

## Welcome to Classis Niagara! Especially first time delegates!

We are glad that you have volunteered to be a delegate from your congregation for this upcoming meeting. These notes are meant to help you navigate your experience here (especially if it is your first time). If you have any questions please do not hesitate to ask one of the officers of the day, or the stated clerk.

Classis Niagara meets three times each year, in February, May, and October to spend time together worshipping and learning, to deliberate and make decisions on our shared ministries, examine candidates for ministry, hear reports from our classical and denominational ministries and other ministries with ties to the CRC, and more. Occasionally a special meeting may be called to examine a candidate for ministry.

At the beginning of the day all the delegates will be asked to stand to indicate their agreement with a statement which will be read by the Chair of Classis, and which is included at the end of this letter.

All delegates are expected to have prepared for the meeting by reading the agenda and accompanying reports and documents. You may choose to print your own hard copies or access the documents electronically.

If you have any dietary restrictions please notify the host church a week before our meeting and they will try to comply. Delegates are expected to stay for the entire meeting. If you must leave before adjournment, please consult with the chair of the day.

In general, our meetings are governed by the Church Order of the CRC, and the Rules and Procedures book of this classis.

When a recommendation comes before the delegates it needs to come as a motion from a delegate, a congregation, or committee of classis. This motion then needs to be supported by a delegate. After this the delegates can discuss the motion: asking questions and state their opinion on whether or not the motion should be adopted. After the discussion is over (either no one else wants to speak, or the chair rules that the discussion is over, or a delegate “calls for the question”), then the chair calls for the delegates to vote. Usually the vote is done by voice, although when dealing with persons or when the vote is too close to call, it is taken by ballot. A majority (50 percent plus one) of the delegates is required to pass a motion.

Often when a motion comes from a congregation it comes in the form of an “overture.” An overture is a formal written proposal sent to classis requesting adoption or amendment of a policy or other legislative action by the classis or the denomination. Overtures that deal with a denominational policy or other action, if passed by classis, will be sent on to Synod, the annual general meeting of the Christian Reformed Church.

Each church sends three delegates to classis, usually one minister, one elder, and one deacon. If you are an elder or deacon delegate, we encourage you to participate fully in the discussion. Don't assume that your pastor will speak on your behalf. Our meetings are deliberative meetings. This means that you are not merely a representative of your council and your council should not/cannot instruct you how to vote. The point of the meeting is to hear all discussion before deciding how to vote. If something is unclear please ask – if you are not sure about something, chances are good that there are more people who are unsure and need clarification as well.

For more information on Classis procedures, rules and committees please see the “Rules of Procedure” document at [www.classisniagara.ca](http://www.classisniagara.ca)



### Commonly Used Acronyms at Classis

**BUCT** – Brock University Chaplaincy Team  
**CMC** - Classis Ministry Council  
**CMD** – Canadian Ministries Director  
**CMLT** - Classis Ministerial Leadership Team  
**CN** - Classis Niagara  
**CNSCT** – Classis Niagara Safe Church Team  
**COD** – Council of Delegates of the CRCNA  
**CRCNA** – Christian Reformed Church in North America  
**DMC** - Diaconal Ministries Canada  
**RUC** - Redeemer University College  
**SC** – Stated Clerk  
**SALT** – Structure and Leadership TaskForce  
**WR** – World Renew

### Committees that exist for the duration of classis or for a specific time frame:

*If your church is assigned to one of these committees, the delegates from your church (including you) make up the committee*

- **Credentials Committee:** Credentials are the forms that each church's delegates must bring to classis verifying that they are the duly appointed delegates from their church. Their task is to make sure all credentials are duly received, to prepare and lead the roll call, and to ensure that issues raised on the credentials are brought to the attention of classis.
- **Overtures Committee:** A formal request from a congregation (sometimes a committee) usually comes in the form of "overture," asking classis to do something. A committee, consisting of the delegates from two churches, is assigned to study the overture in advance and offer advice to classis on how it might deal with the overture.

### Standing committees of classis

- **Classis Ministry Council – (CMC)** This committee takes care of matters that cannot wait until the next classis meeting, as well as preparing the agenda for classis meetings.
- **Classis Ministerial Leadership Team (CMLT)** - Administers funds for financial aid for and works with men and women studying to enter full-time ordained or non-ordained ministry within the CRC.
- **Safe Church Team – (CNSCT)** Helps churches to develop safe church communities and administers the counseling fund.
- **Brock University Chaplaincy Team** provides support, guidance and encouragement to the Classis Niagara chaplain(s) working at Brock and/or Niagara College.
- The 5 Core Value Teams – **Authentic Community, Covenant Relationships, Disciples Making New Disciples, Leadership Development, Prayerful Dependence on God.** The chairpersons of these 5 teams, along with the Chair, Vice-Chair, Clerk and Treasurer, comprise the Classis Ministry Council.

### Other roles in classis:

- **Church Counselors:** When a church lacks a pastor, the pastor from a nearby church is assigned as a counselor to assist the council.
- **Church Visitors:** Each church and its council should be visited every other year by the "church visitors." The church visiting teams are made up of a pastor and an elder, who engage in a conversation with the church council to reflect on overall spiritual health and well-being and to assist if there are concerns within the congregation.
- **Regional Pastor:** Two regional pastors are appointed to classis to help provide pastoral care and encouragement to the pastors in the region.
- **Stated Clerk:** The Stated Clerk prepares the agendas and minutes, keeps the records of classis in order, and serves as the point person for communication within classis and the denomination.
- **Treasurer:** The Treasurer receives and disburses all funds contributed by the churches for Ministry Shares and classical expenses such as stipends and salaries, and presents the budget and financial statements to Classis.
- **Youth Champion:** The Classis Youth Champion serves to encourage and support the youth ministry volunteers and church staff, and raises the needs of youth ministry before classis.

We hope you enjoy your time at Classis.

Wendy de Jong,  
Stated Clerk, [statedclerkniagara@gmail.com](mailto:statedclerkniagara@gmail.com)

**Classis Niagara Declaration of Agreement with  
the Beliefs of the Christian Reformed Church in North America**

We are assembled as delegates to this meeting of Classis Niagara to deliberate and decide on the matters on the Agenda before us.

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.

We believe that the Old and New Testaments are the inspired Word of God, the only infallible rule for faith and life. We affirm three creeds—the Apostles Creed, the Nicene Creed, and the Athanasian Creed—as ecumenical expressions of the Christian faith.

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.

Along with these historic creeds and confessions, we recognize the witness of Our World Belongs to God: A Contemporary Testimony.

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.

*[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*