

THE DELEGATE ORIENTATION

Classis Grand Rapids South





**SO YOU GET TO
GO TO A CLASSIS
MEETING!**

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If you're reading this, it means that you've been selected by your council to attend a Classis meeting of Classis Grand Rapids South. It might be your first meeting or maybe you haven't been at Classis in a while but we want you to have an understanding of what happens at a Classis meeting and how you might participate in a meaningful way. We hope that this will be an opportunity for you to be inspired by God's work in other churches and to meet other church leaders.

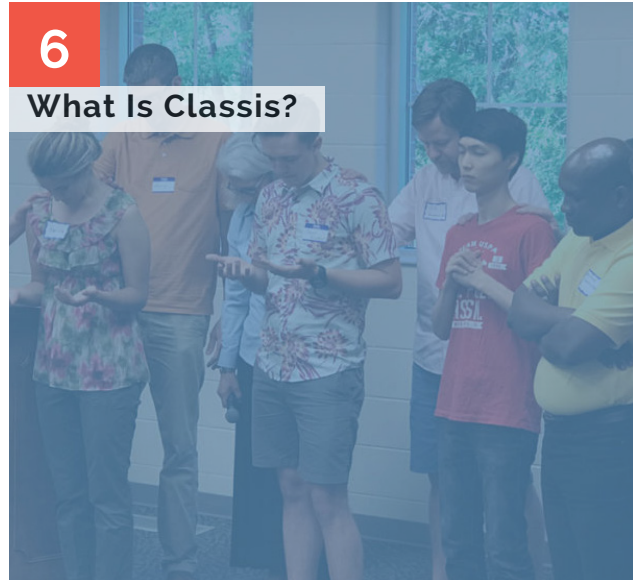
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HOW DO I PREPARE FOR A CLASSIS MEETING?

We want to start with what we think might be the most important question on your mind (other than if there's food at the meeting—by the way, there usually is food at our meetings—at least cookies but sometimes a whole meal).

PRAY

Spend some time in prayer. Pray for God to help you understand what's going on, pray for Classis—that we make wise decisions and pray for God's Kingdom to come.

READ

If you take time to read through this orientation page, we think it would help you get an idea of how Classis is structured and how a Classis meeting is work.

What is expected of you in terms of getting ready for a Classis meeting?

SCAN

If you don't have time to read everything in this packet, please scan the section entitled: What Happens at a Classis Meeting (pages 14 & 15).

REPORTS

You'll probably get some reports before you get to Classis. It would be great if you could read

through those and understand them as best you can.

PRINT

If you like to work from a hard copy, print out a copy of the agenda and all reports. If you don't have a printer, there will be several printed copies of the material available at the meeting.

COMPUTER

If you'd rather work from your computer, many of our churches have Wi-Fi available. The Stated Clerk will let your pastor know if WI-FI will be available.





What Is A Classis?

A Classis in the Christian Reformed Denomination is a group of congregations who are associated together for the purpose of helping each other with their ministries and outreach programs. Churches in a classis are generally in the same geographical area.

There are 48 classes in the CRC, 11 in Canada and 36 in the United States, and one with congregations on both sides of the border. There are five Classes that cover the Grand Rapids area: Classis Grandville; Classis Grand Rapids North, Classis Grand Rapids East, Classis Thornapple and Classis Grand Rapids South.



What Is Classis Grand Rapids South?

Classis Grand Rapids South is a group of Christian Reformed churches who are committed to: bringing honor and glory to God, making and growing disciples for Jesus Christ, and fostering a sense of mutual understanding and community among our congregations.

Classis Grand Rapids South includes 15 congregations and covers an area of Grand Rapids stretching from our Northern most congregation in downtown Grand Rapids to the Southern-most congregation in Wayland Michigan. Our Classis includes churches ministering in a variety of settings—from urban settings to rural settings (see the map below). We also vary in size—from churches with 75 members to a church with over 1,800 members! Even though we vary quite a bit, there is one thing that binds us together—our faith in Jesus Christ. We may have many faces, but we share one faith.

WHAT DOES CLASSIS DO?

WE WORK TOGETHER AND SUPPORT EACH OTHER.

