, 6861 Bale Kenyon Road, Lewis Center, OH, 43035
Rev. Kent Frens, 1832 Onaway SE, Grand Rapids, MI, 49506
Rev. Mark Kleinheksel, 2635 Bauer Rd, Jenison, MI 49428*
Rev. Tierra Marshall, 561 Paris Avenue, Grand Rapids, MI, 49503
Mr. Josh Sanders, 3552 Earle, Grandville, MI, 49418*
Ms. Sherry Seamon 2069 West 100th Street, Cleveland, OH, 44102*
Rev. JB Wernlund, 7734 Eastern Avenue, Grand Rapids, MI, 49408*

HOLLAND CLASSIS

Rev. Kent Fry, 134 W 12th Street, Holland, MI, 49423
Rev. Dan Gillett, 630 State Street, Holland, MI, 49423*
Rev. Darrell Koopmans, 48 Lynden Road, Holland, MI, 49423
Mr. Don Lam, 882 West 26th Street, Holland, MI, 49424*
Ms. Mari Martin, 1205 Waterwalk Drive, Holland, MI, 49423*
Ms. Marilyn Norman, 795 South Shore Drive, Holland, MI, 49423*
Rev. David VanOpstall, 595 Graafschap Road, Holland, MI, 49423

MUSKEGON CLASSIS

Mr. Irv Boersen, 15918 Stanton Street, West Olive, MI, 49460
Mrs. Geraldine Eadie, 21336 40th Avenue, Conklin, MI, 49403
Rev. John Koedyker, 17292 Berkshire Drive, Grand Haven, MI, 49417
Rev. John Kenny, 301 Washington Avenue, Grand Haven, MI, 49417
Mr. Jim Smith, 6691 Minard, Muskegon, MI, 49442*
Rev. Dick Van Dop, 12010 Canterbury Court, Marne, MI, 49435*
Rev. Randy Vander Weit, 1577 Clinton Street, Muskegon, MI, 49442*
Mr. Jack Zandstra, 6051 Hubbard Road, Muskegon, MI, 49442*

NORTH GRAND RAPIDS CLASSIS

Rev. Sarah Bruins, 1025 Courtney Street, Grand Rapids, MI, 49417
Ms. Katie Bush, 3217 Coit Avenue, Grand Rapids, MI, 49525
Rev. Laura Dille, 18288 Woodland Ridge Drive, Apt 7, Spring Lake, MI, 49456
Mr. Bob Engelsman, 3506 Westcott Drive, Ada, MI, 49301*
Mr. Bill Hahn, 2419 Glen Valley Drive, Grand Rapids, MI, 49544*
Rev. Billy Norden, 1047 Paradise Lake Drive, Grand Rapids, MI, 49546
Mr. Ron Roden, 6870 Maplecrest Drive, Grand Rapids, MI, 49546
Rev. Christopher Westerbeek, 295 Greentree Lane, Ada, MI, 49301*

NORTHERN MICHIGAN CLASSIS

Mr. Lee Pranger, PO Box 7, New Era, MI, 49446
Rev. Chris Maki, 100 Oak Street, Charlevoix, MI, 49720

Mr. Roger Ouwinga, 9150 W Watergate, McBain, MI, 49657*
Rev. Drew Poppleton, 1139 E Front Street, Traverse City, MI, 49686
Rev. Kevin Schutt, 8372 S Lucas Road, McBain, MI, 49657
Mr. Brad Vander Waal, 1100 N Saginaw Road, Midland, MI, 48640
Mr. Alan VanDuinen, 4614 Elm Street, New Era, MI, 49446

SOUTHWEST MICHIGAN CLASSIS

Mr. Tim Buis, 2512 Kalamarama, Portage, MI, 49024*
Mr. Tom Drenth, 5212 Land End Drive, Kalamazoo, MI, 49009
Rev. Jim Harrison, 2885 Wentward Circle, Hudsonville, MI, 49426
Mr. Dave Mejeur, 5158 Deerland, Kalamazoo, MI, 49009
Rev. Jason Olson, 326 W Cork Street, Kalamazoo, MI, 49001
Rev. Laura Osborne, 322 South 1st Street, Kalamazoo, MI, 49009*
Mr. Jerry Pols, 1073 West Allegan Street, Martin, MI, 49070
Rev. Phil Rose, 3616 Edinburgh Drive, Kalamazoo, MI, 49006

ZEELAND CLASSIS

Rev. Doug Baker, 10376 Felch Street, Zeeland, MI, 49464
Rev. Steven DeVries, 12050 New Holland Street, Holland, MI, 49424
Mr. Bill Everett, 7345 Watermark Drive, Allendale, MI, 49401
Rev. Shawn Hulst, 6610 36th Avenue, Hudsonville, MI, 49426
Mr. Glenn Kleinheksel, 4269 47th Street, Holland, MI, 49423*
Mr. Cal Klokkert, 4352 134th Avenue, Hamilton, MI, 49419*
Mr. Donald Komejan, 10514 Bridgewater Drive, Zeeland, MI, 49464
Rev. Rob Wondergem, 5947 Lake Michigan Drive, Allendale, MI, 49401*

EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE MEMBERS

President:	Rev. Greg Brower
Vice-President:	Mr. Mik Sutton
Past-President:	Mr. Bob VanderZwaag
Past Past-President:	Rev. Judy Nelson
At-Large Member	Rev. Jen Holmes Curran
Great Lakes City Classis Rep	Rev. Dan Sewell
Holland Classis Rep	Rev. Deb Yurk
Muskegon Classis Rep	Rev. Greg Stamm
Northern Michigan Classis Rep	Mr. Paul DeBoer
North Grand Rapids Classis Rep	Rev. Nancy Boote
Southwest Michigan Classis Rep	Rev. Suzanne Hart
Zeeland Classis Rep	Mrs. Jami Alferink
Regional Executive:	Rev. John Messer
Stated Clerk/Parliamentarian (non-voting):	Rev. Howard Moths

The following delegate was absent with excuse from the 2020 Assembly meeting: Mark Black.

Privilege of the Floor

The president made a number of introductions. 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

The president asked the delegates informally to limit their comments to two minutes whenever they are speaking to the assembly.

Approval of the 2019 Assembly Minutes

The Minutes of the Assembly of the Synod of the Great Lakes that was held on May 6, 2019 are posted on the Great Lakes Region website (<https://greatlakesrca.org>) 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. The president asked for any additions or corrections to the minutes. Since none were offered, he declared that the minutes of the 2019 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. The Study Committee and tellers were not appointed.

