



Christian
Reformed
Church

Agenda for a Meeting of CLASSIS HAMILTON OF THE CHRISTIAN REFORMED CHURCH

Date: February 23, 2021 **Time:** 9:00 AM – 12:00 PM
Via ZOOM

Host: Calvin Christian Reformed Church, 420 Highway 5 W., Dundas, ON L9H 5E2

Officers of Classis: Chair: Ken Benjamins Vice Chair: ICRC, Hmlt Stated Clerk: Dick Kranendonk	Synodical Deputies: Not Required
Reporter: Calvary CRC - Flamborough	Ballot Committee: N/A: Votes will be via the Zoom polls feature
Credentials Committee: New Street CRC, Burlington Bethel CRC, Waterdown	Overture Committee Maranatha CRC, York Immanuel CRC, Simcoe

CREDENTIALS:

1. The credentials shall be returned to the Stated Clerk using Google Forms, previously sent to the church clerks, no later than February 2, 2021. Please note that there are additional questions on the credentials. Please fill them in where desired.
2. Also note the request for elder and deacon nominees for synodical delegate on the third page of the credentials form. Your assistance is much appreciated.
3. The credential questions and observations as well as communications will be forwarded to the Credentials Committee so that they will be able to advise classis. The Committee will email their report to the Stated Clerk by February 9, 2021. Their report will be emailed by the Stated Clerk to all the delegates in the Agenda Addendum.
4. The Overture Committee is also required to send their report to the stated clerk no later than February 9, 2021 so that it can also be included in the Addendum.

EMAIL ADDRESS:

All communication to the Stated Clerk should go to: clerk@classishamilton.ca.

Dear Church Councils,

Time has been set aside to hear a presentation regarding the Ministry Plan that was developed by an ad hoc committee made up of CIC and CMT members. CMT and CIC ask that Councils review this document since, if approved, it will guide classis as to the ministries in which it will engage going forward. The Appendix to the Plan then will be the guide as to how classis will be involved in funding regional ministries.

On behalf of CMT and CIC,
Gareth Harker
Gillian Bruce

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CLASSIS MEETING DETAILS

9:00 AM OPENING EXERCIZES

OPENING DEVOTIONS

- | | |
|--------------------------------------|--------------------|
| 1. WELCOME AND PRAYER | Gareth Harker |
| 2. DEVOTIONS AND SHARING OF MINISTRY | Calvin CRC, Dundas |
| 3. PRAYER FOR CALVIN CRC, DUNDAS | Vice-Chair |
-

10:00 AM 15 MINUTE REFRESHMENT BREAK

- | | |
|--|-----------------|
| 4. CALL TO ORDER | Ken Benjamins |
| 4.1. Welcome and Announcements | |
| 4.2. Attendance | Dick Kranendonk |
| 4.3. Delegates declare agreement with the Covenant for Officebearers | Ken Benjamins |
| 4.4. Approval of Agenda | |
| 4.5. Declare Classis Properly Constituted | |
|
 | |
| 5. FIRST SYNOD DELEGATE BALLOT | Gillian Bruce |
| <p>The nominees for the four synod delegates will be presented and the first ballot will be taken using the Zoom polling feature. (Additional ballots will be called as needed during the meeting until the required delegates have been elected.)</p> | |

CONSENT AGENDA

6. CMT REPORT (INCLUDING CLASSICAL MINISTRY COMMITTEES) (Appendix #1)
- 6.1. External Reports (Appendix #8):
- RECOMMENDED THAT:** The external agency reports from World Renew, Canadian Ministries, Redeemer University, Diaconal Ministries Canada, and Calvin Theological Seminary be received as information.
- 6.2. Youth Ministry Team: (No written report).
- 6.3. Campus Ministries Committee: (Appendix #1.1)
- 6.4. Home Missions Committee: (Appendix #1.2)
- 6.5. Candidacy Committee: (Appendix #1.3)
- 6.5.1. **RECOMMENDED THAT:** Classis approve the disbursement of \$11,226.48 (as forgivable loans) to support 2 students for the 2021-22 school year, as outlined below. These funds will be taken from the 2021 Candidacy Committee budget but remain consistent with our treatment of all students who have applied for support for the 2020-21 academic year.
- All numbers are in CAD.*
- | Student | Need or Tuition | Policy Eligibility | Recommended Support |
|--|--------------------|--------------------|---------------------|
| Ben Wimmers: 3rd year McMaster Divinity | \$5,360.69 | 50% | \$2,041.61 |
| Peter Krannenberg: 1st year CTS Distance | \$16,077.92 | 75% | \$9,184.87 |
| Total CAD: | | | \$11,226.48 |
- 6.6. Sholom Manor: (No written report)
- 6.7. **RECOMMENDED THAT:** Classis approve the work to date of the Classis Ministries Team including the standing committees in so far as this has

been disclosed in minutes previously distributed to the churches as well as in Appendix #1.

7. MINISTRY STAFF REPORTS

- 7.1. Youth Champion (Appendix #3.1)
- 7.2. McMaster Chaplain Report (Appendix #3.2)

8. CLASSIS INTERIM COMMITTEE

- 8.1. Interim Committee Report (Includes Stated Clerk's report, Appendix #4)
- 8.2. Safe Church Directors' Report (Appendix 4.1)
- 8.3. RECOMMENDED THAT:** Classis approve the work to date of the Interim Committee and of the Stated Clerk in so far as this has been disclosed in minutes previously distributed to the churches and in Appendix #2.

9. MOHAWK CHAPLAIN APPOINTMENT

Anthony Elenbaas

- 9.1. Introduction and Conversation with Melissa Kuipers.
- 9.2. **RECOMMENDED THAT:** Classis ratify Melissa Kuipers' appointment.

10. MINISTRY PLAN PRESENTATION (Appendix #2)

Gareth Harker & Gillian Bruce

- 10.1. Discussion
- 10.2. **RECOMMENDED THAT:** the Ministry Plan be approved.

11. BALLOTING REPORT: Final Vote for Delegates to Synod 2021

- 11.1. **RECOMMENDED THAT:** the ballots be destroyed.

12. OVERTURES (Appendix #6)

Immanuel CRC, Simcoe

- 12.1. Human Sexuality Study Report (Appendix #6.1)
- 12.2. To Strike and Additional Synodical Committee (Appendix #6.2)
- 12.3. Not to Adopt Part of Synod Study Report (Appendix #6.3)

13. CREDENTIALS COMMITTEE REPORT

Bethel CRC

14. COD REPORT

William Koopmans

15. PULPIT SUPPLY PRESENTATION (Appendix #7)

Ben Ponsen

- 15.1. Discussion.
- 15.2. Disposition of the matter.

12:00 PM CLOSING DEVOTIONS

Vice-Chair of Classis

APPENDIX #1 – CLASSIS MINISTRY TEAM REPORT

Classis Hamilton Ministry Team (CMT)

January 12, 2021

Greetings delegates of Classis Hamilton,

As we all continue to adapt to new and changing realities in the midst of the COVID-19 pandemic, and the limitations it places upon our local and regional ministries, the CMT continues to be impacted as well. We have not had the chance to formally meet since our last gathering of Classis Hamilton in October of 2020. However, we have managed to accomplish a few things through email communication.

In our October report, we indicated that Bruce Adema (Bethel, Waterdown) had agreed to be the chair of Classis for 2021. Since that time, Bruce has accepted a call to Bloomfield, Ontario and is no longer able to fulfill that commitment. Thankfully, we are happy to report that Ken Benjamins (Calvin CRC, Dundas) has agreed to take his place. We wish Bruce God's richest blessings in his new pastoral position, and pray for God's guidance and wisdom for Ken as he again faithfully serves our Classis in this capacity.

On December the 8th, the CMT had a joint meeting over Zoom with the Classis Interim Committee (CIC) to discuss a candidate for the Mohawk Chaplaincy role as recommended by the Ad-Hoc hiring committee for this role. With the understanding that all subsequent requirements will have been met, we expect the committee to introduce the candidate at the February meeting of Classis.

Last year at this time, the Ad-Hoc committee for developing a ministry plan for Classis Hamilton presented a draft ministry plan document for Classis review and feedback. The committee has since taken into consideration the feedback from that meeting as well as additional feedback received after the meeting. Pending approval by both the CMT and CIC, we hope to present a final copy of this Ministry Plan to the delegates of Classis Hamilton in February of 2021.

We ask for your continued prayers and support as we seek to navigate our role in serving and leading you as a Classis.

On behalf of the Classis Ministry Team,

Blessings,
Gareth Harker
CMT Chair

CMT Members: Gillian Bruce (CIC Liaison), John Bijl (Youth / Meadowlands Fellowship), Tara Vreugdenhil (Mount Hope), John Demik (Mount Hope), and Dick Kranendonk (Clerk of Classis - *ex officio*)

APPENDIX #1.1 – CAMPUS MINISTRY REPORT

January 12, 2021 – Campus Ministry Committee Report to February Classis

A strange year, but not a slower year in Campus ministry land. Students have been impacted in significant ways as both McMaster and Mohawk have moved almost completely online. Students feel the pressure and stress of online learning, as do professors. It's been tough on everyone.

So, our campus ministries have continued to minister to students, faculty, and staff, providing a critical service for the well being of the campus communities we're a part of. Tending to spiritual needs and faith conversations, but also to the more basic needs for community and a place to unwind and dive deep.

Structurally, that has happened through a joint online ministry for McMaster and Mohawk. That was a COVID-pivot that made sense to best steward the resources we've been entrusted with. However, once our Mohawk ministry gets underway (more on that below), we will split these two ministries back apart. We give thanks for Dr. Fallon's good work and care in making these and so many other adjustments: continuing in care for students, securing excellent speakers (who can attend more easily from afar via Zoom!), and mentoring future leaders in the church. It has been a challenge to be sure, but Dr. Fallon has continued to serve faithfully and well in a time of deep need within our campus communities. Thank you, Michael!

While there have been challenges, there have also been opportunities.

Namely, through the Fall of this past year, the decision of Classis to create "*a distinct campus ministry at Mohawk College, staffed with a half-time chaplain so as to continue the good pilot work done there by Dr. Fallon over the last decade*" has been worked through to completion!

A hiring team was created by the CIC and CMT to do the work of searching for and recommending a candidate, which they did from a healthy pool of well-qualified candidates. The CIC and CMT together moved to hire that person, who now falls back under the oversight of the Campus Ministry Committee. Therefore...

We are honoured to introduce to this meeting of Classis Hamilton our newly hired chaplain for Mohawk College: Melissa Kuipers!

Melissa has two Bachelors degrees (Arts & Education) and a Master of Arts in English (Creative Writing). You may know her name already from her articles in the *Christian Courier* and the *Banner*. She's had experience within a few CRC campus ministries (U of T; Western) as a student and as an Assistant Chaplain, has served in various ministry positions within churches in the areas of youth, children, and family ministries, and she has taught at both the high school and University levels, most recently at Redeemer University. Her own journey continues to draw her into places of ministry with young people.

We are excited to recommend Melissa to you and welcome her to this new role, which she has been serving in on our behalf now since the beginning of January! Welcome Melissa!

We pray that Melissa's work and ministry among us and the young people of our area might bring a blessing. Especially in these times like these when that investment of care and support for our young people is needed!

