

**REGIONAL SYNOD OF THE GREAT LAKES
MEETING AND MINUTES
Convened using Zoom Videoconferencing
Sixty-sixth Annual Session
May 3, 2021**

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 3, 2021. Delegates were asked to sign in early for an orientation and to register their attendance using the Chat feature in Zoom. Vice-President Dan Gillett called the meeting to order at 9:00 a.m. at the request of President Mik Sutton, who is undergoing treatment for cancer. Dan asked the Assembly members to pray for Mik and expressed thanks for Mik's continued prayers for us even when he was so ill from chemotherapy. As the presiding officer, Dan 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. The asterisk (*) designates a second year delegate.

GREAT LAKES CITY CLASSIS

Mr. Roger Burgess, 7188 Crestwood, Jenison, MI, 49428
Rev. Matt Cook, 5739 Park Avenue, Hudsonville, MI, 49426
Rev. Andrea DeWard, 7050 Union Avenue, Grand Rapids, MI, 49548
Rev. Kent Frens, 1832 Onaway SE, Grand Rapids, MI, 49506*
Mr. Robert Lacy, 351 Summer Circle, Grand Rapids, MI, 49548
Rev. Tierra Marshall, 561 Paris Avenue, Grand Rapids, MI, 49503*
Mr. Tom Nieboer, 9840 Kenowa Avenue, Byron Center, MI, 49315

HOLLAND CLASSIS

Rev. Kama Jongerius, 111 West 13th Street, Holland, MI, 49423
Mr. Larry Kooiker, 3040 152nd Avenue, Holland, MI, 49424
Mr. Stephen McCarthy, 268 Winter Oak West, Holland, MI, 49424
Mr. Ned Meurer, 14600 James Street, Holland, MI, 49424
Rev. Ron Reinstra, 2365 Capilano Court, Grand Rapids, MI, 49546
Rev. Larry Schuyler, 10455 Bridgewater Drive, Zeeland, MI, 49464
Rev. Cindi Veldheer DeYoung, 960 East 10th Street, Holland, MI, 49423
Ms. Dawn Williams, 44 Winterhalder, Zeeland, MI, 49464

MUSKEGON CLASSIS

Mr. Irv Boersen, 15918 Stanton Street, West Olive, MI, 49460*
Rev. Sherwin Brantsen, 1731 Dykstra Road, Muskegon, MI, 49445
Rev. Miriam Bush, 5670 McMillian Road, Muskegon, MI, 49445
Mrs. Geraldine Eadie, 21336 40th Avenue, Conklin, MI, 49403*
Rev. John Kenny, 301 Washington Avenue, Grand Haven, MI, 49417*
Mr. Matthew Mekkes
Rev. Sandra Nikkel, 3769 Sehler Street, Conklin, MI, 49403
Mr. Jim Smith, 6691 Minard Drive, Muskegon, MI, 49442*

NORTH GRAND RAPIDS CLASSIS

Mr. Kurt Andrews, 13925 Ironwood, Grand Rapids, MI, 49534
Mr. Tom Boehm, 6313 Springmont Drive, Hudsonville, MI, 49426
Rev. Ben Bruins, 1025 Courtney Street, Grand Rapids, MI, 49504
Rev. Sarah Bruins, 1025 Courtney Street, Grand Rapids, MI, 49504*
Ms. Katie Bush, 3217 Coit Avenue, Grand Rapids, MI, 49525*
Rev. Branson Parler, 1728 Country Club Drive, Grand Rapids, MI, 49505
Mr. Ron Roden, 6870 Maplecrest Drive, Grand Rapids, MI, 49546
Rev. Mark Veldt, 1030 Woodspointe Drive, Byron Center, MI, 49315

NORTHERN MICHIGAN CLASSIS

Rev. Alissa Davis, 1100 N Saginaw Road, Midland, MI, 48640
Rev. Tom Jasperse, 605 Hemlock, Fremont, MI, 49412
Rev. Chris Maki, 100 Oak Street, Charlevoix, MI, 49720*
Rev. Drew Poppleton, 1139 East Front Street, Traverse City, MI, 49686
Mr. Lee Pranger, PO Box 7, New Era, MI, 49446*
Mrs. Jan Price, 4903 West MacFarlane Road, Glen Arbor, MI, 49636
Mr. Alan VanDuinen, 4614 Elm Street, New Era, MI, 49446*
Mr. Randy Wiess, 7814 Veldkamp Lane, Central Lake, MI, 49622

SOUTHWEST MICHIGAN CLASSIS

Rev. Rick Christy, 12145 Doster Road, Plainwell, MI, 49080
Mr. Dave Mejeur, 5158 Deerland, Kalamazoo, MI, 49009*
Rev. Jason Olson, 326 W Cork Street, Kalamazoo, MI, 49001*
Mr. Jerry Pols, 1073 West Allegan Street, Martin, MI, 49070*
Ms. Kathy Skippers, 22460 Kline Resort Road Lot 34, Three Rivers, MI, 49093
Mr. Russ VanDenBos, 1118 107th Avenue, Plainwell, MI, 49080
Rev. Mark Vanderson, 6726 Texas Drive, Kalamazoo, MI, 49009
Rev. Dave Zomer, 1833 South Burdick, Kalamazoo, MI, 49001