Classical Minutes Committee

Dick Van Dop, chair
Glenn Kleinheksel
Darrell Koopmans
Ron Roden
Howard Moths (staff)

Resolution/Leave of Absence Committee

Laura Osborne, chair
Terry Ebels
Mark Kleinheksel
Alison DeBoer (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:

R-2

To approve the agenda as printed in the Assembly Workbook. (ADOPTED)

OPENING DEVOTIONS AND PRAYER

Jen Holmes Curran was scheduled to lead the devotions at this time. Jen was unable to attend the meeting. Greg Brower opened the meeting with prayer.

PRESIDENT'S REPORT

Greg Brower, reporting

As Greg presented his report, our vice-president, Mik Sutton, took the chair. Greg presented an oral report and the written report below.

As I write this report, it is Palm Sunday weekend and I am in my basement in a makeshift office, hiding from my four children. For many of us individually and for our churches, life has taken a sudden turn into the unknown in the past few weeks. In a time of uncertainty, I am reminded of God's words to Joshua from Joshua 1:9:

Have I not commanded you? Be strong and courageous. Do not be afraid; do not be discouraged, for the Lord your God will be with you wherever you go.

While we do not know what tomorrow may bring for ourselves or our communities, as we seek to follow Jesus, we can trust our God will be with us and so we do not need to live or operate out of fear.

Currently, there is a lot of anxiety in our culture and in our churches. Due to stay at home orders, we are compelled to find new ways to conduct our work and maintain our relationships. This is true for the business and schools in our communities and for our churches as well. We are learning to hold small groups virtually, to stream worship, to give online, to increase benevolent ministries to those in need, to cooperate across denominational lines, and to adapt more quickly than many of our churches have in decades. It can all feel a little unsettling and is particularly challenging for our churches and their members who do not have significant technological skills or the resources to make these changes. We are learning, however, that when change is our only option, we have more capacity to change than we may have imagined. I wonder how God will use this experience with change to move us into new ways for mission and service in our communities.

Within our denomination, we carry the unique anxiety of Vision 2020 and what changes may be coming through that process. Already, there are rumors of churches or classes already planning to leave the denomination. Two of my boys have recently been reading the Lord the Rings trilogy and I am reminded of a line before one of the battle scenes that when scared a man counts each enemy 10 times. During anxious times, we must all be careful to not be swept up in the rumors and exaggerations, but instead stick to the facts and the careful process laid out both by the Vision 2020 team, General Synod, and the brand deliberative process any change requires in our denomination. I am particularly thankful for John Messer and his work not only on the Vision 2020, but also developing contingency plans for our region based on how any changes might be received. During times of high anxiety, we do well to remember that planning is better than gossip and prayer is better than worry.

In addition to the big anxieties, many of our churches continue facing the same challenges we have seen over the past few decades: declining overall attendance, more infrequent or sporadic attendance of their members, and shrinking financial support. I am excited to see so many churches engaging Churches Learning Change as one way to develop our change muscles as we engage a changing ministry context.

While our churches are facing significant changes and potential challenges, there is also reason to enter this new year with hope. Most obviously, we live with hope because none of these surprises were a surprise to our God. While we do not blame our God for pandemics, church conflicts, or cultural change, we recognize God still exercises authority even in these moments. While we may feel overwhelmed, he is not.

We also see glimpses of the new work God is doing among us in the church plants in our Region. We currently approved 3 new church start plans in the last year. We also see the churches of our region getting involved in church planting around the world, including in places like Indian, Nepal, Brazil, and Hungary. The spread of the gospel continues to grow and change our world.

Our Regional Synod staff, through Luminex, are also support, encouragement, and equipping tools to established churches to help them grow in their vision and impact. Though specialized transition ministries, Church Unique and God Dreams, we are currently supporting 4 churches through the Church Unique Process and 4 other churches in the God Dreams process. In total, over 20 churches have engaged in one or more of these processes in the last 2 years.

There are many stories we would tell of God's work among us this year. I want to share just one from my experience in our region. I have the privilege through my church to serve on the steering team of Lifeline Community Church in Wyoming led by Rob Holland. They were hoping to hold an organizational service in May. While those plans may be delayed we look forward to this day of celebration. In planning for the day, we were discussing how to determine membership when they are organized. In those discussions, they identified 40 adults who had been baptized through Lifeline in the last 6 years. Forty lives changed for eternity because of the obedient faith to take a risk, reach out to someone new, invite a friend, pray boldly, and simply ask someone to join in following Jesus.

No matter the challenges we may face, may our churches and region never forget this simple mission from God to make disciples of all nations. As it happened 2,000 years ago, it happens today, one conversation last a time, one life at a time. May God be glorified in our work.

Let us pray in gratitude for God's work among us.

ELECTION OF THE PRESIDENT

The current vice-president, Mik Sutton, was presented as the sole candidate for the office of president. Delegates used a Google Form to vote by ballot as required by the RSGL Rules of Order. Mik Sutton was elected as President of the Regional Synod of the Great Lakes on the first ballot.

EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE REPORT

Greg Brower, 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 2019 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 except for the March meeting which was held using Zoom video conferencing.

At the June 24, 2019 meeting, the committee:

- welcomed new members Nancy Boote (NGR) and Paul DeBoer (N Michigan).
- approved the Assembly Minutes of May 6, 2019 for distribution.
- evaluated the 2019 Assembly of the Regional Synod of the Great Lakes that was convened at Second Reformed Church in Kalamazoo on Monday, May 6.
- approved the date of Monday, May 4, 2020 for the next RSGL Assembly.
- received a report from John Messer on his work as our Regional Executive including his role on the Vision 2020 Task Force.
- received news that Doug McClintic is leaving the regional synod staff for his new job of supervising global church planting efforts for the General Synod.
- responded to the decisions of the 2019 General Synod and received the report that a Vision 2020 discussion event will be held on November 9 in Grandville.
- participated in a Bible Study on 1 Peter 2:13-17 led by Mike Gafa.
- discussed a proposal to form a new classis submitted by Tom Elenbaas on behalf of the Harbor Churches.
- approved a contract and housing allowance for Mike Gafa as the Luminex Ministry Catalyst.

