

Agenda Materials for the 156th meeting of
Classis Lake Erie
of the Christian Reformed Church
to be held via Zoom, March 6, 2021, 9:00 a.m.

I. Reports for the Agenda

1. Meeting Order for the Day (p. 3)
2. Stated Clerk (Ben Van Arragon, p. 4)
3. Executive Committee (Alex Snider, p. 4-6).

II. Ministry Committees

1. Leadership Development
 - a. Examination of Candidate Chava Vang, Article 23 (Commissioned Pastor; calling congregation: River Terrace CRC *for* Hmong Christian Ministry). Sermon, pp. 6-10)
 - b. Call of Rev. Frank Varga from Dearborn Christian Fellowship to serve on loan (via Art. 13c) to Hungarian Reformed Church of Allen Park, MI (p. 6).
 - c. Extension of loan (via Art. 13c) of Rev. Dong Wan Na from Han Bit CRC to Waldorff Calvary Church, Waldorff, Maryland (p. 10).

Other significant items will be added!

Covenant for Officebearers

(All first-time delegates to classis will be asked sign this document.)

We believe the Holy Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments to be the inspired Word of God, which proclaims the good news of God's creation and redemption through Jesus Christ. Acknowledging the authority of God's Word, we submit to it in all matters of life and faith.

We affirm three creeds—the Apostles' Creed, the Nicene Creed, and the Athanasian Creed—as ecumenical expressions of the Christian faith. In doing so, we confess our faith in unity with followers of Jesus Christ throughout all ages and among all nations.

We also affirm three confessions—the Belgic Confession, the Heidelberg Catechism, and the Canons of Dort—as historic Reformed expressions of the Christian faith, whose doctrines fully agree with the Word of God. These confessions continue to define the way we understand Scripture, direct the way we live in response to the gospel, and locate us within the larger body of Christ.

Grateful for these expressions of faith, we promise to be formed and governed by them. We heartily believe and will promote and defend their doctrines faithfully, conforming our preaching, teaching, writing, serving, and living to them.

Along with these historic creeds and confessions, we also recognize the witness of Our World Belongs to God: A Contemporary Testimony as a current Reformed expression of the Christian faith that forms and guides us in our present context.

We also promise to present or receive confessional difficulties in a spirit of love and fellowship with our brothers and sisters as together we seek a fuller understanding of the gospel. Should we come to believe that a teaching in the confessional documents is not the teaching of God's Word, we will communicate our views to the church, according to the procedures prescribed by the Church Order and its supplements. If the church asks, we will give a full explanation of our views. Further, we promise to submit to the church's judgment and authority.

We honor this covenant for the well-being of the church to the glory of God the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

Meeting Order for the Day

1. Opening Devotions.
2. Role Call.
3. Breakout room check-in (elders, deacons, pastors).
4. Leadership Development:
 - a. Examination (Art. 23), Chava Vang, Commissioned Pastor, Hmong Christian Ministry. Examiner: Rev. Nathan Groenewold.
 - b. Art. 13c loan, Rev. Frank Varga.
 - c. Art. 13c loan extension, Rev. Dong Wan Na.
5. Specialized Ministries
 - a. Committee Report
 - b. Campus Ministries updates (Campus Chapel, Campus Edge)
 - c. New Church Development
 - d. Cohort Detroit
 - e. Mission Fund Grant (Hmong Christian Ministry)
6. Denominational Matters
 - a. Council of Delegates
 - b. Resonate Global Mission
 - c. World Renew
7. Executive Committee
 - a. Committee Report
 - b. Treasurer's Report
 - c. Stated Clerk's Report
8. Concluding Matters

Stated Clerk's Report

1. Prepared and distributed the minutes of the October, 2020 meeting of classis.
2. Tended to various items of correspondence.
3. Updated Classis Lake Erie website.
4. Prepared an agenda and minutes for the Executive Committee.
5. Prepared materials and made arrangements for the March, 2021, meeting of classis.

Executive Committee Report

Minutes – January 27, 2021 *Via Zoom*

I. Attendance

Present: Carla Bieber, Eunice Bossenbrook, Paul Bouman, Joe Creech, John Park, Alex Snider, Ben Van Arragon

Ben opened in prayer.

