**Helpful Information for Stated Clerks of Classes**

(Updated August 2023)

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# Introduction

The **stated clerk**, unlike the president and recording-clerk of classis in most cases, continues to function after the classis meeting 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 unable to carry out his/her duties or moves from the classis.

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

# Materials to process

* 1. *Classical information for the* Yearbook
     1. Submit classis statistics to the *Yearbook* Office in response to the *Yearbook* questionnaire—please complete and return immediately following your fall meeting.
     2. Assist as needed in gathering information from congregations within your classis and send any updates as you’re made aware of to the *Yearbook* Office (see *Acts of Synod 1987*, p. 634).
  2. *Notices of classical meetings*

Send public notices of classical meetings to all councils of classis, the Synodical Services Office, and *The Banner*. You may want to use email notification, and bulletin announcements, in addition to *The Banner* announcement.

* 1. *Minutes and agendas*

Please **include the Yearbook Office (**yearbook@crcna.org**) in your distribution list for classis agendas and minutes**. This is the only CRCNA office you need to include—we have protocols in place to forward the minutes to the General Secretary, Director of Synodical Services, Pension Office, CRC Archives, Canadian Ministries Office (Can. classes), Rev. Kathy Smith, *Banner* News Editor, and Human Resources. Classis agendas are very helpful to the synodical office, keeping us abreast of matters before the classes and enabling us to keep an accurate record of matters 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.

* 1. Stated Clerks are asked to:
     1. Send the agenda and minutes of classis to all church councils within the classis, in addition to the Yearbook Office (digitally, made available on a site with notice of postings, or in printed copy as determined by classis).
     2. Submit important historical documents to the archives at Calvin University at: crcarchives@calvin.edu or Archives of the CRC, Calvin University, 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.
  2. *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 new 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 (scottdevries@crcna.org) 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 (pastorchurch@crcna.org).
     6. Suspension and deposition – send a notice of deposition by email to the Office of Synodical Services (scottdevries@crcna.org).

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

* + - 1. 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).
      2. “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).
    1. 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 Yearbook Office.
    2. Commissioned pastor examinations, retirements, or conclusion of role in position. With the record of an examination of a commissioned pastor please include in the classis minutes confirmation that the respective **position description was previously approved by classis** with the concurrence of synodical deputies. This is an important step to ensure Commissioned Pastors are being called to an *approved* position.
    3. **Please note *retirements* of commissioned pastors *and* special notation if granted title of *commissioned pastor emeritus*** in the classis minutes with the effective date and send a separate communication of notice to the Yearbook Office for special recognition by synod.
    4. Classis must concur with the calling church regarding **termination of service** of a person in an approved commissioned pastor position and record the action and effective date within classis minutes.
    5. Synodical deputy reports
       1. The **stated clerk is responsible** for forwarding a copy of the report of synodical deputies to the Office of Synodical Services.
       2. Retain a copy for the files of classis. See the [*Manual for Synodical Deputies*](https://docs.google.com/document/d/1U3ypqtTw0onVnz6VqBQZB0D3N5nWlkx6AF-1skHtuyI/edit#heading=h.92flq3v50phm). Always use the *updated* synodical deputy forms for each action with which the deputies must concur (updated in August to reflect decisions of synod).
    6. Name(s) of persons nominated for or elected to all denominational boards
       1. Submit denominational board nomination forms to the Office of Synodical Services **by November 15** as a separate communication. A separate packet is sent to the respective classes asked to nominate in a given year for board positions. (See *Rules for Synodical Procedure*, section VI, D, 6 for rules for eligibility and term of office: crcna.org/SynodResources.)
       2. Classis is urged by synod and the Council of Delegates to **consider gender and ethnic diversity** when presenting nominees to reflect the beautiful diversity within our churches! All nominations are processed by synod, or the Council of Delegates in the interim of synod.
  1. *Role of Council of Delegates member at classis meeting*

Council of Delegates (COD) members do not have to be a delegate to classis to attend the classis meeting—they are encouraged to attend their classis meetings. Please welcome your COD member whether they come as a guest or delegate to the classis meeting.

* 1. *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 your classis to explore and articulate its purpose and the potential for renewal.