At the November 4, 2019 meeting, the committee:

- received a report from John Messer on his work as our Regional Executive including his work with the Vision 2020 Task Force.
- voted to ask John Messer to take the lead in our region in forming alternative plans that may be needed within our region following the meeting of 2020 General Synod with the understanding that his efforts will not be designed to undermine the Vision 2020 recommendations.
- formed an ad-hoc task force to assist John Messer in considering options for restructuring the regional synod in the event that a number of churches file petitions for leave to withdraw from the RCA and the classes lose members.
- heard that the regional synod has contracted with Bob Carlton to carry on the work of church multiplication replacing Doug McClintic while the staff position is reviewed and possibly reconstructed.
- designated amounts for the housing allowance of staff members Mike Gafa, Scott Lokers, and John Messer as part of their compensation.
- reviewed the Treasurers Report for the 4th quarter of the 2018-2019 budget and the revised budget for 2019-2020.
- reviewed the Guiding Principles of the Synod of the Great Lakes to see if any changes were advisable.
- considered a proposal to form a new classis in the light of changes that will be coming to the classes in response of the 2020 General Synod to the Vision 2020 Team Report.
- appointed Greg Brower our regular delegate to the 2020 General Synod, and Jennifer Holmes Curran and Judy Nelson as corresponding delegates, with Deb Yurk as the alternate.
- accepted the resignation of Laurel Kempkers with regret as one of the at-large members of this committee and offered thanks for her service among us and prayers for God's healing presence and strength.
- discussed arrangements for the 2020 RSGL Assembly at the DeWitt Ministry Center in the Michigan Regional Center.

At the March 16, 2020 meeting, the committee:

- met using the Zoom video conferencing app.
- received a report from John Messer on his work as our Regional Synod Executive. John's report included a list of his strategic goals and how much progress has been made in each area: leadership and strategic foresight, developing leaders, equipping evangelism, expanding Luminex, starting churches, strengthening churches, and church revitalization and health.
- conducted a self-evaluation following the RSGL Guiding Principles, focusing on Devotion to Prayer and the Word of God, Community Research and Missional Engagement, Church Feedback, Mission Assessment, and Governing Style.
- received a report from the Finance Committee including the 2020/2021 proposed Ministry Fund budget and 2021 Assessment of \$20.00 per confessing member.
- voted to endorse the proposed budget for 2020/2021 presented by the Finance Committee.

- received a report from the RSGL Restructuring Team including best case and worst case scenarios in response to the anticipated exit of some of the churches in our regional synod.
- voted to move toward the creation of a separate 501(c)(3) for Luminex with report to the June meeting of RSGL Executive Committee in order to help Luminex achieve deeper and wider impact while maintaining a strategic partnership with the regional synod.
- nominated Jen Holmes Curran for election to a second term on the RSGL Executive Committee.
- nominated Joel Baar to serve the unexpired term of Laurel Kempkers as an at-large member of the RSGL Executive Committee.
- voted to nominate three persons for the office of vice-president of the regional synod with a list of six alternates.
- voted to hold the May 4, 2020 Assembly meeting online in some form and let the officers and staff figure out how to do it.

NOMINATIONS AND ELECTIONS

Nomination of RSGL Executive Committee Members

The Rules of Order for the Regional Synod of the Great Lakes (RSGL) state that each of its classes nominates one representative to the RSGL Executive Committee to be approved by the Assembly.

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) M=Minister
Great Lakes City	Dan Sewell (2020, 2 nd term) M
Holland	Deb Yurk (2022, 2 nd term) M
Muskegon	Greg Stamm (2020, 2 nd term) M
Northern Michigan	Paul DeBoer (2021, 1 st term)
North Grand Rapids	Nancy Boote (2022, 1 st term) M
Southwest Michigan	Suzanne Hart (2021, 1 st term) M
Zeeland	Jami Alferink (2021, 1 st term)
At-Large	Vacant (2022, 2 nd term)
At-Large	Jen Holmes Curran (2020, 1 st term) M

Three terms RSGL Executive Committee are ending on June 1, 2020. Dan Sewell is retiring after completing his second term as the representative from Great Lakes City Classis. Greg Stamm is retiring after completing his second term as the representative from Muskegon Classis. Jen Holmes Curran is completing her first term on the committee and is eligible for election to a second term. In addition, Laurel Kempkers has resigned from further service on the committee because of her declining health.

Paul DeBoer was appointed last June as the representative from the Northern Michigan Classis on the Executive Committee to serve the unexpired term of Mik Sutton (ending May 31, 2021) since Mik was

elected as vice-president of the regional synod last May. Our RSGL Rules of Order provide that when filling a vacancy the person shall “serve the remainder of the unexpired term for election at the next Assembly meeting.”

Paul DeBoer was born in Grand Rapids and grew up on the southeast side. He graduated from South High School in 1966. Paul and his family attended Central Reformed Church where he made confession of his faith. He attended Grand Rapids Junior College for two years and earned a bachelor’s degree in science from Western Michigan University in 1970. He was drafted into the army in September 1970 and served a short tour in Vietnam. When he returned home in April 1972, he was hired to teach social studies at White Cloud Schools. After three years of teaching he returned to WMU graduate school where he earned a Master of Arts in Counseling Personnel in 1975. He worked for two years as a school counselor at Kent City Schools until budget cuts forced his layoff. Later he worked at counselor at Whittemore-Prescott Schools and Fremont Schools. He retired from Fremont Schools in 2004. Paul has one son from his first marriage. He married his wife, Vickie, in 2018. Paul has attended Grant Reformed Church for 20 years, serving as a deacon and elder. He is involved in the music program there, singing on the praise team regularly and serving on the worship committee.

R-3

To elect Paul DeBoer for a the remaining one-year term on the RSGL Executive Committee as the representative from Northern Michigan Classis. (ADOPTED)

The Great Lakes City Classis is nominating elder Michelle Chahine to be elected to her first term on the RSGL Executive Committee.

Michelle Chahine and her husband Joe have been members of Immanuel Community Reformed Church in Lansing, MI for 29 years. They have two sons, Casey, age 29 and Mitchel, age 25. Michelle has served in many roles in her local church as Elder, Consistory Vice President and Clerk, Outreach Ministry Team Leader, Club Mom & Girlfriends Ministry Co-leader, Youth Director Search Team Moderator and other various projects and committees. Most recently she served as the Great Lakes City Classis President and Vice President, GLCC Classis Leader Search Team Moderator and Member & Communications Coordinator of the RCA General Secretary Search Team. She has also served as the Synod of the Great Lakes Regional Representative on the RCA General Synod Council and Moderator of the General Synod Council. Prior to serving in ministry roles, Michelle worked in Customer Service & Project Management positions and served on boards for several non-profit organizations; St. Vincent Catholic Charities and Lansing Area Parents’ Respite Center. She graduated from Michigan State University with a BA in Communication (1986). She has a passion for strategic leadership, leadership development, and developing systems that support people and organizations to serve well and has a deep sensitivity for other cultures.

R-4

To elect Michelle Chahine for a three-year term on the RSGL Executive Committee, beginning on June 1, 2020, as the representative from the Great Lakes City Classis. (ADOPTED)

The Muskegon Classis is nominating Oswaldo (Wally) De La Fuente to be elected to her first term on the RSGL Executive Committee.

