



CLASSIS NIAGARA OF THE CHRISTIAN REFORMED CHURCH



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



Website: classisniagara.ca; e-mail: statedclerkniagara@gmail.com

MINUTES

of the 112th meeting of Classis
Wednesday, October 16, 2019, held at Smithville CRC, Smithville, Ontario

Chair: Rev. Bob Loerts; **Vice-chair:** Rev. Colin Vander Ploeg; **Stated Clerk:** Wendy de Jong
Examination Session – **Chair** Rev. Colin Vander Ploeg; **Vice-chair:** Rev. Chris de Winter

Synodical Deputies: Rev. Henk Bruinsma (Classis Toronto), Rev. Siebert Van Houten (Classis Hamilton),
Rev. Gary Van Leeuwen (Classis Huron)

CHURCH	PASTORS	ELDERS	DEACONS
Bethany	Colin Vander Ploeg	Ed Roorda/Mark Vahrmeyer	
Bethel	Frank Engelage	Bert Bouwers	Chris DeKlerk
Covenant	Bob Loerts	Dave Baarda	Blair Schiebel
Fruitland		Al Voorberg	John Vanderkolk
Grace	Mike Vandyk	Bryan Stoner	Henry Veld
Jubilee Fellowship	Woodrow Dixon	Steve Folkerts	Alice Verhoef
Mountainview		P.J. Vermeer	Matt Oliveria
Providence	Steve deBoer	Rob Zwier	
Faith Fellowship		Rick Meloen	
Riverside	Wes Collins	Kevin de Roo	Devin Lunshof
Smithville	Peter Tuininga	John Bergman	Kevin Schilstra
Trinity	Chris deWinter	Lucas Teeuwssen	
The Bridge	Karin Vermeer*	Hans Branderhorst*	
The Village	Mark DeVos	Hilda VanderKlippe*	

** The Chair declared Hilda VanderKlippe from the Village Church, (credentials submitted by Covenant CRC) and Hans Branderhorst and Karin Vermeer from The Bridge, (credentials were not submitted by Providence CRC) as voting delegates with privilege of the floor. The chair also welcomed guests Beth Fallinger, Dorothy VanderSteen, Terence Schilstra, Zack DeBruyne, Anna Bailey, Elly Boersma, Janet Ryzebol, Stephanie Collins, Rev. John Heidinga, Lesli Van Milligen, Cathy Benjamins, Rev. Darren Roorda 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. Bob Loerts, welcomed delegates and guests to the meeting and outlined how the day would proceed.
- 1.2 **Constitution of Classis:**
 - 1.2.1 The credentials and roll call were presented by Rev. Wes Collins of Riverside CRC.
 - 1.2.2 Delegates rose to indicate their agreement of the Declaration of Agreement with the beliefs of the Christian Reformed Church of North America, which were read by the Chair.
 - 1.2.3 **MOTION:** To declare Classis constituted and in session. **CARRIED**
- 1.3 **Committee Appointment Confirmations:** The Credentials and Advisory committees were confirmed as printed in the agenda.
- 1.4 **Opening devotions:** Rev. John Heidinga, on behalf of the Prayerful Dependence on God team, led classis in a reflection on Philippians 1: 1-3, a time of prayer for the new ministry from The Village Church, the release of Rev. Allen Kleine Deters and the examination of Candidate Janet Ryzebol, called to Covenant CRC.

2. 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.

- 2.1: **Church Visitors** – The chair reminded the church visitors that these visits should ideally be ready for presentation at the February classis meeting, or at the latest at the May meeting.
 - Dr. Andre Basson & Elder Dick Kersten - Smithville, Bethel & Fruitland
 - Rev. Peter Tuininga & Elder Cliff Oudman - Jubilee Fellowship, Trinity & Providence
 - Rev. John Heidinga & Elder Clarence Mulder – Mountainview, Faith Fellowship, Grace:
 - Rev. Fred VanderBerg & Elder Mike Hamilton - Covenant, Riverside, Bethany
- 2.2 **Church Counselor reports:** Rev. Tuininga reported that the search committee of Fruitland CRC appreciates the support of classis as they continue their search. Mountainview CRC's council and search committee are at a preliminary step in the process.

3. 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.

