



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

116th meeting of Classis
Wednesday, February 24 2021 - held virtually via Zoom
9:00 am – 4:30 pm

Chair: Rev. Woodrow Dixon; **Vice-chair:** Rev. Jeff Klingenberg; **Stated Clerk:** Wendy de Jong

DELEGATES, PLEASE NOTE:

- Please email your completed Classical Credentials form - <https://classisniagara.ca/credentials-form/> by **February 19** to statedclerkniagara@gmail.com.
- If I do not have the email address for a delegate, that church's pastor will need to forward the email.
- All the documents needed are posted on the Classis Niagara website on the second tier – <https://classisniagara.ca> "Classis Agenda & Meeting Documents." If you prefer a hard copy please print your own.
- The main items on this agenda will be a time of guided conversation in response to the Synodical report of the Committee to Articulate a Foundation-laying Biblical Theology on Human Sexuality which will be led by Rev. Lesli van Milligen and Dr. Syd Hielema, as well as responding to overtures related to the report. Please make every effort to have the report prior to the meeting - https://www.crcna.org/sites/default/files/human_sexuality_report_2020.pdf
- Additionally the agenda also includes the election of delegates to Synod, recognizing that by the time Classis Niagara meets, the Council of Delegates will have made a decision whether or not in-person Synod will be held in 2021. If the decision is made to postpone Synod until 2022, then voting of delegates will not be necessary.
- You will receive a Zoom invite with meeting ID & password on February 23rd for the full Classis meeting. Note the day is structured with a significant break between the morning and afternoon session. The Zoom link will be opened by 8:30 for registration and checking sound, etc.
- If you have not yet used Zoom, please download it on your device prior to the meeting day.
- The Waiting room function ensures that only delegates and approved guests are admitted thus it is vital that the names of all delegates are submitted in advance via the credentials.

- Any guests wishing to attend the meeting are asked to notify the Stated Clerk in advance.
- With a large number of participants, it is not possible to see everyone on one screen. Therefore in order to ask questions, please use the “Chat” feature and the “Participant” feature. There you will be able to ask questions and be given the opportunity to raise your hand if you wish to speak.
- Voting will be done via polling on Zoom. Not all devices support the poll option, so if this doesn’t work on your device, **you will need to text your vote to - 289-687-8941.**
- We strongly recommend that each delegate participate with their own device. This is especially critical for voting. If you need to share a device, please ensure that you are set up to accommodate appropriate physical distancing guidelines.
- All delegates will be asked to affirm their agreement with the *Declaration of Agreement with the beliefs of the CRC* with the reading of the Statement below.

ROLL CALL

CHURCH	PASTOR	ELDER	DEACON
Bethany			
Bethel			
Covenant			
Fruitland			
Grace			
Jubilee Fellowship			
Mountainview			
Providence			
Faith Fellowship			
Riverside			
Smithville			
Trinity			
The Bridge			
Village Church			

AGENDA

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 by the Chair, Rev. Woodrow Dixon	9:00
1.2	<p>Constitution of Classis by the Chair, Rev. Woodrow Dixon</p> <p>Affirmation by delegates of the <i>Niagara Declaration of Agreement</i> with the Beliefs of the Christian Reformed Church in North America.</p> <p>“We are assembled as delegates to this meeting of Classis Niagara to deliberate and decide on the matters on the Agenda before us.</p> <p>We promise to do this work in obedience to the revealed will of our Lord Jesus Christ and in full agreement with what we as Christian Reformed Churches confess.</p> <p>We believe that the Old and New Testaments are the inspired Word of God, the only infallible rule for faith and life.</p> <p>We affirm three creeds—the Apostles’ Creed, the Nicene Creed, and the Athanasian Creed—as ecumenical expressions of the Christian faith.</p> <p>We also affirm three confessions—the Belgic Confession, the Heidelberg Catechism, and the Canons of Dort—as historic Reformed expressions of the Christian faith, whose doctrines fully agree with the Word of God.</p> <p>Along with these historic creeds and confessions, we recognize the witness of Our World Belongs to God: A Contemporary Testimony.</p> <p>As we deliberate and make decisions consistent with these beliefs, to the best of our ability and with the help of the Holy Spirit, we commit to respectful dialogue on matters discussed in the spirit of Eph 4:2, “ Be completely humble and gentle; be patient, bearing with one another in love.” In this way we seek to build up the unity and well-being of the church of Jesus Christ in the Niagara Region.</p> <p><i>[After the reading of these words, delegates are asked to rise to indicate their agreement with the beliefs of the Christian Reformed Church in North America.] Adopted by Classis Niagara, May 2019</i></p> <p>Classis declared constituted</p>	9:05
1.3	<p>Committee appointment confirmations:</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;">Credentials: Bethany (Chair) and Bethel</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;">Advisory re overtures/protests: Mountainview (chair) and Trinity</p>	9:10
1.4	Roll Call presented by Bethel CRC	9:15
1.5	Report of the Credentials Committee – Bethel CRC	9:20
1.6	Devotions: Rev. Lesli van Milligen of Faith Formation Ministries will lead us in an interactive, devotional exercise based on our new denominational ministry plan “Our Journey 2025, joining the good work begun in Christ.”	

