



CLASSIS NIAGARA OF THE CHRISTIAN REFORMED CHURCH



*To encourage, equip, and empower churches and ministries
to engage God's people in mission!*



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MINUTES

of the 113th meeting of Classis

Wednesday, February 19, 2020, held at Faith Fellowship CRC, Niagara Falls, Ontario

Chair: Rev. Colin Vander Ploeg; **Vice-chair:** Rev. Mike Vandyk; **Stated Clerk:** Wendy de Jong

CHURCH	PASTORS	ELDERS	DEACONS
Bethany	Colin Vander Ploeg	Kevin DeBoer	Steve Van Lochem
Bethel	Frank Engelage	Don Tilstra	John Scholman
Covenant	Bob Loerts	Joan Kooger	Blair Schiebel
Fruitland	Clarence Nywening	John Vanderkolk	
Grace	Mike Vandyk	Henry Hessels	Wendy Langenberg
Jubilee Fellowship	Woodrow Dixon	Karen Gerritsma	
Mountainview	Mike Collins	Graham Austin	Eric Hienen
Providence	Steve deBoer	Rob Zwier	
Faith Fellowship	Rick Meleon	Bert Prinzen	Tena Schuyler
Riverside	Wes Collins	Cliff Oudman	
Smithville	Peter Tuininga	Harvey Pot	
Trinity	Clarence Van Staalduinen	Andrew Hoogendam	
The Bridge	<i>Karin Vermeer* & Hans Branderhorst* via Providence CRC credentials</i>		
Village Church	<i>Terence Schilstra* (The Table) & Pauline Drenth-Knibbe* via Covenant CRC credentials</i>		

Terence Schilstra from The Table, Pauline Drenth-Knibbe from the Village Church, (credentials submitted by Covenant CRC) and Hans Branderhorst and Karin Vermeer from The Bridge, (credentials submitted by Providence CRC) were seated with privilege of the floor.

Guests present: Terence Schilstra, Zack DeBruyne, Anna Bailey, Andre Basson, Janet Ryzebol, Stephanie Collins, Becky Jones, Andy Wunderink, Lesli Van Milligen, Tena Dykxhoorn, Peter Elgersma and Marian Lensink.

1. PRAYERFUL DEPENDENCE ON GOD

Engaging in prayer with expectant hearts and minds so that our classis, churches and individual members are prayerfully dependent on God.

- 1.1 **Welcome & Opening:** Chair, Rev. Colin Vander Ploeg, welcomed delegates and guests to the meeting and outlined how the day would proceed. Colin led opening devotions with a few verses from Acts 15, on the Council of Jerusalem, giving the historical situation of the church then working together in much the same way as our churches work together today. Colin led in prayer, remembering Pastor Jeff Klingenberg whose mother passed away and therefore is not able to be with us today.
- 1.2 **Roll Call:** The credentials and roll call were presented by elder Harvey Pot of Smithville CRC.
- 1.3 **Constitution of Classis:** Delegates rose to indicate their agreement with the Declaration of Agreement with the beliefs of the Christian Reformed Church of North America, which were read by the Chair. The Chair declared Classis constituted and in session.
- 1.4 **Committee Appointment Confirmations:** The Credentials and Advisory committees were confirmed as printed in the agenda.
- 1.5 **Report of the Credentials Committee:** Rev. Peter Tuininga, of Smithville CRC, read the nominations and notations on the credentials. A recommendation from Jubilee Fellowship CRC to strike an ad hoc committee to create averages on salaries for non pastoral staff to be shared among churches, was referred to the CMC.
- 1.6 **Acceptance of Commissioned Pastor Credentials:** Rev. Mike Vandyk, Chair of the CMC, introduced a three-part motion to accept the credentials of Mike Collins, Commissioned Pastor of Community Life at Mountainview CRC. The Synodical Deputies gave their concurrence in Article 23-a and 24-b. The CMC will follow up with a question whether Mountainview will have to ask Classis to release him at the end of the one-year term.

MOTION - First: The CMC motions to approve the Mountainview CRC Pastor of Community Life job description as fitting the Synodical Guidelines in Church Order Supplement Art 23a.

Grounds: 1. Synodical Guidelines are broad and easily encompass this job description and the Synodical Deputies already concur with approving this motion. **CARRIED**

MOTION - Second: The CMC motions to approve the installation of Mike Collins as Commissioned Pastor for a one-year term in Mountainview CRC without re-examination.

Grounds: 1. Classis has the option to forgo re-examination of incoming Commissioned Pastors.

2. The CRC Commissioned Pastor Handbook says: *"By definition, a commissioned pastor is ordained to, and judged to be qualified for, a particular ministry. A different church and classis must thoroughly discern whether a commissioned pastor is qualified to serve in a different congregation and likely a different role."* Mike Collins has previously served as Commissioned Pastor effectively in more than one Classis Niagara CRC. This is sufficient for our Classical due diligence in this case. **CARRIED**

MOTION - Third: The CMC motions to seat Commissioned Pastor Mike Collins as a Mountainview CRC delegate. Note: This motion was contingent on the previous 2 motions passing. **CARRIED**

2. COVENANTAL RELATIONSHIPS

Encouraging God's people to engage in the various relationships and activities of the church with accountability so that our institutional and relational obligations are met.