ZEELAND CLASSIS

Rev. Paul Burmeister, 3997 38th Street, Hamilton, MI, 49419
Rev. Jamie DeVries, 4276 Baldwin Street, Hudsonville, MI, 49426
Rev. Audrey Edewaard, 12050 New Holland Street, Holland, MI, 49424
Mr. Glenn Emmert, 4455 Sylvia Lane, Zeeland, MI, 49464
Rev. Tom Grabill, 2585 Pebble Court, Zeeland, MI, 49464
Ms. Linda Kolk, 500 West Main #14, Zeeland MI, 49464
Mr. Dean Nevenzel, 2430 41st Street, Allegan, MI, 49010
Mr. Wayne Oosterink, 670 8th Avenue, Byron Center, MI, 49315

EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE MEMBERS

President:	Mr. Mik Sutton
Vice-President:	Rev. Dan Gillett
Past-President:	Rev. Greg Brower
Past Past-President:	Mr. Bob VanderZwaag
At-Large Member	Rev. Jen Holmes Curran
Great Lakes City Classis Rep	Mrs. Michelle Chahine
Holland Classis Rep	Rev. Deb Yurk
Muskegon Classis Rep	Mr. Wally De La Fuente
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 without excuse from this RSGL Assembly meeting: Rev. Rick Christy from Southwest Michigan Classis.

Privilege of the Floor

The presiding officer made a number of introductions. Following the provision in the RSGL *Rules of Order*, the privilege of the floor was granted to those employed as classis leaders, stated clerks, or RCA staff that were present, and those non-delegates and members of the RSGL task forces, committees, and ministry teams who were asked to present reports to the Synod.

Limits to Debate

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

Approval of the 2020 Assembly Minutes

The Minutes of the annual Assembly of the Synod of the Great Lakes that was held on May 4, 2020 and the special session on July 13, 2020 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 presiding officer asked for any additions or corrections to the minutes. Since none were offered, he declared that the minutes of the RSGL Assembly that was held on May 4, 2020 and the special session that was held on July 13, 2020 will stand approved as printed.

Appointment of Standing Committees

The following committees and tellers were appointed by the Executive Committee. The standing committees met before and during the assembly meeting to conduct their business. The Study Committee and tellers were not appointed for this session.

Classical Minutes Committee

Ron Roden, chair
Andrea DeWard
Dave Mejeur
Larry Schuyler
Howard Moths (staff)

Resolution/Leave of Absence Committee

Audrey Edewaard, chair
Geraldine Eadie
Chris Maki
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-1

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

OPENING DEVOTIONS AND PRAYER

Devotions were led by Karla Van Otteren, who serves as the Director of Prayer & Healing Ministry at Gun Lake Community Church in Wayland, Michigan. Karla began with prayer and a reading from James 1:5-8. Karla spoke about what we need to do when we lack wisdom. At her request, a YouTube video of the song, "God I Look to You" by Jenn Johnson, was shared with all the delegates. Delegates were encouraged to sing along with the video. Karla opened the meeting with prayer.

PRESIDENT'S REPORT

Mik Sutton, reporting

Greetings to everyone in the precious Name of Jesus Christ, King of kings and Lord of lords. It is for His glory that we gather this day; it is for His honor that we seek to do the business of The Kingdom and the Church. May our every word, thought, and action lift His name to heights never before seen in the annals of the RCA.

A year ago, amidst the challenges of changes within the denomination, I assumed the office of President and, to be honest, the path of such leadership was somewhat obscured by debris of doubt! So many questions were being asked, so many more were yet to come. How will the RCA deal with the findings prayerfully brought before us via the Vision 20/20 report? Will we remain a single denomination but divided into parts? Might we split into two or three new denominations with additional churches electing to go the route of independence or maybe joining another already established denominations? What is to be done with church properties and assets? What does "gracious separation" mean?

And from all of that, what would we do with the practices and programs that are in place, and have been in place for years, that have ultimately helped countless people, leaders, Consistories, and pastors in reaching out to a lost world? And certainly, how would we deal with sorting through it all and still maintain an attitude

of grace, hope, and love towards our brothers and sisters in Christ? In my heart of hearts, the looming question was, "Mik Sutton, what in the world can you do to help in this complex and convoluted dilemma that seems to be wrapped in a conundrum?" The answer was simple. Pray. So many questions! Pray! Pray for the RCA, the Regional Synod, the Classes, the churches, the leaders, pastors, and staff members and do it all with consistency. Such was the leading I received from the Holy Spirit and such was the path I took the first week of May 2020.

The prayer plan was formed. Classis Clerks were contacted to see if classis directories could be sent to me. And, as directories were sent, they were assigned a day each week during which every name in each directory was lifted up in prayer – from Stated Clerks to Pastors to staff members to retired pastors and their spouses. Prayer. Plans were made that allowed me to schedule visits to Classis meetings. Prayer. Classis leaders were contacted so we could establish effective lines of communication...prayer.