2. 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.

2.1	Brock Campus Chaplaincy Ministry Report: Chaplain Zack DeBruyne (<i>page 6</i>)	10:00
2.1.1	BUCT – Approval of Maternity, Parental & Adoptive Leave Policy (<i>page 7-8</i>) MOTION: To approve the Maternity, Parental & Adoptive Leave Policy	
2.2	Village Church Report: Mark De Vos (<i>page 8-11</i>)	10:10
2.3	The Table: Terence Schilstra (<i>page 10</i>)	10:15
2.4	Bridge Church Plant: Karin Vermeer or Hans Branderhorst	10:20

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	10:35
3.2	Classical Ministry Leadership Team report: Woodrow Dixon	10:40

4. 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.

4.1	Church Visitors – deferred to the May 2021 Classis meeting	
4.2	Church Counselor reports: Rev. Tuininga re Fruitland CRC	10:45
<i>MORNING BREAK – 10:45-11:00 am</i>		

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	Guided Conversation – on the report of the Synodical Committee to Articulate a Foundation-Laying Biblical Theology of Human Sexuality – led by Dr. Syd Hielema and Rev. Lesli van Milligen <p style="text-align: center;"><i>LUNCH BREAK – 12:00–2:00 pm</i></p>	11:00
5.2	Chairing – Due to the overtures coming from the church of which the Chair is pastor, the Vice-Chair will assume leadership of the agenda items pertaining to the overtures.	2:00
5.3	Jubilee Fellowship CRC: Overture in response to the report of the Committee to Articulate a Foundation-laying Biblical Theology of Human Sexuality Overture – (page 12) Presentation & Discussion Advisory Committee Report	

	Motion:	
5.4	Tentative: Jubilee Fellowship CRC: Submission of cross-campus student response overture – <i>If passed by Jubilee Council, this overture will be included in the supplemental agenda which will be sent out in the first week of February</i> Presentation Advisory Committee Report Motion:	2:30
5.5	Tentative: Additional Overtures that may be submitted yet on the Supplemental Agenda or via the Credentials form Overture Presentation Advisory Committee Report Motion:	3:00
	AFTERNOON BREAK – If needed	3:30
5.6	Classis Ministry Council report (page 13-15) MOTION: To approve the work of the Classis Ministry Council	3:40
5.7	Stated Clerk report (page 15) MOTION: To approve the work of the Stated Clerk	3:45
5.8	Council of Delegates report	4:00
5.9	Canada Corp report – Q & A with Darren Roorda	
5.10	Delegates for Synod 2020 – if needed (page 16)	
5.11	Safe Church Team report: (page 17)	
5.12	Regional Pastors report: <i>deferred to May 2021</i>	
5.13	Closing Prayer & Adjournment – Rev. Jeff Klingenberg	4:15
5.14	Printed Reports – Received for Information CRCNA Report to Classis - Canadian Ministries Director World Renew - Winter Letter to Classis Niagara & video Diaconal Ministries Canada Redeemer University College	

Next meeting: May 26, 2021, by Zoom

Agenda Deadline: April 14, 2021

Chair: Rev. Jeff Klingenberg; *Vice-chair:* Rev. Steve deBoer

Credentials: Bethel (chair) and Fruitland

Overture Advisory: Trinity (chair) and Providence

Following meeting: Wednesday, October 27, 2021

A Semester Unlike Any Other

February Classis Supplemental Report

I often wonder when we are in the midst of the unknown how God visions the entire eschaton of past and future. Obviously, sovereignly knowing that even when we are in a time and place where it seems like there is no way out, He is faithfully aware of what is going to come next. The good and the bad. The closed doors and opened ones. The bumpy paths, and the smoothed trails.

If I think back to two short years ago, as I sat in a small office behind a pop-up table, I was constantly wondering why God called me to Brock University. I found myself anxiously doubting what the future could possibly hold for me or the Christian Reformed Chaplaincy. And now, in a surprising contrast that our sovereign God has always known, in two short years Faith and Life has been given a brand-new and fully renovated (almost) building to facilitate the support of students of faith at Brock University. What an amazing testament to God’s will being done on a campus once founded as entirely ‘secular’ (Brock University was purposefully started without any religious studies programs in order to maintain a fully secular post-secondary campus).

