



CLASSIS NIAGARA OF THE CHRISTIAN REFORMED CHURCH



Wednesday, February 17, 2010; 2.00 P.M.
Providence CRC, Beamsville

Chairman: Rev. James Dekker; **Vice-chairman:** Rev. Duane VanderLaan; **Stated Clerk:** John TeBrake

PRIOR TO MEETING, Delegates:

1. **Please bring and submit your Classical Credentials prior to the meeting**
2. **If this is your first time as a delegate to a Classis Niagara meeting, please read and sign the Form of Subscription.**

There will be a designated table for both the above

NOTE 1:

During this meeting of Classis Niagara, Minister and Elder Delegates to Synod of 2010 (June 12 to 19) need to be chosen. Please see Appendix A on page **9** this agenda with respect to rules and procedures Re Delegates to Synod.

The first minister delegate is to be chosen by free-vote election. The second minister delegate is to be chosen in rotation and for 2010 is **Rev. Derek Bouma**, Riverside CRC in Wellandport.

The following ministers were chosen by election (E) and rotation (R) for Classis Niagara delegates for the years shown:

2009: Revs. André Basson (E) and Ryan Braam (R)
2008: Revs. Jim Dekker (E) and Greg Fluit (R)
2007: Revs. Derek Bouma (E) and Harold Winter (R)
2006: Revs. Andrew Beunk (E) and Jim Dekker (R)
2005: Revs. Derek Bouma (E) and Walt VanderWerf (R)
2004: Revs. Pieter Heerema (E) and André Basson (R)
2003: Revs. Walt VanderWerf (E) and Jerry Hoytema (R)

Please indicate any nominations for ELDER DELEGATES, including why they are being nominated, on the reverse of your classical credential forms.

NOTE 2:

During this meeting is planned an examination of Brother Frank Engelage, at the request of the Bethel CRC, as Ministry Associate, for him to serve them as its Pastor of Congregational Life. The position description is at Appendix B on page 9 of this agenda, and needs Classis' approval, with Synodical Deputies written concurrence, that it fits the guidelines of Synod 2001 for Ministry Associate ordination. Rev. David Tigchelaar has agreed to conduct this examination. Please refer to Article 23-a of the Church Order for the details with respect to this procedure.

1. **Welcome and opening devotions**
2. **Constitution of Classis** by the Chairman, Rev. James Dekker
 - Credentials/roll call presented by the host church, Providence CRC
 - Acknowledgment of signing of first-time delegates.
 - Declare Classis constituted
3. **Time schedule:** meeting will **commence at 2:00 P.M.** Dinner is planned to be from 6:00 to approximately 7:15 P.M. Breaks will be scheduled at the call of the Chairman. Scheduled speakers include:
 - Ms. Ida Mutoigo, Director (Canada), CRWRC
 - A representative from the All Ontario Youth Convention

4. Committee appointment confirmations:

- 4.1 Credentials: Rehoboth (to Chair) and Covenant
- 4.2 Advisory re overtures: Trinity (to chair) and Smithville. See overture at Appendix C, pages 10-13
- 4.3 Advisory re appeal: Providence (to chair) and Bethel. See item 7 of the Executive Committee report on page 3

5. Classical Administrative Committee Reports

- 5.1 Executive Committee (*page 3*)
- 5.2 Stated Clerk / correspondence (*page 3*)
- 5.3 Treasurer report
- 5.4 Classis Ministry Leadership Team (*page 4*)
- 5.5 Classical Nominating Committee
- 5.6 Safe Church Team
- 5.7 Church Counselor reports: Rev. Steven deBoer, re Trinity; Rev. David Tigchelaar, re Fruitland; Rev. Greg Fluit, re Mountainview.
- 5.8 Regional Pastors' report: Rev. David Tigchelaar and/or Rev. Rudy Ouwehand

6. Classical Ministries Committee Report

7. Brock University Chaplain's Report (*page 6*)

8. Shalom Manor Chaplain's Report (*page 7*)

9. Church visitor reports:

- Rev. Rudy Ouwehand, Elder Lowell Witvoet – Smithville, Bethany, Fruitland, Bethel
- Rev. Henry Eshuis, Elder Cor VanSoelen – Jubilee Fellowship, Maranatha, Grace
- Rev. Jim Dekker, Elder Bill Thies – Rehoboth, Mountainview, Trinity
- Rev. Jerry Hoytema, Elder John VanHoffen – Providence, Riverside, Covenant

10. Report of Credentials Committee

11. Report of Advisory Committees:

- Overture Advisory Committee (Trinity and Smithville) re Overture from Riverside CRC with respect to the Belhar Confession (*Appendix C, pages 10-13*)
- Appeal Advisory Committee (Providence and Bethel) re personal appeal received

12. Denominational and Other Reports

- 12.1 Denominational reports: *provided as a separate document*
- 12.2 Redeemer University College (*page 8*)

13. Next meeting:

Date: May 26, 2010 **NOTE DATE ADJUSTMENT**

Agenda Deadline: April 1, 2010

Location: **INVITATIONS SOLICITED AND GLADLY RECEIVED!!**

Chairman: Rev. Duane VanderLaan

Vice-chairman: Rev. Richard Loerop

Credentials: Jubilee Fellowship (to chair) and Maranatha

Overture Advisory: Grace (to chair) and Riverside

Following meeting: October 21 2009 **INVITATIONS SOLICITED AND GLADLY RECEIVED!!**

14. Expressions of thanks and closing devotions

AGENDA ITEM 5.1: EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE REPORT

Report of Meeting, January 20, 2010

Present: Rev. Jim Dekker; Rev. Rudy Ouwehand; Frank Engelage; John TeBrake

1. Opening – Rev. Rudy Ouwehand
2. **Correspondence** to January 20 was dealt with (*see agenda item 5.2, below*)
3. **Agenda** for February 17 was reviewed and finalized.

