



CLASSIS NIAGARA OF THE CHRISTIAN REFORMED CHURCH



Wednesday, May 20, 2009; **2:00 P.M.**
Riverside Christian Reformed Church, Wellandport

Chairman: Rev. Andrew Beunk ; **Vice-chairman:** Rev. Rudy Ouwehand; **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:

At this meeting of Classis Niagara we will be asked to vote for a Region 4 Representative to the Board of Trustees of Calvin Theological Seminary (Region 4 consists of Classes Chatham, Hamilton, Huron, and Niagara) The votes from each of these four classes will be totaled to determine the nominee that will serve as the delegate. The nominees are:

Mr. Hank Vander Laan is a member of the First CRC in London, Ontario, where he has served as an elder and deacon. Currently he is serving as a corporate board adviser to the Ontario Ministry of Trade and Economic Development.

Mrs. Petronella (Nell) Vanturenout is a member of the Ancaster CRC, Ancaster, Ontario, where she has served as an elder. She is a former junior high school teacher who worked with children with special needs in primary and junior divisions.

Also at this meeting, Dr. Syd Hielema of the denominational Faith Formation Committee will lead in a presentation/discussion to Classis. Please refer to the Agenda and Acts of Synod, 2008, pages 231-242 (Agenda) and page 473 (Acts) for the committee's report and recommendations.

1. **Welcome and opening devotions**
2. **Constitution of Classis** by the Chairman, Rev. Andrew Beunk
 - Credentials/roll call presented by the host church, Riverside CRC
 - Acknowledgment of signing of first-time delegates.
 - Declare Classis constituted
3. **Time schedule:** meeting will **commence at 2:00 P.M.** Dinner will be from 6:00 to approximately 7:15 PM. Breaks will be scheduled at the call of the Chairman. The afternoon break will be at approximately 3:30. There are no speakers scheduled at the time of the preparation of this agenda.
4. **Committee appointment confirmations:**
 - 4.1 Credentials: Bethel (to chair) and Bethany
 - 4.2 Advisory re overtures: Fruitland (to chair) and Mountainview. There are no overtures at the time of the preparation of this agenda
5. **Classical Administrative Committee Reports**
 - 5.1 Executive Committee (*page 2*)
 - 5.2 Stated Clerk / correspondence (*page 3*)
 - 5.3 Treasurer report
 - 5.4 Classis Ministry Leadership Team
 - 5.5 Classical Nominating Committee
 - 5.6 Safe Church Team

5.7 Church Counselor reports: Rev. E.J. deWaard, re Maranatha; Rev. Derek Bouma, re Bethel; Rev. Steven deBoer, re Trinity

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 4)

8. Shalom Manor Chaplain's Report (page 5)

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 Overture Advisory Committee – No overtures have been received as of the preparation of this agenda.

12. Denominational and Other Reports

12.1 Denominational reports: (pages 7-13)

12.2 Redeemer University College (page 6)

13. Next meeting:

Date: October 21, 2009;

Agenda Deadline: September 1, 2009

Location: TBA

Chairman: Rev. Rudy Ouwehand

Vice-chairman: Rev. Jim Dekker

Credentials: Fruitland (to chair) and Mountainview

Overture Advisory: Jubilee Fellowship (to chair) and Maranatha

Following meetings: February 17, 2010; May 19, 2010; October 20, 2010

14. Expressions of thanks and closing devotions

AGENDA ITEM 5.1: EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE REPORTS

Executive Committee – Report of Meeting, April 1, 2009

Present: Rev. Jim Dekker; Rev. Kevin Stieva; Mr. Frank Engelage; Mr. John TeBrake

1. Recommendation to Classis re liability insurance / trust, etc:
 - we need to organize as either an incorporated or unincorporated (trust) organization to enable us to obtain protection of liability insurance and to obtain status as a charitable organization
 - We can seek incorporation or being organized as a trust.
 - Incorporation will have ongoing legal fees and significant reporting, etc.
 - to organize as a trust we can still organize as a charity, will qualify for liability insurance, is endorsed by Canadian Council of Christian Charities (CCCC). Is less expensive. Can still incorporate in the future if the need/desire arises.
 - Executive Committee **recommends that Classis Niagara pursues to be organized as a trust** (unincorporated) in order to gain charitable status and the ability to obtain protection of liability insurance. This will require the development, approval and acceptance of a constitution/declaration of trust.
 - Frank Engelage will lead Classis in a discussion about the options. Information from the Canadian Council of Christian Charities has been sent to each Council and will form part of this agenda.
2. Correspondence; done. See page 4.