And yet at the beginning of this year, September felt eerily similar to my first overwhelmed days at Brock University two years ago. So much unknown, so many paths untrodden before. Classes and ministry moved entirely online for the foreseeable future (we will be online until at least September). So many doubts and questions swirling around in my mind: *Would students participate? How could I meet student needs in a world where I cannot see them, or spend time over a cup of much needed caffeinated goodness? Where was God leading this ministry?*

And as online Orientation Week began, these questions did not fade away. But much to my surprised (not God’s) I was approached by the University to lead a faith-based workshop. And I had the opportunity to lead a workshop during the first week of classes for the whole Brock community. It was titled, ‘We All Believe in Something’. I do not think that Chaplains have historically been invited to offer orientation week events for the whole campus (typically these events involved partying, free stuff, or connecting with various clubs on campus), but it was a true gift to offer a Christian Reformed perspective on faith and belief on campus. And this event set the tone for the semester that was to come.

And as the semester unfolded, we decided to offer much of our programming as we typically would but in an online avenue. Our weekly programming was made up of two Bible studies, one interfaith night, an Alpha program, a student led ‘Ask Anything about the Bible’ study group, and finally our leadership program for student interns.

One thing stood out to me this semester. We had the joy of having four students who joined one of our two weekly Bible studies that have never read the Bible or heard about the Christian faith before. One student, who I will call Jeff, told me after a study this past semester. *“Zack, I showed up to the first study because I could get some co-curricular credit from Brock. I left my mic and video off and did not intend on staying the whole time. I am not a Christian and never cared for Christians. But, as that first study came and went, I came back the next week and the next week, and the next. And now I feel that this is one of the most meaningful parts of my time here at Brock this semester.”*

Jeff’s story is not only to be celebrated because of the way that the Spirit of God grabbed hold of a student’s heart, but also for the ways in which the shift to online programming has lowered the bar for student participation lower than ever before. Prior to the pandemic, a student like Jeff would have never walked into a classroom of Christians sitting in a circle discussing the Bible. That is much too intimidating! But, with Zoom or Teams, a student can remain anonymous and safely listen in. It is here that God begins to shape and begin something new in their hearts, calling them back to our Christian community week after week. What a gift it has been to see students like Jeff go from always having his camera off and muted, to offering to read the scripture text for this week’s study.

The second major shift that I would like to share with Classis this February is the opportunity that I have had to create and lead the Interfaith Community at Brock. As we know this began a couple of years ago and has since grown to a community of 20 students from 6 different religious identities, including a Jewish Rabbi. This community grows weekly. In fact, two of the student leaders that help coordinate the weekly discussions are Muslims! It has been a beautiful picture of how the Christian voice can create spaces for students to feel safe to share what they believe, all while learning more about the Gospel of Jesus Christ (you can hear a few stories of these students in the PowerPoint).

So we begin yet another semester of online ministry. In some ways, we have a clear vision for how it works. While on the other hand, we recognize that God is doing magnificent things that we do not always see or understand. The Spirit of God is not limited to in-person interaction, nor even to someone having their camera or microphone on! This is a truth that sets the foundation for ministry in these unforeseen times. God is always present, always at work. I am reminded of David's words in Psalm 139:7-10,

Where can I go from your Spirit?
Where can I flee from your presence?
⁸ If I go up to the heavens, you are there;
if I make my bed in the depths, you are there.
⁹ If I rise on the wings of the dawn,
if I settle on the far side of the sea,
¹⁰ even there your hand will guide me,
your right hand will hold me fast.

We minister to Brock faculty, students, and staff confident of the grace and power of Christ in and through His Holy Spirit. Through Zoom and Teams, phone calls, and Facebook messenger. And as always, we thank you for your prayer and support as we navigate a new world of ministry each and every day.

AGENDA ITEM 2.1.1 – Maternity, Parental & Adoptive Leave Policy – Brock Campus Ministry Team

Purpose

Brock Campus Ministry Team is committed to supporting its employees in their work and family life, and desires to do that in situations that call for maternal, parental and/or adoptive leave. We celebrate and recognize the unique situation brought about by parenthood and desire to be as flexible as possible in the working out of this policy.

Policy

Maternity and parental leaves shall conform to the provision of the *Employment Standards Act of Ontario*. Maternity and Parental benefits are payable either to the biological or adoptive parents while they are caring for a newborn or an adopted child (see ESA for details).

For up to six months of a maternity/parental leave, 20% of the regular monthly salary will be paid to supplement the EI benefits.

During the full period of the leaves granted under this policy, vacation and years of service shall continue to accumulate for purposes of salary and benefit calculations. If applicable, CRC pension contributions and medical and liability insurances will also continue to be paid during this time.

When the employee returns to work, employment is guaranteed in a similar position at the same salary level. Every attempt will be made to return employees to a position of equal responsibility on return from leave status; however, no guarantee exists that the exact position left will be available on return.

The employee will give notice to the chairperson of the Brock Campus Ministry Team in writing a minimum of two months in advance of when the leave will begin. A confirmation of the return date will be given in writing at least a month in advance.



