



## CLASSIS NIAGARA OF THE CHRISTIAN REFORMED CHURCH

Minutes of the meeting of Wednesday, October 20, 2010

Host Church: Rehoboth CRC, Niagara Falls; meeting convened at Shalom Manor, Grimsby



**Officers:** Chairman: Rev. Richard Loerop; Vice-Chairman: Rev. Gregory Fluit; Stated Clerk: John TeBrake

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

Providence, Beamsville	Rev. Steven DeBoer	Elder Jake Vandermey
Bethel, Dunnville	Rev. John Heidinga	Elder Frank Engelage
Bethany, Fenwick	Rev. E.J. deWaard	Elder Hans Dam
Fruitland	Elder Fred Hoogendoorn	Elder Peter Tilstra
Mountainview, Grimsby	Elder Max Meijer	Elder Isaac Van Geest
Rehoboth, Niagara Falls	Rev. Rudy Ouwehand	Elder Louis den Bak
Covenant, St. Catharines	Rev. James Dekker	Elder Ralph Numan
Village Church, Thorold	Pastor Mike Collins	N/A (emerging church)
Jubilee Fellowship, St. Catharines	Rev. Joan DeVries (afternoon); Elder Patrick Vermolen (evening)	Elder Theo Meester
Maranatha, St. Catharines	Rev. Richard Loerop	Elder Chris Teeuwssen
Trinity, St. Catharines	Elder Jim Eshuis	Elder Wil Bootsma
Smithville	Rev. Greg Fluit	Elder Brian Breukelman
Grace, Welland	Rev. Ryan Braam	Elder Wayne Knight
Riverside, Wellandport	Rev. Derek Bouma	Elder Dick VanDyke

- 1. Opening Devotions:** The Chairman of this meeting, Rev. Richard Loerop, welcomed the delegates and visitors and invited Rev. Fred VanderBerg, chaplain of Shalom Manor, and whose ministerial credentials reside with Rehoboth CRC, the host church, to lead in opening devotions. In turn, Mr. Art Dreyer, of the Board of Directors of Shalom, welcomed the Classis to Shalom and provided a short history of Shalom Manor, and some of the challenges it needs to deal with (for example, the dilution of the Dutch/Reformed/Ethnic composition of the resident demographic by the Community Care Access Centre-imposed inclusion of people with different back-grounds). Devotions were concluded by delegates gathering in small groups to consider and lift up in prayer issues dealing with the aged, and singing together "Spirit of the Living God".
- 2. Constitution of Classis:** Elder Louis den Bak, 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.
- 3. Reports of the Executive Committee and Stated Clerk:** The Stated Clerk, John TeBrake, led delegates through the reports of the Executive Committee, as printed in the agenda and supplementary materials.

Classis approved the following recommendations of the Executive Committee:

- a) That Classis' financial statements and records be formally audited each year. Grounds:
  - i. For the security of the Treasurer
  - ii. Classis can have objective validation of the financial status
  - iii. The Corporations Act requires that auditors are appointed annually.

The CMC has asked the Treasurer to obtain quotations from (hopefully) three firms to be presented to Classis for approval. Based on the bids received, the Executive Committee plans to propose auditors and cost to Classis at the October meeting [will now be planned for the February 2011 meeting – Stated Clerk]

- b) That the ad-hoc financial review committee's report, originally requested for the October 2009 meeting of Classis but unavailable so far, be tabled to the February 2011 meeting of Classis

- c) That the May 2011 meeting of Classis be re-scheduled from May 18 to May 25, to accommodate the planned four-classis Pastors' and Spouses' Retreat
- d) To increase the financial contribution to the four-classis Pastors' and Spouses' Retreat from \$750 each year (now) to \$1,000 for 2011

The report of the Executive Committee had indicated that Rev. Peter Hogeterp was an interim pastor at Mountainview CRC. As he was present as an observer, he clarified that he is in fact serving as a transitional pastor there, one of several serving as such in the CRCNA.

Classis approved the reports and work of the Executive Committee and of the Stated Clerk.

