



Internal and External Reports for the Churches of CLASSIS HAMILTON OF THE CHRISTIAN REFORMED CHURCH

INFORMATION:

1. The Classis Interim Committee has cancelled the May 26, 2020 meeting of Classis Hamilton due to the Ontario governments restrictions on people gathering in person.
2. Until classis is able to meet again, the CIC will deal with all matters that cannot wait until that time in accordance with the provisions of Church Order, Article 33-b. Any such decisions will be in its minutes and will sent to the churches.
3. The CIC will give account of its actions at the next classis meeting at which time the delegates will have the opportunity to deal with them as they see appropriate.
4. Various reports have been received that were intended for inclusion in the May classis agenda. Since classis will not be meeting, those reports are included in the attached appendices.

EMAIL ADDRESS:

If you have any communications for the CIC during this interim period, please send them to the Stated Clerk: clerk@classishamilton.ca.

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Dick L. Kranendonk".

Dick L. Kranendonk,
Stated Clerk

APPENDICES

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APPENDIX #1 – INTERNAL REPORT

APPENDIX #1.1 – HOME MISSIONS COMMITTEE REPORT

Home Missions Committee for Classis Hamilton – May Classis Report 2020

Members: Greg Sinclair (chair), Marian Lensink, Ron Vandenbrink, Steve Dykstra, Marcia Mantel, Gareth Harker (CMT liaison), John Bouwers (consultant), Beth Fellingner (Resonate eastern Canada leader).

We have decided to postpone our desert social, intended to raise awareness and support for a church plant in classis Hamilton, until after the Covid-19 crisis is past. We also discussed virtual options for continuing to develop interest and support in a church plant at our last meeting (April 9, 2020) but have decided to wait and pray and see what develops in the coming weeks as people are busy with coping with Covid-19 and many have employment issues and other concerns that they are focusing on. We pray that in the coming weeks we will be able to re-focus on helping the churches of Classis Hamilton plant a church. We appreciate the prayers and support of Classis and welcome ideas on how to move forward in this new reality.

We are in the process of reviewing one missional church grant application and are waiting on another church to submit a proposal. We encourage the churches of Classis to submit grant proposals, especially in light of Covid-19 and the pastoral and outreach opportunities arising from this crisis.

If Classis does meet in some format, we would like to request time for prayer towards a church plant and request ideas for forming a group (s) to pray into this potential new expression of church in our classis.

**Classis Hamilton Candidacy Committee
Report to Classis Hamilton | May 26, 2020**

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.

Student and Candidates Update

The Committee is delighted to highlight updates from some of the students and Candidates whom we have been supporting.

- **Student Derek Ellens:** After spending the year in Brampton, ON, Derek will be a candidate for ministry (upon approval by the CRCNA in 2020) and is openly looking for calls pending his approval of Synod. Moving forward, Derek will not be a candidate that the CHCC supports.
- **Student Brad Bootsma:** He and his family have settled well in Grand Rapids; he is doing well in his studies and fully embracing formational experiences and ministry opportunities through CTS.
- **Student Jolene Veenstra:** She is doing well in her studies and enjoying the course work at McMaster Divinity School. She has been able to make some changes at her work allowing her to take some extra courses over the summer.
- **Candidate Courtney Saldivar (nee Mooney):** She is currently working at CrossTown Church in Milton and was planning on being examined during the May Classis meeting in Classis Toronto. However, with things up in the air due to COVID-19, Courtney has asked for an extension on her loan payment. She has received an extension on her candidacy status from the CRCNA.
- **Candidate Femke Visser-Elenbaas:** Conversations are in progress with Immanuel Christian Reformed Church regarding extending a call for ordination as Minister of the Word in her role as hospital chaplain with Hamilton Health Sciences, St. Peter's Hospital. She is also anticipating beginning maternity leave starting at the end of July. An interview is scheduled with the denominational Candidacy Committee for extending her candidacy for another year.

The Committee is delighted to report on the following NEW students who we will begin supporting:

- **Student Jennifer Heidinga:** Jennifer is a member of Immanuel CRC Hamilton and is looking forward to beginning M.Div studies at CTS Distance in the fall of 2020.
- **Student Nina Drenth:** Nina is a member of Immanuel CRC but her and her husband have been attending New Hope Church for the past while. Nina has been working part time on her M.Div at

Wycliffe College in Toronto and is looking forward to beginning her journey to CRC ordained ministry through the EPMC program.

