



CLASSIS NIAGARA OF THE CHRISTIAN REFORMED CHURCH

Minutes of the meeting of Wednesday, February 17, 2010

Host Church: Providence Christian Reformed Church, Beamsville



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

Delegates, as per Classical Credentials:

Providence, Beamsville	Rev. Steven DeBoer	Elder Stuart VanStaalduinen
Bethel, Dunnville	Rev. John Heidinga	Elder Clarence Mulder
Bethany, Fenwick	Rev. E.J. deWaard	Elder Harry Hielema
Fruitland	Elder Fred Hoogendoorn	Elder Mike Hamilton
Mountainview, Grimsby	Pastor Rick Roeda	Elder Sid Feddema
Rehoboth, Niagara Falls	Rev. Rudy Ouwehand	Elder Louis den Bak
Covenant, St. Catharines	Rev. James Dekker	Elder Kees VanderLeek
Village Church, Thorold	Pastor Mike Collins	
Jubilee Fellowship, St. Catharines	Rev. Duane VanderLaan	Elder Sylvan Gerritsma
Maranatha, St. Catharines	Rev. Richard Loerop	Elder Larry Dykstra
Trinity, St. Catharines	Elder Fred Miedema	Elder Wil Bootsma
Smithville	Rev. Greg Fluit	Elder Harvey Pot
Grace, Welland	Rev. Ryan Braam	Elder Arnold Dykstra
Riverside, Wellandport	Rev. Derek Bouma	Elder Dick VanDyke

AFTERNOON SESSION:

- Opening Devotions:** On behalf of the host church, Rev. Steven deBoer welcomed Ms. Ida Kaastra-Mutoigo, CRWRC Canada Director. After the singing of "In Christ Alone", Ms. Kaastra-Mutoigo led in opening devotions in the context of Micah 6. Devotions were concluded by small sharing/prayer groups led by Rev. deBoer.
- Constitution of Classis:** Rev. deBoer on behalf of the host church, read the roll call. All churches were represented. First-time delegates had signed the form of subscription and the Chairman declared classis constituted. Classis took note that the delegate from Riverside was the alternate, due to the fact that Rick Zantingh, the father of the designated delegate Chris Zantingh, had passed away the evening before. Brother Rick Zantingh had been at Classis many times, was well known to most delegates, and the chairman acknowledged his gifts to the church and to our classis.
- Executive Committee/Stated Clerk:** John TeBrake, Stated Clerk, led delegates through the work of the Executive Committee as printed in the agenda and in the supplementary materials; as well he led delegates through the work and correspondence of the Stated Clerk, both in the agenda and supplementary materials. Classis approved the work of the Executive Committee, and that of the Stated Clerk.
- Classical Ministry Leadership Team:** Rev. Derek Bouma reported.

- The CMLT proposed that the number of three ordained ministers being required on this committee be reduced to two. From its report:

"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

- That our committee be composed of 4 members, 2 of whom must be ordained.
- 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 prospective 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 recommendation was approved by Classis.

(b) The CMLT further presented the following:

The CMLT is presently supporting 3 students. 2 at Calvin Seminary; Roelof Pereboom and Kyle Klootra. 1 at McMaster Divinity; Wes Collins. Our support is both financial and through personal contact with the students. Kyle will be graduating this year and we have one new student who is in the process of applying for Classical support for the coming school year.

This past fall we were informed that Steve Eckersley, whom we have supported in the past but had left his studies due to illness, had returned to school and has since finished his M Div. Degree at McMaster Divinity. Because his intentions are to attend Calvin Seminary in the fall with the desire to be ordained in the CRC Steve requested financial support for the courses he recently completed. We struggled with how to respond to his request. It was not processed according to CMLT guidelines and we don't want to set an unhealthy precedent for the future. However we also we understood his situation given his health and as a result his concerns about entering into ordained ministry. Given that this is a bit of a unique situation the CMLT is suggesting that we give him aid of \$ 1,000. This is less than what he would have received had he processed his application at the proper time but we did not feel it appropriate to simply say no. It is our desire that by giving him this aid that we are still respecting the process put in place by our committee yet at the same time supporting and encouraging Steve in his pursuit of ordained ministry in the CRC.

For this reason we are requesting Classical support of \$ 1000 for Steven Eckersley.

