



## CLASSIS NIAGARA OF THE CHRISTIAN REFORMED CHURCH

Minutes of the meeting of Wednesday, May 20, 2009  
Host Church: Riverside Christian Reformed Church, Wellandport



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

**Delegates,** as per Classical Credentials:

Providence, Beamsville	Elder Ron Kielstra <sup>(E)</sup>	Elder Andy Fluit
Bethel, Dunnville	Elder Bernie Korten <sup>(F)</sup>	Elder Harry Vreugenhil
Bethany, Fenwick	Rev. E.J. deWaard	Elder Harry Hielema <sup>(F)</sup>
Fruitland	Rev. Andrew Beunk	Elder John VanderKolk <sup>(F)</sup>
Mountainview, Grimsby	Pastor Rick Roeda <sup>(F)</sup>	Elder Will Bezemer
Rehoboth, Niagara Falls	Rev. Rudy Ouwehand	Elder Mark Roorda
Covenant, St. Catharines	Rev. James Dekker	Elder Ralph Numan
Village Church, Thorold	Pastor Mike Collins	
Jubilee Fellowship, St. Catharines	Rev. Duane VanderLaan	Elder Bonnie Vrieswyk
Maranatha, St. Catharines	Rev. Richard Loerop <sup>(F)</sup>	Elder Hans Branderhorst
Trinity, St. Catharines	Elder Ron Mulder <sup>(F)</sup>	Elder Clarence VanStaalduinen
Smithville	Elder Bill VanderKlippe	Deacon George DeBoer <sup>(F), (A)</sup>
Grace, Welland	Rev. Ryan Braam	Elder Arnold Dykstra <sup>(F)</sup>
Riverside, Wellandport	Rev. Derek Bouma	Elder Dave VanderWier

(A) Afternoon Session only

(E) Evening Session only

(F) First-time delegate to Classis Niagara

### AFTERNOON SESSION:

- Opening:** Rev. Andrew Beunk welcomed all delegates, observers and presenters. He invited Dr. Syd Hielema, of the denominational Faith Formation Committee, to lead in opening devotions. He read from Luke 24, of the time when Jesus met with his disciples on the road to Emmaus, just after his resurrection.
- Constitution of Classis:** At the invitation of the chair, Rev. Derek Bouma of the host church read the names of delegates from the Credentials that were presented. The following exceptions were noted and approved by Classis:
  - Smithville CRC has appointed one Deacon delegate, Deacon George DeBoer
  - Providence CRC was represented by only one (elder) delegate at the opening of Classis. The second (elder) delegate was present for the evening session.
  - Maranatha CRC had appointed Rev. Rich Loerop as a delegate, who has accepted a call from that congregation, and is pastoring there, but has not yet been installed as its pastor (scheduled for June 26)
  - Pastor Mike Collins represented the Village Church, for which credentials were not available. The delegates from Covenant CRC apologized for their omission.

First-time delegates signed the Form of Subscription, and the chairman declared the Classis constituted.

- Faith Formation Committee:** Dr. Syd Hielema represented this denominational committee, members of which are meeting with as many classes as possible to have a conversation on key faith formation matters. "In light of the decision of Synod 2006 about children at the Lord's Supper, and the work of a subsequent task force, Synod 2007 established [this] committee with the following mandate: to deepen the integration of biblical teaching; confessional norms; church polity; and liturgical, educational, and pastoral practices in the CRC with respect to (1) participation in the Lord's Supper and (2) public profession of faith." (Agenda for Synod 2008, page 231). Through his discussion and using a handout, and some small group participation, Dr. Hielema encouraged delegates to provide feedback that he will in turn bring to the committee as it considers future reporting and recommendations to Synod.

4. Rev. Andrew Beunk, who has accepted a call from the New Westminster CRC, Burnaby, BC, offered some words of reflection on his leaving this classis. He also noted the presence of, and welcomed, Rev. Rich Loerop, formerly serving a church in Ludington, MI and whose ministerial credentials presently are with the New Era, MI, CRC, and who has accepted a call from the Maranatha CRC of St. Catharines.
5. **Reports of the Executive Committee and Stated Clerk:** The Stated Clerk referred delegates to two reports of the Executive Committee (one in the agenda, one provided as supplementary material) as well as the summaries of correspondence. The work/reports of the Executive Committee and the Stated Clerk were approved by Classis.