Included on the agenda will be an examination of Mr. Frank Engelage under Church Order article 23-a, Ministry Associate. The council of the Bethel CRC has requested that Classis examine Mr. Engelage for the office of Ministry Associate. We will initiate this process in accordance with Article 23-a of the Church Order, and place this examination on the agenda of the February 17 meeting of Classis Niagara

4. **Church visiting teams** – the same visiting teams will be asked to serve for 2010, with a realignment of teams and churches which will be communicated after the visiting teams and churches are confirmed.
5. **Ad-hoc expense/ministries task force** – this task force was to have presented its report at the October 2009 meeting; however, there has been no report to date. The stated clerk has communicated with the chair of the task force, who has committed to a report for the May meeting of Classis.
6. **Update on incorporation & charitable registration:** the process has been delayed by a change in staff at the office of the solicitor, and a request from the ministry for a modest adjustment in the language of our application. However, the process remains active.
7. A **personal appeal** has been submitted to Classis by Mr. Ed Meyer. Providence and Bethel churches have been asked to provide an advisory committee to make recommendations with respect to the appeal.
8. Closing – Rev James Dekker

AGENDA ITEM 5.2: STATED CLERK/CORRESPONDENCE

Summary of correspondence to January 20, 2010

Note: all items will be available at the meeting of Classis, or can be made available beforehand

From other Classes, for information: Agendas and minutes from various neighboring Classes

Correspondence:

	<i>Item Dated</i>	<i>Item</i>	<i>Action</i>
1	Oct 23	Announcement to the Banner re February meeting of Classis Niagara	RFI
2	Oct 23	To Ms. Dee Recker, Director of Synodical Services CRCNA, presenting nominations from Classis Niagara to the Calvin College Board of Directors (Dr. André Basson, Rev. Richard Loerop, Mr. Bert deBolster)	RFI
3	Oct	From Rev. Gerard Dykstra, Executive Director CRCNA, an overview of the Board of Trustees, and highlights of the Sept 24-26 meeting of the BOT	RFI; this letter was also sent to all the churches
4	Nov 4	To individuals appointed by Classis (October 2009) to various committees and functions, to confirm their appointments	RFI

5	Dec 7	From Rev. Don Byker, Director of Mentored Ministries, Calvin Seminary, encouraging churches to apply for summer interns	RFI; forwarded to CMLT for information; this letter was also sent to Regional Pastors and to all churches
6	Dec 3; Jan 14	From Frank Engelage, Ministry/Worship Coordinator, Bethel CRC, Dunnville, and the Council of the Bethel CRC, requesting an examination for ordination as Ministry Associate	Examination included in Agenda for February 17; Classis will need to confirm that position description conforms to the Synod 2001 guidelines for Ministry Associate per CO Art. 23-a; please see Appendix B on page 9 for position description
7	Dec	From Jeanne Kallemeyn, on behalf of the Classis Renewal Ministry Team, requesting a list of paid classis staff in order that they can connect with various classis staff involved in ministry coordination, youth ministry, etc.	RFI; besides Stated Clerk and Treasurer, Cl. Niagara also has Ministry Coordinator, Youth Leader Coordinator
8	Dec 18	From Rev. Mark Stephenson, Interim Director of Chaplaincy and Care Ministry, CRCNA. The letter reminds classes that all ministers of the Word who hold credentials within a given classis are eligible for delegation to synod, in the context that some chaplains may not work within the classis that holds their credentials. These chaplains are eligible for delegation to Synod	RFI; the letter applies to Rev. Kevin Stieva, a chaplain in the armed forces with credentials held by Mountainview.
9	Dec 18	From Jamie VanderBerg, CRC chaplain at University of Guelph, re an upcoming event, part of their annual Christianity and Culture Lecture series	RFI; forwarded to pastors in Classis Niagara
10	Jan 7	From the council of the Fruitland CRC, requesting that financial information (eg classical ministry shares) be provided directly from the Classis Treasurer to the individual church treasurers.	Communication has been forwarded to Ms. Emma Winter, Treasurer for Classis Niagara.
11	Jan 11	From Ms. Hilda Vander Klippe, Ministry Developer for Prayer and Evangelism, CRHM, bringing attention to the idea of forming a church plant fund with funds available as the financial support to the Village Church decreases over time	RFI; pending report of ad hoc finance/admin review committee expected in May 2010

AGENDA ITEM 5.4: CLASSICAL MINISTRY LEADERSHIP TEAM

CMLT Mandate Changes

Approximately 4 years ago the Student Fund was asked to transform its self into the present CMLT. According to denominational requirements that CMLT was to be formed with at least 50% of it's members being ordained pastors. At that time we set up the committee to include "4 members, three of whom must be ordained pastors." The tasks are laid our as follows;

Committee Members and Their Tasks: (4 members, three of whom must be ordained pastors)

Chair: The chairperson sets the agenda for all meetings, reports to Classis regarding the work of the CMLT, directs requests for information regarding CMLT and its support policies and procedures, and ensures that the general work of CMLT is completed.