3. Follow-up from February: We (Executive Committee) reported in February that we had a discussion about the effects of increasing expectations from councils, consistories, and members; and feelings of inadequacy, on pastors in our Classis and beyond. Our discussion then led us to consider a spiritual health seminar. We discussed pastoral/congregational health and decided we would investigate Sustaining Pastoral Excellence (SPE) and Pastor-Church Relations (PCR) for resources and financial support for organizing a seminar or retreat. Rev. J. Dekker agreed to contact SPE and PCR about resources and financial support and to lead a brief discussion about this at the upcoming meeting of Classis.
4. Follow-up from February: From the denominational Faith Formation Committee [cf. Agenda/Acts of Synod 2008, pages 231-242, 473] a request that Classis Niagara set aside some time in one of our sessions in 2009 to engage in prayer and a discussion similar to the one at Synod 2008, on key faith formation matters. Dr. Syd Hielema, of the denominational committee, will make the presentation at the May, 2009 meeting of Classis. He will be invited to do this in the context of the opening devotions of the meeting of Classis.
5. Review of Article 41, comments from Credentials: a specific item raised was a request for a teaching session on the Form of Subscription. This will be able to be addressed as we receive a presentation from the Form of Subscription Revision Committee (see item 7, below)
6. Agenda for May 20 was confirmed. With Rev. Kevin Stieva, who was to be vice-chairman of the May meeting having accepted a call to Chaplaincy in the Canadian Armed Forces, it was noted that the chairman for the May meeting would be Rev. Andrew Beunk, and the Vice-chair would be Rev. Rudy Ouwehand.
7. Presentation from the Synodical Form of Subscription Revision Committee: Rev. Jim Dekker is chair of that committee, which will be going around the denomination for information for and response from all classes and other various gatherings. Rev. Dekker will provide an update to our Classis of the work of the Form of Subscription Revision Committee.
8. Follow-up from February meeting minutes: # 2, the overture from the Mountainview, Providence, and Smithville CRCs:
The Overture Advisory Committee recommended that Classis accede to this overture and its intent to evaluate the expenses of classis with respect to reducing expenditures. To implement this committee recommended further that:
 - 1) Classis instruct the CMC Executive to form such a task force to conduct the evaluation
 - 2) one member of each of the 3 authoring churches, Mountainview, Providence and Smithville along with 2 members at large be invited to serve on this task force.
 - 3) that this task force be mandated to begin meeting as soon as constituted and that
 - 4) they be prepared to report no later than the October 09 meeting of classis.*Classis approved the recommendation of the Overture Advisory Committee.*
 The Stated Clerk had asked the three councils to provide names of people who might serve on this committee, but no names had been received at the time of the meeting of the Executive Committee. The Clerk will follow up to attempt to obtain the names in time for the next meeting of the Executive Committee.
9. Call from Mountainview to Rev. Kevin Stieva to serve as chaplain in the Canadian Armed Forces with Mountainview being the calling church; (CO Article 12-b): The Executive Committee **recommends that Classis supports the calling by Mountainview of Rev. Kevin Stieva to serve as a chaplain in the Canadian Armed Forces in accordance with Church Order Article 12 b.** Documentation presented includes:
 - The letter of call from Mountainview to Rev. Stieva, including a commitment to ongoing support and supervision
 - A confirmation from Rev. Stieva that he accepts this call from Mountainview
 - Endorsement from Chaplaincy Ministries of the CRCNA
 - A copy of the position description to confirm that it is similar to that of a Minister of the Word in the CRCNA.

AGENDA ITEM 5.2: SUMMARY OF CORRESPONDENCE

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	Feb 23	To Ms. Dee Recker, Director of Synodical Services at CRCNA, credentials from Classis Niagara to Synod 2009. Delegate to Synod forms sent to our delegates with a request that these be forwarded to Ms. Recker	RFI
2	Feb 23	To all those appointed by Classis Niagara at its February meeting to classical committees, confirmation of these appointments	RFI
3	Feb 26	To Rev. Gerard Dykstra, Executive Director of the CRCNA, notification that at his request, Classis Niagara had withdrawn Ken VanDyk's eligibility for a call to the Ministry of the Word in the CRCNA	RFI
4	Mar 25	From Ms. Dee Recker, notice that Classis North Central Iowa had granted honorable release from Ministry of the Word in the CRCNA to Rev. Charles Walton.	RFI; forwarded to all clerks of councils in Classis Niagara

AGENDA ITEM 7: BROCK UNIVERSITY CHAPLAIN'S REPORT

Dear Members of Classis Niagara,

It took me a very long time, but I finally got it. Campus Ministry can be just about programs, which means it has to compete with the larger and better staffed Christian groups on campus. Or – and this is what I have discovered over the past five years – it can focus on individuals, not only students, but also faculty and staff.

I continue to be amazed by the number of people who have become involved in my ministry at Brock, not because of this or that program, but because they just needed someone to talk to. Although students still tend to be the ones who visit me most often, the number of staff and faculty who drop by has been steadily increasing. Of course, it helps being in the office very early in the morning and working until late. Sometimes I am actually forced to spend a morning or an afternoon working at home, just to get some urgent writing done or finish a sermon.

So many of the staff persons who walk into my office every day do so not just to talk about all the mischief the students in the dormitories have been up to again, or about the recent vacation, but also because they have a family problem they would like to discuss or some joyful news they would like to share.

A university can be a very impersonal and lonely place, and Brock is certainly no exception. There are students who enjoy the size and perhaps also the relative anonymity of *Brock Christian Fellowship* or *Campus For Christ*, but their number is limited to the Christian students on campus who simply want to be affirmed in their faith.

But what about the students, not to mention faculty and staff, who are struggling not only with their faith but with other serious issues as well (conflict with parents, break-up with girlfriend or boyfriend, sexual identity, to name but a few), where do they find a safe place, a listening ear, and compassionate heart?

They won't come to programs, no matter how exciting or interesting. In most cases, they want nothing to do with religion. Now I am more convinced than ever before that they are as much my neighbour in the Biblical sense of the word, as the amazing group of Christian students who are part of my ministry team at Brock and who want to be challenged in their faith.

In the past year or so, my team and I have taken a decisive step to break down the walls of our Christian bubble and to do ministry the way Jesus did, by building friendships with whomever God has placed on our path on the Brock campus. The result has not been phenomenal growth, which is what post-modern ministry whether campus focused or congregational can never be (and probably wasn't in the case of Jesus' ministry either!), but a steady increase in lasting relationships that opened the way for the work of the Spirit in ways that can only be described as truly awesome.

