

RULES OF PROCEDURE
CLASSIS CENTRAL U.S.
OF THE
UNITED REFORMED CHURCHES IN NORTH AMERICA

ADOPTED JUNE 16, AD 1998

REVISED 06/1999; 06/2000; 11/2007; 11/2008; 10/2009; 09/2011; 04/2012; 04/2013; 09/2013; 03/2014;
9/2014; 4/2015; 9/2016; 4/2017; 4/2019

INTRODUCTION

As a classis, seeking to honor the apostolic command that in the churches all things be done decently and in order, we adopt the following guidelines to regulate our proceedings. Seeking to work in an ecclesiastical manner, we commit ourselves to mutual consultation and careful consideration of God's Word as we endeavor to reach mutually agreed upon conclusions. These rules are for the purpose of serving the will of the assembly, not hindering it. They are adopted to facilitate, not obstruct, the deliberative process. However, when it seems advisable, they may be suspended, amended, revised or abrogated by a majority vote of classis.

I. CONVENING AND CONSTITUTING OF CLASSIS

- A. Classis shall be convened and constituted as prescribed by the Church Order and these Rules of Procedure.
- B. Classis shall convene at a time and place determined by the previous classis. Two meetings shall be held each year: in the second full week of April and in the second full week of September. Each classis shall designate a convening church for the next meeting, ordinarily following an alphabetical rotation of the churches.
- C. Additional meetings of classis may be held at the discretion of the next convening consistory and must be held at the request of two or more consistories.
- D. Classis shall be called to order by a member of the convening consistory designated to serve as chairman pro tem. The chairman pro tem shall conduct the opening devotions, receive the credentials of the delegates, call the roll, read the Form of Subscription to which every delegate to classis shall respond by rising to indicate his agreement, and declare classis constituted. Each delegate who takes his seat at a later time shall be requested to express his agreement with the Form of Subscription individually in the presence of classis.
- E. The officers of classis shall be the chairman, the vice-chairman and the clerk. The churches shall take turns providing a chairman, following an alphabetical rotation of the churches, according to the name of their city, provided that the brother serving as chairman has attended at least two previous meetings of classis. The vice-chairman shall be provided by the next church in the rotation.
- F. The sessions of classis shall be open to the public, unless classis decides to meet in executive session. All discussion and proceedings relating to a man's performance during his candidacy or ordination examination or colloquium doctum including, but not limited to, the presentation to the delegates of the report of the sermon evaluation committee, all discussion of this report, all discussion of the sermon manuscript(s), and all discussion of the delegates regarding a man's qualifications for the office of Minister of the Word and Sacraments shall be conducted in

- executive session. Classis shall decide how the minutes of each executive session shall be reported.
- G. The convening consistory shall make the proper arrangements for the meeting including meals and lodging for the delegates as required. The cost of the meals shall be reimbursed by the classis.
 - H. The privilege of the floor may be granted to those not delegated when it is considered useful or necessary. Ordinarily the privilege of the floor shall be granted to all ministers of the federation and all elders of classis.
 - I. Consistories not properly represented shall be required to submit an adequate explanation.