II. Continuing Business

- A. Treasurer/Budget. 2020 Financial Report was received for information. Treasurer Joe Creech reported that all but five Lake Erie congregations (including one emerging) have submitted denominational ministry share pledges.
- B. Classis President/Vice-President. Both roles must be filled following CLE's March 2021 meeting. Stated Clerk will solicit nominations/volunteers with March meeting materials. Absent any volunteers, the Executive Committee will assign the roles to Classis ministers in descending alphabetical order.
- C. CLE Position Approval: Regional Pastors; Safe Church/Disability Concerns Coordinator. Both position descriptions were reviewed. The following amendments will be incorporated into the final editions, to be distributed with March meeting Agenda:

Regional Pastors:

- Motion: to increase salary to 2,000.00 per Regional Pastor.
Carries.
- Motion: to advertise three (3) Regional Pastor positions.
Carries.
- Stipulation that RPs will attend all meetings and training provided and required by Pastor-Church Resources.
- Additional duties: RPs will partner with denomination initiatives, such as the Connections Project, to promote resources and training opportunities for pastors. Rps will encourage and facilitate the formation of pastors' peer groups.

Safe Church/Disability Concerns Coordinator:

- Interested applicants will be invited to inquire through the Stated Clerk. The Executive Committee will provide a short list of followup questions and criteria for applicants.

- D. Classis Strategic Planning/Vision. Given current conditions, the Executive Committee agreed to apply strategic planning to specific areas of Classis ministry rather than create an overarching new strategic plan.
 - E. Post-COVID Classis Initiatives. It was observed that many pastors, staff and lay leaders are fatigued and in need of refreshment. The Executive Committee will poll pastors and church leaders regarding possible avenues for rest and recovery. Plans will also proceed regarding possible Classis retreats and small group breakout sessions once in-person meetings resume.
 - F. Congregational Updates/COVID Relief. No requests have been submitted. Ben will include invitation with March meeting materials.
- III. New Business**
- A. Essential Classis Practices.
Church Visitors: The Executive Committee will discuss the traditional role/responsibilities of church visitors at our August, 2021 meeting in order to develop an action plan.
Classis Counselors and Candidate Examiners: Ben will seek to recruit a short list of willing Classis ministers to serve regularly in these roles.
 - B. Connections Project. Carla reminded the Executive Committee of her role as a mobilizer for the CRCNA's Connections Project. Ben agreed to add the Connections Project to the "Resources" section of the CLE website.
- IV. Preparation for March 2021 meeting of Classis (March 6, 2021 via Zoom. 9:00-11:00 a.m.).**
- A. CRCNA Classis Renewal requested all Classes to make time for a 45-minute devotional exercise for "Our Journey 2025". This will be deferred to October 2021.
 - B. Synod 2021. All Synod-related matters will be addressed following the forthcoming decision of the Council of Delegates regarding Synod 2021.
 - C. Art. 23 examination: Chava Vang, pastor, Hmong Christian Ministry.
 - D. Art. 13c call from Dearborn Christian Fellowship for Rev. Frank Varga to serve Hungarian Reformed Church of Allen Park *on loan*.
 - E. Executive Committee proposes brief check-in time via Breakout Rooms *by church office*.

Leadership Development

Examination: Chava Vang

Chava Vang is serving as Pastor at Hmong Christian Ministries in Lansing, Michigan. Chava came to HCM with decades of ministry experience in the Christian and Missionary Alliance Church. For the past year, Chava has undergone an intensive orientation process overseen by

the CRCNA's Director of Candidacy and River Terrace CRC member David Vander Haagen. Chava has met the Candidacy Committee's requirements and is prepared to be examined as a Commissioned Pastor.

Sermon, Chava Vang

Delivered via video, Feb. 21, 2021, Hmong Christian Ministry.

Title: The Foundational Truths

Text: Matthew 7:24-29

Introduction: Good morning all brothers and sisters in Christ. Thank God for giving us another day to worship Him through praise, songs and especially the Word of the Lord God. Thank you for all that made it into the house of the Lord this morning and also for those that joining us on Facebook at home.

Our daily lives that we walk with God, we must have a truth foundation with Him. If we do not have the true foundation in our lives, how can we walk our daily lives as a true Christian with God?

Theme: Today's theme is "**The Foundational Truths**"

Passage **Matthew 7:24-29** (NIV) ²⁴ "Therefore everyone who hears these words of mine and puts them into practice is like a wise man who built his house on the rock. ²⁵ The rain came down, the streams rose, and the winds blew and beat against that house; yet it did not fall, because it had its foundation on the rock. ²⁶ But everyone who hears these words of mine and does not put them into practice is like a foolish man who built his house on sand. ²⁷ The rain came down, the streams rose, and the winds blew and beat against that house, and it fell with a great crash." ²⁸ When Jesus had finished saying these things, the crowds were amazed at his teaching, ²⁹ because he taught as one who had authority, and not as their teachers of the law.

Let's pray before listening to the Message

Illustration: About a house that built on a higher ground and a house that built on a lower ground.

