

**CLASSIS OF HOLLAND
REFORMED CHURCH IN AMERICA**

BYLAWS
(Amended May 2013)

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BYLAWS
CLASSIS OF HOLLAND
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Preamble

The Classis of Holland is an assembly and judicatory of the Reformed Church in America consisting of all the enrolled ministers and the elder delegates who represent the churches within its bounds. The responsibilities of a Classis are defined in the *Book of Church Order (BCO)* of the Reformed Church in America. These bylaws provide the structure through which the Classis pursues its vision and mission.

Holland Classis Vision and Mission Statement

The Holland Classis is called by God, sustained by prayer and empowered by the Holy Spirit to be the very presence of Christ in the Holland community. Our shared task is to serve cooperatively the Holland community, to support proactively the ministries of the classis and its churches, and to sow creatively new worshipping communities.

Article I. Membership

- A. Membership in the Classis includes all enrolled ministers and the elder delegates who represent all the churches within the Classis bounds. Voting rights are limited to elder delegates and those enrolled ministers who are actively serving as ministers either under the jurisdiction of or with the approval of the Classis.
- B. Attendance at Stated and Special Sessions.
 - 1. Ministers and elder delegates to the Classis are expected to attend all stated and special sessions of the Classis.
 - 2. Ministers who have not received credit for attending a minimum of two stated sessions of the Classis in a year shall be placed at the end of the list (as if they have just attended a General or Great Lakes Synod meeting) in the rotational system. The Nominations Committee shall serve as the ruling body if a minister desires to apply for an exception to this rule due to extenuating circumstances.
 - 3. Delegates from a church which is not current in the payment of its assessments (more than 60 days past due) shall not be eligible to vote at the Classis sessions. The Executive Committee may grant a waiver of this requirement at its meeting prior to a stated session of the Classis.
- C. Corresponding delegates are Associates in Ministry, licensed candidates, fraternal delegates, chairs of the Classis committees, and officers of the Classis who do not otherwise have voting rights. Corresponding delegates shall have the privilege of the floor.
- D. Retired ministers shall have the privilege of the floor. The Minister Support and Supervision Committee may designate a retired minister, who is serving under a contract, as actively serving, if the minister requests. These actively serving retired ministers shall have voting privileges, but may not represent the classis at the synods. This designation has to be made annually, since the BCO limits such contracts to one year.

Article II. Stated Sessions

- A. The stated sessions of the Classis shall be held on the fourth Tuesdays of January, March, May and September, unless circumstances require other arrangements or are otherwise approved by the Classis.
- B. The stated sessions shall meet in the churches of the Classis in the order in which they were organized, unless circumstances require other arrangements or are otherwise approved by the Classis.
 - First Reformed – 1847
 - Central Park – 1847
 - Hope – 1862
 - Third – 1867
 - New Community/Fourth – 1896
 - Trinity – 1911
 - Maplewood – 1941
 - Beechwood – 1944
 - Calvary – 1951
 - Rose Park – 1956
 - Christ Memorial – 1957
 - Grace – 1962
 - Fellowship – 1966
 - Maple Avenue Ministries – 1999
 - LifeTree – 2012
 - Pillar – 2012

Article III. Special Sessions

- A. Special sessions of the Classis shall be called by the president as provided by the *Book of Church Order*.
 - 1. The president shall determine the place and time of the session.
 - 2. A special session shall not be held on Sunday morning. The Executive Committee may grant a waiver of this rule for exceptional circumstances.
- B. Written notice of a special session, which states the business for which it is called, shall be sent to each church and enrolled minister at least ten days in advance of the meeting.
- C. New business may be presented at a special session of the Classis only upon the approval of three-fourths of the members present, except at installation and ordination services.
- D. Ordination and installation services of ministers are special sessions of the Classis. Only the business announced in the notice of the meeting may be transacted. The special session ends with the conclusion of the service unless otherwise announced by the presiding officer.
 - 1. The order for the service shall follow the liturgy of the Reformed Church in America.
 - 2. Six minister delegates shall be assigned to attend each ordination and installation service. Assignments shall be made on a rotating basis from the alphabetical listing of all ministers, in good health, who reside within a fifty mile radius of Holland.