Oswaldo (Wally) De La Fuente is a Commissioned Church Planter/Pastor in the Muskegon Classis for the ReDiscover Church. He has also filled the pulpit in seven churches in the West Michigan area. He works co-vocationally with the Christian Leaders Institute as the Programs Director and as the Spanish Language Director which has enrolled over 40,000 students who have taken classes since 2017. He and his wife, April, founded Mission Juarez Mexico, a non-profit organization who has delivered food, clothing, Christmas toys and the Gospel to over 5,000 children in Juarez Mexico over the past 4 years. Prior to that, Wally lived in El Paso, TX where he was youth and young adult leader at Sunshine Community church in the CRC. Prior to that Wally was the video director for a mega church in El Paso called Abundant Living Faith Center with over 30,000 members. Wally has completed his M.T.S. with Northwestern Theological Seminary and is pursuing his M.Div. He has both a Bachelor and an Associate of Divinity from Christian Leaders Institute as well. Prior to his ministry work and theological training, Wally completed a Masters of Marketing Management and a Bachelor in Film and Video and worked his own audio/video business, while volunteering at his local church.

R-5

To elect Osvaldo (Wally) De La Fuente for a three-year term on the RSGL Executive Committee, beginning on June 1, 2020, as the representative from the Muskegon Classis. (ADOPTED)

Jen Holmes Curran was nominated by the RSGL Executive Committee to serve a second term on the committee as one of the at-large members.

Jen Holmes Curran 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. 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. From 2011 to 2018, Jen and her husband Tony co-pastored New Hope Community Church in Hart, Michigan, and in 2019 they moved on to pastor Sherman Street Christian Reformed Church in Grand Rapids. 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-6

To elect Jen Holmes Curran to serve her second three-year term on the RSGL Executive Committee, as one of the at-large members. (ADOPTED)

At the November meeting of the RSGL Executive Committee, they were informed that Laurel Kempkers was diagnosed with ALS and had submitted a letter of resignation.

At their March meeting, Joel Baar was nominated by the RSGL Executive Committee to serve the two-year unexpired term of Laurel Kempkers on the committee.

Joel Baar currently serves as an Elder and Vice-President of Consistory at Fellowship Reformed Church of Hudsonville (MI). Joel is the founding partner of Baar & Lichterman, PLLC, a law firm located in Grandville, MI. In 1995, Joel graduated from the Honors Program at Grand Valley State University, and then graduated magna cum laude in 1998 from the Valparaiso University School of Law. While in law school, Joel interned for the Honorable Kenneth F. Ripple of the United States Court of Appeals for the 7th Circuit (Chicago). Joel has been married to his wife, Renee, for 21+ years. They have 3 children – Quinn (17), Bryce (14) and Noelle (12). The Baar Family enjoys vacationing “Up North”, using their place at Crystal Mountain as their home-away-from-home. Joel gives thanks for the many faith influencers in his life, including but not limited to: his wife, his parents, his in-laws, Duane Smith, Mike Van Buren, Jim DeHorn and Shawn Hulst.

R-7

To elect Joel Baar to serve a two-year unexpired term on the RSGL Executive Committee, as one of the at-large members. (ADOPTED)

2020 Presidential Candidate (our current vice-president)

The RSGL Rules of Order specify that the president is elected by ballot and the current vice-president is the sole nominee on the first ballot. If the candidate receives a majority vote of the delegates present at the meeting, the current vice-president shall be declared elected. Mik Sutton is our current vice-president.

2020 Vice-Presidential Candidates (nominated by the RSGL Executive Committee)

Under ARTICLE V. ELECTIONS, our Rules of Order contain the following rules for the nomination and election of the Vice-President of the Synod of the Great Lakes:

Sec. 2. The vice-president shall be elected by ballot from among the list of the delegates enrolled at the regular session. The office of vice-president shall be filled by a minister of Word and sacrament only on alternate years. The Executive Committee shall recommend a minimum of three (3) eligible candidates for the office of vice-president. Other nominations of delegates may be offered from the floor of the assembly on the nominating ballot (first ballot).

Sec. 3. The election for vice-president shall not begin until the president has been elected. The nominees recommended by the Executive Committee and others nominated from the floor shall appear on the nominating ballot. If any of the nominees receives two-thirds of the total number of ballots cast on the

nominating ballot, the nominee shall be declared elected. If this is not the case and more than three nominees were on the ballot, the three nominees receiving the highest number of votes will be placed on the electing ballot. If only three nominees were on the nominating ballot, the names of the two nominees receiving the highest number of votes will be placed on the electing ballot. A simple majority of ballots cast on the electing ballots will constitute an election to the office. If the second ballot (the first electing ballot) does not result in an election, the names of the two nominees receiving the highest number of votes will be placed on the next electing ballot.

2020 Candidates for Vice-President

This year we must nominate a person who is a minister of Word and Sacrament for the office of vice-president of the regional synod. All the ministers who are serving on the RSGL Executive Committee and all those who are serving as minister delegates from the classes are eligible for nomination. The RSGL Executive Committee nominates the following candidates for vice-president: Nancy Boote, Dan Gillett, and Deb Yurk.

Nancy Boote was born and raised in Western Pennsylvania. She made profession of faith in the United Presbyterian Church and was active in youth ministry leadership. When she was 16, Nancy moved to Okemos, Michigan. She received her bachelor's degree in religion (music minor) from Hope College. While at Hope, Nancy participated in the RCA's Adventure in Ministry program where she served at Bethany Memorial Reformed Church in New York City and continued to explore her ministry gifts. After marrying her husband Evan, Nancy served in a ministry role at Geneva Campus Ministry in Madison, WI. In 1988, Nancy and Evan moved to Columbia, Missouri, where they raised their sons, Cameron and Ethan. While in Columbia, Nancy was the Associate Teaching Director for Community Bible Study.

The Spirit planted the seed of seminary in Nancy's heart through her pastor when she was a teen. This seed grew over time as her love for prayer, the Gospel and people increased. In 2006, Nancy enrolled as a Distance Learning Student at Western Theological Seminary and graduated in 2011. In 2012, Nancy and her husband moved to Grand Rapids. She was ordained in 2013. From 2012-2018, Nancy served as the Pastor of Congregational Care at Ridgewood CRC in Jenison. Besides attending to those in need at Ridgewood, Nancy was actively involved in prayer ministries in the West Michigan area and has trained people to share their faith. She currently serves on the Executive Committee of the Regional Synod of the Great Lakes and the North Grand Rapids Classis Specialized Ministry Committee. Nancy and Evan reside in Ada and currently attend Madison North (part of Madison Square CRC). She enjoys walking, writing music, singing and being a grandma.