II. MATTERS LEGALLY BEFORE CLASSIS

- A. Only matters on the prepared agenda and matters classis deems necessary shall be considered legally before classis. The agenda shall include only matters that are in keeping with Article 25 of the Church Order which may include:
 - 1. Classical business such as reports of committees, classical functionaries, and representatives of classis. All such reports must be submitted to the clerk of classis eight (8) weeks prior to the meeting of classis to be included in the printed agenda. Reports from the interim committee, stated clerk, classis treasurer, and CPAC will be presented at every meeting. All other reports will be presented only in the spring meeting.
 - 2. Request of consistories for advice to proceed to further steps in cases of discipline. No advice will be given without a written statement of the case and its grounds on or attached to the classical credentials.
 - 3. Overtures from consistories, which must be submitted eight (8) weeks prior to the meeting of classis.
 - 4. Appeals and protests by consistories or individual members, who cannot yield to the decisions of the assemblies, provided they have followed the procedure of Church Order Articles 29 and 31.
 - 5. Reports of consistories concerning the church plants and/or chaplains under their oversight, if they desire to provide such reports.
 - 6. Colloquium doctum and exams for candidacy and ordination (See Church Order appendices 3, 4, and 5).
 - 7. Addresses by fraternal delegates.
 - 8. Requests for assistance from the Classis Church Assistance Fund.
 - 9. All other matters which classis declares acceptable by majority vote.
- B. Overtures submitted too late to appear on the printed agenda may be considered by way of exception after evaluation by classis of the reasons given for their lateness.
- C. Representatives of causes, institutions and agencies shall not be permitted to make promotional addresses to classis, though they may set up displays at the discretion of the host church. Missionaries called by URC churches may be permitted to address classis concerning their work.
- D. In preparing for ministerial examinations, the following practices ordinarily shall be followed, unless the convening consistory grants an exception due to weighty circumstances.
 - 1. Exegesis papers are to be completed in preparation for the Biblical Exegesis examination. One paper shall be completed for each of the two texts assigned, setting forth the details of the examinee's exegetical procedures and conclusions, with a bibliography.
 - 2. Required credentials, exegesis papers (if applicable) and sermon manuscript(s) for examinees are to be distributed to the consistories of classis, either by mail or by e-mail, at least six weeks prior to the scheduled date of classis. A manuscript shall be distributed for each sermon that is to be evaluated.
 - 3. The convening consistory shall request a consistory to present to classis an evaluation of the sermon preached in a public worship service.

- a. For candidacy exams, this evaluation should include a brief evaluation of the other two sermons submitted by the examinee; and the evaluating consistory ordinarily should not be the prospective candidate's consistory.
 - b. For ordination exams, this evaluation ordinarily should be performed by the calling consistory; but at their request, it may be performed with the assistance of office-bearers from outside of their own consistory.
 - c. For a colloquium doctum, this evaluation ordinarily should be performed by the sponsoring consistory, if the calling consistory is a member-church of the classis. In the case of a church seeking to enter the federation via Church Order Art. 32, a neighboring consistory should be asked to perform the sermon evaluation. At their request, the consistory may perform this evaluation with the assistance of office-bearers from outside of their own consistory.
4. If two or three men are to receive the same sort of examination, they shall be examined concurrently. If four or more are to be examined, they shall be examined in groups of two or three, as divided by the convening consistory.
- E. The submission and adjudication of appeals shall follow the "Guidelines for Appeals" set forth in Appendix B to the *Regulations for Synodical Procedure*, as amended from time to time.

III. OFFICERS, FUNCTIONARIES AND THEIR DUTIES

A. The Chairman

1. As presiding officer, the chairman shall call the sessions to order at the proper time and see that the sessions are properly opened and closed.
2. He shall see to it that the business is transacted in proper order and expedited as much as possible, and that the members observe the rules of order and decorum.
3. He shall welcome fraternal delegates and other guests, respond to greetings received, or appoint members of classis for this purpose.
4. He shall place before classis every motion that is made and seconded and he shall clearly state every question before a vote is taken. He may allow for a consensus forming discussion of agenda items before a motion is made.
5. He shall remain impartial on any pending question. If he wishes to express himself on any pending question he shall relinquish the chair to the vice-chairman and shall not resume the chair until the matter under consideration is resolved. He may speak, while holding the chair, to state matters of fact or to inform classis regarding points of order.
6. He shall recognize only those who have properly asked for the floor.
7. He shall have and duly exercise the right of declaring a motion or a person out of order. If this ruling is challenged (this challenge must be made immediately), classis shall sustain or reject the ruling by a majority vote.
8. He shall make a ruling at once in case of a point of order. If this ruling is challenged by a member (this challenge must be made immediately), the ruling shall be sustained or reversed by majority vote of classis.
9. When a chairman's ruling is challenged, he shall immediately relinquish the chair to the vice-chairman until his ruling is either sustained or reversed.
10. When a vote is a tie, the chairman may cast the deciding vote, if he has not already voted.
11. He shall not preside in a matter that primarily and specifically concerns himself or the consistory of which he is a member.

B. The Vice-Chairman

The vice-chairman shall assist the chairman and shall assume the chair whenever the chairman requests or as the rules may require.

