



CLASSIS NIAGARA OF THE CHRISTIAN REFORMED CHURCH

Minutes of the meeting of Wednesday, February 16, 2011
Mountainview CRC, Grimsby



Officers: Chairman: Rev. Greg Fluit; Vice-Chairman: Rev. Ryan Braam; Stated Clerk: John TeBrake

Delegates, as per Classical Credentials and report of the host church:

Providence, Beamsville	Rev. Steven DeBoer	Elder Matt Van Staalduinen*
Bethel, Dunnville	Rev. John Heidinga	Elder Alex Buist
Bethany, Fenwick	Rev. E.J. deWaard	Elder George DeRoo
Fruitland	Elder Peter Tilstra	Elder Mike Hamilton
Mountainview, Grimsby	Pastor Rick Roeda	Elder Max Meijer
Rehoboth, Niagara Falls	Rev. Rudy Ouwehand	Elder Rick Meloen
Covenant, St. Catharines	Rev. James Dekker	Elder Jack deVries
Village Church, Thorold	Pastor Mike Collins	N/A (emerging church)
Jubilee Fellowship, St. Catharines	Rev. Joan DeVries	Elder Ruth Jongejan
Maranatha, St. Catharines	Rev. Richard Loerop	Elder Hans Branderhorst
Trinity, St. Catharines	Rev. Chris deWinter*	Elder Ron Mulder
Smithville	Rev. Greg Fluit	Deacon Phil Schilstra*
Grace, Welland	Rev. Ryan Braam	Elder Peter Spyker
Riverside, Wellandport	Rev. Derek Bouma	Elder John Aantjes

*First-time delegate

1. **Opening Devotions:** Pastor Rick Roeda of the host church led in opening devotions focused on “A Church Worker’s Prayer”, applying it in the context of a church (council) and a classis setting.
2. **Constitution of Classis:** The Chairman for the meeting, Rev. Greg Fluit of Smithville, welcomed the delegates and observers/visitors. He invited Mountainview delegate Max Meijer to read the roll call from the Classical Credentials. All churches were represented by delegates. Classis approved the seating of Deacon Phil Schilstra as a delegate from the Smithville CRC. First-time delegates were acknowledged. The Chairman outlined the planned schedule for the meeting and declared the classis constituted.
3. **Report of the Executive Committee:** Stated Clerk John TeBrake reviewed the report of the Executive Committee, referring to reports in the distributed agenda and in the supplementary materials.
 - a) The Executive Committee recommended that future Classis Niagara meetings under ordinary circumstances start at 9:30 a.m. – APPROVED
 - b) The Executive Committee recommended that the firm of Partridge Iggulden be appointed as auditors for the year 2010 – APPROVED
 - c) The Executive Committee recommended that the report of the Ad-hoc Financial Review Committee that was to be dealt with be tabled one more time, to the May meeting. (Ground: there was insufficient time after the receipt of the report for it to be dealt with at this meeting) – APPROVED
 The Classis approved the work of the Executive Committee.
4. **Report of the Stated Clerk/Correspondence:** The Stated Clerk referred the delegates to correspondence outlined in the distributed agenda and in the supplementary materials. After an opportunity for questions from the delegates, the Classis approved the work of the Stated Clerk.
5. **Report of the Nominating Committee:** in the absence of Chairman of the committee, Mr. Cor VanSoelen, Pastor Frank Engelage presented the report of the Nominating Committee as outlined in the distributed agenda and in the supplementary materials. Classis approved the work and nominations of the Nominating Committee.

6. Reports of the Church Counselors:

- a) Rev. Ryan Braam indicated that the interim pastor at the Jubilee Fellowship CRC is now serving them 80%, up from 60%, full-time equivalent
- b) Rev. Greg Fluit informed Classis that Mountainview CRC remains in a process of transition; Rev. Peter Hogeterp continues to serve as transitional minister and while the transition is going well, much remains to be done
- c) Rev. David Tigchelaar reported that the Fruitland CRC has been without a pastor for just under two years now. Plans are to interview a second possible candidate during the upcoming week-end. In the meantime, this congregation is being served by seminarian intern Mr. Joel Bootsma, who was introduced by Rev. Tigchelaar.

7. Report of the Classical Ministries Committee: Classical Ministries Coordinator, Pastor Frank Engelage, introduced the reports of this committee by reminding delegates of the resource that the Classis Niagara website is (www.classisniagara.ca). He requested delegates to e-mail him, as the manager of the web-site, of any changes or adjustments that are needed with respect to church or ministry information. He also indicated that the process towards Classis Niagara being designated with charitable status with the Canada Revenue Agency is underway.

- a) Ms. AnnElise Teeuwesen), who serves as the Coordinator of the Youth Leaders' Support Team, reported:
 - The planned retreat (March 4-6) has 43 youths registered to date
 - Youth Talks, which are held in rotation in the churches of Classis Niagara, continue to occur
 - The YLST is struggling with relevant topics for leadership seminars; they plan to take up contact with Youth Unlimited and plan a leadership development seminar for May
 - Serve Niagara anticipates having 49 leaders involved in the 2011 program
 - She encouraged representation from each church in Classis to the YLST so that all churches are represented.
- b) Pastor Mike Collins of the Village Church reported that it has been a year since weekly worship services were started, and that they plan to celebrate this with the community. Also, a part-time Connections Coordinator has been hired; Pastor Collins continues to serve as the chaplain at the local High School; and they are now allocating \$3,000 per year, up from \$2,000, for a future church plant. There is a concern, however, in that the lives of new Christians are better, but also changed, and this requires more disciplining; he solicited the prayers of the delegates and their churches. Classis surrounded Pastor Collins and Rev. Jim Dekker led in a time of prayer for the Village Church.

