



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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Chair: Rev. Mike Vandyk; **Vice-chair:** Rev. Erick Schuringa; **Stated Clerk:** Wendy de Jong

MINUTES

120th meeting of Classis
Wednesday, May 25, 2022 - held at Smithville CRC
classisniagara.ca/minutes-reports/

ROLL CALL

CHURCH	PASTOR	ELDER	DEACON
Bethany	Pastor Colin Vander Ploeg	Epp DeVries	
Bethel	Pastor Jeff Klingenberg	Art Vos	David Engelage
Covenant	Pastor Bob Loerts	Derek Ryzebol	Henrietta Hunse
Fruitland		Elder Al Voorberg	
Grace	Pastor Mike Vandyk	George Sportel	Esther deVries
Jubilee Fellowship	Elder Dean Bonsma	Alice Klamer	
Mountainview	Pastor Erick Schuringa	Isaac Van Geest	Nick Kiers
Providence	Pastor Steve deBoer	Kirk Weaver	
Faith Fellowship		Rick Meloen	Tena Schuyler
Riverside	Elder Phil Dekker	James Van Tuyl	Devin Lunshof
Smithville	Elder Paul Heerema	Joe Zantingh	Jim Koornneef
Trinity			
The Bridge	Hans Branderhorst, - credentials via Providence		
Village Church	Pastor Mark DeVos - credentials via Covenant		
The Table	Pastor Terence Schilstra - credentials via Covenant		

In attendance for some or all of the day were Karen Gerritsma, Pastor Elly Boersma-Sarkany, Sandra Dam, Joanne Drenth-VanDyke, Pastor Mike Collins, Chaplain Peter Janssens, Pastor Frank Engelage, Rev. Al Postma, Rev. Shawn Brix, Dr. David Zietsma, Monica Risch, Hilda VanderKlippe, Ryanna Schlechter, Leah DeVos and Will Vander Wier.

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:** Rev. Mike Vandyk welcomed everyone to the meeting, expressing his thankfulness that we can meet in person again. Pastor Elly Boersma-Sarkany, of the Leadership Development Team, and Sandra Dam, who is a worship intern at Covenant CRC, led a time of singing, reading of Ephesians 1, and prayer reflective of Ascension Day.
- 1.2 Committee appointment confirmations:** The appointments were confirmed as listed below.
Credentials – delegates of Mountainview (chair) & Providence (reporting)
Advisory re overtures/protests: delegates of Grace (chair) and Covenant (reporting)
- 1.3 Roll Call:** Pastor Steve DeBoer of Providence CRC read the roll call. Trinity’s delegate was not present.
- 1.4 Constitution of Classis:** Chair, Rev. Mike Vandyk, read the Affirmation by delegates of the *Niagara Declaration of Agreement* with the Beliefs of the Christian Reformed Church in North America, which the delegates affirmed, after which Classis was declared constituted.
- 1.5 Report of the Credentials and Overture Advisory Committees:** Rev. Steve DeBoer reported on two matters raised on the credentials. The first was a preference expressed by the majority of churches for an evening and day retreat without an overnight stay. The second was a request from Bethel CRC, Questions under Church Order Article 41, “What are the confessional grounds for administering a baptism where the parents are a same-sex couple?” The committee responded as follows: “To the matter raised on the Bethel Dunnville credentials the question presumably arises from a particular situation and as such should be first taken up with the party in question in the spirit of Matthew 18. If or when that has taken place, we would suggest you may do your own theological research on the matter. That said, we presume to say that the confessions do not deal with this matter directly or specifically. However, the application of baptismal promises to a particular situation does raise some questions worthy of reflection.” Rev. Mike Vandyke, one of the synodical delegates, added that there is helpful material in the Agenda for Synod relating to the Neland CRC situation that may be relevant to this situation. Rev. Jeff Klingenberg thanked the committee for their response which will be brought back Bethel’s council. No overtures were received.
- 1.6 Shalom Manor Chaplains report:** Rev. Peter Janssens, chaplain at Shalom Manor gave an enlightening report on his ministry at Shalom Manor. The residents come from many denominations both within and outside reformed churches including residents who come from other faiths or do not have any church affiliation. One of the many joys of his work is leading worship where denominational affiliation falls away and the residents are united in their relationship with Jesus. He shared a story of two women who greet each other every morning with the words “a day closer to Jesus.” Rev. Janssens highlighted the demands on staff with the shortages and stresses of Covid, and the many funeral services where he is also able to make connections with the family and clergy of other denominations. He thanked everyone for their support of Shalom and expressed appreciation for the difference that support makes in the lives of the elderly in our community.