C. The Clerk

1. The clerk and his alternate shall be chosen for three-year terms. The clerk shall not serve more than two consecutive terms.
2. He shall keep a record of all the proceedings of classis. This record shall consist of:
 - a. Particulars regarding opening and closing the sessions and the roll call.
 - b. All main motions whether carried or lost.
 - c. All decisions of classis.
 - d. Reference to all reports of committees and special appointees.
 - e. Reference to persons and their addresses to classis.
 - f. Any document or part of debate or address that classis by a majority vote decides to include in the minutes.
3. He shall read the concept minutes for approval at the beginning of each session and before the adjournment of classis.
4. He shall keep the archives and preserve a faithful transcription of the concept minutes for a permanent record. Special notation shall be made in the transcribed minutes of any decision affecting these rules. The record shall not contain:
 - a. Any motion other than a main motion which was rejected.
 - b. Any withdrawn motion.
 - c. Any procedural motion.
5. He shall arrange and compile the agenda and send one (1) copy to each member consistory at least six (6) weeks before classis convenes. Credentials, which include the questions of Church Order Article 26, shall be sent with the agenda.
6. He shall invite fraternal delegates or observers as determined by classis.
7. He shall prepare and distribute one (1) copy of the transcribed minutes for each member consistory as soon as possible after classis meets. He shall send one (1) copy to the clerks of the other classes.
8. He shall prepare a report of matters that are of significant interest and distribute it to the churches of classis and appropriate media representatives.
9. He shall conduct all correspondence of classis and present a report on his work to each meeting of classis. He shall be supervised by the next convening consistory.
10. He shall inform the federation Webmaster and Stated Clerk when a congregation is organized (CO article 22), is provisionally accepted into membership (CO, article 32), withdraws from the federation (CO, article 30), or is disbanded (as notified by the Churches).
11. He shall inform the federation Webmaster and Stated Clerk regarding accepted calls, emeritation, ministerial status changes, depositions, leaves of absence, etc. as notified by the Churches.
12. He shall update these Rules of Procedure accordingly when a change is made to the number of an article in the Church Order or to the letter of an appendix in the Church Order which is cited in these Rules of Procedure. He shall report such update(s) to Classis at least six weeks prior to the next meeting.
13. He shall send church planting inquiries within our region to CPAC.
14. Yearly remuneration for the clerk shall be determined by classis at the first regular meeting of each even numbered year and will apply for the calendar year.
15. In sending agendas, minutes, classis reports and other official correspondence to the churches, the clerk may use either conventional mail or e-mail. If e-mail is used, the clerk shall request each church to acknowledge receiving the correspondence.

D. The Treasurer

1. (Due to Federal tax laws) Classis shall appoint a Consistory to coordinate and supervise the duties of Classis Treasurer.
 - a. The appointed Consistory shall appoint a treasurer and alternate.
 - b. The appointed Consistory may serve in this capacity indefinitely, but shall give Classis sufficient notice before relinquishing its duties.

2. He shall report at each meeting of classis and provide a complete annual report of the previous year at the first meeting of classis each year, with copies for every consistory.
3. He shall pay all expenses incurred for services rendered on behalf of classis and keep a proper record of amounts received and disbursed.
4. He shall be duly and sufficiently bonded at the expense of classis.
5. He shall work with his overseeing Consistory to ensure that the classis finances are audited each year to the Consistory's satisfaction. If any problems are discovered, the overseeing Consistory shall inform the churches of this fact at the next meeting of Classis.
6. He shall retain all his ledger books and deposit any older than seven years in the classical archives.
7. He shall send to the U.S. Treasurer the amount requested by Synod to support the website fund. This shall be done in January of each year.
8. He shall remunerate the stated clerk in December. He shall prorate the remuneration as needed when the person serving as clerk changes.
9. Remuneration for the treasurer shall be determined at the first regular meeting in each odd numbered year.

E. Church Visitors

1. Church visitors shall be appointed by classis for a term of three years.
2. An elder who is appointed as a church visitor may complete his term even if his term as an elder ends prior to the completion of his term as a church visitor.

