



Classis Alberta North

Agenda and Support Materials for 170th Session, March 12-13, 2021 Via Zoom Conference

CLASSIS MISSION AND VISION

The **Mission** of Classis Alberta North as a regional gathering of Christian Reformed churches is:

- To assist, support, and encourage faithful and creative local ministry, promoting healthy churches;
- To assist, support, and encourage local churches to unite in shared ministries of evangelism and diaconal involvement through denominational and common initiatives.

The **Vision** is that Classis Alberta North will be a gathering of mutually supportive, healthy churches expressing the good news of God's Kingdom that transforms lives and communities.

Serving Classis:

Jason Dahlman, chair

Harry Zantingh, vice-chair

Gary Duthler, Stated Clerk

Linda Ryks, Recording Clerk

Rich deLange, Classis Chaplain

Balloting Committee: Stated Clerk, Recording Clerk and technical host.

Credentials Committee: the delegates of **Neerlandia** and **Barrhead** CRCs

Advisory Committee on Overtures: the delegates of **First Red Deer** and **Inglewood** CRCs

Synodical Deputies: Rudy Ouwehand (BC-SE), Andrew Beunk (BC-NW), John Vanderburgh (AS/S)

WIFI: It is important that delegates each have their own laptop or desktop computers with stable internet access. It is advised that you print this Agenda and its support documents for easy and quick access as needed during the meeting. (Accessing them with WIFI or on your computer during the meeting may negatively affect your connection to the Zoom meeting.)

Delegates: You will be provided with detailed information about accessing the zoom meeting and other documents (and videos if applicable) well in advance of the meeting.

IMPORTANT: Print this Agenda and the support documents you need to have available as you participate in the Zoom meeting of Classis.

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AGENDA FOR CLASSIS

Friday, March 12, 2021, 7 p.m.

- Note 1:** Delegates will register between 5:30 p.m. and 6:30 p.m., with those needing help signing in earliest.
- Note 2:** 1st-time delegates will have indicated subscription to the Covenant for Office Bearers by email prior to the meeting.
- Note 3:** The time-line is a guide for the meeting and may be adjusted by the Officers.

- 5:30 Registration opens.
Once signed in, delegates will have the opportunity to mingle in smaller groups in the break-out rooms.
- 6:30 Welcome and Devotions Jason Dahlman, Classis Chair
- 6:50 Introductions and Opening Procedures Classis Chair
1. Introductions and Procedures
 2. Roll Call report
 3. Classis declared constituted
 4. **MOTION:** to adopt the Agenda with the time-line as guide
- 6:55 Round Table Sharing Classis Chaplain
Delegates will meet in small groups to share about congregational health, both blessings and challenges, and to pray for each other.
- 7:25 Ministry Presentation Healthy Church Task Force
*Delegates will have reviewed the report included with the agenda (pp.18-19). The HCTF will highlight its work and respond to questions and comments from delegates. HCTF will also introduce a proposal regarding the **Calling and Transition of Pastors (p. 19)** as well as an introduction to a discussion about the **mental health issues** faced by our church leaders (to be followed by a more in-depth presentation in October).*
- 8:10 Break
- 8:15 Seminar on the Human Sexuality Report. Peter Rockhold, Neil De Koning
In the coming months, the churches will be engaged in conversations responding to the Report of the Committee to Articulate a Foundation-laying Biblical Theology of Human Sexuality. To encourage those conversations, we will devote time to explore what is in the Report. The Executive Summary of that Report can be found on our Classis website at http://www.classisalbertanorth.ca/uploads/1/0/2/7/102702076/summary_human_sexuality_report_2020.pdf
- 9:15 Adjournment and Prayer Classis Chaplain

Saturday, March 13, 2021, 8:30 a.m.

- 8:00 Registration opens
Once signed in, delegates will have the opportunity to mingle in the break-out rooms.
- 8:30 Welcome and call to order Chair
Devotions Classis Chaplain
Roll Call Report Stated Clerk
- 8:50 Credentials Committee Report
The Credentials Committee reviews the credentials that have been received and makes recommendations about any requests or proposals that may have been submitted.
- 9:00 CIC Report Stated Clerk
The Stated Clerk will highlight the report which the delegates will have reviewed prior to the meeting. (p. 11)
MOTIONS:
- 1) That Classis approves the work and ratifies the decisions of the Classis Interim Committee since the previous Classis meeting.
 - 2) That Classis appoints Loretta Stadt as a member of CIC to a first term effective July 1, 2021.
 - 3) That Classis nominates Neil de Koning as Synodical Deputy and Cecil van Niejenhuis as Alternate Synodical Deputy.
 - 4) That Classis endorses the nomination of Marg Hoogland to the World Renew Board.
 - 5) That Classis approves Folkert de Boer's early retirement effective April 1, 2021. **(p. 59)**
 - 6) That Classis approves the proposed amendment to the Rules of Procedure, Classis Finances, regarding expenses. **(p. 16)**
 - 7) That Classis approves the job description for a commissioned pastor, submitted by Bethel Community CRC, as being consistent with the guidelines adopted by Synod. **(p. 53)**
 - 8) That Classis approves the job description for a commissioned pastor, submitted by Woodynook CRC, as being consistent with the guidelines adopted by Synod. **(p. 56)**
- 9:20 Nominations Coordinator – Proposal for selection of Minister delegates to Synod.
The Nominations Coordinator will introduce a proposal to restructure the way Pastor delegates to Synod are selected. (See p. 51)
- 9:35 Written Reports from Ministries Ministry representatives
Delegates will have reviewed the reports attached to this Agenda prior to the meeting. These will be discussed in the order found in the Table of Contents. If ministry representatives are present, they will be given opportunity to respond briefly to questions or comments from delegates. These reports are received for information.
- 9:50 **Ministry Presentation: Safe Church Committee**
The Safe Church Committee has submitted a written report about its ministry. (p. 31) A committee member will highlight the report and respond to questions or comments. Delegates will be asked to evaluate whether this ministry continues meets the criteria for Classis support. The criteria are addressed in the written report.
MOTION: that Classis confirms that the ministry of the Safe Church Committee continues to meet the criteria for Classis engagement.

- 10:15 Break
- 10:20 **Denominational Ministries Presentations**
As part of our broader community as the CRC in North America, we invite representatives of denominational ministries to share with us their vision and the work they do on our behalf.
Delegates will have reviewed their written reports prior to the meeting. A committee member will be available to highlight the work of the ministries and to respond to questions or comments from delegates.
- 10:20 **Ministry Presentation: Centre for Public Dialogue (p. 47)** Mike Hogeterp, Director
- 10:50 **Ministry Presentation: Ecumenical and Interfaith Relations (p. 48)** Jim Joesse
- 11:20 Break
- 11:25 **Executive Session: Oversight Committee Report**
The Oversight Committee will report on its process and progress in supporting Pastor Bruce Gritter following his separation from The River CRC. During the Executive Session, only Delegates, ordained members of Classis, members of CIC and the Recording Clerk will be present. All others will be directed into a break-out room. (For this virtual meeting, the technical host will also remain present.)
- 11:40 Church Counsellors and Church Visitors Reports
- 11:50 **Council of Delegates (COD)** Michelle Kool
Michelle, our representative on the COD, will make a presentation on the work of the COD
- 12:35 The meeting of Classis is recessed
- 12:35 **Annual General Meeting of the Association of Classis Alberta North**
*As a not-for-profit association, Classis conducts its own business meeting, chaired by the chair of the Classis Interim Committee. **The agenda is printed on the following page.***
- 12:50 The meeting of Classis resumes
- 12:50 Adjournment - closing comments and prayer Classis Chair and Vice-Chair

Bethel Community CRC (Edmonton) will host the next meeting of Classis on October 15-16, 2021.

AGM of the Association of Classis Alberta North to be held March 13, 2021

Agenda

1. Opening and welcome by the Chair of the Association, Neil De Koning
2. Motion to approve the Agenda
3. Motion to approve the Minutes of the AGM held on March 14, 2020 (See below).
4. Motion to approve the Financial Statements of the Association Classis Alberta North of the Christian Reformed Church in North America for the fiscal year ended December 31, 2020, as presented by Treasurer Mike Vos.
5. Motion to accept the signed Auditor's Report from Halpert Monsma, Chartered Accountants, which accompanied the Financial Statements for the fiscal year ended December 31, 2020, as presented by Treasurer Mike Vos. **Financial statements are posted on the Classis website.**
6. Motion to appoint Halpert Monsma, Chartered Accountants, as auditors for the fiscal year 2021.
7. Board of Directors:
Motion: To appoint Loretta Stadt as Director of the Association for a 3-year term effective July 1, 2021.
8. Question period
9. Adjournment

Minutes: Annual General Meeting of the Association of Classis Alberta North, March 14, 2020

- 1) Martin Mobach, Chair of the Association, opened the meeting with welcome and prayer.
- 2) **Motion carried:** to approve the agenda
- 3) **Motion carried:** to approve the minutes of the AGM held on March 19, 2019
- 4) **Motion carried:** to approve the Audited Financial Statements of the Association Classis Alberta North of the Christian Reformed Church in North America for the fiscal year ended December 31, 2019, as presented by Treasurer Mike Vos.
- 5) **Motion carried:** to accept the signed Auditor's Report from Halpert Monsma, Chartered Accountants, which accompanied the Financial Statements for the fiscal year ended December 31, 2019, as presented by Treasurer Mike Vos.
- 6) **Motion carried:** to appoint Halpert Monsma, Chartered Accountants, auditors for the fiscal year 2020.
- 7) Board of Directors:
 - a) **Motion carried:** To reappoint Mike Vos as Treasurer and Director of the Association for a 3-year term effective July 1, 2020
 - b) **Motion carried:** To reappoint Anita Veldhuisen-Slomp as Director of the Association for a 3-year term effective July 1, 2020
 - c) **Motion carried:** To appoint Brian Dunn as Director of the Association for a 3-year term effective July 1, 2020.
 - d) **Motion carried:** To reappoint Ellen Vlieg-Paquette as Alternate Treasurer for a 3-year term effective July 1, 2020.
- 8) **Motion carried:** to adjourn the meeting.