Arising from the report of the Executive Committee:

- (a) The Executive Committee **recommended/moved that Classis Niagara pursues to be organized as a trust** (unincorporated) in order to gain charitable status and the ability to obtain protection of liability insurance. This will require the development, approval and acceptance of a constitution/declaration of trust. The motion was supported and opened for discussion. On behalf of the Executive Committee, Frank Engelage provided some further background. The denomination has encouraged classes to incorporate for some time; Classis needs to be formally organized in order to be able to obtain liability insurance, particularly with respect to activities of the Safe Church Team; and to be able to obtain charitable organization status with the Canada Revenue Agency. Establishing a trust, as endorsed by the Canadian Council of Christian Charities, would present similar results, but at less initial cost. After some discussion, it was noted that the as-yet absent delegate from the Providence CRC, Elder Ron Kielstra, would be able to provide some further professional opinion. Classis approved a motion from the floor to table the trust/incorporation discussion until after Mr. Kielstra's arrival. (continued at 16, below)
  - (b) With respect to a possible source of financial support for planning and implementing a spiritual health seminar/retreat for our churches, Rev. Jim Dekker suggested that he had contacted the Sustaining Pastoral Excellence (SPE) Program. However, to provide funds to a classis would be a precedent for the SPE and a specific proposal would need to be developed. Rev. Dekker encouraged delegates and their churches to forward any suggestions and ideas to the Executive Committee.
  - (c) Rev. Dekker, serving as chair of the denominational Form of Subscription Revision Committee, provided an overview and update of the process towards a revised Form of Subscription. A proposed revision has not been approved by Synod, and a 12-member committee is engaged in gathering further input from a variety of demographic groups in the CRC in order to develop another draft.
6. **Classical Ministries Committee:** Classical Ministries Coordinator, Mr. Frank Engelage, led the classis as follows:
- (a) Since the departure of Rev. Walt VanderWerf the position of Classical Prayer Coordinator has been unfilled. Mr. Engelage asked for volunteers or suggestions of people who could fill this position.
  - (b) Rev. E.J. deWaard presented the proposed "40 days of prayer initiative", for Advent 2009, for all CRC churches in Ontario. Classis will be asked to endorse this initiative at the October meeting.
  - (c) Brock Chaplaincy: Classis was informed that the Brock University Chaplaincy Committee is conducting an internal evaluation of its ministry.
  - (d) Thorold church plant: Pastor Mike Collins of the Village Church provided an overview of the various programs and the blessings of the church in becoming known and respected in the Thorold community. However, the key person of their worship team is leaving the area, and there are no known possible replacements. Frank Engelage led in prayer for the Village Church, its programs, and for a new worship team leader.
  - (e) Youth Leader Support Team (YLST): the position of Youth Leader Coordinator is presently vacant (was previously held by Ms. Sonya Wierenga). Elder delegate Ron Mulder, who is a member of the YLST, noted that the position will be filled within the present 10 hour per month allocation. While the team is aware of the ad-hoc committee seeking to reduce Classis' costs, Mr. Mulder indicated that the YLST would eventually hope to propose a 40 hour per month position. He asked the churches to embrace the youth programs of Classis, and to pray for the youth and encourage their youth leaders to be open to the idea of working together within Classis Niagara. Pastor Rick Roeda, Youth Pastor at Mountainview CRC, shared his experience and that of 900 young people at the recently-held All Ontario Convention. He found this convention to be a blessing to the youth of the CRC churches in Ontario, highly thought of by youth leaders of other denominations.

A motion to approve the work of the Classical Ministries Coordinator was carried.

7. **Classical Ministry Leadership Team (CMLT):** Rev. Derek Bouma, chair, provided a report of the work of the CMLT. Three students are presently supported: Roelof Peereboom (Bethel, Dunnville) and Kyle Klooster and Wes Collins (both from Mountainview, Grimbsy). Rev. Bouma asked pastors and elders to be on the alert for potential ministers, and encourage them to pursue ministry. The CMLT recommended that the Ministry Share for 2010 for the CMLT be \$7, which will leave them with sufficient funds for projected needs. Classis approved this recommendation. There was a request from a delegate that the CMLT consider broadening financial support to include those studying in other ministries, such as leadership development. However, the present mandate of the CMLT, as well as the relevant Church Order article 21, provide for financial assistance for those studying to become Ministers of the Word.

A motion to provide the same proportion of financial support for those studying at institutions other than Calvin Theological Seminary (CTS), as is being provided for CTS students, was ruled out of order by the chair. He indicated that such a motion should be presented by way of a formal overture to Classis.

A motion to approve the report and the work of the CMLT was carried.

8. **Church Counselor Reports:**

- (a) Maranatha: Rev. E.J. deWaard reported that Rev. Richard Loerop from the New Era CRC of Michigan had accepted the call from Maranatha CRC.
- (b) Bethel: Rev. Derek Bouma deferred to the elder delegates from Bethel. Elder Harry Vreugdenhil announced that Rev. John Heidinga from Victoria, BC had accepted their call. He plans to start at Bethel August 1.
- (c) Trinity: Rev. Steven deBoer was not at this meeting of Classis and there was no report.