A motion to amend the motion to change the amount from \$1,000 to [approximately] \$2,100, which is the amount the student would have received, was approved by Classis.

Classis approved the motion to provide financial support to Steve Eckersley in the amount of [approximately] \$2,100

5. Treasurer's Report, year 2009

Ms. Emma Winter, the Treasurer for Classis Niagara, presented financial statements of Receipts and Expenses for 2009, and Fund Balances as at December 31, 2009. It was observed that at present there is no medical insurance coverage in place for the Brock University Chaplain, opting instead to pay on an as needed basis. The combined cash balance for all programs as at December 31, 2009 is \$164,527. The treasurer explained the need for this balance to provide resources for contingencies, and to pay salaries during the first four to five months of the year, when there typically is no income from churches. The financial statements presented were approved by Classis.

Classis received for its information the report of classical ministry shares submitted by the churches of Classis.

6. **Report of the Appeals Advisory Committee:** The chairman informed Classis that at the request of the appellant this item would be deferred to the May meeting.
7. **CRWRC presentation – Ms. Ida Kaastra-Mutoigo:** Ms. Kaastra-Mutoigo is the Director for Canada for the Christian Reformed World Relief Committee. She provided an update on CRWRC's current work in Haiti (as a response to the January 12 major earthquake) and work in many other communities throughout the world. In 2009 CRWRC provided relief and other programs to more than 3,800 communities world-wide, or an average of 3.8 communities per congregation in the CRC.
8. **Delegates to Synod 2010:** the following were chosen as delegates to the Synod for 2010:
 - Minister delegates: Rev. Rudy Ouwehand (Rehoboth) and Rev. Derek Bouma (Riverside); alternates are Rev. Greg Fluit (Smithville) and Rev. Ryan Braam (Grace)

- Elder delegates: Louis den Bak (Rehoboth) and Ineke Bezuyen (Covenant); alternates are Syl Gerritsma (Jubilee Fellowship) and Janet de Vries (Covenant)
- 9. All Ontario Youth Convention:** Mr. Tim Scholman and Ms. Kendra Bakker provided a lively promotion of the upcoming All Ontario Youth Convention, May 21-24 at Wilfred Laurier University in Waterloo. The AOYC has run every May long week-end since 1975 and continues to grow in attendance and appeal. Information is available at www.allontario.com
- 10. Church Visit Reports:** Reports were read from the Riverside and Providence churches by Elder John VanHoffen; from the Bethany church by Rev. Rudy Ouwehand; and from the Mountainview church by Rev. Jim Dekker. There was an opportunity for questions, and the reports were received for information.
- 11. Church Counselor Reports:**
- (a) Rev. Steven deBoer reported that **Trinity CRC** has been vacant for a year, the search committee is engaged in its work, and a first call (Rev. Ron Nieuwstraten) has been declined. Rev. Wayne Knight will serve as interim pastor.
 - (b) Rev. Greg Fluit reported that the **Mountainview** congregation has hired Mr. Jon Masselink as pastor of congregational care, awaiting Classis' approval for his ordination as Ministry Associate in that position. A search for a senior pastor is under way.
 - (c) Rev. David Tigchelaar reported that the **Fruitland** church has engaged Wes Collins for the summer months, and that the church is doing well and moving forward.
- 12. Welcome to Rev. John Heidinga:** The chairman extended a welcome to Rev. John Heidinga, new pastor of Bethel CRC and delegate for the first time to the meeting of Classis Niagara.
- 13. Denominational reports:** The chairman referred delegates to the denominational reports in the agenda. There were no questions or comments about these reports.
- 14. Classical Ministries Committee Report:** Mr. Frank Engelage, Classical Ministries Coordinator, led in this report:
- (a) He introduced Anne Elise Teeuwssen, of the Trinity CRC, as the new classical Youth Leader Support coordinator
 - (b) Delegates heard from Hilda VanderKlippe, representing Home Missions, about the introduction of missional clusters
 - (c) Heard from Mike Collins about how God is blessing the ministry in Thorold
 - (d) Heard from Dr. André Basson about the Brock University Chaplaincy Committee
 - (e) Classis is now incorporated in Ontario, and is working on charitable organization status.
- 15. Safe Church Team:** Ms. Sheryl Janssen and Ms. Esther Bulk provided a presentation about the need for each church to develop a Safe Church Team. This would provide a safe environment for volunteers and vulnerable people, and limit the liability for church councils. The Classical Safe Church Team will provide resources and education to church councils and to congregations, upon request.