Other work of the committee also continues: a mandate review to wisely govern two ministries on your behalf is underway, safe campus policies are being written, and advancement work is being pursued with an eye to the sustainability and flourishing of these significant ministries!

We are thankful to Classis for seeing and responding to the ministry needs & opportunities at both McMaster and Mohawk, and throwing behind each of these your prayers, support, and resources! This truly is your ministry, but as your trustees of this good work, we say: thank you!

Please join us in giving thanks to God for His faithful presence and work at McMaster and Mohawk, even in such a challenging season! And, please continue to pray for Dr. Fallon and the ministry at McMaster and Melissa with the ministry at Mohawk. Pray for students, faculty, and staff as well. May they all come to see and know the light and life of Jesus Christ in these dark and challenging times.

On behalf of the Campus Ministry Committee,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Anthony Elenbaas", written in a cursive style.

Anthony Elenbaas, Chair

APPENDIX #1.2 – HOME MISSIONS COMMITTEE

Report from the Classis Hamilton Home Missions Committee – Jan 12, 2021

Thank you all for your support. It has been a challenge to further our church planting goals during the pandemic. We are all in time of waiting for vaccine distribution and to see what the new normal will be post-pandemic. In the meantime, we have decided to pray on a monthly basis with all who have a heart for church planting in the Classis via Zoom. These have been very encouraging times and we are thankful to those who have attended. We meet the third Thursday of every month at 8pm and welcome more participation. For more information, please contact Marian Lensink at mlensink@crcna.org.

One of our next tasks as a committee is to propose a budget for a future church plant. We are thankful for the help we have received from Beth Fellingner (Resonate Eastern Canada Regional Leader) and John Bouwers (Church Plant Institute)

Although we are focused on starting a new church plant, we continue to award missional grants for churches with innovative projects. Please send your project grant proposals to me at gsinclair@crcna.org.

As the current chair who is finishing a second term in May, I am mindful that we will need to fill a number of spots on this committee in the coming months. I would ask that you search your hearts when the call comes for nominations. We are in a good position financially to see a church plant start in 2022. We will continue to pray with that goal in mind.

Greg Sinclair (chair)

(Marcia Mantel, Jackie Bootsma, Ron VandenBrink, Marian Lensink)

Classis Hamilton Candidacy Committee Report to Classis Hamilton | February 2021

Our primary work as a committee continues to be supporting students from our Classis who are preparing for ministry within the CRCNA. This support involves personal visits, phone calls & emails, and direct mentoring and discerning with some of the students. For students in the 2-year, non-residential EPMC program, we also meet with them during their program to talk about their sense of calling, the development of their pastoral identity, and their understanding of Reformed theology. After each of these meetings, we provide a written report to the CRCNA Candidacy Office as they coordinate the process for students seeking to be approved as candidates for ordained ministry by Synod.

We are delighted to report that several students with whom we have been walking continue to work toward graduation and candidacy. We are anticipating new undergraduate students who have already indicated to CHCC members their interest and calling toward graduate studies and ordained ministry in the CRCNA after completing their University work. We are prayerful for others too who might be considering potential paths towards ministry as well. If you as pastors or other office bearers know of people in your congregation who are considering ministry, please let us know; this information helps us to plan ahead financially and participate in their discernment process.

Highlight of recent activity (for information):

Over the past several months, our committee has discussed our mandate, the various documents that guide our actions, and the way we disburse money. Here is a summary of key changes we are making to help us fulfill our mandate more effectively and efficiently.

1. Our task is to “support.” We are changing our documentation to clarify that our support comes in two ways: financial loans (forgivable) and encouragement.
2. We offer loans to students in MDiv or EPMC programs. We have changed our loan agreement to clarify that the loan forgiveness program (across five years of ordained ministry in the CRC) is applicable both for those who are ordained as Minister of the Word and for those who become Commissioned Pastors according to Church Order Article 24a and b (solo pastors). All others are asked to repay their loans.
3. We are creating a form by which those who have benefited from our loans can provide a short progress report until their loans are completely forgiven or repaid.
4. Our task is to factor financial need into our disbursement of funds. To assist us with the thorny question of “need,” we have added one question to the application form, simply: “how much do you need?” Accordingly, we have also adjusted our procedure to clarify that we will disburse funds according to need up to a limit of a certain percentage of tuition (100% for Calvin Seminary students; 75% for Distance Calvin students; 50% for students enrolled at other Classis-approved schools).

For action:

The CHCC recommends that Classis approve the disbursement of \$11,226.48 (as forgivable loans) to support 2 students for the 2021-22 school year, as outlined below. These funds will be taken from the 2021 Candidacy Committee budget but remain consistent with our treatment of all students who have applied for support for the 2020-21 academic year.

All numbers are in CAD.

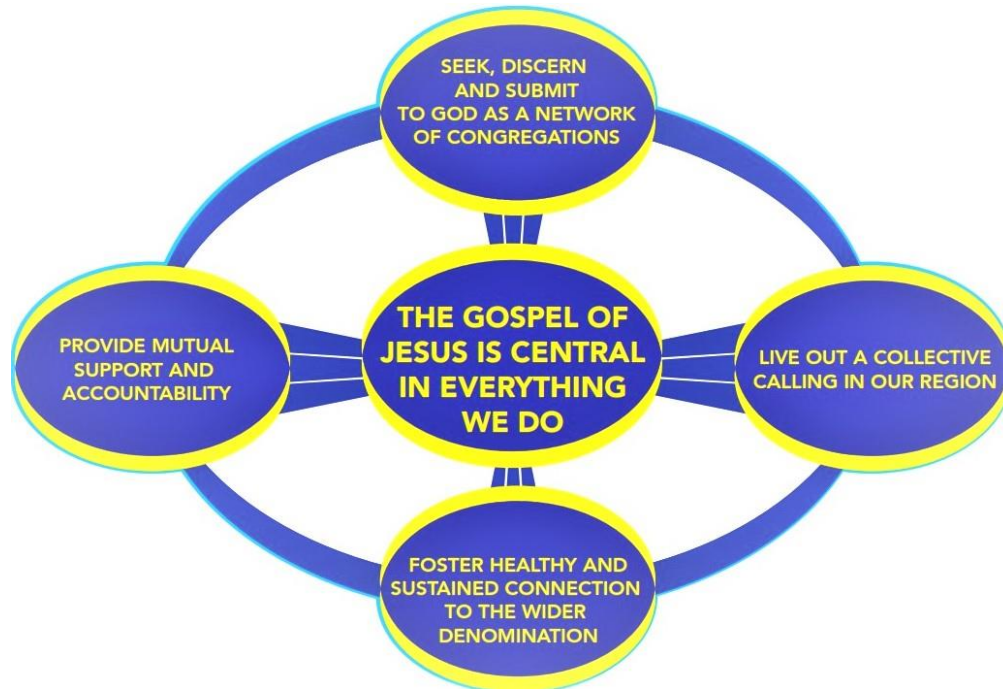
Student	Need or Tuition	Eligible re Policy	Recommended Support ¹
Ben Wimmers²: 3rd year McMaster Divinity	\$5,360.69	50%	\$2,041.61
Peter Krannenberg: 1st year CTS Distance	\$16,077.92	75%	\$9,184.87
Total CAD:			\$11,226.48

¹ The recommended support takes into account the same formula that we used to distribute funds to students last May. To stay within our budget we offered 67% of policy eligibility to each student.

² Although we have already offered support to Ben for the 2020-21 academic year, he has taken on more EPMC courses than originally anticipated, increasing his financial need.

APPENDIX #2 – MINISTRY PLAN

Classis Hamilton Ministry Plan Mission, Vision, Values, and Ministries



OUR MISSION

Under the Lordship of Jesus Christ, the mission of Classis Hamilton is:

1. To seek, discern, and submit to God as a network of congregations;
2. To provide mutual support and accountability;
3. To live out a collective calling within our region; and
4. To be a healthy and sustained connection to the wider denomination.

OUR VISION

A healthy network of Christian Reformed churches supporting each other and collaborating in gospel ministry.

OUR VALUES

1. **Gospel centred ministry** – classis exists to demonstrate the good news of salvation in Jesus Christ. All classis sponsored ministries will reflect this core value.
2. **Humble submission** – classis is called to humbly submit to Christ and to other member churches. In all our activities, we will devote ourselves to scripture and prayer, seek wisdom and discernment in cooperation, and submit to one another out of love and grace.
3. **Mutual encouragement** – our ministries will both extend the work of the local church through sharing resources and reinforce/undergird the work of the local church through mutual support and accountability.
4. **Supportive structures** – ministries should be well supported by policies and accountable governing bodies. We will adhere to all legal requirements and denominational church order, and our committees will submit all their work to classis for approval.
5. **Pursuit of excellence** - effectiveness of ministries will be measured through clearly defined outcome objectives.

OUR MISSION LIVED OUT

Each ministry and activity of Classis Hamilton must fit within one of the four foci of the Mission Statement. These ministries fall into one of two categories: Mandated and Covenanted.

1. **Mandated Ministries** – Activities necessary to our practices as a Classis within the Christian Reformed Church of North America. These activities are determined by Church Order and decisions of Synod.
2. **Covenanted Ministries** – Where we agree together as a network of churches to create and support a regional ministry that benefits the greater Hamilton area. Covenanted ministries will develop a plan to become self-sustaining in order to create space for future ministry opportunities.

APPENDIX

Classis Hamilton Ministry Funding and Evaluation

OUR FUNDING OF MINISTRIES

1. Mandated ministries will receive 100% funding, subject to periodic evaluation regarding their continued usefulness and effectiveness to qualify for continued funding as determined by the CIC.
2. Covenanted ministries will receive classis funding determined and agreed upon by classis. Ministries will be urged to develop self-sustaining funding models.

OUR EVALUATION PROCESS

There are two evaluation processes: (1) to determine original support or (2) to determine continued support.

Original Support

Classis will consider a sponsorship proposal if it substantially meets the following criteria. When the proposed ministry:

1. lives out a collective calling within our region.
 - Through local church support and mutual accountability.
2. is gospel centred and supports the ministries of the local church.
 - Word and deed ministry must both be pursued.
3. has a clearly defined supervision and accountability structures.
 - Primary consideration will be given to accountability to the sponsoring local church(es).
 - Classis committees may give support to the ministry of the local church(es).
4. provides evidence of clearly defined outcome objectives.
 - Examples of outcomes (to consider among others) – to be developed by each ministry for proposed projects:
 - The minimum number of active ministry participants and ideal target to be involved with this ministry.
 - Description of networking relationship with other churches and organizations.
 - Number of persons impacted who became followers of Jesus Christ and active participants in a local church, etc.
 - Evidence of active participants regularly contribute their time (# of volunteer hours), and financial contributions (% of total ministry budget), leadership skill development (# of people trained), etc.
5. provides a long-term funding model that demonstrates a diminishing need for financial support from classis, achieving complete financial independence from classis within three years, wherever possible.
 - Evidence must be provided as to how the ministry proposes to achieve financial self-sustainability.
 - A responsible estimate must be provided to indicate the length of time it will take to achieve financial self-sustainability for the ministry.