This ministry has taken me to places that would probably have caused some of my seminary professors to shudder, but then in their day the focus was on keeping "good" Christians on the straight and narrow, while leaving the "bad" ones or those society didn't want or care for to evangelism committees. Some of the most satisfying theological discussions I've ever had, I've had a over a glass of beer in a student hangout in downtown St. Catharines. These discussions, recently dubbed "Chilling with the Chaplain" by some students, have now become a regular part of the Christian Reformed Campus Ministry at Brock.

Perhaps even more gratifying have been the numerous community oriented ministries the student members of my team have launched or participated in on their own initiative during past two years, and the number

is still increasing! To misquote the late President Kennedy, these students are not asking “What can Brock Campus Ministry do for me” (unfortunately still the attitude of far too many), but “What can I do for the Kingdom through Campus Ministry.”

For all these reasons, the team and I cannot thank Classis Niagara enough for its generous support of this ministry. All of us hope that in the year to come we will be able to share with all of you news of even greater things God is doing on this campus.

Yours in our Lord Jesus Christ

Dr. André F. Basson
CRC Campus Minister
Brock University
St. Catharines, On.

AGENDA ITEM 8: SHALOM MANOR CHAPLAIN'S REPORT

Chaplaincy at Shalom Manor and Gardens

After morning, spring showers, the sun is breaking through outside of my office. After a long winter at Shalom Manor & Gardens, smiles are breaking out on people's faces. For the elderly too, spring is a time of new promise and new life.

Through this winter season, we have been in “shut down” for approximately weeks in total. (A “shut down” is when the presence of colds, virus', or/and flus forces all residents to remain on their own floors and sometimes in their own room. All inter floor activities are cancelled.) This winter, for the first time, no worship services were cancelled. There were times when only the Garden residents were worshipping in the worship space and the residents of the Manor were participating from the lounges or their rooms. Other times, it was the other way around. One time, save for some people singing, I was the only one in the auditorium and all the residents were participating from lounges or rooms. It worked well.

The transition one monthly Dutch worship service to no Dutch worship services has gone smoothly. To ease the transition, we often sing one Dutch song in our worship service. This song is often sung with a bit more volume and passion than the English songs. When I hear this, it serves as a reminder me to put a Dutch song in the service again next week.

We have had a significant number of deaths this winter. In the months of December through March we have had already had four more deaths than all of last year. Pastoral, palliative care has been a big part of my ministry this winter. Initiated this winter, I now hold a “remembering” service on the floor of the resident who died. I do this the day after the person has passed away. This service consists of reading of Scriptures, prayers and a time of reflecting on the deceased person's life (the residents are encouraged to participate). A death for a resident means that a familiar face, a table companion, a friend, is there for one meal and gone the next. Attending the funeral is most of the time not a possibility. This service is designed to provide an opportunity for the residents to share their sorrow, their memories and to provide a bit of closure.

At Shalom Manor & Gardens the death of one resident means the movement of residents who already live here (They are moved to new floors where the care level is more appropriate for their needs.) and new members moving in. This means that in these winter months I have spent more times looking for residents, not remembering where they have been moved to, and meeting new residents. For some time, our new residents were mostly very old. This winter has seen a change. This winter, many of our new residents are younger; suffering from early Alzheimer, brain injury, or mental challenges. This presents new dynamics and new challenges for me.

As I develop more meaningful relationships with the residents, I find myself planning and conducting more funerals. I try to steer families to their home churches. When the home church is without a minister or when there no longer is a relationship, I often conduct the funeral. I feel privileged to do this for the family.

Let me conclude saying that I feel blessed being able to do ministry in the context of Shalom Manor & Gardens.

Submitted by Rev. Fred VanderBerg



Greetings from Redeemer University College. We trust that you had blessed Lenten and Easter Season as we celebrated the death and resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ.

As the second semester of the 2008-09 academic year is drawing to a close, students continue to be busy with academic work, as well as many co-curricular activities. The January Social Justice Conference had over 100 participants and was a very worthwhile event. We have enjoyed several art exhibits and choir concerts. In early February, the Theatre and Music Departments teamed up in a performance of the musical, *Fiddler on the Roof*, which played to full houses and was a resounding success. During reading break some students and staff members participated in mission trips to Mississippi and downtown Hamilton.

We also had a good response to the Ministers' Conference held on March 3 with Dr Tom G. Long, Brandy Professor of Preaching at Candler School of Theology, Emory University, Atlanta, GA. Next year the Ministers' Conference is again planned for the first Tuesday in March – March 2, 2010. Building on the success of our Autism course, Redeemer is planning a Mini-Conference for Autism Spectrum Disorders on April 25. The Chaplain and a planning group has begun planning on our second annual Worship Workshops on September 25, 2009. These events are encouraging us to offer more in the area of adult and continuing education to expand Redeemer's mission to a new audience.

It is encouraging to see that Christian university education is beginning to receive a higher profile in Canada through student survey results in national publications. This past October, Redeemer, along with The King's University College, received among the highest scores in Canada in a national survey of student satisfaction published by the *Globe and Mail* (see www.globecampus.ca). Redeemer was also featured in the *Maclean's Magazine* student satisfaction issue of February 2009 and again was first, second or third among 31 universities in all of the categories of the student satisfaction survey in which we participated. It is a new experience to have our mainstream media helping to build the reputation of Christian higher education.

