December 3, 2020

Dear Stated Clerks of Classes:

May you experience *hope* of the Advent Season—the promise of a Savior!

The Synodical Services Office has been making preparations for the meeting of Synod 2021, scheduled to meet on the campus of Dordt University in Sioux Center, Iowa, convening on Friday morning, June 11 through Thursday afternoon, June 17. Because of the uncertainties of the COVID-19 pandemic, our office has been in conversations with key persons to consider all options in the event that synod is unable to meet in person.

What should your classis do with regard to planning for synod at this time (all documents are posted at [www.crcna.org/StatedClerks](http://www.crcna.org/StatedClerks))?

1. Submit any **overtures and communications for Synod 2021** adopted by classis to the Executive Director and Synodical Services Office (executive-director@crcna.org and drecker@crcna.org) **by the March 15 deadline**. Review the document titled “Classifications of Materials Legally before Synod.” Please share this document at your next classis meeting to assist member churches with the Rules for submitting overtures and communications. Please know that no matter the decision regarding the meeting of synod, overtures and communications in response to matters in the *Agenda for Synod 2021* may still be submitted—as quickly as possible after the meeting of classis to allow for proper processing.

2. Appoint classis **delegates to Synod 2021** and forward the completed “Credentials for Synod” to the Synodical Services Office **by the March 15 deadline**.

 Please **communicate with potential delegates** that synod (1) may meet in-person (dependent upon a vaccine readily available and the opening of national/state borders) and (2) there is a possibility that synod will meet virtually and, thus, requires access to the Internet and a flexible schedule (e.g., officer elections held in late spring). (3) There is also the possibility that synod may be cancelled as was the case in 2020. However, it is too early to make a decision at this time regarding the safe meeting of synod. The Program Committee (officers of Synod 2019) and the Council of Delegates will decide on the meeting and format of synod by mid-March. We will inform you as soon as a decision is made. This may affect what is included in synod’s agenda—also to be communicated as soon as a decision is made.

 Please proceed with the normal process of delegating four persons to synod: one minister of the Word, one elder, one deacon, and one *other* officebearer (as well as an alternate for each delegate). Please give careful consideration to the decision of Synod 2019 encouraging that “each classis **include at least one woman *or* one ethnic minority person** in its delegation” (*Acts of Synod 2019*, pp. 814-15). Synod 2019 also encourages classes “to send one or more delegates to synod for two consecutive years, if possible, to build continuity from synod to synod (*Acts of Synod 2019*, pp. 809-10).

Please take note of the following steps for meeting synod guidelines for synod delegates and materials to be legally before synod:

* Stated clerks, please complete and return the **“Credentials for Synod”** form as soon as possible following the classis meeting—include **full** **names** **of** **all delegates to synod and their alternates**, as well as the mailing address and phone contact for elders and deacons—and send to the Synodical Services Office **by the March 15 deadline**. Indicate on the Credentials for Synod whether interpretation is needed for the delegates appointed or other special comments. Who is eligible to serve as a delegate? See the following . . .
* Synod 2011 adopted the following to ensure the **inclusion of disabled and nondisabled persons alike** at synod: “that future meetings of synod provide . . . reasonable accommodations . . . to all participants, including but not limited to people with known hearing impairments, sight impairments, and mobility impairments” (*Acts of Synod 2011*, pp. 817-18). The spring registration process will provide opportunity for delegates to share with us how we can make their experience more meaningful.
* **Ministers of the Word** serving the local congregation, as well as serving in specialized ministry (unless classis rules prevent it) **qualify** to serve as minister delegates. Retired ministers of the Word should be serving in a specialized ministry to be delegated as a minister delegate (e.g., chaplaincy, transitional pastor). **RCA pastors** called as ministers of the Word to serve CRC congregations *are eligible* to serve as delegates (see Church Order Supplement, Article 8, D, 10).
* **Elder and deacon** delegates must be ordained in their respective offices at the time of synod (ministers should not be appointed to serve as elders or deacons unless serving in the office of elder or deacon at the time of synod).
* “**Commissioned pastors serving as a solo pastor** of an organized congregation may be sent as a ministerial delegate to synod and nominated to serve in other denominational functions where a person must normally be a minister of the Word. **Commissioned pastors serving in emerging churches and associate staff positions** may be delegated as elder delegates to synod and nominated to serve in other denominational functions where a person must normally be an elder” (see Church Order Supplement, Article 45).
* Ask all synod delegates and alternates appointed to complete the **Delegate to Synod Information form** *online* at [www.crcna.org/Synod](http://www.crcna.org/Synod) or share this [direct link to the form](https://docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLSf3LRu5yqhZyNkUIdTV7_qk_SerzuAZ9ezyc4pVeyzrf3BIJw/viewform). Provide the link to the Delegate to Synod Information form to each delegate *and* alternate delegate. The deadline for completing the form is **March 15** or earlier.
* Share the **“What to Expect as a Delegate to Synod”** with your delegates.
* We want to encourage classis to invite recent or former synod delegates to mentor/contact first-time delegates to help them prepare. Having someone to share personal experience at synod is invaluable!
* To be “good stewards” of our resources, please share contact information among your delegation and encourage them to begin considering car pools to synod if driving from a distance.

Submit any **overtures, appeals, and communications** adopted by classis to the Executive Director of the CRCNA and the Synodical Services Office as soon as possible but **no later than the March 15 deadline**. Each overture, appeal, or communication should be addressed to synod and each sent by way of a **separate official communication** over the signature of the stated clerk of classis. All information pertinent to an appeal (except for a personal appeal), overture, or communication should be included in the document as adopted by the assembly that is submitting it. (**Send to** executive-director@crcna.org and drecker@crcna.org.) You will receive an acknowledgement of receipt of your submission.

Finally, please send all **notices of retirement of ministers and commissioned pastors**, changes of ministerial and commissioned pastor status, and reports of synodical deputy actions taken at your classis meetings to the Synodical Services Office **no later than May 17** to be included on synod’s agenda.

For your convenience and easy access, refer to the Stated Clerk webpage at [www.crcna.org/StatedClerks](http://www.crcna.org/StatedClerks) to access documents mentioned within this correspondence. We are very grateful for your assistance to the Synodical Services Office in preparing for our annual synod. It is a privilege to serve with you! Please call me if you have a question regarding delegates to synod or matters to be considered by synod (616-224-0827).

Gratefully,



Dee Recker

Director of Synodical Services

Enc.: Credentials for Synod form

 Preparation of the Credentials for Synod and the Delegate Information forms

 Delegate to Synod 2021 Information form

 What to Expect as a Delegate to Synod (FAQs)

 Classifications of Materials Legally Before Synod