As the summer progressed and my relationships with Classes leaders developed, more information was shared, trust was developed, and wonderfully, the prayer support was blessed to grow to also include the names of many family members, sons, and daughters who were graduating, heading off to college, the military, or into the work force. Prayers for parents who welcomed new babies into their families. Prayers for parents who were elderly and struggling with immediate life issues. Requests were shared regarding upcoming meetings, ministry and personal plans, life and congregational issues. The support became ever so relational, and the prayers offered each week grew to be multidimensional and meaningful beyond words. That it had totally become a God Thing was apparent! It just fit, just fit with one of my favorite Scriptures, John 15:7,8. "Jesus said, 'If you abide in Me, and My words abide in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be granted. For this is to My Father's glory that you should be fruitful, thus showing yourselves to be My disciples.'" And even more, yet another Scripture was revealed within the multi-dimensional prayer outreach process, Matthew 7:21 where Jesus said, "Not everyone who says to Me, 'Lord, Lord,' will enter the Kingdom of heaven, but only he who does the will of My Father who is in heaven." As the mutual prayer support grew, it seemed that those with whom I spoke, emailed, and/or texted, had a belief that the intercessions were so much bigger than just our prayers each day and week, or their expressed needs for prayer, but the need was for the Church to totally abide in the will of God the Father, no matter what the culture demanded, or the courts, or the BCO, but doing the will of God, of loving others in the Name and Truth of Jesus took precedence over all else. What a beautiful thing to experience!

And this became even more evident when I was blessed to attend some Classis meetings last fall. I experienced unity; there was no arguing, no aggressive push back, no movement of political correctness trying to take control from the greater purpose of abiding in Christ! I watched as plans were made, positions were clarified, moments of celebration were treasured, prayers were offered, fellowship was enjoyed, and Jesus was glorified. The prayer support, treasured throughout the summer, continued into the fall, then, in mid-October, came my cancer diagnosis, the resulting surgeries, chemo and radiation treatments, endless trips to Muskegon. New priorities for time and energy were established, yet the pathway for prayer, of abiding in the ways of Christ, had been cleared, and traveled, countless times...perhaps in preparation for such a time as this. Perhaps allowing seeds of unity to be sown along that path. Seeds containing a nature of renewal, seeds that can sprout new growth in good soil nurtured by increased love and commitment to follow the ways and will of God. Seeds that will grow deep roots of responsiveness to the Word of God even as they respond to the needs of this culture. Seeds that will make possible the fruitful growth of new ways of administrating our polity and practices while still revering the Holy Scriptures, growing ideas that will lead us to find exciting and applicable ways to raise up and develop new leaders and further empower current leaders! Maybe God will grant us fresh wisdom by which we can start or revitalize churches...ways that truly touch the hearts of people for whom "church" has perhaps become just a habit, a place of social gathering, a place to be entertained for an hour or two once a week. Maybe church can be changed to become a vibrant entity that truly, powerfully impacts culture in the greatest Kingdom sense. Maybe the church can move forward with more emphasis on Kingdom unity than cultural diversity.

And, perhaps God is doing some deep reorganization in the midst of our questions, our prayers, and our plans! Maybe God is calling to us, saying, "Look to Me, first!! Seek to do My will, long to follow My plan, and do so with all your hearts, souls, minds, and strength. Honor Me, trust in Me and Me alone. Follow Me and Me alone."

Yes, indeed, so many questions, so many voices, so many possibilities that sound good...but what is best? What is truly the will of God? What does it mean to abide in the way of Christ and His words to us, to our walks and witness of faith? What does it really mean to live in obedient unity and fellowship with our Savior?

As I typed this report in the weeks after Easter, life continued to be a gentle time of healing, hours of recovery and retrospection, a time to pause and consider, to meditate and focus on the words of God rather than the reacting to the demanding cacophony created by the culture. I prayed that we will each draw closer to the Savior, abiding in Him. I prayed that with each new day we will experience a renewed, incredible passion, a burning fire in our hearts to follow in the steps of Jesus! May it be experienced deeply by us all on this Assembly Day as we follow the Way of Christ on our unified journey of Kingdom service. O that this gathering might exemplify holiness more than bureaucracy as we truly live out the way of Colossians 3:17, "And in all that you do in word or deed, do in the Name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through Him."

To God be the glory, to God be the glory, forever and ever. Amen.

ELECTION OF THE PRESIDENT

President Mik Sutton presided during the election of the president. The current vice-president, Dan Gillett, 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. Dan Gillett was elected as President of the Regional Synod of the Great Lakes on the first ballot.

EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE REPORT

Dan Gillett, 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 May 3, 2020 annual Assembly meeting, the Executive Committee met four times. A summary of each meeting is printed below. All meetings were held using Zoom video conferencing.

At the June 22, 2020 meeting, the committee:

- welcomed new members Dan Gillett (vice-president, Joel Baar (at-large), Michelle Chahine (GLCC), and Wally De La Fuente (Muskegon).
- approved the Assembly Minutes of May 4, 2020 for distribution.
- participated in a Bible Study on Mark 1:1-11 led by Dan Gillett.
- evaluated the 2020 Assembly of the Regional Synod of the Great Lakes that was convened using video conferencing on May 4, 2020.
- approved the date of Monday, May 3, 2021 for the next RSGL Assembly.
- reviewed the new edition of the RSGL Rules of Order including amendments approved by the 2020 Assembly.
- received a report from John Messer on his work as our Regional Executive including his role on the Vision 2020 Task Force.
- voted to move forward to start the process to set up Luminex at a 501(c)3.
- discussed the postponement of the 2020 General Synod.
- approved a new budget presented by the Finance Committee for the 2020/2021 Ministry Fund and 2021 Assessment of \$18.50 per confessing member (reduced from the \$20.00 approved by the annual RSGL Assembly on May 4).
- voted to hold a Special Session of the RSGL Assembly on July 13, from 7:00-8:00 p.m. using Zoom to consider the revised budget and assessment.

