

**The Bylaws of Southwest Michigan Classis  
Reformed Church in America (RCA)  
Approved October 27, 2015**

**Article 1. Membership**

Section A. Definition

The Classis of SW Michigan is an assembly and judicatory consisting of all the enrolled ministers, commissioned pastors, and the elder delegates who represent the RCA churches within its bounds. The classis is a permanent, continuing body which functions between stated sessions through teams. (BCO, 1.II.1) The Classis of SW Michigan is a member classis of the Reformed Church in America and is (and at all times shall be) subject to and governed by the Constitution of the Reformed Church in America.

Section B. Elder Delegates

1. A church with three hundred or fewer confessing members shall have one elder delegate, and an elder delegate for each additional three hundred confessing members or fraction thereof. A church shall not have more than four such elder delegates. A church without an installed minister shall have an elder delegate who shall not be counted as one of the above delegates. An organizing church shall have one elder delegate. (BCO, 1.II.3)
2. The elder delegate to classis shall be chosen from the entire body of elders in a church, whether or not presently a member of the board of elders.
3. The elder delegate shall be a member of classis from the date of election or appointment and shall continue in that responsibility to classis until the effective date of election or appointment of a successor. If, however, confessing membership in the church represented shall be terminated during the period of appointment, the delegate shall cease to be a member of classis.
4. Elder delegates shall be seated if the assessments of the previous year from the church they represent have been paid or excused.

Section C. Commissioned Pastors and Non-RCA Ministers

1. Commissioned pastors and non-RCA ministers shall have the rights and privileges of classis membership for the period of the classis-approved service, but may not represent the classis in the higher judicatories, assemblies, agencies, or commissions of the Reformed Church in America.
2. A minister of another denomination who is actively serving either under the jurisdiction of or with the approval of the classis as a minister may be approved as a member of the classis. (BCO, 1.II.13.16) A minister from another denomination who is installed in a classis church shall be *ipso facto* a member of the classis. (BCO, 1.I.2.4)
3. A commissioned pastor serving with the approval of classis shall be a member of classis, but shall not serve as an elder delegate, during the period of commissioned service. (BCO, 1.II.17.9)

#### Section D. Corresponding Delegates

1. Corresponding delegates fully participate in classis but cannot vote, make motions, or be elected to office unless otherwise eligible.
2. All licensed candidates under the care of the SW Michigan Classis shall be corresponding delegates.
3. Each member church shall appoint one deacon as a corresponding delegate.
4. All members of the teams or committees appointed by the classis shall be corresponding delegates, if they are not already members of the classis or appointed as an elder delegate.

#### Section E. Voting Rights & Leave of Absence

1. Voting rights shall be limited to elder delegates and those enrolled ministers and commissioned pastors who are actively serving either under the jurisdiction of or with the approval of the classis.
2. Only duly accredited delegates to classis shall be entitled to vote. Elder delegates are accredited by the classis clerk upon receipt of written notice of their appointment by the clerk of consistory in advance of the classis meeting.
3. All delegates are expected to attend every stated session unless a request for a leave of absence is submitted in writing to the stated clerk in advance of the meeting.

### **Article II. Sessions of Classis**

#### Section A. Stated (Regular) Sessions

1. Stated sessions of classis shall be held the fourth Tuesday of September and February.
2. The time and location of all stated sessions shall be determined by the Leadership Team following a rotation schedule of host churches.
3. All classis sessions shall begin and end with prayer. Stated sessions shall include a time for worship. (*BCO*, 1.II.4.1)
4. The presence of (a) a majority of the elder delegates and commissioned pastors and (b) a majority of those ministers who are actively serving in ministries under the jurisdiction of the classis is required to transact business. (*BCO*, 1.II.4.1)
5. Notice of the date, time, place, and agenda of the stated session shall be sent to all delegates at least ten days before each session of classis.

#### Section B. Special Sessions

1. The president of classis shall call a special session of classis whenever special business requires it or upon the written request of two ministers and two elder delegates. (*BCO*, 1.II.4.2)
2. At least ten days' notice of any special session shall be given to all the ministers, commissioned pastors, elder delegates, and corresponding delegates of the classis. The notice shall state the purpose of the special session, along with the time and place of the session. (*BCO*, 1.II.4.2)
3. No business shall be transacted at special sessions except for that set forth in the notice of the meeting, unless three-fourths of the members present vote to

- consider additional business.
4. The presence of three ministers and three elder delegates shall constitute a quorum to transact the business stated in the notice of a special session. (BCO, 1.II.4.2)
  5. Ordination and installation services shall be considered special sessions of the classis. The appointment of minister and elder delegates needed to guarantee a quorum shall be done on a rotating basis. Any such delegate appointed to attend a special session must find their own substitute if they cannot attend the session.
  6. Special sessions for the examination of students of theology for licensure, licensed candidates for ordination, and commissioned pastor candidates shall be scheduled as needed.

### **Article III. Responsibilities of the Classis**

#### Section A. Constitutional Responsibilities

The classis shall fulfill the responsibilities listed in the Book of Church Order (1.II.2), including a general superintendence over its enrolled ministers and over the interests and concerns of the churches within its bounds. The classis shall exercise all ecclesiastical functions in accord with the Government of the Reformed Church in America which are not specifically delegated to other assemblies.

#### Section B. Transaction of Business

The classis shall be guided in its transaction of business by those rules set forth in these bylaws and the most recent edition of *Robert's Rules of Order* except as is otherwise specified in the Policy and Procedures of the SW Michigan Classis, and which are in accord with the Government of the Reformed Church in America. The classis shall be incorporated within the State of Michigan.