CHCC also took the following actions with respect to outstanding forgivable loans:

- **Ben Verkerk:** approved the forgiveness of 20% of original loan since he is currently serving as an ordained minister in the CRC.
- **Courtney Mooney:** deferred her loan repayment starting date by one year. Candidacy extended.
- **Mark DeVos:** approved the forgiveness of an additional 20% of original loan since he is currently serving as an ordained minister in the CRC.
- **Femke Visser-Elenbaas:** deferred her loan repayment starting date by one year. Candidacy extended
- **Nathan Klingenberg:** approved the forgiveness of an additional 20% of original loan since he is currently serving as an ordained minister in the CRC.
- **Corey VanHuizen:** approved the forgiveness of an additional 20% of original loan since he is currently serving as an ordained minister in the CRC.
- **Willem de Vries:** approved the forgiveness of an additional 20% of original loan since he is currently serving as an ordained minister in the CRC.

APPENDIX #1.3 – McMASTER CHAPLAIN REPORT



McMaster University and Mohawk College, Christian
Reformed Campus Ministry
C/o The Chaplaincy Centre
MUSC 231
McMaster University
1280 Main St. West



Dear Representatives of Classis Hamilton

April 2020

What is normal now? The current pandemic is forcing us to change the daily rhythm of our lives, but are these changes just on the surface - a veneer, or is something more profound taking place? Are we changing internally and if so, what changes are taking place in us and are these changes lasting? A student asked me (via fb messenger) the other day, when did I think “things would get back to the way they were?” My first response was “probably not as soon as we think they will,” but I then asked him if he would be the same, would he get back to the way he was after the pandemic protocols faded and life returned to its ‘normal’ rhythms. The little dots started and stopped several times before his response popped up on my screen. He missed doing certain things. He missed seeing certain people but he felt that he had changed, was changing, although he was not sure how, or if those changes would last.

I do not have the proper separation from this academic year to give a deep account of it but let me note a few things here. In thinking about how this year has unfolded, my feelings are mixed, I have feelings of disappointment, gratitude but also hope.

I am of course, deeply disappointed with how this semester is winding down. This disappointment however seems trivial and insignificant in the light of our elderly and vulnerable citizens dying of the COVID 19 virus and large numbers of people losing their jobs. To this point – since I sat down to write this reflection, I have had one student and a university counsellor text me and share that his father and her son, have lost their jobs. That said, Classis still has reason to celebrate the many good things that God brought to fruition in our campus ministry this year. So, it is with this mixed backdrop that I reflect on the year that God has given our CRC Campus Ministry.

The first thing that comes to mind when I reflect on this year is the Student Leadership Team I had the privilege to work with. My student team this year was comprised of three students – Alia Dieleman, Shannon Prins and Ben Wimmers. Alia is a second-year kinesiology student, Shannon is a fourth-year nursing student and Ben is a second year MDiv. Student.

With a large group of students graduating last year and a small leadership team to start with this year I had concerns. With such a small leadership team I was thinking there would be things that we would not be able to do/offer to the fellowship. That turned out to be the case. In the past for example, we would often have two sports teams operating/competing each semester. This year we did not have the leaders needed to organize a single sports team. We also lacked leaders and drivers to oversee many of our other regular extra-curricular activities such as our fall hikes, ROM trip, Fall Retreat

Recognising this vacuum our initial leadership strategy sessions dealt with the question, “what can we do, and do well?” Our response was to focus on our four core programs – our Leadership Development Program, All Things (Student Fellowship), Fully Alive (Men’s Group) and Revive Again

(Women's Group). In retrospect this turned out to be a wise course of action. Simply put, it has allowed our leaders to focus on their group responsibilities and not feel stretched or burdened by having too many things on their plate. I led our 'Leadership Development Program', Shannon and Alia took on the leadership of 'Revive Again' and Ben and I looked after 'Fully Alive.'