- If financial self-sustainability will not be possible in a three-year time frame, provide compelling reasons why classis should commence sponsoring the ministry.
6. provides a risk assessment profile for the ministry and paid or unpaid staff who carry out the ministry, particularly as it relates to harassment and abuse. This is to be done in consultation with the Classis Hamilton Safe Church Director.

Continued Support

1. Every ministry financially supported by Classis Hamilton shall provide:
 - A detailed annual report to classis demonstrating:
 - How the ministry continues to adhere to the mission, vision and values of Classis Hamilton.
 - How progress toward each of the outcome goals have been measured and include achievements to date.
 - The progress that has been made to secure financial support from individuals, corporations, organizations and churches both within and outside of classis.
 - A detailed budget outlining all expenditures for the coming year as well as the percentage of financial support expected from Classis Hamilton.
 - A detailed statement as to how Classis Hamilton can support the ministry to achieve its outcome objectives.
2. provides a risk assessment profile for the ministry and paid or unpaid staff who carry out the ministry, particularly as it relates to harassment and abuse. This is to be done in consultation with the Classis Hamilton Safe Church Director.

APPENDIX #3 – STAFF REPORTS

APPENDIX #3.1 – CLASSIS YOUTH CHAMPION REPORT

The Classis Hamilton Youth Ministry Team (CHYMT): Pastor Ben Ponsen (York CRC), Ryan Flokstra (Immanuel CRC), Kennan Benjamins (Calvin CRC) and the Classis Champion, John Bijl (Meadowlands Fellowship CRC) has been meeting somewhat regularly to discuss/plan various events happening within or for the classis.

It has been an interesting 8 or 9 months since my last report when we were just heading into our new reality. We have had to cancel all in person events that classic Hamilton youth may have attended such as the fall retreat, leadership studio, SERVE summer mission trips, and individual youth group retreats.

Moving to an online youth ministry has been a tough go for most of the youth ministries in classis Hamilton and within the denomination. A few succeeded for a while and a few didn't have the volunteer resources to go on line. It was exhausting for everyone and a great learning curve on how best to minister to our youth.

In march I held the first zoom classis youth leader meeting. It was a great time to touch base with some of the classis youth leaders. In these meetings the youth leaders were able to share their frustrations, joys and discoveries. We found out pretty quickly that youth, for the most part, didn't want to be online. Being a highly relational person myself, I understood why. The youth, like most of us, craved to have personal contact. I encouraged youth leaders to start an intentional mentoring program. Meeting youth one on one for coffee and a check in (safe church and health protocols are always in place). I put my own advice to work with the youth at my own church and put together "survival kits" filled with treats and small games. This small gesture gave me a reason to stop by the youth's homes and do an in-person check-in for each of them. This season was and is still a great opportunity for churches to think outside the box, while being in the box.

I continue to hold monthly-ish meetings with youth leaders on Zoom or Google meets (depending on which service was working at that moment) and encourage and share resources that I have found on line. Researching online resources such as RightNow Media, Orange, Grow and other organizations that are involved with youth ministries. I have also encouraged the youth leaders to engage parents of the youth and to keep in touch with them. Parents of young families are finding it difficult to minister to their own children as well as home school and work from home.

These times are definitely trying for everyone and I ask that you, the classis leaders, continue to support your youth and their leaders, touch base with them personally if restrictions allow it and pray.

A LAST REQUEST:

The CHYMT is looking for a few more members to join our team. If you or someone you feel has a real heart for youth ministry please considering this team.

John Bijl,
Classis Hamilton Youth Champion

APPENDIX #3.2 – McMASTER CHAPLAIN



McMaster University
Chaplaincy Centre
MUSC 231
McMaster University
1280 Main St. West
Hamilton, ON L8S 4S4



January 2020 Dear

Representatives of Classis Hamilton

As you can imagine, our Fall Semester was different this year! How different? I found it to be the most unusual semester I have encountered as a Chaplain. The pandemic and its repercussions: working online; continuous zoom classes; student, faculty, and staff isolation; mental health concerns; student fatigue; had us shifting, if not changing, our priorities.

What do I mean by that? One of our top priorities is simply giving students the support they need to be successful in their studies, graduate from their programs and find careers in their chosen fields. That support is dependant on the student's individual needs and as such, is manifested differently. It maybe academic support, mental health support, or emotional/worldview support. Typically, it involves meeting with students one on one. Listening to the challenges they are encountering in their programs and strategizing with them or offering advice when it is sought.

This year however, while we are running our key programs as close to 'normal' as possible, we, very intentionally, have a more discernable mental health emphasis running through our ministry. It is perhaps most visible in our speaker series. For example, at All Things/ Solid Rock, Dr. Derek Schuurman opened the year for us with a discussion on the challenge of living online. Dr. Nathan Cooper picked this up by addressed how to deal with the stress that can come from the sudden isolation that students were feeling. Even our faculty advisor, Dr Aaron Schat shared some strategies he was developing about how to balance working remotely while maintaining connections.

Another way we have tried to address the isolation students are encountering is by starting what we are calling the 'All Thing's Cafe'. Our Cafe' It is not a program like our other programs. The Café' is a casual zoom drop in, where students can take a coffee break with some of their peers.

We have successfully moved our three main programs online. They are our merged 'All Things/ Solid Rock' Fellowship, our men's group, 'Fully Alive,' and our women's group 'Revive Again.' Two things came up at our end of term student review. One, the students felt that our speakers were excellent and that their Christian perspective shone through. And second, they felt that the topics we discussed were very timely and relevant.

It is clear to us, that even during this pandemic and the restrictions that do not allow us to meet in person, we are still able to create places and spaces to have the important discussions, to build relationships and to testify to the Kingdom.

Michael

Dr. Michael D. Fallon
fallonm@mcmaster.ca / 289-880-6134

APPENDIX #4 – CIC AND STATED CLERK'S REPORT

Following is a list of the significant items of interest from the CIC since the last Classis meeting other than those that are already included in the classis agenda:

1. Safe Church: The Safe Church Directors have been active as reported in more detail in Appendix #2.1 below.
2. Oversight Committees: CIC has continued to monitor the progress being made by the various oversight committees that classis previously appointed. However, due to COVID, progress has been slower than would normally be expected.
3. McMaster Chaplain Job Description: CIC has worked with the Campus Ministries Committee to revise the McMaster Chaplain's job description now that the Mohawk ministry no longer is his responsibility. The final job description was approved and was previously circulated to the churches.
4. Mohawk Chaplain Appointment: CIC offered an employment contract to Melissa Kuipers to serve as Mohawk Chaplain, subject to a number of conditions being met during the probationary period. One of those conditions will be carried out at this classis meeting by the delegates having a conversation with Melissa and by ratifying her appointment.
5. New Stated Clerk: No applications for a new Stated Clerk of classis have been received to date. CIC requests its local churches to recommend any of its members who are either retired or semi-retired and who have the gifts of administration to Gillian Bruce so that they can be contacted and be informed of what is involved.
6. New Chair of Classis: Due to the resignation of Bruce Adema and Chair of Classis and the need to have a new Chair of Classis in place prior to the actual meeting of classis for various reasons, including technical, CIC resolved to appoint Ken Benjamins as the Chair of Classis until May 31, 2021.
7. Stated Clerk's Communications: The stated clerk continues to receive and send many communications from and to many parties: too numerous to mention. These communications often are in the nature of comments or advice relating to matters arising in local churches. Where the information or commentary is considered sensitive, it is shared with the CIC before it is sent out. When there is clear Church Order or synodical support for commentary, it is sent out but always available to the CIC.

Dick L. Kranendonk – Stated Clerk,
clerk@lassishamilton.ca

Memorandum

To: Classis Hamilton
From: Judy Cook and Gina Taylor, Safe Church Co Directors Classis Hamilton
Re: Classis Hamilton Safe Church Update

We are pleased to provide a brief update on Safe Church activities in Classis Hamilton.

We have been in contact with Safe Church representatives in all member churches and are pleased to report that all churches have an active Safe Church policy in place. All policies have been provided to us and in some churches we have assisted with amendments and answered questions as presented. As a reminder, our email is safechurch@classishamilton.ca and we are available to meet with you (virtually at this time) or consult by telephone as needed.

We meet monthly with CRCNA Safe Church representatives and also meet monthly via Zoom with Classis Safe Church representatives across Canada and the United States. These meetings are very helpful in information sharing and providing best practice information.

We have been working on a Classis Safe Church policy, specifically focusing on Classis supervised ministries – the Classis Youth Committee and the Classis Chaplaincy ministries at McMaster and Mohawk. To that end, we have had several Canada wide meetings with various chaplaincy ministries along with Resonate Mission personnel who provide operating grants for many of same.

We continue to acquire individual church abuse response liability coverage certificates and assisting some churches with applications for same.

Judy has also authored a training document entitled “Power Differential and Boundary Setting” which comes complete with discussion questions. We have provided this document to various churches and encourage anyone wishing a copy to email us at safechurch@classishamilton.ca . This training would be useful with your Councils as well as ministry staff and pastors.

We have also provided information specific to electronic ministries and safe church for use during these COVID times. Again, please email us for your copy if we’ve missed connecting with your church.

Judy Cook and Gina Taylor
6 January 2021

APPENDIX #5 – DELEGATE, FUNCTIONARY AND COMMITTEE NOMINATIONS

Nominations for additional elder and deacon delegates to Synod 2021 will be accepted as part of the credentials up to and including February 2, 2021.

History of Synod Delegates:

YEAR	MINISTERS	ELDER/DEACON
2020	Synod not held	Synod not held
2019	William Koopmans Gareth Harker	Darrel Ouwehand Marcia Hosmar
2018	Joel Bootsma Anthony Elenbaas	Mark Vandervliet John Dekker
2017	Kenneth F. Benjamins Ed Visser	Judy Gook/Elder Gina Taylor/Deacon
2016	Chris Schoon Andrew Zomerman	Gary Sytsma/ Elder Gina Taylor/ Deacon
2015	Rita Klein-Geltink Henry P. Kranenburg	Martin W. Tigchelaar Fred Reitsma
2014	M. Jeffery Klingenberg Kenneth F. Benjamins	Adrian Guldemon Andy Miedema
2013	Kevin P. DeRaaf Henry P. Kranenburg	Jacob Ellens George Elzinga
2012	Paul Vanden Brink Kenneth F. Benjamins	Mark Vandervliet Henry Brouwer

Nominees for Synod 2020 Delegates:

Ministers:

Not able to go – *Everett Vander Horst, Jeff Vandermeer, Willemina Zwart, Joel Bootsma, Anthony Elenbaas and Hayden Regeling.*

Able and willing to go:

William Koopmans – Pastor at Hope CRC, Brantford. “He currently is a member of the Classis Hamilton Interim Committee, chair of the Ecumenical and Interfaith Relations Committee of the CRCNA, and the Classis Hamilton representative on the Canada Corp and the Council of Delegates. He was delegated to attend Synod 2020, which was cancelled due to Covid-19.”

Willem de Vries – Pastor at Ebenezer CRC, Jarvis desires to be delegated to Synod 2021. “I am husband to Jennifer and father to 5 great kids. In 2019, I volunteered to be a delegate at both the 2020 and 2021 Synods. As a fairly new pastor, I would relish the experience that being a delegate at Synod would provide, as well as the opportunity to hear and have a voice on important matters pertaining to the CRCNA.”