At the November 9, 2020 meeting, the committee:

- approved the Special RSGL Assembly Minutes of July 13, 2020.
- reviewed the Finance Committee report including an Income Statement Budget to Actual for all the synod funds for the year-to-date of 9/30/20 and the RSGL Ministry Fund 2020/2021 Ministry Fund Budget.
- received a report from John Messer outlining the implications of the Vision 2020 Process for the regional synod including plans for restructuring the synod and the appointment of a Transition Team to plan for future changes.
- approved amounts for the housing allowance for staff members Mike Gafa, Scott Lokers, John Messer, and Howard Moths following the provisions of Section 107 of the Internal Revenue Code.

- reviewed the Guiding Principles of the Synod of the Great Lakes and decided to conduct a significant review and revision of the Guiding Principles in the light of the significant changes that may be coming for the RCA. A task force was appointed to prepare recommendations for a special meeting of this committee on January 11.
- received a report on the 1 Cor 13 Project, a collaborative resource to center the health, healing, and wholeness of Black people in particular. It intends to counteract the debilitating effects of the American church's complicity in 400 years of failure to love black people. More information can be found at: <https://www.1cor13project.com>.
- appointed delegates for the 2021 General Synod. Rev. Greg Brower will serve as the regular delegate from the RSGL, and Jen Holmes Curran and Nancy Boote will serve as the women corresponding delegates.

At the January 11, 2021 special meeting, the committee:

- considered the recommendation of the task force appointed on November 9 to conduct a significant review and revision of the Guiding Principles in the light of the significant changes that may be coming for the RCA. The task force met on November 16, November 23, December 7, and December 21.
- adopted an Addendum to the RSGL Guiding Principles prepared by the task force to serve as Transition Period Guiding Principles that will expire in January of 2023 unless revised and/or renewed by the RSGL Executive Committee.

At the March 15, 2021 meeting, the committee:

- received news that Mik Sutton is taking a medical leave of absence from his role as president of the regional synod while he recovers from his radiation and chemotherapy treatments. Dan Gillett was asked to preside at the May 3, 2021 RSGL Assembly.
- received a report from John Messer covering the areas of Church Multiplication, Transition Ministry, the Luminex Group (new name), Preparing for General Synod Outcomes, Restructure of the Regional Synod, Regional Synod Finances and Budget, and the Vision 2020 Team.
- conducted a review following the Guiding Principle AP1.b.2 requirement for "monitoring of the performance of the Regional Executive and its own work as a board."
- decided to continue our Zoom prayer meetings as we did in 2020 on the third Thursday at 11:00 a.m.
- decided to forgo a formal five-year assessment of the regional synod as specified in the Guiding Principles and to engage in continuing conversation about the role of the regional synod within the RCA in response to the Vision 2020 Report.
- reviewed the newly adopted RSGL Transitional Guiding Principles as part of our commitment to the process of governance.
- noted the limitations of making decisions by Zoom (in shorter meetings) and the challenges we face with an unknown future regarding the role of the regional synod in the denomination.
- reviewed some proposals that are under consideration in response to the Vision 2020 Team Report including establishing two new regional synods (an overture under consideration by the GLCC), a proposed network called the Alliance of Reformed Churches (ARC), the God's Preferred Future for the RCA document from the General Secretary (on the RCA website), the establishment of affinity classes (including the Unity Missional Classis), and other possibilities.
- voted to affirm the 2021/2022 proposed budget and the proposed assessment of \$18.50 that will be presented to the May 3 Assembly by the Finance Committee.
- voted to affirm the 2022 Ministerial Compensation Guidelines and the 2022 Church Staff Salary and Benefit Guidelines that will be presented to the May 3 Assembly by the Finance Committee.
- reviewed a rough draft of the Nominations Report that will be presented to the May 3 RSGL Assembly, including the nomination of representatives from three classes for the RSGL Executive Committee.
- received the resignation of Joel Barr as an at-large member of the RSGL Executive Committee and voted to nominate Mike Johnson to fill his unexpired term ending in 2022.
- voted to nominate Dan Gillett as our presidential candidate following the provision of the RSGL Rules of Order.
- voted to nominate the three candidates for the office of vice-president and three alternate candidates if needed.
- voted to approve the recommendation of the RSGL Officers that the 2021 RSGL Assembly scheduled for Monday, May 3 be held using Zoom rather than an in-person meeting at the DeWitt

Ministry Center of the Michigan Regional Center. Given the continuing threat of COVID-19 and the fact that some delegates are not comfortable meeting in person, the Officers decided it would be best to switch to a Zoom meeting on May 3 from 9:00 a.m. – 12:30 p.m. starting with a delegate orientation at 8:30 a.m.

- considered the possibility of holding a special session of the regional synod sometime this summer (before General Synod in October) and/or immediately after the General Synod meeting to respond to the recommendations in the new Vision 2020 Report. The delegates to the May 3, 2021 Assembly will be asked to attend any special session held in 2021 unless otherwise designated by their classis.
- set the dates for the next two meetings of this committee: Monday, June 28, 2021 by Zoom from 9:00 – 12:30 p.m. and Monday, November 1 from 10:00 a.m. – 3:00 p.m. (hopefully in person).