IV. COMMITTEES

A. Nature and Authority

1. The purpose of committees shall be to serve classis in matters entrusted to them at classis or during the interim between classis meetings.
2. The authority of committees shall be limited to the mandates given them by classis. No committee may arrogate to itself duties or mandates not specifically assigned to it.
3. Committees shall appoint their own officers unless classis appoints them.
4. In the event of a vacancy in a committee, an alternate fills out the term of the member and in the next election a new alternate shall be chosen.

B. Committees

1. Classical Interim Committee

- a. It shall be the consistory designated to convene the next meeting of classis.
- b. It shall do all things which are entrusted to it and attend to all matters which require action between the meetings of classis.
- c. It shall report in writing at every meeting of classis.
- d. It shall oversee the work of the classical clerk.

2. Credentials Committee

- a. The credentials committee shall be appointed by the chairman at the beginning of each classis meeting and shall examine the credentials to see that they are in good order and that the Church Order Article 26 questions are answered satisfactorily.
- b. They shall bring to the attention of classis any requests for advice or help from classis found on the credentials.

3. Other Committees

Classis may appoint committees to study and report concerning matters of importance or to carry out specific resolutions of past meetings. They shall function in accord with the following rules:

- a. The person first named at the appointment of the committee shall be the convener of the committee's first meeting and shall serve as chairman pro-tem.

- b. The chairman shall call the committee together, preside at its meetings, and see that it functions properly.
 - c. Any member of classis may appear before any committee for the purpose of speaking to the committee about any matter referred to it.
 - d. Committee reports shall list the chairman and the reporter of the committee. In case of a minority report, each report must list the members who favor it.
 - e. The report of the majority shall be considered the report of the committee. After the committee's report has been read and the motion to adopt has been made and seconded, the minority report shall be read and received as information.
 - f. When the report of a committee has been previously distributed to classis in printed form, and the members of classis have had sufficient time to examine it, the first reading of the report is not required. The reporter, when called upon, may simply move that the report be accepted for consideration.
 - g. During the discussion the task of defending the report shall rest primarily upon the chairman and the reporter of the committee. These shall have precedence over every other speaker and shall not be limited as to the number and length of their speeches. Other committee members shall be subject to the accepted rules.
 - h. Recommendations of a committee are main motions and may be recommitted whenever classis judges doing so would expedite its work.
4. Church Planting Advisory Committee
- a. Membership
 - 1) CPAC shall comprise at least five experienced office-bearers of Classis; namely, two elders (having served or currently serving) and three ministers.
 - 2) Terms: Members shall serve a three-year term and are eligible for reappointment.
 - 3) Appointment: Classis is responsible for the appointment of members to CPAC. Appointments shall be made in light of recommendations from CPAC and the geographical structure of Classis. Two alternate members shall be appointed.
 - b. Committee Financing
 - 1) CPAC shall propose its yearly budget to Classis, which will be based on its projected work for the following calendar year.
 - 2) The proposed budget shall be submitted to the fall Classis meeting.
 - c. Functions and Tasks

The Church Planting Advisory Committee shall:

 - 1) function under the oversight of a Consistory designated by Classis and shall give account of its work through regular reports of its meetings and activity;
 - 2) make reports of its activity at every meeting of Classis;
 - 3) regularly gather information in a comprehensive newsletter about Classically Assisted Church Plants. The newsletter shall be distributed via the Classical Clerk;
 - 4) work with Consistories in completing "Church Plant Proposals" and "Annual Updates" of their church plants that are to be presented to Classis;
 - 5) review "Church Plant Proposals" and "Annual Updates" that are presented by Consistories, and bring recommendations to Classis;
 - 6) investigate potential mission fields, with a view to connecting a church plant with an overseeing Consistory;
 - 7) respond to inquiries that are sent to the committee by the Classical Clerk and the URCNA Stated Clerk;
 - 8) respond to invitations to visit church plants;
 - 9) make recommendations to Classis about amending "Classis Guidelines for Church Planting";
 - 10) encourage churches of Classis in missions and evangelism, in conjunction with the federation's Missions Coordinator.

V. RULES OF ORDER

A. MAIN MOTION

This is a motion that presents a certain subject to classis for consideration or action.