Alia and Shannon slowly built up 'Revive Again.' They did that via the quality and interesting nature of their discussions but also because they are both very warm and welcoming young women. Most of the young ladies that have joined 'RA' are first years which bodes well for the future.

We returned to our roots this year with 'Fully Alive' and wrestled with the question "what does it mean to be a man – fully alive in Jesus Christ?" It is amazing how many deep discussions have been sparked by that simple question. At the end of the first semester, one of the men said to me that he had never been part of a men's group before. He had wondered if he would like it, but he shared that the discussion we got into at the first meeting he attended hooked him. He was surprised at the current significance of the topics we addressed and how open and vulnerable some of the men were.

Our discussions at our Student Fellowship 'All Things' this year have not only been of a high professional quality but they have also been deep and appropriately personal. We are blessed to have so many gifted speakers from our McMaster Faculty in our Speaker's Bureau. It was affirming to witness the relationships develop between our faculty mentors and the students in our fellowship.

While Mohawk College was taken off my list of responsibilities this year, I did have one significant event with some key Mohawk educators last semester. In December I co-hosted, along with our CRC Indigenous Committee, a KAIROS Blanket Exercise Facilitator Training Weekend. This training weekend was the fruit of a relationship I had developed with Mohawk College's Indigenous Student Services over the last several years. Much of our denominations 'Indigenous' activities are directed back toward our own CRC community. What was unique about this gathering was that we had Indigenous leaders from Mohawk College and several other Universities and Indigenous agencies attend the training weekend. If we consider the frayed or non-existing relationships that many Indigenous leaders and communities have with Christianity, I believe this was healthy and productive development for our denomination.

Even though this semester was cut short, we still got in a full calendar of special events. We had a fantastic 'Algonquin Retreat' and very fun 'Irish Celi' (Irish Dance Party). We also had our 7th 'Baking for Bees for World Renew' at the start of March. Ida Kaastra Mutoigo informed us that we raised enough to put two more women in Uganda into the Bee Keeping business. That is approximately 30 some ladies to date. One highlight for me was that just over a month ago, I had the honour of officiating and bringing the message at the wedding ceremony of two of my alumni, Kirk Kuiper and Sabrina Douglas. Essentially, we had all our programs up and running until the middle of March at which time the university told us to cancel all our on and off campus activities.

My biggest disappointment here was the cancellation of our 'End of Year Celebration and Graduation Banquet.' Our Banquet is the highlight of our year. It is when we celebrate the year that God has given us and at the same time, we send off our graduates with a community blessing. Other cancelations quickly followed, the installation of our new student leaders at our Maundy Thursday Service, our Bi-National Christian Reformed Campus Ministry Conference and so forth.

So where are we now? At this point, I am still writing letters of recommendation for students seeking jobs – summer and permanent positions, still writing reports, still doing grant applications, but aside from one thread I have going with a number of current Health Science professionals (alumni of our ministry), I find my main activity is connecting with students one on one. The Health Science thread began by accident. I was talking to one of my former student leaders who works in the ICU - Intensive Care Unit at St. Joe's hospitals. I was telling her that I was praying for her safety and the safety of our other alumni who are working on the front lines of the health care crises. She suggested that I tell them that directly – so I started an online conversation. We have had approximately 15 doctors, nurses,

midwives, participate (many of them student leaders) in our ministry over the last few years. I did not foresee it, but some of our alumni started to update each other as to where they were and what they are currently doing. Those conversations have quieted down now but it seemed like the opportunity to connect with each other, in addition to hearing that they were being prayed for was heartening for them.

In regard to my conversations with our students and their concerns, I am wondering if a pattern is developing. Initially when the university closed down and classes went online, the students were rightly concerned with finishing their courses on line and how their exams would look. After the residences were closed to Ontario students and those students went home, some expressed how hard it was to stay focused with everything that was going on around them. The next issue (for some) to come along was concern over whether or not they will have a summer job. More recently, as the true nature of this pandemic has settled in, a few expressed concerns for their grandparents and elderly relatives, and yes, as mentioned above, I am now starting to hear about job losses in some families.