We celebrate with, pray for, cry with each other when we are able to do so. We also partner together in ministry when it is helpful.

Teams that help lead us in this area: Established Church Development, Spiritual Growth Team, Church Visitors, New Church Development, Classiscal Ministry Leadership Team, Diaconal Ministries Team.

WE KEEP EACH OTHER ON TRACK

We hold each other accountable to stick to the historic Christian faith in our church's teaching and actions.

Teams that help lead us in this area: Church Counselors, Examiners, Single Focus Teams

WE CONNECT WITH OUR DENOMINATION

Our Classis is an essential link between our local congregations and our denominational ministries and agencies.

Teams that help lead us in this area: Board of Delegates Representative, Calvin college and Seminary, World Renew, Resonate Global Missions.

LOCATIONS OF OUR CHURCHES



Alger Park CRC

2655 Eastern Ave SE Grand Rapids,
MI 49507

Community CRC

150 Burt St SE, Wyoming, MI 49548

Covenant CRC

7171 Willard Ave SE Grand Rapids,
MI 49548

Cutlerville East CRC

501 68th St. SE Grand Rapids, MI 49548

Discovery CRC

7245 Eastern Ave SE, Cutlerville, MI,
49508

First Cutlerville CRC

1425 68th Street SW, Byron Center MI
49315

Hillside Community CRC

1440 68th Street SE Grand Rapids, MI
49508

Ideal Park CRC

320—56th St. SW. Wyoming, MI 49548

inSpirit CRC

870 74th Street, Suite A
Byron Center, MI 49315

LaGrave Avenue CRC

107 LaGrave Ave. SE
Grand Rapids, MI 49503

Moline CRC

4341 Chappell / PO Box 158
Moline MI, 49335

Providence CRC

7730 Eastern Avenue SE
Grand Rapids, MI 49508

Vietnamese Reformed Church

1881 52nd St SE Kentwood, Michigan

Wayland CRC

303 E. Elm, Wayland, MI 49348

OUR MINISTRY TEAMS



"The authority by which the Christian leader leads is not power but love, not force but example, not coercion but reasoned persuasion. Leaders have power, but power is safe only in the hands of those who humble themselves to serve."

John Stott

As a collection of churches we need servant leaders who will help us keep moving forward in a healthy, God-honoring way. Classis Grand Rapids South enjoys having several men and women who serve in a variety of roles to help us do that. Many serve on teams and some serve in an individual capacity. If you desire to know actual names of leaders who serve us you can visit: onefaithmanyfaces.org/servants

CLASSICAL MINISTRIES COMMITTEE

CMC



This team is made up of representatives from various team and seeks to coordinate the overall vision and ministry work of Classis.

CLASSICAL INTERMIN COMMITTEE

CIC



This team focuses on helping already existing churches to grow healthier in every way—Worship, Outreach, Pastoral Care, Administration and Spiritual Growth.

ESTABLISHED CHURCH COMMITTEE

ECC



This team is made up of the Stated Clerk, the two Co-chairs of Classis and the chairperson of the Committee. This group does the administrative work of Classis—handling ministerial credentials and coordinating our Classis meetings (and making sure the right people are there).

DIACONAL COMMITTEE

DC



This team serves Classis by enhancing the work of classis deacons through providing opportunities and resources for ministry, outreach, encouragement, education, training, and support.

NEW CHURCH DEVELOPMENT

NCD



This team focuses on helping our churches—new and established—to grow spiritually, primarily through the ministry of prayer.

SPIRITUAL GROWTH & PRAYER COMMITTEE

SGPC



This team focuses on new and emerging ministries and churches in our Classis. Since it is extremely difficult for one church to have the needed resources to plant a church, this team helps our churches work together to plant new ministries.

CLASSICAL MINISTRY LEADERSHIP TEAM

CMLT



This team provides support to students who are seeking to enter full-time ministry. This team makes recommendations to Classis about financial support for students but also meets with students to support them while they are in school.

CLASSICAL FINANCIAL COMMITTEE

CFC



These pastors check in with churches to see how things are going and to offer support if needed. (Supporting each other)

CHURCH VISITORS

CV



This team is responsible to oversee the work of the treasurer and to manage the finances of Classis. They present the budget at our October meeting.

