

Helpful Information for Stated Clerks of Classes (Updated July 2018)

I. Introduction

The **stated clerk**, unlike the president and recording-clerk of classis, continues to function after the session has adjourned. The stated clerk is elected by classis for a specific term of office, preparing the agenda, transcribing the minutes, maintaining the files and archives, and attending to all official correspondence of classis.

An **alternate stated clerk** is also elected by each classis to function if or when the stated clerk is incapacitated or moves from the classis.

Following is an outline of responsibilities of stated clerks in cooperation with the denominational Office of Synodical Services.

II. Materials to process

Note: See the “**Quick Reference Directory**” at end of this document for helpful phone and email contact information.

A. *Classical information for the Yearbook*

1. Submit statistics with respect to your classis to the *Yearbook* Office each fall upon receipt of the *Yearbook* questionnaire—please provide the info immediately following your fall meeting.
2. Assist as needed in gathering information from the congregations within your classis and send updates to the *Yearbook* Office (see *Acts of Synod 1987*, p. 634).

B. *Notices of classical meetings*

Send public notices of classical meetings to all councils of classis and *The Banner*. Suggestions for such announcements include using *The Banner*, email notification, and bulletin announcements to publicly announce an upcoming meeting of classis.

C. *Minutes and agendas*

Please **include the Office of Synodical Services (drecker@crcna.org) in your distribution list for classis agendas and minutes**. This is the only CRCNA office you need to include—we have *new* protocols to forward the minutes to the Executive Director, Pension Office, CRC Archives, Canadian Ministries Office (Can. classes), Rev. Kathy Smith, Banner News Editor, Human Resources, and the Classis Coordinator. Classis agendas are very helpful to the synodical office, keeping us abreast of matters before the classes and enabling us to keep an accurate file of things being addressed. We would be happy to provide you with sample classis minutes as templates that are helpful to those who read and archive them.

Stated Clerks are asked to

1. Send the agenda and minutes of classis to all church councils within the classis (electronically or hard copy as determined by classis).
2. Send the complete set of materials for your agenda *and* the minutes of classical meetings to the Office of Synodical Services (**we distribute to all others for you as appropriate**).

3. Submit important historical documents to the archives at Calvin College at: crcarchives@calvin.edu or Archives of the CRC, Calvin College, 3301 Burton Street SE, Grand Rapids, MI 49546. *Note:* Classis minutes will be forwarded to other CRC ministry offices as information to better serve you.

D. Important classis information to be noted in minutes and forwarded

1. Calls accepted by ministers in the classis, transfer of ministerial credentials within classis, and appointments of commissioned pastors – notify *Yearbook* (yearbook@crcna.org) and *The Banner* (classifieds@thebanner.org).
2. Contact information for ministers processed by way of Church Order Article 8 – send to the *Yearbook* Office at yearbook@crcna.org.
3. Minister leaving a church in classis – notify *Yearbook* (yearbook@crcna.org) and Pastor Church Resources (pastorchurch@crcna.org).
4. Minister released from ministry in the CRC under Church Order Articles 14-b, 14-c, or 17-c – notify the Office of Synodical Services by email as soon as possible.
5. Separation of a pastor from a congregation – send a copy of the approved separation agreement between a pastor and a congregation to the Pastor Church Resources Office.
6. Suspension and deposition – send a notice of deposition by email to the Office of Synodical Services.

Synod has established the following rules regarding suspension and deposition involving councils and stated clerks of classes:

- a. With respect to suspension, “the minor assemblies involved . . . can judge whether publication of notice of suspension serves the best interest of the minister and of all the churches. As long as suspension of a minister awaits final disposition, publication of notice of suspension could not only prove unnecessary but also uncharitable and in violation of the ninth commandment” (*Acts of Synod 1975*, p. 19).
- b. “In the case of deposition, the stated clerk of the classis shall notify the stated clerks of all the other classes concerning the action, and these shall in turn notify each [council] within their classis” (*Acts of Synod 1972*, p. 26).
7. All retirements of ministers (such notices should **include the effective date and the ground** for each retirement) – send retirement notices to both the Ministers’ Pension Office and the Office of Synodical Services.
8. Commissioned pastor retirements or conclusion of role in position

Please note retirements of commissioned pastors in the classis minutes and send a separate communication of notice to the Office of Synodical Services for special recognition by synod.