Secretary/Treasurer: This combined position is the responsibility of the non-ordained member. They are

responsible for recording minutes of the meetings, maintaining records of students who are being supported including current addresses, handling all correspondence, placing notices in bulletins as well as denominational publications to inform students that applications for financial aid will be received, and disbursing funds for students.

One Committee Member: Appointed annually to arrange a Classical Seminary Sunday so that students supported by Classis Niagara who are licensed to exhort may be given an opportunity to exhort in the churches of Classis Niagara.

The Three Ordained Committee Members: Will work with prospective students and those already supported by Classis Niagara, with a view to help them to understand the Candidacy Process and to encourage them by way of direct interaction, prayer, teaching, and communication.

What we have discovered over the last number of years is that this committee should be able to function with only two ordained pastors. So this past year we began to wonder about the possibility of replacing one of the ordained pastors on our committee with a second lay person. This person would need to have a passion for ministry and for encouraging individuals in their pursuit of ordained ministry. For this reason;

We the CMLT of Niagara Recommend the following changes to our Mandate

1. That our committee be composed of 4 members, 2 of whom must be ordained.
2. The second lay member would have a passion for ministry and a desire to encourage individuals in their pursuit of ordained ministry.
3. This lay person would be responsible for helping to organize a seminary Sunday as well as be willing to make contact and encourage any perspective students or students our committee is assisting through the ordination process.

Grounds

1. Having one less ordained pastor on our committee would allow for that individual to serve on another committee of Classis
2. We want to ensure that this 2nd lay member has a defined job description so as to ensure they are empowered to do the work on the committee.
3. We simply don't need 3 ordained pastors on the committee.

The changes to the mandate will be as follows

Committee Members and Their Tasks: (4 members, **two** of whom must be ordained pastors)

Chair: The chairperson sets the agenda for all meetings, reports to Classis regarding the work of the CMLT, directs requests for information regarding CMLT and its support policies and procedures, and ensures that the general work of CMLT is completed.

Secretary/Treasurer: This combined position is the responsibility of the non-ordained member. They are responsible for recording minutes of the meetings, maintaining records of students who are being supported including current addresses, handling all correspondence, placing notices in bulletins as well as denominational publications to inform students that applications for financial aid will be received, and disbursing funds for students.

2nd lay Committee Member: Will be responsible to arrange a Classical Seminary Sunday so that students supported by Classis Niagara who are licensed to exhort may be given an opportunity to exhort in the churches of Classis Niagara. ***As well as assist the other members of the committee as they make contact with and encourage any perspective students or students our committee is assisting through the ordination process***

The Two Ordained Committee Members: Will work with prospective students and those already supported by Classis Niagara, with a view to help them to understand the Candidacy Process and to encourage them by way of direct interaction, prayer, teaching, and communication.

AGENDA ITEM 7: BROCK UNIVERSITY CHAPLAIN'S REPORT

Brock Christian Reformed Campus Ministry
Report to Classis Niagara: January 2010

Dear Members of Classis,

Recently, a former student phoned me from Kirgistan – yes, I didn't quite know where Kirgistan was either! - just to say "hi." These days, it seems young Canadians are finding jobs in the strangest of places. His phone call (he called quite a few times thereafter) as well as a Christmas card I received from two other students who are currently teaching English in South Korea, not to mention the many emails and postcards from near and far, are a constant reminder that once students graduate, those who have been involved in campus ministry want to stay connected, no matter where they are in the world. For the first few years after they graduate, many of these students remain "ecclesiastically challenged" in the sense that for many reasons they resist committing to or connecting with a church in the area where they now reside and, instead, prefer to still regard the CRC Campus Ministry as their spiritual home and the campus minister as their pastor, at least for the time being. The CRC Campus Ministry and the campus minister therefore continue to play a key role, especially in helping them through this transitional phase in their life (not to mention the numerous weddings at which he is invited to officiate!). In some cases, we have even become a lifeline for former students who are struggling with post parting depression, i.e. the difficulty of facing the emotional and financial stresses of life after university.

Unlike congregational ministry that enjoys a fairly stable membership, campus ministry has to contend with the fact that every year many of its students and even student leaders graduate. Although this is partly compensated for by new students also entering the university every year, it still makes it difficult to build a congregation in the traditional sense of the word. But we can come close by staying in touch with our students who have already graduated, if only to guide them in their spiritual growth until they find a new home church. On the other hand, this constant inflow and outflow of students means we have amazing potential for establishing a virtually unlimited alumni-base that will soon be strong enough – at least this is one of our main long-term goals - to help make this ministry increasingly self-supporting.