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 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	Michelle Chahine (2023, 1 st term)
Holland	Deb Yurk (2022, 2 nd term) M
Muskegon	Osvaldo (Wally) De La Fuente (2023, 1 st term)
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	Joel Baar (2022, 1 st term, resigned on 2/4/21)
At-Large	Jen Holmes Curran (2023, 2 nd term) M

Three terms RSGL Executive Committee are ending on June 1, 2021. Jami Alferink is completing her first term as a representative from the Zeeland Classis. Paul DeBoer is completing an unexpired term as a representative from the Northern Michigan Classis. Suzanne Hart is completing her first term as a representative from the Southwest Michigan Classis. In addition, Joel Baar submitted his resignation as a member of the RSGL Executive Committee on February 4, 2021.

The Zeeland Classis is nominating Jami Alferink to be elected to her second term on the RSGL Executive Committee.

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 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-2

To elect Jami Alferink for a three-year term on the RSGL Executive Committee, beginning on June 1, 2021, as the representative from the Zeeland Classis. (ADOPTED)

The Northern Michigan Classis is nominating Paul DeBoer to be elected to a second term on the RSGL Executive Committee. Paul was appointed in June of 2019 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.

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 three-year term on the RSGL Executive Committee, beginning on June 1, 2021, as the representative from the Northern Michigan Classis. (ADOPTED)

The Southwest Michigan Classis is nominating Suzanne Hart to be elected to her second term on the RSGL Executive Committee.

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 was on staff at Second Reformed Church, Kalamazoo, MI as the Pastor for Transformational Ministries for three years. She is currently serving as the Transitional Pastor at Lakeland Reformed Church in Vicksburg, MI. Suzanne and Kevin have four children: Elizabeth (and Dan), Benjamin (18), Nathan (15), and Anna (11). They have three grandchildren. Suzanne enjoys being outdoors, particularly in the mountains of her home state, and near the Michigan shore, and time spent with family.

R-4

To elect Suzanne Hart for a three-year term on the RSGL Executive Committee, beginning on June 1, 2021, as the representative from the Southwest Michigan Classis. (ADOPTED)

Joel Baar submitted his resignation as an at-large member of the RSGL Executive Committee on February 4 following the vote of Fellowship Reformed Church of Hudsonville (of which he is a member, Elder, and VP of Consistory) to send a letter to Zeeland Classis outlining its intention to file a petition to withdraw from the RCA. The first term for Joel Baar expires in 2022, so we need to elect a new member for a one-year term. The RSGL Executive Committee is given the responsibility of nominating two at-large members. The

Executive Committee is nominating Mike Johnson to be elected to an unexpired term on the RSGL Executive Committee.

Mike Johnson grew up in the Cadillac Christian Reformed Church in Cadillac, Michigan. He served as a deacon before moving from the area. He and his wife Kelly became members of the Immanuel Community Reformed (Lansing) in 1990 and he has served in several roles including deacon, elder, adult Sunday School teacher (10 years) and middle school Sunday School teacher (10 years) as well as other committee work. He and Kelly raised their three sons at Immanuel, too. He worked in several different school districts as a teacher, coach, principal, and central office administrator. He retired from Grand Ledge Public Schools in 2019 after spending the last 29 years of his 40 year career in GL. He recently became an elder at ICRC and has assumed the leadership role as VP as the church transitioned between pastors. He earned his BS and MA from Central Michigan University and his PhD from MSU in 2000 although his allegiance continues to be with the Big 10 school down the road. Go Blue! Mike enjoys spending time with family and sporting activities.

R-5

To elect Mike Johnson for a one-year term on the RSGL Executive Committee, beginning on June 1, 2021, as an at-large member. (ADOPTED)

The motions in the Nominations report above were approved using a Google form.

2021 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. Dan Gillett is our current vice-president. Dan was elected as President using a Google Form.

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.

2021 Candidates for Vice-President

This year we must nominate a person who is not a minister of Word and Sacrament for the office of vice-president of the regional synod. All those who are not ministers and are serving on the RSGL Executive Committee and all those who are serving as elder delegates from the classes to this Assembly are eligible for nomination.

The RSGL Executive Committee nominates the following candidates for vice-president of the regional synod: Irv Boersen, Michelle Chahine, and Dave Mejeur.

Irv Boersen grew up near Zeeland, Michigan. He attended Zeeland High School. He retired from the City of Zeeland where he was Supervisor of Cemetery and Parks. He served 5 years on the General Synod Council (GSC) on both the Mission and Personnel Evaluation Committees. He is currently past president of the Muskegon Classis serving the past 2 years as president of classis. He also is a member of the RSGL Finance Committee and previously served on the RSGL Executive Committee and the Overtures and Judicial Business Committee (OJBC). He is married to his wife Irene and they are members of First Reformed Church in Grand Haven.

Michelle Chahine and her husband Joe have been members of Immanuel Community Reformed Church in Lansing, MI for 30 years. They have two sons, Casey, age 31 and Mitchel, age 26. Michelle is currently serving on the Regional Synod of the Great Lakes Executive Committee and the General Synod Council. Most recently she served as the Great Lakes City Classis (GLCC) President and Vice President, GLCC

Classis Leader Search Team Moderator, and RCA General Secretary Search Team Member & Communications Coordinator. She has served in many roles in her local church as Elder, Consistory Vice President, Consistory Clerk, Pastoral Search Team Chairperson, Youth Director Search Team Chairperson, Outreach Ministry Team Leader, Club Mom & Girlfriends Ministry Co-leader and other various projects and committees. She has also served as the General Synod Council Moderator and the RSGL Regional Representative to the General Synod. Prior to serving in ministry roles, she enjoyed a career in Customer Service, Operations & Project Management and served on boards for non-profit organizations: St. Vincent Catholic Charities and Lansing Area Parents' Respite Center. She graduated from Michigan State University with a Bachelor of Arts in Communication. She has a passion for strategic leadership and developing systems that support organizations and people to serve well and has a deep sensitivity for other cultures.

