



CLASSIS NIAGARA OF THE CHRISTIAN REFORMED CHURCH

Minutes of the meeting of Wednesday, February 20, 2008
Covenant Christian Reformed Church, St. Catharines



Officers: Rev. Ryan Braam, Chairman; Rev. Steve deBoer, Vice-Chairman; John TeBrake, Stated Clerk

1. **Opening:** Rev. Jim Dekker, of the host church, welcomed the delegates and guests to Covenant. He led in opening devotions
2. **Constitution of Classis:** The Chairman, Rev. Ryan Braam, welcomed delegates and visitors to this meeting of Classis Niagara. He invited the Covenant delegates to read the roll call, which indicated that all churches were represented. However, the credentials from the Mountainview CRC of Grimsby were not available, and their delegate, Mr. Fred Schat, was seated with Classis' approval (the second Mountainview delegate was scheduled to arrive with the Credentials later). Rev. Braam also welcomed Pastor Mike Collins, who recently commenced work as a Church Planter in Thorold, ON, as the delegate from this emerging church. First-time delegates were signed the form of subscription and were acknowledged, and Rev. Braam declared the session of Classis Niagara constituted.
3. **Education/Information:** The following presentations were made to Classis:
 - a. Rev. Jack Vos, who led a discussion on how consistories and congregations could seek to re-enfold inactive members. This was in response to a number of questions from churches under CO Article 41, asking about how to minister to fringe/inactive/uninvolved members
 - b. Ryan and Amanda VanGeest, who informed Classis about their participation with the Mission Aviation Fellowship, and requested prayer and financial support;
 - c. Wendy Gritter, who informed delegates of New Direction Ministries of Canada, which is a resource to pastors and elders, and whose mission it is to create a safe place for same-gender-attracted people to journey towards wholeness in Christ
4. **Report of the Overture Advisory Committee:** Elder Bob Teeuwesen addressed Classis on behalf of the Overture Advisory Committee and highlighted some proposed additions and amendments to the overture presented by the Covenant CRC. Since the delegates of Covenant found these amendments acceptable, they were considered incorporated into the overture. There was a motion from the floor to amend the overture to change the actual overture from: "Classis Niagara overtures the 2008 Synod of the CRCNA to appoint a task force to develop guidelines...." to read: "Classis Niagara overtures the 2008 Synod of the CRCNA to instruct the Board of Trustees to develop guidelines..." This motion to amend the overture was supported and approved by Classis. Finally, with the agreement of Covenant, the word "members" was deleted from the list of groups for whom the guidelines would eventually be intended. Thus the final actual overture approved by Classis is as follows:

Classis Niagara overtures the 2008 Synod of the CRCNA to instruct the Board of Trustees to develop guidelines for CRC institutions, agencies, congregations and affiliated organizations to implement practices, programs and habits that respect God's earth by changing attitudes and consumption of excess in all areas of daily living in order to honour God and respect creation

Note: the overture in its entirety will be included on the Classis Niagara Website along with these minutes
5. **Classical Safe Church Team:** Rev. Ryan Braam reported that the CSCT considered it vital that each church in Classis Niagara have an easily visible Safe Church Team, and that one member from each church's Safe Church Team be appointed to the Classical Safe Church Team (see also item 9 following). Classis approved the report that was presented on behalf of the CSCT.

6. **Report of the Credentials Committee:** Rev. Jim Dekker reported that all Credentials available are in order, and that there are no questions or comments with respect to Article 41. The Council of Maranatha CRC in St. Catharines invited Classis to hold its meeting there in October; the invitation was accepted. There are also a number of nominations for Elder delegates to Synod.
7. **Delegates to Synod:** the following are Delegates to Synod 2008:
 1st minister (by vote): Rev. Jim Dekker 1st minister alternate: Rev. Andrew Beunk
 2nd minister (by rotation): Rev. Greg Fluit 2nd minister alternate: Rev. Rudy Ouwehand