Individuals Who Serve Us

Co-Chairs of Classis: Classis GR South has pastors who serve on a rotating basis as the chairpersons of Classis.

Church Counselors: When a church is without a pastor, the Classis appoints a Church Counselor to help them in their search process and to make sure the church follows correct procedure

Individuals appointed to examine candidates for ministry (Commissioned or ordained): When a church is calling someone to a ministry position and wants that person to be commissioned or ordained, the Classis plays a role in helping to evaluate if that individual is qualified for the ministry to which he or she is called.

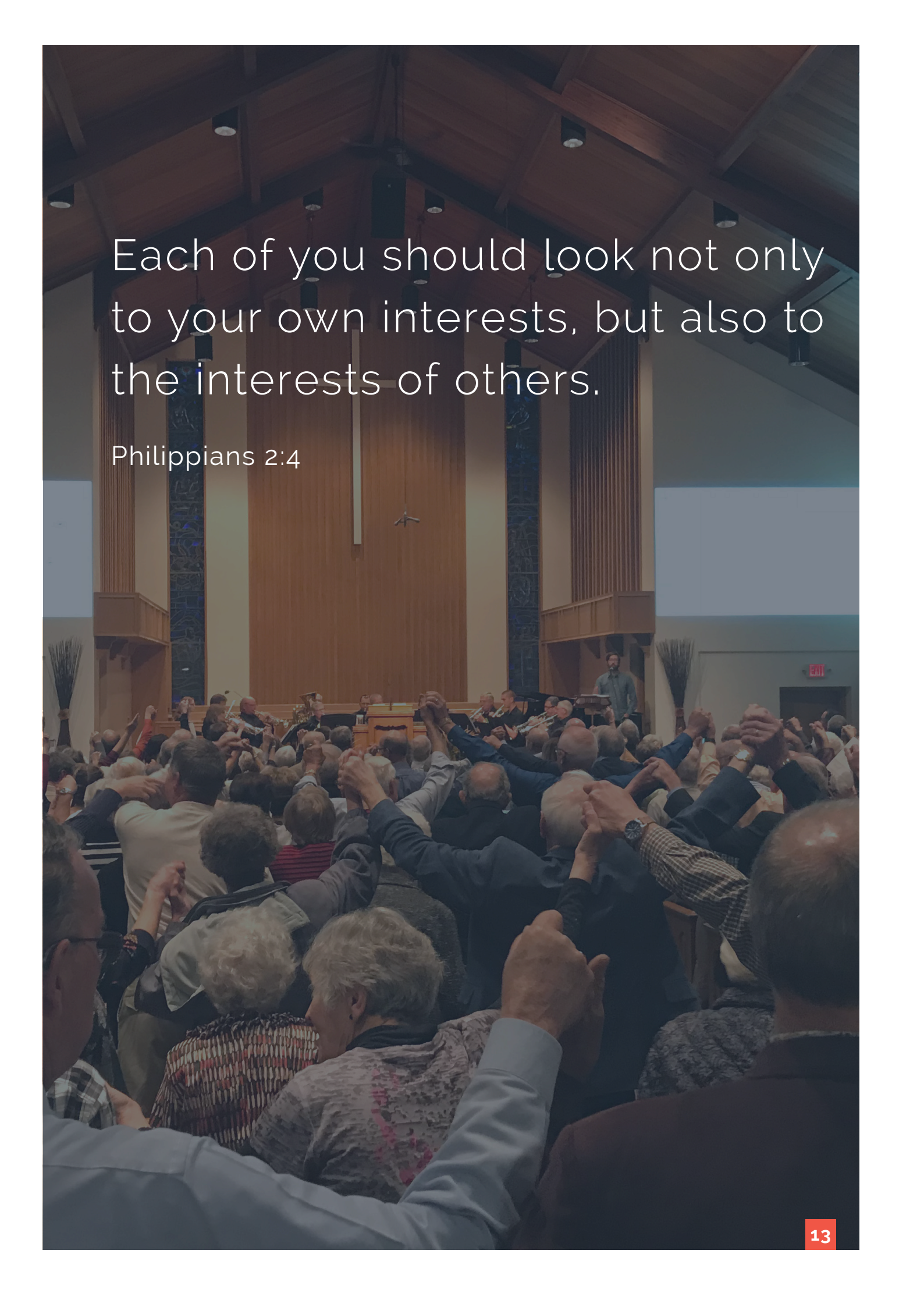
There are several individuals who are paid by Classis to help us in our work together:

Prayer Coordinator: This person helps us to engage in and support the work of prayer in our congregations and as a Classis

Treasurer: This person pays the bills and balances the books

Communications Coordinator: This person helps us communicate with each other and with our community. The Communications Coordinator oversees our online presence, general communication and works closely with the Classical Ministries Team.

Stated Clerk: This person handles the paperwork for the classis—taking minutes, receiving communication, passing on communication from denominational ministries and agencies, etc.

A photograph of a church interior during a service. The congregation, seen from behind, has their hands raised in prayer. The sanctuary features a high, vaulted wooden ceiling with exposed beams and modern lighting. The front of the church has a large wooden altar area with a man standing at a podium. Stained glass windows are visible on the sides of the altar.

Each of you should look not only
to your own interests, but also to
the interests of others.

Philippians 2:4

WHAT HAPPENS AT A CLASSIS MEETING?

Classis usually meets three times a year. There are two meetings that happen at the same time each year—the third Thursday of January and May. Depending on the amount of material needed to be dealt with the meetings might start at 4 pm or later, though occasionally we have an all day meeting. There is also often a meeting in the fall of the year. The date is a bit more flexible.

Every church in the Classis sends a pastor, an elder and a deacon.



A classis meeting has five parts: Gathering Together. Old Business. New Business. Reports. Departing.

1. We Gather Together (Officially)

You might think of our gathering together as having two parts.

We want to gather as brothers and sisters in Christ who care for each other and for our churches. For this reason we will have conversations together and will open with a time of worship and prayer. We are a family gathering.

We also gather together as an "official" group to do the business of the Classis. Since Classis is made up of different delegates at every meeting, we need to make sure we know who is representing what churches and we must agree that everyone is recognized as belonging so we can conduct official business. This part of gathering together can feel a bit formal—but it's essential for us to do this.

Here is how we accomplish those two things:

- Arrival—delegates arrive, get name tags, pick up any additional or new reports, sign the Covenant for Officebearers if they haven't already done so and greet fellow delegates
- Opening Worship/Devotions/Prayer
- Officially "constituting" Classis - Roll Call of churches and delegates. If a church forgot their credentials a motion is made to "seat" the delegates from that church
- Appointment of Committees - We always need a committee to take a look at the credentials to see if a church has written down anything they want to bring to Classis. At some meetings we need a team to count ballots or do another activity.

2. Old Business

Sometimes there are matters that did not get finished at a previous meeting. They are often dealt with first. If there is old business, the chair of Classis will seek to provide sufficient background to whatever is being dealt with so all can participate in discussions.

3. New Business

These are going to be matters that we need to deal with together that fall outside of our normal committees or that need to have some special attention. Matters that fall under new business might be:

- The examination of a person who is going to be ordained or commissioned.
- Dealing with a challenge that a church is facing—it might be that a church and a pastor are struggling in their relationship or a church might be trying to figure out if they need to close their doors.
- Dealing with an opportunity that is available to us as a Classis—maybe a conference that is coming up or a new church that is starting.

4. Reports

These are going to be matters that we need to deal with together that fall outside of our normal committees or that need to have some special attention.

Reports from Classical Support Ministry Individuals and Teams:

- Stated Clerk—the stated clerk reports on his or her activities since the last meeting of Classis. The report will often talk about correspondence received or sent and other such matters. **As a Classis we will vote to approve the work of the Stated Clerk.**
- Classical Interim Committee—The Interim Committee does administrative work on behalf of Classis. This report includes matters such as accepting and sending ministerial credentials,

following up on any assignments given to the Interim Committee by Classis, and providing updates on any Classical level ministry position (E.G. Regional Pastor).

- Treasurer—The treasurer will provide a written report regarding the finances of Classis.