1. The main motion is acceptable under the following conditions.
 - a. If the mover has been recognized by the chair and his motion has been seconded by a member of classis.
 - b. If, at the request of the chairman, the motion has been presented in writing.
 - c. If the chairman judges the motion acceptable.
2. A main motion is not acceptable under the following conditions:
 - a. If it conflicts with the Church Order or is contrary to Scripture as interpreted by the Three Forms of Unity.
 - b. If another motion is before classis; if it conflicts with any decision already taken by classis in its current meeting; or if it interferes with the freedom of action by classis in a matter that was previously introduced but of which no final disposal was made.
 - c. If it is substantially the same as a motion already rejected by classis.

B. MOTION TO AMEND

This is a proposal to amend a main motion in language or in meaning before final action is taken on the motion.

1. A motion to amend may propose any of the following: to strike out, to insert, or to substitute for certain words, phrases, sentences, or paragraphs.
2. A motion to amend may not nullify the main motion and it must be germane to the main motion, that is, no new matter may be introduced to classis under the guise of an amendment. (The chairman shall judge whether an amendment is acceptable or he may submit the matter to a vote.)
3. A motion to amend an amendment is permissible and is called a secondary motion. Only one such amendment may be considered at a time.

C. MOTION TO DEFER OR WITHHOLD ACTION

1. A motion to table a matter to a definite time
 - a. When classis deems it advisable, it may decide to table a motion temporarily or to a definite time. Tabling a motion temporarily implies that the assembly will resume consideration on the motion at a later hour or date.
 - b. This motion is debatable and may be amended.
 - c. If a motion to postpone definitely has passed, no other motion similar in word or thought to the postponed motion may appear before classis.
 - d. The matter postponed may be taken up before the specified time by a majority vote of classis.
 - e. If a motion to amend has been postponed definitely, the main motion to which the postponed amendment is related is likewise deferred.
 - f. Any number of matters may be postponed to the same time. When that time arrives, the matters deferred are taken up in the order of their postponement.
 - g. When the hour to which such matters have been deferred arrives, and classis is at that time busy with an undecided question, classis need not be disturbed or interrupted in its work by the consideration of postponed matters, if these can wait until the question then before classis has been disposed of.
2. A motion to withhold action or table indefinitely

This motion is to be used when classis wishes to be rid of a matter without deciding either positively or negatively.

D. PRIVILEGED MOTIONS

1. Calls for the order of the day

When any member of classis believes that the regular business of classis is being obstructed or interrupted by irrelevant or unimportant material, he has the right to rise and to call for the order of the day. This means that he desires classis to return to the regular course of action. The following rules apply:

- a. A call for the order of the day may be made without recognition and while a member is speaking.
 - b. Such a call is undebatable, needs no seconding, and must be put to a vote.
 - c. It has precedence over every other motion except a motion to adjourn or to take a recess.
2. Points of order

It is the duty of the chairman to apply the rules of order and to prevent infractions. Should a member believe that the rules have been misinterpreted or misapplied he may rise stating that he wishes to make a point of order. Asked by the chair to state the point, he does so, and the chairman renders his decision at once on the point in question. The following rules apply:

- a. A point of order may be raised at any time and must be recognized by the chairman.
 - b. It needs no seconding and is undebatable.
 - c. In case the member making the point of order is not satisfied with the decision of the chair, he may appeal to the floor. When this is done, the point of order becomes undebatable and a simple majority is sufficient to sustain, or overthrow the chairman's decision.
3. Call for a division of the question
- With a majority vote of classis, a motion consisting of several parts must be divided into its component parts and each part must be voted on separately.

E. MOTION TO BRING MATTERS ONCE DECIDED AGAIN BEFORE CLASSIS

If any member of classis for weighty reasons desires reconsideration of a matter once decided, one of the following motions may be used.

1. A motion to reconsider

- a. The intent of this motion is to propose a new discussion and a new vote. This motion must be made by someone who voted with the prevailing side.
- b. A motion to reconsider must be made in the same meeting which the motion in question was passed.
- c. It is unacceptable if action has begun in accordance with the motion in question.
- d. A motion to reconsider may be tabled to a definite time, but it may not be amended, withheld indefinitely, or referred to a committee.
- e. A motion to reconsider is debatable insofar as the reasons for reconsideration are concerned.