Our applications and retention for the 2009-10 academic year continue to confirm our expectation of an overall enrolment of 840 FTE students. The Accounting Co-op program has been accredited by the Institute of Chartered Accountants of Ontario (ICAO) - one of only ten other universities in Ontario having an accredited co-op program. In the area of research, a major scholarly contribution to the academic study of the relationship between nature and Scripture, edited by Dr Jiste van der Meer, was published by Brill Publications. Dr Mark Bowald has been awarded the Colin Gunton Prize for an essay entitled, "The Character of Theological Interpretation of Scripture," that will be published as the lead article in a 2010 edition of the *International Journal of Systematic Theology*.

In the area of campus development, we have been in discussions with the Ancaster Soccer Club and the City of Hamilton about partnering to build our second soccer field, assuming we can gain access to federal funding for recreation projects. In addition, \$2 billion has been made available to universities for infrastructure funding in the federal budget, and we also have an opportunity to apply for these funds to upgrade, renovate and refurbish our research and teaching facilities. This could be a tremendous opportunity for Redeemer.

As I complete my presidency in another year, the Board has taken two steps. First, a strategic planning process has been launched to set the vision for Redeemer for the next ten years. And second, a Presidential Search Committee has been struck and will commence the search for a new President who can give leadership to fulfill this vision. Please remember these important initiatives in your prayers.

Finally, in the area of donations, we have been blessed thus far this year. A small group of donors offered to match every gift to the *GW* Student Support campaign to a total of \$500,000 until the end of April. We are very pleased to report that to date almost half of the match has been raised. Church donations for this year are just over \$700,000 for which we are very grateful.

Please convey our thanks to your congregations for their prayers and financial support of Redeemer. Their partnership is crucial as we pursue our mission of lifting up the Name of Christ in university education through teaching, scholarship and service.

Dr Justin Cooper, President

MINISTRY REPORT TO CLASSES AND COUNCILS

MAY 2009



CHRISTIAN
REFORMED
CHURCH

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From the Director of Denominational Ministries

Below you will find quarterly reports to you from all our denominational ministries. My prayer is that you truly hear their desire to be ministries you want to partner with. The CRC ministries are continually looking at how they can effectively and responsively provide support and resources to you—the congregations and classes. As you read about the work of our ministries, you will sense that not only are they valued and supported by you but also by those beyond the denomination. Together, we can truly say

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that God has allowed our ministries to have kingdom impact around the world!

Abuse Prevention

The Office of Abuse Prevention announces the fourth edition of *Preventing Child Abuse*—a book that helps churches reduce the risk of abuse in its facilities and programs. This book is periodically revised because circumstances change, and we continue to learn from each other what works and what does not seem to work as more churches write and implement a child safety policy. The book is one way we assemble our best practices and publish them for all to benefit.

An example of changing circumstances is the growing concern parents have about children bullying other children. Bullying is not child abuse, but bullying and child abuse share some similar dynamics. A person who bullies a peer could continue that pattern of intimidation in a dating relationship, a marriage, or a parenting relationship where the behavior could manifest as domestic violence or child abuse. Ms. Jessie Schut presents a thoughtful article on responding to bullying in *Preventing Child Abuse*.

The Office of Abuse Prevention will help churches reduce the risk of child abuse, but partnership does not stop there. The resources of Abuse Prevention and the Classical Safe Church Teams can help churches teach and model healthy relationships to children and adults as well as respond effectively when unhealthy behavior occurs.

Chaplaincy Ministries

The members of congregations in the Christian Reformed Church are concerned about finding and supporting outreach to others with the Good News in Jesus Christ, but there are places where the church cannot go or has minimal opportunities to minister.

The military battle field is the most visible example, but hospital and prison visits are other difficult venues for church involvement.

The Office of Chaplaincy Ministries provides the opportunity to send the Good News to such places. Where pastors and elders are limited in ministry to the person they come to visit, a staff chaplain has access to entire structures—staff, administration, un-churched patients—and can address the ethics of care in the institution. Also, since the organization that hires the chaplain pays his/her salary and benefits (the estimated total cost for this ministry is \$7.5 million), congregations are free from heavy financial involvement and can support this ministry with prayer and praise.

The Office of Chaplaincy Ministries also assures the entire denomination that the calling and sending of chaplains is done according to our ecclesiastical rules and regulations by managing endorsement procedures, ensuring proper education, providing tuition assistance, and researching and sharing opportunities for chaplaincy ministry in the U.S. and Canada. Ministers, congregations, and classes need to follow the procedures established in Church Order Article 12 b, c; Supplement 12 c; Article 23; and Supplement 23 c. Contact the new Interim Director of Chaplaincy Ministries, Rev Mark Stephenson, at mstephenson@crcna.org with inquiries.

Disability Concerns

Since its beginning in 1982, the Office of Disability Concerns has fostered healthier congregations through the inclusion of God's people who live with disabilities. We provide resources to congregations in a variety of ways. A sampling follows:

- Some 550 volunteers work in CR congregations and classes as church and regional advocates for people with disabilities.
- Over half of CR congregations subscribe to our quarterly newsletter, *Breaking Barriers*, which provides stories and resources for inclusion.
- We recently published a handbook for advocacy that was distributed to all of the church and regional advocates and is available for download on our website (www.crcdisabilityconcerns.org). The website also features over 50 other resources including the capability to subscribe electronically to *Breaking Barriers*.
- A guidebook titled *A Compassionate Journey*, by John Cook, was published in

collaboration with Faith Alive Christian Resources to assist care teams and council members in caring for people with long term needs.

- The Office of Disability Concerns partners with other ministries in the U.S. and Canada so that ministry with people with disabilities can flourish.