Ken Benjamins – Pastor at Calvin CRC, Dundas. “I have been in ordained ministry since 1992. I am currently in my fourth church at Calvin CRC. I have served previously in Wyoming (Ont), Ebenezer Jarvis, and Hope CRC of Brantford. I have served several terms in the CIC, CMT, and as a church visitor. I have served at synod multiple times.”

Gareth Harker – Pastor at Calvary CRC, Flamborough. “I have been an ordained pastor in the CRC since 2016. I was a minister delegate to Synod 2019 for Classis Hamilton. I currently serve as the chair of the Classis Ministry Team in Classis Hamilton.”

Michael Bootsma – Pastor at Immanuel CRC. Hamilton. “I have served two previous congregations: Blenheim and Frankford (both in Ontario). My wife and I have 4 children, all in their 20s. I have served on various Classis committees and teams and as reporter for a Synodical advisory committee. I was called to Immanuel in 2019 as Pastor of Outreach and Pastoral Care.”

Benjamin Ponsen – Pastor at Maranatha CRC, York. He was delegated to attend Synod 2020, which was cancelled due to Covid-19. “I have been married to my beautiful wife, Lori for the past 30 years. We are blessed with three daughters and one son-in-law. I have been the pastor at Maranatha CRC of York for 4 years. In Classis Hamilton I have served for the past 3 years on the Class Hamilton Youth Ministry Team and began serving on the Classical Interim Committee this last fall.”

Cara DeHaan – Pastor of Faith CRC, Burlington. “I was ordained as Minister of the Word in September 2019 at Faith Church in Burlington. My passions as pastor include listening, praying, encouraging, worshiping, learning, growing community, and sharing the good news. I serve on the classis Candidacy Committee and the denomination's Global Missions Ministry Committee. I have been married to Dave, a software developer, for almost 22 years; our three children attend Trinity Christian and HD Christian.”

Elders willing to go:

Connie Bijl – Elder at Meadowlands Fellowship CRC, Ancaster. “Lifelong member of CRC, also served as a Deacon. Continuing member of our church's Visual Arts Team, with a long commitment to the youth of our congregation. I am 30 years married with a married daughter. My career began in the Fashion Industry and continues in horticulture where I have been president of an industry board. I am a horticultural and floral design judge and competitor.”

Ken Tigchelaar – Elder at Meadowlands Fellowship CRC, Ancaster. “I have been a member of Meadowlands Fellowship CRC since 1989 and have been privileged to serve as Cadet counselor, young adults leader, and CAP money coach. I am currently approaching the end of my second term as elder, both times as chair of Council. I'm retired and have been exploring my next career. I have been feeling a call to focus on poverty issues and have been doing that by volunteering and preparing for a career shift that will include developing expertise in affordable housing. I have been exploring my next career. I have been feeling a call to focus on poverty issues and have been doing that by volunteering and preparing for a career shift that will include developing expertise in affordable housing.”

Deacons willing to go:

Marcia Hosmar – Deacon at Meadowlands Fellowship CRC, Ancaster and desires to be delegated to Synod 2021. “I have been a deacon for the last 4.5 years and was privileged to be a delegate for Synod 2019. Enjoy serving in capacities of outreach and community service and hospitality and passionate about helping others.”

APPENDIX #6 – OVERTURES

APPENDIX #6.1 – TO DELAY HUMAN SEXUALITY STUDY REPORT

Overture 1: To overture Synod 2021 to delay consideration of the final report of the “Committee to Articulate a Foundation-laying Biblical Theology of Human Sexuality” for a year (or until a full in-person synod can be held), to allow councils and congregations to read, study, reflect on, and possibly respond to that report during that time, and thus to assist a full in-person synod (when one can safely be held) in responding to and voting on this report.

Background: The final report of the “Committee to Articulate a Foundation-laying Biblical Theology of Human Sexuality” has been received. In early November 2020, it was distributed to the councils and congregations of the Christian Reformed Church in North America for reading, review, and consideration. The report is slated to appear on the Agenda for Synod 2021, where it is to be discussed and voted on.

The report is 175 pages in length. It is academically rigorous and wide-ranging, dealing with many questions which have been raised in contemporary society and in today’s churches. Such a report needs to be carefully read and discussed within the denomination, so that responses to or overtures about the report can be prepared and submitted for the consideration of the synod at which voting on the report will take place. This has hardly been possible in the current situation.

The report was released at the beginning of November 2020. Any responses to or overtures about the report have to be developed and written (after careful reading and reflection), then processed through church councils and classes, and then submitted for the synod agenda by March 15, 2021. This left, at most, ten weeks for reading the report and preparing responses or overtures to be prepared for and responded to at council meetings (in order to meet deadlines for agendas for classis meetings). This is not enough time to do such important work well.

To appreciate the challenge of dealing with this report in a constricted timespan, it is helpful to compare the length of this complex, multi-faceted report with two related synodical reports which are background to it. The report of the 1973 Study Committee on Homosexuality was 25 pages. The 1980 Study Committee on Divorce and Remarriage was 20 pages. The report of the Committee to Articulate a Foundation-laying Biblical Theology of Human Sexuality is 7 times as long as the 1973 report and almost 9 times as long as the 1980 report.

Our concern squares with the points emphasized in the “Challenging Conversations Toolkit” prepared, with the blessing of the study committee, by Pastor Church Resources (PCR). In the “Frequently Asked Questions” information about that toolkit, PCR urges two points: “(1) A good process is rarely fast,” and “(2) A good process is always deliberate.” PCR recognizes this is true for congregations. It is surely no less true for the denomination as a whole. In that regard, it is important to recognize that the trainings for facilitators for these “challenging conversations” did not even begin until mid-December 2020. By the time the trainings were to be completed, it would prove impossible to hold such conversations within congregations, complete those conversations, and then have time left to produce responses or overtures on this report.

Trying to get such processes going on a report of this length and depth during the span of ten weeks would have been challenging under any circumstances. To try to do so in the midst of the current pandemic, with all its restrictions and limitations, increased that difficulty dramatically. Managing all

this while finding ways not to infringe on churches' and families' celebrations of the birth of Christ and the coming of the New Year, specifically during these undeniably tense times brought on by the pandemic and its varied impacts on individuals, families, and churches, has raised the difficulty entailed even higher. It would be pastorally unwise and insensitive to insist that such meetings as would have been necessary to read, study, and respond to this report must have taken place in the short time necessary to meet these deadlines.

Grounds:

- 1 The study committee had four years to conduct its research, study, and writing. It is surely reasonable to allow the councils, congregations, and denomination one year to read, reflect on, and possibly respond to that lengthy and detailed report for the benefit of synod.
- 2 The Pastor Church Resources' "Challenging Conversations Toolkit," prepared with the blessing of the study committee, acknowledges that this report needs to be carefully considered. But as the "Frequently Asked Questions" information for that toolkit indicates, "(1) A good process is rarely fast," and "(2) A good process is always deliberate." We need a good process for dealing with this weighty report appropriately: the denomination needs more time to do this reading and discussion with due deliberation. Voting on this report at Synod 2021 will not allow for a good process.
- 3 The extraordinary circumstances of all this coming during a pandemic, in which restrictions limit interpersonal contact and meetings (in many places in North America), point to the need for flexibility in what are otherwise our procedural patterns for study committee report submissions and their consideration at the next synod.
- 4 Given the reality of an ongoing pandemic, Synod 2021 might not be held and (as happened in 2020) the Council of Delegates might have to handle urgent synodical matters. The significance of this report and its implications warrant having its consideration be delayed until a full in-person synod can be held.

Council of Meadowlands Fellowship CRC, Ancaster, Ontario

APPENDIX #6.2 – TO STRIKE AN ADDITIONAL SYNODICAL COMMITTEE

Overture 2: To overture Synod 2021

- (1) to table the report of the Committee to Articulate a Foundation-laying Biblical Theology of Human Sexuality, with expression of appreciation to the committee for its service; and**
- (2) to strike a committee to meet with and interview couples involved in long-term, monogamous, same-sex marriages/relationships, and to report to synod what the committee has found out about such couples' love for and commitment to each other, to Christ, and to the church, and to serve synod with advice about how the CRCNA should relate to such couples; and**
- (3) to consider both reports together at a subsequent Synod.**

1. Appreciation:

The Committee to Articulate a Foundation-laying Biblical Theology of Human Sexuality [hereafter, “the committee”] has produced its report and submitted it to Synod 2021. The committee conducted its work over a four-year period (2016–2020) and produced valuable material for the Christian Reformed Church in North America [hereafter, CRCNA] to consider and use as members and congregations of the CRCNA respond to issues of sexuality in the present day. The committee’s treatment on pornography (pp. 29–59) has enriched the resources available to the CRCNA for dealing with a challenge that has dramatically increased since the 1973 report of the Committee to Study Homosexuality (Report 42, Committee to Study Homosexuality, *Synod 1973: Supplement*, pp. 609–633 [hereafter, “the 1973 report”]). Further, the committee’s treatments of premarital sex, extra-marital sex, adultery, and polyamory have given much helpful direction to the CRCNA as its members and churches face these issues. In addition, the committee’s detailed proposals for pastoral care offer options for responding to various issues regarding sexuality (pp. 50–59, 82–92, 114–127), resources not offered in the 1973 report. Moreover, the two appendices (pp. 149–175) relate scientific information not otherwise readily available to interested CRCNA readers about issues dealt with in the committee’s report. For all this, and the efforts the committee has collectively poured into their work, the CRCNA can be grateful to the committee.

2. Concerns:

When the committee was set up by Synod 2016, its members were required to “adhere to the CRC’s biblical view on marriage and same-sex relationships” (*Acts of Synod 2016*, p. 926), pointing to the 1973 report.

In its more expansive treatment of biblical texts, the committee has adhered to—indeed, it has elaborated and laid out more extensively—the particular approach followed in dealing with those texts in the 1973 report. Moreover, the committee has unquestionably adhered to the 1973 report in allowing that homosexuality as a condition is in itself not sinful, but asserting that any same-sex sexual activity (what the 1973 report identifies as “homosexualism”) is sinful. However, the committee has not consistently adhered to the 1973 report: indeed, it has forthrightly repudiated a significant portion of the 1973 report (“*A theological-ethical approach*” [pp. 623–631]). The committee does so *without*

acknowledging that it is thus rejecting a part of the 1973 report to which the committee was obliged to adhere.

The 1973 report urged, “the Christian homosexual ought to seek in whatever ways are open to him the healing of his disorder” (pp. 626–627)—that is, to avail himself of ways to overcome his homosexuality. Put more forcefully, the 1973 report went on to declare that such a person “*must make use of ... the therapy available to him from scientific sources*” (p. 627 [emphasis added]). The 1973 report continued in this vein, asserting, “Of course, the first responsibility for the homosexual is to *exhaust the possibility of sexual reorientation* through all available means” (p. 627 [emphases added]). Later, under the 1973 report’s section “Pastoral Advice” (pp. 631–633), the 1973 report maintained, “Homosexuals, especially in their earlier years, *should be encouraged to seek such help as may effect their sexual reorientation*” (p. 632 [emphases added]).