2. A motion to rescind

- a. The purpose of a motion to rescind is to annul a decision.
- b. All motions to rescind shall require a two-thirds majority to carry.
- c. A motion to rescind is debatable, including both the reasons for rescinding as well as the merits of the original question.
- d. Rescinding applies to decisions taken by classis in session. It does not apply to decisions taken by previous classes. A succeeding classis may alter the stand of a previous classis or it may reach a conclusion which is at variance with a conclusion reached by an earlier classis. In such cases the most recent decision invalidates all previous decisions in conflict with it.

F. DEBATE

1. To obtain the floor, a member must be recognized by the chairman.

2. If a member obtains the floor, he shall address his remarks only to the chairman and never to any member of classis. If he fails to adhere to the point under discussion or becomes unnecessarily lengthy, the chairman shall call attention to these faults and insist on pointedness and brevity.
3. Those who have not yet spoken twice on a pending issue shall be given priority over those members who have already spoken twice.
4. The chairman, when he believes that a measure has been sufficiently debated, shall have the right to propose cessation of debate. Should a majority of the members sustain this proposal, debate shall end at once and the main motion and any pending amendments shall be voted on.
5. Any member, when he deems a matter to have been sufficiently debated, may move to cease debate and call for the previous question. This motion is undebatable and is to be voted on at once. If it passes by a majority, debate shall cease only after all those who had previously requested the floor and been recognized by the chairman have had opportunity to speak. It is not acceptable when a motion to table, to commit, to recommit, to postpone definitely, or to withhold action is before classis.
6. A member may not speak to a motion and then immediately move to cease debate or call for the question.

G. OBJECTION TO THE CONSIDERATION OF QUESTIONS

When a member rises to make such objection, the chairman shall ask him to state his objection. The chairman, having heard his objection, either sustains or overrules it and states his reason for so doing. If the objector is not satisfied by the ruling of the chair he may appeal to classis. When he does so the objection becomes debatable and requires a majority to be sustained.

H. RIGHT OF PROTEST

It is the right of any member of classis to protest any decision of classis. Protests should be registered immediately or during the session in which the matter was decided. Protests must be filed individually and not in groups. A member may request his name and vote be recorded in protest, or he may submit a written protest.

I. PROCEDURAL INQUIRY

Any member of classis may request advice of the chairman regarding how to accomplish a purpose for which he does not know the proper means.

J. VOTING

Various methods of voting may be used:

1. By voice ("Yes" and "No"). This is the ordinary method of voting.
2. By rising or a show of hands. Whenever the chairman is unable to determine from the voice vote whose opinion has prevailed, or if the chairman's judgment is questioned by any member of classis, the chairman shall call for rising or a show of hands.
3. By roll call. Names and votes to be recorded in minutes. This method to be employed only when decided by majority vote.
4. By ballot. Classis must vote by ballot in election of officers. In other cases classis may vote by ballot if a majority so decides.
5. Classis may require a two-thirds majority for the adoption of very important measures.

VI. PROCEDURES FOR EXAMINATIONS

A. For Candidacy Examinations:

1. Following the examination and the decision of the man's consistory, the delegates will enter executive session. The three sermons are to be considered within the Biblical Exegesis area. The following motion will be made at the appropriate time:

“We are satisfied that the examinee has sustained the _____ area of the examination.”

2. After discussion of each area, a vote will be taken by ballot (see attached sample). The ballots will be tallied after voting on all areas has been completed. If the delegates are satisfied with all of the areas, the man may continue the process toward admission to the Ministry of the Word in the URCNA.
3. If the delegates are not satisfied with any particular area(s) of the examination, the examinee may return to classis within 13 months to be examined in that/those area(s) only. He need not undergo the entire examination again if he returns within that time period.