ORIENTATION FOR DELEGATES TO CLASSIS

This document is intended to help delegates, especially first-time delegates, better understand the procedures at Classis meetings as well as to answer some important questions. Please read carefully.

Agenda highlights

CIC Report:

The Classis Interim Committee (CIC) handles all matters that require attention between classis meetings. You will be asked to ratify the CIC's actions, as well as to vote on a number of motions proposed to Classis.

Missions and Ministries – Reports:

Classis ministries, as well as several denominational and other agencies, are asked to provide written reports for each classis meeting. Delegates are expected to have read the reports. If there are questions or comments, the presenters will be asked to respond. Otherwise the reports are received for information.

At each Classis meeting, some ministries are also invited to make presentations to provide delegates with a better understanding of how Classis and the denomination minister to and on behalf of the churches. At this meeting you will hear from the **Safe Church Committee**, the **Healthy Church Task Force**, the **Centre for Public Dialogue** and the **Committee on Ecumenical and Interfaith Relations**. For this meeting we have asked these ministries to prepare either a video or written report which they will highlight in the meeting.

The Safe Church Committee's presentation will be followed by a motion declaring that this ministry continues to meet the criteria for a Classis ministry in relation to the mission and vision of Classis.

The Healthy Church Task Force, in their presentation, will introduce a protocol for the calling and transition of pastors. They will also introduce a discussion on how we can support our church leaders in dealing with the stresses and anxieties inherent in their calling; a topic that will be explored more fully in our Fall meeting.

Report of the Committee to Articulate a Foundation-laying Biblical Theology of Human Sexuality

On Friday evening, we will spend some time to help orient delegates and, through the delegates, the congregations to this Report by reviewing and discussing its Executive Summary. The Executive Summary can be found on the Classis website at

http://www.classisalbertanorth.ca/uploads/1/0/2/7/102702076/summary_human_sexuality_report_2020.pdf

Overtures

Because Synod will not meet in 2021 and all overtures regarding the Human Sexuality Report will be deferred to Synod 2022, we have revised our Classis agenda. The overtures on the report that we have received are included in this package, but the discussion on them is deferred to our meeting in March, 2022. This gives the churches time to review the Report and the submitted overtures, and to determine if they wish to submit other overtures which will be discussed together.

Report from COD

On Saturday morning we have scheduled time for a presentation by Michelle Kool on the work and deliberations of the Council of Delegates (COD) which functions much like a denominational board.

See the next page for important things all delegates should know.

Things Delegates Should Know

For this Zoom meeting of Classis:

This is not going to be a “normal” meeting of Classis. (I know, there is no such thing, but this is special.) Since this will be a virtual (Zoom) meeting, ***please watch for, and read, the meeting instructions and information that will be sent to each delegate.*** We will be running practice sessions for those who need reassurance about this form of meeting.

Introduction:

Classis consists of three delegates from each member congregation – a pastor, an elder and a deacon. (If no pastor is available, a congregation may send 2 elders and a deacon.) Each Council has been asked to submit the credentials for their delegates prior to the classis meeting.

First-time delegates are asked to sign and send in the *Covenant for Officebearers* prior to the meeting.

Duration of Classis Meetings

- The Zoom meeting will begin at 6:30 p.m. on Friday and continue on Saturday morning. You are expected to participate from beginning of Classis until the meeting is formally adjourned. (No part of the meeting has optional attendance.)

Classis Agenda:

- The Classis Agenda will, ordinarily, be in the hands of church councils four weeks prior to the actual meeting date of classis. It is hoped that each church council will review the agenda prior to sending delegates.
- Delegates should thoroughly familiarize themselves with the classis agenda. The assumption is that the agenda has been discussed at the delegates’ local council meetings and that all documents have been read prior to the meeting.

Executive of Classis

- The Executive consists of a Chair, Vice-Chair and the Stated Clerk. A Recording Clerk takes minutes.
- The Stated Clerk appoints a Chaplain to lead Classis in devotions, to lead us in prayer, and to monitor the pastoral needs that arise in the context of the meeting.
- The Chair and Vice-Chair are asked to serve on a rotation basis (alphabetically by church name). The Vice-Chair will serve as Chair at the succeeding meeting of Classis.

What May I Expect to Happen at the Classis Meeting?

- First time delegates are to sign the Covenant for Officebearers and, in this case, to send in the form prior to the meeting.
- Delegates may be requested to serve in the following capacities:
 - **Prayer:** for the ministries of classis, concerns of classis and/or for individuals.
 - **Committee work:**
 - Delegates in teams of one or two churches may be asked to serve on one of the committees of classis.
 - Usually the advisory committees and credential committees meet prior to the classis meeting. If possible, and as appropriate, they will submit their reports prior to the meeting of Classis.
- Though there is a degree of flexibility, Classis abides by its own Rules of Procedure together with the rules of the CRCNA Church Order in conducting its meetings. The Church Order is determined by Synod and is held in covenant by all Christian Reformed Churches. The Classis Rules of Procedure are available on our website at: <http://www.classisalbertanorth.ca/documents.html>.

What is an Executive Session?

An executive session is a session of Classis at which only the delegates, other officebearers, CIC members and the recording secretary are present. This happens especially when we discuss sensitive matters involving individual persons; for example, in matters of discipline or when we discuss a motion to accept a candidate into the Ministry of the Word. Only delegates and certain other persons are allowed to be present for executive sessions. **EVERYTHING discussed in executive session is confidential** and may not be discussed in any manner by delegates outside of that session, not even in their home council meetings.

What Are Classis' Expectations of Me?

- Read the documents on zoom meeting etiquette and information for delegates.
- Attend and be on time for all parts of the classis meeting.
- Delegates are expected to review the agenda and its supporting materials prior to the meeting.
- If you do not understand a procedure, or it is not clear what is being discussed, or you are uncertain of the implications of a decision, **please ask**. It is important that all delegates deliberate and vote with full awareness of what is going on. That is a higher priority than “getting done” with the agenda.
- Delegates should report to their councils the decisions made at the classis meeting.

What does it mean that Classis is a deliberative body?

- You are not at Classis to represent your council, and delegates are not obligated to vote according to their council's wishes. Classis is a deliberative body and the delegates are expected to speak and make decisions guided by the Holy Spirit and based on the best information or perspective presented at classis. (*Church Order*, Article 34)
- Because Classis is a deliberative body it may make decisions from time to time that you do not necessarily agree with but which will be “our” decision as churches in Classis.
- Strong objection to a decision of classis may be voiced by stating your objection. If you wish to have your objection recorded, you will need to submit a written statement (within 24 hours) indicating your objection and reason(s) why.

What's an Overture?

- When a church council wants Classis to look at an issue, take an action, make a change, etc., the discussion is initiated by an “overture” which is a document that describes the action the council desires and provides grounds for that request. (In other words, for us an overture is not the introduction to a symphony or opera.)
Classis, through the CIC, appoints an advisory committee which is asked to study the overture and recommend a response to be considered by Classis.
- An advisory committee may also be tasked with reviewing requests that come from committees or other agencies.

What do the Acronyms Used at Classis Mean?

Here follows a list of more common acronyms often included in reports or heard at classis meetings. If you are puzzled by an acronym not listed here, do all the new delegates a favour and ask. (YANA: You Are Not Alone).

- CHMC – Classis Home Missions Committee
- CIC – Classis Interim Committee (also serves as the corporation's Board of Directors)
- CYMC – Classis Youth Ministry Committee (Bill Nieuwenhuis is Consultant)
- CMC – Classis Ministry Committee representing all Classis committees and ministries.
- CRCNA – Christian Reformed Church in North America
- COD – Council of Delegates of the CRCNA (Not unlike a board of directors.)
- DMC – Diaconal Ministries Canada
- EPMC – Ecclesiastical Program for Ministerial Candidates
- HCTF – Healthy Church Task Force
- NADC – Northern Alberta Diaconal Conference (Jesse Edgington is Consultant)

COVENANT FOR OFFICE BEARERS

NOTE: First-time delegates to Classis are asked to remit an emailed statement to the Stated Clerk that they have read/reviewed this document and affirm the Covenant. This must be received prior to the meeting. Send the following affirmation, with your name and church name to the Stated Clerk at classisstatedclerk@gmail.com:

As a first-time Delegate to Classis, I affirm my subscription to the Covenant For Office Bearers.

