



ADDENDUM TO THE ADDENDUM TO THE AGENDA CLASSIS HAMILTON OF THE CHRISTIAN REFORMED CHURCH

February 23, 2016

Below, please find three additional items for the upcoming Classis meeting.

The Overture Committee #1 had not dealt with a request regarding the covenantal partnership that currently exists between Classis Hamilton, Classis Niagara and Shalom Manor in the CRC chaplaincy ministry at Shalom Manor. A request prepared by the CIC to Overture Committee #1 to as yet address that request has been submitted, but because of key members of the committee not being available until Saturday, their response is not yet available. This is presented below as Communication #1

In October 2015, Classis Hamilton submitted an overture to Synod 2016 regarding Student Funding and Article 43. The previously circulated agenda for our Classis meeting included updates to this overture as well as a recommendation from Overture Committee # 1 related to those proposed clarifications. Since writing that overture, new information has come to the surface that raise questions about the viability of our October overture.

In response to the October overture, the Classis Hamilton Candidacy Committee has continued conversations with Calvin Theological Seminary and the CRCNA Candidacy Committee related to the issues identified in our overture. Some of these conversations have unfolded over the last two weeks. In light of these most recent conversations, the Classis Hamilton Candidacy Committee has submitted a new overture. You can find the new overture below as Communication #2 along with a copy of the draft response from Calvin Theological Seminary. Please read both of these carefully.

Communication #3 also has some additional information regarding the changes that were made to the October 27 student funding overture to synod, particularly in the grounds relating to the requested changes in Article 43 of the Church Order.

This late material may be confusing to some of you, but as you read it carefully it is hoped that you will understand why it is being presented at this late date. It is intended to provide you with as much information as possible prior to the actual classis meeting so that you will be able to make informed decisions.

Thank you,

Dick L. Kranendonk,
Stated Clerk

clerk@classishamilton.ca

289-239-7564

1. COMMUNICATION #1 3
2. COMMUNICATION #2 4
3. COMMUNICATION #3 8

1. COMMUNICATION #1

To: Overture Committee #1

Shalom Manor and Gardens Chaplaincy Committee

Classis Hamilton CIC (CHCIC) notes that the Overture Committee (OC) did not address the specific request of the Shalom Manor and Gardens Chaplaincy Committee (SMGCC)/Classis Niagara CIC (CNCIC). This request you will find on pages 21/22 of the agenda in the form of asking CH to mandate the SMGCC with two tasks.

We are resubmitting that to the committee with the following comments that we pass on to CH delegates so that we are all working with the same awareness of these points of information:

1. Addressing the request of SMGCC/CNCIC needs to take care to distinguish between legal governance and covenantal (ecclesiastical) governance. The former is held solely by CN; the latter is shared between the two Classis and SM through representation on the SMGCC. CH has made clear only that it is not interested in changing the legal governance from what it currently is.
2. It is not clear why it is necessary to mandate the SMGCC to do the two things they request, nor what implications may be understood by such mandating. It seems, given the discussions of the two Classes to date, and the overall mandate of SMGCC that it is within their prerogative to pursue and present new models to meet the discussion and concerns raised.
3. CH will determine its own response to the request of SMGCC/CNCIC. Options the OC could consider include:
 - a. withholding action on the Jarvis overture until a decision is made about a revised (covenantal) governance structure and financing model are reviewed.
 - b. voting on the overture as is
 - c. considering a change of timeline for the decrease in funding
 - d. voting on the overture and current/revised timeline but include the understanding that the timeline be revisited in October when an update will be given by the SMGCC on its work. If there is sufficient reason at that meeting to change the timeline or put the decision on hold, CH could do so then.
4. We note that a desire within CH and within SMGCC (as reported by SMGCC) is to move away from Classis ministry share funding for SM chaplaincy. If it becomes clear at some point that moving in that direction needs extra time beyond any decisions made by CH that CH could determine a response to that need when that information is clear.

Given the above, CIC is asking that OC #1 submit a recommendation to Classis, not later than the start of Classis, with regards to the request of SMGCC/CNCIC. This would need to be approved by the Feb 23 Exec of CH.