Our Vision

“Therefore, go and make disciples of all nations...” - Jesus (Mtt 28:19)

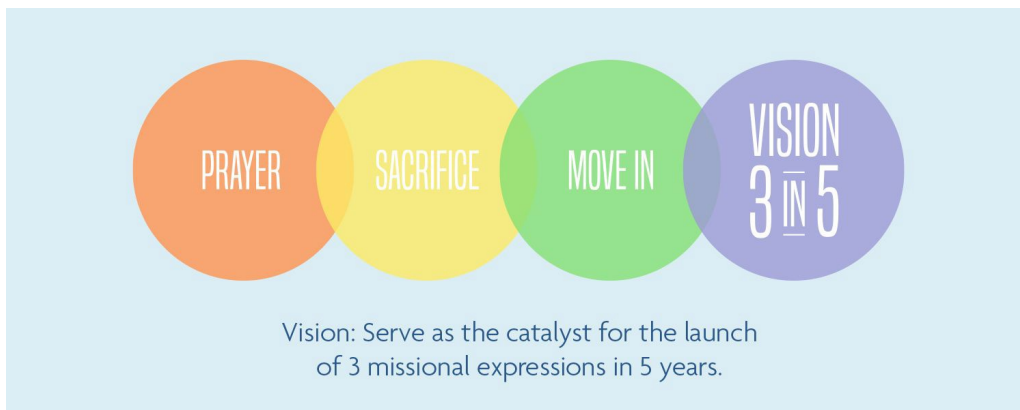
A) Our model was partnership in prayer, sacrifice and moving in

The photo to the right was taken in our early days at Richmond St. Public School. Classis planted this little group of people in Thorold with one vision - reach people for Jesus. Classis had quite the vision for this little group! From the prayer, sacrifice and vision to move into this little place called Thorold, we witnessed a marvelous work of God - there emerged a church. That was 12 years ago....



B) Partnership will continue to be our strategy...

At our 2019 vision party we discussed, what is next? We dreamed a new vision, to serve as the catalyst amongst our church partners for the launch of 3 new “little groups” in the next 5 years. We are now calling these groups - missional expressions. It seemed impossible at the time. We wrestled with the idea, “What if we fail?” We concluded, “We will have attempted something worthwhile.” We began praying, “God, what would it actually look like to partner with other churches to do this?” We did not know. We decided to look back to see forward. In the early days the church emerged as we prayed, sacrificed and moved into Thorold. Our strategy developed from that. What if we tried it again: prayed, sacrificed and “moved-in” to wherever God might be pleased to call us to go? What might God be pleased to do?



Moving forward we recognize that the days where the church is at the centre of culture are over. We seek to prayerfully and sacrificially “move-in” to neighbourhoods to imitate what Jesus did when he, as the eternal Word of God, took on our humanity and “moved into the neighbourhood” of our world (John 1:14, MSG). Certainly, our heart is that people would “come and see” Jesus and his work in the church as it is. But we have a conviction that the strategy of the 3 in 5 vision is a “go and be” model of church. The bigger picture is that Classis Niagara’s initial investment into the Village Church would have a ripple effect in our region.

C) Where we are at today with the 3 missional expressions

Today we are seeking partnerships with other churches in our area and denomination to plant Christ's church into new places. We saw this happen at the beginning of this year, when from an initial launch gift of \$10 000 and a calling process of Terence Schilstra *four other churches* (Trinity CRC, Covenant CRC, Smithville CRC and Riverside CRC) came on board to launch “The Table” in downtown Thorold. Below Terence shares some of the fruit from that initiative.

We would like to see what happened with the Table happen two more times in the next three and a half years. As we partner with you in “going” through prayer, sacrifice and “moving in” - we are trusting God that He will continue to use us.

Thank you for your ongoing support and commitment to this work!

Mark DeVos,
Lead Pastor
The Village Church
289-880-2699



Downtown Thorold Missional Expression

Seeking the peace of the city. Jer. 29:7

Over the last 6 years, a missional expression has been taking root in downtown Thorold. As of early last year, 2020, that missional expression was named “The Table.” The mission of The Table is to proclaim the gospel of Christ among the unreached urban poor in downtown.

This last year has been both challenging and rewarding amid COVID-19. It is certainly challenging due to the fact that we have not been able to gather and connect in an inner-city school as we have done in the past. However, God led us to gather and grow in a new way by meeting in our homes, garages, and carpools.

As of the summer, we started gathering in 4 separate locations throughout downtown Thorold to facilitate growth and comply with attendance limits. The format of the gatherings includes 3 practices: 1) *Growing In*; Connecting over food (people bring their own “picnic” in some cases). 2) *Growing Up*; Through prayer and dwelling in Scripture. 3) *Growing Out*; Exploring ways in which we can love and serve our community amid COVID-19.