I remembered back when I was still a boy about 6 or 7 years old back in the village where I lived with my parents and brothers and sisters way up in the mountains countryside. We live in a small village where just cousins and close relatives. One family built their house on the top of a hill and another family built their house on the lower flat land closed to a small creek to a pond nearby. One raining season came the water backed up from a pond nearby and washed all kinds of dirt and bushes from the mountain side to the house that built on a lower flat land. This house was flooded about waist height and all the people in that family were managed to get out but all of their belongings were damaged. But the house that built on the top of a hill was not flooded and that family saved from that one raining season. I've found out that the gentleman that built his house on the top of a hill listened and obeyed his father's teaching. But

the other gentleman did not believe his father's teaching, so he didn't think about the safety of his family.

In the passage of **Matthew 7:24-29**, we are going to hear about three foundations. So, let's look at these foundations and learn what God has for us today.

First topic. The Wiseman's Foundation (v. 24-25)

A wise man always listens and thinks for what is best to himself or his family. Our culture, a good son always listens and obeys his father. That is why the gentleman that built his house on the top of a hill was out of danger from that raining season, because he listened and obeyed to his father's teaching.

Jesus taught us as Christians that we should listen when we heard of his words and practice on them. In (**Matthew 7:24-25**) said,

"²⁴Therefore everyone who hears these words of mine and puts them into practice is like a wise man who built his house on the rock. ²⁵The rain came down, the streams rose, and the winds blew and beat against that house; yet it did not fall, because it had its foundation on the rock."

Jesus said a person is wise, is *"he who hears these words of mine and puts them into Practice."* We as Christians must be obedient to what Jesus has told us! If we listen to his words and practice on them then we are like a wise man that built his house on a rock.

Jesus is the rock for you and me. If we build our house in Jesus, by trusting, obeying, and living our lives according to His Words. So when the rain comes, the streams rise, and the wind blows, we will stand firm because we build our house on a good foundation which is Jesus Christ. So, when we face temptations through hard times from the devil, this world, and our families and friends, we will not fall because we have Jesus as our foundation and our protector. In (**John 13:17**) Jesus says if we know these things and do them then we will be blessed.

Christian brothers and sisters, if we want to build our house on a good foundation that will stand against the beating of rain, streams and winds. Then we must live our lives by putting God's Words into practice like a wise man that built his house on the rock.

In (**James 1:25**) said,

"Whoever looks intently into the perfect law that gives freedom, and continues in it—not forgetting what they have heard, but doing it—they will be blessed in what they do."

Yes, a wise man will be blessed because he always listens and does what he has heard. We too, should live our lives wisely by listening and doing it to be blessed. And Jesus also tells us another foundation, which is;

Second topic. The Foolishman's Foundation (v. 26-27)

A foolish man is usually a man that doesn't think and doesn't believe or like what other's teaching. He or she thinks that not one is better than he or she is. I heard some of my cousins told their children that they didn't listen to their teaching, this! *"One day you will know."* And I asked

them, what do you means? They told me son, watch! Some day when troubles come they will know why we parents teach them.

Yes, Jesus told us as Christians exactly what will happen to us if we don't put His Words into practice. One day we will know, when our troubles come and then we will remember what our parents has taught us to listen to them.

Jesus talked in the book of (*Matthew 7:26-27*) that said, ²⁶ *But everyone who hears these words of mine and does not put them into practice is like a foolish man who built his house on sand. 27 The rain came down, the streams rose, and the winds blew and beat against that house, and it fell with a great crash.*"

All brothers and sisters, Jesus says that if we as Christians do not obey His Words or we heard but do not put them into practice then we are just like a foolish man that he built his house on sand. And when the rain come, streams rise and the wind blow against that house, for sure it will fell with a great crash. If we build our house on a sandy foundation nearby the ocean or a lake. It may look pretty, beautiful, relaxing, we may enjoy with a lots things that we plant around it. But in the end, when storms come will bring it crashing down and wash away.

If we do not live our lives according to the words of Jesus Christ or faithfully follow His teachings, we are just like the foolish man. When we face temptations from the devil, for sure we will not be able to stand! Our lives will fall down like a great crash! We as Church or Christians, if we do not following the words of Jesus than our spiritual lives are foolishness. Because we build our house not on a good foundation.

Do we think that sand will be a good foundation to build a house on? Of course not, because sand is not solid, it is loose, shifty, sinks and does not remain constant. Would you like to build your house on sand? I don't think so. If anyone build their house on sand, you know what people will call you? You will be call a foolish man. A foolish man's life is just like a man that listen to the word but does not do what it says and after looking at himself in a mirror, goes away immediately and forget what he looks like in (*James 1:23-24*).