4. **Treasurer's Report/Budget 2011:** Ms. Emma Winter, the treasurer for Classis Niagara, presented the budget proposed by the Executive Committee, which had been distributed to the churches and was included in the supplementary materials. The total budget presented is for \$208,227 (\$201,137 for 2010) for our ministries and our administrative expenses. The adoption of this budget was supported. A motion from the Brock University Chaplaincy Committee to amend the proposed budget to maintain the salary of the Brock Chaplain to the 2010 amount was approved after discussion. Classis approved the proposed budget with the amendment, which would bring the budget for 2011 to *approximately* \$206,638.
5. **Regional Pastors' Report:** Rev. David Tigchelaar gave a brief report on behalf of himself and of Rev. Rudy Ouwehand, including an update with respect to a previously announced Ministry Associate candidate for the Mountainview CRC who is now not a candidate for that position.
6. **Classical Ministerial Leadership Team:** Rev. Derek Bouma, chair of this team, informed delegates that at present there are four students receiving financial, spiritual and leadership support from the CMLT/Classis. He encouraged delegates to stimulate potential ministers to contact this committee. The committee will need to know by the beginning of January 2011 of any potential students who may benefit from CMLT support.
7. **Classical Nominating Committee:** Classical Ministry Coordinator Frank Engelage reported on behalf of the Committee. Classis approved the following appointments:
  - a) For the Ministerial Leadership Team: Rev. James Dekker (Covenant CRC) and Mr. Bill Thies (Bethany)
  - b) Brock University Chaplaincy Committee: to table appointments
  - c) Consent to the Covenant CRC appointment of Mr. Tom Venema as its representative to the Classis Niagara Safe Church Team
8. **Safe Church Team:** Rev. Ryan Braam, minister member of this committee, informed delegates, and asked them to bring forward to their Councils, that there have been some changes in the criminal reference check processes which will require more diligence and work than in the past. Current police checks will remain valid, but churches should monitor the lapsing (e.g., three years) of police checks of all their volunteers and employees. Churches can contact either Ms. Cheryl Janssen (905-563-5830) or Ms. Esther Bulk (905-957-7301) who can offer education and support to councils of the churches of Classis Niagara with respect to Safe Church matters.
9. **Church Counselor reports:** The following reports were presented:
  - a) Fruitland – Rev. David Tigchelaar, counselor, reported that the one call that has been extended has been declined, and that they have had a student over the summer, and are planning on a student intern from now through the spring of 2011
  - b) Trinity – Rev. Steven deBoer reported that candidate Chris de Winter has accepted a call from Trinity, and that he is to be examined by our Classis today
  - c) Jubilee Fellowship – Rev. Ryan Braam reported that Rev. Joan DeVries is filling in on an interim basis
  - d) Mountainview – Rev. Greg Fluit reported that Rev. Peter Hogeterp is serving Mountainview as a transitional pastor, and that a search team is continuing its efforts to search for a new pastor.

**10. Director of Canadian Ministries:** Rev. Bruce Adema, who serves in this position, expressed thanks for the opportunity to meet with our Classis. He made a presentation about denominational ministry shares, and how they are not about money but about vision. Churches are provided with guidelines for annual share amounts based on their number of active adult members, they are asked to follow integrity guidelines, and communicate with the denominational offices if they can meet, exceed, or cannot meet their suggested amounts. In particular, his reference was to the Communal Covenantal Commitment Task Force report of Synod 2009.

Rev. Adema also addressed Canadian Ministries, in particular to affirm our ministries among aboriginals, and to highlight the leadership role of the CRCNA in ecumenical issues. He indicated that today, the main denominations providing ecumenical leadership are the Salvation Army, the Mennonite Church, and the CRCNA.

**11. Classical Ministries Team:** Frank Engelage, Classical Ministries Coordinator, updated the delegates on the youth leaders support team (e.g. Youth Talks has been started again). He invited Pastor Mike Collins and Dr. André Basson to report on, respectively, the Village Church (church plant in Thorold) and the Brock University Chaplaincy.

**12. Redeemer University College:** Dr. Hubert Krygsman, President, and Ms. Valerie Louter, Director of Alumni and Church Relations, were introduced as representing Redeemer University College. Dr. Krygsman brought greetings from Redeemer, and highlighted that, among other things, Redeemer should reach the 1,000 student threshold sooner than anticipated; Redeemer enables the reformed community to have a broader impact; Redeemer is participating in more partnerships (e.g., the new soccer field being developed in collaboration with the Ancaster Soccer Club); Redeemer is a venue for a larger variety of gatherings; and Redeemer thanks the Classis Niagara community for its ongoing support. An emerging issue deals with privacy legislation and access to names and addresses of potential students.

**13. Church Order Article 17-c matter:** In a previously circulated document, the Grace CRC of Welland recommended that "Classis Niagara release Wayne Knight from ministerial office based on Article 17-c of the Church Order but to retain his license to preach". Delegate Rev. Ryan Braam of the Grace CRC read the recommendation along with the grounds (attached as Appendix A); the Stated Clerk read a letter from Rev. Knight (Appendix B). Classis decided to deal initially with the release from ministerial office issue only, and after discussion, Classis approved the recommendation to release Wayne Knight from ministerial office based on Article 17-c of the Church Order. The Synodical Deputies (Rev. Herman Praamsma, Classis Toronto; Rev. Dirk Miedema, Classis Chatham; and Rev. Bernie Bakker, Classis Quinte) concurred in this decision.

Classis then discussed the request of both the Grace CRC council and Mr. Knight for him to be able to continue to preach. Following a supported motion and discussion, Classis decided to grant Mr. Knight the licensure to exhort in Classis Niagara for a one-year period, renewable upon his request and Classis Niagara's approval.