Dave Mejeur grew up in Kalamazoo at Centerpoint Church (formerly Third Reformed Church). He is a graduate of Kalamazoo Christian High School and Western Michigan University. He has served at Centerpoint as a high school youth group leader, Deacon, Treasurer, Chairman of the Deacons, Elder, vice-president of Consistory, and Clerk of Consistory. He has served on the Executive Committee and as vice-president of the Classis of Southwest Michigan, on the Executive Committee of the Regional Synod of the Great Lakes and is currently serving on the Overtures and Judicial Business Committee of the RSGL. He worked for the Pfizer Pharmaceutical Company for forty years until retiring in 2019. Dave is married to his wife Kris. They have three children and ten grandchildren. In his spare time he enjoys watching their grandchildren participate in sports and their school activities and also working in his woodworking shop.

General Synod Delegates

The 2021 General Synod has been postponed. The tentative plan is to hold an in-person stated session of the General Synod in October 2021. (Location and dates for the October gathering will be determined based on facility availability.)

Greg Brower is planning to serve as our regular delegate to the 2021 General Synod.

John Messer will be attending as our regional synod executive as a corresponding delegate. Jen Holmes Curran and Nancy Boote were appointed to serve as our two women corresponding delegates. The RSGL Executive Committee members were asked to recommend candidates to serve as the young adult delegate. However, given the postponement for the General Synod to October it is unlikely that we will find a youth delegate who is willing to attend.

ELECTION OF THE VICE-PRESIDENT

Irv Boersen, Michelle Chahine, and Dave Mejeur 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. The delegates voted using a Google Form. Two of the candidates received a tie vote on the first ballot. The delegates were asked to vote again for the three nominees. Following this second ballot vote, the names of Irv Boersen, Michelle Chahine were presented for a vote on the third ballot. Michelle Chahine was elected to the office of Vice-President on the third 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. He responded to a question about the organization and funding of the work of Luminex.

Looking at the past year

Over the past year we continued planning for an uncertain future. Amid the uncertainty and tension, we were determined to maintain our focus on Christ-centered ministry to our neighbors. Accomplishing that required creatively engaging with decreasing budgets and resources, but not allowing bodies, bucks, and bricks to distract us from the Gospel and reaching our neighbors with the love of Christ. As you will hear, regional staff went above and beyond to equip and encourage church leaders and congregations rather than shrinking back due to anxiety and ambiguity.

Mike Gafa poured himself out, strengthening churches through many Church Unique and God Dreams training sessions, enabling leaders and congregations to grasp God's unique purposes and calling for them.

Scott Lokers worked tirelessly to meet constant new challenges and demands for Transition Ministry. Increasing numbers of churches are recognizing the value of a transition minister and the process of equipping and encouraging the church through a transitional phase.

Bob Carlton accomplished great work with the region's new Church Multiplication Catalysts (CMCs). Through equipping retreats and encouraging our classes to consider how to start new ministries, the CMCs have become a major force for Gospel ministry and keeping us focused on the most important priorities.

Howard Moths continued to provide wisdom and expertise in all the details of working within the RCA effectively. He prepared numerous resources for clerks, church leaders and congregations to help them navigate the decision-making and transitions of the future.

Alison continued to keep everything running smoothly. She handled countless details to get people paid on time (including classes), communication accomplished flawlessly, and meetings completed with excellence. As the only staff member caring for children while simultaneously working from home, this was an extraordinary accomplishment.

Looking to the future

Our congregations and classes are faced with making decisions about how they will move into the future.

Regardless of what decision, what and where and why, there is one reality that we need to address. **There is a famine in the land.** People all around us are starving for the love of God. People everywhere are trying to fill the void in their souls with dust and stubble and things of no eternal value. We know that nothing other than the love of God through Jesus Christ will nourish the human soul. And the Church is uniquely gifted, empowered and called to meet that need. We are called to share the Bread that gives true Life with our neighbors. That's the purpose of the church; to love God and, empowered by His love, to love others with God's love. The Great Commandment: we all know that.

But, in our current reality, our ministry to our neighbors has been weakened by our focus on boundary keeping. Let me put the bottom-line up front: boundary keeping is draining our ability to love God and others. The struggles and differences about biblical interpretation, theology, and ministry practice have sharpened our focus on the boundaries between what we consider acceptable and unacceptable; between "right" and "wrong" as we define them. As necessary as defining and observing boundaries is in the Church, there is also a point at which the virtue of orthodoxy can exhibit a dark side. One author put it this way: "Christians who are rightly concerned about the purity of faith and doctrine can become so obsessed by that concern that they begin looking at each other askance, and love is set aside. Orthodoxy becomes the hallmark of 'true faith,' and love seems to be of secondary importance."