However, by far our most dramatic growth this past year has come through on-campus ministry and teaching. These have enabled me to connect on various levels with more than a hundred students every week, not to mention the sizeable number of staff and faculty. We anticipate that our regular toonie-suppers will dramatically increase this number even further and make it possible to build relationships with many new students as well. In short, Brock CRC Campus Ministry can now legitimately claim to be one of the largest outreach ministries in Classis Niagara. The students we are reaching are, for the most part, from a non-Christian or even very secular background. Many of them also happen to be international students. We are especially grateful that we are able to do this despite the fact that we have voluntarily cut our budget by \$10,000. It is our aim to cut it by a further \$5,000. It is now an established fact as well as a source of great concern for the university that the anxiety levels of our students are at an all-time high and not even close to peaking, partly because of the depressed job market so many of them will be facing after graduation. To help combat the problem, Brock Student Counseling Services have invited a small number of faculty and staff including the CRC Campus Minister to enroll for an online course on suicide prevention. There are also many students who are too financially strapped to afford a decent meal every day. International students find themselves in an even more precarious situation. Because many lack proper clothing for the Canadian winters, Campus Ministry has recently been approached by the Dean of Graduate students to see where we can help. We hope that in addition to this, the toonie-suppers will also offer some relief and serve as an example of true incarnational ministry.

In October, Brock CRC Campus Ministry again hosted a Thanksgiving Dinner for international students. The event was enormously successful with approximately a hundred and twenty five students from all over the world attending. But what was most gratifying was the generous support we received from so many congregations of Classis Niagara. Without their help the evening would not have been possible.

In the next few months, we also hope to launch a whole new series of events, book-discussions and service projects for our Christian students. Although mission trips abroad are all the rage these days, they are becoming very expensive and often the underlying intentions are, in my honest opinion, somewhat questionable. As a result, we are currently looking at the possibility of participating in short term CRWRC social justice projects much closer to home, probably in the US.

I am also pleased to report that relations with Brock Christian Fellowship and Campus for Christ could not be better. These two groups represent in excess of two hundred Christian students on campus and now often regard the CRC Campus Minister as their main spokesperson and even *ex-officio* chaplain.

Beginning May 2010, I will begin my first term as secretary / treasurer of the CRC Campus Ministry Association (US and Canada). Academic credentials are of vital importance if a campus minister wishes to be accepted as fully part of the university community. Being able to teach has been very helpful in this regard. I have already been invited to teach again in the 2010/2011 academic year. Furthermore, the editor of one of the most prestigious academic review journals for Classics in the English-speaking world, *The Classical Review*, has recently invited me to write a review of a book on the so-called Great Persecution of the Christians launched by the emperor Diocletian in 303. I have just been informed that the article has been accepted for publication.

I continue to consider it a privilege to be able to preach regularly in the congregations of Classis Niagara and even in CRC and non-CRC (mainly RCA and Mennonite) churches further afield. I may just mention that I have been preaching almost every Sunday since last June, without even taking some time off for vacation. However, my commitments on campus for the next few months now force me to cut back on the number of preaching engagements, at least until May.

Finally, Classis Niagara has been supporting a campus ministry at Brock for almost a quarter of a century. Isn't it high time the ministry returns the favour? By virtue of his work, the campus minister has to stay in touch with almost every area of theology as well as new trends in ministry. In many respects, so many of the challenges facing campus ministry today are the very same challenges churches will have to face tomorrow. This makes the campus minister an excellent resource person. Hopefully, churches of Classis Niagara will in the future be more willing to make use of his services in this regard!

I wish to conclude by re-affirming how truly blessed I feel in this ministry and how very grateful I am to Classis Niagara for continuing to support it. Since taking up this position five years ago, I have been approached to apply for a number of positions elsewhere, including a professorship in Church History and, more recently, that of Director of Chaplaincy of the CRC in North America. In each case, I turned it down because I believe now more than ever before in the importance and the future of this ministry.

Submitted in Christ
André Basson

AGENDA ITEM 8: SHALOM MANOR CHAPLAIN'S REPORT

Report of Chaplaincy Ministry at Shalom Manor & Gardens

At the beginning of a new year, it is a good time to reflect on the year gone past. It has been a year of changes and constants. I will write about the changes first.

This past year is the first year that the residents of Shalom Manor & Gardens have worshiped in English only. To ease the transition, we sing at least one song in the Dutch language per service. Over the year, the residents have noted a marked improvement in my pronunciation of the title of the Dutch song. There are less smiles and quiet laughter when I announce the title of the Dutch song. While there are less smiles and laughter at that time in worship, there are more children, young people and families sitting with their opas and omas during our worship services. This adds a healthy and enjoyable dimension to our worship services. I have not encountered any negativity with our decision to worship in the English language only.

On New Year's day, the first and second Sunday of January, Shalom Manor & Gardens were in an "outbreak." This means that because of illness, residents are not permitted off of their floors. On the given day of worship, I, together with a music accompanist, and a few volunteer singers, go through the worship liturgy in the auditorium. A person from the recreation department videos the service. The service is then transmitted live to the big screen t.v.s in the lounges on each floor and to the t.v.s in the resident's rooms. It is strange to preach in an empty auditorium, I miss receiving facial feedback from the worshipers; but, the residents are able to gather and to worship.