Dan Gillett was born and raised in West Michigan. He attended WMU earning a Bachelor of Music. He taught vocal music at Parchment Schools while learning about ministry with Kalamazoo Youth for Christ. He became acquainted with Reformed Theology as a member of Haven Reformed Church in Parchment. This led him to attend Western Seminary in Holland. In addition, Dan earned a counseling/psychology MA degree from WMU and D.Min. from Fuller Theological Seminary. Dan served as an associate minister at Haven, and is currently the lead pastor at First Reformed in Holland, MI. He has also served as an adjunct professor with both WTS and MFCA.

Dan has served the RCA in numerous capacities. He has served with Student Supervision Committees, President of Holland Classis, President of General Synod, and numerous committees on all assembly levels. Dan and his wife, Sherrie, have been blessed to have two kids, Josh and Steph, now adults. Josh is married to Lydia (Nykamp) and they recently added Elliana to the family. Lydia's grandparents include the late Rev. Bob Nykamp and Rev. Cecil Martens. So Dan, though not brought up Reformed, now feels like his RCA pedigree has grown.

Deb Yurk is Co-Pastor of Trinity Reformed Church in Holland, where she has served since October 2014. Prior to moving to Holland, Deb lived in southern California and planted Church of Grace in Garden Grove, through Emmanuel Reformed Church, Paramount, CA. Prior to her ordination, Deb served on staff at the Crystal Cathedral as Pastor of Congregational Life, on the management team of CenterPoint in Kalamazoo, MI as and at Trinity Reformed, Kalamazoo in various Christian Ed roles. Prior to her ministerial roles, Deb worked as an Occupational Therapist in home health. Deb graduated from WMU with her BS in OT (1979); from WTS with an MRE (1996) and with an MDiv (2008). She has been married to her husband, Pat for 42 years who is looking forward to his retirement in May 2020. Deb and Pat have 4 grown children. Dr. Brian (& Michelle), Rev. Kevin (& Rachel), Stephen (& Ashley) and Meghan (& Matt Johnson). Deb and Pat have 9

grandchildren. Her back porch is her favorite place to read and the Pacific Ocean and Lake Michigan are her favorite places to visit.

General Synod Delegates

The RSGL was asked to appoint delegates to the 2020 General Synod that will be held on the campus of Northwestern College in Orange City, Iowa, beginning Thursday, June 11 at 3:00 p.m. and adjourning by noon on Tuesday, June 16. Each regional synod is entitled to appoint:

- one regular, voting delegate (*BCO 1.IV.1*)
- two women corresponding delegates (*BCO 3.I.9.11a*)
- one young adult corresponding delegate (*BCO 3.I.9.11b*)
- its regional synod executive as a corresponding delegate (*BCO 3.I.9.11c*)

Greg Brower will serve as our regular delegate to the 2020 General Synod.

Deb Yurk and Jen Holmes Curran will be serving as women corresponding delegates.

John Messer will be serving as our regional synod executive corresponding delegate.

The Executive Committee members were asked to recommend candidates to serve as the youth corresponding delegate. At the time this report we have not found someone to serve in this role.

Note: The nominees for office above were elected using a Google form.

ELECTION OF THE VICE-PRESIDENT

Nancy Boote, Dan Gillett, and Deb Yurk 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 by the delegates. Following the first ballot vote, the names of Nancy Boote and Dan Gillett were presented for the second ballot. Dan Gillett 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.

Past year

In the past year, regional staff maintained our missional priorities of developing leaders to start and strengthen churches, while anticipating and preparing for the impact of Vision 2020.

Strengthening Churches

We expanded the Luminex ministry to provide a broader range of ministries to regional churches. So far, we have completed or are currently facilitating Church Unique mission and values framing processes or God Dreams vision framing processes with 20 RSGL churches. The feedback from churches about Church Unique and God Dreams is overwhelmingly positive. Several have commented on the renewed sense of purpose and identity gained from Church Unique and the clear, measurable path to vision implementation from God Dreams.

Starting churches

RSGL contracted with Bob Carlton for assistance in developing and implementing a revised multiplication structure with the region. The overarching goal was to provide more resources to Classes and empower them to accomplish multi-site, traditional, and micro-church planting appropriate for each unique context.

We are making good progress toward the 25 X 25 goal, and intend to achieve it before 2025. Church planting goals will be revised based on ongoing restructuring and the new CMC strategy currently being implemented.

Status of church planting 25 X 25 goal:

Churches Started: 13 with 9 in process

Churches Organized: 7 with 9 in process

Missionary Planters Sent: 11 with 5 in process

Future church planting organization and strategy:

Regional multiplication ministry is being restructured around Classis Multiplication Catalysts, emphasizing the role and responsibility of Classes to fuel multiplication within their churches. Regional Synod staff will provide support for CMCs, but most funding will be coordinated with the RCA Multiplication Team. This structure and strategy is an effort to maximize Classis resources while minimizing layers of institutional bureaucracy. We

anticipate that having local, church based, boots on the ground leaders to champion and catalyze multiplication, directly fueled by the denomination, will rapidly propel multiplication in our region.

Vision 2020

Participation on the Vision 2020 Team demanded significant time and effort this year. Working the myriad data, groups, and input from the denomination taxed the group. In six months, I facilitated 36 Vision 2020 informational meetings with Classes, congregations, and leadership groups. As anxiety regarding the possible outcomes of the Vision process, facilitation became more challenging. Yet, asking and processing the hard questions will benefit those who are willing to invest in the effort.

Regional restructuring scenarios

Significant changes are coming. The Vision 2020 outcome, regardless of what is decided, will drive significant changes in the region. This will most likely require restructuring and realigning congregations and Classes for better ministry effectiveness in the future. In addition to organizational restructure, we are planning for sharp budget reductions, with subsequent program and staffing changes. Our intention is to maintain, even increase, our equipping and strengthening ministries through Luminex in the future.

Immediate Focus

In the immediate future we will focus on supporting and equipping leaders and congregations to make the most of the twin trials of COVID-19 and Vision 2020 changes. The point of trials is not to make us tougher. They are intended to make us more pliable, softer, gentler; more dependent on God's power and wisdom; better able to respond faithfully in fulfilling His purposes. In other words, tough times are intended to make us more resilient Christians. We don't just tough them out. We lean into hardships and struggles to learn and be transformed as God desires. Through tough times, we actively persevere, not just passively grin and bear it.

Our approach to the future focuses on forming leaders and disciples who are Hopeful, Empowered, Resilient and Optimistic (HERO) through the work of the indwelling Holy Spirit.

We will intentionally and consistently work to form resilient leaders who don't just grin and bear tough times. Tough times don't destroy Christ's disciples; instead, tough times make us more mature, more loving, more compassionate, more dependent on the Spirit, and more effective ministers for our neighbors and our communities (James 1:2-4; Romans 5:3-5; 2 Thess. 1:4; Hebrews 12:1).