As we are the children of God, when they hear the Words of God. We suppose to put these words into practice which is to do what it says. If we hear them but we do not put them into practice or to do what it says then we are just like a foolish man that wants evidence of faith without deeds. Faith without deeds is useless (*James 2:20*).

God does not want us to be like a foolish man or to be beating by temptations of this world like a sandy foundation. But He wants us to be like the wise man, stand firm against all temptations and like a solid rock foundation. And the final foundation we see in this passage is:

Third topic. The Foundation of Jesus's Teaching (v. 28-29)

Jesus did not teach us as other teachers taught. Listen to what He teaches us in Matthew 7:28-29 says:

"²⁸When Jesus had finished saying these things, the crowds were amazed at his teaching, ²⁹because he taught as one who had authority, and not as their teachers of the law."

Verse 28 concludes Jesus' Sermon on the mountainside. After He finished teaching, the crowds were amazed at His teaching that they had not heard other people teach as He taught. Verse 29 is the key word that Jesus taught us as the foundation of His teaching with authority, and not as their teachers of the law. For generations and generations, other Jewish teachers appealed to the teachings of other people for their authority. They appealed to other rabbis, other experts in the law, traditions and the Pharisees. But Jesus appealed to Himself for authority! Jesus was not teaching like the scribes of other teachers whom the people were used to hear, but Jesus was teaching as one who had authority because He did have authority! He had the authority of God!

Even though Jesus' listeners were amazed at His teaching because His words had authority (*Luke 4:32*), but the amazement of the people was not what He was going for. He was going for the obedience of the people! And that will bring us to a consideration at the conclusion of Jesus' Sermon on the mountainside.

Conclusion:

So, it is not enough to call Jesus a good teacher, a good prophet, and not even enough to be amazed at Jesus. But we must be obedient to Jesus and faithfully follow Him! The message through out His sermon was not just trying to give us a list of rules; but Jesus is trying to make us new people of God because of God's love, through the power of God, by the grace of God, and for the glory of God. Jesus is calling us to change and to choose.

There is no other foundation that will last. Only on Christ Jesus the solid rock will stand. All other foundation is sinking sand! We must make a choice today about where your foundation will be built. You can build your foundation on any other things in this world, but one day it will come crashing down. Even if everything in this life goes perfectly for you (which is probably won't), but one day you will stand before God at His judgment seat and you will have to have a good foundation to stand on when you face God. You better be standing on the foundation of Jesus Christ!

Closing:

If you're here today and you want to make a decision to follow Jesus Christ as your personal Savior. Make your decision now on which foundation you want to build your house on. Is it in Jesus or in sand? You better make the right decision, if you're giving your life to Jesus, be sure to faithfully and obediently follow Him. God's grace will get you back on track! Build your house in Jesus now!

Article 13c Loan: Rev. Frank Varga

“A minister of the Word may be loaned temporarily by the calling church to serve as pastor of a congregation outside of the Christian Reformed Church, but only with the approval of classis, the concurring advice of the synodical deputies, and in accordance with the synodical regulations. Although the specific duties may be regulated in cooperation with the other congregation, the supervision of doctrine and life rests with the calling church.” (*Church Order*, Art. 13c)

In December, 2020, Dearborn Christian Fellowship CRC extended a call for Rev. Frank Varga to serve on loan to the Hungarian Reformed Church of Allen Park, based on the following rationale:

1. Rev. Varga is uniquely gifted to continue serving as Hungarian Reformed Church’s Senior Pastor.
2. Rev. Varga is committed to the CRCNA, and hopes to facilitate ongoing ecumenical relationship between the Hungarian Reformed denomination and the CRCNA.
3. Dearborn Christian Fellowship recognizes Rev. Varga’s gifts and the value in maintaining a close relationship with Rev. Varga and his congregation.

Rev. Varga has served as pastor at Hungarian Reformed Church of Allen Park since 2003, and was previously under the supervision of a congregation in his former Classis, Hope Community CRC in Lawrence, IN.

Article 13c Loan Extension: Rev. Dong Wan Na

In March 2016, Classis Lake Erie approved the loan of Rev. Dong Wan Na, ordained at Han Bit CRC, to Waldorff Calvary Church (Waldorff, Maryland). The Council at Han Bit CRC has faithfully supervised Rev. Na’s doctrine and life via a mentoring relationship with Han Bit’s senior pastor and regular communication. Han Bit and Rev. Na request a two-year extension of Rev. Na’s loan on the following grounds:

1. Rev. Na’s efforts to influence the Waldorff Calvary Church’s theology and denominational affiliation are ongoing;
2. Rev Na is interested in pursuing a call to a CRCNA congregation, but current conditions (i.e., COVID) are not conducive to this pursuit.