Classis must concur with the calling church regarding **termination of service** of a person in an approved commissioned pastor position and record the action within classis minutes.

9. Synodical deputy reports
 - The **stated clerk is responsible** to forward one copy of the report of synodical deputies to the Office of Synodical Services.

- Retain a second copy for the files of classis. See the *Manual for Synodical Deputies* posted on the stated clerk web page. Always use the *updated* forms for each action with which the deputies must concur (uploaded each August).

10. Name(s) of persons nominated for or elected to all denominational boards

Submit denominational board nomination forms to the Office of Synodical Services by **November 15** as a separate communication. (Please see *Rules for Synodical Procedure*, section VI, D, 6 for rules for eligibility and term of office.)

Classis is urged by synod and the Council of Delegates to **consider gender and ethnic diversity** when presenting nominees. All nominations are processed by synod or by the Council of Delegates of the CRCNA between synods.

E. Role of Council of Delegates member at classis meeting

Many questions arose during the first year of the Council of Delegates related to the **role or status of COD members at the classis meetings**. The board wishes to communicate with the classes that COD members do not have to be a member of classis to attend the classis meeting. Please welcome COD members as a *guest* at your meetings (unless, of course, they are delegated by their council).

F. Developing/updating a classical ministry plan

Church Order Article 75 indicates that every classis shall have a ministry plan. Developing a plan for ministry is also an opportunity for a classis to explore and articulate its purpose and the potential for renewal. A Classis Renewal Advisory Team, in addition to a classis renewal consultant, are available to support your classis in exploring renewal and developing a ministry plan.

III. Certificates for classis use

A. Available on the Stated Clerk web page (www.crcna.org/StatedClerks)

- **Classical Credentials**
- **Classical Diploma** – issued for candidates who are admitted to the ministry of the Word
- **Certificate of Ordination**
- **Certificate – Colloquium Doctum**
- **Classical Certificate for Commissioned Pastor**
- **Classical Certificate for Exhorter**
- **Letter of Call for Minister of the Word – U.S. or Canada**
- **Letter of Call for Commissioned Pastor – U.S. or Canada**
- **Ecclesiastical Credential for a Minister**
- **Transfer of Supervision for a Retired Minister**

B. Available from the Office of Synodical Services

- **Certificates of Ordination** for candidates ordained to the ministry of the Word
- **Certificates of Ordination** for those entering ministry via Church Order Articles 7 and 8
- **Certificates of Ordination for Commissioned Pastor**

Enclosed are two signed copies of Certificates of Ordination and two copies for Commissioned Pastor (to be signed by stated clerk). Please let the Office of Synodical Services know if you need additional copies mailed to you.

IV. Ordination materials

Calvin Seminary M.Div. graduates are processed for candidacy by the Candidacy Committee—there is no change in the involvement of classes in the examination of candidates. There is an extensive Candidacy Committee Manual that describes the procedures to be followed for Church Order Articles 7, 8, and commissioned pastor (Article 23) ordinations. The details of Candidacy Committee procedures are available on the CRCNA website (www.crcna.org/candidacy) and at least parts of the procedure are included in the *Manual for Synodical Deputies* and the *Church Order and Its Supplements*. The primary contact person for candidacy related matters is Rev. David Koll, director of candidacy (dkoll@crcna.org).

V. Deadlines for the synodical Agenda

All overtures, appeals, and communications to synod endorsed by classis must be submitted to the executive director, addressed to synod, and sent as a **separate official communication**, signed by the stated clerk. Electronic copy should be sent to the Office of Synodical Services. (See *Rules for Synodical Procedure* section V for definitions, a list of items legally before synod, and deadlines.)

Please observe the established **deadlines for submitting overtures** to be included in the printed *Agenda for Synod*. No overtures received in the denominational office after **March 15** will be printed in the *Agenda for Synod* or considered for decision by synod, with the **exception** of overtures which deal with matters relevant to reports found in the printed *Agenda for Synod*.

Note the following decision of Synod 1988 relative to materials submitted to synod:

All information pertinent to an appeal (except for a personal appeal), overture, or report must be included in the appeal, overture, or report as adopted for printing by the committee or assembly submitting it. Documents relating to an appeal, overture, or report are to be listed as exhibits. Such documents will be listed as on file in the [denominational] office and will not be printed in the *Agenda for Synod* or the *Acts of Synod*.