As congregations embrace the value of inclusion of people with disabilities, their influence and outreach grows in their communities. Regional Advocate Curt Gesch writes, "When I am speaking with people who are not Christian people, their ears always perk up when I mention I work with disabilities issues in my church. Being a disability advocate affords me opportunities to witness to the inclusiveness of God's kingdom to those around me."

Dynamic Youth Ministries

Thanks to generous individuals, organizations, and churches, Youth Unlimited (YU) is able to continue offering support to the youth ministry efforts of the local church. YU supports hundreds of churches through short-term mission opportunities (SERVE and ENCOUNTER) and large youth events (Convention and Where U At? Urban Youth Conference). The Compass 21 workshops and training offer evaluation tools that help churches set intentional goals to revitalize their youth ministry. The eEquip monthly newsletter offers support, encouragement, and ideas to help youth groups of every size. YU also offers event discounts, a bi-monthly e-newsletter, a "pastor's tool kit", and a website for everything to do with youth ministry and more.

GEMS Girls' Clubs support 561 CRC churches and 260 non-CRC churches with a dynamic, relationship-based program designed to equip and inspire women to mentor girls in their walk with Jesus Christ. All materials and curriculum needed to operate a successful and relevant club program are developed by GEMS for churches. Churches can depend upon multiple, outstanding opportunities to be available each year for women to be equipped, trained, and inspired in their area of personal ministry as mentors or counselors to girls. Also, multiple helpful resources are available to churches to help parents in their all-important role as the primary faith nurturers of their children.

At a recent conference for Reformed and Presbyterian church educators, a number of registrants visited the Calvinist Cadet Corps exhibit for one specific reason—a workshop was held where the instructor explained the great value of using Cadet and GEMS ministries to bring community

people into the church. We were glad the word was getting out because we intentionally provide support and resources for congregations in two areas—evangelism and education. We have been doing that well for Christian Reformed congregations since 1952.

Faith Alive Christian Resources

With a mix of resources, from preschool through adult, Faith Alive consistently delivers solidly reformed, relevant materials to transform lives and communities worldwide. For children and youth, we offer three distinct Sunday school curricula, as well as a variety of lively doctrinal and ethical study materials. For adults, we offer resources from booklets that give practical information for church volunteers (our recently revised SYBAT series), to accessible studies of science and faith in books like *Origins: Creation, Design, & Evolution* and *Bioethics: Life and Death Choices*. With these, as well as a wide array of Bible study and discipleship materials, Faith Alive seeks to deepen and broaden the faith of believers and bring a relevant gospel to the lost.

Our commitment goes beyond products, however, extending to training, education, and communication. We believe the best customer service happens when we have an ongoing, two-way relationship with leaders and ministries on the frontlines of life transformation. Our customer service reps do more than take orders. They listen, coach, and help match local ministry needs to resources. Our fulltime educators are professionally trained, understand teaching methodology, and stay abreast of educational trends.

Our impact is broad. Our resources reach beyond Reformed North American congregations to new churches as far away as Russia, Mexico, and Argentina. In this way, the publishing ministry of the CRC reaches far beyond its denomination to influence and transform the lives of all kinds of Christians across North America and around the world.

Loan Fund

The Christian Reformed Church Loan Fund recently celebrated twenty-five years of serving Christian Reformed Churches and looks forward to serving congregations in the future. We continue to encourage congregational leaders and members from many areas of ministry to go to the denomination first when seeking assistance with their financing needs. Mortgage loans are available for the purchase, construction, or renovation of church

buildings and parsonages as well as for the purchase of land for use by a church. The Loan Fund specializes in loans to churches and understands church financing.

The Loan Fund also provides meaningful investment opportunities with excellent yields. The ministry of the Loan Fund thrives and grows due to thousands of CRC investors who earn a good rate of interest and use some of their investments to support the growth of the kingdom. If you, your church, or classis has money to invest, consider the Christian Reformed Church Loan Fund. Your investment will make loans available to other churches.

For more information, go online at www.crcna.org/loanfund or contact us at 616-224-0829, 800-332-0012, or crlf@crcna.org.

This information does not constitute an offer to sell or a solicitation of an offer to purchase. Offers will be made only by the offering circular in those jurisdictions where it is lawful to make such an offer or solicitation of an offer. Investments in the Loan Fund involve risks more fully disclosed in the offering circular.

Office of Social Justice and Hunger Action

Because social justice encompasses such a wide ranging set of issues, the Office of Social Justice provides a variety of resources for each congregation or individual looking for assistance.

Many of our resources are available online. Our website, www.crcjustice.org, has downloadable PowerPoint presentations on several social justice issues, as well as fact sheets, small group activities, and other recommended reading. Our e-newsletter goes out twice a month with the latest news, events, and opportunities that the Office of Social Justice has to offer. Email mkrale@crcna.org to subscribe today.

Sometimes the most helpful resource is connecting with others who share the same struggles. Our online social network at <http://justiceseekers.ning.com> is for members of the CRC who want to further their knowledge and experience of social justice. Members of Justice Seekers can post their own multimedia resources as well as provide and respond to the personal testimonies of others.

Kate Kooyman, a joint employee of the OSJ and CRWRC, is available to help congregations become more involved in social justice. Kate, a recent seminary graduate, is often asked to speak on justice issues such as fair trade or immigration. She can also assist in getting a social justice group up and running and has a wide network of resources to draw from.

In addition, OSJ partners with many other faith-based advocacy organizations such as Bread for the World, the Micah Challenge, and Alternatives for Simple Living. Visit our website to learn more about the resources our partners have to offer.

Don't see what you're looking for? Give us a call (616-241-1691 x236) or email us (osjha@crcna.org)! The Office of Social Justice can tailor-make something for your small group or conference.

