

## Great Lakes City Classis Affinity & Assurance REVISION

The Great Lakes City Classis was specifically formed in 2014 with the vision to equip, provide leadership, and direct resources towards increasing our effectiveness for Christ's Kingdom in a three-fold mission. This vision is expressed as the **Affinity** that binds us together in mission.

The 3-fold Mission of the GLCC is to prayerfully engage in:

1. Church Planting
2. Church Revitalization and Re-birth
3. Leadership Development

Our classis is uniquely positioned and resourced for this mission. This is the fruitful work we are doing together, and the fruitful work we will continue together as Pastors, Elders, Specialized Ministers, and Congregations. Each are a vital part of the Greater Body of Christ commissioned and called for this purpose, and also called to be together to love and offer mutual support to one another as a model of His Kingdom at work. This is how we wish to be known: by the **Affinity** that holds us together.

We do not wish to allow the increasing anxiety regarding the future of the Reformed Church in America (RCA) to side track us from our call, or to rob His Kingdom of the fruit we might produce together. Along with identifying our **Affinity**, the leadership of the GLCC is responding to the expressions of concerns within our classis by offering a steadfast **Assurance** in the midst of the conflict and division within our denomination and beyond, particularly over issues regarding human sexuality.

Aside from the debate and confusion, it is important to recognize that the official theological stance of the RCA remains unchanged. The numerous decisions and General Synod statements are easily accessed at [rca.org](http://rca.org), but is perhaps stated most succinctly when the General Synod of 2017 voted "to affirm that the Heidelberg Catechism Q&A 108 and 109 categorically states that God condemns 'all unchastity', which includes same-sex sexual activity, and that faithful adherence to the RCA's Standards, therefore, entails the affirmation that marriage is between one man and one woman."

Everyone who has become a member in the RCA has vowed to obey its doctrines and teachings, and those ordained for service also additionally *uphold* them. Those in our faith tradition are called to be "continually reforming to the Word of God," holding up Christ as the Living Word who speaks to us through His Holy Spirit. We are free to openly discuss how we respond to our faith and calling in healthy ways, always with Scripture as our final authority in all matters of faith and practice. As we interact and learn from one another in this process, we offer the **Assurance** that we continue to align our life and ministry with these standards and doctrinal statements.

In this, we also recognize that grace is an essential pillar of our faith tradition. The other side of this **Assurance** is that we, as broken people needing redemption, will refrain from sitting in judgment of others, recognizing we all share the same inner need. With love, and not hatred, with discernment and not judgment, with welcome and not rejection, we strive to discover how to come alongside all with the encouragement to walk towards the light and with Jesus.

In this statement of **Assurance**, we affirm both a faithful submission to the current RCA Standards and Doctrine, as well as the **Assurance** that we will adhere to the Great Command to love God and those

He Created, and the Great Commission to take the Gospel to all people. We love because he first loved us, and each are called in their particular brokenness to find our deepest needs met in Him.

In this context, our summary statement of this **Assurance** is that:

**We will stay the course; i.e.:**

1. Consistent with our membership and ordination vows, GLCC members will continue to adhere to the current RCA Standards and Doctrine, as supported by existing General Synod statements and judicial precedents regarding human sexuality.
2. GLCC members will continue our current practices a) of refraining from ordaining individuals who are living in active same-sex relationships and b) of not performing weddings for same-sex couples. If an individual or organization fails to follow these practices and charges are brought, we will enter a judicial session to determine how most effectively to lovingly restore those who have strayed from the expectations set by our General Synod statements.
3. GLCC members will remain committed to one another and our faithfulness to scripture as we navigate the challenges of working within a denomination where other classes hold to different interpretations of human sexuality.

This ongoing conversation about human sexuality involves people - real people we love: family members, friends, sons and daughters - who are gay or experiencing same-sex attraction or gender dysphoria and not knowing what to do with this, and who are assuming the church is simply hostile towards them. We both pray and seek ways to change that perception to one of love and a genuine openness without wavering, as we emulate the One who was fully Truth and immeasurable Grace.

It is important to note that this **Assurance** presumes no change in the denomination's stated theological position on marriage and human sexuality. If there were to be a change in the future, the GLCC would seek to keep our fruitful work and collegial body intact as we evaluate options for the possibility of collectively aligning with another association of missional churches.

We have a healthy and functional classis that has and will continue to bear fruit for His Kingdom. In this, we would first hope to be identified for our **Affinity**, as we plant and strengthen churches, training many leaders to further this mission. And as people of spiritual integrity, we are transparent and forthright, willing to be known as those who also offer the **Assurance** that we will remain faithful to the work and witness of the Reformed Church in America as we have promised, so long as this call remains upon us.

The GLCC Executive Team  
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