



CLASSIS NIAGARA OF THE CHRISTIAN REFORMED CHURCH



Minutes of the meeting of Wednesday, October 21, 2009
Host Church: Jubilee Fellowship Christian Reformed Church, St. Catharines

Officers: Chairman: Rev. Rudy Ouwehand; Vice-Chairman: Rev. James Dekker; Stated Clerk: John TeBrake

Delegates, as per Classical Credentials:

Providence, Beamsville	Rev. Steve DeBoer	Elder John Vanderbeek
Bethel, Dunnville	Elder Frank Engelage	Elder Otto Bulk
Bethany, Fenwick	Rev. E.J. deWaard	Elder Hans Dam
Fruitland	Elder John Vanderkolk	Elder Mike Hamilton ^(F)
Mountainview, Grimsby	Pastor Rick Roeda	Elder Lawrence DeGraaf ^(F)
Rehoboth, Niagara Falls	Rev. Rudy Ouwehand	Elder John Prinzen ^(F)
Covenant, St. Catharines	Rev. James Dekker	Elder Jack DeVries
Village Church, Thorold	Pastor Mike Collins	
Jubilee Fellowship, St. Catharines	Rev. Duane VanderLaan	Elder Harry VanTuyl
Maranatha, St. Catharines	Rev. Richard Loerop	Elder Pete Kiers
Trinity, St. Catharines	Elder Ron Mulder	Elder Jim Eshuis
Smithville	Rev. Greg Fluit	Elder Adrian VanderWier
Grace, Welland	Rev. Ryan Braam	Elder Marten Zwier
Riverside, Wellandport	Rev. Derek Bouma	Elder Phil Dekker

^(F) First-time delegate to Classis Niagara

AFTERNOON SESSION:

- Opening:** The chairman of this meeting of Classis Niagara, Rev. Rudy Ouwehand, welcomed all the delegates and visitors, including synodical deputies Rev. Nick Overduin (Classis Toronto); Rev. Henry Katerberg (Classis Hamilton); and Rev. Dirk Miedema (Classis Chatham) who were attending with respect to a matter that would be dealt with in an executive session of Classis. He invited Rev. Duane VanderLaan of the host church to lead in opening devotions. Pastor VanderLaan shared a recent personal experience to apply I John 4:13-16, particularly verse 16: "And so we know and rely on the love God has for us". He further referred to Ephesians 3, that through the power of the Spirit rooted in me, I might "have power together with all the saints to grasp how wide and long and high and deep is the love of Christ..." In conclusion he offered the song: Have thine own way, Lord, ... Thou art the Potter, I am the clay.
- Constitution of Classis:** At the invitation of the chair, Elder Harry VanTuyl of the host church read the names of delegates from the credentials of the churches that were presented. All churches were properly delegated. Three first-time delegates had signed the Form of Subscription, and the chairman declared the Classis constituted.
- Executive Session:** the Chairman invited the delegates of the Jubilee Fellowship CRC to inform Classis of their request. Elder Harry VanTuyl read the request, which was:

The Council of Jubilee Fellowship Chr. Ref. Church ("Jubilee") requests that Classis Niagara

- Concur in Jubilee Council's decision of Oct.13, 2009 to acquiesce in the written request of Lloyd Burghart, a pastor emeritus in the CRC and member of Jubilee, to resign his membership in Jubilee and the Christian Reformed Church denomination.
- Formally declare that the ministerial status of brother Burghart is now "considered that of one deposed from office" under CO Art.14 and so advise the churches of the CRC.

The Chairman declared an executive session of classis, and non-officebearers were excused.