One Table gathering is hosted by a family in their home on Saturday afternoons. It’s been amazing to see the fruit that has developed there. For example, one individual was recently freed from addiction through laying on of hands and prayer. Furthermore, on August 3rd, we baptized a young lady in the pool in her backyard.

Another gathering is a ladies Table led by Karen Schilstra each Friday morning at our home on Maitland Street. One of our immediate neighbours has been joining and is exploring faith in Christ. Karen has had amazing opportunities to share the gospel and God is working in the hearts of these ladies.

To learn more about the story of The Table and our missional practices, I encourage you to pick up my book *Peace of the City - A Handbook for Missional Communities* at peaceofthecity.ca. All proceeds of the book go directly to support the mission of God in downtown Thorold. Thank you,

Terence Schilstra
Pastor/Planter
The Table, Downtown Thorold
thetable.downtown@gmail.com

Partnership Opportunity

“And pray for us, too, that God may open a door for our message, so that we may proclaim the mystery of Christ” - Col 4:3

With Covid we have all had to re-evaluate the ways in which we are supporting our community. Since Covid we have found new opportunities to see the Gospel make a real difference in people's lives.



We have pivoted in our ministry through offering the Alpha course and Bible studies online and have connected with over a dozen people who are not in our city, province, nor even necessarily our country!

With the gospel and Zoom, we are participating in the sharing of the gospel in *closed* countries! ***If you would like to participate in discipling a new believer online through Alpha or an online Bible study you are welcome to call me: 289-880-2699.*** We have never in history had a greater opportunity to reach people around the world. Indeed the harvest is plentiful, but the labourers are few!

Somehow pre-Covid we never thought to be online.

This opportunity to just try new things to reach people for Jesus is perhaps what I love most about my job. You too can participate in this offering of hope, inspiring people to discover spiritual truth *wherever you are*. In the neighbourhood, workplace or family you are in, you get to not only impact this life for people, but eternity. Know that we are praying for you too, in the places you have been called. At the end of the year my prayer is that you will be able to say - I have enabled others to encounter the life changing message of the gospel.

Mark DeVos Lead Pastor
The Village Church

P.S. [This is a song that has inspired me in my work and mission.](#) The Song is called: No One Ever Cared for Me Like Jesus , cover by Steffany Gretzinger. Feel free to pass it along to whoever you know who might need some encouragement...may your life “be a testimony” in 2021!

The Song is called: No One Ever Cared for Me Like Jesus , cover by Steffany Gretzinger Should be written out for the printed version.

AGENDA ITEM 5.3: OVERTURE FROM JUBILEE FELLOWSHIP CRC

The Council of Jubilee Fellowship CRC overtures Classis to send the following overture to Synod.

Having read and reflected on the report of the Committee to Articulate a Foundation-laying Biblical Theology of Human Sexuality to be submitted to Synod 2021, and while appreciating the report's counsel on a variety of points, the Council of Jubilee Fellowship CRC nevertheless overtures Classis Niagara to overture Synod to receive this report as information and not to approve it, for the following reasons.

GROUNDS:

1. This report describes issues surrounding human sexuality in contemporary society to be settled, and these interpretations binding in the CRC and in other traditions of Christianity, despite the serious and studied positions of many faithful Christians around the world that prove this not to be the case;
2. Unlike the compassionate, grace-filled 1980 Report on Divorce and Remarriage, this report instead uses the 1980 report and its recommendations as grounds to retreat from the healing power of forgiveness and restoration for divorced persons, and goes on to apply that same retreat to same-sex relationships;
3. This report has failed to present personal stories of any of our members or former members that would not confirm the conclusions of the committee's work (see Appendix A* for examples of such stories and the cost of this silence);
4. If accepted, has the potential to divide the CRC again by pitting our members against one another and undermining our witness as a body that accepts and works through disagreements with mutual love and support, all while maintaining our unity in Christ.

*Appendix A will include stories from the LGBTQ+ Christian Storytelling Project, currently underway. It is our intention to have them compiled and sent out in a supplemental agenda during the first week of February.