Our hope is in Christ (1 Cor. 15:19; Eph. 1:12; Col. 1:27; 1 Thess. 1:3); Our power is from the Holy Spirit (Acts 1:8; Romans 15:13); Our Resilience grows through perseverance grounded in our hope in God's promises and our optimism that He indeed is working for the good of his people (Romans 8:28).

To the hopeless, we bring hope. We live with optimism in the midst of worldly pessimism and cynicism. And we demonstrate the power of God through our humble dependence on Him rather than merely human resources. And through it all, we prove the resilience of lives rooted in Christ rather than the things of this world.

BREAK

OVERTURES AND JUDICIAL BUSINESS COMMITTEE

Case Van Kempen, reporting

This committee met on March 26, 2020 using the Zoom video conferencing software. All members of the committee were in attendance.

Permission for an Electronic Meeting for the RSGL Assembly on May 4

The Overtures and Judicial Business Committee ("OJBC") believes that extraordinary times require extraordinary measures to continue the work of the church. While it would be preferable to meet face-to-face in one room, the Regional Synod of the Great Lakes ("RSGL") respects the request of our governmental leaders and health officials who are calling for as much social distancing as possible to avoid the spread of COVID-19. On March 16, 2020 the RSGL Executive Committee voted "to hold the May 4, 2020 Assembly meeting online in some form and let the officers and staff figure out how to do it." The stated clerk requested that the OJBC consider what directive would be needed to conduct the Assembly meeting legally because of the unprecedented nature of this action. The OJBC reviewed the existing RSGL Rules of Order and the RSGL Articles of Incorporation and found nothing in the current governing documents of the regional synod that

prohibits the use of electronic meetings. Since the RSGL is incorporated as an ecclesiastical non-profit, the OJBC reviewed sections of the Michigan State nonprofit law regarding the use of electronic meetings. Section 450.2405 of the Michigan Nonprofit Act (the "ACT") provides that "unless otherwise restricted by the articles of incorporation or bylaws, a shareholder, member, or proxy holder may participate in a meeting of shareholders or members by a conference telephone or other means or remote communication that permits all persons that participate in the meeting to communicate with all the other participants."

Section 450.2405 further provides that:

1. participants must be advised of the means of remote communication.
2. participation in the meeting constitutes presence in person at the meeting.
3. participants may vote subject to guidelines and procedures adopted by the organization to ensure:
 - a. that each person voting is considered present and permitted to vote.
 - b. each participant has a reasonable opportunity to participate in the meeting and to read or hear the proceedings substantially concurrently with the proceedings.
 - c. a record of the vote or other action taken at the meeting is maintained by the organization.

Section 450.2521 of the Act provides similar provisions for meetings of a board or board committee.

The OJBC was tasked with reviewing the decision of the RSGL Executive Committee to hold the May 4, 2020 Assembly meeting online (the "Directive"). The OJBC, after reviewing and discussing this question at length, voted to approve the following Directive for the RSGL Assembly meeting:

It is appropriate for the RSGL to hold the meeting of the annual Assembly of the RSGL by having members participate by means of remote communication, such as the Zoom video conferencing app and Google forms for voting. (This action is provided for the information of the 2020 RSGL Assembly and no vote by the Assembly was necessary.)

Amendments to the RSGL Rules of Order

The following amendments to the Rules of Order of the Regional Synod of the Great Lakes were approved in principle in a first reading by the May 6, 2019 RSGL Assembly. According to our Rules of Order, after amendments are approved by one Assembly, they are referred to the Overtures and Judicial Business Committee for editing and integration into the Rules of Order. At the next annual session of the Regional Synod assembly, the report of the Overtures and Judicial Business Committee concerning the amendment must be adopted by a two-thirds vote.

The Overtures and Judicial Business Committee reviewed the approved amendments and is recommending the following amendments and their adoption by the 2020 RSGL Assembly.

R-8

To approve the following amendments to the RSGL Rules of Order that were approved in principle at the 2019 RSGL Assembly meeting. (ADOPTED BY 2/3rds VOTE)

One or Two-Year Term for Assembly Delegates

The current rule in the RSGL Rules of Order of the regional synod that states: "The delegates serve two-year terms, according to their classis' regular rotation or selection process..." The rule was designed to provide more continuity in the decision-making of the regional synod, but it has the downside of limiting the numbers of minister and elder delegates who can attend over the years. After considering this recommendation, the motion was made, seconded, and carried to recommend the following amendment (*additions underlined, deletions stricken*):

ARTICLE I. MEMBERSHIP OF THE ASSEMBLY

Sec. 1. The membership of the assembly of the Regional Synod is the Regional Synod Executive Committee, and four ministers of the Word and Sacrament delegates and four elder delegates from each of the classes within the bounds of the Synod. The delegates are selected serve two-year terms, according to their classis' regular rotation or selection process. Synod staff are *ipso facto* members without vote. The seated delegates and the Executive Committee members are permitted to vote.

Reason: This amendment allows each classis to determine the number of terms that any one delegate may serve, similar to the process for General Synod delegates. The classes will be informally encouraged to appoint delegates for more than one term to encourage continuity.

Method of Guaranteeing Balance on the Executive Committee

Now that we have started our regular rotation of members appointed by the classes, we need to find a way to carry out the requirements for balance between ministers of Word and sacrament and non-ministers on the committee. The motion was made, seconded, and carried to propose the following amendment (underlined below):

ARTICLE V. ELECTIONS

Sec. 5. Nine regular members of the Executive Committee will be elected in staggered three-year terms as needed at the regular session of the Assembly and will be eligible for nomination and re-election one time. A balance shall be maintained between ministers of Word and sacrament and non-ministers on the committee. Terms for all members begin on June 1 and end on May 31. Regular members will be chosen for their gifts, from the confessing members of the churches in the Regional Synod and need not come from the body of delegates at the assembly. One member will be nominated by each classis for approval at the assembly meeting. The 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 SGL Executive Committee will nominate two at-large members for approval by the Assembly to ensure a balance of leadership gifts, ethnic/gender/age perspectives, and such other skills as may be needed on the Executive Committee. Should any of the members resign or otherwise vacate their position, the classis (or the SGL Executive Committee in the case of an at-large member) shall nominate a new person to serve the remainder of the unexpired term for election at the next Assembly meeting. Members who have served a partial term of one year shall be eligible for an additional full three-year term. In order to maintain a balance between ministers of Word and sacrament and non-ministers on the committee, positions held for two terms shall be rotated to the opposite category (minister or non-minister).

Corresponding Delegates for the RSGL Assembly

For the past few years the delegates have adopted the following motion at the beginning of the RSGL Assembly meeting:

The privilege of the floor is limited to the official delegates of the Assembly. Since non-delegates do not have access to the floor, the following motion is in order: "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."