4. **Return to Regular Session:** Classis returned to regular session. The outcome of the Executive Session is (1) that Classis acquiesced in the written request of Lloyd Burghart to resign his membership in the Jubilee Fellowship CRC and the Christian Reformed Church denomination; and (2) that Classis formally declare that the ministerial status of brother Burghart is now "considered that of one deposed from office" under CO Art.14 and that we would advise the churches of the CRC. The Chairman thanked the Synodical Deputies for their participation.
5. **Classical Ministries Committee/Brock University Chaplain's Report:** Dr. André Basson shared that increasingly the students he is dealing with are looking for substantive things and he, Dr. Basson, feels he is able to provide that. Facebook is a successful tool for keeping in contact with the students. He hosted a Thanksgiving dinner for students, and 125 students had participated, and many volunteers from the Classis Niagara churches had assisted. (continued at item 9)
6. **Budget for 2010:** Ms. Emma Winter, the Classis Treasurer, presented the budget for 2010 as proposed by the Executive Committee of the Classis (agenda pages 17-20 of the agenda, with minor adjustments for membership numbers). Also included in this was the financial summary for 2009 to the end of August.
 - (a) Considering that the Brock University Chaplain is able to cover a variety of costs through income he receives from teaching at Brock University, it was moved and supported to reduce the Brock Campus Ministry budget by \$4,000, from \$89,965 to \$85,965. The motion was **carried**.
 - (b) With respect to the budget amount for classis support for the Village Church in Thorold (a church plant sponsored by CRHM and supported by Classis Niagara) there was some uncertainty about future commitments and whether funds saved by reduced support could be directed to other church plants. The Executive Committee was asked to provide a status of this support along with the minutes of this meeting. Classis **approved** the budget, subject to the adjustment recorded in (a) above, as provided in the agenda. A summary of the approved budget and Classical Ministry Shares is as follows:

	2010		2009	
	<i>Ministry share per member</i>	<i>Total approved ministry share income from Classis Niagara</i>	<i>Total approved ministry expense for Classis Niagara</i>	<i>Ministry share per member</i>
Classis Expense Fund	4.00	12,840	17,550	4.00
Campus Ministry - Brock	26.78	85,965	85,965	29.27
Shalom Manor Chaplain**	8.71	27,974	27,974	10.12
Classical Ministries Committee	6.19	19,862	19,862	6.15
Classis Ministry Leadership Team	7.00	22,470	22,470	4.00
The Village Church**	8.00	25,680	25,680	10.00
Total:	60.68	194,791	199,501	63.54

** ministry shared with partners

- (c) Classis **approved** the work of the treasurer.
7. **Reports of the Executive Committee and Stated Clerk:**

The Stated Clerk referred delegates to the report of the Executive Committee, page 3 of the agenda, and to the schedule of correspondence on pages 4 and 5 of the agenda and page 21 of the supplementary agenda.

 - (a) Re item 6 of the Executive Committee report, the Grace CRC has now sent its own letter to the Editorial Committee of the Banner in response to the March 2009 editorial (see minutes, May 20, 2009, item 15 c). The letter was read. A proposal from the Executive Committee to support the letter from Grace CRC was **defeated**. It was agreed and the Chairman ruled that with the passage of time and Grace's response the matter is closed.
 - (b) Re item 7 of the Executive Committee report, work towards legal incorporation of Classis Niagara is proceeding. The application to incorporate under the Corporations Act of Ontario has been completed and will be submitted forthwith
 - (c) Delegates were asked to take note of the pulpit supply schedule included in the Executive Committee report, and to ensure that those responsible for pulpit supply are given a copy.

(d) Re correspondence item 14, Classis **approved** the recommendation of the Executive Committee that the meeting for May will be changed from May 19, 2010 to May 26, 2010, to accommodate the planned Tri-Classis (now four-Classis) retreat planned for May 18-20, 2010
Classis approved the work of the Executive Committee and of the Stated Clerk