# **Certificates for classis use**

* 1. *Available on the Stated Clerk webpage (www.crcna.org/StatedClerks)* 
     1. Classical Credentials
     2. Classical Diploma – issued for candidates who are admitted to the ministry of the Word
     3. Certificate of Ordination
     4. Certificate of Reordination
     5. Certificate – Colloquium Doctum
     6. Classical Certificate for Commissioned Pastor
     7. Classical Certificate for Exhorter
     8. Letter of Call for Minister of the Word – U.S. or Canada
     9. Letter of Call for Commissioned Pastor – U.S. or Canada
     10. Ecclesiastical Credential for a Minister
     11. Ecclesiastical Credential for a Minister in Same Classis
     12. Transfer of Supervision for a Released Minister in the Same Classis
     13. Transfer of Supervision for a Released Minister to New Church and Classis
     14. Transfer of Supervision for a Retired Minister
     15. Transfer of Supervision for a Commissioned Pastor Emeritus
     16. Certificate of Retirement
  2. *Available from the Office of Synodical Services.* [Order here](https://docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLSfVaWz4XkSa4OCYBi3kgCfe0GaNP628zvDjiHIQylw3gP4ptw/viewform).
     1. **Certificates of Ordination** (tri-fold card) for candidates ordained to the ministry of the Word.
     2. **Certificates of Ordination** (tri-fold card) for those entering ministry via Church Order Articles 7 and 8
     3. **Certificates of Ordination for Commissioned Pastor** (tri-fold card)

# 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 and 8, and a Commissioned Pastor Handbook for commissioned pastor

ordinations (Articles 23-24). The details of Candidacy Committee procedures are available on the CRCNA website (www.crcna.org/candidacy) and at least parts of the procedures 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. Susan LaClear, director of candidacy (slaclear@crcna.org).

# Deadlines **for Credentials for Synod and the synodical *Agenda***

Please begin dialogue at classis well in advance of the deadline regarding appointment of **delegates to synod**. Synod 2019 encouraged classes to include at least one ethnic or one woman delegate in the classis delegation to synod. Synod 2023 decided that each classis shall *ordinarily* delegate one minister, one elder, one deacon, and one other officebearer to synod. A *classis may send no more than two delegates bearing the same office.*

The [**Credentials for Synod**](https://forms.gle/LjUvdLDFgihX4RbB9)are due to the Synodical Services Office by **March 15**. Because of the changes made by Synod 2023 and in order to expedite the completing and submitting of these forms, a new Google form is being introduced for 2024. In addition to the credential form filled out by the Stated Clerk, don’t forget to share the “[Delegate Information Forms](https://forms.gle/M2t7jsUxHi23aNky9)” provided by the stated clerk to the synod delegates. These are also due to the synodical office by the **March 15** deadline. (Please note that each year we spend many hours emailing and calling delegates who have not submitted their forms. This puts a lot of stress on our staff and significantly slows down the preparation of the *Agenda for Synod* and other synod planning. Any encouragement you can give to delegates to submit their form in a timely manner would be much appreciated.)

All overtures, appeals, and communications to synod adopted by classis must be submitted to the General Secretary, 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 *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 that deal with matters relevant to reports found in the *Agenda for Synod*, usually available in early April.

# Organized**, emerging, and multisite churches**

* 1. *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 providing 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).
   1. *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.”

* 1. *Multisite churches*

A *multisite church* designation has been implemented to describe a *third* type of congregation. A multisite church is 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.

# **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**

Synodical Services Office/Office of General Secretary

Christian Reformed Church in North America

1700 28th St. SE

Grand Rapids, MI 49508

*Office of Synodical Services*

Phone: 616-224-0827

Email: scottdevries@crcna.org

synod@crcna.org

*Yearbook Office*

Phone: 616-224-0833

Email: yearbook@crcna.org

*Ministers’ Pension Office*

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

Email: pension@crcna.org

*Thrive - Pastor & Church Support*

Phone: 877-279-9994, ext. 2678

Email: sbaker@crcna.org

*Candidacy Office*

Phone: 616-224-0768

Email: slaclear@crcna.org

*CRC Archives*

c/o Calvin University

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