Pastor-Church Relations

Pastor-Church Relations was originally mandated to provide programs of healing and prevention for ministers, staff, consistories, and congregations. However, in the past seven years, additional services have been added that promote the denomination-wide goal of "creating and sustaining healthy congregations."

The staff of the Office of Pastor-Church Relations is frequently invited to help congregations in the areas of intervention, consultation, education, leadership development, and staff support. More frequently, counsel is being requested early in congregational discussions of education, consultation, or intervention. Joining the staff of Pastor-Church Relations is Rev. Cecil Van Niejenhuis, of Edmonton, AB, who will be providing many direct consultation and education services to pastors and congregations.

Specific ministries offered are the Ministerial Information Service (updating and sharing profiles of congregations and pastors), the Staff Ministry Committee (which focuses on non-ordained church staff), Specialized Transition Ministers (who pastor churches in transition), regional pastors (60 pastors who provide support to other pastors in their geographic area), and continuing education grants (for paid church staff).

The Office of Pastor-Church Relations is committed to assisting pastors, staff and congregations of the CRCNA in expressing and modeling the good news of God's kingdom that transforms lives and communities.

Service Link

A somewhat edited version of a recent conversation with a potential volunteer from outside our denomination reads, "We want to serve somewhere overseas but want to make sure we can do that with the Christian Reformed Church. We feel volunteer opportunities with your ministries allow us to serve in the best way possible—through the building of relationships and an opportunity to walk alongside people and to work in partnership with them. The

missional vision of the CRC is also something that we really appreciate and so would love an opportunity to contribute to some aspect of their ministry. It doesn't matter where. Furthermore, we understand the importance of being well prepared for what volunteers will encounter on the field and so appreciate the training and resources provided prior to a person's departure." This person had done some research with other organizations and was offered an opportunity to serve with one of them, but had turned it down because it didn't fit into the concept of sustainable development and didn't provide the necessary resources to prepare for an overseas experience.

This potential volunteer knew how best to serve our brothers and sisters around the world and that the CRC would provide resources and training in order to do that and to do it well. Therefore, his ministry of choice was to serve with the Christian Reformed Church, who, through the Service Link program, provides a broad range of resources to congregations and individuals in preparation to serve with our varied ministries.

Sustaining Congregational Excellence

Coaching is a new program that has just been added to the resources that Sustaining Congregational Excellence (SCE) offers smaller congregations (150 or less adult professing members). Churches can apply for an SCE coach to walk alongside them as they explore either leadership or process issues.

Leadership coaching gives assistance to ministry leaders as they guide the congregation in areas such as staff and leadership development, leadership team enhancement, or conflict resolution.

Process coaching gives assistance as the church sorts out its current reality of ministry. The coach helps to identify one or two priority areas of focus such as vision for the church, new outreach ideas, budget planning or challenges, or a discernment process that asks "Who are we?"

The coaching relationship generally lasts for one year and involves the pastor, one ministry leader, and the SCE coach. Grants are available to assist congregations with the cost although churches are required to contribute 25% of the total expense. Proposal deadlines are September 1, 2009 and March 1, 2010. For more details go to <http://www.crcna.org/pages/sce.cfm>

SCE learning events are held across Canada and the U.S. for pastors, ministry leaders, and their spouses. These events gather people from twelve smaller congregations for a time of encouragement, refreshment, and mutual learning. Recently, events have been held in Michigan, Ontario, Florida,

Connecticut, Alberta, and Minnesota. A Florida attendee made the following comment about the event, "Awesome! Serious conversation; lots of fun; brought clarity and evaluation to our current organization". Additional events are planned for Fall 2009.

Sustaining Pastoral Excellence

With greater frequency, the office of Sustaining Pastoral Excellence (SPE) receives inquiries regarding sabbaticals for pastors. This is very encouraging as it indicates that councils and congregations are increasingly becoming aware of the benefits of and the need for pastors to experience sabbatical. Sabbaticals not only refresh the pastor's soul, heart, and mind but ultimately impact congregational health. Healthy pastors and flourishing congregations—we need both.

SPE has created a webpage http://www.crcna.org/pages/spe_sabbaticals.cfm with sabbatical resources. There you will find:

- a document to assist councils as they create a sabbatical policy that is uniquely theirs.
- a list of sabbatical opportunities including a number of retreat centers/lodges available to pastors (and sometimes their families) at no charge.
- fifty sabbatical policies from CRCs across Canada and the US.

To date, SPE has published four training tools that focus on ministry. They are:

- *Toward Effective Pastoral Mentoring* – Assisting mentors and mentees as together they explore parish ministry.
- *Effective Leadership in the Church* – Written to help congregations, pastors, and other church leaders effectively work together to accomplish God's mission.
- *Closing Well—Continuing Strong* – A resource for walking with pastors during their transition from ministry to retirement and beyond.
- *Marriage and Ministry* – Believing that a strong marriage nurtures effective ministry, this booklet addresses important issues related to the pastor's marriage and ministry.

Electronic copies of these resources may be downloaded at

http://www.crcna.org/pages/spe_training.cfm or free hard copies may be ordered from Faith Alive Christian Resources at 1-800-333-8300.

SPE has granted permission to Wesley Theological Seminary (United Methodist) and the Nebraska Pastoral Excellence Program (Disciples of Christ) to adapt two of the above publications for use in their denomination.

CRWRC

The Christian Reformed World relief Committee (CRWRC) is your agency for responding to disaster, hunger, poverty, and injustice around the world. To help CRC churches and their members respond to these needs, CRWRC provides numerous opportunities to give, pray, volunteer, and act throughout each calendar year.

