



CLASSIS NIAGARA OF THE CHRISTIAN REFORMED CHURCH

Minutes of the meeting of Wednesday, October 19, 2011
Bethel CRC, Dunnville, ON



Officers: Chairman: Rev. Derek Bouma; Vice-Chairman: Rev. Steven deBoer; Stated Clerk: John TeBrake

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

Providence, Beamsville	Rev. Steven DeBoer	Deacon Nelli VanderBerg*
Bethel, Dunnville	Rev. John Heidinga	Elder Clarence Mulder
Bethany, Fenwick	Elder Cor VanSoelen	Elder Bill Vahrmeyer*
Fruitland	Rev. Ben Ponsen*	Elder Mike Hamilton
Mountainview, Grimsby	Pastor Rick Roeda	Elder Don Dam
Rehoboth, Niagara Falls	Rev. Rudy Ouwehand	Elder Rick Meloen
Covenant, St. Catharines	Rev. Jim Dekker	Elder Bas Brouwer*
Village Church, Thorold	Pastor Mike Collins	N/A (emerging church)
Jubilee Fellowship, St. Catharines	Rev. Joan DeVries	Elder Coby Veenstra
Maranatha, St. Catharines	Rev. Richard Loerop	Elder Erik Kuiper*
Trinity, St. Catharines	Elder Richard Hiebendaal	Elder Wil Bootsma
Smithville	Rev. Greg Fluit	Elder Rick Attema*
Grace, Welland	Rev. Ryan Braam	Elder Mike Huizinga/Marten Zwier
Riverside, Wellandport	Rev. Derek Bouma	Elder Chris Zantingh

*First-time delegate

1. **Opening Devotions:** Rev. John Heidinga of the host church led in opening devotions, using Mark 10:46-52. He encouraged delegates and observers to put themselves in Bartimaeus' place and having Jesus ask us: "What do you want me to do for you?"
2. Elder Clarence Mulder of the host church read the roll call from the Classical Credentials. All churches were represented by delegates. Classis approved the seating of Deacon Nelli VanderBerg as a delegate from Providence CRC. First-time delegates were acknowledged. The Chairman welcomed all delegates and guests and declared the classis constituted. He outlined the planned schedule for the meeting.
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 the firm of Partridge Iggulden be appointed to provide a review report for the financial transactions and statements for the year 2011 – APPROVED
 - b) The Executive Committee recommended that the following be added as one of the objects in our Letters Patent: *"b. To improve the efficiency and effectiveness of Christian Reformed Churches, which are also registered charities under the Income Tax Act (Canada), by expertly managing and administrating the regional charitable activities of the various Christian Reformed Churches in the Niagara area, which shall permit the more effective regional advancement of the religious tenets, doctrines, observances and culture associated with the faith of the Christian Reformed Church."* APPROVED
 - c) The Executive Committee recommended that the licensure to exhort in Classis Niagara, held by Mr. Wayne Knight, be extended for one year to October 2012. 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. Classis will accept the invitation from the Trinity CRC to meet there for its February 15, 2012 meeting. After an opportunity for questions from the delegates, the Classis approved the work of the Stated Clerk.
5. **Classical Ministry Leadership Team:** Rev. Jim Dekker, chairman of the Classical Ministry Leadership Team (CMLT), referred delegates to a hand-out which outlined the financial support being provided to Wes

Collins (US \$6,451 plus books); Joe Hamilton (US \$12,903); and Rick Roeda (US \$719.94). The current balance of the fund is approx. US \$12,000 to \$13,000). Rick Roeda provided a verbal report, and Joe Hamilton a letter, expressing appreciation for this assistance and outlining its helpfulness.

The Chairman declared an executive session to deal with a CMLT recommendation, and non-office bearers were excused. Minutes of this session are on file with the Stated Clerk.

6. Reports of the Church Counselors:

- a) Rev. Ryan Braam indicated that the Jubilee Fellowship CRC had developed a new vision and direction, and had restructured as to how council/elders/deacons work together; a conversation with a potential pastor has ended; they are considering whom to call next; and the contract with Rev. Joan DeVries had been extended.
- b) Rev. Greg Fluit informed Classis that Mountainview CRC hopes to install its new pastor, Rev. Sidney Couperus on November 6, and a delegate from Mountainview invited delegates to a "meet and greet" for the Couperus family on November 4.
- c) Rev. David Tigchelaar reported that the Fruitland CRC has installed its new pastor, Rev. Ben Ponsen, formerly from the Kemptville CRC.