AGENDA ITEM 5.7: REPORT OF THE CLASSIS MINISTRY COUNCIL

Classis Ministry Council - January 14, 2020, via ZOOM

MINUTES

1	<p>Present: Wendy de Jong, Joanne Drenth-VanDyke, Karen Gerritsma, Janet Ryzebol, Colin Vander Ploeg, Mike Vandyk, Andy Wunderink.</p> <p>Opening Devotions/Prayer: Andy gave an update of recent developments at the Hub which has been transformed into a warming space in cooperation with Out of the Cold. They have been able to provide soup to households in the area as well as desperately needed coats, socks, etc to folks walking in from the community. Colin Vander Ploeg led devotions with a reading from Romans 12 with a call to unity and faithfulness, and led in prayer asking for a blessing on the upcoming meeting and pastoral concerns.</p>
2	<p>Motion to approve CMC Minutes of September 17, 2020 - Carried</p> <p>Classis Niagara Minutes of October 28, 2020 - Carried</p>
3	<p>Core Value Team Reports</p> <p>3a <u>Prayerful Dependence on God Team</u> – Planning any new events is on hold as the team waits for things to open up again.</p> <p>3b <u>Authentic Community Team</u> – We discussed the feasibility of aiming for a retreat in October and concluded that, given how the pandemic and vaccinations play out, to first aim for a regular in-person meeting in October. We will likely have a better idea by late summer if that’s feasible or meetings continue on Zoom the remainder of this year, and then perhaps determine whether a February in-person retreat might be a possibility.</p> <p>3c <u>Covenantal Relationships Team</u> - Colin raised the suggestion that we streamline the credentials process to disband assigning two churches to form the credentials committee. Given our practice has already changed significantly in the last two years with the Stated Clerk receiving all credentials forms electronically prior to the meeting and knowing in advance what items may need to be dealt with the credentials committee is rather redundant. After some discussion of practical details such as the need to read the roll call and in case there is a change in the delegates from those indicated on the actual form, the following motion was put forward:</p> <p>Motion: <i>That the practice of assigning a Credentials Committee be disbanded. All churches are to submit credentials to the Stated Clerk in advance of the meeting. The Stated Clerk will review the credentials, prepare a roll call as a record of those present, notify the Chair & Vice-Chair of any items that require action, overtures, nominations submitted, etc. As part of declaring Classis constituted, the Chair will ascertain with the Stated Clerk that all the credentials are in order. Carried</i></p> <p><u>Leadership Development Team</u> – Karen Gerritsma agreed to become the new CMC liaison with this team now that Anna Bailey no longer attends CMC meetings. Karen will connect with Anna about chairing, expectations, etc. Thanks Karen for agreeing to step in!</p> <p>3d <u>Disciples Making New Disciples</u> Janet raised the matter of a miscommunication last summer, likely due to changeovers in the team, resulting in a budget amount for The Table of \$5,000 rather than the \$10,000 the DMD requested. Agreed that some of the surplus funds in the Missions Development portion of the budget be used to contribute the difference and to adjust the budget for the full amount in 2021. Terence’s ministry is having remarkable success in downtown Thorold, especially given the current conditions. Marian Lensink has been a resident consultant for this team for many years, but is giving up that position with Resonate, and will be missed.</p> <p>3e <u>BUCT update</u> – Karen reported that Zack will be continuing much as he has been doing of late with online</p>

	<p>presence. The Open House went well. He has been appointed as the multi-faith coordinator at Brock, which makes him an official part of the Brock staff. The team isn't sure yet how much time this is going to take and whether or not there will be monetary implications. The team has received some excellent documentation from Mark Wallace of Resonate to help guide them through an evaluation process of the campus ministry.</p> <p><u>Draft Parental Leave policy</u> – This draft policy is currently being reviewed by the councils of the two champion churches. Anticipating their approval, the CMC endorses the policy as presented, which will be adopted by Classis when the work of the CMC is approved.</p>
4	<p>Follow up re Article 17-a release of Pastor Allen Kleine Deters: The oversight committee is maintaining contact with Allen. Mike will also get in touch with him soon in connection with the end of the two-year period this fall.</p>
5	<p>Stated Clerk report: Wendy reported that the credentials for Rev. Erick Schuringa have been received, signed and forwarded to Mountainview's counsellor and the denominational office. Erick begins his ministry at Mountainview on January 17. Mike will send a welcome note on behalf of Classis which could be read at the installation service, or other time should the installation already have occurred. Wendy has been in touch with Mike Collins regarding his credentials and status. He is overlapping with Erick for the next month.</p> <p>The safe church abuse prevention forms have been coming in steadily with only two churches outstanding, but Wendy hopes to have the entire package of documentation sent off to the insurance company next week at the latest.</p> <p>It was agreed not to set a standard procedure in terms of how pulpit supply can be filled since there are too many variables, but to have the pastors work out details with the church. Some churches may ask the pastor to preach in person for their own live streaming, but options such as having the church members tune into the online service of the designated pastor's church, or sending in a pre-recorded sermon from a previous service for their use in their own streaming, are all valid.</p>
6	<p>Treasurer's report: Joanne Drenth-VanDyke presented the draft financial statements.</p> <p>She noted an increase in the surplus of \$40,000 since no student loans were paid out last year. This is partly because of the CMLT operates on a school calendar year and since most of the students have finished their studies or taken a temporary leave. David Scholman's work at Covenant is being credited as part of his loan forgiveness plan.</p> <p>All the churches contributed 100% classical ministry shares. We were also the first Classis to get our Ministry Share pledges in to the denomination. Well done all!</p> <p>There is approximately \$8,000 in outstanding Resonate grant money available for the Brock Campus Ministry which funds are restricted for resonate expenditures. The team will raise this at their next meeting determining effective ways to use these funds. The unused amount of his professional development fund will be rolled forward as an expense into 2021 to be used for a retreat or similar event. It was agreed to keep such funds separate and not to add them as salary.</p> <p>The audited Financial Statements will be presented to Classis in May as part of the Annual General Meeting.</p> <p>The surplus funds and the needs of the Hub and Third Space Café were discussed at length. In order to maintain the charitable status and separation between the Bridge/the Hub and the Third Space Café, it was agreed that Andy Wunderink will present the need to both classis delegates and the church diaconates via videos introducing their work and the challenges they face. Churches will be encouraged to support this work through offerings, while classical financial support will continue to be given to The Bridge, whose leaders may then determine where and how to apply the funds to reimburse volunteers, etc. connected to the Hub warming space and Third Space Café. Andy is also encouraged to write something up to raise awareness that can be sent to the churches for their bulletins and offerings. The Bridge leadership team has been meeting with Mike Collins to get feedback and look at next steps but with COVID, being able to meet and make plans has been challenging.</p> <p>Stephanie Collins has decided not to resume the treasurer position following her maternity leave. Welcome Joanne as the new official treasurer! Stephanie has agreed to be the alternate treasurer. Mike will arrange for a thank you bouquet and card for Stephanie.</p>

