

## Guidelines for churches hosting meetings of Classis Niagara of the CRCNA

### 1. Introduction

Thank you for offering to host a meeting of Classis Niagara of the Christian Reformed Church. Classis meetings are held in various churches in response to invitations to meet there. Each church is encouraged to invite Classis to meet there from time to time.

The purpose of this guide is to assist the host church in providing the physical space and a meeting environment that result in the best possible meeting of Classis Niagara. These guidelines are in response to frequently asked questions by host churches, and are not meant to direct. ***Please feel free to express your church's gifts of hospitality in your own way.***

- (a) The guidelines that follow reflect usual Classis Niagara practices and conventions for the venue only. Classis follows the Church Order and its own rules for the actual process of the meeting.
- (b) Normally, a meeting of Classis Niagara is hosted by one of the churches in our classis. And normally, there are three meetings of Classis Niagara per year (the third Wednesday of February, May, and October). That means that on average, each church would host a meeting of Classis about every four years or so.
- (c) The groups of people that attend classis meetings include:

	<i>Approximate # of people</i>
Delegates (two from each church, normally the pastor and an elder, and one from the emerging church)	<b>27</b>
Speakers (usually two or three, representing various CRCNA ministries or allied ministries)	<b>2-3</b>
Functionaries (such as stated clerk, treasurer, ministry coordinator, two regional pastors, standing and ad-hoc committee chairs/reporters)	<b>4-7</b>
Observers (including alternate delegates, interested individuals)	<b>10*</b>
<b>Total</b>	<b>40-50</b>

*\*The number of observers is difficult to determine and varies from meeting to meeting; there are usually some. There may be items on the agenda that draw larger groups, or there may be very routine meetings with few observers*

### 2. Physical arrangements

- (a) The host church should provide a table near the main entrance to the meeting area for the Classis. A meeting-room table should be of sufficient size to collect credentials, forms of subscription, name tags, extra agenda copies, etc. The actual materials on the table are the responsibility of the Stated Clerk.
- (b) The actual meeting space for the classis should
  - i. be able to accommodate all the people expected at the meeting
  - ii. allow for good communication among the delegates, such that all the delegates can easily participate and others can adequately hear and see the proceedings; ideally delegates should be able to face each other.
  - iii. provide sufficient table space for each delegate to manage their agendas and other documents

- (c) Past experience for meaningful interaction suggests that the best seating arrangement for the delegates and officers of Classis is around a square or rectangular arrangement of tables (conference style) with the Officers (Chair, Vice-Chair, and Clerk) at one of the sides, and the delegates around the other three sides. (The officers' table should be near an electrical outlet, or an extension cord should be provided, if possible). However, other arrangements have worked equally well and it is up to the host church to arrange the seating.
- (d) Only the delegates and officers (approximately 30 in total) are seated around or in the actual meeting area. The other attendees should be accommodated in a few rows of seats adjacent to the delegate area such that they can hear and observe the proceedings, and easily access the meeting if they are asked to report.
- (e) Do not crowd: please provide space for delegates to manage their agendas and other documents for up to approximately 8 hours.
- (f) Please provide a suitably placed lectern for use by various speakers during the meeting
- (g) Comforts (meetings last up to 8 hours or more) – water (*pitchers with drinking glasses are OK!*), mints, or similar are appreciated.
- (h) Sometimes there is a need for an executive session, which is a meeting of the delegates and visiting office bearers only. Normally this will be known ahead of time. The host church will be asked to provide a separate area where the observers can wait such that the executive session of classis can be held in private until classis resumes its public session.

### **3. Audio/visual equipment**

- (a) Audio amplification is almost always necessary. There should be microphones for at least the Chair and the lectern. The audio equipment should be set up such that it is ready to go, or someone from the host church should be available to attend to it.
- (b) Presentations are often made using PowerPoint or some similar program. Some presenters provide their own projection equipment; others rely on it being available. If possible, it is a good idea to have the equipment set up and tested prior to the meeting, in such a way that it is easily accessible by the presenter (for example, having the equipment placed in the middle of a square of tables is convenient only if there is a space between some tables for the presenter to access the equipment)

### **4. Meals and refreshments**

Ordinarily, the host church provides refreshments and a meal as follows:

- (a) Refreshments upon arrival at the meeting: usually between 9:00 a.m. and 9:30 a.m., prior to the start of the meeting, and could be coffee, tea, juice, water, cookies. Remember that at that time most delegates will have just completed breakfast when they arrive.
- (b) Refreshments during breaks: there is normally not a break in the morning. By lunch time we will have a fairly good idea if there will be an afternoon break. (Please check with either the Chair or the Clerk of the meeting). Simple choices of hot and cold drinks and light snacks are appreciated.
- (c) Lunch break: the usual break for lunch is at 12:00 noon, until about 1:15 p.m. The meal should accommodate about 40-50 people, as indicated above. The meal is often provided by a fund-raising group of the host church or of the local Christian school; how it is provided is up to the host church.
- (d) Dinner break: it is anticipated that under ordinary circumstances, Classis will adjourn in the afternoon and a dinner will not be required. There may however be unusual situations which will require Classis to continue into the evening, and a light meal would be appropriate. Classis officers will do all they can to inform the host church as soon as this is anticipated.
- (e) Please be sure to honour the principles of stewardship and care for the environment in providing refreshments and meals.

- (f) The cost for the refreshments and meals are reimbursed by the classis. Please forward your invoice for the cost of the refreshments and meals to the Classis Treasurer as soon as possible, for reimbursement. The Classical Treasurer is listed in the front of the directory of the CRCs in Niagara, as well as in the denominational Year Book.  
(as of this writing, the Treasurer is Ms. Emma Winter; phone 905-563-4681; e-mail: wbts@bellnet.ca)

#### **5. Agenda items that are the responsibility of the host church:**

The following items that are part of the agenda/meeting of the Classis are the responsibility of the host church:

- (a) Opening devotions; normally led by the pastor of the host church. The Chair or Clerk of the classis will confirm prior to the meeting.
- (b) Credentials and Roll Call: the host church is responsible for obtaining the Classical Credentials<sup>1</sup> from each church, and using these as the basis of a roll call when asked to do so by the Chair of the meeting. The host church then provides the Credential forms to the members of the Credential Advisory Committee, which is appointed before each meeting of Classis and who are identified on the Agenda.
- (c) Balloting Committee: from time to time there are elections at Classis that require written ballots. The host church is expected to provide at least two people to form a balloting counting committee.

#### **6. Any questions?**

- (a) You could contact the clerk of one or two churches that recently hosted a Classis meeting for the name of the person who was responsible for the venue arrangements and ask them your question(s);
- (b) Your pastor or elders in your church who have attended recent meetings will have a sense of what is expected of a host church;
- (c) The Stated Clerk of Classis is responsible for convening the meetings, so he/she should be able to assist in dealing with any issues you have. The Stated Clerk is listed in the front of the directory of the CRCs in Niagara, as well as in the denominational Year Book.  
(As of this writing, the Stated Clerk is Mr. John TeBrake; phone 905-892-8059; e-mail: statedclerk@classisniagara.ca)

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<sup>1</sup> Each church will be asked to leave their Classical Credentials at a designated spot for each meeting. The Stated Clerk will assist the host church in determining if each church has provided the credentials.