Proposed Overture from Classis Hamilton to Synod 2016 Presented by CHCC:

In light of our continued dialogue with representatives from Calvin Theological Seminary and the CRCNA Candidacy Committee, the Classis Hamilton Candidacy Committee submits the following overture to Classis Hamilton, requesting that Classis Hamilton overture Synod 2016:

That Synod 2016:

Form a task force to address (a) issues of equity in Classis-based student funding, (b) financial challenges faced by students in Canadian contexts who desire to attend Calvin Theological Seminary, and (c) the impact of these financial circumstances on CRC members accessing a Reformed preparation for ministry within the CRCNA; that this task force be comprised of representatives from Calvin Theological Seminary, the CRCNA Candidacy Committee, 3 Classis committees responsible for student funding, and 2 current or recent CTS students; that the task force report its findings and any recommendations to Synod 2017.

Grounds:

1. In October 2015, Classis Hamilton submitted an overture to Synod 2016 regarding student funding and potential changes to Church Order, Article 43.
2. Continued dialogue with Calvin Theological Seminary and the CRCNA Candidacy Committee has revealed that the issues are more complex than Classis Hamilton's original overture indicated.
3. There is wide discrepancy between Classes with regard to student funding levels and criteria for determining support, fostering inequitable situations in training CRCNA students for ministry in the CRCNA.
4. CRCNA students from Canada face challenges with attending Calvin Theological Seminary that CRCNA students from the United States do not face.
5. A task force involving the parties indicated above will be able to provide a more comprehensive response to the concerns raised through Classis Hamilton's original overture and additional concerns identified by Calvin Theological Seminary, the CRCNA Candidacy Committee, and students themselves.
6. The matter of preparing students for ministry and the financial challenges being faced by Classes and students in that preparation process calls for timely attention.

As further background information as to why the CHCC is proposing the above additional overture, please see the response received from CTS. We have received permission to share it with the delegates, although it should not be distributed further.

CONFIDENTIAL DRAFT RESPONSE TO CLASSIS HAMILTON PROPOSAL REGARDING CLASSICAL AID

As the [original] overture from Classis Hamilton has been reviewed, we whole heartedly agree that there is need to review the current process. The funding of seminary students has challenges of equity and fairness that deserve a thoughtful response. We appreciate and agree with Classis Hamilton's two basic concerns: a) that ministers in the CRCNA receive Reformed training that has both depth and breadth, and

b) that seminary students should receive financial support that is equitable. We are thankful to Classis Hamilton for opening the lines of communication. With a shared commitment to equipping our leaders in a way that is equitable, we look forward to engaging in a discussion about the best methods to achieve this.

However, the [original] overture has some assumptions and assertions that are missing key information. We are concerned about the inaccuracy of some of the information in the report, and that the overture as originally written could potentially create additional problems for seminary students training for service in the CRCNA rather than solve them. We are glad that Classis Hamilton has reached out to Calvin Seminary and the Candidacy Committee so that consultation could form a better process in responding to the need in the church and the needs of the students. The following response includes a) important background information to the conversation about classical funding, b) initiatives Calvin Seminary has recently undertaken to begin to address some inequity issues, and c) a response to specific items in the [original] Classis Hamilton overture.

I. Background Information

- a. The account of the history of student funding is incomplete: Formal student funding has in fact been in place for decades, described within Church Order 21. The changes referred to in the [original] Hamilton overture had to do with a consolidation of the Student Fund and the CMLT, not with the creation of expected student fund support.
- b. The [original] Hamilton overture neglected to mention that in 2006 an overture was brought to synod requesting the formation of a denominational student fund (akin to the solution offered in the Classis Hamilton overture). This 2006 overture was strongly rejected. One of the main objections was the loss of relationship between the classis and the student. We believe the wisdom of keeping funding of student close to the students is still highly valued. Plainly, a more local funding model will result in better funding for students. Direct funding from a classis has the additional positive effect of connecting students to local support networks. Submitting such a similar proposal would most likely result in it being rejected again.
- c. The [original] overture of Classis Hamilton does not show an accurate understanding of how Calvin Seminary scholarship support works, and was not formed in consultation with Calvin Seminary. The [original] overture states that *“Any CTS need-based support is determined after other forms of support, including classis assistance have been exhausted. The determination of need by CTS occurs after Canadian students are required to demonstrate to the U.S. government that they have funding arranged for the duration of their program.”* This is inaccurate. Calvin Seminary awards students prior to classis funding decisions are made. Calvin Seminary does not take classical awards into consideration when awarding scholarships. Additionally, determination of need by Calvin Seminary is done prior to the deadline when students are required to demonstrate funding to the U.S. government.