We, [the undersigned], believe the Holy Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments to be the inspired Word of God, which proclaims the good news of God's creation and redemption through Jesus Christ. Acknowledging the authority of God's Word, we submit to it in all matters of life and faith.

We affirm three creeds—the Apostles' Creed, the Nicene Creed, and the Athanasian Creed—as ecumenical expressions of the Christian faith. In doing so, we confess our faith in unity with followers of Jesus Christ throughout all ages and among all nations.

We also affirm three confessions—the Belgic Confession, the Heidelberg Catechism, and the Canons of Dort—as historic Reformed expressions of the Christian faith, whose doctrines fully agree with the Word of God. These confessions continue to define the way we understand Scripture, direct the way we live in response to the gospel, and locate us within the larger body of Christ. Grateful for these expressions of faith, we promise to be formed and governed by them. We heartily believe and will promote and defend their doctrines faithfully, conforming our preaching, teaching, writing, serving, and living to them.

Along with these historic creeds and confessions, we also recognize the witness of *Our World Belongs to God: A Contemporary Testimony* as a current Reformed expression of the Christian faith that forms and guides us in our present context.

We also promise to present or receive confessional difficulties in a spirit of love and fellowship with our brothers and sisters as together we seek a fuller understanding of the gospel. Should we come to believe that a teaching in the confessional documents is not the teaching of God's Word, we will communicate our views to the church, according to the procedures prescribed by the Church Order and its supplements. If the church asks, we will give a full explanation of our views. Further, we promise to submit to the church's judgment and authority.

We honour this covenant for the well-being of the church to the glory of God the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

CLASSIS INTERIM COMMITTEE REPORT

The Classis Interim Committee consists of 7 directors appointed by Classis.

Neil De Koning – Chair
Anna Feddes – Vice-Chair and Preaching Schedule Coordinator
Brian Dunn – Alternate Stated Clerk
Gary Duthler – Stated Clerk
Loretta Stadt
Anita Veldhuisen-Slomp – Nominations Coordinator
Mike Vos – Treasurer

The Classis Interim Committee (CIC) has met four times since our Classis meeting in October. The mandate of the Committee is to “do all things entrusted to it by Classis and all things that require the action of Classis prior to its next session,” and to “act as Directors of the Association of Classis Alberta North.” That mandate has kept us busy on several fronts. What follows is a summary of what CIC has done on the behalf of Classis, with the motions that have been passed.

1. Matters from the previous Classis Meeting

1.1. Minutes

Motion carried: to approve the minutes of the meeting of Classis, October 16-17, 2020. These minutes have been distributed and posted on the web.

1.2. Council of Delegates and CRCNA restructuring

Michelle Kool engaged the CIC in an update of the work of the Council of Delegates. She outlined some of the history of the restructuring process and discussed the misconception that this is about separation along national lines whereas the process is intended to explore what joint ministry looks like.

Michelle is involved on behalf of Classis Alberta North in many ways: she is chair of Resonate committee and vice-chair of Global Missions; part of the Executive Committee of the COD; vice-chair of the Canada Corporation and sits on its Executive; part of the task force creating the job description for the Canadian Ministries Director; and serves as part of the Structure and Leadership Taskforce (SALT). We owe her a debt of gratitude.

1.3. Ministry Shares

We received pledges from all but one of the churches by the end of January. Some time will be dedicated at the Classis meeting to discuss these pledges and to encourage each other in our support for denominational ministries.

1.4. Oversight Committee

CIC was tasked with the appointment of an oversight committee dealing with the Article 17 separation of Rev. Bruce Gritter from The River Community CRC.

Motion carried: that the oversight committee consists of Anita Veldhuisen-Slomp, Rev. Cecil Van Niejenhuis and Rev. Bill Nieuwenhuis.

The committee will present a brief update during this meeting of Classis.

2. Matters continuing or arising since the previous Classis Meeting

2.1. General

- a. Office: Rather than buying an extra computer, CIC agreed to pay the Stated Clerk \$125 per year for the use of his personal computer for Classis business.
- b. Abuse Insurance: While the churches have signed on to a policy statement required by the insurance company, Classis also needs a policy that covers its employees and volunteers, including regional pastors.
Mike Vos and Loretta Stadt will formulate a draft policy and seek input from the Safe Church, Campus Ministry and Youth Ministry Committees.

2.2. Healthy Church Task Force:

- a. Stress and the Clergy
HCTF sent a proposal to CIC regarding its concern about the stress, tensions and struggles pastors are experiencing and which are exacerbated during the pandemic. HCTF is recommending that this matter be addressed at a future Classis meeting.
Motion carried: to ask the HCTF to do a brief presentation about the issue at the March classis meeting with workshop or presentation follow-up at the October meeting.
- b. Pastoral Transitions
HCTF has indicated its concern that when pastors leave churches without transition conversations, the pastor and the congregation, as well as Classis, lose out on the opportunity to capture what has been learned in and from their walk together. HCTF has drafted a proposal to encourage such conversations. This will be introduced as part of the HCTF presentation at Classis, after which it will be finalized and distributed to all pastors and councils.
Motion carried: to approve the proposal in principle.

2.3. March Classis meeting

- a. Motion carried: that the March meeting of Classis will be a virtual meeting.
- b. Motion carried: to enlist Leah Martin-Visscher, Will Ryks, and Ben Scriber to serve as the support team for the virtual meeting.
- c. Pastor delegates to Synod:
CIC dealt with the challenges related to the schedule of appointing first pastor delegates to Synod. The inherited rotation schedule is arbitrary difficult to administer and it is hard to find a logical basis for it.
It was determined that we should schedule a short discussion at Classis to explore possible alternatives, with a policy to be ready for the Fall meeting of Classis.

2.4. Synodical Report on Human Sexuality:

CIC discussed the November release of the Report of the Committee to Articulate a Foundation-laying Biblical Theology of Human Sexuality.

Motion carried: to endorse the proposal [of the ad-hoc committee promoting conversations on LGTBQ2+ related matters] to gather together particular groups of people in the next half year to listen and discover the places of unity and difference for the sake of journeying together in faith through this contentious, challenging and disquieting concern about conversations in light of the Synodical Report on Human Sexuality.

Motion carried: to instruct the Stated Clerk to write a letter to the Council of Delegates requesting that the consideration by Synod of the Synodical Report on Human Sexuality

be delayed for one year to give the churches and classes time and space for the conversations that need to take place in the interest of finding unity where possible and room for each other where there is disagreement.
(See Appendix 1 of this report for the letter.)

2.5. Preaching assignments

CIC discussed the logistics of conducting preaching assignments during Covid. The consensus is that pastors do have a visiting role that can be adapted to the needs of the congregations, including the need for the administration of the sacraments. It is expected that the ministers and receiving churches can work out appropriate ways of fulfilling the role in these unique circumstances.

2.6. Rules of Procedure – Classis Finances

CIC and the Classis Ministries Committee discussed the need to clarify some of the procedures regarding the submission of expenses incurred by employees and volunteers.

Motion carried: to recommend that Classis approve the proposed amendment to the Rules of Procedure regarding expenses. (See Appendix 2 of this report for the amendment)

2.7. Commissioned Pastor job description

Bethel Community CRC (Edmonton) and Woodynook CRC have submitted job descriptions for commissioned pastor positions. The Church Order requires that Classis determines whether the job description is consistent with the guidelines adopted by Synod, and the Synodical Deputies must concur with the decision of Classis.
(The proposed job descriptions are included in the agenda package.)

Motion carried: to recommend that Classis approves the job description for a commissioned pastor submitted by Bethel Community CRC as being consistent with the guidelines adopted by Synod.

Motion carried: to recommend that Classis approves the job description for a commissioned pastor submitted by Woodynook CRC as being consistent with the guidelines adopted by Synod.

2.8. Appointments

- a. With the resignation of Martin Mobach, Neil De Koning and Anna Feddes were acclaimed as chair and vice-chair of CIC, respectively.
- b. Motion carried: to nominate Loretta Stadt as a member of CIC with a first term to begin July 1, 2021. (Loretta is presently finishing Martin Mobach's term.)
- c. Motion carried: to nominate Neil de Koning as Synodical Deputy and Cecil van Niejenhuis as Alternate Synodical Deputy.
- d. Motion carried: to endorse the nomination of Marg Hoogland to the World Renew Board.
- e. Motion carried: to appoint Teresa VanderKooi to the Safe Church Committee.
- f. Motion carried: to appoint Beate Schmitt as a member of the Cuban Connection Committee.
- g. Motion carried: to appoint Tony Maan as mentor for Commissioned Pastors Carlos and Meire Rosa.
- h. Church **visitors:** John Pasma has indicated that for health reasons he is not able to continue in the role of supporting and encouraging church visitor clusters. HCTF will not name someone to fill that role until they have conducted a review of this experiment.

2.9. Pastoral transitions

a. Folkert de Boer – early retirement

We have received a request to approve the early retirement of Rev. Folkert de Boer. This is accompanied by an endorsement from the Ebenezer (Leduc) council. (See material submitted with the Agenda.

Motion carried: to recommend to Classis that Folkert de Boer's early retirement, effective April 1, 2021, be approved.