For example, a cost-effective alternative to child sponsorship, provides North Americans with an opportunity to support entire families living in poverty. Families learn how to read and write, start a business, send their children to school, and care for their health. Meanwhile, North American donors learn about a representative family as they follow the family's progress throughout the year.

While providing you with great ways to respond to needs in North America and around the world, CRWRC has also established a good reputation among partner and non-CRC organizations. Governments, municipalities, and Christian organizations depend on CRWRC to provide leadership, training, resources, and staff to assess and respond when needs for relief and development arise.

Also, the Federal Emergency Management Agency, American Red Cross, and United Way heartily welcome the involvement of CRWRC Disaster Response Services (DRS). DRS partners with these organizations to provide emergency response staff, needs assessment teams, and construction volunteers. Communities across North America look to DRS to establish local, long-term recovery organizations that oversee the community's disaster recovery and reconstruction operations.

Other agencies who count on CRWRC initiatives include the Canadian Foodgrains Bank, Foods Resources Bank, Canadian International Development Agency, and United States Agency for International Development.

Calvin College

Calvin faculty, staff, and retired faculty are available to lead church adult education and retreats, and to speak at conferences or Days of Encouragement. Go to www.calvin.edu/admin/community/guide for a list of

speakers and their contact information, topics, and topic descriptions.

To help plan a worship service, teach a church class, lead a small group Bible study, develop an outreach program, or talk with a professional in church ministry to learn how to make the most effective use of the newest and finest leadership resources for your area of service, contact Calvin's Ministry Resource Center (MRC) (<http://library.calvin.edu/collections/mrc/> or 616-526-8731), located in the Hekman Library. The center is designed to provide the best available resources. It has an outstanding collection of practical resources in print, digital, and audio-visual formats for all aspects of college, seminary, and congregational ministry. The collection benefits students and professors, pastors, worship planners and leaders, church school teachers, small group Bible study leaders, and youth ministers. The MRC's entire database is online so that church leaders can log on and quickly find materials in every area of ministry (e.g., adult education, family devotions, disability ministries, parenting, small group ministries, and worship leadership). While most are in English, there are several in other languages as well.

The Calvin Institute of Christian Worship also offers a multitude of church resources on their comprehensive website at www.calvin.edu/worship. Here you will find publications, music, worship planning tools, a schedule of conferences on and off campus, information on the annual Symposium on Worship, grant information to assist your church in a worship project, and a resource index. Their "Worship Sourcebook," complete with a CD for easy use in church bulletins and liturgies, has been used widely across North America. The site also offers web links to speakers, interviews, and worship services.

Calvin Theological Seminary

Many churches are adding ministry staff—worship leaders, youth pastors, administrators, pastoral caregivers, and other specialized staff—and are looking to train those leaders. Beginning in Fall 2009, Calvin Theological Seminary (CTS) will offer learning opportunities for church staff and volunteers through new specializations in its Master of Arts degree program and new Certificate Programs.

CTS's M.A. degree program will have two new specializations in Youth & Family Ministries and Pastoral Care in addition to current specializations in Worship, Educational Ministries, and Evangelism and Missions. This degree combines CTS's rich study in Bible and theology with specialized courses in particular ministry areas.

CTS has also added a unique Master of Arts in Bible and Theology degree for those who are not preparing for a particular ministry role. These students can learn how Bible study and Reformed theology contribute to their various occupations and life experiences. For instance, K-12 teachers could add a whole new perspective on their subject areas, and business owners could enrich their spiritual lives and personal character as leaders.

CTS is also offering new Certificate Programs for those who desire further study but are not planning to get a Masters degree. Certificate programs may be just right for ministry volunteers, Sunday school teachers, worship leaders, and other laypersons who desire more study in basic Reformed thought and a specialized ministry area. Nine choices are available from church planting to worship to youth ministry.

For more information on CTS's M.A. degree and certificate programs, see www.calvinseminary.edu/degrees

Back to God Ministries International

Back to God Ministries International (BTGMI) is known for world-wide programming in nine languages. BTGMI produces 46 radio programs that air on over 1600 radio stations. Six television programs are broadcast on over 100 stations. Millions of devotional resources are distributed yearly. Twenty-three websites receive millions of visits.

But increasingly, the use of media is not only in the hands of experts trained in communication technology. High school students are posting their own videos on You-Tube; college students are blogging; and everyone seems to be opening a Facebook account. Congregations also have a wealth of media resources at their disposal to assist in connecting with their communities. But how can all these resources be used effectively?

BTGMI wants to become the place where churches go to better understand how they and their members can use media to reach out with the gospel. A new congregational media program is being launched at BTGMI to assist congregations called Church Juice. The goal of the program is to help churches "juice" their media ministries and bring them to the next level of effectiveness. BTGMI is joining with other denominational ministries, including the Sustaining Congregational Excellence program, to assist churches in becoming skilled at claiming the latest media tools to reach their neighbors for Christ.

Sound interesting? A website is presently being developed that will share resources. In the meantime, your church can contact the head of this new

program, Jerod Clark, at jlark@crcna.org for more information.

Home Missions

Christian Reformed Home Missions is working every day to become a ministry of choice for the Christian Reformed Church. We rejoice that God is working through our twelve ministry teams. We see him transforming lives and communities as we provide coaching, training, vision, and prayer support for CRC congregations throughout North America.