7. Report of the Regional Pastors: Rev. David Tigchelaar informed delegates that he and Rev. Rudy Ouwehand were planning to attend a conference in Grand Rapids for Regional Pastors, where they are to consider issues faced by the clergy, and as one example he mentioned retirement. He invited pastors to inform them of any issues they would like to be brought forward for consideration at this conference.

8. Report of the Nominating Committee: Chairman Mr. Cor VanSoelen indicated that there was no report of this committee, other than that his term as Chairman had come to an end and he requested names of new members to this committee.

9. Report from Redeemer University College: Redeemer President, Dr. Hubert Krygsman, stated that

- a) though this year's enrollment was down slightly from that for the previous year, the long term trend is that of continued growth;
- b) while income from Classis Niagara churches is up from that of the previous year, it is at about 40% of denominational guidelines;
- c) there are a number of new partnerships with the community started or emerging;
- d) there are new academic programs emerging (e.g., Youth Ministry program, BSc in health sciences, social work);
- e) the annual ministers' conference is planned for March 6, 2012; and
- f) there is an awareness that Christian post-secondary education cultivates discipleship, while secular education undermines it.

Rev. Greg Fluit led in a prayer for the work of Redeemer University College.

10. Report of the Village Church: Pastor Mike Collins told Classis that a new position had been created, that of (part-time) Community Connections Coordinator, to facilitate links with community agencies. The Village Church has received a lot of very favourable publicity in the local newspaper. Pastor Collins is involved with a local missional cluster, an interdenominational group that meets to discern what outreach is needed, and how the group can work together to reach out to the needs.

Rev. Steven deBoer led in a prayer for the work of the Village Church

11. Report re Restorative Justice: Rev. John de Vries Jr., Canadian CRC Restorative Justice Liaison, informed Classis of this initiative adopted by Synod of 2005. According to its website, this initiative "...is about promoting and building healthy relationships in church and community and, if necessary, holds those who have harmed others accountable in ways which restore relationships, develop explicit relational practices in church and communities. Everyone has a voice in the process. As such power and control issues are mostly negated." Rev. de Vries encouraged delegates to bring this idea back to their respective churches to see how it could be implemented in church practice – worship, council, deacons, safe church, and other elements of church. More information is available at www.crcjustice.org.

Rev. Ouwehand offered a prayer for the work of Restorative Justice, as well as for blessings as delegates, guests and observers enjoyed their lunch and fellowship.