Boundary keeping is about drawing lines between us versus them; the insiders versus outsiders. Those who are right versus those who are wrong. To boundary keepers, the problem is always external to them. It's "those" people. And, although boundaries are good and necessary, the point at which keeping boundaries overtakes the need to love as Christ loved defines a church overtaken with what Earl Palmer called the Ephesus Syndrome.

Jesus made it clear: "by this all people will know that you are my disciples—that you love one another" (John 13:35). However, in Ephesus "hatred of heresy and extensive involvement in the works appropriate to faith had allowed the first fresh glow of love for God and one another to fade" (T. Scott Daniels, *Seven Deadly Spirits*, pp. 39-40). As Robert Mounce noted, "every virtue carries within itself the seeds of its own destruction." That's what was happening in Ephesus, according to Revelation (2:1-7). Their strength in fighting heresy and false prophets became a trap, diminishing their love for God and others. And that is our current reality, I believe. And, as we consider our future and our identity as the Church of Christ, we must address this reality.

The Church is the visible evidence/proof of the invisible God. "Since God so loved us, we also ought to love one another. "No one has ever seen God; but if we love one another, God lives in us and his love is made complete in us" (I John 4:11-12). The love of God poured out through Jesus Christ is lived out by his people—us; in our relationships with other Christians and with our neighbors. The very evidence of living out God's love gives us confidence for the future: "God is love. Whoever lives in love lives in God, and God in them. "This is how love is made complete among us so that we will have confidence on the day of judgment: In this world we are like Jesus" (I John 4:16-17).

In Jesus Christ, God's love met our greatest need, reconciling us to himself through Jesus' atoning sacrifice. God's "command to love is not a demand for forced intimacy or shallow sentimentality." Love is self-sacrificial. It is a command to meet the relational, physical, emotional and spiritual needs of others when we encounter them, just as Jesus taught his disciples in the parable of the Good Samaritan. So, loving our neighbor means spending our time and money to meet the needs of others. (Karen Jobes, 1, 2 and 3 John, 193-194). Christians should live in a way that consistently and intentionally responds to the needs of those

around them—"providing clean water, food, clothing, shelter, and of greatest importance, the true gospel of Jesus Christ" (Jobes, 160-161).

When we speak of God's love, we must be careful to define it as the self-sacrificing, Christ-focused concern and care for others as God intends. There is a tendency to define God's love by human concepts of love, which leads "directly to self-serving heresy, such as is often presented by popular spirituality" (Jobes, 191). So, the question I am asking is this: Are we truly representing the love of God, demonstrated through Jesus Christ, to one another and our neighbors? Or has boundary keeping diminished our love for one another and our neighbors.

Make no mistake, I believe we are trying. And I acknowledge and appreciate the efforts our congregations have made to meet needs and maintain relationships throughout the past years, and especially through the COVID tumult. But, are we really loving one another and our neighbors the best we can? Are we actually living out the love of God to the best of our ability? Faced with decisions and choices about the future and where and what and how, I just want to make sure we don't forget to ask ourselves the most important question: Are we loving God with all our heart, soul, mind and strength, and our neighbors as ourselves?

Good works and pure or right doctrine will never be adequate substitutes for that "rich relationship of mutual love shared by those who have experienced the redemptive love of God."

The Ephesian Church had forsaken its first love—their love for God. "A cooling of personal love for God inevitably results in the loss of harmonious relationships within the body of believers" (Robert Mounce, Revelation, 69-70). The spirit of the church trapped in boundary keeping becomes an ungenerous and unloving orthodoxy. The Church become can be so focused on declaring and keeping boundaries that they lose the divine spark of love that draws people to Christ.

No one was ever saved by right doctrine or good works. Only the love of God demonstrated through Jesus, poured into the souls of starving people, apart from works or doctrine, saves them. He is the Bread of Life. That's why it is so important that we examine ourselves. Yes, boundaries are important. But our love for God and others is equally important and we must not confuse boundary keeping with loving. So, we have an opportunity. We can ask God to restore us in the love he alone can pour into our hearts. We can reflect on specific attitudes or behaviors. This is important. There's a famine in the land!

Reflection: How are we doing...

Loving God with all our hearts, souls, minds and strength?

Loving our neighbors (and one another) as ourselves (sacrificially)?

Loving one another in thought, word and deed?

Following Christ in our behavior with everyone?

In what ways have we engaged in boundary keeping?

What happens to a church when boundary keeping becomes its primary purpose?

How can we continue to hold tightly to the truth of the gospel without losing the centrality of Christian love?

What do we need to do about what the Holy Spirit reveals to us?

Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord, Jesus Christ! In his great mercy, he has given us new birth into a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead. (1 Peter 1:3)

BREAK

OVERTURES AND JUDICIAL BUSINESS COMMITTEE

Dirk Weeldreyer, reporting

The RSGL Overtures and Judicial Business Committee (OJBC) met March 22, 2021 using the Zoom video conferencing software.

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. The motion was made, seconded, and carried to elect Dirk Weeldreyer as the chair. The motion was made, seconded, and carried to elect Brian Smilde as vice-chair.

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 a first reading by the May 4, 2020 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.

Before the 2020 RSGL Assembly meeting, 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.
 - d. 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 was provided for the information of the 2020 RSGL Assembly and no vote by the Assembly was necessary.)

