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Dakota Classis

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Recommended Citation

Anderson, Douglas Firth, "Dakota Classis" (2021). *Finding Aids*. 9.

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Finding Aid

Reformed Church in America

DAKOTA CLASSIS ARCHIVES

1888 - 1977

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- Introduction
- Historical Notes
- Related Materials
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Introduction

The Dakota Classis Archives document the corporate institutional life of a regional classis of the Reformed Church in America based in South and North Dakota—and, at times, beyond—in the late nineteenth and the first three-fourths of the twentieth centuries. The records include the minutes of the classis and related material. Collectively, these archives provide evidence for the historical growth of a multi-generational Dutch-immigrant Protestant denomination in the trans-Mississippi prairies and northern plains over the span of almost a century.

Size: 58 cm

Provenance: Presumably, these records were deposited by one or more classis official.

Restrictions, copying, and permission to publish and citations: Use of these materials, copying, permission to publish and citations are subject to the specifications of the General Synod Council of the Reformed Church in America. Contact Archivist, Reformed Church in America Archives, 21 Seminary Place, New Brunswick, NJ 08901, Fax (732) 249-5412, E-mail archives@rca.org.

Processing Notes: This arrangement and finding aid were completed in 2015 by Doug Anderson.

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Historical Notes

The [Reformed Church in America](#) traces its beginnings to the celebration of communion in the colony of New Amsterdam in 1628 (the local church begun then exists today as the [Collegiate Reformed Church, New York City](#)). Although the Dutch colony became the British colony of New York later in the 17th century, services in the English language did not begin until the mid-18th century. After the American War of Independence, the Reformed denomination also established its independence from the Netherlands. The denomination was incorporated in 1819 as the Reformed Protestant Dutch Church; it became the Reformed Church in America in 1867.

Confessions: Historic statements of belief formally affirmed by the Reformed Church in America include the Apostles', Nicene, and Athanasian Creeds, the Belgic Confession, the Heidelberg Catechism, and the Canons of Dort.

Polity: Each local Reformed church has a consistory, consisting of lay elders and deacons (elected by the congregation), and ordained minister(s). The clerk of consistory is responsible for the minutes; the consistory itself is responsible for the oversight of the life and order of the local church.

Multiple congregations in a geographic area form a classis. The classis consists of elected lay delegates (elders) and all the ministers enrolled in the classis. It has charge of the process of the training, examination, ordination, and oversight of clergy. It also has charge of overseeing local churches within its geographic bounds, including authorizing new ones and disbanding ones deemed no longer viable.

Multiple classes (plural of classis) form regional synods. (An older terminology is “particular synod.”) Regional synods consist of clergy and lay delegates from classes.

The denomination’s highest body is the General Synod. Minister and lay delegates from classes and regional synods, along with other authorized delegates, together have general superintendence of the whole church.

The Classis of Dakota: Dakota Classis, still flourishing, was organized in Centerville (or Centreville), Dakota Territory, on May 18, 1888. This organization had been formally enabled earlier in the month by the action of the Particular Synod of Chicago, in answer to a petition from the Iowa Classis. Twelve already-existing congregations transferred from the Classis of Iowa to the new classis.

At first, the classis extended all the way to the Pacific Ocean. Montana had a local church in the classis in 1896, and Washington had two churches by 1903. These and other congregations were the fruit of not only local members but of the classical missionary, i.e., a minister assigned by the classis to plant and nurture new churches. The Rev. B.D. Dykstra was Classis Missionary from 1913-1921.

More recently, the classis boundaries have come to conform more closely to North and South Dakota as new classes have been organized.

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Related Materials

This collection is closely related to that of the Dakota Classis Disbanded Churches Record Group (see its finding aid). Since B.D. Dykstra was the classis missionary, his collection also has potential connections to this collection. Further, many congregations from the North Central Classis joined Dakota Classis in 1969 when North Central (formerly known as Germania) was dissolved see the Germania/North Central Classis finding aid).

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Arrangement

The Dakota Classis Archives is divided into six units of ledgers and boxes. The collection is essentially chronological. The detailed arrangement is as follows:

DAKOTA CLASSIS, 1888-1977			
BOX	FOLDER	CONTENTS	DATES
1 (ledger)		Minutes of the Classis of Dakota	1888-1905
2 (ledger)		Minutes of the Classis of Dakota	1905-1922
3 (ledger)		Minutes of the Classis of Dakota	1922-1925
4	notebook	Formulae for Ordination & Licensure	1922-1978
	notebook	Notula of Classis of Dakota	1915-1916
	notebook	[Notes]	1935-1943
	notebook	[Notes]	1939-1940
	notebook	[Notes]	1940-1942
	notebook	[Notes]	1942-1943
	notebook	[Notes]	1943-1950
	folder	[Minutes. Handwritten.]	1925-1927
	folder	[Minutes. Typed.]	1928-1930
	folder	[Minutes. Typed.]	1931
	folder	[Minutes. Typed.]	1932
	folder	[Minutes. Typed.]	1933
	folder	[Minutes. Typed.]	1934
	folder	[Minutes. Typed.]	1935
	folder	[Minutes. Typed.]	1936
	folder	[Minutes. Typed.]	1937
	folder	[Minutes. Typed.]	1938
	folder	[Minutes. Typed.]	1939-1940
	folder	[Minutes. Typed.]	1941-1942

	folder	[Minutes. Typed.]	1943
5	1	[Minutes. Typed.]	1944
	2	[Minutes. Typed.]	1945
	3	[Minutes. Typed.]	1946
	4	[Minutes. Typed.]	1947
	5	[Minutes. Typed.]	1948
	6	[Minutes. Typed.]	1949
	7	[Minutes. Typed.]	1950
	8	[Minutes. Typed.]	1951
	9	[Minutes. Typed.]	1952
	10	[Minutes. Typed.]	1953
	11	[Minutes. Typed.]	1954
	12	[Minutes and ms. of Van Bunschoten bequest.]	1955
	13	[Minutes. Typed.]	1956
	14	[Minutes. Typed.]	1957
	15	[Minutes. Typed.]	1958
	16	[Minutes. Typed.]	1959
	17	[Notes. Handwritten.]	1955-1959
6	binder	Minutes	1960-1967
	binder	Minutes	1967-1971
	binder	Minutes	1971-1977