B. For Ordination Examinations and *Colloquia Docta*:

1. Following the examination, the delegates will enter executive session. The sermon is to be considered within the Practica area. The following motion will be made at the appropriate time:
“We are satisfied that the examinee has sustained the _____ area of the examination.”
2. After discussion of each area, a vote will be taken by ballot (see attached sample). The ballots will be tallied after voting on all areas has been completed. If the delegates are satisfied with all of the areas, the man may continue the process toward admission to the Ministry of the Word in the URCNA.
3. If the delegates are not satisfied with any particular area(s) of the examination, the examinee may return to classis within 13 months to be examined in that/those area(s) only. He need not undergo the entire examination again if he returns within that time period.

C. In the event that a man does not sustain an entire examination at classis:

1. The Classis shall remain in the Executive Session declared for the purpose of discussing and voting on the examinee’s performance in his examination.
2. A member from the examinee’s Consistory shall be sent to explain what is going to happen next (see #3 below), and accompany the examinee back into Executive Session and to the front of the assembly.
3. The Chairman, on behalf of Classis, shall:
 - acknowledge and give thanks to God for the examinee’s success by identifying that/those area(s) of the examination that he sustained; and
 - encourage and instruct him in how he may proceed to pursue the goal of becoming a minister of the Word in the URCNA (e.g. returning, at the request of his Consistory, within 13 months to be examined in that/those area(s) of the examination which he did not sustain.)
4. The accompanying member from his Consistory shall offer a prayer of thanksgiving and supplication on behalf of the examinee.
5. The Chairman, before ending Executive Session, shall ask the examinee if he would prefer to remain as an observer when General Session is resumed, or be excused from the Classis before the General Session is resumed.
6. Upon resuming General Session, the Chairman shall announce the outcome of the examination and the broad outlines of the Classis’ dealings with the examinee (see #3 above).

VII. CLASSIS GUIDELINES FOR CHURCH PLANTING

While any Consistory may seek to begin a mission work independently of the other churches, the churches of Classis Central U.S. are agreed that formally working together as early as possible in our church planting efforts, both foreign and domestic, would result in more orderly and effective

communication, wiser use of our resources, more regular and specific prayer, and more consistent financial support.

A. Classically Assisted Church Plants

1. Church Plant Defined

A church plant is a group of believers and their children that gathers together under the supervision of an existing Consistory in order to worship God on the Lord's Day, grow as disciples of Christ, and use their gifts in loving service to each other and to their neighbors, for the spread of the Gospel and the eventual establishment of a new congregation (cf. *The Four Phases of Church Planting in How to Plant a Reformed a Church: The Church Planting Manual of the URCNA*).

2. Classical Assistance Defined

Consistories may engage in the work of church planting apart from Classis; however, Consistories seeking assistance from the churches of Classis shall work in accordance with these guidelines. Classically assisted church plants shall be:

- a. included on the agenda for each Classis;
- b. included in the classical church planting newsletter;
- c. included on the websites of the Classis and the federation;
- d. deemed a priority for financial assistance by the churches of Classis.

Church plants that are not classically assisted shall ordinarily lack these benefits.

3. Procedure for Obtaining Classical Assistance

In order to encourage the churches of Classis to cooperate more effectively with one another in their mission efforts, the following steps shall be taken to receive classical assistance:

- a. The Consistory overseeing a church plant shall complete a "Church Plant Proposal Form" for review by CPAC forty-five days prior to the deadline for the Classis Agenda, and then submit the form to the clerk of classis for inclusion on the agenda.
- b. Having reviewed the completed "Church Plant Proposal Form" and received the advice of CPAC, Classis shall by majority vote decide whether or not to formally assist the church plant.
- c. Church plants shall continue to receive classical assistance by presenting to Classis the "Church Plant Annual Update Form" by means of the regular CPAC report.

B. Church Plant Proposal Form

Classis Central Consistory Proposing:

Location of Church Plant Work:

Date of Report:

1. Background

- a. Please provide a brief, general background of the core group. How and when did the core group originate? If they left another church, why?
- b. What has been your involvement with the group? How often are you meeting with them?
- c. How many people/families are genuinely interested in being part of this new work? How well does the group work together?
- d. Does this group understand what submission to a Consistory means? How well do they work with your Consistory?
- e. What are their reasons for seeking to begin a URC mission work?
 - 1) How familiar is the group with the Reformed faith as summarized in the Three Forms of Unity?
 - 2) What are they doing together to grow more familiar with the Reformed faith?
 - 3) How are you assisting them in their study of the Three Forms of Unity?
- f. How does the group demonstrate a desire to reach out to the surrounding community with the Gospel, and to see people brought to faith in Christ?
- g. What efforts have been made to promote participation in this group?

