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### Meeting Notes of the Consistory of the First Reformed Church

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William Buursma

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9 October 1854

Holland, Michigan

Rev. Albertus C. Van Raalte opened the Consistory meeting of the First Reformed Church with prayer. The majority of those present (Elders Labots, Jonker, Hekhuis, and Appeldoorn and Deacon Keppel) opposed changing the present system for terms of service of consistory men. However, upon retirement of consistory men, they would become part of the "greater" consistory and could be called upon when their advice would be needed. Evidently there has been pressure from the congregation against long terms of service of consistory men. Also discussed were the continuing arrears in the pastor's salary. He had been promised \$600 per year but this amount had never been reached. The congregation had the responsibility to pay for family needs although his debts related to his "obligations in connection with the colony and lands" were his responsibility. Van Raalte said that it was necessary to speak about this matter of salary and not be silent. Several important matters were on the agenda of this meeting.

In Dutch; translation by Rev. William Buursma.

Original in the collection of the Pillar Christian Reformed Church at the Joint Archives of Holland, Hope College, volume I, pp. 102-107.

Meeting Held on October 9, 1854

Present were Elders Labots, Jonker, Hekhuis, Appeldoorn; Deacon Keppel; and Rev. van Raalte.

ARTICLE 1 – The meeting was opened with prayer by Rev. van Raalte.

ARTICLE 2 – The minutes were read and approved.

ARTICLE 3 – The question is asked concerning the conduct of the editor (of “The Hollander”) in connection with unorthodox writings. It is reported that he will discontinue printing the author and that it, therefore, would be best to let the matter rest.

ARTICLE 4 – The majority of the brothers express their opposition to the ordinary retirement of consistory members. They fear that this would mean the embracing of a principle which is contrary to God’s Word. This would also lead to an annual loss of experienced men serving in the consistory. Everything seems to point to a warning against changing the present system.

On the other hand, the retirement of officebearers in the Reformed Church tradition still makes it possible for the church to regularly call upon them for service in the ecclesiastical offices and they will continue to be acknowledged. The thought is expressed that if this custom

of a "greater" consistory would make it possible for the congregation to call upon former officebearers when there are weighty circumstances. This proposed enlarging of the congregational officers would make the consistory more representative of the congregation as a whole, leading to decisions compatible with the desires of the congregation. This arrangement would also provide for more frequent relief of those serving and will distribute the burdens of office more equitably, since it has become a well-grounded custom that only the pastors and teachers are reimbursed.

Furthermore, enlargement of the officebearers in the church by including those persons who are retired from active service, it will offer the opportunity to solicit more members from within the bosom of the congregation.

This will also help in avoiding the appearance of hierarchy and take away jealousy and opposition to the consistory. There is now some distancing of the congregation from the consistory, and this fact tends toward making the above changes.

The brethren declared themselves perfectly willing to

their office and to give opportunity to the congregation for an entirely new election., with the intent of removing any possibility of pressure and lording it over other. Since this matter is of extreme weightiness, it was decided not to make a specific decision at this time, but to prayerfully and diligently reflect upon the subject.

ARTICLE 5 – In connection with a synodical communication, calling for holding a congregational meeting on the last Wednesday of this month, with the purpose of studying whether the pastor and shepherd is being remunerated according to his needs, and making regulations to do so, a discussion was held concerning the arrears still owed to the pastor for the last five years. He had been promised \$600.00 salary in that period, but because of the increasing financial pressure, which has increased by one-third in recent years, it was judged appropriate to make an effort to make up the arrears.

Since bookkeeping was maintained only for the last three years, each member will be asked to give a written account of what he/she has given to the pastor during these years. This will make it possible to begin to make reparations, because we are convinced of our debt and our negligence.

The pastor, having been asked, testifies to his strong

desire and need to be able to earn the daily sustenance for his family. If provisions to do this were to be made, it would be reason for hearty thanksgiving on his part. He indicates that as long as he has labored here, he has had to ask the congregation for the support necessary to take care of the family needs. He considers it improper to divert the funds set aside to pay his debts for family needs. These debts are his responsibility because of obligations in connection with the colony and lands. He adds that as a Christian and father his civic responsibilities are also to be taken care of.

He adds that if the congregation does not provide for his support, his name, character, and ministry will be impacted. Many other citizens will suffer material consequences, and God's name will be slandered. He openly warns the brothers so that they cannot when it is too late accuse him of being silent concerning these matters. He brings into consideration whether it would not be better if the congregation finds the load of support for him and his family too heavy, it would be more fair and wiser to freely state this. This will avoid misleading and additional misery, and when it is too late regret this.

It was decided to set a time when the congregation will be called together, but not until a consistory meeting can be scheduled.

ARTICLE 6 - Brother Keppel presents correspondence with the county welfare officer, Mr. van Yck, concerning the support of recently arrived needy individuals. The county welfare agent made the scornful comment, among others, wondering why there is so little charity to be found in the people of the Reformed Dutch church, and why there is so much sectarianism, which leads to eliminating those who are not members of the congregation from benevolent support.

On behalf of the deacons, the following comment is made: In the first place, the monies collected in the congregation are designated for the widows, the sick, and the needy within the church. After that, it is their task to assist those who are outside, but not at the expense of the previously mentioned beneficiaries.

Moreover, it is not wise to unnecessarily place a burden upon the citizens living here, which would be the case if the town of Holland would assign to the congregation the task of caring for all of the newly arrived people needing assistance. According to the law, such expenditures are divided among the towns over the entire county. To respond to the welfare officer's request would mean that the congregation of Holland would first take responsibility for the burdens involving with newly arrived emigrants and then, in addition, they would still need to pay a tax to help needy emigrants living in other parts of the county. This would be unfair, especially since

the burden for support is already assessed inequitably, because the majority of needy emigrants (they are not few in number) settle here. Their needs are taken care of without any county financial support. In addition, the church pays its share for the expenses for all of the poor in the county.

ARTICLE 8 (sic) – Taking into consideration the ever-increasing needs of the poor fund, because of the high cost of living, the increase in the number of widows and need emigrants, it is decided: To encourage the congregation to increase their love offerings gradually and modestly each Lord's Day.

ARTICLE 9 – The elderly brother de Witt has, by reason of age, resigned as janitor and grave digger. It is decided that Brother Keppel will speak with Brother Westveer, who has been recommended for this position, about the requirements.

ARTICLE 10 – The meeting was closed with prayer by Brother Hekhuis.

A. C. van Raalte

MINUTES OF THE NINTH STREET CRC.,

OF

HOLLAND, MICHIGAN

November 5, 1850 – May 24. 1855

Volume I

*Rev. William Burgma,  
Translating*