7	Youth Ministry Champion report: Anna Bailey will report in person at the classis meetings and via the Leadership Development team for CMC meetings.
8	<p>Preliminary Preparation for February 24, 2021: The draft agenda was reviewed and approval given to the time frame as set out making this a full day Classis meeting. It was agreed to limit the meeting strictly to delegates and those denominational staff who will be leading the guided conversation and/or reporting at the end of the meeting. With a full agenda it was agreed not to have a sharing time on the core value of Disciples Making Disciples.</p> <p>Inclusion of a guided conversation led by Syd Hielema and Lesli van Millien introducing the Challenging Conversations toolkit was approved as a good way to make churches familiar with this toolkit which will be beneficial for any church council to use and which could be a very helpful process for Classis.</p> <p>The credentials form will encourage delegates to read the Synodical study report on human sexuality. One overture has been received, a second is anticipated. The agenda includes a potential third overture should anything come in from one of the churches in the next six weeks. Wendy will touch base with the delegates of Mountainview and Trinity who make up the Overture Committee well ahead of the meeting date. Mike & Wendy will meet with the Chair and Vice-Chair, pastors Woodrow Dixon and Jeff Klingenberg, a week prior in preparation of the meeting.</p> <p>Although very unlikely, should we need to vote for synodical delegates, those who were nominated last year will be asked first if they would still like to have their name stand, and voting will only be held if other delegates are needed.</p>
9	Safe Church Report: Wendy reported that she and Christina Pleizier are both stepping down as Co-coordinators of the Classis Safe Church Team. Christina's term is finished in May while Wendy is leaving a year early due to other time commitments. They will be seeking a new coordinator before they step down and as much as possible stay on as an ad hoc basis if needed this year.
10	Closing prayer & next meeting: Mike closed the meeting with prayer. The next meeting date was set for March 18 if there are items from the February meeting that need attention. If not the CMC will meet again on April 15 to prepare for the May 26 meeting.

AGENDA ITEM 5.8: REPORT OF STATED CLERK/CORRESPONDENCE

Since the October meeting, work on the Stated Clerk side has been rather quiet. Apart from the main work of preparing for the February 24th meeting, there have been a few Stated Clerk Zoom sessions, primarily focused on navigating Zoom better and identifying where there were hiccups and sharing advice on polling. I am taking advantage of this time to go through the online Church Polity course by Dr. Kathy Smith a second time to further solidify my grasp of the church order.

The task of obtaining abuse prevention insurance for classis is nearing the end. All the documentation from the churches has been sent on to Robertson Hall Insurance. As policies and best practices come down from the denominational staff, these will also be incorporated into the Brock campus ministry with the aim of including that ministry in the overall classical insurance coverage.

The pulpit supply list is included below and will be updated if there are changes. Thank you to those who submitted their thoughts on whether or not to hold an in-person Synod this June. Classis Niagara's submission indicated a desire to postpone Synod until 2022, to also postpone discussion of the synodical study report on human sexuality, and concurrence with allowing the COD to deal with any matters that cannot wait until June 2022. Voting for delegates will only take place should the COD decide to meet in June 2021 after all.

Finally it was a nice surprise to see this piece included in the January Connections "The Brief" – a 10-Minute* Monthly Encouragement for Those Who Serve Regions or Classes – and yes, I'm tooting my own horn 😊

MINISTRY ON THE FRONTLINES

This month we're going to highlight one story out of Classis Niagara that shows the power and trust-building capacity of the connections mindset.