 1st elder: Mel Elzinga 1st elder alternate: John Bezuyen
 2nd elder: Sylvan Gerritsma 2nd elder alternate: George DeRoo
 The motion to destroy the ballots was approved.
8. **Financial Report for 2007:** The Treasurer, Ms. Emma Winter, led the delegates through the financial report for 2007. While the report was approved by Classis, there was a discussion about Ministry Shares that resulted from the observation that the Ministry Shares received for the Brock University Campus Chaplaincy Committee were well below what had been budgeted. Delegates agreed that it is each church's obligation to pay full Classical Ministry Shares. It was determined that some churches submit a breakdown by Ministry Share of their contributions, while other do not. Since each church should pay full shares, it was moved, supported and approved that churches should submit their ministry shares undesignated as to specific ministries. *[subsequent information: this issue will be on the agenda of the next meeting of the Classical Interim Committee in order to bring clarity to the process of submitting Classical Ministry Shares and consistency in reporting between the churches and the Treasurer]*
9. **Report of the Nominating Committee:** Rev. Greg Fluit reported. It was approved by Classis that Rev. Fluit be appointed the Historical Committee Representative for Classis Niagara; and that Carolyn Hamming be appointed to serve as the Secretary on the Classical Ministries Leadership Team. This committee echoed the request of the Classical Safe Church Team to have each church designate someone to serve on the Classical Safe Church Team, and this was approved subject to affirmation of each such appointment by Classis. The report of the Nominating Committee was approved by Classis.
10. **Sympathy Resolution re the late Rev. John DeJong:** Classis took note of the recent death of Rev. John DeJong, who had served the denomination and in particular the classis for many years. Classis requested the Clerk to convey a resolution of sympathy to the widow and family of Rev. DeJong.
11. **Classical Interim Committee/Report of the Stated Clerk:** The Clerk referred delegates to the material of the CIC which has begun to work together with the Classical Ministries Committee.
- Classis approved the proposed mandate of this new combined committee ***"The Classis Ministry Committee plans and coordinates the meetings and ministries of Classis. It provides regular reports and recommendations to Classis on all aspects of its work"***.
 - Rev. Gerald VanSmeerdijk has accepted a call from the Emo CRC to serve as a chaplain in the Canadian Armed Forces. A new pulpit supply schedule was presented to provide pulpit supply to the Bethel CRC in Dunnville. Rev. Derek Bouma will serve as the Counselor for this church.
 - Classis approved the recommendation of the CIC ***"that Frank Engelage and Ron Kielstra, and with input from Treasurer Emma Winter, be appointed to arrange for incorporation, liability insurance and charitable organization status [of Classis Niagara]."***
- The work of the Classical Interim Committee was approved.
 The Clerk then provided the summaries of correspondence.
- Classis approved the recommendations to (i) support the reconstitution of the Ontario Youth Ministry Board as the Ontario Youth Ministry Team; and (ii) to appoint Rob VanGeest and Sonya Wierenga as Classis Niagara representatives on the Ontario Youth Ministry Team.

The work of the Stated Clerk was approved by Classis.

- 12. Report of the Liaison Committee re Maranatha CRC, St. Catharines:** Frank Engelage gave an update of this committee's work with the council and congregation of Maranatha since the separation between it and its pastor in May of 2007. The committee brought the following recommendation to Classis: ***"That Classis declares Maranatha CRC ready to extend a call and declare that the work of the liaison team is complete and the team is disbanded"***. Maranatha elder delegate Bob Teeuwsen described the various events and accomplishments that had taken place, and expressed thanks to the committee for its encouragement and work, and also to Interim Pastor Jerry Hoytema for his work in helping Maranatha move forward. Classis approved the recommendation of the committee. The chairman led in a prayer to thank God for guiding the work done and to ask that He would continue to bless Maranatha as it plans its future.
- 13. Church Counselor Reports:** Rev. Duane Vander Laan, who is the Counselor for the Maranatha CRC, was absent due to the very recent birth of a new son. He had submitted a written report as Counselor for Maranatha, in which he echoed the report of the liaison committee that great strides had been made there since the difficult situation in the spring of 2007.
- 14. Classical Ministries Committee:** Classical Ministries Coordinator Frank Engelage navigated Classis through several items:
- The Youth Leader Support Team Coordinator, Sonya Wierenga, has resigned from this position, and the team will look for a replacement
 - Dr. André Basson, Chaplain at Brock University, was invited to address Classis about his work. He gave examples of how that work is being blessed even in a very secular setting, and thanked the churches for their support.
 - Pastor Mike Collins, church planter at the Thorold Church Plant, gave an overview of his own orientation to this position, and of the life of the church plant in its very early stages. They now have a physical location which is suitable for a variety of purposes.
 - Rev. Harold Winter is no longer the chairman of the Brock University Chaplaincy Committee; he has been replaced by Rev. Lloyd Burghart.
 - Classis approved the work of the Ministry Coordinator.
- 15. Church Visit Reports:** Rev. Rudy Ouwehand read the reports of visits made to the Bethel, Fruitland, and Smithville churches. There were no other reports for this meeting.
- 16. Adjournment:** A motion to close the meeting was approved by Classis. Rev. Steve deBoer thanked Rev. Braam for his work as chairman, and led in closing devotions.
- 17. Next meeting:**

Date: May 21, 2008
Agenda Deadline: April 1, 2008
Location: Fruitland CRC
Chairman: Rev. Steven deBoer
Vice-chairman: Rev. E.J. deWaard
Credentials: Maranatha (to chair) and Trinity
Overture Advisory: Smithville (to chair) and Grace

Following meeting: October 15 2008 at Maranatha CRC in St. Catharines.

Website: www.classisniagara.ca