9. **Classical Nominating Committee:** As recommended by the Nominating Committee, Classis ratified the appointment of Ms. Cheryl Janssen as the Mountainview CRC representative on the Safe Church Team.

10. **Regional Pastors' Report:** Regional Pastor Rev. Rudy Ouwehand, on behalf of himself and Rev. David Tigchelaar, indicated that councils should be aware that there are pastors who can minister to their pastor, and should feel free to call on them if that would be helpful. He also reminded the pastors about, and encouraged them to participate in, the bi-weekly lunch get-togethers.

11. Closing of the afternoon session: Rev. Jim Dekker led in devotions, reading from Psalm 133, and asking God to bless the work that had been done in the afternoon, the dinner and fellowship, and the upcoming evening session.

**EVENING SESSION:**

12. **Change in Delegates:** Delegate George DeBoer of Smithville CRC has had to leave and was not replaced. The second Elder Delegate of the Providence CRC, Mr. Ron Kielstra, was now present.

13. **Board of Trustees Update (BOT):** Rev. Andrew Beunk, who has just completed his second term on the BOT, provided a synopsis of some of the highlights of some recent BOT meetings. These highlights have been provided to councils after each BOT meeting.

14. **Church Visitor Reports:** (Former) Elder Cor VanSoelen read reports of visits he and Rev. Henry Eshuis had made with the Maranatha and Grace CRC Councils. Rev. Jim Dekker read a report of a visit he and Elder Bill Thies had made with the Trinity CRC Council. The reading of these reports generated some caring and helpful discussion, particularly as to how council and pastor support each other in their ministry among their congregations. The reports that were presented are on file with the Stated Clerk.

15. **Credentials Advisory Committee:** Elder Harry Vreugdenhil reported.

- (a) There were two questions under CO Article 41: (i) Which baptisms (denominations) does the CRC recognize?, e.g., Catholic, United Church, etc. **Response:** See CO article 58. (ii) What have other CRC churches done with regards to second service attendance? **Response:** referred to Executive Committee as part of material for planning a future church health conference/seminar/retreat (see 5 (b) above)
- (b) There was a communication from the Fruitland CRC informing that their pastor had accepted a call and requesting a Pastoral Advisor (Counselor). **Response:** Rev. David Tigchelaar has been appointed to serve the Fruitland CRC as Counselor.
- (c) The Grace CRC brought forward its concern about the editorial by Rev. Bob De Moor in the March 2009 issue of *the Banner*. In particular, the comments: "present CRC policy doesn't help [church leaders] deal

pastorally with same-sex couples who live in a committed relationship and who show strong faith, Christian maturity, and a sincere desire to continue within the fellowship of believers.” The Grace communication requested Classis to respond to Rev. De Moor’s article holding him accountable for the theological inaccuracy of the views he expressed. **Response:** the Executive Committee will use the Grace communication and input received at Classis to develop a response on behalf of Classis which would be discussed at the October meeting (or perhaps dealt with prior to that for the sake of timeliness). Classis also noted that after this meeting’s discussion, Grace should feel supported and empowered to submit their concerns directly to Rev. De Moor and/or the Banner Editorial Advisory Committee. Some Classis Niagara councils had already done so.

**16.** Rev. Rudy Ouwehand volunteered to represent Classis at the upcoming farewell service for Rev. Andrew Beunk at the Fruitland CRC. It had been previously determined that Rev. Duane VanderLaan will represent Classis at the upcoming installation of Rev. Rich Loerop as Minister of the Word at Maranatha CRC.

**17. Continuation of 5 (a), discussion of organizing as a trust:** Since Elder delegate Ron Kielstra was now present, it was moved to lift the tabling of the motion to organize as a trust. That motion was carried, and thus the motion to pursue to be organized as a trust was before Classis again. During the ensuing discussion it was noted that all classes that have organized have incorporated; that the denominational office recommends incorporation; the annual reporting for a corporation is not onerous; the significant financial difference between the trust and incorporation options is that there is a one-time up-front fee for incorporation and maintenance costs are about the same. The motion to organize as a trust was defeated. There was then a motion, which was supported, that Classis Niagara seek to be incorporated. This motion was carried.

**18. Adjournment:** Rev. Rudy Ouwehand thanked Rev. Beunk for his leadership, and led in a prayer of thanks.

**Next meeting:**

*Date:* October 21, 2009 at 2:00 pm

*Agenda Deadline:* September 1, 2009

*Location:* Jubilee Fellowship CRC, St. Catharines

*Chairman:* Rev. Rudy Ouwehand

*Vice-chairman:* Rev. Jim Dekker

*Credentials:* Fruitland (to chair) and Mountainview

*Overture Advisory:* Jubilee Fellowship (to chair) and Maranatha

*Following meetings:* February 17, 2010; May 19, 2010; October 20, 2010