2.10. Finances

a. Home Missions Budget

The Home Missions Committee asked for permission to allocate unused funds from the Church Renewal Lab project for a Church Renewal Conference in 2022.

Motion carried: to approve the request from Home Missions.

b. Audited Financial Statement

Motion carried: to recommend that Classis approve the Audited Financial Statement.

Motion carried: to recommend that Classis appoint the firm Halpert Monsma as auditors for the fiscal year 2021.

3. Motions by CIC to be voted on by Classis as part of this report

3.1. That Classis approves the work and ratifies the decisions of the Classis Interim Committee since the previous Classis meeting.

3.2. That Classis appoints Loretta Stadt as a member of CIC to a first term effective July 1, 2021.

3.3. That Classis nominates Neil de Koning as Synodical Deputy and Cecil van Niejenhuis as Alternate Synodical Deputy.

3.4. That Classis endorses the nomination of Marg Hoogland to the World Renew Board.

3.5. That Classis approves Folkert de Boer's early retirement effective April 1, 2021.

3.6. That Classis approves the proposed amendment to the Rules of Procedure, Classis Finances, regarding expenses. (See Appendix 2 of this report for the amendment.)

3.7. That Classis approves the job description for a commissioned pastor, submitted by Bethel Community CRC, as being consistent with the guidelines adopted by Synod.

3.8. That Classis approves the job description for a commissioned pastor, submitted by Woodynook CRC, as being consistent with the guidelines adopted by Synod.

4. Motions to be voted on by Classis in the course of the meeting:

4.1. That Classis appoints Loretta Stadt as a Director of the Association of Classis Alberta North to a first term effective July 1, 2021.

4.2. That Classis approves the Audited Financial Statement.

4.3. That Classis appoints the firm Halpert Monsma as auditors for the fiscal year 2021.

Submitted on behalf of the Classis Interim Committee

Gary Duthler, Stated Clerk.

CIC Report
APPENDIX 1: Letter to Council of Delegates

December 17, 2020

Rev. Paul R. De Vries, Chair,
Council of Delegates, CRCNA

Greetings,

The Interim Committee of Classis Alberta North has at length discussed how to promote conversations within Classis about the Report from the Committee to Articulate a Foundation-laying Biblical Theology of Human Sexuality. We know that the Report will draw strong reactions from a wide variety of viewpoints, and we are very aware of the need for conversations that encourage us to find common ground and unity in Scripture.

The introduction to the Report states that it “is made available to the CRC congregations and classes for discussion and careful review.” It then continues: “All responses to this report must be in the form of an Overture or Communication to Synod 2021. Such documents must be processed through a church council and then through classis and then be received by the Synodical Services Office by March 15, 2021, in order to be included on synod’s agenda.” This is a problematic introduction because it is self-defeating: the desire for discussion and careful review is incompatible with the imposed deadline.

The Report was released in November. It is unreasonable to expect that congregants, elders and deacons carefully reviewed a 175-page report prior to any council meetings in November. Considering that few councils meet in December, this means that the opportunity for councils to carefully draft, consider and approve an overture to Classis will be almost impossible, should that be the approach a church felt was needed. (Classis Alberta North meets in March and requires overtures and communications to be submitted at least a month prior to the meeting.) In short, congregants and council members will not have had time to review the report carefully, councils will not have had time to prepare thoughtful, articulate overtures and classis will not have time to prepare a communication or overture to Synod where this Report will be presented for approval.

We fear that by making thoughtful considerations very difficult, the march to the Synodical deadlines will mean that the responses will be dominated by those who have already made up their minds and by those who will only focus on specific elements of the Report. The whole “foundation of Biblical theology” that needs to inform the discussions if our goal is understanding and unity will not be addressed. This fear is exacerbated by the probability that both Classis and Synod may have to meet virtually, with all the limitations on healthy interactions and bridgebuilding inherent in virtual meetings.

We respectfully submit that setting the unreasonable timeline effectually disempowers the churches from participating in a consideration of the Report and we respectfully suggest that insisting on that timeline is an abuse of the power the COD has in setting the agenda for Synod. We therefore request that the COD determine that the churches will be better served in the quest for mutual understanding and unity by a delay of the consideration of the Report until Synod 2022.

In His Service,

Gary Duthler, Stated Clerk,
Classis Alberta North,
on behalf of the Classis Interim Committee

cc: Mr. Andy de Ruyter, COD Vice chair
- Rev. Darren Roorda, Director, Canadian Ministries
- Mr. Colin Watson, Sr., CRCNA Executive Director
- Rev. Michelle Kool, COD, Classis AB North Delegate

CIC Report

APPENDIX 2: Amendment to Rules of Procedure – Classis Finances

Recommended amendment to bullet 3:

All budget requests, **operating and capital**, for Classis funds must be submitted to the Treasurer by a stated deadline. The budget requests will be presented and discussed at the Classis Ministries Committee meeting(s), prior to the budget for the following year being finalised. The Treasurer will prepare a budget package to be sent to the churches with the **fall meeting** agenda. If a Classis ministry fails to submit a budget request on time, the Treasurer will submit a budget amount equal to that for the current year or less.

The annual operating budget is a forecast of revenue, the tithes of our churches' members, and Classis ministry committees' expenses with both potentially changing due to unforeseen circumstances. Therefore, expenses beyond those approved by Classis should not be made without the prior approval of the CIC (via the Treasurer). The CIC, committees and Classis personnel are expected to show good judgement and discernment when making expenditures in recognition of their accountability to the churches of Classis.

Classis Ministry committees are encouraged to communicate with and seek the input of the Treasurer when anticipating changes in their operating budgets.

Add new Bullet 4

Expenses incurred on behalf of Classis will be reimbursed using the provided form: Expense Reimbursement Request. The request is to be approved by the appropriate ministry committee chair. It is expected the request will be reviewed for accuracy and that the expenses claimed are within the Classis approved mandate and budget of the ministry.

Bullet 5 currently reads:

Capital expenditures are any new items to be purchased with a value of over \$1,500, excluding taxes, and will be amortized in accordance with CRA approved guidelines as directed by the Classis auditor. Individual items purchased with a value of under \$1,500, excluding taxes, will be included in the respective ministry committee's annual operating budget. Funds for approved capital expenditures are not set aside if the purchase is not made.

Recommended amendment to Bullet 5:

Capital expenditures are any new items to be purchased with a value of over \$1,500, excluding taxes, and will be amortized in accordance with CRA approved guidelines as directed by the Classis auditor. **The request for funds for the purchase of any item over \$1,500 (a capital expenditure) should be made at the time of annual budget preparation and, for the purpose of fiscal responsibility, have the prior written approval of the CIC before actual expenditure.** Funds for approved capital expenditures are not set aside if the purchase is not made. Individual items purchased with a value of under \$1,500, excluding taxes, will be included in the respective ministry committee's annual operating budget.

COMMITTEE AND MINISTRIES REPORTS

These reports from various ministries that support the mission of Classis Alberta North and the Christian Reformed Church are presented here and received for information. There will be no oral presentation of these reports at the Classis Meeting, but delegates will have the opportunity to ask questions about each of the reports where members of the ministries are present.

Check the Classis website for other reports (written or video) that may become available prior to the meeting.

(Formulate your questions and comments as you review these materials.)

Healthy Church Task Force

Report to Classis – March 2021

Despite COVID-19 restrictions your HCTF continues to meet monthly via Zoom. We spend a considerable amount of time dealing with sensitive pastor/church matters, which arise from time to time. These of course, remain confidential. Thankfully our Taskforce is blessed with members who use their training and experience to wisely address these situations and offer specific suggestions as to how to bring resolution.

A number of matters, which are taken up and can be publicly mentioned, are:

1. Peter Vanderbeek keeps the Web page updated. Feel free to browse and discover the status of churches and functionaries to various assignments.
2. Church Visitation is now to occur with clusters of churches visiting with each other addressing various issues, spending time in prayer and sharing of best practices. Especially with COVID restrictions Clusters have not been meeting. Recently Rev. John Pasma who was our cluster/visitation coordinator resigned due to his personal situation.

When Classis adopted the “cluster method” to implement C.O. Art. 42, we did indicate that it would be reviewed after two or three years. Now would be a good time to assess how best to move forward. A sub-committee (P. VanderBeek, chair) has been appointed to make recommendations. Feel free to share your opinions, ideas, beefs or bouquets with members of the Taskforce.

1. HCTF is responsible for the **annual Ministry Renewal Conference**, which was cancelled last April. We have decided that there will be no Conference this Spring due to ongoing pandemic considerations; possibly we could meet in September.
2. An **exit interview** questionnaire for those pastors leaving their churches and Classis has been prepared to gain insight into matters of which Classis, through its HCTF should be aware.
3. Stress levels amongst pastors, especially during this pandemic, are real. HCTF is prepared to lead a discussion at Classis as to how to address these issues and support individuals and churches.
4. Henry Kranenberg, Peter Vanderbeek and Gary Bomhof serve as **Regional Pastors** for our Classis. They are focusing on becoming more pro-active in contacting pastors in their areas to offer listening ears and suggestions.
5. The taskforce is following Synod’s proposed curriculum Re Abuse of Power. More information and training opportunities are forthcoming.