- 2.1 **Sharing Stories of Missional Ministry & Deepening Spiritual Discipleship:** Pastor Bob Loerts, on behalf of the team that attended the Canadian National Gathering which initiated a motion that churches share stories of missional engagement and spiritual disciplining, invited six churches to share their stories. Delegates from Bethel, Bethany, Smithville, The Bridge, Covenant and Mountainview spoke about new initiatives or some they have been working on for several years, exploring where God is at

work in their community, developing relationships with those in their neighbourhoods, welcoming new people into their churches, prayer walks, new small groups, etc., that speak to the Spirit's leading and growth in their churches. Church leaders were invited to a retreat on "Faithwalking," led by Resonate in April. The delegates formed into small groups to work through a series of questions. The notes were gathered and will be compiled and attached as an addendum to the minutes.

2.2 Covenant Relations Guided Conversation: Pastor Colin Vander Ploeg introduced a discussion in which churches were asked to give input on the value of the work of Church Visitors, and where changes could be made to make this more meaningful for both the Church Visitors and the congregations. The Covenant Relations Team will review this feedback and potentially come with recommendations to a future Classis meeting.

2.3 Report of Overture Advisory Committee: There were no overtures submitted.

2.4 Classis Ministry Council report: Pastor Mike Vandyk, Chair of the CMC, presented the work of the CMC highlighting the motions outlined in the minutes. The CMC is asked to review the job description of the Youth Ministry Champion particularly with a view to enhancing the importance of this position, and to bring the revised job description to Classis for approval. The recommended stipend increase was approved, as well as the CMC recommendation to review the stipends of the treasurer and Stated Clerk in the coming year.

MOTION: To approve the work of the Classis Ministry Council. **CARRIED**

2.5 Stated Clerk report: The Stated Clerk's report covered the stated clerk's conferences, the new website being developed, ongoing work to secure abuse prevention insurance coverage for Classis, and a request for suggestions of persons who could serve on the World Renew board.

MOTION: To approve the work of the Stated Clerk. **CARRIED**

2.6 Delegates for Synod 2020: This was Classis' first experiment with voting electronically, along with some delegates using paper ballots. Classis approved continuing to use electronic voting in future, and to destroy the ballots. Results were as follows:

Pastor - Rev. Bob Loerts, alternate Rev. Steve deBoer

Elder - Joan Kooger, alternate Tena Dykxhoorn

Deacon - Blair Scheibel, alternate Ingrid Beck

Fourth delegate - Rev. Mike Vandyk, alternate Rev. Mark deVos.

2.7 Synodical Deputies: Nominated and voted to serve as Synodical Deputies: Rev. Jeff Klingenberg & Rev. Chris deWinter as alternate synodical deputy. **CARRIED.**

2.8 Treasurer's report: Stephanie Collins led Classis through a review of the Financial Statements for 2019. She pointed out that Classis has a surplus of just under \$45,000 for this year, with a total surplus of \$197,000. Both the CMLT and Disciples Making Disciples, the two areas with the largest surplus, have been asked to consider this as they prepare for next year's budget. Stephanie thanked the churches for honouring their Ministry Shares commitments. The formal approval of the audited Financial Statements will be done in May, during the Annual General Meeting.

MOTION: To approve the work of the treasurer. **CARRIED.**

2.9 Safe Church Team report: Becky Jones, the new Safe Church and Disability Concerns rep, who works out of the Burlington CRCNA office, highlighted the five main goals of Safe Church. Becky invited delegates to the Safe Church conference in Waterloo on March 7 and the Disability Concerns Conference on April 25. A request was made that Disability Concerns provide a clearer understanding of biblical mental health; not just what it is not, but also what it is. A powerpoint presentation outlining the progress to date on the directives from Synod to address Abuse of Power was shown.