- 8. Back to God Ministries International:** Rev. Steve deBoer presented a slide-show of the work of the Back to God Ministries International on behalf of the Region 4 representative, Ms. Alice Klamer, who was unable to attend to bring the presentation herself.
- 9. Classical Ministries Committee** (continued from item 5): **The Village Church report:** Pastor Mike Collins reported on the many activities carried on at the Village Church, including some 18 functioning small groups. He also reported on well-developing community goodwill and support. On behalf of the Village Church community, he thanked Classis Niagara for the financial and praying support provided.
- 10. Redeemer University College:** President Dr. Justin Cooper presented this report. He noted that Redeemer started when three pastors in Niagara came up with the idea of a Christian university in this area, in 1976. As pastor Vanderlaan had done in his opening devotions, Dr. Cooper also shared that what has happened since has been Ephesians 3 at work. Dr. Cooper's highlights included:
- Redeemer now has the largest enrollment in its history (some 918 students from 52 denominations, about 25% of them of the Roman Catholic Church);
 - public recognition for Redeemer and other Christian post-high school education through public funding for infrastructure and community involvement in sports facilities;
 - media acknowledgment of quality education and student life.
- Dr. Cooper plans to retire from Redeemer during this coming summer, after which he plans to continue to serve Christian graduate education as Executive Director of Christian Higher Education Canada, which includes a group of more than 30 Christian colleges and universities.
- 11. Diaconal Ministries Canada:** Ms. Tammy Heidbuurt, Community Ministry Developer for Diaconal Ministries Canada, informed delegates that this ministry had now been established for 50 years. It continues to provide resources to deacons and churches. She noted the following resources from DMC:
- access to the Community Opportunity Scan, vouched for by Pastor Mike Collins of the Village Church;
 - Operation Manna, which allows churches to start and be involved in community projects;
 - equipping deacons
 - Ms. Karin Vermeer (Grace CRC) and Mr. Al Bezuyen (Maranatha CRC) are the Classical Ministry Developers in Classis Niagara
- 12. Youth Leader Support Team:** Mr. Ron Mulder reported that during the past few years the various sectors/groups such as Youth Talks, Niagara Serves, and Niagara League activities had shifted and merged into what is now the one ministry for high-school aged youth in Niagara, Niagara Youth Network. He indicated that there have been struggles during that time in having a full committee and in achieving full participation from all churches.
- He informed Classis that subject to its approval, it would like to designate Ms. Ann Elise Teeuwssen (Trinity CRC) to the position of Youth Leader Coordinator (10 hours per month). [Classis approved this as part of the Nominating Committee Report; see item 18 h]
 - He requested that Classis approve that each church should provide a board member for the Niagara Youth Network.
- After some discussion, during which support for the Niagara Youth Network was evident, Classis:
- Asked each council to take this request for its consideration;
 - Suggested that the Niagara Youth Network approach each council requesting board members;
 - **Approved** a motion that Classis Niagara support the work of Niagara Youth Network and request that they formalize their plan and request to the churches;
 - Asked the Niagara Youth Network to develop an updated mandate to be presented to Classis for approval
- 13. Denominational Form of Subscription Committee II Report:** Rev. James Dekker, chair of this committee, provided a background of the mandate and work of this committee [see Agenda for Synod 2009, pp 448-451]. Synod has encouraged classes and churches to engage in prayer and discussion about a possible revision to the Form of Subscription. Rev. Dekker asked that a proposed new form, which had been distributed, be discussed at each table during the dinner time of the meeting, and to offer responses to the provided questions back to him after the dinner.
- 14. Dinner break:** Rev. Richard Loerop read Psalm 34 and led in devotions prior to dinner.

EVENING SESSION:

15. Credentials Committee Report: Fruitland CRC delegate Elder John VanderKolk reported that there were two items presented on the credentials, both of which were nominations for Region 4 representatives to the Board of Trustees of Calvin College (Dr. André Basson and Rev. Richard Loerop; see nominating committee report at item 18f).

There was also one item that was a response to a previous survey from the Stated Clerk on behalf of the Executive Committee. This survey asked churches to indicate if they did or did not allow pastors' spouses to access Pastors' Professional Development allowances.¹

16. Christian Reformed World Missions: Rev. Derek Bouma, our regional board member, provided an update on the work of CRWM. While in the past CRWM would engage in planting churches, today it is more focused on partnering with churches that are already established to deliver a more effective ministry. More emphasis is placed on training leaders of existing Christian churches. A video was shown to display this partnership and the opportunities for training leaders in partner churches. Rev. Bouma also informed delegates that as is the case with other agencies CRWM is experiencing financial challenges.