Another new thing this past year is a communal reflection about the resident who has just passed away. This reflection takes place on the floor of the deceased resident a day after his/her dying. In a sense, this reflection

mirrors the purpose which funerals serve in the “outside” society. It is a time of remembering and giving thanks. It helps to bring closure for the living residents.

These are the major changes that have taken place. The constant has been and is God’s faithfulness to God’s children who are old. Day after day, I have seen God give strength to each resident that was sufficient for the day.

The last thing that I will write about is the “dying of residents.” This has gotten harder for me. When I first started in this position, I sat with, ministered to and watched the dying die. In most cases, I did not know them. That has changed. Today, when I sit with, minister to and watch a person die, I often know the person quite well, sometimes I call the dying person, friend. After the resident’s death, I miss them. Often, I meet and come to know members of the resident’s family. Sometimes, a member of the resident’s family worships with us every Sunday. I come to know those family members well. When a resident dies, I mourn the resident’s death and mourn the loss of contact with the family members. It’s kind of a double death.

Within a short while, I walk down the corridor where a dead resident lived. Inevitably, I look into his/her former room. I see new furniture. I see an unfamiliar, elderly person sitting in a comfortable chair, looking uncomfortable, lost and forlorn. I knock, put a smile on my face, and walk in. A new ministry begins. And, we begin a new year.
Submitted by Chaplain Rev. FredVanderBerg

AGENDA ITEM 12.1: DENOMINATIONAL REPORTS

Report provided separately.

AGENDA ITEM 12.2: REDEEMER UNIVERSITY COLLEGE REPORT

REDEEMER UNIVERSITY COLLEGE ~ Fall/Winter Report 2009-1



Greetings from Redeemer. We trust that you have been blessed during this Advent and Christmas season as we have celebrated our Lord’s birth.

As the first semester of the 2009-10 academic year is drawing to a close, we praise God for his many wonderful blessings. Our total enrolment is 918 students (or 865 FTE—full-time equivalent), an increase of 52 students over last year. We were extremely pleased with the publication of the *Globe & Mail’s* annual “University Report” in October. Redeemer did very well in many important areas, including an “A+” in overall student satisfaction, for which we can be thankful and rightfully proud.

We are encouraged by the spiritual, intellectual and cultural vitality on our campus. Our theme this year, “*The Truth Shall Set You Free*,” has been woven through our chapels and various other campus events. We have also launched a new adult education program called C.L.E.A.R. (Continuous Learning & Education at Redeemer), which is off to an amazing start this fall. Our students continue to show leadership in volunteering in various downtown ministries and participating in mission and service opportunities.

Work on the various projects around the Academic Building is well under way, while preparations for the Soccer Dome project are proceeding with a planned construction start date of March 2010 and a completion date of August. We hope to include a small native garden as part of the planning for the new soccer complex, in order to honour the presence of the first nations village that was uncovered on the site last spring.

Our faculty have thrown themselves with enthusiasm into their teaching and scholarship this Fall term. We are working to fill two full-time faculty positions, in Philosophy to replace the late Dr. Theo Plantinga, and in Psychology to replace Dr. Charles Hackney who plans to leave at the end of the fall term to take up an academic position elsewhere.

On November 11 we enjoyed the sixth annual Bernard Zylstra Lectures, given by Dr. John Witte, Jr. who spoke on “*From Contract to Covenant: Rediscovering the Fundamentals of Marriage*”. On January 13, 2010, Dr James

Payton, Jr. will give an evening public lecture, jointly sponsored by the Association for Reformed Institutions for Higher Education (ARIHE), on the legacy of John Calvin. On January 22, Stephen Lewis will speak and be part of a panel on the topic of global health. Please see our website for more details on these and other events on campus. We look forward to having many of you attend the annual Ministers' Conference on **Tuesday, March 2, 2010**. More details will follow in a special letter of invitation.

In this final year of my presidency, the *Legacy Campaign* fundraising initiative that are working on is showing results that continue to amaze us. We look forward to a balanced budget for this year and are more than halfway to our goal of eliminating our \$30 million long-term capital debt, with \$5 million in current gifts and \$12 million in planned giving. The farewell tour of 10 centres around the province (seven in Western Ontario and three in Eastern Ontario) has been completed.

The Presidential Search Committee is on schedule with their process to find a new President, having interviewed a short list of candidates, and hopes to bring a candidate to the Board no later than early March. Your prayers for this process as they seek the person of God's choosing are appreciated.

We thank you again for your ongoing support of Redeemer through prayer and the financial giving of your congregations. May the Lord bless you in your ministry.

Dr Justin Cooper, President

APPENDIX A: EXCERPT FROM RULES AND PROCEDURES RE DELEGATES TO SYNOD

G. DELEGATES TO SYNOD

1. At its January [thus now February] meeting, Classis shall appoint one minister delegate and alternate by a rotation schedule, and one minister delegate and alternate by the free vote method. (*Jan 21, 2001*) At its meeting of *Sept. 17, 2003*, Classis approved the following process:
 - the first minister delegate is elected by free vote;
 - the minister having the greater than 50% of the votes and the highest number of votes would be the first minister delegate
 - the minister with the next highest number of votes would be the first minister alternate
 - the minister with the third highest number of votes would be the second minister alternate
 - then the second minister delegate is chosen by rotation, in alphabetical order of location of church. If a minister is unable to serve or if the church is vacant, the rotation moves to the next in alphabetical order
 - A minister shall have served the churches of classis Niagara for at least 12 months before being eligible to be delegated to Synod.
2. Councils are encouraged to submit the names of elders willing and able to serve in this capacity on their credentials to the February meeting of Classis.
3. Elder delegates may request reimbursement for lost wages up to the amount determined by Classis.