Currently the regional synod Rules of Order do not provide for corresponding members. This committee decided to recommend a new section in the rules that would eliminate the need for this motion each year. The motion was made, seconded, and carried to recommend the following amendment:

ARTICLE I. MEMBERSHIP OF THE ASSEMBLY

Sec. 4. Classis leaders, stated clerks, or RCA staff that are present at an Assembly meeting, 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 will be considered corresponding delegates. Corresponding delegates may fully participate in the Assembly but cannot vote, make motions, or be elected to office.

Editorial Changes

Since two classes combined to form the Great Lakes City Classis, we have seven rather than eight classes in our region. The following amendment bring the Rules of Order up-to-date.

ARTICLE VII. ADMINISTRATIVE COMMITTEES

Sec. 2. Overtures and Judicial Business Committee.

B. Membership. This committee shall consist of eight members one member from each classis within the Regional Synod, at least three members must be ministers and at least two members must be elders.

A number of years ago the Executive Committee changed the name of our Synod Minister to "Regional Executive". This committee recommends a global amendment to replace "Synod Minister" with "Regional Executive" wherever that title is found in the Rules of Order.

For a number of years, the Executive Committee has delegated the responsibility of appointing the Standing Committees (Classical Minutes Committee, Study Committee, and Leave of Absence and Resolutions Committee) to the president, working with Alison DeBoer (Operations Manager of the regional synod), rather than requiring the approval of the Executive Committee. This committee recommends the following amendments:

ARTICLE II. MEETINGS OF THE ASSEMBLY

Sec. 5. Standing Committees. The following committees shall be appointed nominated by the president and appointed by the Executive Committee. Each committee shall consist of two ministers and two elders. They shall serve from the time of their appointment to the end of the annual session of assembly. Time shall be scheduled during the regular session of the assembly meeting for these committees to meet and report to the assembly.

ARTICLE IV. DUTIES OF THE OFFICERS

Sec. 1. The president shall preside over all meetings of the Regional Synod assembly and the Executive Committee. It shall be the president's duty to state and explain the business which is to be transacted, to enforce the Rules of Order, and in general to maintain the decorum and dignity becoming a judicatory of the church. The president shall appoint recommend to the Executive Committee appointees to all standing committees and a sufficient number of persons to serve as tellers for each session, whose task it will be to distribute materials, to count written ballots, and to perform such other activities as the president may direct. It shall also be the president's duty at each regular session to present to the assembly a report on the state of religion in the Synod, based upon personal observations and reports submitted by the classes. When this report has been adopted, it shall be published in the Minutes of the Regional Synod.

Explanation: The report of the president is always published in the Minutes of the Regional Synod, and the Assembly never votes to adopt the report in its entirety. If the report contains recommendations for the Assembly to consider, it is referred to the Study Committee. In recent years, the reports of the president have not included specific recommendations and the Study Committee has not been appointed.

Amendments to the Rules of Order to Allow Electronic Meetings

Following the lengthy discussion in our meeting on March 26, the OJBC is convinced that the Michigan Nonprofit Act permits that "unless otherwise restricted by the articles of incorporation or bylaws, a shareholder, member, or proxy holder may participate in a meeting of shareholders or members by a conference telephone or other means or remote communication." The OJBC is also convinced that the current Articles of Incorporation and the Rules of Order of the RSGL do not restrict the use of remote communication. However, to avoid any misunderstanding and long debate in the future, the OJBC believes that it would be helpful to propose amendments to the RSGL Rules of Order that would give explicit permission for the use of remote communication.

R-9

**To approve following amendments to the RSGL Rules of Order in principle in a first reading.
(ADOPTED)**

Amend Article II, Section 1 to read (*additions underlined*):

ARTICLE II. MEETINGS OF THE ASSEMBLY

Sec. 1. The assembly of the Regional Synod shall meet annually in regular session. The date, time and place of meeting shall be determined by the Executive Committee. The regular session shall normally be held within the first ten days of May. An agenda shall be distributed to the delegates at least fifteen days prior to the meeting. The Executive Committee may decide that an emergency prevents the Assembly from meeting in person and may make arrangements for a meeting using remote communication following the provisions in the Michigan Nonprofit Act.

Amend Article VI, Sec. 1 to read (*additions underlined*):

ARTICLE VI. EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

Sec. 1. The Executive Committee shall consist of the president, the vice-president, the Regional Executive, the two most recent past presidents, the chairperson of the Finance Committee, and nine members. A majority of the members of the Executive Committee shall constitute a quorum at any meeting. The Executive Committee may meet using remote communication following the provisions of the Michigan Nonprofit Act.

Amend Article VII by adding a new Sec. 3 (*additions underlined*):

ARTICLE VII. ADMINISTRATIVE COMMITTEES

Sec. 3. The administrative committees of the regional synod may meet using remote communication following the provisions of the Michigan Nonprofit Act.

Review of the Last Appeal from the Region: The 2018 Forner Complaint

The Overtures and Judicial Business Committee (OJBC) of the Regional Synod of the Great Lakes (RSGL) met on February 21, 2019 to consider the appeal/complaint filed by Phil and Diane Forner against the October

29, 2018 decision of Zeeland Classis “to not undertake an intentional process of reconciliation between Phil and Diane Forner (Forners), Spring Valley Church (SVC) and Zeeland Classis.” As reported to the 2019 RSGL Assembly, the motion was made, seconded, and carried to find this complaint filed by the Forners against the Zeeland Classis to be frivolous, dilatory, and clearly without merit and to dismiss the complaint without a hearing. This action was reported to the Assembly of the Regional Synod of the Great Lakes on May 6, 2019, and this decision is considered the final action of the regional synod in response to this complaint following Chapter 1, Part II, Article 2, Section 5 of the RCA *Book of Church Order*. The Forners filed an appeal of the action of the OJBC on April 8, 2019 with the General Synod. The General Synod Commission on Judicial Business (CJB) found that there was insufficient time for the to complete its work on it prior to the 2019 General Synod meeting. Accordingly, the CJB intends to complete its work on the Forner Appeal in time for a written report (and recommendation, if applicable) to be submitted to the 2020 General Synod.

Election of a Chair

A chairperson is elected annually by this committee following the RSGL Rules of Order. The chair presides at the meetings of this committee and reports to the annual RSGL Assembly meeting. A vice-chair is elected to take on this role the absence of the chair. Dirk Weeldreyer was elected as the chair and Brian Smilde was elected as vice-chair.