17. Church Counselor Reports: The following information was provided by counselors of churches seeking a pastor:

- Mountainview, Grimsby: Counselor Rev. Greg Fluit reported that this church is currently seeking a pastor of congregational care, and is planning an evening for the congregation to meet a possible candidate. Once this position is filled Mountainview will search for a Senior Pastor.
- Trinity, St. Catharines: Counselor Rev. Steve deBoer indicated that the search committee has developed a profile, and will vote on calling Rev. Doug Nieustraten of the Ebenezer Reformed Church of Stoney Creek during the week following this meeting of Classis.
- Fruitland CRC: The counselor, Rev. David Tigchelaar, was not present, but the delegates from this church reported that a search team is in place, and a church profile is being developed.

18. Nominating Committee Report: In the absence of the chair (Mr. Cor VanSoelen) of this committee Mr. Frank Engelage reported. Classis approved the following recommendations:

- (a) **Mr. Neal DeRoo** (Jubilee Fellowship CRC) to the Brock chaplaincy committee, to replace Mr. Lloyd Burghart
- (b) **Rev. Rudy Ouwehand** (Rehoboth, Niagara Falls) to the Executive Committee of the CMC, to replace Rev. Kevin Stieva;
- (c) **Mr. John Bezuyen** (Covenant CRC) to the Shalom chaplaincy committee;
- (d) To have no objections to having **Ms. Alice Klamer** stand for a second term with the Back To God Ministries for region 4;
- (e) To have no objections to having **Mr. Ben Van Hoffen** stand for a second term as board member for CRWRC for Classis Niagara
- (f) To have Mr. Bert DeBolster (Covenant CRC) as a nominee for the Board of Trustees for Calvin College for Region 4. [the following names will be added as provided from the Credentials: **Dr. André Basson** (Rehoboth CRC); **Rev. Richard Loerop** (Maranatha CRC)]
- (g) To appoint **Ms. Ruth Veldhuizen** as the (Providence CRC) representative to the Classical Safe Church Team
- (h) To appoint **Ms. Ann Elise Teeuwssen** (Trinity CRC) as the Youth Leader Coordinator for the Youth Leader Support Team/Niagara Youth Network

19. Regional Pastors' Report: On behalf of Rev. David Tigchelaar and himself, Rev. Rudy Ouwehand indicated that they have been assisting in situations churches and pastors have been dealing with, for example item 4, above; and that they remain available to pastors and churches as needed.

¹ Results of this informal survey among the 13 organized churches of Classis Niagara: 2 allow spouses access to the pastor's professional development allowance; 1 would consider it; 7 do not; and 3 did not respond.

20. Church Visitor Reports: Church visit reports were presented from the Smithville, Rehoboth, and Fruitland CRC, with opportunities for questions and discussion. A related discussion ensued with respect to a minister's observation that when a church is vacant, there is active participation among elders and the congregation, but this participation dwindles once there is a minister in that church.

21. Denominational Reports: there were no questions or further contributions about any of the denominational ministry reports included in the agenda.

22. Closing: Rev. James Dekker led in closing devotions. He noted that though the content of the matter dealt with at agenda items 3 and 4 was distasteful, the process had been open, trustworthy and respectful. He led delegates in a participatory closing prayer, and together the delegates joined in the singing of PH # 634, Father/Jesus/Spirit, We Love You.

23. Next meeting:

Date: February 17, 2010 at 2:00 p.m.

Agenda Deadline: January 2, 2010

Location: Providence CRC, Beamsville

Chairman: Rev. Rev. Jim Dekker

Vice-chairman: Rev. Duane VanderLaan

Credentials: Niagara Falls (to chair) and Covenant

Overture Advisory: Trinity (to chair) and Smithville

Following meetings: May 26, 2010 (**note change!**); October 20, 2010