APPENDIX B: JOB DESCRIPTION FOR PASTOR OF CONGREGATIONAL LIFE, BETHEL CRC, DUNNVILLE

Bethel Christian Reformed Church Pastor of Congregational Life - Job Description

Purpose:

The Pastor of Congregational Life will help promote the ministry of the church by helping individuals find opportunities to use their gifts in meaningful ways and by planning for and implementing all ministries which enfold new members and provide for the nurture and fellowship of all members.

Duties:

1. Equipping
 - a) Identify ministry needs at Bethel and encourage team members to develop further ministry opportunities.
 - b) Insure that a person identified to fill a particular need is placed in that position.
 - c) Insure that there is adequate training for all positions into which people are placed.
 - d) Do a routine follow-up to assess each placement.

- e) Offer Spiritual Gifts classes on a regular basis and maintain a list of people who will be invited to the class. Keep a Spiritual Gift inventory
- f) Insure that the congregation is aware of ministry opportunities at Bethel Church and in the community. This can be done by weekly bulletin announcements, the mailboxes, etc.

2. Congregational Life

- a) Provide leadership and management of various ministries: including but not limited to; Ushers, Greeters, Youth Advisory, Library
- b) Oversee all ministries under Congregational Life. Ensure that coordinators of each group understand their responsibilities and have access to supplies needed.
- c) Recruit people to fill volunteer leadership (coordinator) positions in each area. (Not responsible to find the volunteers in each ministry area).
- d) Provide training and encouragement to coordinators.

3. Executive and Full Council:

- a) Serves as a non voting member providing administrative support
- b) Complete all tasks that may be assigned by Executive
- c) Serve as a resource to the Elders and Deacons

4. Worship:

- a) Assists Lead Pastor in planning and leading worship
- b) Implements agreed upon worship plans
- c) Coordinates the sound and video projection teams
- d) Prepares the visuals for use in weekly worship
- e) Ensure effective communication of worship goals with praise teams and musicians and other worship participants
- f) Other ministry tasks in consultation with Lead Pastor
- g) Serves as a non voting member of the Worship Committee

Working relationships:

Responsible to: Lead Pastor and Worship Committee for worship, the Council chair for administrative details, and the Council through a monthly written report and a yearly evaluation of job performance.

Works closely with: Congregation members; Committee/Team leaders; Pastor & Staff

Qualifications:

- a) Possesses a personal belief in the Lord Jesus Christ as Savior.
- b) Possesses a solid grasp of Biblical Knowledge and Reformed Theology
- c) Evidences a lifestyle consistent with Scripture
- d) Member of Bethel and in agreement with stated vision and mission.
- e) Be able to communicate effectively.
- f) Be able to establish good working relationships between people and have relational problem solving skills.

Time required: 40 hours a week (average).

APPENDIX C: OVERTURE FROM RIVERSIDE CRC, WELLAND RE BELHAR CONFESSION

Adopt the Belhar as a Testimony not a Confession

Preamble

The Synod of 2009 proposed *“to Synod 2012 the adoption of the Belhar Confession as part of the standards of unity of the CRC (as a fourth confession).”* Ground 8 of this proposal *“allow[s] for a three-year period of reflection (2009-2012) . . . The additional time is given to the churches to adequately study and reflect on the proposal and be better prepared for response.”*

This overture is a response to Synod’s recommendation to study and reflect on the Belhar Confession. We hope that this overture will be a helpful addition to this study period and that this overture will be received as part of Synod’s discussion in 2012.

Introduction

Racism is a terrible sin that has humiliated, belittled and destroyed countless people through the ages. Throughout history racism has taken on many forms. It has appeared as slavery, oppression, Apartheid, and the Holocaust to name a few forms. Regardless of its form, racism effectively denies that all people are created in the image of God. Scripture makes it clear that in Christ there are no divisions of race. In Christ “there is no Greek or Jew, circumcised or uncircumcised, barbarian, Scythian, slave or free, but Christ is all, and is in all” (Colossians 3:11, NIV).

Unfortunately the Church has not always proclaimed this truth. Some churches have remained silent about racism while others have manipulated scripture to make racism appear acceptable, even honourable. In both silence and endorsement the sin of racism has been perpetuated in Dutch Reformed churches. The sin of Apartheid isn't something that happened in South Africa; it is the sin of our family. This pains us as a family and causes much regret.

We are thankful to our brothers and sisters in South Africa who have done much hard work in promoting reconciliation and peace where there has been division. We are thankful for the time and efforts that they have poured into the Belhar Confession. We are grateful that they have shared the Belhar Confession with us, as it reminds us how easily racism can hide in our churches.