II. Recent Financial Initiatives Calvin Seminary has Taken with Canadian Students

Calvin Seminary is continuously looking for opportunities to learn about and respond to the unique financial challenges that Canadian students may face while attending seminary. The following three recent initiatives are examples:

- a. Calvin Seminary has just approved a grant to help alleviate the Canadian exchange rate burden. All Canadian first level masters students have received a small grant to mitigate the exchange rate burden, which is applied in Spring 2016 and disbursed to both distance and residential students.
- b. This past year, the U.S. Federal government adopted a policy of requiring distance students to pay a \$200 fee each time they enter the U.S. for their week of face to face class each semester. Previously, the fee was an annual fee. Calvin Seminary has issued \$200 travel grants to each Canadian distance student to cover the cost of the second border crossing required to attend face to face intensives.
- c. In recent years, Calvin Seminary has begun using an online payment system that allows Canadian students to get a better Bank Fee Rate when making payments to Calvin Seminary using Canadian dollars.

III. Responses to the Classis Hamilton Overture

- a. Classis Hamilton identifies the problematic timing of how CALVIN SEMINARY funding and Classis Hamilton CMLT funding are awarded relative to one another. However, Calvin Seminary awards scholarships well before classis meet to determine classical funding. Consequently, Calvin Seminary does not consider classical aid when making decisions about Calvin Seminary financial aid. It is the goal of the Scholarship Committee at Calvin Seminary to award students in late March or early April. Students should be able to communicate their awards from Calvin Seminary to their respective classis before any classis meetings in May.
- b. There are governmental expectations and fiduciary responsibilities, along with tax implications, that complicate the administration of the solution proposed by Classis Hamilton [in the original overture]. Any funds administered to students by Calvin Seminary that exceeds the cost of tuition are taxable to students in the U.S. and Canada. At present, Calvin Seminary reports scholarships only to the IRS and CRA. It is Calvin Seminary policy for scholarship levels not to exceed tuition. Therefore, scholarship administered by Calvin Seminary under currently not taxed.
- c. Local congregations can provide critical support for seminary students. Support from a classis and local church can be a powerful way to affirm a student's calling, and to encourage them in their studies. Financial support is one aspect of this. But healthy spiritual and pastoral support from a local classis and congregation that is vested in a student can be a critical part of a student's ministry training journey. If funding is centralized through ministry shares, the student loses a tangible affirmation of their calling from a local congregation and classis. Partial funding from multiple sources establishes a broader support network for students.

In view of these considerations the following motion is offered as a substitute, [by either Calvin Seminary or by Calvin Seminary and Classis Hamilton combined]

That synod appoint a task force to report to a succeeding synod with an address to the concerns raised by Classis Hamilton.

Convening the appropriate representatives of Classis Hamilton, Calvin Seminary, the CRCNA Candidacy Committee to the same table would result in recommendations that would better serve the goals stated in the [original] overture. Representatives would include at least one other representative from another

classis in Canada and the United States. This would allow us to work together with accurate information in order to come up with a better method for us to pursue the same goals of establishing and equitable financial support model that will enable us to equip future CRCNA ministers with a deep and rich Reformed theological education

3. COMMUNICATION #3

Additional Information Regarding the Recommendation from Overture Committee #1 in the Addendum.

Please note that the previously communicated recommendation did not identify the changes that had been made in the Grounds relating to the proposed change of Church Order Article 43. These changes are identified below by means of strikeouts.

Grounds:

1. The above change to Church Order Article 43 supports the foregoing recommendation, since the classes will no longer be required to financially support students enrolled in CTS.
2. The change will provide classes the authority to carry out the financial support ministry for individuals enrolled in seminaries other than CTS on their own, or to work together with another classis or classes, as is already the case in at least one instance.

~~3. That the cost of CTS providing the need-based financial assistance program be included into the CTS ministry shares effective for the 2017 calendar year.~~

~~4. The denominational Candidacy Committee has the student financial support information from the classes so that it will be able to advise synod as to by what amount the ministry share allocation for CTS should be raised.~~

~~5. There should be no negative effect on the CTS budget as a consequence of implementing the proposed change.~~