Home Missions participates in this process in three ways. First, Home Missions offers support, encouragement, and growth opportunities for churches and church leaders through coaching and consultation for vision and mission development, revitalization strategies, leadership development, small group strategies that help grow people in their faith, church planting, and conferences and training events

Second, Home Missions walks alongside local congregations to help them assess their current situations and engage them in processes for renewal through evaluation and process identification. These include church planter assessment, community outreach strategies, grants for church planting, mission-focused churches, educational missions, and leadership development.

Third, Home Missions works alongside those beyond the Christian Reformed Church through partnerships and collaboration including global church outreach partnerships, coaching and training, ecumenical partnerships with seven mainline denominational partners, and online assessments for church planters and redevelopers in cooperation with Gallup Inc.

World Missions

Both at home and abroad Christian Reformed World Missions (CRWM) seeks to be a valued asset to the missions efforts of congregations. In North America, CRWM empowers CRC congregations to pursue their missions passions through Global Outreach (GO) conferences. More than 49 missions enthusiasts from CRC congregations in Abbotsford, British Columbia attended the February 21, 2009, GO conference. The topics ranged from Poverty in the Bible to Short-term missions—Long-term Impact. The Abbotsford conference is just one of those that have been carried out, and CRWM has already scheduled more. Mark Schmidt, Missions and Community Life Pastor at Eastern Hills CRC, who attended the Denver, Colorado, GO conference in November 2008

said, "I had the unique opportunity to meet people from my community who are devoted to missions and outreach and to learn from people who have devoted their lives to furthering the Great Commission."

Around the globe, CRWM works through Transformation Centers. In Nicaragua, the Nehemiah Center is a network of leaders who work to bring about God's Kingdom in every facet of their country's life. In Nigeria, the Daniel Center works with pastors and leaders to catch a vision for holistic ministry, including Christian participation in politics.

It is the combination of work in North America and abroad that makes CRWM a ministry of choice.

Classis Niagara of the Christian Reformed Church

Wednesday, May 20, 2009

Riverside Christian Reformed Church

SUPPLEMENTARY AGENDA ITEMS

Attached:

Agenda item 5.1, Executive Committee Report, May 13, 2009	Page 14
<i>Includes Pulpit Supply Schedule</i>	Page 15
Agenda item 5.2, Correspondence after Agenda distributed	Page 15
Agenda item 5.5, Report of the Nominating Committee	Page 15

AGENDA ITEM 5.1, EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE REPORT

Report of meeting of Executive Committee, May 13, 2009.

Present: Rev. Jim Dekker, Chair; Frank Engelage; John TeBrake

Guests: Rev. Andrew Beunk and Rev. Rudy Ouwehand, chair and vice-chair of May 20 meeting of Classis Niagara

At this meeting:

1. The agenda for the May 20 meeting was reviewed and finalized
2. Correspondence received after the distribution of the agenda was dealt with (see below, page 15)
3. Pulpit Supply schedule for September through November 2009 was completed (see below, page 15). Given that most churches/pastors make use of advent liturgy series, and that asking pastors to preach elsewhere during that time could be disruptive to the series, pulpit supply is not provided for December.
4. Formed task force as per February meeting of Classis to evaluate the expenses of Classis Niagara. The following names are presented:
 - One from each of the three churches that presented the overture in February:
 - Ron Kielstra, Providence (Chair)
 - Peter Zwart, Mountainview (Reporter)
 - Mark Moesker, Smithville
 - Two members at large:
 - TBA
 - TBA
5. Church Counselors for newly vacant churches are appointed as follows:
 - Mountainview: TBA
 - Fruitland: Rev. David Tigchelaar
6. Requested Rev. Duane VanderLaan to represent Classis at the installation service for Rev. Rich Loerop at Maranatha CRC, which he has agreed to do
7. The Classical Ministries Coordinator, Frank Engelage, reported for our information that the position of Youth Leader Coordinator position is vacant (was previously held by Ms. Sonya Wierenga), and that the Youth Leader Support Team is considering some options.

AGENDA ITEM 5.1, EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE REPORT, continued

Pulpit Supply Schedule, September to December 2009

	<u>Trinity</u>	<u>Mountainview</u>	<u>Fruitland</u>
Sept 13	deWaard	Bouma	Ouwehand
Sept 27	Fluit	Braam	VanderBerg
Oct 11	Heidinga	deBoer	VanderLaan
Oct 25	Loerop	Dekker	Hoytema
Nov 8	Ouwehand	deWaard	Bouma
Nov 22	VanderBerg	Fluit	Braam

Any scheduling changes should be arranged and confirmed by the pastor and the council of the church involved

AGENDA ITEM 5.2, STATED CLERK/CORRESPONDENCE

Correspondence received after distribution of the agenda:

	<i>Item Dated</i>	<i>Item</i>	<i>Action</i>
5	March 26	From Rev. Ed Gerber, Pastor at Webster (New York) CRC, requesting financial support to pursue PhD studies in the New Testament	RFI
6		From clerks of Fruitland and Mountainview CRCs, requests for pulpit supply during their upcoming vacancies	Included in schedule, Sept to November 2009
7	April 30	From Dr. Peter Borgdorff, Executive Director-Emeritus CRCNA, offering to make a presentation and/or facilitate a discussion on the Belhar Confession and why the Interchurch Relations Committee (IRC) is recommending its eventual adoption by the CRCNA as a fourth confession.	The Executive Committee recommends that we await the outcomes of the IRC report and recommendations at Synod 2009, and take appropriate action later.

AGENDA ITEM 5.5, CLASSICAL NOMINATING COMMITTEE REPORT

Classical Appointments

The Nominating Committee hereby recommends that...

1. Classis Niagara ratify Mountainview CRC's appointment of Cheryl Janssen as their representative on the Safe Church Team.