- 3.1 **Youth Ministry Champion report:** Anna Bailey encouraged all the churches to reach out to her with any needs in which she can provide support and resources to help strengthen their youth ministry. She passed out a hand-out listing the six core commitments of the Growing Young Ministry and invited churches to consider being part of an RCA organized cohort in West Michigan or in the CRC Growing Young Learning Community in Iowa next year. Delegates were asked to brainstorm among themselves two of the core commitments - keychain leadership and prioritizing young people and young families everywhere – as those are currently or could be implemented in their church.
- 3.2 **Classical Ministry Leadership Team report:** Rev. Chris de Winter reported on the committee's work in supporting the students of our classis on their journey toward ordination. Terence Schilstra and Zack DeBruyne are already active in our classis. The CMLT is continuing its support of David Scholman who has

just taken a 50% youth pastor role at Covenant CRC, and is just beginning a conversation with Malorie Van Weelden (DeBruyne). Pastor Jim Dekker has retired after serving 9 years on the CMLT, replaced by Dr. Andre Basson.

4. DISCIPLES MAKING NEW DISCIPLES

Empowering and equipping churches and individuals to multiply ministries that will reach their local communities so that not-yet Christians may embrace Christ as Lord.

4.1 Disciples Making Disciples Report: Hilda VanderKlippe reported on several of their team's initiatives. There is funding available that churches can apply for if they would like to begin some new ministry opportunities, particularly in the "Go Local" concept. Hilda also spoke of the need to continue bringing the message of hope in our world where the light of Jesus is still so badly needed. Marian Lensink, of Resonate, attends all their meetings and has been a very supportive member of the DMD.

4.1.1 Brock University Chaplaincy Team (BUCT) documents: It was clarified that the Chaplain is an ex-officio member of the team who attends all meetings. The Disciples Making Disciples team brought the following motion to approve documents governing the Brock Campus Ministry, which have been approved by Trinity and Jubilee, the two champion churches, the DMD and the CMC:

MOTION: To approve the Brock University Chaplaincy Team (BUCT) Mandate, the Employment Covenant between BUCT & the Brock Chaplain, the Professional Development Policy and the Sabbatical Policy. **CARRIED.**

4.2 Brock Campus Chaplaincy Ministry Report: Chaplain Zack DeBruyne gave a report on his ministry this fall, the changes since last January, hearing God's voice reminding him that it is God who builds this ministry while we serve as God's agent. Zack is leading a Bible study with a small group of diverse students. The new Faith and Life Centre has resulted in a substantial increase in the visibility of this ministry. The space is filling every day with students with whom Zack can build relationships. He asks that we continue to pray for the Brock ministry and spiritual growth happening among the students.

4.3 Presentation from Resonate Global Missions – Hilda introduced Beth Fellingner who is the new Resonate Eastern Canada Regional Leader. She shared several examples of how God has worked in struggling communities, particularly with the "Go Local" concept, asking churches and councils to imagine some new experiments and missional expressions they could embark on in their own community.

4.4 Village Church: Rev. Mark DeVos expressed his gratitude for his position in leading the Village Church and for the sacrifices made by churches in Classis to live into this church plant. They have adopted a vision to grow three new missional expressions in the next five years. The first proposal has come from Terence Schilstra for a missional expression in downtown Thorold at the Prince of Wales school. Terence shared some stories of God's amazing work in this community. DMD brought a motion to the CMC to approve \$5,000 for this new missional expression led by Terence Schilstra, which is already embedded in the budget and will be formally adopted by Classis along with the rest of the budget.

Marion Lensink led Classis in prayer giving thanks for the Spirit's leading in these ministry opportunities.

5. 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.

5.1 Classis Ministry Council report: The Stated Clerk, Wendy de Jong, highlighted some key items of the CMC's work that are not covered elsewhere in the agenda. The Ecclesiastical Credentials of Rev. Sid Couperus were transferred to Classis Huron.

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

5.2 Stated Clerk report: The Stated Clerk's report covered the stated clerk's video conferences, some changes coming from Synod 2019, the ongoing work to secure insurance coverage for the Brock Campus chaplain, and an upcoming Stated Clerk's conference in January 2020. A recommendation was made to the CMC to send out supplementary agendas rather than to update the original agenda when new documents become available.

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

Colin Vander Ploeg led Classis delegates and guests in prayer after which they enjoyed a lunch break and time for informal conversations.