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 Classis Ministry Council report** – Rev. Erick Schuringa pointed everyone to the CMC minutes that were included in the agenda, indicating that most of the CMC's work is preparing for Classis meetings.
MOTION: To approve the work of the Classis Ministry Council: **CARRIED**
- 2.2 Stated Clerk, Pulpit Supply and Classis Functionaries Report** – Wendy de Jong highlighted the transfer of ministerial credentials of Rev. Jack Vander Veer to Classis Quinte and First CRC of Kingston, and of Rev. Duane VanderLaan to Classis Huron and Drayton CRC. Pastor Mike Collins requested Commissioned Pastor Emeritus Status with his ministerial credentials held by Mountainview CRC. A number of new appointments to various Classical committees were approved, with gratitude to those who completed one or two terms of service.
MOTION: To approve the work of the Stated Clerk: **CARRIED**
MOTION: To approve the Commission Pastor Emeritus Status of Pastor Mike Collins: **CARRIED**
MOTION: To approve the nominations and positions as listed in the Functionaries Report: **CARRIED**
- 2.3 Rules & Procedures:** Wendy reviewed the updates and changes proposed to the Rules & Procedures document. Most of the changes bring the wording in the document in line with current practice. The only significant change is a rewrite of the sections explaining the tasks and protocols for the Credentials and Overture Advisory Committees as the original text at times conflated those. Also new to the document is an appendix from Pastor Church Resources with guidelines for anyone serving on an Overture Advisory Committee. The section outlining the five Core Value team membership and mandates will be updated following the February 2023 retreat during which an evaluation of the vision and core values will take place. A request to also defer approval of Section IV.A.7 which also refers to the Core Value teams was accepted as a friendly amendment.
MOTION: To approve the modifications to the Rules & Procedures for Classis Niagara, with the exception of Section IV.A.7: **CARRIED**
- 2.4 MINUTES OF THE ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING, MAY 25, 2022**
- CMC Chair Rev. Erick Schuringa led this portion of the meeting which brings us into compliance with the Ontario Non-Profit Corporations Act.
- 2.4.1 **MOTION:** To approve the Minutes of the Annual General Meeting held on May 26, 2021: **CARRIED**
- 2.4.2 **MOTION:** To approve the election of Members to the Board of Directors consisting of Erick Schuringa, Frank Engelage, Colin Vander Ploeg, Janet Ryzebol and Karen Gerritsma. **CARRIED**
- 2.4.3 **MOTION:** To approval of the Financial Statements of 2021, presented by Treasurer, Joanne Drenth-VanDyke and to Approve the work of the Treasurer: **CARRIED**
Joanne clarified a question on the recording of surpluses and carry-overs from the previous year.
- 2.4.4 **MOTION:** To approve the Auditors Report of the 2021 Financial Statements: **CARRIED**
- 2.4.5 **MOTION:** To approve the appointment of Grant Thornton, LLP, Chartered Professional Accountants, as auditors for 2022: **CARRIED**
- The Annual General Meeting was adjourned and regular session resumed.

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 Leadership Development Team interactive presentation:** Karen Gerritsma, Chair of the Leadership Development Team, introduced Monica Risch of The Colossian Forum. Monica led us through a two-hour interactive session called “A Taste of Wayfinder: Equipping Christian leaders to think, act and lead like Jesus in the face of division.” Some of the pointers were how to ask curious questions rather than leading ones, turning toward and engaging a person we may be frustrated or angry with rather than avoiding them, and remembering that they too are children of God and deeply desirous to live in obedience and faithfulness. The goal is not to avoid conflict but to handle it well without letting it break down relationships. Delegates had opportunities to work through some of the questions in small groups as well as asking questions from the floor. The chair thanked Monica for her presentation and delegates were encouraged to continue discussion with her over the lunch break.
- 3.2 Introduction of the Transitional Executive Director Canada:** Rev. Al Postma introduced himself as the new Transitional Executive Director Canada. He brought greetings on behalf of the Canadian Ministries and staff and welcomed churches to reach out to him and other staff for assistance in any area of church life. Al prayed for a blessing on the lunch and for all the ministries which reported earlier.
- 3.3 Classical Ministry Leadership Team:** There was no report as the CMLT Chair, Rev. Woodrow Dixon, was on sabbatical.
- 3.4 Youth Ministry Champion Report:** There was no report from the Youth Ministry Champion. A number of classical youth ministry champions are on a retreat.
- 3.5 Calvin Theological Seminary:** Rev. Shawn Brix, Canadian Church Relations Liaison introduced some of the changes happening at the seminary as they adjust to different student demographics and course requirements. 70% of Canadians are studying online which allows them to stay in their home community rather than move to Grand Rapids. Calvin Theological Seminary (CTS) hopes to make a formal announcement soon that Canadian tuition will be accepted on par with the American dollar which will make CTS much more affordable.
- 3.6 Redeemer University:** President David Zietsma brought greetings on behalf of Redeemer. He thanked Classis for faithful financial and prayer support. He gave an update on some new developments on campus, including a new housing complex. Redeemer is celebrating its 40th anniversary in September and looking forward to their largest incoming cohort of 1100 students, of which 60 come from Niagara. Their government charter has also been expanded allowing them to offer many more degrees including graduate degrees.