In North America churches have also struggled with the sin of racism. Historically we recognize our endorsement of slavery and continued mistreatment of people of colour. In fact, this was predated by mistreatment and often outright slaughter of Native Americans. In both situations our treatment of people with different colour skin is disgraceful and offensive to God. We recognize that racism isn't simply a historical problem. It continues today in the way we perceive people of Mid-Eastern descent with fear, especially since the 9/11 attacks. We must also note our disrespectful treatment of many legal and illegal immigrants.

History of Racism in the CRC

The CRCNA, while not guiltless, has not remained quiet on the issue of racism and in numerous cases has put words into action. In 2007 Synod recognized that the decision to send missionaries to China instead of Africa “was motivated in part by racist values.” For this reason we took time to pray and to confess our sin as a denomination.

This wasn't the only time our denomination has struggled with racist tendencies. The Timothy Christian School situation in Cicero, Illinois in the 60s is just one example of that. Another would be the white flight mentality as we moved our churches into the suburbs to avoid contact with the increasingly coloured community that moved into the cities.

In all of this we recognize that we can't ignore the reality of racism in our churches and in our denomination. We must fight against this sin as we seek to love and embrace our fellow humans regardless of race or colour or ethnic background.

The Benefits of the Belhar Confession

It's into this context that we receive the Belhar Confession. This document does well in its call to reconciliation and healing. It is a call to unity and a call to love each other regardless of our differences. Given our continent's and our own denomination's history, this is an important document because it forces us to wrestle with racism.

Belhar is an articulation of our need for unity and respect for the diversity God has created in the world he loves. We also recognize its desire to remain true to God's Word. After reading through this document one would find it very difficult to argue against its basic premise from a Biblical basis. For this reason we see value in this document within our context in the CRCNA. At the same time we also note some significant concerns about this document.

Theological Concerns

The Belhar Confession leaps into social matters before establishing a Gospel foundation. It rightly points out Christ's concern for the unity of the church. Citing John 17:20-23 the Belhar notes **“that this unity must become visible so that the world may believe that separation, enmity and hatred between people and groups is sin which Christ has already conquered, and accordingly that anything which threatens this unity may have no place in the church and must be resisted.”** This visible aspect of unity is a necessary component of declaring the Lordship of Jesus Christ. However, we must be careful that we keep our emphases in proper order.

The Belhar Confession states humanity's need for unity in such strong terms that it renders unclear humanity's greater need for reconciliation with God through Jesus Christ. In John 17:21b Jesus emphasizes that the heart of evangelism is union with God the Father and God the Son when says to the Father **“May they also be in us so that the world may believe that you have sent me.”** Christ's followers are unified not first in how they

act, but first as they know a more significant union with God through the blood of Christ. Union with each other serves as evidence of this more significant union with God. We fear that the Belhar is aiming only for the fruit of true conversion not the root of the unity problem – being reconciled to God!

The preceding observation is evidence that the Belhar may be theologically unclear. There is a confusion of theological emphasis as it appears to place primary importance on horizontal unity with man, as though this will strengthen our vertical unity with God. This emphasis appears to parallel a humanistic assumption that the human race can better itself through our own hard work - in this case the hard work of race reconciliation. Little emphasis is given to human depravity and our need to first be reconciled to God through Christ by means of Christ's atonement and the Spirit's power. Jesus evidenced this in his summary of the Law in Matthew 22:34-40. Loving God above all must lead to love for his image bearers. The Belhar's human-centered theology will in the end fail to achieve results because it is centered on people first before God.

When we consider racism in this light, we realize that racism is a much more serious issue. Racism is not simply harmful feelings or actions between those of different coloured skin. Racism is a symptom of a heart that has not been reconciled to God. To this end, racism causes us grave concern, not only for the victims of racism, but for the perpetrators of racism considered before their God. Therefore, when the Belhar Confession focuses only on the fruit of conversion – .viz, unity with humanity – it effectively bypasses a much more serious need for the perpetrators of racism to be reconciled to God through the blood of Christ.

A second concern that we have is with the Belhar's statement "***we reject any doctrine which explicitly or implicitly maintains that descent or any other human or social factor should be a consideration in determining membership of the church.***" The term "social factor" is much too ambiguous. Religion itself can be categorized as a social factor. To this end, the Belhar can very easily be used to propagate a theology of universalism.

Furthermore, we should recognize that the Gospel itself is on occasion divisive in nature. In Luke 12:49-53, Jesus says he is not bringing peace but division. As Jesus speaks from there he talks about division which will happen within families as a result of the gospel. Given that this division will happen within a family system, this division is obviously not based on descent, but is likely based on social factors. As Christians we are called to live according to a different standard than the world. What secular society deems as acceptable behavior, is often much different than how Christ calls us to live. Even these basic parameters of belief fall under the category of "social factor."

Third, we are concerned with where the Belhar stands in relation to our current three Forms of Unity. Since the Belhar calls for a rejection of all theology that does not encourage unity, this appears to place the Belhar at odds with our other three confessions given that these confessions themselves point to a division between members of the church. They were written to distinguish the beliefs of Reformed churches from other theological traditions of the day. In our current Reformed Confessions we discover language referring to the Mass as "condemnable idolatry" (Q&A # 80) and detesting the "errors of the Anabaptists" (Art. 34 Belgic). Historically, the CRCNA has taken issue with these statements in our current confessions and has opted not to change these confessions due to the historical nature of these documents. Rather, these oppositions have been noted as footnotes in subsequent printings of these documents. Since the CRCNA has chosen not to alter our existing confessions these divisive words still stand. This implies that if we were to receive the Belhar confession as a fourth confession we might be required to reject the other three.