Grounds:

- 1) All materials pertinent to an agenda item should be available to all delegates of synod in the printed *Agenda*.
- 2) No material is to be printed or forwarded that has not been approved by the sending committee or assembly.

VI. Organized, emerging, and multisite churches

A. Organized churches

Guidelines for consideration for a church to become *organized* are found in Church Order Article 38-b and its Supplement. The approval of classis is required at which time the following are considered:

1. Ordinarily the congregation shall have been in existence at least three years.
2. The congregation shall include a sufficient number of members who meet the biblical requirements for church office and are committed to use their personal and spiritual gifts in proving leadership and support to the congregation and its ministry.
3. The congregation exercises financial stewardship for the continuing development and effectiveness of its ministry and, prior to organization, provides the classis with financial information that reflects its capacity and commitment toward financial self-support, including personnel expenses and classical and denominational ministry shares.

4. The community in which the congregation is located offers the potential for continuing ministry, and the congregation gives evidence of its continuing commitment to fulfill the great commission with the resources and opportunities God gives (*Acts of Synod 2005*, pp. 762-63).

B. Emerging churches

Churches that do not have their own council and are under the care of a supervising council (or “parent church”) are designated as *emerging churches*. These churches may eventually become organized (or remain emerging).

Under Article 38 of the *Manual of Christian Reformed Church Government*, the recognition of emerging congregations is addressed. The care of an emerging church “involves holding of memberships, the supervision of worship services, the administration of the sacraments, and Christian discipline.” Also, emerging churches are “entitled to the love and care of the denomination through the ministrations of a neighboring council. The classis designates the council that is to care for such groups of believers.”

C. Multisite churches

A *multisite church* designation has been implemented to describe a *third* type of congregation. A multisite church is as an established church that consists of two or more member congregations served and governed by one church council with **no intent for the additional congregation(s) to become organized** separately (unlike an emerging church).

Note: Each congregation of the multisite church has a separate worship and differentiated ministry. This may include congregations meeting at different locations at the same meeting time, same address at different meeting times, or both. There may be differentiated congregational leadership, pastoral care, outreach, finances, and so forth.

VII. Ministers’ pension plan rule

We ask that you take note of the administrative rule that affects ministers who are released from service to a congregation (Church Order Article 17) and those who may be granted a temporary leave of absence (Church Order Article 16). Please make sure that your classis is aware of the following rule whenever it is involved in Article 16 or 17 decisions.

The Ministers’ Pension Plan rule is as follows:

Pastors whose service to an organized church is terminated or interrupted under Articles 16 or 17 of the Church Order will be granted credited service in the ministers’ pension plan only if church assessments are paid based on the number of professing members age 18 and older of his/her church, or, if greater, the direct costs of the pastor’s participation in the plans. This principle also shall apply when ministers serve organized churches in stated supply or any other temporary capacity for which credited service in the plan would otherwise be granted.

Quick Reference Directory

Christian Reformed Church in North America
1700 28th St. SE
Grand Rapids, MI 49508

Office of Synodical Services

Phone: 616-224-0827 or 800-272-5125, ext. 2827

Fax: 616-224-5895

Email: drecker@crcna.org

Classis Renewal Consultant

Phone: 800-730-3490, ext.4563

Email: apostma@crcna.org

Yearbook Office

Phone: 616-224-0833 or 800-272-5125, ext. 2833

Email: yearbook@crcna.org

Ministers' Pension Office

Phone: 616-224-0722 or 877-279-9994, ext. 2722

Email: pension@crcna.org

Office of Pastor Church Resources

Phone: 877-279-9994, ext. 2152

Email: cvanniejenhuis@crcna.org

Candidacy Office

Phone: 616-224-0768 or 800-272-5125, ext. 2768

Email: dkoll@crcna.org

CRC Archives

c/o Calvin College

3301 Burton Street SE

Grand Rapids, MI 49546

Phone: 616-526-6916

Email: crcarchives@calvin.edu

Banner Classifieds

Email: classifieds@thebanner.org

Banner News Editor

Email: news@thebanner.org