- 2.10 **Lunch** - Mike Vandyk prayed for a blessing on the lunch. The cooks and servers were thanked for the delicious meal.
- 2.11 **Regional Pastors report:** Dr. Andre Basson reported on a workshop he attended last year where he was struck by how seriously the denomination takes the responsibility of ensuring a healthy relationships between churches and pastors, as well as the overall health of the pastors. He is involved in a spiritual direction cohort with the aim of equipping him in his work as regional pastor.
- 2.12 **Council of Delegates:** Pastor Chris de Winter, who was unable to be present due to a conflict with a Council of Delegates meeting in Grand Rapids, addressed Classis by video. He explained the changes that are occurring at the governance level, necessitated by changes to the Revenue Canada regulations. He stressed that the changes are only in governance and that we will remain one denomination sharing a common theology, agencies, etc.
- 2.13 **Ministry Shares Re-imagined:** Peter Elgersma, Director of Congregational Services in Canada, led Classis through the changes that are coming in how Ministry Shares will be determined, contingent on Synod's approval in June. Classis is asked to gather the pledges and discuss the overall pledge amount, particularly if there is a significant discrepancy between what was given in the current system and what is being pledged in the new system. Churches are encouraged to begin considering the amount they can pledge for 2021 this summer or early fall in preparation for compiling these amounts at the October Classis meeting. He clarified the role that classis plays in holding the churches accountable, recommending that churches send their pledge amount to the Stated Clerk prior to the meeting. Churches are asked to also submit a rationale for their pledge if it is significantly higher or lower than what they are currently being assessed. He offered to come to any church's council meeting and/or to share the ppt presentation that Council's can review. Emerging churches are also encouraged to consider an amount that they may be able to contribute.
- 2.14 **Denominational and other reports:**
- Faith Formation Ministries – Rev. Lesli Van Milligen highlighted some new resources for churches: “Dwell at Home” to help bridge the gap between Sunday School and home so that help parents engage their children in faith formative conversations, as well as a toolkit “User’s guide on the Third Third of life,” aimed at helping older members be active members remain engaged in the life of the church and in navigating their own faith and life journey.
- Other Reports:** A number of other reports from various denominational agencies, colleges and seminaries, which are posted on the Classis Niagara website under denominational reports, were received for information.

3. AUTHENTIC COMMUNITY

Encouraging God's people by intentionally sharing life and story together so that classis is being transformed into a community of grace and truth.

- 3.1 **Church Visitors** – Andre Basson reported on the visit to Bethel CRC. They were encouraged by the degree to which Bethel CRC has moved into the community and is making an impact there. They also visited Smithville CRC. Both reports will be included in the May agenda.
- 3.2 **Church Counselor reports:** Fruitland CRC appreciates the support of classis as they continue their search. Mountainview CRC has called Commissioned Pastor Mike Collins for a one-year transitional position.

4. LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT

Providing opportunities to develop, equip and encourage lay and ordained leaders in every context and at every level to be on mission with God.

- 4.1 **Youth Ministry Champion report:** Anna Bailey provided two resources, “Growing With” which is a follow up on “Growing Young” that helps parents understand the faith journey of their children, teens and young adults, and a booklet “Everyday Family Faith.”
- 4.2 **Classical Ministry Leadership Team report:** Andre Basson gave a report on the work of the CMLT, listing the students who are being supported by Classis and their mentors. The CMLT was asked to clarify why they are supporting a student who is not planning to pursue ordained ministry and report back via the CMC.

5. DISCIPLES MAKING NEW DISCIPLES

- 5.1: **Brock Campus Chaplaincy Ministry Report:** Chaplain Zack DeBruyne gave an update on the campus ministry at Brock, highlighting ways he has creatively adapted to the challenges caused by the renovations. He also shared some personal stories of his interactions with students who are exploring their faith. Mike Vandyk led a prayer of blessing over Zack’s ministry.
- 5.1.1 **BUCT – Approval of Restricted Fund Policy:** This policy sets the parameters that will guide the Brock University Chaplaincy Team (BUCT) and Chaplain in determining approval of and usage of the designated gift of \$39,100, representing the profit earned from the sale of Sonview House, a housing initiative for the Brock Campus Ministry, which was sold in 2018.
- MOTION:** To approve the proposed Restricted Fund policy. **CARRIED**
- 5.2 **Village Church:** Pauline Drenth-Knibbe shared a few highlights of the Village Church. The first of the three missional expressions began in January, led by Terence & Karen Schilstra. In January the Village ministry center moved into the Thorold Community Center. They appreciate the ongoing support of Classis.
- 5.2.1 **The Table:** Terence thanked Classis for their financial support as he went through the EPMC. He gave an update on a new missional expression that he and Karen are involved with. Terence laid out a historical perspective of the growth from the first CRC in Niagara Falls, established in 1952, which in turn led to another congregation in Wellandport later that year, and then how these emerging churches, living at the missional edge in their time, in turn led to the establishment of congregations throughout Niagara. Terence outlined some demographics of Thorold, where 1 in 5 children lives in poverty and the schools are in the bottom tier of educational aptitude. Terence thanked classis and the partner churches for their support and issued a challenge of who will go next to grow and multiply into a new community.
- 5.3 **Bridge Church Plant:** Karin Vermeer’s report outlined some of the messiness and challenges of ministry on the street level, She shared some heartbreaking stories of people who come in where there seems so little hope, but also stories of lives changed and their joy in being enfolded in a community where they are embraced and loved.
- 5.4 **Closing Prayer & Adjournment:** Following a reminder of upcoming meetings and closing comments, Pastor Mike closed with prayer.

Next meeting: Wednesday, May 20, 2020, Faith & Life Centre, Brock University

Agenda Deadline: April 16, 2020

Chair: Rev. Mike Vandyk; *Vice-chair:* Rev. Chris de Winter

Credentials: Grace, Welland (chair) and Trinity

Overture Advisory: Bethany, Fenwick (chair) and Jubilee Fellowship

Following meeting: October 3, 2020 – Saturday afternoon, last portion of the retreat