OJBC Members: John Grant, Diane Maodush-Pitzer, Dave Mejeur, Leighton Seys, Brian Smilde, Case VanKempen, Dirk Weeldreyer

VISION 2020 PROCESS

We reserved a half hour in the agenda for a discussion of the future of the Reformed Church in America and the report of the 2020 Vision Team to the General Synod. John Messer, our Regional Executive, introduced this part of our meeting. John presented a brief overview of the work of the Vision 2020 Team. The timetable for presenting the final report of the 2020 Vision Team was delayed since the General Synod meeting was postponed until October because of the COVID-19 crisis. The delegates were divided into breakout rooms for group discussion using the questions: 1) What did you hear that was new to you? and 2) What questions do you have for John? After the delegates rejoined the meeting, John Messer answered questions from the delegates regarding the work of the Vision 2020 Team.

FINANCE COMMITTEE REPORT **Mike Gafa, reporting**

During the past year, the Finance Committee:

- Reviewed some changes to the 2019-20 budget (most pertinently a further actual decrease in membership of 1.4% vs. the initial budget).
- Reviewed the investment manager’s report on earnings for 2019, and the current portfolio with the Synod’s investment manager.
- Reviewed the financial statements for the year ended September 30, 2019.
- Updated the Minimum Salary Guidelines and Schedule for Ministers of Word and sacrament for 2021.
- Updated voluntary compensation guidelines for church staff of SGL churches for 2021.
- Reviewed in detail our current financial situation, and the likelihood of further decreases in revenue, in advance of a proposed Ministry Fund Budget and assessment for 2020-2021 (from the Executive Committee).
- Reviewed financial statements for the quarter ended December 31, 2019.
- Reviewed the RCA proposal to move from a per-member assessment model to a covenant share model. The Finance Committee endorsed the covenant share model, including implementing the model for our region at the same time the denomination implements the model.

COMPENSATION GUIDELINES

The Executive Committee requested that we annually review and update the voluntary guidelines published to assist churches in setting reasonable compensation guidelines for Ministers of Word and Sacrament, as well as certain other church staff members. The Finance Committee has completed its review, and based on a combination of Consumer Price Index, rate of inflation, and annual Social Security increase, is recommending a 2.0% increase over the 2020 guidelines.

R-10

To approve the proposed 2021 Compensation Guidelines for Ministers of Word and Sacrament and recommend them to the classes within our region. (APPROVED)

R-11

To approve the proposed 2021 Church Staff Salary and Benefits Guidelines and recommend them to the churches to be implemented on a voluntary basis. (APPROVED)

2020-21 BUDGET

The Finance Committee has spent ample time considering, and giving input to, the formation of a Ministry Fund budget for 2020-21.

The 2020-21 Ministry Fund budget assumes a 7% decrease in membership (from 36,752 members to 34,179 members), which is the highest projected decrease we have forecasted (for reference, the actual decrease in FY2019-20 was ~3.5% - from 38,144 to 36,752). However, in light of the current realities we face as a denomination, we believe that projecting a steep membership decline is warranted.

Further, because we recognize the financial challenges our congregations are facing, we are setting the assessment rate at \$20/member, which matches the current FY2019-20 assessment rate. This will mark the third consecutive year that the Great Lakes Region will have held our per member assessment rate.

In spite of financial challenges, we remain optimistic and believe we will have the necessary resources to serve our churches, leaders, and members well in FY2020-21. And of course we are employing adaptive leadership to understand and adjust to the current, and projected future, realities of our ministry environment.

MINISTRY FUND

The 2021 proposed assessment of \$20.00 in our regional synod represents no change from 2020, and remains one of the lowest of the RCA's regional synods. Mike explained that the Finance Committee will be making a recommendation to the June meeting on the RSGL Executive Committee to adopt a new budget with the assessment reduced to \$18.50.

R-12

To approve the 2020-2021 Ministry Fund Budget and the \$20.00 per confessing member assessment. (APPROVED)

FINANCE COMMITTEE

Chuck Brower, chair (ZEE)

Tim Elzinga (NGR)

Cindy Lowman (SWM)

Vacant (Holland)

Mike Gafa, Treasurer (Ex-Officio)

Gordon Vander Slice (NMI)

Bob Zielinski (GLCC)

Irv Boersen (MUSK)

Alison DeBoer, staff

John Messer, Regional Executive (Ex-Officio)

Staff Reports

Staff Reports from Mike Gafa, Scott Lokers and Bob Carlton were included on pages 45-47 in the Assembly Workbook. (See the Appendix.)

Classical Minutes Committee

Dick Van Dop, reporting

Minutes of the seven classes within our region were submitted by the classis clerks and examined by this committee before the meeting. Dick reported that examined the minutes from all seven classes and found them to be complete & generally in good order. There is nothing significant to report. Kudos to our Stated Clerks." The committee members completed feedback forms that will be sent to each classis clerk.

Resolutions/Leave of Absence Committee

Laura Osborne, reporting

The following Resolutions were recommended by the committee:

R-13

To thank Judy Nelson for her four years of service on the Synod of the Great Lakes Executive Committee as vice president, president, past president, and past past president. (ADOPTED)

R-14

To thank Dan Sewell for his six years of service on the Executive Committee. (ADOPTED)

R-15

To thank Greg Stamm for his six years of service on the Executive Committee. (ADOPTED)

R-16

To thank Laurel Kempkers for her four years of service on the Executive Committee. (ADOPTED)

R-17

To thank Case VanKempen for his eight years of service on the Overtures and Judicial Business Committee. (ADOPTED)

Excused and Unexcused Absences

The following delegate was absent with excuse from the 2020 Assembly meeting: Mark Black.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

Delegates were asked to complete an evaluation form for the Assembly meeting using a Google Form.

READING OF THE JOURNAL

In his role as stated clerk, Howard Moths read the minutes of this session by title: "The 65th Annual Session of the Synod of the Great Lakes Minutes, convened using the Zoom videoconferencing app on May 4, 2020." 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

The past-president of the regional synod, Bob VanderZwaag, congratulated Mik Sutton, the newly elected president, and Dan Gillett, the newly elected vice-president. Bob thanked Greg for his leadership of this Assembly. He offered words of encouragement to Mik Sutton and Dan Gillett as they take on the responsibilities of their office.

CLOSING PRAYER

Mik Sutton took over as the presiding officer and closed the Assembly meeting with prayer.

ADJOURNMENT

The motion was made, seconded, and carried to adjourn this Assembly of the Regional Synod of the Great Lakes. The meeting was adjourned at 12:10 p.m.

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

Documents that appear in the Appendix:

Financial Reports

2021 Compensation Guidelines for Ministers of Word and Sacrament

2021 Church Staff Salary and Benefits Guidelines

Staff Report by Mike Gafa (Church Optimization Catalyst / Luminex Director)

Staff Report: Scott Lokers (Transition Ministry/Church Optimization Catalyst)

Staff Report by Bob Carlton (Multiplication Guru, LLC)