Given these straightforward directives of the 1973 report, it is striking that when the committee offers its own counsel regarding “Homosexuality: Pastoral Care” (pp. 114–127) it explicitly repudiates such “therapies” and “helps” as “False expectations” (p. 115), pointing out that such expectations are “not just wrong but can be very harmful” (p. 115). The supposed “conversion therapies” (as these “ex-gay” endeavors came to be called) had been welcomed and encouraged as offering the sort of “sexual reorientation” urged in the 1973 report. However, in the frank assessment of the committee, “Much of the church embraced and pushed *this fallacious notion* of change, *wounding countless vulnerable children* of the church” (p. 115 [emphases added]).

The purpose of pointing this out is not to fault the committee. Indeed, recognizing the harshly negative psychological assessments of such “sexual reorientation” therapies and listening to the pained witness of those who have been subjected to them show openness to take a starkly different path than that explicitly laid out in the 1973 report. It is regrettable, though, that the committee did not forthrightly acknowledge that it had done so.

The committee came to this opposing assessment, in part, by learning about the actual experience of those who had been subjected to and, too often, negatively impacted by these supposed conversion therapies. Regrettably, the committee did not follow this same pattern of listening to those with actual experience in committed, long-term, same-sex marriages or partnerships. While this would have stepped to the edge of adhering to the 1973 report in its assessment of same-sex relationships, it would be no more a departure than considering and departing from the 1973 report’s *theological-ethical approach*, with its directives in favor of conversion therapy.

This is, perhaps, the most disappointing aspect of the committee’s report. Many CRCNA members know people—brothers or sisters in Christ—who are in committed, long-term, monogamous same-sex marriages or partnerships; some of these same-sex couples attend services at or are members of CRCNA congregations. At the least, many CRCNA members, across the spectrum of sexual orientations, hoped the committee would engage in some responsible consideration, even within the bounds of the 1973 report, of such same-sex relationships.

The committee’s report recognizes this as a significant question, stating (under *Current Context*, pp. 6–7): “many of us have questions about sexuality or about the church’s response to changing realities,” going on to offer, as the next to last of these questions, “The gay couples I know seem happier than

most of the straight couples I know, so how can their love not be from God?" (p. 7). Even so, the report does not indicate that the committee interviewed even one such couple.

What the committee pointed out in its treatment of the Wisdom literature of the Bible would certainly point in the direction of doing so. There, the committee noted (p. 23), "Love is dangerous because it is powerful. When it is the real thing, its value is without parallel: 'For love is as strong as death, its jealousy unyielding as the grave. It burns like blazing fire, like a mighty flame. Many waters cannot quench love; rivers cannot sweep it away. If one were to give all the wealth of one's house for love, it would be utterly scorned'" (Song of Songs 8:6-7). That almost directly invites consideration of the question the committee itself recognized and raised.

But no: the only references to same-sex marriage either cast it aside (p. 27) or consider it as part of what the committee calls "the overall biblical association of homosexual conduct with human perversity (p. 98)—pointing to the Genesis 19 story of Sodom and Gomorrah. This is particularly egregious, associating the gang rape threatened in that story with the committed, monogamous, long-term relationships pointed to by the question the committee had indicated (p. 7) it would consider in its report. (The only other reference in the entire report to such a same-sex couple is in the cautious advice given [pp. 118–119] on how to respond to interests expressed by a lesbian couple attending a CRCNA congregation.)

If, as Scripture teaches, "you will know them by their fruits" (Matthew 7:20), it would have been at least prudent, given the fact that the committee itself recognized the question, to have interviewed couples engaged in a long-term, committed, monogamous same-sex relationship, to see whether love such as the Song of Songs passage the committee quoted could be recognized in their relationship. That might have pushed the committee to the edge of adherence to the 1973 report, but it would not have been any more out of keeping with that adherence than the committee's response to the 1973 report's *theological-ethical approach* regarding conversion therapies.

"Are grapes gathered from thorns, or figs from thistles? In the same way, every good tree bears good fruit, but the bad tree bears bad fruit" (Matthew 7:16-17). Did the committee interview any committed, long-term, monogamous same-sex couples to look for the "good fruit" of the kind of love the Song of Songs praises? The answer is stark in its simplicity: no, not one. The committee acknowledged the question, but it did not try to answer it. The committee has failed the CRCNA in this.

To repeat: the committee itself recognized the question. It is a question many in the CRCNA ask in genuine seriousness. However, the committee did not try to answer the question: instead, it ignored it.

To be sure, the 1973 report argued that, even in the case of a homosexual who could not exercise sexual self-control (p. 622), no exception to the prohibition of same-sex marriage could be made: "marriage is not an option for him" (p. 628). But the 1973 report also encouraged conversion therapies. Since then, those therapies have been shown to be and experienced as hurtful and ineffective. The committee has taken cognizance of that and has turned away from the firm directives given in the 1973 report about those attempts to "effect their sexual reorientation" (pp. 632).

Since the adoption of the 1973 report same-sex marriage has become legal in both Canada and the majority of states in the USA. Over the last number of years, many such marriages have taken place, and committed, long-term, monogamous same-sex couples are not only (as they would have been in 1973) an unlikely possibility: they have become, by 2021, relatively common. Although unanticipated by the 1973 report, that situation now requires to be taken into consideration: not simply that same-sex marriages have been legalized, but that these partnerships can manifest the kind of love that corresponds to the Song of Songs description cited by the committee (p. 23).

As the committee recognizes, this has led to many CRCNA members asking the question the committee itself identifies (p. 7). But the committee has not dealt with that question, except to rule it out of consideration. That is not an appropriate response, either to our cultural situation in 2021 or to the CRCNA members who honestly ask the question. Simply adhering to the 1973 report, in the face of that situation and the question, when this gifted committee could surely have discerned a way to deal with it forthrightly, means the committee has failed to serve the CRCNA with the guidance the committee was struck to provide.

Council of Meadowlands Fellowship CRC, Ancaster, Ontario

Overture 3: To overture Synod 2021 not to adopt Recommendation D of the report of the Committee to Articulate a Foundation-laying Biblical Theology of Human Sexuality.

Introduction: Synod 2016’s mandate for the Committee to Articulate a Foundation-laying Biblical Theology of Human Sexuality [hereafter, “the committee”], included reflection and evaluation on the question “whether or not, with respect to same-sex behavior and other issues identified in the study, it will be advisable for future synods to consider ... declaring a *status confessionis*” (p. 3).

After concluding its lengthy report, the committee addresses that question in its *Recommendation D: That synod declare that the church’s teaching on premarital sex, extra-marital sex, adultery, polyamory, pornography, and homosexual sex already has confessional status.*

The argument the committee presents for confessional status (pp. 144-148) leads it to the conclusion that the view the committee has presented “already has confessional status” (p. 149). After an opening explanation of the significance of the Latin term, the committee builds its case by citing (1) the treatment accorded the Belhar Confession by Synods 2012 and 2017; (2) the intention of Zacharias Ursinus in the use of “unchastity” in the wording of Heidelberg Catechism [hereafter, “HC”] Q/A 108; and (3) a decision of the RCA’s General Synod [hereafter, GS] in 2017 on the meaning of “unchastity.”

None of these arguments withstands scrutiny, as the following treatment of each of them indicates. Before considering them, though, it is important to point out the committee’s misdirection in carrying out its mandate.

Ground 1: When Synod 2016 included in the committee’s mandate for it to consider “*whether or not ... it will be advisable for future synods to consider ... declaring a status confessionis*” (p. 3 [emphases added]), it is quite obvious—from the wording itself—that Synod 2016 did not consider (and synods of the past had not considered) the issue as “already having” such status. The committee’s assertion that what it argues for in its report “already has confessional status” is simply not true, whether from a church history perspective or from the history of CRCNA church polity. No such synodical declaration has ever been made. With its assertion, the committee seeks to forestall the laborious challenges that would be necessary for the CRCNA to declare such a *status confessionis*. It is understandable that the committee attempted this approach, since (as Ground 2 will indicate), the CRCNA has not eagerly moved to declaring such a *status confessionis* regarding other issues.

Ground 2: As the committee points out (pp. 144-145), Synods 2012 and 2017 did not grant “confessional status” to the Belhar Confession, which focuses on serious issues that challenge the church in our day: unity, reconciliation, and justice. These are all constant, pervasive themes of the apostolic proclamation of the import and purpose of the salvation accomplished by Jesus Christ. In the face of that, it is startling for the committee to propose (and assume) “confessional status” for the perspectives it has presented—which are certainly not constant, pervasive themes of that apostolic proclamation.

Ground 3: The committee points out that one of the authors of HC was Zacharias Ursinus and that “unchastity” in HC Q/A 108 should be interpreted in accordance with what Ursinus expounds “unchastity” to include in his commentary on HC (p. 146). This is interesting but irrelevant to the

question. The CRCNA is not bound by what may have been in Ursinus's thoughts but by what is found in HC itself: the CRCNA has adopted HC, not Ursinus's commentary on it.

What Ursinus wrote in the commentary informs us today of what he viewed as "unchastity," to be sure, but if what he wrote in that commentary is to dictate how the CRCNA interprets "unchastity" in HC Q/A 108, it would be incumbent on the CRCNA to pay attention to and be bound also by what Ursinus writes about "unchastity" *within* the marriage bond of husband and wife, not just apart from it. Early in his treatment, Ursinus notes that the "unchastity" forbidden in HC Q/A 108 forbids "all unlawful intercourse and inordinate copulation ... *whether in holy wedlock or in a single life*" (p. 1042 [emphasis added]). What would constitute "inordinate copulation" in a lawful marriage of husband and wife? Should pleasure in or frequency of marital sexual relations be regulated or specified? Ursinus is clearly concerned about "inordinate copulation" in a husband/wife relationship as an example of "unchastity," but the committee does not bring this up. Nor does the committee point out that Ursinus returns to his condemnation of "unlawful intercourse" when he denounces "unlawful copulation" in marital relationships (p. 1050). If the CRCNA is to be bound by Ursinus's view of "unchastity," then the committee should also have advised what such "unlawful intercourse" or "unlawful copulation" in a husband/wife sexual relationship might include and should, consequently, be forbidden.

The CRCNA cannot shape its views by what might have been in Ursinus's mind as he penned the HC or subsequently thought about it, but by what is stated in HC itself. The CRCNA is not obliged to follow Ursinus's statements in his commentary on HC.

Ground 4: To support its call to recognize confessional status for its interpretation of "unchastity," the committee urges, "By the word 'unchastity' the catechism intends to encompass all sexual immorality, including homosexual activity" (p. 146). Then it immediately appeals to a recent synodical decision of the RCA: "The Reformed Church in America acknowledged this in 2017, affirming that in the catechism 'God condemns 'all unchastity,' which includes same-sex sexual activity'" (cited, in footnote 244, from *The Acts and Proceedings of the 211th Regular Session of the General Synod of the Reformed Church in America*, p. 161). So, the committee here appeals to a synodical decision of the RCA to support the committee's claim to confessional status for the committee's interpretation of "unchastity," in the hope of having the CRCNA also affirm such a synodical decision.

Considering the import of this appeal and its significance requires careful consideration of the church governance and structure patterns of both the RCA and the CRCNA. (The details and interpretation of what follows have been checked with and vetted by experts in church governance and structure in both denominations.)