3. Six elder delegates shall also be assigned to attend each ordination and installation service. Assignments for elders shall be made on a rotating basis from the listing of the churches within the Classis. Three churches shall each send two elder delegates to an ordination or installation service. The host church shall normally be one of the assigned churches.
4. The stated clerk shall send notice to the six minister delegates and to the three churches to inform them of their responsibility to be the official delegation of the Classis. If an assigned minister is unable to attend, the minister shall find a substitute from among other Classis ministers. The stated clerk shall be informed of any substitutions.
5. The host church for these special sessions shall provide a place where the delegates may gather, prior to the worship service, so they may be enrolled and then proceed to the seats which have been reserved for them.

Article IV. Expressing our Faith

- A. All sessions of the Classis shall be opened and closed with prayer.
- B. Stated sessions shall include a brief worship service.
- C. Committee meetings shall include prayer.

Article V. Delegates to General Synod and the Great Lakes Synod

- A. A slate of delegates shall be presented by the Nominations Committee for approval by the Classis. The slate shall be composed of an equal number of ministers and elders as specified by each synod.
- B. MINISTER DELEGATES
 1. Delegates shall be appointed from the enrolled ministers with voting rights who have not attended nor had opportunity to attend these sessions for the longest period of time. In the event that the turn of two ministers occurs in the same year, the minister who signed the Declaration for Ministers first shall be appointed as the delegate. Ministers shall be members of the Classis for at least one year prior to being appointed as delegates to a General Synod or Great Lakes Synod.
 2. Appointees who ask to be excused from attending General or Great Lakes Synod shall report to the chair of the Nominations committee the reason they seek to be excused. A postponement for a just cause will be granted for one year only. Requests for postponement must be submitted prior to February 15. After that date, choosing not to attend the synod or failure to attend a synod meeting is forfeiture of one's turn.
 3. Rules governing the appointment of ALTERNATE delegates shall be the same as those for delegates, except that alternates who decline service after February 15 will not forfeit their turn to serve as a delegate. Alternate delegates to General and Great Lakes Synods shall be recruited for service in the order of the listed names presented to the Classis. The Nominations Committee chairperson or stated clerk shall inform alternate delegates of their duty to attend.

4. General Synod:
 - a) The maximum number of delegates permitted by General Synod shall be appointed to attend the synod. Each delegate appointment remains effective until the next General Synod is formed or until a replacement is approved.
 - b) Missionaries are appointed to General Synod according to the *Book of Church Order*.
5. Great Lakes Synod: The maximum number of delegates permitted by Great Lakes Synod shall be appointed to attend the synod. Each delegate appointment remains effective for two stated sessions or until a replacement is approved.

C. ELDER DELEGATES

1. Elder delegates shall be appointed from the churches according to a rotation system based on the organizational date of the church.
2. Both delegates and alternates shall be chosen from the same church.
3. General Synod:
 - a) The maximum number of delegates permitted by General Synod shall be appointed to attend the synod. Each delegate appointment remains effective until the next General Synod is formed or until a replacement is approved.
 - b) When a church is unable to fill the delegate appointment, it shall notify the classis clerk no later than February 15. All churches will be notified of the delegate opening and invited to submit names. The Nominations committee shall select the alternate delegate from the names submitted. The church sending the alternate delegate and the church which declined the appointment do not change or forfeit their original places in the rotation order.
4. Great Lakes Synod:
 - a) The maximum number of delegates permitted by Great Lakes Synod shall be appointed to attend the synod. Each delegate appointment remains effective for two stated sessions or until a replacement is approved.
 - b) When a church is unable to fill the delegate appointment in its first year, for the first assigned stated session, the church may request a postponement until the next opportunity to appoint a delegate. If a church is unable to fill the delegate appointment in the second year for the second assigned stated session, the church forfeits the appointment.

Article VI. Officers

- A. The officers of the Classis shall be a president, a vice president, a past president, a stated clerk and a treasurer.
- B. The president, vice president, and past president shall serve for a term of twelve months.
- C. The president and vice-president shall be elected by nominating ballot at the stated session prior to the beginning of the fiscal year of the Classis.
 1. The Nominations Committee may present a slate of names to the Classis.
 2. Nominees for office shall be permitted to judge whether their gifts are congenial to the demands of the office.
 3. In case of a vacancy in the office of president, the vice-president will fill the unexpired term. If the office of vice-president is vacant, a new vice-president shall be elected by nominating ballot at the next stated session of the Classis. Such officers are eligible for election to a full term, following the completion of the unexpired term.
 4. Leadership shall rotate on alternate years between elders and enrolled ministers with voting rights.