Elder Will Bootsma of the Trinity CRC led in devotions and prayer at the end of the afternoon session, and in anticipation of the evening meal and the evening session.

EVENING SESSION

- 16. Credentials Committee:** Rev. Rudy Ouwehand reported on the work of this committee. The following items were received for information:
- (a) **CO article 41 issues:** funding, discipline in the church, promoting healthy stewardship, aspects of stewardship and monetary giving.. how do we encourage consistent giving, questions re safe church practices and police checks; these issues will be forwarded to the Executive Committee for consideration.
 - (b) **Received for Information:**
 - i. nominations for elder delegates to Synod 2010 (dealt with as part of item 8, above);
 - ii. communication from Covenant CRC that they recommend the endorsement of the Synodical Study Committee's report on Ministry to Migrant Workers; the Synodical Task Force on Church Order Revision; and the Riverside overture re the Belhar Confession, but deferring it to Synod 2012
 - iii. from the Riverside CRC, request for advice and direction with respect to Safe Church Policy/Abuse Prevention: referred to Classical Safe Church Team
- 17. Overture Advisory Committee:** Elder Will Bootsma (Trinity CRC) presented the report on behalf of the Overture Advisory Committee as follows:

It is with Christian humility and love that the churches of Trinity CRC and Smithville CRC submit the following recommendation to Classis Niagara regarding the overture submitted by Riverside CRC.

We recommend that Classis accede to this overture.

Grounds:

1. The theological concerns expressed in the overture are weighty enough to warrant continued discussion regarding the status of the Belhar Confession.
2. Synod 2009 did not provide delegates with an alternative status by which to categorize the Belhar leaving delegates with only two options, accept it as a confession or reject it altogether. This overture provides a viable alternative.
3. In our opinion the Belhar Confession is a description of how we, in light of what we know about God, ought to live with each other. It is a response to the gospel and therefore better classified as a testimony.

A motion to table this motion until after a presentation by the denominational committee to initiate a discussion about the Belhar Confession was defeated.

It was ruled by the chairman to table the motion until after the upcoming examination of Mr. Frank Engelage as Ministry Associate (item 19 following)

- 18. Examination for Ministry Associate:** The council of the Bethel CRC has requested an examination of Mr. Frank Engelage as Ministry Associate for the position of Minister of Congregational Life at Bethel CRC. The Executive Committee recommended that the position description, as provided by Bethel, fits the guidelines for Ministry Associate as defined by the Synod in 2001. This recommendation was approved by Classis, and concurred with by the Synodical Deputies of Classes Hamilton, Toronto, and Chatham.

Rev. David Tigchelaar conducted an examination of Mr. Engelage in accordance with Church Order Article 23-a.

Classis then moved into executive session. (a record of that session is on file with the Stated Clerk)

Classis moved back to regular session. The Chairman informed Mr. Engelage that Classis had observed that he had dealt very capably with the examination, and that Classis approved to admit him as Ministry Associate to the position of Pastor of Congregational Life at Bethel CRC.

- 19. Overture Advisory Committee, continued from item 17:** The discussion with respect to the overture to present an overture to Synod 2010 to consider the Belhar Confession as a document with the same status as "Our World Belongs to God; A Contemporary Testimony" was continued, and the overture was approved. Classis Niagara will overture Synod to consider the Belhar Confession as a document with the same status as "Our World Belongs to God; A Contemporary Testimony".

- 20. Closing:** Vice-Chair Rev. Duane VanderLaan offered a closing prayer.

21. Next meeting:

Date: May 26, 2010 at 2:00 p.m.

Agenda Deadline: April 1, 2010

Location: Maranatha CRC, St. Catharines

Chairman: Rev. Rev. Duane VanderLaan

Vice-chairman: Rev. Rich Loerop

Credentials: Jubilee Fellowship (to chair) and Maranatha

Appeals Advisory: Providence (to chair) and Bethel

Overture Advisory: Grace (to chair) and Riverside

Following meetings:

October 20, 2010 (at Shalom Manor, hosted by the Shalom Manor Chaplaincy Committee, on behalf of Rehoboth CRC);

February 16, 2011 (Mountainview CRC);

May 18, 2011 (Grace CRC)