Where do we go from here? I may be wrong here but it appears some people, writers, political pundits, clergy ... are already noting the benefits that will come after people deal with all the challenges brought about by this pandemic crisis and are looking for opportunities. As I heard one lady say yesterday, "There is no growth when you are comfortable." I believe that there is some truth in that understanding. After all it does say in Romans that "suffering produces perseverance and perseverance character." So while I am interested to know what lasting effects this crisis will have on our Canadian students (many International students I know have already faced more severe crises), I do believe that it is premature to have that discussion right now when anxiety levels are so high and we are still in the middle of it.

So where do we go? As I said, I am very interested to know what changes will come from this. If people do change, how will they change? Will they want to go back to the way things were? Will their priorities have shifted? What role can our ministry play in that? That said, it appears to me that my focus at this time needs to be on listening to students that want to talk to someone and do what I can to support them. For some it means encouraging them to stay focused on their academics and finish their year as best they can under these circumstances. For others, it may mean listening to them as they express concern for their parents and the potential economic hardship they now see coming just over the horizon.

In closing would also like to say that I am very grateful to my Classis Steering Committee which is chaired by Anthony Elenbass. The committee has done its best to `not` have me be involved in what we have going on at Mohawk. Freeing me to once again be present fulltime at McMaster. I have felt the change. I have been able to stay on top of my responsibilities to the Dean of Students; I have had more time to meet with students; To cooperate with my fellow chaplains (we did two advent Chapels and one exam drop in) and what is very important to me - to invest in my student leaders. And finally, I have also greatly appreciated having more time to craft my sermons and my `All Things` discussions.

To the churches in Classis Hamilton, thank you for your support and interest. Please continue to pray for the students, staff and faculty that comprise our campus community. One further thing I would ask of you is to pray for our Health Science Alumni – the doctors, nurse and other professionals who are working for the benefit of all our citizens during this time. May God bless you and the congregations you represent?

Michael

Dr. Michael D. Fallon
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APPENDIX #1.4 – YOUTH CHAMPION REPORT

Classis Youth Champion Report

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

In September, Classis Hamilton held its third annual youth retreat at Country Side Camp. Thanks to the planning team of Maryann Benjamins, Anthony Elenbaas, Heather Dehaan, and Ryan Flokstra who worked with me. 50 students and leaders attended to make it a great weekend. The speaker for the weekend, Joel Dykxhoorn, spoke on “Who Do You follow” and Chloe Stell led worship.

We have already started planning the next fall retreat for October 2-4, 2020. This year we decided to invite multiple speakers for the weekend. It will be a good weekend of learning, serving and worshipping our God. Registration is opening soon, so watch for emails and ask your youth & youth leaders to register. This year we are hoping that at least 70 youth and leaders to attend.

As the Classis Champion, I have been busy connecting with youth leaders, pastors, and churches sharing resources to help their ministries. In speaking with these leaders, I was struck by the passion they all had for what they did. This year I had the pleasure of visiting some youth groups during their weekly meetings and was blessed, again, to see what each group brings to their ministry. Each youth leader, varying in age from 25-65, brought different life experiences to their role and to the youth.

Over the last year I met with two youth ministry teams who were working on putting together a job description for full-time youth directors. This past August we had a classis youth leader appreciation BBQ for all the classis youth leaders, directors, and youth pastors. It was great time to make connections. It has been encouraging to see that there is more excitement in engaging our youth and young adults. I have also begun to research more involvement with parent ministries. I feel that my work with classis has begun to be recognized as a needed resource and that it is beginning to feel like youth ministry in Classis Hamilton is less of a silo ministry and more of a community.

With the current global crisis, we have new opportunities to do youth ministry. In March I invited all classis youth leaders where I was able to encourage a few youth leaders in setting up zoom to try do youth ministry via zoom. I hope to continue with zoom meetings in order to help the churches with their ministries. I am bombarded with immense amounts of online resources, of which I send the best selection to the rest of the classis youth leaders. It has been a great learning opportunity for all of us.

As a team, the CHYMT continues to learn how best to serve the churches and their youth ministries. We have put out an on-line survey to gather more information to help us with that task. To date only 5 of the 16 churches have responded. Please encourage your youth and young adults to fill in the survey that was sent to the council clerks. As we continue to support, plan events, try new ideas, for the youth ministries of Classis Hamilton I ask that you continue to participate, give constructive feedback, share your ideas, and keep the Classis Hamilton youth and the CHYMT in your prayers.