### **Article IV. Officers**

#### Section A. Officers

1. The officers of the classis shall be the president, stated clerk and the classis treasurer. The classis leader shall serve as president.
2. An elder elected as an officer shall be a member of classis from the date of election and shall continue as a member until the effective date of election or appointment of a successor, or when active confessing membership in the RCA ends.

#### Section B. Selection of Officers

1. The classis leader, stated clerk, and treasurer shall be employed by the Leadership Team. The classis leader, treasurer, and stated clerk shall be compensated for services rendered.

#### Section C. Duties of Officers

1. The president shall preside at classis sessions. It shall be the duty of the

president to state and explain the business to be transacted, to enforce the rules of order, and, in general, to maintain the decorum and dignity belonging to the church of Jesus Christ. Additional duties of the president will be listed in the Policy and Procedures Manual of the SW Michigan Classis.

2. A minister or elder approved by the Leadership Team shall preside in the absence of the president.
3. The classis leader will be responsible for the formation and functioning of the teams and clusters within the classis and shall perform other duties listed in the Policy and Procedures Manual of the SW Michigan Classis.
4. The treasurer shall record all the assessments of the classis, pay all bills of the classis, provide financial reports for the classis, and perform other duties as listed in the Policy and Procedures Manual of the SW Michigan Classis.
5. The stated clerk shall keep a faithful record of all the proceedings of the classis, and furnish official notices in writing to all who are directly affected by decisions of the classis. The clerk shall perform other duties as listed in the Policy and Procedures Manual of the SW Michigan Classis.

## **Article V. Leadership Team**

### Section A. Definition

The Leadership Team shall consist of the president /classis leader, treasurer, stated clerk, lead pastor cluster leaders (5), and five (5) elders. The classis leader, treasurer, and stated clerk serve ex-officio without vote on this team.

Section B. The Lead Pastor Cluster Leaders will be selected from their respective clusters and the five elders serving on the Leadership Team will be chosen by their cluster to serve three year terms.

### Section C. Duties

The Leadership Team shall be empowered to act on behalf of the classis between stated sessions except as otherwise provided in the *Book of Church Order*. The Leadership Team shall serve as the directors of the corporation as defined by non-profit law within the State of Michigan. The Leadership Team shall perform other duties as listed in the Policy and Procedures Manual of the SW Michigan Classis.

### Section D. Communication

The Leadership Team shall communicate its decisions to the consistories and members of the Classis through the publication of the minutes of its meetings.

## **Article VI. Other Teams**

Other teams are listed in the Policy and Procedures Manual of the SW Michigan Classis. Except as otherwise provided in the *Book of Church Order* or the Policy and Procedures Manual of the SW Michigan Classis, members of classis teams, committees, commissions, or boards shall be enrolled ministers of classis, , commissioned pastors, or confessing members of the churches in the classis.

## Article VII. Delegates to the Synods

### Section A. Eligibility

1. Eligibility to represent the classis at General Synod and Synod of the Great Lakes shall be limited to elders appointed by the churches and those ministers who are actively serving under the jurisdiction or with the approval of the classis.
2. Ministers who have been declared retired or without charge before January 1 are not eligible to attend the synods as delegates from the classis.
3. Minister delegates shall be members of the SW Michigan Classis at least one year previous before being appointed as a delegate to the synods.
4. No minister shall attend the synods as a delegate who has been absent without excuse from the last two preceding stated sessions of classis at the time of appointment.
5. No church shall be asked to appoint an elder delegate who has not sent an elder to the last two preceding stated sessions of classis at the time of appointment.
6. Churches that have not paid their classical assessments for the previous year shall forfeit their right to send an elder delegate to the synods.
7. Ministers who fail to attend after appointment and churches who fail to appoint an elder delegate when asked shall lose their place in the rotation list.

### Section B. Appointment of Delegates

1. Elder delegates to General Synod shall be from those churches that for the longest time have not been represented by elder delegates to General Synod. Those churches next in line shall be alternates.
2. Elder delegates to Synod of the Great Lakes shall be from those churches that for the longest time have not been represented by elder delegates to Synod of the Great Lakes. Those churches next in line shall be alternates.
3. Minister delegates to General Synod shall be those ministers who for the longest time have not attended General Synod as delegates. Those next in line shall be alternates. (The date of ordination, the date of transfer into the denomination, or the date of attendance at General Synod as a delegate from any classis shall be considered the "starting point.")
4. Minister delegates to Synod of the Great Lakes shall be those ministers who for the longest time have not attended Synod of the Great Lakes as delegates. Those next in line shall be alternates. (The date of ordination or the date of entrance into a classis of the Synod of the Great Lakes or the date of last attendance as a delegate to the Synod of the Great Lakes shall be considered the "starting point.")
5. No minister shall be appointed to attend more than one synod during a given year. The classis shall not ask a church to send an elder delegate to more than one synod in a given year. A minister delegate and an elder delegate from the same church may attend the same synod. Precedence shall be given to attendance at General Synod, unless the delegate is serving a second year as a delegate to the Synod of the Great Lakes.

## **Article VIII. Suspension & Amendment of Bylaws**

### Section A. Suspensions

These bylaws may be set aside for a single session of classis by a three-fourths vote of classis, provided the action does not contradict the *Book of Church Order*.

### Section B. Amendments

These bylaws may be amended by a two-thirds vote of classis, provided the proposed amendment has been presented to classis at the previous regular session.

### Section C. Other Policies and Procedures

The Policy and Procedures of the SW Michigan Classis may be amended by a majority vote of the Leadership Team, provided that notice has been given of the proposed amendment at the previous meeting. Any Policies and Procedures may not contradict these bylaws or any rules within the RCA *Book of Church Order*.