Classis Niagara's stated clerk received an email from their CMLT (Classis Ministry Leadership Team) chairperson who was reaching out on behalf of an elder stepping into a pastoral care/visitation role at his own vacant congregation. She inquired with Al Postma about any resources that would help the elder in this new role. Al connected her to Sean Baker from Pastor Church Resources, Shawn Brix at Calvin Seminary, and their Regional Network Connector, Lesli Van Milligen. All three of these people were invited to come alongside this elder learning a new church leadership role. This was the clerk's reply: "Thank you so much for all these responses. When someone wonders about where Ministry Share dollars go, I'm tempted to show them an email chain like this one and say "If you have a question, send it to someone at the denomination, and if they don't know themselves, they will find someone who does, and within a day, you will have an answer!" All of your feedback put a smile on my face."

PULPIT SUPPLY LIST FOR CLASSIS NIAGARA – January – May 2021

	TRINITY CRC Currently only at 10:00 am	FRUITLAND CRC 9:30 am
January 10 January 24	Rev. Wes Collins Rev. Jeff Klingenberg	Rev. Bob Loerts Rev. Jack VanderVeer
February 14 February 28	Rev. Colin Vander Ploeg Rev. Jack VanderVeer	Rev. Wes Collins Rev. Peter Tuininga
March 14 March 28	Rev. Woodrow Dixon Rev. Mike Vandyk	Rev. Janet Ryzebol Rev. Steve deBoer
April 11 April 25	Rev. Colin Vander Ploeg Rev. Bob Loerts	Rev. Jeff Klingenberg Rev. Jack VanderVeer
May 9 May 23	Rev. Peter Tuininga Rev. Erick Schuringa	Rev. Woodrow Dixon Rev. Steve deBoer

AGENDA ITEM 5.10: Delegates to Synod in previous years

	PASTOR	ELDER	DEACON	4 TH	PASTOR ALT	ELDER ALT	DEACON ALT	4 TH ALT
2020 voting results	Bob Loerts	Joan Kooger	Blair Schiebel	Mike Vandyk	Steve deBoer	Tena Dykxhoorn	Ingrid Beck	Mark DeVos
2019	Sid Couperus	Dan Baarda		Tena Dykxhoorn	Bob Loerts	Frank Engelage		Steve DeBoer
2018	Mike Vandyk	Hilbert Bokma	Karen Vandyk	George Sportel	Sid Couperus			Kevin VanderVeen
2017	Woodrow Dixon	Archie Vermeer		Colin VanderPloeg	Fred VanderBerg	Dora Strooboscher		Brian Verheul
2016	Chris deWinter	Cora Vink		Fred VanderBerg	Steve deBoer			Allen Klein- Deters

The COD will likely make a decision at its February meeting as to whether or not Synod will meet in person in June 2021. If the decision is made to postpone Synod until 2022, voting for delegates will not take place.

AGENDA ITEM 5.10: Safe Church Report

This report provide a brief update on several matters related to safe church ministry:

- Last November the Classis Niagara Safe Church Team was able to meet safely in person. Many of the churches resumed their children's programs online last fall and had either adapted their policies for online usage or were looking for resources to help them do so. One of the best resources available for training help is Dove's Nest, an organization based in the Mennonite tradition but which has strong links to the CRCNA Safe Church Ministry. www.dovenest.net. They offer a number of sample policies and a 38 minute training video.
- At the end of October a meeting was held with campus chaplains, campus ministry chairpersons and the classical safe church coordinators, in order to build bridges, make each other aware of policies and best practices being used, and discerning where there were gaps and improvements needed. The CRCNA Resonate and Safe Church staff are now developing a manual of policies for campus ministry use with an anticipated release date of the draft sometime this winter and a final resource of policies by summer.
- The matter of acquiring full abuse prevention insurance for classis continues. Many thanks to all the churches who responded so quickly to the request for a current abuse prevention checklist. The gathered material and forms have now been sent off to Robertson Hall Insurance and we await word as to whether this is sufficient for them to extend this insurance to Classis in addition to their coverage of individual churches.
- Later this spring both Christina Pleizier and Wendy de Jong are stepping down from their roles as co-coordinators and classis champions. Christina will be moving to Hamilton and Wendy is leaving the co-coordinator position a year early due to time commitments on the COD. We hope to have a new coordinator in place this spring, and echo our earlier request that there be a pastor delegate on this committee. The ideal is to have a designated Safe Church Champion who would be reimbursed the annual \$1500 stipend who could give this vital work the time and attention it deserves. We are planning a Zoom meeting of the Safe Church Team liaisons from each church in March.
- Bonnie Nicholas retired in November and as you will have seen elsewhere, Dr. Amanda Benckhuysen has been hired as the new director of Safe Church Ministries.

Christina Pleizier (Mountainview), Clarence Houwer, (Bethel), Karen Vandyk (Covenant), Jason Witteveen (Riverside), Wendy de Jong (Jubilee)