The committee's argument here would initially seem to make a convincing case for the committee's argument for confessional status in two regards.

First, a GS of the RCA (with which the CRCNA has an especially close relationship) has already itself explicitly adopted this interpretation of HC Q/A 108, thereby—allegedly, as per the committee's appeal to this decision—according it what amounts to *status confessionis*.

Secondly, the committee has already asserted that if what the committee presents “is declared to have confessional status, questions arise about what that means for those who sign the Covenant for Officebearers (CFO) in the CRCNA” and raises questions (but does not answer any of them) about the “need to accept this new item” (p. 145). By citing this RCA affirmation without qualification or further explanation, the committee implicitly urges that the RCA’s GS decision should inform how the CFO is to be understood (since that decision is, allegedly, an official declarative statement by a synod of a closely related Reformed denomination). It would also, consequently, shape what will be required of CRCNA office-bearers—who have promised in the CFO that they will “be formed and governed by them [the Three Forms of Unity, including HC]” and will “promote their doctrines faithfully, conforming our preaching, teaching, writings, serving, and living to them.”

However, all this is a significant misreading and a misleading presentation of the significance of that 2017 RCA GS decision, for two reasons.

First, because of its governing structure, a GS of the RCA cannot make decisions which function as binding statements on the denomination. As a constitutional church, the RCA is primarily bound by its constitution, not by pronouncements of its assemblies—even a GS. For the committee to appeal casually to this 2017 RCA GS, without making that distinction clear, will certainly mislead CRCNA readers about the significance of that decision. For those CRCNA readers, since the CRCNA is a synodical church, doctrinal declarations made by synod are “considered settled and binding, unless it is proved that they conflict with the Word of God or the Church Order” (*Church Order*, Art. 29). That is, emphatically, not the case within the RCA. However, the committee does not bring up that significant difference.

Secondly, within the RCA the relationship of office-bearers to the Three Forms of Unity (“Four” now for the RCA, with its 2010 adoption of the Belhar Confession) is different than what is required in the CRCNA’s CFO. In the RCA, since the early 1970s, the promise made by ministers is, “I accept the Scriptures as the only rule of faith and life. I accept the Standards [the Forms of Unity] as historic and faithful witnesses to the Word of God.” Within the RCA, office-bearers are not “bound” to the Forms of Unity—including HC—in the same way CRCNA office-bearers are bound. Thus, even if the RCA’s GS could make some sort of “official” or “authorizing” decision about the meaning of a statement in the Forms of Unity (including HC Q/ A 108)—something which, as pointed out above, an RCA GS constitutionally cannot do—it would not be “settled and binding” on any RCA office-bearer in the way such an official or authorized pronouncement by a synod of the CRCNA would be “settled and binding” on CRCNA office-bearers. Nevertheless, the committee’s appeal to this 2017 RCA GS decision implies precisely that sort of binding.

The committee has misrepresented the situation and significance of this 2017 RCA GS decision. By appealing to the surface facts of this 2017 decision without placing them in the dual contexts laid out above, the committee has argued on false premises. In so doing, the committee has misled the CRCNA.

To conclude this treatment: whatever the RCA has done (or might do) on this matter, even in a GS, any such decision has no direct authority or jurisdiction over the CRCNA.

To sum up: the committee's claim that the views it presents already have confessional status is false, and the arguments it offers fail to support that claim.

Council of Meadowlands Fellowship CRC, Ancaster, Ontario

APPENDIX #7 – PULPIT SUPPLY PRESENTATION

Classis Hamilton Pulpit Supply

This report comes with a request to re-evaluate the provision of Pulpit Supply for vacant churches in Classis Hamilton.

“Pulpit Supply” or “Classical Appointments” has been a long-standing practice throughout the Christian Reformed Church. With this practice churches covenant to support one another during times of being without a pastor (vacancy).

In recent years – at least in Classis Hamilton – it has become increasingly challenging to administer and provide pulpit supply. This was evidenced when, at a meeting of Classis Hamilton, it was decided to reduce the Pulpit Supply support from two Sundays per month to one Sunday per month, in part because many churches were vacant. In addition to this, provisions were included giving churches providing such a Classical Appointment the option, instead of sending their own Pastor, of arranging for an available qualified preacher to fulfill that covenanted responsibility. The rationale for this was to facilitate a desire not to interrupt the focus of a series of sermons.

The challenge of providing (continuing) Pulpit Supply is not new to Classis Hamilton. In May, 2015 Norman Visser wrote a blog in “The Network” entitled “Classical Appointment – An Endangered Species?” Although he didn’t cite any Classes that had discontinued it altogether, he wrote about a trend to curtail the provision of Pulpit Supply. He references a report to Synod recommending discontinuing the committee providing “The Living Word” reading service sermons (one of the authors was our own Pastor Ken Benjamins). Rationale included the “abundance of commissioned pastors, retired pastors, people with classical licenses to exhort, and others who can be called upon to preach. In addition, the availability of recorded sermons and sermon podcasts means that in many areas (though not all) churches very rarely have to resort to a “reading sermon.” And, he adds: “Furthermore, church order changes allowing the sacraments to be administered by an elder approved by classis further reduce a church’s dependence on classical appointments”.

In his own push-back against discontinuing Pulpit Supply, Visser frets that “The classical appointment reflected the idea that for all of our differences and peculiarities as preachers and as congregations (no interchangeable parts) we were still part of a body that was greater than ourselves. This sense will be further weakened if the classical appointment goes extinct.” In two responses, reflecting both sides of this issue: George Vink writes “The classical appointment could/should remain as a tangible expression that we’re interested in each other’s well being, get to know each other a little, and consequently work together more effectively at classical and denominational level. Pastors have to give some leadership to keep the bonds/sinews that connect us....” and Steve Dozeman writes “for those churches/pastors fulfilling classical appointments, there is the question of how often is it healthy for the primary pastor to be gone ...” and again “There are probably better and more creative and innovative ways to support our sisters and brothers in our classis and denomination who are without a pastor than through classical appointments.”

All that being said (and there’s much more can be said), the local character of each congregation is becoming more and more unique to their local community’s missional focus.

Another challenge: How do we support - or how does a congregation fulfill their covenanted responsibility - when their pastor is on sabbatical?

And also worth considering is the (un)fairness of exempting churches where the (normally) two-pastor church is vacant of one of their pastors. (*expressing only my personal view*). Classis Hamilton’s guidelines state: “Congregations that have TWO pastors involved in preaching, where one of the Pastors leaves,

may request pulpit supply via the Stated Clerk. This will be granted when said pastor was involved in preaching in 3 or more services per month.” Meanwhile, those churches that (normally) only have a single pastor continue to be part of the pulpit supply rotation.

Given these reflections, **the following alternatives are being recommended for consideration:**

Alternative One: Discontinue the practice of providing Pulpit Supply to vacant congregations except for those churches whose Pastor is delegated to Synod (my preferred recommendation).

Grounds:

1. Congregations are missionally focused on their local communities to the extent that the unique characteristics of that focus produces a reluctance to yield the rhythm of a series of sermons to the interruption of providing and or receiving pulpit supply.
2. There is a generous supply of retired preachers and denominationally based (at the Mainway office) and educationally based (at Redeemer University College) to provide access for vacant congregations to needed ministerial resources.

Alternative Two: Continue our current practice of providing Pulpit Supply (1 x per month; September thru May) but remove the provision where two-pastor congregations have the option of requesting pulpit supply if they are vacant of their “preaching Pastor” along with any exemption from the pulpit supply rotation for two-pastor congregations with only one Pastor.

Alternative Three (the ‘do nothing’ alternative): No change from current practice.

APPENDIX #8 – EXTERNAL REPORTS

APPENDIX #8.1 – WORLD RENEW



Classis Hamilton Report – winter, 2021

Submitted by Peter Bulthuis, Canadian Director of Church and Community Engagement

The churches of classis Hamilton are experiencing changes like never before in classis' 68-year history. You've changed (several times!) worship service formats, ways of fellowshipping, kinds of outreach; so many things in your churches are not like before. BUT: *The steadfast love of the Lord never ceases; his mercies never come to an end; they are new every morning; great is your faithfulness.* (Lam. 3: 22-23). You have lived in that love, and you continue to share that love in so many ways, including sharing His grace and love globally. The churches in this classis have again partnered with World Renew to support victims of poverty and disaster around the world; you have given \$248,891.33 through 2020. **Thank you!**

A. General Updates:

Your donations to the work of World Renew have impacted many people, both here in North America, and around the world. This report seeks to inform you of those impacts.

-In Nov.-Dec. of 2020, World Renew provided leadership on an awareness campaign across our constituency about Gender Based Violence/16 Days of Activism, highlighting the "shadow pandemic" of this tragic and overwhelming evil. (Go to the Justice page on our website, and view the video [here](#). (<https://worldrenew.ca/peaceandjustice>)



-World Renew is going through the certification process with the "Core Humanitarian Standard" (learn about it [here](#)). This global consortium sets the standards for how disaster response organizations (like World Renew) support people and communities stricken by disasters. One of our staff, Jackie Koster, is one the board; the process is helping us learn to be better "hands and feet". The intense process will continue through this year.

-Through 2020, as with many NGOs, donations were less than had been projected in January of last year. World Renew had to balance the need to continue to provide support to those partners with whom we were working, ramp up responses to the needs that Covid-19 threw at communities, with changes in

donations. Very quickly, we decreased expenditures in these areas: travel (of course), publications, supplies, training events, continuing education, meetings, and printing costs. Program costs, and staffing costs were not cut; virtual connections with global staff, churches, donors and others have been the order of the day.

B. Upcoming Important Dates and Activities

The CRCNA Synod annually encourages churches to set aside several Sundays in each year, to hold offerings for World Renew's work. Notwithstanding Covid, those designated Sundays are still days during which your church can highlight some of the work done through World Renew, by holding an offering.

We will continue to support your church in that. We will also highlight the opportunity for greater individual giving either through our website (www.worldrenew.ca)

March 7: CFGB: World Renew is a member of the Canadian Foodgrains Bank; this agency supports many of our projects, and very often accesses the 4:1 match from the Canadian Federal government.

April 11: Refugee Sunday: World Renew supports churches that sponsor refugee resettlement, with wisdom, experience and (the voluminous!) paper-work

May 2: Diaconal Ministries Canada: World Renew partners with DMC; each organization supports each other's work.

May 9: Maternal and Child Health/Mother's Day: World Renew's global programming very often has a health component, assisting families and communities in their work towards healthy moms and children.

June 27: Human Trafficking Awareness Sunday: World Renew works globally to assist communities to enable sustainable livelihoods for families.

C. Community Development: Pivoting to include COVID-19 Responses

There are many stories of how your donations have supported God's people globally. Here's one:

In the slums of Dhaka City, COVID-19 has had a devastating impact. Families are packed in close quarters with their neighbours, and access to testing and health service is limited. Day labourers who provided for their families struggled when their jobs disappeared during lockdown, making it nearly impossible to afford food and rent.

Rita Rani lives in Dhaka City with her husband and two children, where she's also a member of her local women's group. Her family had faced similar challenges in the past: two years ago, they faced eviction due to construction. Since then, though, Rita was able to take out a loan and start a shoe business. But when COVID-19 struck, Rita had to close the business. As a result, her family has been struggling to meet their daily needs.