However, since the regional synod has nothing in our current rules of order regarding electronic meetings, this committee decided to propose the following amendments in 2020 in order to remove any question in the future regarding the use of electronic meetings by the RSGL Assembly, the RSGL Executive Committee, and the Administrative Committees of the regional synod. On March 22, 2021, this committee reviewed the amendments approved by the 2020 RSGL Assembly in a first reading and is proposing their adoption by the 2021 RSGL Assembly for inclusion in the RSGL Rules of Order. (*This motion requires a two-thirds vote by the Assembly for adoption.*)

R-6

To approve the proposed amendments below for inclusion in the RSGL Rules of Order. (ADOPTED using a Zoom poll with 100% of the delegates voting in favor.)

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.

OJB COMMITTEE MEMBERS:

Dirk Weeldreyer (chair)	John Grant
Diane Maodush-Pitzer	Dave Mejeur
Leighton Seys	Brian Smilde
Howard Moths (ex-official, without vote)	

PRESENTATION ON RESTORATIVE PRACTICES AND BREAKOUT GROUPS FOR PRAYER

John Messer introduced Jen Holmes Curran who led a presentation on pursuing reconciliation. Jen introduced Restorative Practices, which are tools to help to build community and, when there has been wrongdoing, repair relationships and restore harm. They do this hard work by inviting all people impacted by a decision or conflict to speak into the process through a facilitated conversation that helps us to speak honestly and listen openly while distributing power more evenly. The church has always had conflict, from the disciples to the early church to now. Learning to steward this resource well is an important part of our ministry and witness. After Jen completed the presentation, Karla Van Otteren introduced a time of prayer that was held in 12 small groups in Zoom Breakout Rooms. After the prayer time, the delegates returned to the main meeting room. An outline of Jen's presentation was sent to the delegates following this session.

FINANCE COMMITTEE REPORT

Mike Gafa, reporting

During the past year, the Finance Committee:

- Reviewed the investment manager's report on earnings for 2020, and the current portfolio with the Synod's investment manager.
- Reviewed the financial statements for the year ended September 30, 2020.
- Updated the Minimum Salary Guidelines and Schedule for Ministers of Word and sacrament for 2022.
- Updated voluntary compensation guidelines for church staff of SGL churches for 2022.
- 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 2021-2021 (from the Executive Committee).
- Reviewed financial statements for the quarter ended December 31, 2020.
- Reviewed projections of decreased membership (and associated revenue), with significant financial impact likely to hit in FY'23.

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 1.75% increase over the 2021 guidelines. This committee recommended the following motions:

R-7

To approve the proposed 2022 Compensation Guidelines for Ministers of Word and Sacrament and recommend them to the classes within our region. (ADOPTED)

R-8

To approve the proposed 2022 Church Staff Salary and Benefits Guidelines and recommend them to the churches to be implemented on a voluntary basis. (ADOPTED)

2021-22 BUDGET

The Finance Committee has spent ample time considering, and giving input to, the formation of a Ministry Fund budget for 2021-22. The 2021-22 Ministry Fund budget assumes a 5% decrease in membership (from 34,914 members to 33,168 members).

Further, because we recognize the financial challenges our congregations are facing, along with the need to meet our GLR commitments, we are setting the assessment rate at \$18.50/member, which matches the current FY2020-21 assessment rate. This will mark the fourth consecutive year that the Great Lakes Region will have either reduced, or held, the 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 FY2021-22.

MINISTRY FUND

The 2022 proposed assessment of \$18.50 in our regional synod represents no change from 2021 and remains one of the lowest of the RCA's regional synods. This committee recommended the following motion:

R-9

To approve the 2021-2022 Ministry Fund Budget and the \$18.50 per confessing member assessment. (ADOPTED)

FINANCE COMMITTEE MEMBERS

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 38-40 in the Assembly Workbook. (*See the Appendix.*)

CLASSICAL MINUTES COMMITTEE

Ron Roden, reporting

Minutes of the seven classes within our region were submitted by the classis clerks and examined by this committee before the meeting. Ron reported that examined the minutes from all seven classes and found them to be in good order. The committee members completed feedback forms that will be sent to each classis clerk.

RESOLUTIONS/LEAVE OF ABSENCE COMMITTEE

Audrey Edewaard, reporting

The following Resolutions were recommended by this committee:

R-10

To thank Bob VanderZwaag 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. (ADOPTED)

R-11

To thank Joel Baar for his one year of service on the Executive Committee. (ADOPTED)

ANNOUNCEMENTS

Delegates were asked to complete an evaluation form for the Assembly meeting using a Google Form. The delegates were reminded that the RSGL Executive Committee will be considering the possibility of holding a special session of the regional synod sometime this summer (before General Synod in October) and/or immediately after the General Synod meeting to respond to the recommendations in the new Vision 2020 Report. The delegates to this Assembly meeting will be asked to attend any special session held in 2021 unless otherwise designated by their classis.

READING OF THE JOURNAL

In his role as stated clerk, Howard Moths read the minutes of this session by title: "The 66th Annual Session of the Synod of the Great Lakes Minutes, convened using the Zoom videoconferencing app on May 2, 2021." The Executive Committee will review and approve the minutes before publication and after that they will be available on the RSGL website.

SEATING OF THE NEW OFFICERS

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

CLOSING PRAYER

Dan Gillett 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 session was adjourned at 12:22 p.m.

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

Documents that appear in the Appendix:

Financial Reports

2022 Compensation Guidelines for Ministers of Word and Sacrament

2022 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)