- Report of the Committee to Examine Credentials

Reports from the Ministry Teams and individuals of Classis

- Established Church Development
- Spiritual Growth and Prayer
- Diaconal Ministries
- Ministry Leadership Team
- Church Visitors
- Church Counselors
- Prayer Coordinator
- Communications Coordinator

Reports related to our relationship with the denomination

- Report of the delegate to the Council of Delegates

5. We Depart

It's important that we leave well—affirming and supporting each other, even if we may have disagreed during a meeting.

- We say thanks to the host church
- We agree to our next meeting date
- We close in prayer
- We chat as we go



WHO MAY SPEAK AT CLASSIS?

Any of the delegates are welcome to speak to any of the issues Classis is dealing with. One of the challenges of Classis is that many delegates only attend one or two meetings during their time on the Council of their church. This makes it hard for delegates to feel comfortable understanding what's going on or feeling they might have something to contribute. PLEASE—don't be afraid

to speak up or ask questions. We are the church TOGETHER!!

At times someone who is not a delegate to Classis is "given the floor" (allowed to speak at Classis). Most often when someone who is not a delegate speaks at Classis it is to provide information for Classis, not to speak for or against anything Classis is dealing with.



HOW ARE DECISIONS MADE?

Classis is run like many other meetings (except we probably pray more!). We follow Robert's Rules of Order. Robert's Rules of Order are rules that help us keep our discussions fair and focused. They help facilitate our decisions as a group. Kindness and consideration of others are essential as we discuss matters—especially when we feel passionate about them.

If you are not familiar with Robert's Rules of Order, we invite you to spend some time at this website: rulesonline.com

THE OFFICIAL CHEAT SHEET FOR CLASSIS GRAND RAPIDS SOUTH

- **CIC:** Classical Interim Committee
- **Church Counselor:** When a church is without a pastor, classis provides a classical counselor from outside the congregation to advise the church in all matters pertaining to the calling of a new pastor.
- **Church Visitor:** Appointed by classis, church visitors are typically two-person teams that connect with a set number of churches within the classis on a regular basis. Churches are also welcome to call upon church visitors for advice should problems arise. The church visitors are expected to provide written reports of their work to classis.
- **Church Order:** A document that shows how our congregations have agreed to live together and organize ourselves. It is divided into 86 "Articles" that describe the role of individual churches, Councils, Classes, and Synod.
- **Classical Interim Committee:** Made up of the Stated Clerk, the Co-chairs of Classis and the chair of this team, this group supports Classis by doing much of the administrative work of Classis
- **Council of Delegates (COD):** is the governing board of the Christian Reformed Church. As an ecclesiastical governance entity serving in the interim of synod (highest authority), the COD provides governance by means of the authority delegated to it by synod and with its synodically elected membership representing classes or serving in at-large capacities.
- **Covenant for Officebearers:** This document is signed by all delegates to Classis, signifying their agreement with the official creeds and confessions of the church.
- **Credentials:** These are the official papers that a church provides naming the delegates from that church and any matters the church wants to discuss at Classis
- **Mentors:** Newly ordained pastors, as well as those entering the CRC from other denominations, are required to have mentors for the first five years of their ordained ministry. Mentors are experienced pastors, usually from within the classis, available to help with personal and spiritual matters, professional practices and pastoral formation.
- **Prayer Coordinator:** The Prayer Coordinator works to create an environment of prayer in our churches and our Classis.
- **Regional Pastor:** Regional pastors are active or retired pastors who provide support to active clergy in the classis. Regional pastors build relationships with pastors, commissioned pastors, and their spouses through regular contact and conversation, assist in arranging mentors for new pastors, and seek to be available at all times, and especially during times of particular challenge or opportunity.
- **Stated Clerk:** The stated Clerk ensures accurate records/ minutes of all classis proceedings, manages the various communications of classis from routine correspondence to official communications relative to ministerial credentials, congregational status and overtures to synod. A stated clerk also ensures that the protocols and decisions of the classis conform to the Church Order of the CRCNA
- **Synod:** The synod of the CRC represents the churches of all the classes. Synod meets annually in June with 192 delegates: one minister, one elder, one deacon, and one other officebearer from each classis.



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