



**CLASSIS NIAGARA OF THE CHRISTIAN REFORMED CHURCH**

Minutes of the meeting of Wednesday, May 25, 2011  
Grace CRC, Welland



**Officers:** Chairman: Rev. Ryan Braam; Vice-Chairman: Rev. Derek Bouma; Stated Clerk: John TeBrake

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

Providence, Beamsville	Rev. Steven DeBoer	Elder Bill Opthof
Bethel, Dunnville	Elder Clarence Houwer	Elder Clarence Mulder
Bethany, Fenwick	Rev. E.J. deWaard	Elder Cor VanSoelen
Fruitland	Elder John VanderKolk	Elder Mike Hamilton
Mountainview, Grimsby	Elder Jason VanderWier*	Elder Randy Vermeer
Rehoboth, Niagara Falls	Rev. Rudy Ouwehand	Elder John Prinzen
Covenant, St. Catharines	Elder Ralph Numan	Elder Jack deVries
Village Church, Thorold	Ms. Hilda VanderKlippe	N/A (emerging church)
Jubilee Fellowship, St. Catharines	Rev. Joan DeVries	Elder Nellie Westerhof*
Maranatha, St. Catharines	Rev. Richard Loerop	Elder Larry Dykstra
Trinity, St. Catharines	Rev. Chris deWinter	Elder Peter VanBerkel
Smithville	Rev. Greg Fluit	Elder Steve DeHaan
Grace, Welland	Rev. Ryan Braam	Elder Arnold Dykstra
Riverside, Wellandport	Rev. Derek Bouma	Elder Phil Dekker

\*First-time delegate

- Opening Devotions:** The meeting started at 9:30 a.m. Rev. Ryan Braam, Chairman, and pastor of the host church, led in opening devotions, with small groups sharing the impact of Jesus in the busyness of our ministries.
- Constitution of Classis:** Rev. Braam welcomed the delegates and observers/visitors. He read the roll call from the Classical Credentials. All churches were represented by delegates. Classis approved the seating of Ms. Hilda VanderKlippe of the Village Church as a guest. First-time delegates were acknowledged. The Chairman outlined the planned schedule for the meeting and declared the classis constituted.
- Report of the Advisory Committee with respect to the report of the *Ad-hoc Committee to Evaluate the Ministries and Expenses of Classis Niagara***

Related Materials:

- Report of the *ad hoc Committee to Evaluate the Ministries and Expenses of Classis Niagara*, February 2011 (included in Agenda for the May 25, 2011 meeting of Classis Niagara)
- Advisory Committee Report From Maranatha CRC and Trinity CRC (included as Appendix A to these minutes)

The Chairman of the Advisory Committee, Rev. Rich Loerop, was invited to report on behalf of the committee. The committee recommended that "Classis receive this [*ad hoc Committee to Evaluate...*] report for information and maintain current Classical Ministry Share allocations and commitments". During discussion it became apparent that while there was a lot of information and analysis, and that Classis Niagara's administrative expenses and overall ministry shares compare favourably with those of the other eight classes compared, there was no evaluation of the ministries of Classis. The chairman of the ad-hoc committee, Mr. Ron Kielstra, was given an opportunity to respond to this. He indicated that the ad-hoc committee as established was not equipped to evaluate the effectiveness of the ministries such as the Shalom Manor and Brock University Chaplaincies.

The recommendation of the Advisory Committee that "Classis receive this report for information and maintain current Classical Ministry Share allocations and commitments" was **approved**.

The recommendation of the Advisory Committee that “the ad hoc Committee to Evaluate the Ministries and Expenses of Classis be thanked and dismissed” was **approved**.

- 4. Classical Ministries Committee:** Rev. Greg Fluit reported on behalf of the Brock University Chaplaincy. He particularly identified the need for people from our congregations to assist in providing meals for the “toonie suppers”, and urged delegates to bring this need to their churches.

Ms. Hilda VanderKlippe expressed thanks to Classis for the significant support to the Village Church ministry in Thorold. She indicated that the ministry is active, and had just initiated a neighbourhood host program to welcome newcomers to their community. Christian Reformed Home Missions can provide resources to leaders in church plants, such as the Village Church; to church plants; and to existing churches wanting to define themselves. From a Home Missions perspective, Ms. VanderKlippe asked Classis to consider that as the ministry share for the Village Church is phased out over the next few years, the actual ministry share be retained, with the available money being used to develop a fund for future church plants in Niagara. Home Missions also provides an excellent Leadership Development Network, which prepares church leaders in a two year program. Several testimonies to the effectiveness of this program were provided. Ms. VanderKlippe encouraged delegates to look around to see if there are any people in their church that would benefit from this program, and who in turn would be equipped to serve their church.

A motion to approve the work of the Classical Ministries Committee was **approved**.

Rev. Braam offered a prayer for continued blessings on the work of the ministries of Classis Niagara.