5. Those completing a term as president are ineligible for the office of vice-president or president for a period of five years.
- D. The stated clerk and treasurer shall serve two-year terms.
1. Election/re-election shall take place, in the odd-numbered years, at the stated session prior to the beginning of the fiscal year of the Classis.
 2. In case of a vacancy, a temporary stated clerk or treasurer shall be appointed by the Executive Committee to serve the remainder of the term or a limited time set by the Executive Committee.

Article VII. Duties of Officers

- A. The president shall
1. Call special sessions of the Classis.
 2. Approve the order of service and participants for ordination and installation services.
 3. Preside at all sessions of the Classis. The right to vote in all matters before the classis is inherent in the office of president. The president does not need to be designated as an elder delegate in order to have the right to vote.
 4. Represent the Classis (or designate a representative) at all events and occasions that require official representation.
 5. Decide all questions of order according to the *Classis of Holland Bylaws*, the *RCA Book of Church Order*, and the current edition of *Robert's Rules of Order Newly Revised*.
 6. The president chairs the Executive Committee and is an ex-officio member of all Classis committees (except Nominations).
- B. The vice president shall
1. Preside at sessions of the Classis in the absence of the president.
 2. Assume the duties of the office of the president in the event the office should become vacant.
 3. The vice-president is a member of the Executive Committee and is an ex-officio member of all Classis committees (except Nominations).
- C. The past president shall:
1. Present a State of Religion Report at the time approved by the Executive Committee.
 2. Serve on the Personnel Committee.
- D. The stated clerk shall
1. Announce all sessions of the Classis to ministers and elder delegates.
 2. Give notice of matters of business to each committee chairperson.
 3. Make available at stated sessions:
 - a) The most recent minutes of the Classis, Great Lakes Synod and General Synod.
 - b) *The Classis Holland Bylaws, the Book of Church Order, and the current edition of Robert's Rules of Order Newly Revised*.
 - c) Agendas for the present meeting of the Classis.
 4. Preserve:
 - a) A record of all transactions of the Classis arranged and recorded according to the order of business.
 - b) The minutes of the Classis and all documents of permanent value in a safe place (i.e. Holland or RCA Archives). All other papers may be destroyed after seven years.

5. Provide:
 - a) The Classis with a list of committee members, showing term expiration dates and which members are eligible for re-election.
 - b) The Executive Committee, especially the past president, with information on the state of religion from the *Annual Consistorial Reports*.
 - c) The Nominations Committee with:
 - 1) A list of the ministers indicating when they enrolled in the Classis and when they last attended General Synod and Great Lakes Synod.
 - 2) An annual record of attendance of ministers at stated sessions.
 - 3) A list of the churches indicating when delegates were last appointed from their membership to General Synod and Great Lakes Synod meetings.
 - 4) Consistories with the necessary forms for all required reports.
 6. Forward:
 - a) To the Great Lakes Synod: The minutes of the Classis; the annual statistical report; the State of Religion report; the names of delegates to Great Lakes synod; overtures addressed to the synod, and all other required documents.
 - b) To General Synod: Change of Status forms for ministers; any action of Classis on items submitted by General Synod; the annual statistical report; the names of delegates to General Synod; overtures addressed to the General Synod, and all other required reports.
 - c) To various institutions and boards: The names of those elected as representatives.
 - d) To individuals: A notification that they have been elected or appointed to perform a task for the Classis.
 7. The stated clerk shall be responsible for the Classis correspondence, and perform other duties as directed by the Executive Committee.
 8. Supervise Classis-employed secretarial service.
 9. The stated clerk is a voting member of the Executive Committee, and is an ex-officio member of every Classis committee. However, the stated clerk shall not have the privilege of vote in these committees.
- E. The treasurer shall
1. Receive and disburse funds as directed by the Classis.
 2. Present a written financial statement for each stated session.
 3. Be bonded.
 4. The treasurer is a member of the Executive Committee, and is an ex-officio member of the Stewardship & Finance Committee.

Article VIII. Committee Membership

- A. Committees, teams, taskforces, etc. exist to accomplish the vision, mission, and ministry of the Classis. In these bylaws, the term "committee" will be used to commonly apply to all these groupings.
- B. Three basic types of committees function in this Classis:
 1. Standing committees. Standing committees are defined within these bylaws.
 2. Ministry Committees. Ministry committees are defined in a separate policy document. A policy document separate from these bylaws shall specify the name of each committee, its composition, its purpose and the description of its tasks and responsibilities. Ministry

committees may be disbanded or re-assigned when their purpose or effectiveness has been completed. Classis may change a policy document by a simple majority vote.