- 12. Report of the Credentials Committee:** Pastor Rick Roeda reported that all the churches had presented proper credentials. The Jubilee Fellowship CRC requested that Classis consider planning some “equipping sessions”. There were no other requests for information or assistance from Classis.
- 13. Report of the Overture Advisory Committee** (Refer to overture from Trinity CRC on page 13 of the agenda, report of the Advisory Committee on page 18, supplementary materials):
- Rev Greg Fluit led the Classis through the report, with its recommendation: “that when Classis votes for Synodical Delegates and there is opportunity for a diversity of churches to be represented that the Clerk or Chairman inform classis of such diversity before the voting takes place. We believe this would honour both the spirit of the overture and integrity of the current system.”
 - Since the report of the advisory committee was at variance from the overture, the delegates from Trinity were given an opportunity to speak to the overture. After some discussion, the overture was tabled and Classis returned to the report of the advisory committee.
 - After some thoughtful deliberations, Classis chose to honour the spirit of the overture, but leave it up to each classis meeting to do its best to avoid having delegates to Synod from the same church.
- 14. Proposed budget for 2012:** (Refer to the proposed budget, pages 6-8, of the agenda, with revision): Treasurer Ms. Emma Winter led delegates through a revised budget which had been previously distributed, and which includes \$9.50 per member for the CMLT, approved by Classis in May 2011, rather than the \$8.50 shown in the agenda budget. Upon the recommendation of the Executive Committee, Classis approved a budget of \$217,493 for our ministries for 2012 (it is \$207,030 for 2011). This works out to a ministry share per member of \$64.69 for 2012 (\$59.61 for 2011). The increase in the ministry share is due to a slightly increased budget and a decrease in the number of members reported by the churches. Classis approved the proposed budget for 2012 (\$217,493, \$64.69 per member)
Classis approved the work of the Treasurer.
Rev. Greg Fluit offered a prayer of thanks for and a blessing for the work of both the Stated Clerk and the Treasurer.
- 15. Change in delegate:** The Chairman noted that elder Marten Zwier would take the place of elder Mike Huizinga for the balance of the meeting as a delegate from Grace CRC
- 16. Report of the Brock University Chaplain:** Dr. André Basson spoke of his opportunities to connect with non-Christians: students, faculty and staff at the university. The Chairman reminded delegates that Dr. Basson’s ministry is our ministry and churches should take ownership of this ministry.
Rev. Joan DeVries presented the needs of this ministry in prayer to God.
- 17. Report of the Shalom Manor Chaplain:** Rev. Fred VanderBerg spoke of the joys of being at Shalom, including the privilege of being with the dying and ministering to them and their loved ones, and worship at Shalom. There are also challenges: people are old and it is difficult to establish a relationship with them; there are now residents at Shalom who are not Christian.
- 18. Reports of the Church Visitors:** Elder Cor VanSoelen read the report of a visit he and Rev. Rich Loerop had made to the Mountainview CRC. The report included some correspondence with respect to the supervision the Mountainview Council has over Rev. Kevin Stieva, a former pastor whose credentials are with Mountainview. Pastor Rick Roeda, a delegate from Mountainview, reported that a written update had been received recently from Rev. Stieva.
- 19. Thanks to Elder Cor VanSoelen:** Mr. VanSoelen, who has been well-known to Classis for his involvement for many years, including being an elder delegate to Synod five times, thanked Classis for enabling his involvement and God for giving him the wisdom to do so. Rev. Bouma thanked Mr. VanSoelen for his many years of service to Classis and on behalf of Classis wished him God’s blessings in the times ahead.
- 20. Denominational Ministries:** Delegates were given an opportunity for observations and questions with respect to the denominational ministries report. A delegate requested that we pray for the denominational leadership during this difficult transitioning time. The Chairman led in a prayer for the denomination and its leadership.

21. Report of Classical Ministries Committee: Classical Ministries Coordinator Pastor Frank Engelage invited Ms. Hilda VanderKlippe to update Classis on Christian Reformed Home Missions. CRHM continues to plan and support church plants and campus ministries, providing coaching, encouraging. CRHM also helps established churches to implement their passions for community outreach. They have developed leadership clusters involving multi-denominational leaders together discerning the needs of the community, and what needs does God want us to stimulate.

The Youth Leadership Support Team has asked Classis to provide \$500 in one time support. Soul Care is a conference for training youth leaders hosted by Youth Unlimited. With the approval of \$500 we have partnered with Ont Youth Min Team (OYMT) to support youth leaders registration to this event. This will cover a portion of the cost; the rest is to be covered by the participants. APPROVED

Elaborating a little bit on his submitted report, Pastor Engelage asked the Classis to consider besides the shared ministries, who are we together, what is it we want to do together?

Classis approved the work of the Classical Ministries Coordinator, and Pastor Rick Roeda lifted the work of the CMC and the Coordinator up in prayer, that God might make this to be a blessing.

22. Nominations for Denominational Boards: Classis was invited to submit names of Region 4 nominees to the following denominational boards: Faith Alive Christian Resources (a clergy person); and Christian Reformed Home Missions (non-clergy persons). The name of Rev. Joan DeVries will be submitted as a nominee for Faith Alive.

23. Closing: Rev. Steven deBoer thanked Rev. Bouma for his capable leadership of this meeting, and together the delegates and observers sang the Doxology.

24. Next meeting:

Date: February 15, 2012

Agenda Deadline: January 1, 2012

Location: An invitation has been accepted from Trinity CRC, St. Catharines

Chairman: Rev. Steven deBoer

Vice-chairman: Rev. John Heidinga

Credentials: Covenant (to chair) and Jubilee

Overture Advisory: Riverside (to chair) and Providence

Following meetings: May 23 and October 17, 2012