



## CLASSIS NIAGARA OF THE CHRISTIAN REFORMED CHURCH

Minutes of the meeting of Wednesday, February 18, 2009  
Brock University, St. Catharines; hosted by Rehoboth CRC



**Officers:** Rev. Kevin Stieva; Chairman; Rev. Rudy Ouwehand, Vice-Chairman; John TeBrake, Stated Clerk

1. **Opening:** Dr. André Basson, the Christian Reformed chaplain at Brock University, led in opening devotions in the Rita Welch Meditation Room. He welcomed the delegates to Brock University, after which the Classis moved to the Boardroom for its meeting.
2. **Constitution of Classis:** The Chairman for this meeting, Rev. Kevin Stieva, welcomed delegates and guests to this session of Classis Niagara. He invited Elder Rick Meloen to read the roll call from the Classical Credential forms that had been submitted. All churches were represented; however, credentials for the delegate from the Village Church (Thorold) and for the delegates from Maranatha were not available. Classis approved the seating of Pastor Mike Collins from the Village Church, and Elder Hans Branderhorst of Maranatha as delegates. The second Maranatha delegate was reported to be on his way with the credentials. (He arrived shortly after with the credentials for both Maranatha delegates). Two first-time delegates had signed the Form of Subscription and were recognized. The Chairman declared Classis constituted.
3. **Executive Committee and the Stated Clerk Reports:** Stated Clerk John TeBrake presented the reports of the meetings of the Executive Committee of November 19, 2008 and January 7, 2009 which were in the agenda; and of February 12, 2009, which were in the supplementary material. After opportunity for questions, the work of the Executive Committee was approved.

John TeBrake then presented the correspondence summaries, one in each of the agenda and the supplementary materials. Again after opportunities for questions, the work of the Stated Clerk was approved by Classis.

4. **Nominating Committee Report:** Rev. Greg Fluit reported on behalf of the Nominating Committee. The committee recommended eight (re)appointments to various committees. The recommendations of the Nominating Committee were approved by Classis.
5. **Church Counselor Reports:**
  - a. Rev. E.J. deWaard reported that the Maranatha CRC in St. Catharines had extended a call to Rev. Richard Loerop;
  - b. Rev. Derek Bouma reported that the Bethel CRC in Dunnville had invited a potential pastor to preach there in the near future;
  - c. Rev. Steven deBoer reported that the council of Trinity CRC in St. Catharines had recently begun preparing itself for the process of calling a pastor.
6. **Regional Pastors' Reports:** Rev. Rudy Ouwehand encouraged the pastors of Classis Niagara to contact either himself or Rev. David Tigchelaar if there is a need, and invited them to call on them if there is a need for support and encouragement. As their work is generally confidential in nature, it is difficult to provide a report with specifics.
7. **CRWRC Board Member Report:** Our Classis' Board representative, Mr. Ben Van Hoffen, gave an overview of some of the developmental work undertaken by CRWRC, using work in Ecuador as an example.
8. **Executive Session:** The chairman declared an Executive Session of Classis. Minutes of this session are on file with the Stated Clerk.
9. **Outcome of the Executive Session:** The Chairman informed classis that after a significant conversation Classis Niagara had accepted the request of candidate Ken VanDyk to withdraw his eligibility for a call to the Ministry of the Word in the CRCNA. The Synodical deputies of Classis Toronto, Hamilton and Huron concurred with the decision of classis. As a classis we pledged to hold Ken in prayer and help him to find the clarity of God's call in his life.

**10. Financial Statement/Reports:** Ms. Emma Winter, the Treasurer for Classis Niagara, presented the financial statements for the year 2008. In response to a question as to the rationale for the balance of funds of \$150,698 at the year end, the Treasurer responded that typically there is little submission of Classical Ministry shares in the early part of a year, and this amount is required for expenditures in the first four or five months of a year until churches make submissions again. After a motion which was supported, Classis approved the work of the Treasurer and the financial statements for 2008.