- 5. Report of the Executive Committee:** the Stated Clerk referred delegates to the reports of the Executive Committee, one in the agenda and the other in the supplementary materials. After opportunity for questions and discussion, the work of the Executive Committee was **approved**.
- 6. Report of the Stated Clerk:** the Stated Clerk asked delegates to refer to the reports of correspondence in the agenda, and in the supplementary materials. With changes to the Ministers’ Pension Fund, two pastors requested Classis’ endorsement of their respective pre-retirement in-service pension distribution, and that they become inactive in the Minister’s Pension Plan as of June 30, 2011.
  - For Rev. James Dekker, Classis Niagara **approved this request pending** the confirmation of the approval of his council.
  - For Rev. Rudy Ouwehand, Classis Niagara **approved this request** (confirmation of the approval of his council has been received)

A motion to approve the work of the Stated Clerk was **approved** by Classis.

- 7. Canadian Christian Education Foundation presentation:** The Executive Director for the CCEF, Ms. Barbara Ferrier, described its work as curriculum development for Christian schools in Canada. She requested that CCEF be included in churches’ offering schedules; that any potential board members be brought to CCEF’s attention; and that churches make use of CCEF’s bulletin inserts.
- 8. Lunch Break:** Rev. Derek Bouma offered a prayer for blessing and thanks for the food to be received during lunch.
- 9. Afternoon Session:** it was noted that delegates from Smithville (Rev. Greg Fluit) and from Mountainview (Jason VanderWier) had left for the balance of the meeting.
- 10. Report of the Credentials Committee:** Elder Cor VanSoelen reported that the committee had reviewed the credentials. There were no CO Article 41 questions, and no items of information or requests for advice. All credentials were complete.
- 11. Classical Ministerial Leadership Team:** Rev. Derek Bouma, chairman of this committee, presented the following report:

We are presently supporting 3 students;

Joseph Hamilton (Calvin Seminary)	\$ 12,903 plus books (\$ 1,000)
Wes Collins (EPMC Calvin Seminary)	\$ 6,451 plus books (\$ 500)
Rick Roeda (Part-time Fuller)	\$ 5,000 plus books (\$ 500)
Total	\$ 24,354 plus books (\$ 2,000) = \$26,354

We are requesting a ministry share amount of \$ 9.50 [for the year 2012]

The ministry share request is an increase of \$1 from last year. A number of years ago we had found ourselves with a considerable surplus in our account, over \$100,000. Over the last number of year we have been running a deficit budget, based on a lower ministry share, to lower the excess amount of money in our account. The goal was to bring our account down to the \$ 50,000 - \$ 60,000 range so we could still handle a significant jump in need if that were to arise. At this time, due to such a need, our account balance is very tight as we only have around \$29,000. The ministry share ask of \$9.50 obviously won't bring us back up to that range but it will give us a little more breathing room then we presently have in our account.

We would also like to formally thank those congregations who are involved in the Seminary Sunday on May 29. This is a great way for us to support and encourage our Seminarians.

Classis **approved** the financial support for the students, as recommended by the CMLT; and Classis **approved** the ministry share for the CMLT for 2012 of \$9.50 per member.

Through the Chairman, Rev. Ryan Braam, Classis acknowledged that Rev. Bouma has completed his second term on this committee, and expressed thanks to him for his work on it.

12. **Nominating Committee Report:** Chairman Cor VanSoelen recommended on behalf of the Nominating Committee that:
  - Mr. Peter Van Berkel serve for a second term as Classis Niagara representative to the Redeemer University College Board of Governors – **approved**
  - Also Rev. Chris de Winter to the Classical Ministerial Leadership Team to replace Rev. Derek Bouma, who has served two terms – **approved**
13. **Classical Safe Church Team Report:** Rev. Ryan Braam, chairman of this committee, reminded delegates that the Classical Safe Church Team advocates for each church having its own Safe Church Team, and for each church being represented at the Classical Safe Church Team. The terms of representatives of several churches to the Classical team have ended and they need to be replaced (Smithville, Rehoboth, Riverside, Maranatha)
14. **Church Counselor Reports:** with respect to churches seeking pastors, Classis was informed as follows:
  - Mountainview (Counselor, Rev. Greg Fluit): [interim] Pastor Peter Hogeterp and the transition process continue to be a blessing to the congregation. The search committee has been given some new direction in their search for a Senior Pastor based on the transition process and is actively at work.
  - Fruitland (Counselor, Rev. David Tigchelaar): Elder Joe Hamilton reported that a candidate for a call is preaching there shortly, and the Calling Committee hopes to make a recommendation shortly thereafter. Student Joel Bootsma has agreed to serve to the end of August.
  - Jubilee Fellowship (Counselor, Rev. Ryan Braam): interim pastor Rev. Joan DeVries is continuing to serve, and the search committee is continuing in its work.
15. **Church Visitor Reports:** Reports were presented on three church visits: Providence and Riverside (Rev. Rudy Ouwehand and Elder Lowell Witvoet) and Covenant (Rev. Rich Loerop and Elder Cor VanSoelen). After each report there was opportunity for questions
16. **Executive Session:** The chairman announced an executive session to deal with a matter of advice provided by the church visitors to a church's council. In the executive session Classis approved the advice and the report of the church visitors to Covenant. Records of this session are maintained separately by the Stated Clerk.