Members of the Taskforce have established a good personal and working relationship. We pray that the Lord may use us to be a blessing to individuals, churches and to Classis as a whole.

In Christ,
The Healthy Church Task Force

Gary Bomhof, chair
Joanne Munro
Anita Velthuizen-Slomp
Janet Paquette

Henry Kranenberg
Pete VanderBeek
Cecil Van Niejenhuis

Calling and Transition Protocols proposal

The Healthy Church Task Force (HCTF) makes the following recommendations to Classis Alberta North:

1. That Classis adopt a process of reflection and learning for churches and pastors when their relationship is coming to a close, including steps for calling, and processing of credentials. The process would be as follows:

a) Outline of Transition Steps

When it is determined that a pastor-church relationship is coming to a close,

1. Notify the Stated Clerk of Classis of anticipated change
2. Engage in a “Transitions Conversation” (described below in section 1 b)
3. Follow-up:
 - Council: inform the Stated Clerk of Classis when the Transitions Conversation has been **completed**
 - Council: request of the Stated Clerk of Classis a counselor for the calling process (*Note: if a particular pastor is being requested, this pastor needs to be one whose credentials are held by another church within Classis, so as to avoid conflicts of interest.*)
 - Pastor: request of Council and the Stated Clerk of Classis the processing of credentials
4. Once CIC receives word that the Transitions Conversation has occurred,
 - CIC to assign counselor through HCTF
 - CIC to process ministerial credentials
 - HCTF to send feedback form to Church and Pastor
5. Church to set up Search Committee
 - in consultation with Counselor
 - utilize the CRCNA resource “More than a Search Committee”

b) Transition Conversations

Purpose: to gain clarity regarding the relationship and mutual ministry of a pastor with Council/congregation, so as to foster appropriate acknowledgements and relevant learnings.

Attendees: pastor and three or more members of council.

Process: the default method would be a conversation around the questions below. By request, this conversation could be facilitated by a representative from the HCTF.

Sample Questions for the conversation:

- 1) Describe some of what has been good/enjoyable/satisfying in your time together.
- 2) Is there anything you wished you would have done differently? Explain.
- 3) What was especially challenging—even frustrating—for you in your tenure together?
- 4) What have you learned about pastoring, about the church, about yourself, about God?

- 5) What has been helpful about the council's partnership in leading, and in their support? How might this become still more helpful?
- 6) What has been helpful about the pastor's partnership in leading, and in pastor's support? How might this become still more helpful?
- 7) Are there any unfinished matters which should be named and for which there should be follow-up?

Note: transition conversations will be strengthened if they occur as part of an existing, regular pattern of interactions between a Council and Pastor (and Classis) that include

- *annual evaluation and feedback for pastor*
- *utilizing CRCNA resources such as Evaluation Essentials*
- *regular cluster conversations and/or regular reviews with church visitors*

2. That Classis, in order to ensure that Councils are aware of resources available and processes required, enquire of each Church Council a response to the following questions as part of the 'credentialing' process for Classis:

- a. Have you asked for or received a church visit from church visitors, and/or been part of a church visit cluster meeting as per CAN guidelines, within the last year?
- b. Of the resources available for Annual evaluation/feedback of both the work of pastors and the work of Councils, which have you found most helpful? Which practices are you currently employing?
- c. If your church is anticipating or has a pastoral vacancy, what resources have you accessed through Classis to ensure the necessary steps/processes have been met?

Classis Home Missions Report

Spring 2021

The Home Missions team continues to doggedly pursue a three-pronged mission strategy:

1. Church Planting,
2. Church Renewal, and
3. Prayer.

Church Planting:

- Bridge Church continues to impact Fort Saskatchewan in significant ways as Pastor Ryan's report shows (see below).
- We continue to dialogue with one church's leadership about sponsoring Classis' 2022 church plant.
- We are seeking to raise money to be able to support church plants through providing planter training and grants for church plants to undertake missional efforts.

Church Renewal

- We had planned to host the first annual Church Renewal Conference on June 5, featuring Tod Bolsinger, author of *Canoeing the Mountains*. We are now rethinking this in light of COVID-19 restrictions. We may take a different approach to help churches in ways suited to the times. We hope to have specifics by the time of our spring classis meeting.

Prayer

- Our goal is to have a prayer representative in each church. Ideally they would lead a prayer group that would pray for their own church and for the missional efforts of Classis. Many churches already have a rep. Some have prayer groups.
- Our hope is that every church will one day be in prayer for our shared mission, and that the prayer reps will be in contact with one another.
- Prayer encouragement-and-training events are already being offered regularly through our Classical Prayer Coordinator, Pastor Rich DeLange, sometimes as a shared effort of the Prayer Coordinator and the Home Missions Team.
- Pastors and church leaders. If you have a qualified individual who could serve as your prayer point person, please put them in touch with Pastor Rich.

Bridge Church Report

Greetings Sisters and Brothers in Classis Alberta North

In Colossians 4, Paul instructs the Colossians to pray that God may "open doors" for the Gospel to be proclaimed. He tells them to "be wise" and "make the most of every opportunity" in their relationships with those outside their community.

I am pleased to report that the congregation at Bridge Church has been faithful to these instructions. By God's grace, our leadership team has sought the Lord and looked for open doors to connect with the people of Fort Saskatchewan.

Here are two big examples: First, we hosted outdoor concerts with multiple community bands this fall. The Rotary Club, Boys and Girls Club and an addictions recovery group eagerly jumped on board to help. This was an incredible chance to mingle with and get to know our neighbors in the Fort. The second example is when we hosted a drive-in Christmas Eve service for the community. Once again hundreds came in their cars looking for Hope.

These opportunities to build a connection with people have led to *real life change*. Whether it was a man who came on Easter, watched online for the summer and was baptized in the fall. Or the man who came on Christmas Eve and was later connected to MosaicHouse in Edmonton (it was much closer to his home!). God is using Bridge to draw people to Himself.

What is ahead for Bridge Church? We sense God's leading to venture deeper into the world of online church community. The internet is a fantastic place to reach new people with the Gospel of Jesus. In addition to expanded online ministry, we have church leaders being trained in a church planting program called "Dinner Church." This training is graciously subsidized by Resonate. We will look to offer two Dinner Church "Campuses" in Fort Saskatchewan and Josephburg.

Thank you for your partnership in the Gospel through prayers, financial support and encouragement. We are honored to continue the work of evangelism and discipleship in the region of Fort Saskatchewan. We move forward in faith.

Sincerely,

Pastor Ryan and the Team at Bridge Church

Cuba Connection Committee to Classis

In 2019, John Strikwerda, Chairman; Larry Lutgendorf, Resonate; and Jim Dekker, translator/historian visited Cuban churches for a week. Six churches were seen. Many discussions were held with pastors and staff regarding the activities such as senior services, outreach and congregational activities. In all instances we were received with great hospitality.

On the weekend, we visited the Havana church pastored by the President of the churches, Yordanys Ortega. We met on Saturday with the new council and representatives from La Grave, Grande Rapids Cuba committee and Luis Peltier, Resonate leader for the Caribbean countries.

The discussion centred on presentations relating to the work of the Cuban churches and how we can support them. The needs identified included pastoral family support, continued development of the national office, repair of pastoral houses and churches, and support for evangelism and education.

Practical needs such as vehicle repair and replacement were also tabled. One final important project identified was the desire to put in place church twinning. All of these discussions were prefaced with the reading of 1Peter 2:9.

We joined the Sunday worship service with an exuberant congregation and an uplifting spirit. We enjoyed a wonderful meal with the Pastor and his family and members of the council. It was a true celebration of love between members of the Church universal.

Throughout all of this a program of enhancing relationships between Classis Alberta North and the Cuban churches was developed. Unfortunately, the pandemic put a hold on the committee's ability to meet and pursue these endeavors.

Early last Fall we were receiving indications of a change in Cuban government monetary policy. Numerous emails from Cuba confirmed the worst possible scenario for churches generally and our affiliated churches particularly. Effective January 1, 2021 the Cuban peso was being valued relative to the US dollar. The immediate result was high inflation. Coupled with the change in monetary policy was the raising of the minimum wage.

While this move might be considered positive, the result is massive layoffs for the churches. There is no possible way the churches can afford to pay those wages and continue their diaconal work, pay inflated prices for food, etc, and pay their pastors. More than 19 people have been put out of work. Food and drug supplies are becoming harder to get. Prices are high. The situation is very bleak for the Cuban people.

We sent \$3500 to the Cuban church in December. Another \$5000 dollars will be sent shortly. These are all a result of donations made by various churches in our classis. Supporters in the USA are also sending funds. We are coordinating with our American friends in understanding developments and responding as best we can.

Thank you to all who have supported the Cuba Connection Committee. That support has been very thankfully received by our brothers and sisters in Cuba. Seniors are fed and housed. Children are learning the gospel. Members of each church are supported where needed. Outreach is happening. All this at risk due to arbitrary decisions by government.

Please continue to hold the Cubans in your hearts and prayers. Where possible, hold a collection in your church and send the money to Resonate Canada earmarked for the Cuba Connection Committee.

Thank you for your prayers and support.