John Bijl
Classis Youth Champion

APPENDIX #6 – EXTERNAL REPORTS

APPENDIX #6.1 – WORLD RENEW



Classis Hamilton Report – May 26, 2020

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

Thank you, brothers and sisters of Classis Hamilton, for your churches' support of the work of World Renew. Thank you for your very kind gifts of prayer, volunteering and financial donations. The churches in this classis gave World Renew \$198,485.52 to continue to bless communities around the world, on your behalf.

What a difference a few months make. A short while ago, we shared with you the impact of Jeremy Benjamin's **I AM NOT MY OWN** tour across Canada. Now I'm thinking that phrase has taken on a whole new meaning. I copy it here:

Q. What is your only comfort in life and death?

A. That I am not my own, but belong with body and soul, both in life and in death, to my faithful Saviour Jesus Christ. He has fully paid for all my sins with his precious blood, and has set me free from all the power of the devil. He also preserves me in such a way that without the will of my heavenly Father not a hair can fall from my head; indeed, all things must work together for my salvation. Therefore, by his Holy Spirit he also assures me of eternal life and makes me heartily willing and ready from now on to live for him.

This sure comfort is the foundation of our faith, and informs our life of gratitude as we as individuals and as World Renew move resolutely ahead to serve this faithful and risen Christ.

This report is a snapshot in time; it was written during the week of April 6-10. What is sure, is that the situation is fluid and World Renew is continually working to respond to the situation as it changes as much as we can.

A. General Updates:

At the time of this writing, the Church and Community Engagement (CaCE) team of World Renew is involved with three major initiatives: first: working with the International Disaster Response (IDR) team, the Global Volunteer Program (GVP) team, and Diaconal Ministries Canada (DMC) to enable grants for diaconates developing innovative community-based responses to the COVID-19 crisis. Second: working with DMC to develop and offer webinars to support ongoing deacon work across Canada, and third, calling each diaconate/CRC church across Canada to offer such assistance as we can, and to let folks know what World Renew is doing in response to this crisis.

The marketing and communications team is ensuring that every part of World Renew stays in touch with every other part, so that there is continual synergy throughout. Regular updates are sent out to constituents and donors; the website is constantly being updated, and the various social media platforms are also used as ways to ensure that constituents and supporters of World Renew are made as knowledgeable as possible. If you have the opportunity, do open this page:

www.worldrenew.ca/corona, and this one: www.worldrenew.ca/moment-of-hope. Both will share updated information about World Renew's current responses to COVID-19.

B. Upcoming Offering Dates

As we together continue through this uncharted time of the COVID-19 pandemic, please remember the ongoing needs of communities and participants around the world, who suffer poverty and injustice. Your prayers and donations continue to shine the light of Christ on them. Here are three upcoming dates for which your church will be resourced with information on how your church can continue to make a profound impact on those people in need.

June 28: -Canada Day (recognition only),

Oct., 12: -CDN Thanksgiving,

Nov. 1: -World Hunger Sunday. Thank you!

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

We have launched an international COVID-19 response that includes:

- Preparing for corona cases in remote communities that are so far unaffected by the virus.
- Moving staff and volunteers that are in at-risk locations to safety and complying with “stay at home” and other public health orders worldwide.
- Working in refugee camps to keep COVID-19 out, including doubling up food deliveries to reduce exposure.
- Modifying existing community- and group-based projects to individual interactions such as village savings and loan activities.
- Supporting our local church partners by phone and internet.
- Continuing to train individuals and families in good hygiene and sanitation
- Adding covid-19 prevention education to our existing projects
- Supporting our partners and communities worldwide who are involved “essential services,” particularly agriculture production, as price gouging increases and food supplies decrease.

D. International Disaster Response

The International Disaster Response team priorities moving forward are (1) continuing life-saving, essential humanitarian programming, and (2) examining how programming can be adjusted and adapted to the constantly evolving situation. While this global pandemic adds to the many needs faced by families around the world, their pre-existing needs remain. Those displaced by conflict, affected by drought or natural disaster, still require the basics, like nutritious food each day, and we are committed to providing that.