**17. Christian Reformed World Missions:** Rev. Derek Bouma, representative for Region 4, presented a video and report on behalf of CRWM. He described projects such as Timothy Training, Christian Education, and transformational networks that CRWM is involved with. He encouraged delegates to visit [www.crwm.org](http://www.crwm.org) to learn more, and to understand that this is **our** work, this is what **we** are doing.

**18. Financial Report for 2010:** Treasurer Ms. Emma Winter was invited to present the financial statements for the year ending December 31, 2010. She introduced Mr. Eliseo Sinopoli, of the accounting firm Iggulden Partridge, who led the delegates through the financial statements and responded to questions. There was considerable discussion about the pros and cons of maintaining our total fund surplus of approximately \$156,000 at December 31, 2010, and in the end Classis accepted with gratitude God's goodness to us, recognizing that there is a plan to reduce the surplus over time to eventually provide for about six months' of classis' expenses.

The work of the Treasurer was approved by Classis. In particular, Classis approved the financial statements as of December 31, 2010, as presented. Classis also expressed thanks to the Treasurer for her work.

**19. Denominational Reports:** Opportunity was provided to ask questions or to add any information with respect to the denominational reports provided by the Ministry Report.

**20. Adjournment:** The Chairman, Rev. Ryan Braam, thanked everyone for their cooperation and participation in this meeting, and led in a closing prayer. The meeting was adjourned at 3:15 p.m.

**21. Next meeting:**

*Date:* October 19, 2011

*Agenda Deadline:* September 1, 2011

*Location:* Bethel CRC, Dunnville

*Chairman:* Rev. Derek Bouma

*Vice-chairman:* Rev. Steven deBoer

*Credentials:* Mountainview (to chair) and Rehoboth

*Overture Advisory:* Smithville (to chair) and Grace

*Following meetings:* February 15, May 16 and October 17, 2012 **Offers from churches to host a meeting would be very welcome!**

## APPENDIX A

### **Advisory Committee Report from Maranatha CRC and Trinity CRC**

#### **Introduction**

For consideration at the May 25<sup>th</sup>, 2011 meeting of Classis Niagara the *ad hoc* Committee to Evaluate the Ministries and Expenses of Classis Niagara has submitted a report in response to the February 2009 Overture from the Councils of Providence (Beamsville), Smithville, and Mountainview (Grimbsy).

The delegates from Maranatha and Trinity have been asked to submit an advisory recommendation by the Classical Interim Committee.

#### **Overview**

The original overture came to Classis with the goal of “reducing classical shares to enable churches to use these funds for local ministry initiatives.” (Page 1) After some discussion regarding the interpretation of the mandate the *ad hoc* committee decided that they would “compile financial information from as many Classes as possible ... Such an analysis would provide a broad indication as to whether Classis Niagara was more efficient or less efficient than other classes in carrying out ministries at the classical level.” (Page 2)

Noteworthy in this analysis is the Administrative Costs of Classis Niagara. Of the Classes surveyed the average expenditure on administration was 17% of Classical Ministry Shares (CMS); whereas Classis Niagara operates at only 13.9% of CMS. (cf. Page 3) Also significant from this report is the actual amount spent per member in Classis Niagara, \$56.65; whereas the average spent per member in the other Classes is \$66.73. (cf. Page 4)

The *ad hoc* Committee Report does not include a final assessment or recommendation for Classis to consider; however, the report notes that “it is unlikely that classical expenditures could be reduced significantly through reduced administrative expenditures.” (Page 4)

#### **Advisory Committee Recommendation**

- 1) The Advisory Committee from Maranatha and Trinity recommends that Classis receive this report for information and maintain current CMS allocations and commitments.

##### **Grounds:**

- i) We believe this report portrays Classis Niagara in a favourable light in regards to its CMS programs in comparison to other Canadian Classes.
- ii) To reduce CMS would adversely affect ministry efforts on the Classical level.
- iii) A regular commitment to Classical Ministries fosters and encourages church ministry beyond the local congregation towards a broader understanding of covenantal identity.

- 2) The Advisory Committee recommends that the *ad hoc* Committee to Evaluate the Ministries of Expenses of Classis be thanked and dismissed.

##### **Grounds:**

- i) Ron Kielstra (Chairperson), Peter Zwart (Reporter), Mark Moesker, Theresa VanOenen, and Brain VanStaalduined have completed the task of evaluating the ministries and expenses of Classis in comparison to other Canadian Classes.

Rev. Richard Loerop, Advisory Committee Chair  
Rev. Chris deWinter, Advisory Committee Reporter