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 Brock Campus Chaplaincy Ministry Report:** Chaplain Zack DeBruyne submitted a written report since he was attending the North American Campus Ministry Retreat in Kingston.
- 4.2 Niagara International Students Report:** Assistant Chaplain Hilda VanderKlippe introduced Ryanna Schlechter and Leah DeVos who also work with Niagara International Student Ministry.

	<p>We watched a short video giving a snapshot of many of the social and learning opportunities their ministry has been involved with during the past year. Ryanna and Leah shared stories of connections with students, introducing them to Jesus, and creating opportunities for these international students to develop friendships. Hilda pointed out that never before in history have the least reached and the church been in such close proximity. There are thousands of international students coming to Niagara. Her dream is that each student will be matched with a movement of Christian volunteers and churches to reach these students.</p>
4.3	<p>Village Church Report: Rev. Mark De Vos shared plans for this summer’s invitation to people to come together over a shared meal, organizing a BBQ in the park after their worship service, following the model presented in the video “This is Dinner Church.” They initially opened registration for 50 people, then expanded that to 100, but now have to turn people away because they don’t have adequate space or food to meet needs beyond that. They are developing connections with students coming through the Niagara International Student Ministry. Mark asks for prayers for sustainability of this initiative and that God would raise up workers to come alongside The Village Church.</p>
4.4	<p>The Table: Rev. Terence Schilstra spoke of the need to live out our faith with deeds and to lead with practices more than leading with beliefs particularly in this time of great cultural change. He shared a story of a recent request to help a family in need in an inner-city school in Thorold and was honoured to be asked and trusted to step into this crisis situation. They have hired a Brock student to lead their summer children’s ministry and are excited to see this ministry flourish.</p>
4.5	<p>Bridge Church Plant: Hans Branderhorst thanked the classis for their ongoing support. They experience a keen sense that God is on the move and has invited them to join him in their ministry. Up to now they have been meeting in each other’s homes. Realizing that with no fixed address they don’t have a way to invite people to join them, they are searching out a permanent meeting place. The Bowling for Breakfast fund-raiser, for which they set an initial target of \$10-12,000, raised a phenomenal \$56,000. They sense God is telling them to think much bigger than only providing breakfast and consider this as a nudge to work toward finding a permanent solution for homelessness in downtown Niagara Falls.</p>

5. 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.

5.1	<p>Council of Delegates & Canada Corp board report – Wendy de Jong gave a report on the recent in-person meetings held in Grand Rapids on May 3-5. The restructuring proposal, SALT, will likely be passed at Synod this summer. Canada Corp is cautiously optimistic that its implementation will be good for Canadian staff and ministries, and certainly less detrimental than originally feared. They appreciate the realization on the US side for the need of an equivalent Executive Director US, and of the formation of the new CRC-Worldwide corporation. Wendy thanked Classis Niagara for its support of the January 29 Canadian Catalytic Conversation. The Canada Corp board has been actively working on developing short, medium and long-term goals for the board, ministries and churches and is planning two sessions in the coming year to gather with representatives of all classes to continue listening and dialoguing together to strengthen and bless ministries in the Canadian context.</p>
5.2	<p>Church Visitors: The matter of church visits will be picked up at the October meeting and potentially discussed in more depth at the February 2023 retreat.</p>

5.3	Regional Pastors report: A written report by Rev. Jim Dekker was included in the agenda.
5.4	Church Counselor & Oversight Committee reports: Rev. Erick Schuringa reflected briefly on Fruitland’s closure, marked by a service of celebration on June 5. Fruitland elder delegate, Al Voorberg, thanked Classis for their support during this difficult and challenging time for their congregation.
5.5	Closing Prayer & Adjournment: The volunteers and staff of Smithville CRC were thanked for the excellent service and lunch. Rev. Erick Schuringa expressed his thanks to the delegates for a good day of deliberations and to Rev. Mike Vandyke for chairing. He offered closing prayer, particularly for Fruitland CRC, after which the meeting was adjourned an hour earlier than anticipated.

Next meeting: October 26, 2022 -- host church needed

Agenda Deadline: September 14, 2022

Chair: Rev. Erick Schuringa; *Vice-chair:* Rev. Jeff Klingenberg

Credentials Committee: Providence (*Chair*); Bethany (*Reporting*)

Overture Advisory: Covenant (*Chair*) and Riverside (*Reporting*)

Following meeting: Wednesday, February 22, 2023

– unless we are able to schedule a weekend retreat earlier in February