That means that we still need support to make these essential programs possible. It is not a time to forget about the global community we live in, but to walk alongside our global neighbours as they experience many of the same challenges that we are now experiencing. As food prices rise and currencies fall, it becomes even more difficult to provide the same level of assistance as before, yet we cannot forget those in need. The reality is simple: millions of people are more vulnerable today than they were just one month ago, and we must do what we can, with the resources and capacities we have, to offer assistance.

E. Refugee Settlement Activities:

The work of the Refugee Program continues in the context of COVID-19. We continue to work with churches on finalizing new sponsorship applications for submission to IRCC. Currently the Refugee Program is working on 76 sponsorship applications for 214 refugees. IRCC staff in Canada continue to receive and review sponsorship applications. However, processing overseas has stopped as many visa posts are closed. Between January 1, 2020 and April 6 2020, 12 refugees arrived in Canada through World Renew sponsorships. However, with the Government’s travel ban we received flight cancellations for 13 refugees. Weekly meetings with the Sponsorship Agreement Holder (SAH) elected council who

meet weekly with IRCC, as well as weekly meetings with the Refugee Sponsorship Training Program (RSTP) and the Canadian Council for Refugees (CCR) have been very helpful in gathering relevant and timely information that we share with sponsoring churches. In particular, the Refugee Program is providing resources and information for sponsors who are currently settling newcomers in the context of physical distancing. This is a challenging situation for the sponsoring churches as well as the newcomers.

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

Pray for a continuation of the work being done; pray that the virus will be stopped.

Share the continuing need for support for families and communities around the world for food, water and the basic necessities of survival by encouraging folks to go to this page:

<https://worldrenew.ca/CORONA>.

In Hebrews 13:5, God promises: "Never will I leave you; never will I forsake you." God emphasizes that He will not abandon us. He wants us to grasp firmly the truth that no matter what circumstances may indicate, we can know that He will not leave us to the mercy of those circumstances. We can rest in him, because God doesn't leave us on our own. NEVER leave....NEVER forsake.

He is very near to us in times of trouble. We KNOW that Almighty God is with us. No crisis is too big for God. The earth could give way - the mountains could fall into the sea - and even that would not cause us fear - because God is with us. Our omnipotent God is an "ever-present help.

God is our REFUGE and STRENGTH; a VERY PRESENT HELP in times of trouble (Ps. 46). God calls his church to share that comfort.

Blessings,



Peter Bulthuis, Director, Church and Community Engagement Canada

APPENDIX #6.2 – REDEEMER UNIVERSITY COLLEGE

Report to Classis Hamilton of the Christian Reformed Church: Spring 2020

During times of uncertainty, our trust in the Sovereign God brings comfort and a sense of peace. I am encouraged by Colossians 3:12 that instructs, “Therefore, as God’s chosen people, holy and dearly loved, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience.” Christians have a unique opportunity to embody Christ’s love during difficult times.

The impact of the COVID-19 public health crisis is far-reaching. For Redeemer, students are having to move out of residence and adjust to online learning, which will no doubt cause concerns and anxiety. Faculty and staff had to quickly make adjustments to work remotely. We anticipate this pandemic will also present significant financial implications for Redeemer, and for the broader community. Pray for students as they handle these changes and finish the year well under difficult circumstances. This is an unprecedented time in our history, and we ask that you pray that God will give the leaders of Redeemer wisdom to make the right decisions and provide the means to continue our mission in these uncertain times.

The COVID-19 pandemic has also affected Redeemer’s newly-created gap year program, Act Five, which was flourishing with its first cohort. It is disappointing that the program had to come to an abrupt end, just as students were entering their work placements, but the well-being of these students was first priority. Students were grateful for the time that they had this past year to live and learn together and were busy with the many programs and activities that Act Five offered. For example, students spent a week on the Six Nations reserve, learning from community members in partnership with Ohsweken Baptist Church. They also travelled to Zambia with Edudeo, serving in local villages and communities. The Act Five leaders are already making plans for next year and are excited about next year’s cohort.

