

# Classis Matters

July August 2015

## Member Churches of Classis Georgetown

- ◆ Alive Ministries
- ◆ Baldwin Street CRC
- ◆ Bauer CRC
- ◆ Cottonwood Church
- ◆ EverGreen Ministries
- ◆ Fairway CRC
- ◆ First Hudsonville CRC
- ◆ First Jenison CRC
- ◆ Forest Grove CRC
- ◆ Friendship Chapel
- ◆ Georgetown CRC
- ◆ Hillcrest CRC
- ◆ Immanuel CRC
- ◆ Jamestown CRC
- ◆ Messiah CRC
- ◆ Ridgewood CRC
- ◆ Searchlight Ministries
- ◆ Trinity CRC
- ◆ Twelfth Avenue CRC
- ◆ Zutphen CRC



## Praises . . . and Prayer requests

~ pray with thanksgiving for the work of Synod and for all of the churches as they live out the decisions that were made.

~praise God with the congregation of Jamestown CRC as they welcome their new pastor, the Rev. Dan Gritter.

~ pray for the "peace that passes all understanding" to permeate our world.

## Synod Reflections from Our Delegates

*The Christian Reformed Church holds its annual leadership meeting in June each year. This is ordinarily held at Calvin College, but this year the June 12-18 meeting was held at Dordt College in Sioux Center Iowa.*

*While these meetings are about the business of the church, they are much more than that. Featured in this edition of the newsletter are the personal reflections from the four delegates that represented Classis Georgetown.*

*Some of the reflections were shared by all of the delegates, such as the gracious hospitality of the hosts, the approval by Synod of the new Structure Plan for the CRCNA, the decision to seat deacons at both classis and synod meetings, and the worship times.*

*When you see these delegates, thank them for their service to Classis Georgetown and to the denomination. (The Editor)*

### **Rev. Dave Den Haan, Fairway CRC, 1st Pastor Delegate:**

One of my most potent memories of Synod 2015 was the smell of hog manure in the air on the Monday evening of synod. The air was humid and thick with that "fresh" aroma! It was a smell that we would not have encountered if Synod had been at Calvin College, as it usually is. The fact that it was held at Dordt College this year meant a long and pleasant ride with other ministry colleagues, a reunion with people from my first church in Edgerton, Minnesota (75 miles north of Dordt College), and the smell of liquid "fertilizer."

The Sunday before I left for Synod 2015 I asked the people of my congregation to pray for three things for me and the rest of the delegates: wisdom, stamina, and humility. We would need wisdom as we faced complex issues regarding structure, the office of deacon, the work of missions, and many other things. We would need stamina for the long days on the floor of synod. We would also need humility because every discussion is more fruitful when the participants "consider others better than themselves (Philippians 2:3).

God blessed us with all three of these things. I witnessed great wisdom in people in the advisory committee to which I was assigned (the committee to discuss all educational matters and make necessary recommendations to synod), in the delegates who came to the mic on the floor of synod, in the leaders of synod, and in the votes that were made at synod. I also felt energized throughout the experience even though the days were long (8 AM – 9:30 PM), thanks to God's grace, and most of the people there spoke *with* one another rather than *at* one another—a sign of humility. God is good!

Some of Synod 2015's

decisions were:

~to combine our denomination's World Missions agency and our Home Missions agency.

~To raise the influence of deacons and their mission in our denomination.

~To restructure the agencies of the denomination.

~To lead classes to a greater role in the formation of those they send into ministry so that ministry preparation is not done in isolation but in communion with the student's home classis.

Synod 2015 was a wonderful way to see the denomination's impact on the world and to see God's impact on our denomination. I was delighted by the ethnic and gender diversity among the delegates, and by the hospitality of our hosts at Dordt College. Not even the smell of hog manure could get in the way of a good and fruitful time!

### **Rev. Gerry Koning, Trinity CRC, 2nd Pastor Delegate:**

As I reflect on my experience at Synod this past month I came away with four strong positive impressions that I would like to share with you.

~The worship was something special. The messages, music, prayers, and the unity expressed gave me a very strong impression that our denomination is one which

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really seeks after the Lord.

~There was a strong emphasis on prayer which was evident in the designated prayer room and the many prayers offered on the floor of Synod. The prayer to begin Synod on the morning after the murders in Charlottestown AME Church was particularly powerful.

~I was blessed with significant contact with people of other ethnic groups, including Koreans, Native Americans, and black brothers and sisters. These were some very precious moments.

~I left Synod with a strong impression that there appears to be renewed trust in the leadership of our denomination. We have gone through some difficult times and rapid change when it comes to people who fill the top positions in our denominational structure. However, at this Synod, the delegates were very willing to allow the leadership of the denomination the latitude to develop structure and devise a way forward, and not try to put cumbersome obstacles in their way in the name of oversight.

As we begin to move in new directions regarding this structure of our denomination it will be exciting to see where God will take us, but we cannot stop praying for changes that will be made. Exciting time!

**Mr. Shelby Gemmen, Immanuel CRC, 1st Elder Delegate:**

This was my first synod and I was also attending with hopes of being approved as a candidate for ministry (he was). As a first time attendee I

was curious about learning the procedure of synod and to see how delegates interacted with one another. Discussions were fairly orderly and generally peaceable. There were many issues that were voted on and passed through quickly, some with discussion, and a few with more passion and even some debate. Overall, there was a pastoral tone and sense of charity throughout all of the discussions that took place. There were a few times when delegates would request a time of prayer for an issue at hand.

The first few days of Synod involved committee work. I was on the synodical services committee, which handled the restructuring of the denomination's board and the "five streams" ministry plan. This item brought about much discussion in the committee and on the floor of synod, but was eventually approved. This is a significant step for the denomination as it is a new direction in ministry as it seeks to have a more efficient structure.

The best part of synod was the worship. It was truly a blessing to see elders and pastors from all over the CRC gather together for worship. It was a moving and memorable experience to see the passion and unique gifts that every leader brought to the church. As I came home from Synod, it was nice to have a sense of accomplishment in that many helpful decisions were made for the betterment of Christ's church. I also felt as though I was part of something important, as decisions were made for the sake of the gospel and in an effort to better the Christian

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Reformed Church in the name of Jesus.

**Mr. Ron Koedam, Forest Grove CRC, 2nd Elder Delegate:**

This was my first time at Synod as it was for a large majority of the delegates. I really appreciated the opportunity to represent Classis Georgetown.

I was impressed with the high quality of leadership and the general spirit of cooperation shown at Synod.

High points – seeing the candidates for ministry from Calvin Theological Seminary, interviewing two new CTS professors, and hearing from the new director of World Renew.

Low points – dealing in strict executive session with a matter inherent in our sinful world and dealing with the issues of gay marriage and general homosexual lifestyles.

Dordt College was a wonderful host (a slightly biased opinion since it is my alma mater).

I was pleasantly surprised at the technology used to make proceedings very efficient.

I think we took a historic step forward with combining World Missions and Home Missions and also the major restructuring, along with the new executive director.

The new challenge for our deacons is also a big step.

I also greatly enjoyed meeting up with many former college friends whom I have not seen in more than 42 years.

#### Classis Georgetown Vision Team, Members and Staff

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