3. Special committees may be appointed by the Executive Committee.

C. Composition

1. Membership on the Classis committees shall be open to all enrolled ministers and all confessing members of the Classis churches, unless otherwise specified.
2. Chairpersons of committees shall be specified prior to the beginning of the fiscal year.
3. The Nominations Committee shall be responsible for recruiting all committee members who serve with a specified term. Committees may add additional members with Nominations Committee approval. The approval shall specify the voting privileges of the added members.

D. Service Terms

1. Election of committee members shall occur at the stated session prior to the beginning of the fiscal year of the Classis.
2. Committee membership begins on the date provided to the Classis at the time of election.
3. Members shall serve for three years, unless otherwise specified at the time of nomination. The service term end date shall be specified at the time of election.
4. Members may be re-elected to the same committee for one additional three-year term. By recommendation of the Executive Committee and approval of Classis, this rule may be waived.
5. Members filling unexpired terms are eligible for a full term of service and an additional term.

E. Reports to the Classis

1. Committees shall report on matters referred to them and may address other matters germane to their work.
2. Recommendations to the Classis shall be submitted in time for inclusion in the agenda packet.
3. Requests for the appropriation of the Classis funds for the coming year shall be submitted to the Stewardship and Finance Committee no later than the date specified.

Article IX. Standing Committees

The standing committees are the Executive, the Nominations, and the Overtures and Judicial Business Committees.

A. EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

1. Membership: The president, vice-president, stated clerk, treasurer, past president, and the chairpersons of the standing committees and ministry committees.
2. Trustees of the Classis: The president, vice-president, stated clerk, and treasurer.
3. Committee responsibilities:
 - a) Direct the ministry of Classis towards the achievement of the vision and mission of the Classis.
 - b) Consider and/or act upon any necessary business between sessions of the Classis.
 - c) Act on communications and referrals.
 - d) Prepare and present agendas for stated and special sessions of the Classis.
 - e) Supervise employed personnel. A personnel committee may be formed to review job performance and salaries of all employed persons.
 - f) Provide for a Classis office and secretarial services as needed.

B. NOMINATIONS COMMITTEE

1. Membership: Six members minimum, three of whom are ministers.

2. Committee responsibilities:
 - a) Present the slate of delegates for General Synod and Great Lakes Synod to the Classis.
 - b) Recruit persons to serve on the various classis committees. Present the names of recruits to the classis for approval prior to their service on a committee.
 - c) Prepare and keep current a list of persons willing to serve on the Classis committees and nominate persons to fill vacancies as they occur.

C. OVERTURES AND JUDICIAL BUSINESS COMMITTEE

1. Membership: Six members minimum, three of whom are ministers.
2. Committee responsibilities:
 - a) Recommend to the Classis action on amendments to the *Book of Church Order* which have been proposed by General Synod.
 - b) Recommend to classis action on amendments to the *Classis of Holland Bylaws*.
 - c) Recommend to the Classis action on overtures sent to the Classis from churches. Overtures for General and Great Lakes Synod must be submitted to the committee no later than January 1, unless the committee grants an exception for unusual circumstances.
 - d) Recommend to the Classis action on overtures proposed by other classis committees. Overtures for General and Great Lakes Synod must be submitted to the OJB committee no later than January 1, unless the OJB committee grants an exception for unusual circumstances.
 - e) Examine and present to the Executive Committee matters of church discipline.
 - f) Act on complaints and appeals, that have been received in the manner prescribed by the *Book of Church Order*.

Article X. Program and Fiscal Year

- A. The fiscal year for the Classis shall be from January 1 to December 31.
- B. The Classis shall maintain a set of policies to guide its work and ministry. Policy statements may be adopted by the classis by majority vote when presented in writing at a stated session. Ministry committee descriptions shall be specified in a policy statement.

Article XI. Rules and Amendments

- A. The *Book of Church Order* has precedence over the *Classis of Holland Bylaws*.
- B. The *Classis of Holland Bylaws* may be amended by a two-thirds vote of the members of the Classis present, if the proposed amendment has been adopted as a first reading at a previous stated session of the Classis.