- 1) How are the people spending time together to pray for the work and to encourage one another in their efforts?
- 2) Is the group mostly comprised of people from a particular community, or are they spread over a larger area?
- h. Looking at the group as a whole, what are the perceived assets and liabilities, or strengths and weaknesses (e.g., former elders, numbers, finances, church planting experience, strong personalities, etc.)?
- i. What stresses are visibly evident? How are people coping with these?
- j. What are your current prayer requests for this specific church plant work?
2. Demographics
 - a. What are the basic demographics of this particular area? (Include information such as local population, regional growth or decline, proximity to population centers, etc.)
 - b. What is the “religious climate” like in this area?
 - c. What other NAPARC congregations are in the area? If so, has there been any communication with them about the establishment of another Reformed church in the area (per the NAPARC Golden Rule Comity Agreement)?
 - d. Why should you start a URC in this location?
3. Planning
 - a. What is your vision for this church plant? How has this been clearly communicated to the core group?
 - b. What are your plans for faithfully maintaining oversight of this church plant?
 - c. Are there any plans in place for calling a minister?
 - d. Are there any plans for training office bearers? Are there any men who are being considered potential elders or deacons?
 - e. What has the group done to reach the community with the Gospel? What are your future plans for encouraging evangelism?
 - f. Where does this group plan to meet for studies and worship? Please describe the facility.
4. Finances

What is your projected, estimated budget for the next three years, including internal and external income? This projected budget should include costs associated with the following:

 - a. saturating the field with information about the new church
 - b. the church planter's salary, work expenses, housing, insurance, disability, and retirement
 - c. renting a visible office with signage until the church has its own worship location
 - d. web page, internet, and phone
 - e. producing materials for distribution and/or use for Bible studies, discipleship, etc.
 - f. rent for worship facility
 - g. advertising in local papers, on the radio, or low-cost cable access, etc.

C. Church Plant Annual Update Form

Classis Central Consistory Updating:

Location of Church Plant:

Date of Report:

1. What is going on in the life of this church plant (studies, events, activities, worship services, etc.)? What has changed over the last year?
2. How are your prayers being answered? What joys and growth (spiritual and numerical) are you experiencing? What struggles are you experiencing? What are your current prayer requests?
3. How many people/families are involved with this work? How has composition of the core group changed?
4. What efforts are being made to promote participation in this group?
5. How is the vision of this church plant being advanced or changing?
6. What progress is being made in calling a minister?

7. What progress is being made in training office bearers?
8. What challenges have you experienced in faithfully shepherding this church plant?
9. What kind of community outreach is occurring? How comfortable has the congregation been in embracing new visitors?
10. How have the proposed plans changed? What change have you seen in the group's assets and liabilities, strengths and weaknesses? How have you handled successes? How have you handled failures?
11. How has the last year been financially? Please include internal and external income, as well as current financial assets. What is your revised projected, estimated budget for the next three years?

VIII. CLASSIS CHURCH ASSISTANCE FUND

- A. The Classis Treasurer shall separately account for funds designated for the "Classis Church Assistance Fund" (CCAF) and shall distribute such amounts as approved at a meeting of classis.
- B. Each church should decide the level and frequency of contribution to the CCAF, based on the needs that are presented at classis meetings. Such contributions are not part of the Classis "askings" for the ongoing expenses of classis functionaries or standing committee(s).
- C. Churches needing assistance shall present their request in writing, describing the circumstances and nature of the need, the amount of assistance requested, and the expected duration of the need.
- D. Requests for assistance shall be presented to the Clerk of Classis by the deadline for inclusion on the classis Agenda.
- E. Requests for assistance shall be placed on the Agenda and distributed to the churches of classis but shall not be published publicly.
- F. The delegates at classis shall vote on whether to approve all or any portion of the requested assistance.