Given that the CRCNA has been reluctant to alter inflammatory language in our current confessions, can we safely assume the same treatment of the Belhar if it reaches confessional status? As it stands right now, there are many concerns about the content and the language of the Belhar. Is it wise for the CRCNA to rush forward and grant this document confessional status without first wisely and carefully addressing these issues before the document reaches a status where we can no longer alter it's content?

This in itself is a problem because we recognize the limited scope of the Belhar. It is a document concerned solely with one issue: the issue of racial unity. When placed beside the Belgic Confession and the Heidelberg Catechism, the Belhar lacks the depth and richness of the whole Christian Faith. While the Canons of Dort focus on one specific theological issue, they are an important confessional statement to make as the Canons of Dort bring clarity to God's sovereignty in such a way that the elect can have comfort and peace in their election to salvation. Our Three Forms of Unity lay out the basics of Reformed theology. They help to speak our reformed accent in a way that the Belhar doesn't.

The Belhar appears to be in an entirely different category than our current three forms of Unity. The current three forms of unity serve mainly as a vertical description of who God is and how God interacts with humanity. The Belhar focuses on the horizontal relationship between people. This horizontal relationship serves as a testimony to who God is. Our current confessions are statements about God, the Belhar is a statement about how people should respond to each other in response to God. To this end, it seems appropriate for the Belhar to

be accepted as a testimonial status. A testimony is our response to the gospel. A testimony is a call for our actions to speak to who God is.

Finally we find this document far too open-ended and unclear. It calls us to offer reconciliation to anyone who has experienced injustice. What kind of injustice are we referring to? Is it real injustice or perceived injustice? May we even make a distinction between the two? What if a perceived injustice doesn't resonate with the truths of God's Word? Some would argue that it is unjust to limit a woman's right to abortion. Do we need to fight on behalf of these rights when Scripture recognizes that sometimes being true to God's word means being unjust in some people's eyes? The lack of clarity of the Belhar is a point of concern given that the purpose of our confessions is to bring greater clarity to what we believe.

The Paradox of Our Response

Some people are afraid that if we don't accept the Belhar as confessional, it would send the wrong message to people. They fear rejecting the Belhar as confessional could send the message that we endorse racism. Therefore we need to be careful to distinguish between the Belhar as a document and the act of racism. Some would assume that not accepting the Belhar as confessional is nothing more than passive racism. We must be clear that not accepting the Belhar as confessional does not equal embracing racism. Racism is sin.

More important, we need to consider the implications of accepting the Belhar as confessional. This too could send the wrong message to people. Accepting the Belhar as confessional could send the message that the church is so concerned with producing fruits of the gospel (social issues) that it pays little attention to its root: its central message about the active and passive obedience to Christ. When the church places social matters before us without clarifying the gospel it diminishes the church to just another social agency. The Word of God deals greatly with social matters but only as an outflow of the gospel and the knowledge of God (theology); there is no warrant for hanging one social issue like racial justice alongside our confessions independently.

Furthermore, the language of the Belhar Confession is divisive in itself. There are portions of the Belhar where the wording is so strong that it makes it difficult to express theological disagreement without being seen as a racist. Point 5 of the Belhar leaves little room for questioning or dialogue. There it states ***"we believe that, in obedience to Jesus Christ, its only head, the church is called to confess and to do all these things, even though the authorities and human laws might forbid them and punishment and suffering be the consequence."*** This point appears to say that if a person does not agree with every last point that is written in this document, that person must not be a follower of Christ. This is in stark contrast to the tone found in the Belgic Confession article 7 where it humbly submits itself to the authority of scripture when it says ***"We must not consider human writings-no matter how holy their authors may have been – equal to the divine writings . . . therefore we reject with all our hearts, everything that does not agree with this infallible rule."***

To that end, we don't wish to accept the Belhar as confessional because there are aspects of the Belhar that don't agree fully with the emphasis of Scripture or give full-bodied expression to the gospel as it is expressed in our other confessions.

Conclusion:

Given the above discussion we recognize the benefits and the limitations of the Belhar as a Confession. It certainly has value for our denomination and our context but its limitations make it impossible for us to receive it with confessional status. As a result we wonder about the possibility of receiving this document on par with Our World Belongs to God; A Contemporary Testimony. Both documents challenge us, as a denomination, to live out our faith in our specific social context.

For this reasons the council of Riverside CRC Overtures Classis to recommend that Synod 2010 propose to Synod 2012 the adoption of the Belhar Confession as a document with the same status as Our World Belongs to God; A Contemporary Testimony.

Grounds:

1. A testimony is properly understood to be our response to the gospel.
2. It recognizes the importance of this document.
3. It honours our need for racial reconciliation.
4. It recognizes the limits of this document (not confessional).
5. It provides Synod 2012 with an additional option as how to handle Belhar.

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