On behalf of the Committee, John Strikwerda

Youth Consultant Report

Since the last meeting of Classis Alberta North in October, youth ministry continues to be challenging due to restrictions on gathering because of COVID-19. In person meetings have been mostly few in number or nonexistent. I have had to rely on using Zoom calls for consultation or meetings. Here are the more noteworthy matters I have been up to since the last Classis report.

- On October 5 & 6 I participated with a number of other CRC Growing Young trainers in the second gathering of the Heartland Growing Young Cohort RCA (Reformed Church of America). This meeting was held virtually through Zoom. The three churches from Northwest Iowa and the one from Southwest Minnesota were in attendance. In this phase of the training the goal was to lead the churches to develop a concrete plan to move forward with directing their churches deeper into a Growing Young approach to ministry. I can say it was a very productive two days! All the churches expressed their struggles with COVID-19 and overall church\youth ministry. In the end, though, all four churches came through with solid plans for their church's future engagement in youth ministry through Growing Young principles.
- In mid-October pastors Ken Vis, Leon Johnston and I meet to discuss the matter of young adult's ministry in the churches of our Classis. In early September we had discussed reaching out to young adults and what form that might take. We decided to take some time for prayer and to see where God would lead. Most young adults that we have talked to in the meantime have indicated that they are weary of more Zoom meetings as much of their educational experience is delivered this way. We three continue to ponder and discuss the matter to see what direction might be helpful for the young adults of our congregations.
- On October 29-30 I participated in the bi-national CRC Youth Champions Retreat (virtual). This was planned and put together by the CRC Youth Executive lead by Ron DeVries and on which I serve. We planned for a retreat where the participants could find a quiet spot away from their places of work to be present for the event through Zoom. During this time we had presentations on the follow up book to *Growing Young* called *Growing With*. By all accounts it was a very successful retreat. The presented information was well received and the break was timely for a group of ministry personal who are all struggling to keep going in these challenging times.
- Last summer I held a youth leader training event with three youth leaders from Wolf Creek CRC (teaching them how to study the Bible). These same three leaders invited me to attend one of their youth evenings to see how they were doing at implementing the lessons I taught them with the Bible Tools Workshop. I was able to attend a youth night on November 2nd and saw eleven young people from Grades 7-12 and their leaders fully engaged in using their Bibles and their Bible concordances, dictionaries and handbooks studying of the Gospel of Mark! It was an amazing moment for me to see the youth fully engaged in using the materials. The evening was a delight to be there for and I got a chance to add into the study and discussion as well.
- During this COVID-19 time I have been keeping in touch with youth pastors and some lay youth leaders in our Classis to give support as I can. The burden of ministry during the pandemic does wear greatly upon our youth ministry leaders. A number of youth\faith formation pastors are very stressed and tired at this point of the pandemic and are facing a variety of challenges. We need to continue to pray for those who are striving to do meaningful ministry with youth and young adults during this time of uncertainty. I also continue to stay in contact with Pastor Derrick Lee (Classis assigned mentee) to see how he is doing in his new ministries as part time hospital chaplain in Bonnyville and reserves chaplain at Canadian Forces Base Cold Lake.

- I have been asked to serve on the Classis Oversight Committee for Rev. Bruce Gritter who left The River Community Church, CRC, at the end of June 2020. The two other committee members and I have been in communication with Pastor Bruce and our work is progressing.
- In late November I conducted two Sunday evening training sessions of the Bible Study Tools Workshop for the Baker family from First CRC, Edmonton. This was an experiment to see how the method might work in a family setting with parents and teenagers\young adults learning together. Janneke and Shawn Baker have four children. Two were away at university at the time but two were at home (Grades 9 & 11). The first session of training I taught the family how to use the tools (Study Bible, Bible concordance, dictionary and handbook). For the second session a week later the four family members each gave a short presentation on a person\place\topic from the Bible of their choice. This exercise went very well. Parents and students alike had learned much. All four family members also noted how this workshop in Bible study had immediate benefit when hearing sermons during Advent. The Baker family is very appreciative of having done the workshop. Their family time at the dinner table has become much richer through discussing sermons, looking deeper into the Bible and gaining new insights from the Bible for their faith walk. The Bakers plan to do some recruiting of other families who would be willing to take the training in the future.
- I preached at The River CRC on Thanksgiving weekend in October. On November 15th I installed Edson's new pastor, Daniel Meyer, after he had successfully completed his Classis exam in at the last meeting of Classis. I filled in at Barrhead CRC on November 29th. I was also supposed to preach at Barrhead on December 13th but the then new provincial pandemic guidelines lead Barrhead church to close down its services for December. I did provide them with my written Advent sermon for distribution to their congregants for that Sunday. I also preached at Centrepointe CRC on January 24th. December 5th I conducted a wedding at The River CRC for two of the young adults from that church who I have gotten to know.
- December and January has been taken up with reading some books that have been on the back burner and working on Bible Studies for my Gospel of Mark series to go with the Bible Tools Workshop. My hope is to have all 36 studies finished by some time in February and then review\finalize\edit them all by the summer. At that time they will be ready to be freely distributed to churches\youth groups that have done the Bible Tools Workshops in Classis. January 26th I attended a Classis sponsored workshop on Gender and Human Sexuality. The 2.5 hour presentation took up the report that is scheduled to go Synod 2021 for approval

This completes the summary of my work for the fall and early winter. The reality of the pandemic conditions and restrictions seems to make everything much more difficult to do than it should be. Yet, in the midst of all this, the Lord remains sovereign and on the throne. By keeping our eyes fixed on Jesus there, and exercising care here below, we continue to advance the work of youth ministry in Classis Alberta North.

Sincerely,
 Pastor Bill Nieuwenhuis
 Classis Alberta North Youth Consultant

[Check out the Classis Alberta North Website Youth Ministry Page:](http://www.classisalbertanorth.ca/youth-ministry.html)
<http://www.classisalbertanorth.ca/youth-ministry.html>

NADC Consultant Classis Report: March, 2021

Northern Alberta Diaconal Conference: A Classis ministry of which all churches are members. The full board consists of a representative of each church. This representative is usually, though not always, a deacon. We exist to encourage congregations and communities to grow in living lives of stewardship, justice, mercy, and compassion. This is done by regularly meeting, collaborating, communicating and sharing of experience between members and ministry partners. Since we met last fall:

- 1) DOE 2020 happened the first Saturday of November with an online format. We explored the topic of Care and Connection through many great speakers and stories. We were unsure of the appetite for zoom meetings but we had a modest crowd of about 70 people. One encouraging thing was that we did have participants literally from coast to coast (as well as one from the USA). While we missed out on the obvious advantages of meeting in person, we gained the accessibility of distance, being able to make a video recording of the event and providing some unique audio/visual content. The day was well received and we got positive feedback. You can watch the sessions at:
<https://youtu.be/O0GA52YfdX8> - John Van Sloten
<https://youtu.be/4y6nJO4BeZE> - Richard Bodini, Anita V.S. & Mel Slomp
<https://youtu.be/Bc7buwk7Oc> – Sarah Roelofs, Dena Nicolai & Rick Mast.
- 2) Later in the fall I started ongoing participation with a group of CRC people in western Canada to explore a revival of the Hearts Exchanged program; that first took place in 2000. The initial event was a step towards reconciliation with Indigenous Peoples and, while some of our churches have been active in certain ways, it was meant to be a more formal and ongoing process. We are exploring ways to facilitate further learning, relationship building and promotion.
- 3) Looking at 2021 so far and what's to come:
 - a. The Deacons and reps met on February 11th by zoom to connect and encourage each other. We heard from Chris Artola who is a new area rep, for World Renew in their finance department. We also heard from Dona Abma, who is one of the founding directors of The Broom Tree Foundation in Lacombe. She shared about this vital ministry for women, the impacts it is having and how churches in our Classis can be involved. If you were unable to attend but want to hear more, please check out the website for the recording (www.classisalbertanorth.ca/nadc).
 - b. Involvement in various zoom meetings with deacon chairs, connections to Classis ministries like the Cuba Connection, and our denominational partners of World Renew and Diaconal Ministries Canada continues as best it can during covid. Online connection has been a blessing to be able to at least engage in some interaction and things like justice book clubs, neighborhood engagement learning and benevolence workshops have been some of them.
 - c. My involvement continues with prison ministry connections, but in disrupted ways because of covid. I have helped facilitate community reintegration group meetings; both online and limited capacity, physical distanced. With things being locked down again, I have had to visit inmates by phone and online. Morale is low with the guys in prison and half-way houses and they seek connection and hope. So far there have not been major illnesses in the facilities that I interact with but that is sadly not true of everywhere. Things are worse off in larger facilities and we are holding out hope for a quicker vaccine roll out for everyone in Canada.

Submitted by: Jesse Edgington

yournadc@gmail.com

780-819-7488

Campus Ministry Committee

Report for March 12-13, 2021, Classis Alberta North Meeting

In September 2020, Rick found himself facing a dramatically different U of A campus community than any before. As he describes it, “ Walking around campus felt like walking through a ghost town. Campus student residences, where other years I creatively loitered among students twice a week, were closed to public traffic and almost completely empty. None of my colleagues were in their offices; staff was ordered to work remotely; university meetings had been moved into online formats.” As well, massive provincial government budget cuts and subsequent downsizing, has led to the elimination of entire departments. As for students, many are lonely, overwhelmed, and suffering from serious mental health issues as a result of the pandemic with substance abuse often a big concern. Rick reports, “At the University of Alberta - like at most North American universities - nearly 87 per cent of students report feeling overwhelmed by the everyday pressures of university life. More than half experience hopelessness and anxiety as a result. And almost nine per cent - more than 3,000 students - are so overwhelmed that they seriously consider suicide.”

