



**CLASSIS NIAGARA OF THE CHRISTIAN REFORMED CHURCH**  
Minutes of the meeting of Wednesday, October 15, 2008  
Beacon Christian School, St. Catharines; hosted by Maranatha CRC



**Officers:** Rev. E.J. deWaard; Chairman; Rev. Andrew Beunk, Vice-Chairman; John TeBrake, Stated Clerk

- 1. Opening:** Elder Bob Teeuwssen, a delegate of Maranatha CRC, the host church, welcomed the delegates and guests to this meeting of Classis Niagara. The location for the meeting was the Beacon Christian (Elementary) School in St. Catharines. The Chairman, Rev. E.J. deWaard, led in devotions and also offered words of welcome.
- 2. Constitution of Classis:** Bob Teeuwssen read the roll call from the Classical Credential forms that had been submitted. All churches were represented. First-time delegates signed the Form of Subscription. The Chairman declared Classis constituted.
- 3. Discussion on Ministry Shares:** The Chairman welcomed and introduced Rev. Bruce Adema, Director of Canadian Ministries. Rev. Adema gave an overview of the history of ministry shares (previously also known as quotas, assessments). An overarching principle is that as churches we bear one another's burden as a covenantal obligation. He also highlighted some factors that can determine a congregation's actual obligation (it can be reduced if there are fewer than 193 adult professing members; or if the classis has acknowledged a financial hardship for the congregation). The Synod of 1998 approved the exclusion of inactive members in the number on which ministry share obligations is based.

Rev. Adema then facilitated a discussion among delegates and guests about what stands in the way of a congregation paying its full obligation, and how some of these barriers could be reduced or eliminated. (*The Ministries Coordinator has retained the notes from this discussion*).

- 4. Reports of the Executive Committee and Stated Clerk:** The Stated Clerk, John TeBrake, led the delegates through the reports of the Executive Committee, including a supplementary report that was not included in the agenda. The Executive Committee **recommended that in the future, agendas (including Classical Credential forms) and minutes of all meetings of Classis should be e-mailed only to all churches in our Classis.** The recommendation was supported and was approved by Classis. The work of the Executive Committee was approved by Classis.

The Stated Clerk then referred the delegates to the summary of correspondence provided in the agenda. Classis approved the work of the Stated Clerk.

- 5. Report of the Treasurer – Budget for 2009:** The Treasurer for Classis Niagara, Ms. Emma Winter, presented the budget that was proposed by the Executive Committee. After a discussion and some clarification, the budget for Classis Niagara for 2009, for a total of \$203,103 (\$63.17 per member) was approved. It is the intent that henceforth the number of members reported for each congregation in the denominational year book for a particular year will be the number used to determine a congregation's total classis ministry share obligation for that year (as approved by Classis May 21, 2008).
- 6. Reports from Post-Secondary Educational Institutions:**
  - Dr. Bob Sweetman, acting President of the Institute for Christian Studies in Toronto, and post-graduate student Jon Stanley brought greetings on behalf of ICS. In particular, Mr. Stanley gave his story of coming from a Southern evangelistic and fundamentalist background into a reformed world view environment and spoke of the opportunities available to him at ICS.
  - Dr. Justin Cooper, President of Redeemer University College, informed delegates that Redeemer has the highest number of full-time-equivalent students in its history. As demographics change and the number of students is expected to plateau in 2012, Redeemer is planning to begin providing continuing education in the near future. He also pointed to efforts to encourage churches and congregations outside the circle of Reformed supporters, but to which many RUC students belong, to consider supporting the school from offerings.

c. Rev. Andrew Beunk offered a prayer on behalf of ICS and Redeemer.

**7. Report of Classical Ministry Leadership Committee:** Rev. Derek Bouma, chairman of the CMLT, provided a brief overview of the purpose of the CMLT. Its focus is the candidacy process of seminary students. It works with students along their way to the ministry, providing not only tuition funding but also encouragement, and spiritual and practical guidance. Pastors and elders are asked to encourage those whom they identify as potential ministers/pastors to pursue this course.

**8. Reports of Church Counselors:**

- a. Rev. E.J. deWaard reported that the Maranatha CRC is moving forward; it is wrestling with tradition; how to “do church”; and considering opportunities for ministry on a joint basis with Trinity CRC.
- b. Rev. Derek Bouma informed delegates that the Bethel CRC is reviewing different profiles of potential pastors and is doing its best to move forward.
- c. Trinity CRC in St. Catharines will soon be without a pastor, as its pastor Rev. Harold Winter has accepted a call from the Fredericton, NB CRC.