**11. Delegates to Synod 2009:** Delegates to Synod were chosen as follows:

Minister delegates: 1<sup>st</sup>: Dr. André Basson (chosen by free vote)  
2<sup>nd</sup>: Rev. Ryan Braam (by rotation)  
Minister alternate delegates: 1<sup>st</sup>: Rev. Andrew Beunk  
2<sup>nd</sup>: Rev. Kevin Stieva  
  
Elder delegates: 1<sup>st</sup>: Elder Bill Thies (Bethany)  
2<sup>nd</sup>: Elder Carl Maartense (Covenant)  
Elder Alternate: Elder Harry VanTuyl (Jubilee Fellowship)

**12. Church Visitor Reports:** Elder Cor VanSoelen reported on a visit he and Rev. Henry Eshuis had made with the Council of the Jubilee Fellowship CRC of St. Catharines. As usual, opportunity was provided for questions.

**13. Classical Ministries Committee Report:** Frank Engelage, the Classical Ministries Coordinator, was invited to give his report. In turn, he invited Pastor Mike Collins (the Village Church); Dr. André Basson (Brock University Chaplain); and Rev. Fred VanderBerg (Shalom Manor Chaplain) to provide an overview of their respective ministries. God's blessings were evident in the report of each of these ministries. Classis approved the work of the Classical Ministries Coordinator.

**14. Credentials Committee Report:** Rev. Derek Bouma reported on behalf of the Credentials Committee (made up of delegates from the Riverside and Providence churches). CO Article 41 items included these items which are hereby passed to the Executive Committee to respond to at a future meeting:

- a. a request for a teaching session about the meaning and implications of signing the Form of Subscription
- b. declining membership/declining 2<sup>nd</sup> service attendance/small groups

Comments for information included:

- a. several elder nominees to Synod 2009
- b. a communication from Bethany that its elders had discerned that they would transform the 2<sup>nd</sup> service from a formal worship service to a teaching/fellowship gathering
- c. from the Covenant CRC a statement that its consistory endorses the present position of the CRC on homosexuality (with reference to the overture from the Grace CRC of Welland).

**15. Overture Advisory Committee Report:** This committee presented with respect to the two overtures received by Classis:

# 1, the overture from the Grace CRC: The Overture Advisory Committee recommended that Classis Niagara not accede to this overture on the following grounds:

1) Classis should not adopt such a broad policy as is proposed here, a policy that endorses and enforces one particular view even if we all agree with it. Synod has taken the best approach in recognizing that this issue needs to be worked out pastorally and individually in each case or situation.

2) Synod itself would reject this overture since it does not present any "new grounds."

The overture took precedence over the committee's report. It was moved, supported, and approved to table the overture and return to the committee's report. The recommendation of the committee to not accede to this overture was approved by Classis.

# 2, the overture from the Mountainview, Providence, and Fruitland CRCs: It was noted that (a) Mr. Frank Engelage, elder delegate from Bethel CRC in Dunnville, declared a conflict and that he would not vote on this matter because he fills a paid staff position of classis; and (b) the vice-chairman, Rev. Rudy Ouwehand, chaired this discussion because the Classis chairman, Rev. Kevin Stieva, is a member of one of the signatory churches (Mountainview CRC).

The Overture Advisory Committee recommended that Classis accede to this overture and its intent to evaluate the expenses of classis with respect to reducing expenditures. To implement this the committee recommended further that:

- 1) Classis instruct the CMC Executive to form such a task force to conduct the evaluation

- 2) one member of each of the 3 authoring churches, Mountainview, Providence and Smithville along with 2 members at large be invited to serve on this task force.
  - 3) that this task force be mandated to begin meeting as soon as constituted and that
  - 4) they be prepared to report no later than the October 09 meeting of classis.
- Classis approved the recommendation of the Overture Advisory Committee.

**16. Motion to destroy the ballots:** Classis approved a motion to destroy the ballots cast during this meeting of Classis.

**17. Adjournment:** Rev. Stieva announced the adjournment of the meeting, thanking the Rehoboth CRC and Dr. Basson for their hospitality, and leading in a closing prayer.

**Next meeting:**

*Date:* May 20, 2009

*Agenda Deadline:* April 1, 2009

*Location:* Riverside CRC, Wellandport

*Chairman:* Rev. Andrew Beunk

*Vice-chairman:* Rev. Kevin Stieva

*Credentials:* Bethel (to chair) and Bethany

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

*Following meeting:* October 21 2009