It is into this world that our campus pastor, Rick Mast, strives to minister. And mainly he has to do it virtually. What a challenge! As Campus Ministry Committee our goal this past semester has been to help Rick obtain the tools he needs to better stay connected to students and to reach out and minister to them virtually (eg. a new computer and related accessories) and to support and encourage him as he does so. One can read of how he is carrying out his ministry in his separate report.

The members of the Campus Ministry Committee concur that our campus pastor continues to fulfill his mandate and be a blessing to the U of A campus community in spite of all the challenges of the the COVID-19 pandemic. And, as Rick asks at the end of his report, “please continue to pray for our ministry here at the UofA.”

1. Meetings:

- Rick Mast and Campus Ministry Committee member, Jim Joosse, attended the Classis meeting of October 16, 2020.
- November 16, 2020- the entire Campus Ministry Committee met by Zoom
- December 14- NAIT chaplain search committee met and interviewed a potential candidate
- December 17: Co-chairs Jonathan and Janet and Rick Mast met with the Classis Stated Clerk and Treasurer to discuss and clarify expense claims and communication issues.
- January 19, 2021- the entire Campus Ministry Committee met by Zoom

2. NAIT Ministry Update:

To date, the search committee for a NAIT chaplain (Jonathan Nicolai de Koning; Rick Mast; Anita Veldhuisen-Slomp [CIC Rep]; Loretta Stadt [Local Church Rep]) has interviewed one applicant but will not be proceeding further in the hiring process with this individual. The primary reason was that the applicant's current schedule and other work commitments did not give him the ability to provide a consistent ministry of presence at NAIT nor did it allow for more certain commitment to the position in the future.

In its deliberations afterwards, the committee recognized that we do not need to feel particular urgency to fill this role until we find the right person. Our current pandemic-influenced season will not last forever, and although it would be helpful to find someone in the coming months to begin building a strong foundation for post-pandemic ministry, it is most important to find the right person in time for September 2021. A hire prior to that would be

beneficial but not a necessity. Two potential applicants reached out to the hiring committee in early December and we will begin the screening process in early 2021.

Below is a summary description of the position of Campus Minister, Northern Alberta Institute of Technology (Paid - Casual, 6 hours/week) and the desired qualifications. Advertising in church bulletins and elsewhere has been sporadic. We ask for the help of Classis delegates to spread the word. Also, reviewing the description below may bring to mind possible candidates that could be encouraged to apply.

Position Summary: The campus minister is called to:

- establish relationships with NAIT students, faculty, and staff (especially students)
- serve the spiritual needs of the whole campus community;
- be a visible presence of the CRC church at NAIT;
- create a space in which people of faith can gather together for discipleship;
- take advantage of opportunities to collaborate with NAIT and/or other communities and faith groups
- identify and develop potential student leaders;
- promote and connect students to local faith and/or church communities
- report regularly to the campus ministry committee, and twice a year to Classis North.

Qualifications:

- A faithful follower of Jesus Christ, and an active member of a Christian Reformed faith community.
- A heart for post-secondary students and for the NAIT community as a whole.
- Outgoing personality and excellent communication skills.
- Ministry or other relevant experience would be an asset.

For further info, contact Jonathan.Nicolai-deKoning@kingsu.ca

Respectfully submitted,

Janet Greidanus, Jonathan Nicolai deKoning, co-chairs

Judy Groenendyk

Jim Joosse

Anna Noga

Dave Nydam

Tian Ooi, Student Rep.

Campus Minister – University of Alberta

Naturally, and unnaturally, COVID-19 has had a dramatic effect on life at the university.

Each year university Counselling and Clinical Services hire students to help with caseload. These train for the most common type of counselling (dealing with the fall-out of not getting into a desired class, romantic break ups, lower than expected grades, rejection from a program). This year, those issues *aren't even surfacing*. Showing up instead are SERIOUS issues which those hired students are not equipped to deal with: sexual assault, serious consideration of suicide, drug and alcohol addiction, including opioid addictions. Students are off campus, online, isolated, and perhaps studying in a basement in their home country/small town. Many are finding their realities crushing.

To help out in the lives of students, I have taken on a variety of tasks within the university. I volunteer for English Reading Club, English Conversation Club, Residence Life & Isolation Wellness, Access Community Brokers Team (dedicated to making a difference in how students 'access' and engage with mental health supports in conjunction with a nationwide group of ACCESS stakeholders), and the Community Social Work Team providing information, engaging in discussion, and challenging unhealthy life choices at the University of Alberta.

I have been welcomed, with frequent mention of “appreciating a chaplain’s perspective”.

Some members wrote, in response to my work (for all committee members to read): “Rick, as with all the pieces you’ve written for DOA work, I so appreciate your tone with this content -- it's so encouraging and inviting.” Another wrote: “This just reads so lovely! What a great way to discuss what some view as intimidating, in such a welcoming way. 😊”, and “Your care for our campus community is seen through your actions, Rick. I'm so grateful to have you as part of our team. Thank you for the time, care, and thoughtfulness you bring to the work we are doing with the other members. Your energy and attention to hope makes a difference. Thanks for everything you've given to this work over the fall semester.”

Most Christian witness is accomplished over a bridge of personal connection.

I remember a young man last year who was struggling. Much had been damaged and ruined by him because of careless sexual activity – he was despondent, telling me that he was giving up. I met with him some ten times. He told me that many people back home had supported his getting to the UofA and that he had become a failure; that he didn't deserve their love or support, and that he certainly didn't deserve God's care or attention either. I agreed with him, out loud. I said, “Yes, you're right, you don't deserve it. But do you know what God wants you to know? No, you don't deserve it. But you're worth it! God shows us that in Jesus Christ.” He had been slouching, and then sat up much straighter and said “Oh, I like that!”

Within two weeks his mother called me to say that she hoped that I was understanding just how important I had been through her son's dark time. And around that time, he told me he was done with 'hook up culture' and that he was making some new plans. And then in May he shot me a text, “Hey Rick, thank you so much for bringing a light in my life when things seemed so dark.” I wrote him back with four words: “You are worth it!” This past New Year's Day, he wrote again. “Happy new year, Rick. You have given me so much guidance and hope in the hardest year of my life. I can't thank you enough for everything and I cannot wait to see you the next time we can. You have made a serious impact in my life and I am forever grateful.”

Of course, an even better approach to just waiting until students, staff or faculty are unwell to connect with us as chaplains, would be an approach which establishes personal contact at any and every opportunity. As a Classis Alberta North ministry, we strive to make those contacts, however COVID-19 has changed *how* the majority of those contacts can now be made. This semester our Christian Reformed Campus ministry is going to offer a bolstered online presence as one more way to effectively open doors for meaningful and life-changing/saving relational connections for students, staff and faculty. We have invested budget funds into some new technology. With the aid of our newly purchased computer and a video editing program, we are going to have an even higher-profiled online presence. However, that first step of reaching out to me as a campus minister is a huge step. I was just recently contacted by a student from Northern Alberta who told me that he had been watching my “online offerings” since September before (finally!) contacting me in January!

This work cannot and does not get done in isolation. Many people in our Classis contribute to our success through prayer, direct participation, contributing resources and expertise making this work possible. We have a Classis Ministries Committee of seven individuals who volunteer their time to oversee the ministry. Our denomination hosted an October meeting to bolster Safe Campus guidelines. CRC Resonate Global Mission has sponsored and partnered with me and our emerging international student leader Tian Ooi from Singapore, for the past two years. Tian remains an essential part of our campus ministry. For instance, this past semester Tian created a video for students, highlighting how she reaches out for help with basic mental health issues. Our work is made possible by the broad base of support we gratefully receive through Classis Alberta North. In November I presented at the Day of Encouragement where I shared our work on campus to a wide range of CRC members.

Space prevents me from saying much more, but I want you to know that we ministered to our “connected” students (including international students), staff and faculty over the Christmas holidays with gifts of chocolate letters, pepernoten, gevelde speculaas (thanks to Ben’s Meats) and two online evenings of painting with (now YouTube’s) Bob Ross. Over twenty participated!

Young adults are not always to be found in our churches, but many young adults are here on campus. These students are willing to connect with someone who demonstrates that they care and are interested in them. I am interested, and I do care. Please continue to pray for our ministry here at the UofA. Thank you for your support this year again.

Rick Mast - UofA CRC Campus Minister

Classis Safe Church Committee

Our Committees Objective: To work with and remind congregations that we need to keep our vulnerable people in our congregations safe and secure.

- Congregations (Safe Church Committees) must be concerned about how to keep their vulnerable people safe, develop clear policies and procedures (that) will serve to protect both those who work with our vulnerable and our vulnerable members.
- Abuse can be categorized as physical, sexual, emotional, neglect, bullying as well as abuse of power.
- The church facility must be a safe environment; for example, lighting (inside and outside), hallway monitoring (visible room areas), floor and walls clear of dangerous objects and so on.