5.3 Treasurer's report: Stephanie Collins, who became the new treasurer as of July 1, 2019, led delegates through the proposed 2020 budget, highlighting the significant changes from the previous budget. The Bridge App amount is reduced to \$4,500. The amount for the new website was approved at \$4,000 as a one-time expense. As a visional budget anticipating new and ongoing ministry, \$5,000 was allocated for the Village Church missional expression, and \$25,000 for continued support of the Bridge Church plant. The proposed budget includes a reduction in Ministry Shares by \$37,500 to be taken out of the 2018 surplus. The treasurer noted that Denomination Ministry Shares should be sent to the CRCNA Burlington office, Classical Ministry share contributions should be sent to her c/o Riverside CRC, with the Redeemer University College amount sent directly to Redeemer.

MOTION: To approve the 2020 Budget for Classis Niagara with the adjusted reduction for the Bridge App expense. **CARRIED.**

MOTION: To approve the work of the Classis Niagara Treasurer. **CARRIED**

MOTION: To approve the CMC recommendation to extend financial support for an additional year for The Bridge church plant for the year 2021. **CARRIED.**

5.4 Report of Credentials Committee & Nomination for Council of Delegates: The credentials report raised a nomination from Trinity CRC to nominate Brett Graham to the Council of Delegates as a Canada at-large position.

MOTION: To nominate Brett Graham as a nominee for the Council of Delegates at large position. **Carried.**

MOTION: To nominate Bob Loerts as the Classis Niagara delegate to the Council of Delegates. **Carried.**

5.5 Report of Overture Advisory Committee: No overtures were presented.

5.6 Regional Pastors report: There were no reports as neither regional pastor was present.

5.7 Safe Church Team report: Wendy de Jong, who is currently the co-chair of the Classis Niagara Safe Church Team, gave an update on the work of this team, recommending denominational resources and training for councils. As per Synod's request, \$500 has been added to the budget to help cover counseling for abuse survivors.

Ed Roorda gave a prayer of thanks for the reports and work covered thus far.

5.8 National Gathering Ministry Networking Session: Chris deWinter, Bob Loerts and Hilda VanderKlippe, 3 of the 8 Classis Niagara representatives who attended the National Gathering in May, led Classis through a brainstorming session to imagine how they can move intentionally into deepening spiritual discipleship and missional ministry, both within our local churches, in the 5 core value teams and

Classis as a whole. It was stressed how crucial it is to learn the posture of receiving rather than giving. Several suggestions on how to share stories of successes, failures and experiments at Classis were raised. It was recommended that we allow time at each Classis meeting for delegates to share how they tried, succeeded or failed in these experiments in both missional ministry and in spiritual discipleship, not to shame us, but so that we can learn from each other in creating a repository of possibilities and experiments. Working out these two goals also applies to the CMC and the 5 core vision teams. Each church is asked to bring their first story of where they have experimented with missional community, and one story of spiritual formation in preparation of the February classis meeting.

MOTION: In a desire to honour God in our mutual ministry as Classis Niagara we commit to encouraging our local ministries to experimenting with new initiatives to

1. develop our engagement in missional ministry and
2. deepening our spiritual discipleship.

Grounds:

1. We have discerned together that missional ministry and spiritual discipleship are growth edges that are reflected in many of our local and shared ministries
2. By committing to working toward these goals at the same time and sharing our stories we maximize potential learning from each other so that we can fulfill God's purpose for us as his church. **CARRIED.**

5.9 Denominational and other reports:

5.9.1 Canadian Ministries Director, Rev. Darren Roorda spoke about the work of the Canadian CRCs, their goal in serving the local church, and the many excellent available resources in people and tool that are available. Additionally he outlined the changes coming with Ministry Shares reimaged. For the last 25 years the Canadian churches have met a significantly higher level of ministry shares than the denomination as a whole. Darren also reviewed the top priorities that came out of the Canadian National Gathering. There are ecumenical grants available for local churches that want to engage with other non-CRC churches in their community. The contact person is pelgersma@crcna.org. Classis are asked to support the Bridge App for one more year. Waybase (City movement), Extreme Technology and the CRCNA are working together to develop an increased digital presence and growth of the Bridge App.

5.9.2 Council of Delegates – Rev. Chris deWinter spoke about the work of the Council of Delegates, highlighting how the CRC is part of the bigger conversation happening as churches and denomination. He explained the difference between the Canada Corp and American Corp, some key conversations happening around the name of Back to God Ministries International, and big-picture planning in formulating the 2025 Ministry Plan. Chris also served on an ad hoc committee of the COD is reviewing bi-nationality. Canadian Ministry Share funds are directed to Canadian ministries.