**14. Credential Committee Report:** Rev. Ryan Braam reported that:

- a) All the credentials were in order
- b) Maranatha CRC proposes Rev. Richard Loerop as Regional 4 Representative to the Board of Trustees of Calvin Seminary
- c) Jubilee Fellowship proposes Mr. Sylvan Gerritsma as Classis Niagara's representative to the Board of Trustees of the Christian Reformed Church in North America.

A motion to approve the names proposed in items (b) and (c) was approved by Classis.

Classis also approved the re-appointment for a second term of Rev. Derek Bouma as the Region 4 representative to the Board of Christian Reformed World Missions.

Providence CRC, under CO Article 41, asked for some thought and discussion on how elders can effectively connect with members in their districts; ways different than the standard method of once yearly home visits; and they would like Classis to consider beginning their meetings earlier in the day, perhaps at 9:00 a.m. These items were referred to the Executive Committee.

**15. Examination of Candidate for Ministry, Christopher de Winter:** Trinity CRC of St. Catharines has extended a call to Candidate Christopher de Winter, which he has accepted. The council of Trinity has requested an examination of this candidate. This examination took place during the evening session of this Classis meeting, and followed the steps outlined in the Classis Niagara Rules and Procedures. Examiners were Rev. Ryan Braam (Practica); Rev. James Dekker and Rev. George VanArragon (sermon evaluators); and Rev. John Heidinga, Biblical and theological.

Classis moved to Executive Session, of which the Stated Clerk has a separate record.

Classis returned to regular session.

The Chairman informed Mr. de Winter that he had been successful in the examination, and that Classis had voted to admit him to the Ministry of the Word in the CRCNA. Delegates and observers were invited to congratulate Christopher and his wife Rachel.

**16. Closing:** The Vice-chairman, Rev. Greg Fluit, offered a closing prayer.

**17. Next meeting:**

*Date:* February 16, 2011

*Agenda Deadline:* January 3, 2011

*Location:* Mountainview CRC

*Chairman:* Rev. Greg Fluit

*Vice-chairman:* Rev. Ryan Braam

*Credentials:* Providence (to chair) and Bethel

*Overture Advisory:* Mountainview (to chair) and Rehoboth

*Following meetings:* May 25, 2011, (Grace CRC); Oct.19, 2011

**APPENDIX A: Recommendation from the Grace CRC, Welland, to release Wayne Knight from ministerial office**

The council of Grace CRC recommends Classis Niagara to release Wayne Knight from ministerial office based on Article 17.c. of the Church Order but to retain his license to preach.

Grounds:

Article 17. C. of the church order states:

*A minister of the Word who has been released from active ministerial service in a congregation shall be eligible for call for a period of two years, after which time the classis, with the concurring advice of the synodical deputies, shall declare the minister to be released from the ministerial office. For weighty reasons the classis, with the concurring advice of the synodical deputies, may extend the eligibility for call on a yearly basis.*

It has been 2 years since Rev. Wayne Knight has been released from active ministerial service and Rev. Knight has not yet received a call. Furthermore, Rev. Knight unofficially indicated that he does not desire to pursue another call in parish ministry anytime in the near future. Yet, Rev. Knight would like to maintain his ministerial credentials for occasional ministry purposes.

However, Rev. Knight's desire is not in compliance Church order. Accordingly, the council of Grace CRC has been unable to substantiate any "weighty reasons" noted in article 17. c. in order to apply for an extension of Rev. Knight's eligibility for call. Yet the council also recognizes the benefit of Rev Knight's occasional ministry work through the preaching of the word. Therefore, the Council of Grace CRC recommends that Rev. Wayne Knight be released from ministerial office under Article 17. c of Church order, while retaining a license to preach .

Decided in Council, October 5, 2010.

**APPENDIX B (October 13, 2010) Communication from (Rev.) Wayne Knight in response to the Grace CRC recommendation to release him from ministerial office.**

Greetings John,

As you may know, it has been two years since I left full-time ministry at CrossPoint CRC in Brampton, from which the church and I separated amicably. Since then, my wife Catherine and I moved back to our hometown in Niagara where I have continued active ministry. Over the past two years I have led hundreds of worship services in the churches of Classis Niagara and several in Classis Hamilton. Also, I recently completed an interim position at Trinity CRC in St Catharines.

I have received several inquiries regarding my return to full-time ministry, but have been counselled against making such a move. I do not plan on becoming fully employed by any particular Christian Reformed Church but do plan on continuing to use my gifts by remaining active as a minister of the word and sacraments in the CR churches of Niagara. My understanding is that "ordination" in the CRC equals "full-time employment" with one congregation, and does not leave room for active ministers who do not tie themselves to one congregation. If this is the case, I am no longer an "ordained" pastor but rather an "unordained" one. I will remain faithful to my calling to minister and will continue to serve the Lord Jesus as he has equipped me.

I request that Classis Niagara recognize my gifts and permit me to continue my service as an "unordained" minister of the word and sacraments.

Thank you.

Rev. Wayne A Knight