To help support families like Rita's, World Renew and a local partner institution, SATHI, offered financial support and training to community leadership groups—known as People's Institutions—as they distributed relief materials to households in need. In the end, they distributed rice, lentils, and soap to over [1,600] households in Dhaka city. Rita is grateful that her family was chosen. "Everything is so uncertain for us now. We don't know how to manage our daily food and other needs in this crisis situation... At least, we have our meal for a week."

Without your church's support, this would not have been possible. God is there, in Dhaka City.

D. International Disaster Response (IDR)

(as of mid-December, 2020) IDR has initiated a total of 28 new projects valued at over US\$7 million in 2020. These projects are reaching over 200,000 people in complex environments such as Bangladesh, Colombia, Lebanon, Nigeria, and Syria as well as other WR community development countries. These are some of those responses: Hurricane Eta (Nicaragua and Honduras), Beirut blast (Lebanon), Rohingya response (Bangladesh), Syria conflict (Syria and Lebanon), Earthquakes (Nepal, Indonesia, Philippines), Food security and agriculture (Uganda, Tanzania, Kenya). And more. **We thank God for you.**



E. Disaster Response Services (DRS)

The work of World Renew DRS has been slowed down by COVID19, but has not been stopped. Individual volunteers are still completing high priority assignments to get people back in their homes before the holidays. Grants are given to local organizations so that area contractors can be hired to do the same. DRS leadership staff and volunteers are making road trips to disaster sites to plan with local groups. At this time our tentative plan is to begin reopening sometime in February. Conditions when that time comes will determine final decisions.

F. Refugee Settlement Activities:

Between January 1, 2020 and November 10, 2020, 57 refugee sponsorship applications were submitted to IRCC. 56 of these refugee sponsorship applications are Privately Sponsored Refugee (PSR) applications for a total of 129 refugees. One Blended Visa Office Referred (BVOR) application was submitted for a total of 5 refugees. (As of mid-December) The Refugee team is working on 54 sponsorship applications for 141 refugees. We are working hard to ensure that we meet our allocation target for 2020.

G. What else can the people and the churches of Classis Hamilton do?

Encourage your church to partner with a church or community outside North America. Call the office. Contact Peter Bulthuis (pbulthuis@worldrenew.ca ; 800-730-3490, ext. 4237), or Maria Oliveira (moliveira@worldrenew.ca , ext. 4319) for more ideas on how we can help you achieve your ministry objectives. To learn more about World Renew's ministry and/or to sign up for our regular newsletter, please visit www.worldrenew.ca.

Please continue to pray for the world. May the God of peace grant wisdom and healing to the nations.

Please also watch this video [here](#)

Blessings,



Peter Bulthuis, Director, Church and Community Engagement Canada

Canadian Ministries Director Classis Letter – Winter 2021



Let me start by saying THANK YOU. Thank you for your perseverance and steadfastness in this most challenging ministry season. It has been a very difficult season of ministry for all of us and we in the denominational positions recognize that reality for all of you. As such, let me point you to some resources that can be helpful for this time:

- Support during Covid, online: <https://www.crcna.org/covid19>
- Resources page via CRCNA: <https://www.crcna.org/resources> (this is also available to all of you in The Bridge App 'Connected' function)
- Ministry in Canada support: <https://www2.crcna.org/Canada> (note the Canada 2020 [Ministry Directory](#) is there too, connecting you to the wider Canadian Ministry Support audience including Classis partners). This has all the contact info you should need
- My and other email addresses within the CRCNA (they all follow the same pattern: first initial, last name@crcna.org. droorda@crcna.org). Specifically, my phone # is 289-208-9918 (cell). Do not hesitate to call at any time.

Compliance, Restructuring and Unity: A huge THANK YOU to all of you who have participated in some form of this conversation. Whether Town Halls, Focus Groups, keeping up on material sent to your council etc. I am glad that we have chosen to do this work in a very open process. The Canadian side of the board continues to seek the greatest unity along with the greatest opportunity. That is, through our one denomination stretching across Canada and the USA, to live out our local and institutional lives in such a way that we are 100% compliant and 100% appropriately able to direct and control ministry in/for the Canadian context. Some changes have been made already. We continue to work through more – and understand that this is not an easy or immediate process.

As changes develop over time, the Canada Corporation board continues to seek to engage and develop ministry within Canada that is financially responsible, connected locally and increasingly robust in its approach to ministry in our home and native land. Full report and material will become available through the Canada Corp and COD as we enter into the summer of 2021.

A special thanks to the Canada Corp/COD delegate from your area. Their value is immense.

Our Journey 2025: "Joining the good work begun in Christ"-- As a CRCNA, we are on a journey together, and its a journey with the local church in mind. Over the past few years, leaders and members from congregations across North America have identified 4 key areas that they feel are vital to the growth and health of our churches. The Canadian National Gathering and the cross Canada Classis survey were part of this information gathering. The result is an effort that truly reflects all of us, and also allows for adaptation for your local context.

Visit [crcna.org/ourjourney](https://www.crcna.org/ourjourney) to learn more. Stay tuned for tools and resources that can help your congregation discern how God is calling you to move forward in any or all of these four areas: cultivating practices of prayer and spiritual discipline, listening to the voices of every generation, growing in diversity and unity, and sharing the gospel by living it missionally and planting new churches. (shielema@crcna.org)

Ecumenical partners and their resources: The ecumenical work we do as a church can be valuable on a local scale. I am constantly asking and imploring entities like the [Canadian Council of Churches](#) and the

[Evangelical Fellowship of Canada](#) to work in such a way that there is payoff for the local scene. Here are their two web links for you so that you might find material from them ranging from scientific research, bible studies, worship material for the Week of Christian Unity and others.

Also note our partnership with the 4 C's: Canadian Council of Christian Charities which can be a key help for so many administrative matters at a church level: <https://www.cccc.org/>

Synod 2021 – At the writing of this letter, there is still much conversation going on about the nature of Synod 2021. As such, there will be more information to come on this. Stay tuned. As most everyone knows, one critical report that is scheduled to come to the floor of Synod is the Report on Human Sexuality. Both the report and a toolkit for your church to engage with it can be found [here](https://www.crcna.org/news-and-events/news/toolkit-helps-churches-discuss-sexuality-report). (<https://www.crcna.org/news-and-events/news/toolkit-helps-churches-discuss-sexuality-report>). I cannot say enough how important such engagement is so that a healthy and critical conversation is well heard, understood and appreciated by all sides on this matter.

Update on The Bridge App – Our partnership around this tool is meeting with increased success! The Bridge App has upgraded its features – automatic deposits via one's bank account is now part of the process. This and other giving upgrades have meant that we have been able to help keep giving realities healthy in churches despite the pandemic. We are delighted to report that nearly 3 million dollars worth of giving by year end will be testimony to God's timing in this ministry effort focussed on local churches. That's nearly a 10X increase! (dvandersteen@crcna.org or kbosvled@crcna.org or bridgeapp@crcna.org)

Ministry Share Reimagined: The process for this new version of exercising a church's gifts toward the ministries we share in common, continues. Thank you to the churches who have pledged. If your church has questions, needs support, or a conversation about the wonderful results our ministry shares contribute to, do not hesitate to ask Peter Elgersma at pelgersma@crcna.org. Peter is willing to join your local council via zoom if it would serve you well.

I have always been impressed at the faithfulness of giving by local churches across Canada to things that really matter. Let's stay engaged and directing our funds to both local matters even while we extend the reach of grace through ministry that goes beyond local.

Indigenous Ministry: Due to the pandemic, this season has been very difficult for the Indigenous Ministry Centres in Edmonton, Regina and Winnipeg. In the truest sense of the word, the individuals engaged in ministry here are frontline workers. More so this year than ever! I cannot encourage your churches or classes enough to be aware and engaged with them. Youth trips, connecting by video, or online support are all welcome. For an offering length video to help you and others in your church know more about them, see here: <https://www.crcna.org/indigenous>

These kinds of ministry have garnered the CRCNA great respect across Canada – from other denominations and even in the offices of federal MPs. They are a noticeable and tangible expressions of the style of reconciliation that people in the CRCNA can be. (Contact info for the 3 centres via: <https://www.crcna.org/indigenous/urban-indigenous-ministry-centres>)

Canadian National Gathering 2022?: Springing from our history, the work within the realm of Indigenous Ministry, and the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, I am happy to announce that once the pandemic is over you will begin hearing about the next Canadian national gathering. A key focus of that gathering will be the nature of reconciliation in Canada with Indigenous Peoples. What we can also say is that the CNG will likely be held on the eastern side of Canada after the first two were held in Southern Ontario and Alberta respectively. Stay tuned for more to come.

Inspire 2021: COVID 19 has made our worlds smaller. Whether we are in lockdown in our homes, interacting only with our "social bubbles" or even starting to gather again as congregations, we are not able to be together the way we once were. As we look forward to this new year, I encourage you to

AGENDA, Classis Hamilton February 23, 2021

consider Inspire 2021. Instead of turning inward, Inspire is intended to help us reach outward and embrace all that the CRCNA has to offer. For three days in August, we'll learn from each other, gather new resources, worship, fellowship together and be inspired to return to our local congregations with new tools and excitement for the work God has given us. At this point, we are hoping that Inspire 2021 can take place, as planned, in Chicago August 5-7. If COVID prevents physical gathering, we will be turning this in to a virtual event. Visit crcna.org/Inspire to learn more and subscribe to updates

Highlights in the area of Race Relations: There has been a plan in Canada for almost 20 + years around the unique strategy for Canada to engage this area of ministry. As such, the Canada Corp directors have approved a strategic development that will see the hiring of a replacement for the Race Relations office in Canada. After a year of being without a Race Relations person in Canada we took the time to re-group and re-think. We hope to have a person in place by Spring, 2021.

An upcoming project: You may be hearing more and more about governance and leadership coming from the voices of people in the denominational offices. That is because we are working toward a project entitled '*Good Governance for Better Missions.*' Currently we have a few churches in a pilot phase. Stay tuned for more to come. If you experience things like "frustrating council meetings, lack of traction on a local Ministry Plan, trouble finding office bearers or other such things, this WILL BE of value.

Blessings in 2021 to all of you in your differing contexts,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "D. Roorda". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Darren Roorda – Canadian Ministries Servant
droorda@crcna.org 289-208-9918

Administrator: Anna Bowes (abowes@crcna.org)

APPENDIX #8.3 – REDEEMER UNIVERSITY COLLEGE

Winter 2021 Classis Report: Redeemer University

As we continue to journey through this season of uncertainty, we are immensely grateful for God's provisions throughout the past year. We remain confident that the Lord holds everything together and will continue to sustain us.

The COVID-19 pandemic presented both a challenge and an opportunity for Redeemer University to preserve learning in community while simultaneously offering a choice to students to participate in classes either in person or remotely. We are thankful that our first semester of dual delivery was successful for our students. Redeemer has decided to continue to offer this mode of learning in the 2021/2022 academic year. The decision to offer this choice for students between synchronous remote and in-person learning allows for flexibility at a time when there is still uncertainty about the future of the COVID-19 pandemic.