Amidst this difficult situation, we have many things to reflect on and for which to be thankful. After a successful Organization Review and a Name Change application process with external expert review panels under the Postsecondary Education Quality Assessment Board (PEQAB), Minister for Colleges and Universities Ross Romano granted Ministerial Consent for Redeemer to be known as **Redeemer University** on January 20, 2020. This is an exciting and historic change for Redeemer! We believe that changing the institution’s name to Redeemer University will clear up confusion that regularly arises from the term “university college.” Aligning the name with the university education that Redeemer provides, clarifies the degree-granting status that we have had for over two decades.

More exciting changes are coming in the long-awaited filling of the provost and vice president, academic position. We are pleased to welcome Dr. David Zietsma as Redeemer’s new provost and vice president, academic beginning April 1. Dr. Zietsma joined Redeemer in 2007 as a member of the History department, and has served for the last five years as the vice president for external relations and enrolment. The wealth of knowledge and experience he gained in these roles, and his role as the dean of humanities, will serve Redeemer well as he makes the transition into the provost role.

During the first week of February, students, faculty and staff celebrated generous donors through the Gratitude Project - a week-long reflection and series of events highlighting the contributions made so that more students can afford a Redeemer University education. Redeemer is so grateful for the financial

contributions and support in prayer from the Christian Reformed Church. More young people than ever are being educated through a Reformed Christian worldview, and your partnership is vital in continuing this mission.

Redeemer prayerfully looks forward to a promising future with increased enrolment, a new strategic plan and a continued commitment to prepare students to follow Christ wherever they are called.

Sincerely,

Robert J. Graham, PhD
President



CALVIN
THEOLOGICAL
SEMINARY

Calvin Theological Seminary
CANADIAN Church-Relations Liaison
Report to Classis

Calvin Theological Seminary (CTS) has always had a deep commitment to Canadian churches and ministries but, for the first time in its 144 year history, it has called a Canadian pastor – living and serving in Canada! – to be an ambassador on its behalf north of the 49th parallel.

As CTS' *Canadian Church Relations Liaison* (CCRL), my role is to build and strengthen bridges between the seminary, you, your congregation, and the ministries of your classis. CTS has always been a community rich with resources for ministry! My desire is to see those resources shared broadly with the church in Canada so that congregations and Canadian ministries can further live into the mission God has given them.

I began my role in January 2020 and already God is opening doors of possibility! We've begun exploring with the Canadian Church Planting Institute (an initiative of several CRC classes in Ontario and Eastern Canada) how we might partner with them to further equip church planters. We've also had some initial conversations with the Christian Reformed Campus Ministry Association about possibly providing continuing education opportunities for our campus pastors and/or their staff and volunteer leaders.

Several other new initiatives to serve the church are already firmly in place. For instance:

- In the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic, CTS (through the Calvin Institute for Christian Worship) has already gathered several hundred articles and other resources to help churches cope with the new reality churches face in Canada and around the world. Additional resources are added daily! To explore what's available, go to <https://worship.calvin.edu/resources/resource-library/covid-19-and-worship-resources-for-churches-adapting-to-social-isolation> and to their partner site <https://preachingandworship.org/search/COVID-19>
- A new *Certificate in Bible Instruction* is now being offered for K-12 teachers who teach Bible classes in Christian schools or churches. The certificate will equip teachers at all grade levels to teach Bible classes steeped in solid theology, excellent pedagogy, and a passion for God's Word. The courses are offered online and designed to fit a teacher's schedule. Partnering with Christian School's International and Calvin University's Master of Education degree program, those who enroll in the course can receive graduate level certification.
- The new Doctor of Ministry (DMin) program at CTS is for ministry leaders who want to develop advanced ministry leadership skills and spiritual formation. Designed to fit a pastor's or ministry leader's life and ministry, the program empowers students to bring their ministry driven questions and congregational initiatives to bear within a community of learners.

How else might we serve? I'm eager to have conversations with you to determine other ways we might partner with you in your local congregations and classis. How might I help your Student Fund Committee, for instance (or classical Candidacy Committee, or Leadership Ministry team)? What workshops might I host in your classis that would benefit you and other local ministry leaders? What training resources does your congregation or council need? Is there a topic or issue that you'd like to have a speaker from CTS address in your congregation? In short, CTS is your seminary and we welcome opportunities to serve!

I'm looking forward to the partnerships we build together!

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