5.9.3 Faith Formation Ministries – Rev. Lesli Van Milligen highlighted some new resources for churches, particularly about mentoring and a toolkit that addresses the challenge in finding new office bearers so that leadership encourages spiritual growth. Their newest booklet is a support for faith formation in the home, called "*Dear Parent.*"

5.10 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. Several questions were raised on a few reports. The CMC was asked to have a conversation about increasing ethnic diversity in our classis meetings.

Lucas Teeuwssen closed this portion of the Classis meeting with prayer.

6. Executive Session Declared: The Chair of Classis declared executive session and asked those present who were not delegates, officers of classis, office-bearers in the local churches, ordained pastors, and CIC members to leave the meeting. Chair Bob Loerts led Classis in a time of prayer. Members of the Prayerful Dependence on God team led those who stepped out in a time of prayer for the discussions taking place.

- 6.1: The delegates and synodical deputies entered into a time of discussion, voting and reporting upon the request brought by Providence CRC, parent church of The Bridge church plant, to release Rev. Allen Kleine Deters from active ministry according to Article 17-a. The termination package and weighty reasons were presented.
- 6.2: **MOTION:** To approve the request for an Article 17-a Release from Active Ministry for Rev. Allen Kleine Deters at the Bridge church plant, and to approve the Termination Agreement and the Compensation package which has been agreed upon by both parties. **CARRIED.**
- 6.3: The Synodical Deputies concurred with the decision of classis.
- 6.4: Classis instructed the Classis Ministry Council to create an "Oversight Committee" for Rev. Allen Kleine Deters of at least three persons to plan and monitor an evaluation of readiness for the ministry, as laid out in the Supplement, under article 17-a of the Church Order.
- 6.5: On behalf of Classis the Chair offered prayer for Rev. Kleine Deters, and his wife Freda, as well as for The Bridge Church plant.
- 6.6: Executive session was declared ended.

Rev. Colin Vander Ploeg led in a closing prayer and asked for a blessing on the supper. Delegates & guests enjoyed a delicious supper and time of fellowship together.

7. Examination of Candidate Janet Ryzebol, called as Pastor of Community, 80 FTE, by Covenant CRC, Article 10

- 7.1: Rev. Colin Vander Ploeg assumed the chair for this portion of the meeting.
- 7.2 **Introduction of the Candidate:** Commissioned Pastor, Elly Boersma, of Covenant CRC, introduced the Candidate, Janet Ryzebol to Classis, with a review of her journey into ministry.
- 7.3 **Examination of Candidate Janet Ryzebol:** The process for examination of a candidate as per Church Order (CO) Article 10 was followed. Examiners were Rev. Jeff Klingenberg (practica); Rev. Fred VanderBerg and Jim Dekker (sermon evaluators); and Rev. Mike Vandyk (theological). In each part of the examination opportunity was provided for questions from delegates and the Synodical Deputies.
- 7.4 A **MOTION** was made to admit Candidate **Janet Ryzebol** to the Ministry of the Word in the Christian Reformed church in North America. Classis moved into **executive session** as required by Church Order Article 10, its procedures were followed (there are no separate minutes of this session, as it followed the Church Order). The delegates voted by ballot. Upon return to the general session of Classis, the chair informed that Classis **APPROVED** the ordination of candidate Janet Ryzebol as a Minister of the Word in the CRCNA via Church Order Article 10.
- 7.5 The Synodical Deputies concurred with this decision and signed the Church Order Article 10 Synodical deputy form, with the request that a mentor be assigned. The Chair ruled that the ballots be destroyed.
- 7.6 Rev. Bob Loerts announced the date of ordination of Candidate Janet Ryzebol for Sunday, October 20, 2019, at 4:00 pm., at Covenant CRC, St.Catharines.

8. Closing Prayer & Adjournment –The meeting was closed in a circle of prayer surrounding Janet and Brant Ryzebol led by Rev. Colin Vander Ploeg. The meeting was adjourned.

Next meeting: *February 19, 2020 at Faith Fellowship CRC, Niagara Falls*

Agenda Deadline: January 8, 2020

Chair: Rev. Colin Vander Ploeg; *Vice-chair:* Rev. Chris de Winter

Credentials: Smithville (chair) and Grace, Welland

Overture Advisory: Bethel, Dunnville (chair) and Bethany, Fenwick

Following meeting: May 20, 2020