This fall, despite many obstacles brought about by the pandemic, we welcomed the largest incoming class in Redeemer's history. A total of 896 students chose to enroll in Redeemer's unique offering of Christian university education that integrates faith, life and learning. With the growth of Redeemer's student body, there are exciting opportunities ahead.

One of these exciting opportunities is our new building project. We are currently in the process of constructing a new residence and learning facility in the heart of campus. We're pleased to have celebrated a groundbreaking ceremony for this project on October 1 and expect the building to open in September 2021. The building will help to accommodate steady growth in enrolment and will ensure that Redeemer can continue its mission on a modern and spiritually vibrant campus.

Lastly, we are thrilled to share that as of December 2020, legislative changes were made that allow Redeemer the ability to grant new degrees, providing new opportunities for many more students. Redeemer plans to offer three new degree programs next fall that will provide Redeemer students with a post-secondary education more tailored to their career path of choice. This legislative change is a historic milestone, building on the legacy of the university's founding vision.

We are so grateful for the Christian Reformed Church's faithful financial support to Redeemer University. Church members who believe in the mission continue to make a lasting impact on our students. We know that this year has brought significant challenges to your churches, and we continue to pray for wisdom and discernment during this time. Thank you for the very important work that you carry out each and every week, and we pray for God's continued blessings on your church.

Hank de Jong
Associate VP, External Relations



Greetings Friends in Ministry!

If you're like us, when the first lockdown happened back in March 2020, you thought that by Christmas, Covid-19 would all be a distant memory. And yet, as I write this Classis Report from Hamilton, ON, here we are again, back at the start it would seem.

A song that someone shared with me over the Christmas season really hit home, particularly because of the year we've had. (You can listen to the full song [HERE](#).)

O come, all you unfaithful. Come, weak and unstable. Come, know you are not alone.
O come, barren and waiting ones. Weary of praying, come. See what your God has done!
O come, bitter and broken. Come with fears unspoken. Come, taste of His perfect love.
O come, guilty and hiding ones, there is no need to run; see what your God has done.
Christ is born, Christ is born, Christ is born for you!

I love the honesty of this song, in stark contrast to the carol we all know and love: "O come all ye *faithful, joyful and triumphant*.... O come let us adore Him." For most of 2020, I have felt more like the first: weak and waiting, bitter and broken, fearful and hiding. And yet, the truth of those words in the second carol ring true. No matter what's been going on in my life, both personally and in my church and faith community, I remember that we serve a faithful Father who brings us good news of great joy - for ALL people!

Over the last year, deacons have played an important role in bringing this good news to their churches and communities and for that, we are grateful. And it has been our privilege to serve and equip them in this role. Here's a quick story from Frankford Community CRC, shared by Bill Groot-Nibbelink, the Diaconal Coach for Classis Quinte.

"Our church usually organizes a sit-down Christmas dinner for the community each year but with COVID in the picture, it seemed that we would not be able to do that this year. The deacons however came up with the novel idea of offering a curbside pick-up, take-out dinner. A local roofing company (not members of our church) offered \$500 towards the effort. Church members, volunteers from our food pantry, local businesses, and other community members all pitched in. Meals were packed in brown paper bags which church members, including many kids, had decorated with hand-drawn pictures, Bible verses, and other Christmas wishes. A church business card was stapled to each bag. On the back of the card was an offer of help to anyone who might need it.

"Over 160 meals were handed out! In some ways, it offered unique individual contact with recipients that would be less likely to happen with a full sit down meal. It was a joy to work together on this project especially when many of us had not been able to spend social time together for these many months. More importantly, we pray that seeds were planted seeds for Christ's kingdom."

And so we are also grateful to you, our faithful supporters, who pray for us and contribute financially to our mission to equip and support deacons in their role. **THANK YOU!**

Some other things we're working on for 2021 with and for deacons are:

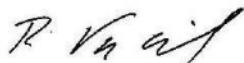
- Although the structure and timeline of our **Stewardship Pilot Project** have changed due to the pandemic, the goal is the same: to be a program of learning, resources and action, intended to help CRCs in Canada increase their members' awareness of the Biblical principles of stewardship, and help them live those principles out in practical, measurable ways. Many new resources are available on our website and learning workshops and action toolkits are being developed. If your church is ready to form a Stewardship Team and dive into some learning and action, please contact Diaconal Ministries today! Another way to grow your understanding of stewardship is by joining our Stewardship Book Study. So far, two groups have completed this 5-week study made up of deacons, elders, and other interested folks!
- Our **Covid-19 Grants**, in partnership with World Renew Canada, helped 20 congregations across Canada love and serve their local community during this pandemic. We are excited about the ways our partnership with World Renew has deepened and expanded over the last months.
- We are already looking ahead to our spring **NewGround Offering**. As you can imagine, last year's offering took a significant hit when churches weren't gathering in their usual ways. We appreciate your ongoing support of this vital program that helps churches love their community through Community Opportunity Scans, Community Ministry Grants and Support, Deacon Scholarships and our brand new Youth Justice Initiative. More information on these key activities can be found on our website: diaconalministries.com/newground.

For your information, here is our Board Executive for 2020-21:

- Chair – Peter VanHarmelen (Halifax, NS).....petervanharmelen@gmail.com
- Vice-Chair – Martin Slofstra (Toronto, ON).....martinslofstra9@gmail.com
- Secretary – Cindy Verbeek (Houston, BC).....cindy.verbeek@arocha.ca
- Treasurer – Rose Saller (Pontypool, ON).....rosesaller@gmail.com

We invite you to visit our website (diaconalministries.com) to again familiarize yourself with our vast array of resources for deacons and churches. For more information, contact all us at dmc@crcna.org or write to one of the board members listed above.

Respectfully submitted,



ron vanden brink

National Director - Diaconal Ministries Canada

Calvin Theological Seminary – Spring 2021 Highlights

Since 1876, Calvin Theological Seminary (CTS) has worked on your behalf to faithfully prepare leaders who can nurture disciples and serve the church. Calvin Seminary is a vital and hospitable learning community in the Reformed Christian tradition.

Our desire is not just to train pastors, but to also form church leaders who can cultivate communities of disciples for Jesus Christ.

Currently Calvin Seminary has around 300 students in various programs including our Latino/na Ministry Certificates. In addition, the school hosts a number of classes, weekly community events, chapel services, conferences, lectures, and other learning opportunities.

Ministry Highlights:

COVID-19 Update

The global pandemic from COVID-19 has affected and is continuing to affect us all and that includes Calvin Theological Seminary. In March of 2020, we went completely online with the hopes of being able to return to some level of residential instruction at some point in the spring semester, but we could not. We even had to hold a virtual commemoration for our 61 graduates who came from Brazil, Canada, China, Hong Kong, Indonesia, Kenya, South Korea and the United States.

2020 Celebration of Graduates Commencement Video: <https://vimeo.com/420427114>

The fall 2020 semester brought us to a “flex” delivery system of education where we had asynchronous online courses as well as synchronous residential courses where students had the option of being present via Zoom or in person. Near Thanksgiving we had to move entirely online. From use of an outdoor tent to turning our chapel into a classroom space, we did what we could to adapt to the circumstances that kept changing through the semester.

We anticipate that the spring 2021 semester will bring a mirror reverse image of the fall where we start in flex mode again, but we probably have most students online with the hope that we can move into more face to face residential instruction as the vaccine for COVID-19 becomes more prevalent.

We would like to commend those who worked in providing and supporting IT functions and programming support which especially includes Daryl Boersema, Technology Support Manager, and Chris De Man, Organizational Systems & Strategic Initiatives Manager. We also have been blessed by the team leadership of Chief Operations Officer, Margaret Mwenda, and Dean of Students, Jeff Sajdak, who co-lead our COVID-19 Response Team.

While we have also seen the pause of prospective students on whether to attend school during a pandemic, we have also been blessed by a Summer 2020 session where we partnered with Calvin University and the Calvin Institute of Christian Worship to offer “COVID courses” which led to over 300 different individuals from across the globe taking a course that centered on some aspect of responding to and ministering in the midst of this panic. We are continuing with experimenting with an online format for continuing such courses which can be found here -

<https://www.calvinseminary.edu/academics/covid-19-courses>

We also were able to provide a complete on-line conference entitled Loving Your Neighbor Conference: Forming Citizens of God's Kingdom in Prison and Upon Reentry. The entire summer conference can be found here – <https://vimeo.com/showcase/7340817>

We want to also acknowledge and give thanks for the ongoing and faithful support from the Christian Reformed Church as a denomination and from individuals, churches, and classes. We are blessed by this community that continues to care for and encourage us – Board members, faculty, staff, and students.

In addition to the above, we would highlight the following:

- Launched a Doctor of Ministry (D.Min.) degree with 12 new students that focuses on applied, contextual learning for a diverse community of practitioners to develop advanced ministry leadership skills and spiritual formation. The webpage for this program can be found at <https://www.calvinseminary.edu/academics/doctor-of-ministry> We welcome new student applications and inquiries.
- Presented a book launch to highlight Missiology and Missional Ministry Professor Cory Willson's new book (published by Eerdmans) which he co-authored entitled – Work and Worship: Reconnecting our Labor and Liturgy. Here is a link to an overview presentation on this topic - <https://vimeo.com/478925236>
- Launched an updated website for The Center for Excellence in Preaching (CEP) as it continues to serve as one of the premier Reformed preaching and teaching sites in North America under the direction of Rev. Scott Hoezee. <https://cep.calvinseminary.edu/>
- We also continue to welcome the opportunity to connect our students with churches in need of summer ministry leadership – be that as a result of pastoral vacancy, sabbaticals, or new ministry initiatives. Please contact the Vocational Formation office for more information about this process. vocationalformation@calvinseminary.edu and our webpage on this – <https://www.calvinseminary.edu/church-resources>
- Calvin Theological Seminary and University sponsored the Stob Lecture and Colloquium through the January Series. The speaker this year is Jemar Tisby who wrote – The Color of Compromise and How to Fight Racism. The link for the Colloquium interview with Calvin Seminary Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Coaches – Pastors Dave Beelen and Denise Posie can be viewed at <https://vimeo.com/489568992>
- We want to introduce you to Annie Mas-Smith as the new Calvin Seminary Director of Communications. Annie comes to us after serving at Calvin University, Grace College and World Renew in various capacities. If you are looking for resources, Annie will be glad to assist you. She can be reached at - amas202@calvinseminary.edu
- We also want to acknowledge the transition of Professor Amanda Benckhuysen (O.T. Professor) who has accepted the call to be the next Director of Safe Church Ministries for the CRCNA. Professor Benckhuysen is an excellent teacher and scholar and her new role will only extend her gifts to others. We wish her well and we are very glad that she will still be doing some teaching for us in the spring. <https://www.crcna.org/news-and-events/news/benckhuysen-be-new-safe-church-director>
- The transition of Professor Benckhuysen as well as upcoming retirements of some professors will be leading to a search process where we will be inviting applicants in the area of Church History, Old Testament, New Testament and Latino/na Ministry Program leadership among other needs. We

invite your prayers for God's provision and at another time, we will be asking the church to provide nominations for faculty openings.

Thank you for your ministry of prayer, support and encouragement! We are glad that we are C.T.S. - Called To Serve!

Keith Oosthoek
Chair - CTS
Kitchener Ontario