Classis approved the work of the Classical Ministries Coordinator.

8. Report of the Brock University Chaplain: Dr. André Basson shared concerns about the lives of the young people he serves, and gave several examples. It is difficult now to gather groups of students together due to their various involvements and so more of his work is one on one. He also observed that the level of theological knowledge among young people, including those of CRC back-ground, is limited and he encouraged the churches to be aware of this as they deliver their programs to their youth. Further, many of the students have no meaningful connection with anyone older than they themselves and he would like to see something like "mentoring families" as many of these students are desperate for some regular involvement with a family that is not dysfunctional.

9. Report of the Regional Pastors: Rev. Rudy Ouwehand indicated there was no regular report, but he did want to remind, and encourage pastors, of the upcoming pastors' retreat.

10. Delegates to Synod 2011: the following were chosen as delegates to Synod 2011:

Minister Delegate: Rev. Jim Dekker, first; Rev. Steven deBoer, second (rotation)
Minister Alternate: Rev. Greg Fluit, first; Rev. EJ deWaard, second

Elder Delegate: Jack deVries, Covenant, first; Bert Witvoet, Jubilee Fellowship, second
Elder Alternate: Cor VanSoelen, Bethany, first; Louis den Bak, Rehoboth, second

- 11. Presentation on behalf of Diaconal Ministries Canada:** Ms. Tammy Heidbuurt, Community Ministry Developer, provided current information of services and resources. She invited several individuals to share how DMC ministries (for example, Community Opportunity Scan and Project Manna) had supported their churches and/or communities. She identified Mr. Al Bezuyen (905-468-4334) and Ms. Karin Vermeer (905-735-5744) as Diaconal Ministry Developers that could be approached by local diaconates to enquire about or to access DMC resources.
- 12. Presentation on behalf of Calvin College Board of Trustees:** Dr. Wytse van Dijk is the Regional 4 representative to the Calvin College BOT. He brought greetings and broadly updated the delegates about some current issues at the college. The internship programs are to be expanded to include all disciplines to provide seamless transition from education to career. The college has recently received the gift of a large parcel of land, some 30 miles away from the college. There have been declining enrolments, resulting in less tuition income, which in turn has meant frozen salaries for two years, and now reductions in staff have had to be implemented. Calvin College's hope and plans are that for the next academic year no further reductions will be required.

An article in the current issue of the Banner states that two Calvin professors have published scholarly articles saying that evolution evidence conflicts with creation parts of the Reformed confessions; Adam and Eve were literary figures rather than historical ones. In response to questions about this from some of the delegates, Dr. van Dijk answered that there have been new rules in place for resolving disputes about the confessional integrity of faculty or their work. Dr. van Dijk assured Classis that the college is following these guidelines; a Professional Standards Committee is in place to monitor the process and is expected to make recommendations to the BOT before the end of May 2011. He invited those interested to visit www.calvin.edu/provost and to look for the FAQ segment in the Current Discussion section.

Dr. van Dijk finally informed Classis that Mr. Bastiaan Knoppers, chair of the BOT, would soon be stepping down from that position. He requested the prayers of the delegates and their churches for Calvin College and the issues it deals with.

13. Report of the Credentials Committee:

Rev. Steven deBoer reported the following items from the credentials:

- a) Rehoboth CRC notifies Classis that for the year 2010 it was able to pay only 45% of Classical Ministry Shares due to some financial difficulties. They expect to restore their giving to 100% for 2011 (Received for information)
- b) Mountainview CRC reported that support of Christian Schools is important to that congregation and has been added to its budget for 2011 (Received for information)
- c) "The Covenant CRC requests that Classis Niagara sponsor a discussion led by Stan Baker and Steve Kabetu, CRC members from Friendship CRC in Toronto and of Hope Fellowship CRC in Courtice on the Belhar Confession at an upcoming Classis meeting. A beneficial discussion was held in January at the meeting of Classis Toronto and this would benefit our classis as well" – request forwarded to the Executive Committee
- d) "The Council of Covenant CRC of St. Catharines requests Classis Niagara to approve a contract with Dr. André Basson for preaching and critical pastoral responsibilities during Pastor J. Dekker's sabbatical from mid-May until mid-August 2011". This request was presented as a motion, seconded, and discussed. It was clarified that Dr. Basson would preach mostly in the morning services, with some afternoon services, and would be paid the Classis Niagara preaching rate. It was noted that this would impinge on the ability of the other churches in Classis Niagara to meet their pulpit supply needs. An amendment was proposed, and supported, that the approval would be pending the approval of the Brock University Chaplaincy Committee. The amendment was approved. Subsequently, the request of Covenant CRC for "***Classis Niagara to approve a contract with Dr. André Basson for preaching and critical pastoral responsibilities during Pastor J. Dekker's sabbatical from mid-May until mid-August 2011, pending the approval of the Brock University Chaplaincy Committee***" was APPROVED by Classis.

- 14. Denominational Reports:** There was opportunity to provide observations or to ask questions with respect to the two most recent Denominational Ministry Reports. There were no additional observations or questions.

15. Closing: The vice-chairman, Rev. Ryan Braam, offered a closing prayer.

16. Next meeting:

Date: May 25, 2011; **NOTE NEW STARTING TIME: 9:30 A.M.**

Agenda Deadline: April 1, 2011

Location: Grace CRC, Welland

Chairman: Rev. Ryan Braam

Vice-chairman: Rev. Derek Bouma

Credentials: Bethany (to chair) and Fruitland

Overture Advisory: Covenant (to chair) and Jubilee Fellowship

Report Advisory Committee (Ad-hoc Financial Review Report): Maranatha (to chair) and Trinity

Following meeting: Oct. 19, 2011; location: Bethel CRC, Dunnville