

CLASSIS NIAGARA

CLASSIS MINISTERIAL LEADERSHIP TEAM (CMLT) MANDATE

Revised in 2017

PRIMARY MANDATE

On behalf of Classis Niagara, the Classis Ministerial Leadership Team (CMLT) shall carry out the following guidelines, approach, and stipulations re the financial, emotional and spiritual support of students from Classis Niagara, ordinarily attending Calvin Theological Seminary with a view toward ordained ministry in the Christian Reformed Church of North America (CRCNA):

Classical Guidelines for Students and Churches:

1. If someone senses the call into ordained ministry within the CRCNA and is nearing the end of their undergraduate studies, they are encouraged to get in contact with Classis Ministerial Leadership Team (CMLT) directly who will contact the CRCNA Candidacy Committee on their behalf. The CMLT will give them a brief introduction to the Candidacy process. Usually the student will have already applied for and/or been accepted for study at a seminary.
2. The individual will then complete the "Candidates Application to Council Form." This allows the individual's council to affirm their call into ministry. Following an interview the council will fill out the "Council Recommendation Form." These completed forms will then be forwarded to the CMLT.
3. To be eligible for financial assistance from Classis Niagara, the applicant will have completed an undergraduate degree fitting within the CRCNA Candidacy Committee guidelines, and will have been a member of a Classis Niagara CRC congregation for at least 3 years.
4. The CMLT then interviews the individual as to his/her knowledge of the Bible and Reformed doctrine, and as to his/her personal piety and sense of vocation, and makes a decision concerning endorsement.
At this time the CMLT also requests the following documentation.
 - a. Completed Application Forms for Financial Aid (available from the secretary of the CMLT)
 - b. A copy of the completed Seminary Application Form
 - c. A copy of his/her Council's endorsement of the application to pursue seminary studies
 - d. A statement of reasons for attending a seminary other than Calvin Theological Seminary (If that is the case). In lieu of a statement, the reason for attending another seminary may be discussed during the interview.
5. Qualified Seminaries include: Calvin Theological Seminary, Western Theological Seminary, McMaster Divinity School and Tyndale Seminary. Other seminaries will be considered on a case by case basis with regard to their appropriateness in preparing students for ministry in the CRCNA.
6. If the CMLT decides to endorse the individual, it then helps the student set up a Financial Plan and a Study Plan. The CMLT also completes the CMLT recommendation form and forwards all pertinent paper work onto the Candidacy Committee (CC).

7. The Candidacy Committee of the CRCNA then decides whether or not to admit this individual into the Candidacy Process.
8. Upon CC approval, the individual is requested to identify a vocational mentor and a mentoring committee who, in addition to the CMLT, will meet regularly with the individual for encouragement, mentorship and aid. The mentor and CMLT will complete all required forms as per the Candidacy Committee 24-month mentorship process. The 24-month period ends with the individual's target graduation date.

LOANS AND REPAYMENT OF THE LOANS

- 1) Student aid will be given in accordance to the CMLT Classis Niagara Funding Policy – see attached.
- 2) It is the Student's responsibility to submit copies of their tuition statements and book purchases to the CMLT for reimbursement throughout their time of study.
- 3) Based on interviews or contact between the student and the CMLT for additional financial assistance, these shall be determined based on available funds.
- 4) It is the student's responsibility to keep the secretary of the committee informed about changes of address and any change in his/her vocational goal and approved course of studies.

CLASSIS APPROACH TOWARD (PROSPECTIVE) STUDENTS

- *Personal Encouragement:* Two or Three members of the CMLT offer such encouragement. Such a member helps to introduce the students for the Candidacy process and the expectations of the Committee and the Denomination. They will maintain contact with at least once per year in the first year of studies and then every 3 months during the final 24 months, as per the 24-month Candidacy Process. In this way, they help monitor study progress as well as the overall well-being and spiritual health of the student and his/her family. The CMLT will also work with the churches to help them to understand the new process and to encourage the churches to support and celebrate with the student as they make their way to ordination.
- *Personal Responsibility:* The Classis emphasizes that the students are personally responsible for the funding of their education leading to ordained ministry in the CRCNA. Assistance from the CMLT is granted to attract students, as well as to give additional funding according to exceptional cases of extreme need.
- *Personal Incentive:* All students from Classis Niagara who are approved by the CMLT for support in accordance with the above-stated guidelines will receive funding according to the guidelines of the Fund Policy adopted by Classis May 21, 2017 to include the EPMC and distance learning options.
- *Exceptional Cases:* In situations where there is extreme need on behalf of the students, students are to present their requests to their local congregation, and if the need goes beyond the abilities of the local diaconate to provide assistance, the diaconate may request additional funding from the CMLT.

COMMITTEE MEMBERS AND THEIR TASKS:

(Ordinarily 4 members, **two** of whom must be ordained pastors)

Chair: The chairperson sets the agenda for all meetings, reports to Classis regarding the work of the CMLT, directs requests for information regarding CMLT and its support policies and procedures, and ensures that the general work of CMLT is completed.

Secretary/Treasurer: This combined position is the responsibility of the non-ordained member. They are responsible for recording minutes of the meetings, maintaining records of students who are being supported including current addresses, handling all correspondence, placing notices in bulletins as well as denominational publications to inform students that applications for financial aid will be received, and disbursing funds for students. The Secretary/Treasurer will also be responsible to arrange a Classical Seminary Sunday so that students supported by Classis Niagara who are licensed to exhort may be given an opportunity to exhort in the churches of Classis Niagara.

The two Ordained Committee Members will work with prospective students and those already supported by Classis Niagara, with a view to help them to understand the Candidacy Process and to encourage them by way of direct interaction, prayer, teaching, and communication, as per the guidelines of the 24 month Candidacy Process – *attached hereto*.

Frequency of Meetings:

The CMLT meets ordinarily twice a year – once in late March to process new applicants to the Candidacy Process and well as new Financial Aid Applications for currently supported students and once in November to review the progress of students. Further meetings may be scheduled if deemed necessary.

SECONDARY MANDATE

Since Classis recognizes and supports the need for Specialized Ministries staff, the CMLT shall provide support to such students who are pursuing degrees other than the M.Div., by way of prayer, words of personal encouragement, and financial aid as it is able. All financial aid from the CMLT to such students shall be repaid by the students, unless the student (after graduation) is working in a ministry capacity at a CRC or one of its agencies, in which case a student's loan will be forgiven at the rate of 20% (of the original total loan) per year of service. It should be understood that only graduate students may apply for this support.