**9. Report of the Classical Ministries Committee:** Classical Ministries Coordinator, Mr. Frank Engelage, stated that a meeting of the full Classical Ministries Committee should occur soon to determine the ministry direction of this classis. Specifics of the CMC report are:

- a. The position of Classical Prayer Coordinator remains unfilled. If anyone knows of someone gifted to fill it, or is so inclined him/her self, please contact Frank Engelage.
- b. A representative from the Youth Leadership Support Team, Mr. Ron Mulder, highlighted some areas the team is now coordinating since the termination of the Niagara League: youth talks, the annual retreat, seminars for youth leaders, and the Niagara Serve projects. There is a desire for the team to grow so it can be more involved with the youth groups of the churches in our classis. A pastor delegate asked if the YLST could better promote the annual all-Ontario Convention, which he himself felt is a valuable opportunity for the young people of our classis. Mr. Mulder responded that he too would promote better attendance by our youth, but that he finds that young people have limited financial resources for an increasing number of worthwhile activities.
- c. Dr. André Basson provided an update to his report printed in the agenda and thanked Classis for its ongoing support of his work. The ministry is moving from the Chaplain’s ministry to a team-based ministry involving Christian students who seek to connect with the 17,000 “not-yet-Christian” students. Dr. Basson expressed his thanks to Rev. Harold Winter, who has accepted a call from the Fredericton CRC, for his support and encouragement while serving on the Brock Campus Chaplaincy Committee.
- d. Pastor Mike Collins gave a report on activities at the Village Church in Thorold. He and the launch team are finding and creative inroads into the community. Please uphold this ministry in prayer.
- e. Frank Engelage reflected on having served as Classical Ministries Coordinator since 2002 and the progress of the Classical Ministries Committee since then. The Classis Niagara website, which he maintains, is updated regularly and he plans to have a new design in a few months. Classis approved the work of the Classical Ministries Coordinator.

**10. Ministry Associate Process – Mr. Rick Roeda:** The Mountainview CRC of Grimsby has requested Classis to endorse their staff position of Youth Director/Youth Pastor as one consistent with the guidelines of the CRCNA of Ministry Associate. The Executive Committee has reviewed the position description, and **recommended that Classis approve the request to endorse the position of Youth Director/Youth Pastor as being keeping with synodical guidelines for ministry associates**, in accordance with Church Order Article 23-a. The Synodical Deputies from Classes Toronto, Hamilton, and Chatham concur that the position description provided by the Mountainview CRC is in keeping with Synodical guidelines for Ministry Associates. Classis approved the recommendation.

The Mountainview CRC has called Pastor Rick Roeda who until recently served the San Diego CRC in Classis California South, where he had been ordained as a Ministry Associate in Youth Ministry in accordance with CO Article 23-a.

Rev. Kevin Stieva of the Mountainview CRC gave an overview of how Mountainview had come to extend a call to Rick to serve them as their Youth Director/Youth Pastor, and then introduced Rick to the Classis. Rev. Jim Dekker invited Rick to outline to Classis his journey of how he had arrived at the point of accepting the call to serve Mountainview.

The Executive Committee has received and reviewed confirmation from Classis California South that he has been examined and found eligible for ordination to the office of ministry associate at the San Diego CRC; and from the Council of the San Diego CRC, that testifies to Rick's soundness in both doctrine and life while he served that church. The Executive Committee **recommended that Classis reaffirm his [Rick Roeda's] standing as an ordained Ministry Associate, and that Mountainview CRC be permitted to install him as a Ministry Associate as Youth Director/Youth Pastor in accordance with Church Order Article 23-a.** The recommendation was approved.

Rev. Greg Fluit offered a prayer on behalf of Rick and the Mountainview congregation, and all of Classis Niagara that God might bless Rick's work in the congregation and in our classis. A short intermission provided opportunity to the delegates to offer congratulations to Pastor Rick.

**11. Report of the Credentials Committee:** Rev. Greg Fluit reported on several items from the Credentials:

- a. Items related to Church Order Article 41:
  - i. Would like guidance in terms of clarification of termination of membership – specifically “lapse” vs. “inactive” – and any other designations there might be
  - ii. An item from a church with respect to its net membership count for ministry shares
  - iii. What is the role of a church counselor to a vacant church

These items will be referred to the Executive Committee.

- b. Items of Information and Requests for Advice or Help of Classis:
  - i. Nominations for Board of Trustees: Mr. Frank Engelage; for Calvin Seminary: Mr. Hank Hultink
  - ii. We would like to see more regular combined worship gatherings of the congregations of Classis Niagara. (for example, when we celebrated together the CRC's 100<sup>th</sup> Anniversary in Canada)
  - iii. Classis to review the process of appointment of classical pulpit supply to include retired or other available pastors.

**12. Denominational Nominations:** The following nominations were approved to be forwarded to the Director of Synodical Services to include in slates to be developed for voting:

- a. For Board of Trustees, Christian Reformed Church in North America: Mr. Frank Engelage, Bethel, Dunnville; and Mr. George DeRoo, Bethany, Fenwick
- b. For the Board of Calvin Theological Seminary: Mr. Hank Hultink, Bethel, Dunnville.

**13.** The Chairman declared the meeting adjourned, and asked Rev. Kevin Stieva to lead in closing prayer.

**Next meeting:**

*Date:* February 18, 2009

*Agenda Deadline:* January 1, 2009

*Location:* Hosted by Brock University Chaplaincy Committee (Location: Board Room, 13<sup>th</sup> floor, Schmonn Tower)

*Chairman:* Rev. Andrew Beunk

*Vice-chairman:* Rev. Kevin Stieva

*Credentials:* Riverside (to chair) and Providence

*Overture Advisory:* Bethel (to chair) and Bethany

*Following meetings:* May 20, and October 21 2009