Committee members: Ken Vis (Chair), Teresa Vanderkooi, Jennifer Uitvlugt and John Feddes are available to assist churches in developing their Safe Church Policy and Procedures Manual and forward any new or pertinent information.

- Teresa meets with the Cross Canada Regional Safe Church Reps.
- Jennifer has been focusing on the implications of COVID with on-line classes.
- John communicates with the Safe Church Reps from each congregation every three months. John also maintains the website and enters or deletes resource material from our Dropbox, which is accessible from our website.
- Pastor Ken serves as Chair and is our representative at Classis.

Committee self evaluation:

- a) We have evenly distributed our duties amongst our four members.
- b) As stated in our committee's objectives, we are committed to reaching out to every congregation's safe church committee. We send out an email every three months reminding the committees of the resources we have both in our dropbox and on our webpage. These include books that are recommended reading, material that can be used for teaching and annual orientation in their ministries. We have received good feedback that the material we have posted is of use.
- c) We offer to visit the committees if that would be helpful.
- d) We feel that the committee has adequate resources at this time. Some churches are well along in implementing their policies/practices while others are progressing at a slower rate. It appears that all congregations have some form of a safe church policy.
- e) **Challenges:** We have found it difficult communicating with some churches. Each church senses a different level of urgency in formulating policies and procedures to protect their vulnerable and those that work with the vulnerable. Insurance appears to be an issue for some as well. The denomination is suggesting \$5,000,000 for basic protection against allegations. Safe Church Committees vary considerably, ranging from the pastor to a well-represented Safe Church committee that meets regularly and keeps updating their policy and procedures.

Another challenge: Abuse of power has been expanding our church definition of "vulnerable". Vulnerable is not only defined by age or those with special needs but also includes power issues. For example, an elder, deacon, prominent leader or pastor can easily abuse their position and therefore make others vulnerable. A well-spoken person has

power over those who are not so eloquent. Those with financial means can use that as leverage to persuade others. We need to remember that some people are in leadership positions, some have financial abundance, and others have the gifts to speak well. However, in our positions, we must remember that we are called to serve and not to be served and it is important to recognize all forms of possible abuse.

Another challenge: Some of our congregations do not appear to be taking the AHS guidelines seriously. **Classis must** remind the delegates that they are putting their congregants in danger and they set a poor example to their surrounding community.

- f) **Future Work:** Encourage more congregations to consider the Circle of Grace program. Encourage annual orientation/training for each church ministry. Only 8/32 congregations have reported 5 million insurance coverage. We have not been able to contact 3 congregations. We will encourage Classis to have a Safe Campus Policy and investigate if Classis requires a safe classis policy for its employees and volunteers.
- g) **We recommend that Classis confirms that this ministry continues to meet the criteria for Classis engagement.**

Website: Highlights reading material, books and articles, upcoming webinars and provides access to our resource material including sample policies.

Resources: At this point, the Safe Church Committee has the resources to assist each congregation in their journey of achieving a safe environment for their congregants. (Could use a few funds for purchasing an occasional pizza.)

Classis Input: The Committee feels that it is important for Classis leadership to remind church delegates that this is an important ministry in their church and to utilize the Classis Committee and website to help them design and follow a Safe Church Policy.

Respectfully submitted;

Ken Vis (Chair), Jennifer Uitvlugt, Teresa Vanderkooi, and John Feddes

World Renew

Classis Alberta North Report – winter, 2021

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

The churches of classis Alberta North are experiencing changes like never before in classis' 64 year history. You've changed (several times!) worship service formats, ways of fellowshiping, 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 \$540,384.54 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). (<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 ether 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 Alberta North 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.

Blessings,

Peter Bulthuis, Director, Church and Community Engagement Canada

Diaconal Ministries Canada

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

The King's University

Report to Classis AB North of the Christian Reformed Church: January 2021

Greetings from The King's University! We continue to be thankful for the community that walks alongside us as we serve our Lord through all that we do at the university. Despite being enveloped in a global pandemic that has presented many challenges, our comfort is found in belonging to God and participating with Him in renewing every square inch. We have so much to be thankful for and we continue to have hope for the future.

Contrary to the speculation about how the pandemic might impact enrolment numbers this year, we were surprised and grateful to experience another year of increasing student enrolment. This fall we welcomed 858 students to their studies at King's. This past spring, when the impact of the pandemic was being realized, some were forecasting declines in enrolment of up to 20%. While some higher education institutions did experience dramatic decreases in enrolment, we are incredibly thankful that we were not only spared enrolment declines but were surprised with the blessing of increase – thanks be to God! We continue to covet your prayers and support in encouraging prospective students in your community to pursue their Christian university education at King's. Despite positive student enrolment numbers this fall, the financial impacts of COVID-19 continue to put pressures on the institution's revenues making planning and budgeting a challenge. Please pray for wisdom and guidance for the university's board and executive leadership team as we wrestle with difficult decisions and develop strategies for moving the institution through these challenging times.

The impacts of the pandemic meant that all post-secondary institutions needed to modify and adapt their education delivery to adhere to public health measures in place to ensure the safety of our community. While many institutions opted for exclusively online learning, King's capitalized on the advantages of being a small university to be able to continue to provide students with the option of having some in-person instruction. For most courses this year, students have the option to take one class per week in the classroom with the remainder of classes being taught online. A lot of work was put into planning and rescheduling to accommodate in-person instruction in a way that would ensure that no classroom had more than 30 students and appropriate classroom spaces were used to always allow two meters of physical distancing. While most prefer to have all face-to-face instruction, students were thankful to at least have some instruction delivered in-person.

While no cafeteria food services were available this year, we were able to open residence spaces for students in our accommodations that have their own cooking facilities. There was strong demand from students wanting to live on-campus this year and we filled all our available spaces with 118 students living in residence. This is approximately half of our regular capacity.

Even with having students living in residence and having some in-person instruction for students, the numerous safety measures put in place and the adherence to these rules by our students and employees has resulted in King's having experienced very few cases of COVID-19 amongst our community. As of January 6, 2021, there have been 11 reported cases of COVID-19 amongst our student community with only one of these cases being a student living in residence. All the cases were unrelated, and our stringent health and safety measures ensured that there has not been any community transmission.

This fall King's offered eight public lectures to our community on Monday evenings in October and November led by our faculty. All these lectures were free to attend and recordings are available on our website at <https://www.kingsu.ca/research/public-lectures/previous-lectures>. King's has also partnered with Classis BC North-West and BC South-East to offer an education series for all

members of CRC churches in BC from January through May 2021. *1Life, Five Callings* is a conversation series that will encourage theological reflection, leadership, and faith-filled practice and encompasses the five callings of ministry of the CRC: faith formation, global mission, mercy and justice, servant leadership, and gospel proclamation and worship. We are really honoured and excited to be given the opportunity to partner with our community's churches in BC in offering this online lecture series and we hope that there may be future opportunities to do something similar with churches in other regions as well.

King's is a unique and beautiful community where transformation occurs in the lives of students. We are so grateful for this space that you are helping to provide. The faithful and generous support from many churches in Classis AB North continues to have a profound impact on King's and our students. Through your investment in Christian higher education at King's, you are building the future and changing lives. You are helping to fulfill the vision of building a more humane, just, and sustainable world through King's, as we prepare our students and alumni to serve as teachers, businesspeople, missionaries, politicians, researchers, non-profit leaders, doctors, and in all other fields where our alumni work. Together we are offering first-class educational experiences and ensuring it is accessible to all students seeking a King's education. Thank you for your continued partnership!

In His service,

Melanie Humphreys, PhD
President

Calvin Theological Seminary

Thank you for your continuing support of Calvin Theological Seminary (CTS)! Through your faithful giving, you're partnering with us in our vision to prepare leaders who "**nurture disciples and serve the church.**"

The last year at CTS has seen a number of milestones:

CTS hired its first **Canadian Church Relations Liaison!** 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.

CTS launched its new **DMin program** in the Fall of 2020 with a full complement of 12 students. The program is designed for ministry leaders who are looking for a diverse community of learners that will help them to develop advanced ministry leadership skills and spiritual formation. The application deadline for Fall 2021 is March 1st.

Summers at CTS will never be the same! In June and July 2020, CTS offered a number of short-term online courses that were designed to support leaders and churches in the midst of the new challenges they were facing in a COVID-shaped world. Over 300 pastors and other leaders registered to take one or more of the courses! Encouraged by this response, we've committed ourselves to providing **additional opportunities for continuing education** that equip church leaders to serve in today's world. Watch for the courses coming this summer!

Committed to serve the church more widely, CTS is developing **new online certificate** programs that help leaders in a variety of ministry contexts thrive. Certificates in Missional Leadership, in Pastoral Care, in Worship, in Pastoral Leadership, and in Education, Youth, and Family are all available. A **Certificate in Bible Instruction** is now also 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. Presently, a **Certificate for Campus Ministry** is also being developed and will likely be available soon.

Join with CTS in giving thanks for the publication of ***Work and Worship: Reconnecting our Labor and Liturgy*** by Matthew Kaemingk, Professor of Christian Ethics at Fuller Seminary, and Cory Wilson, CTS' Associate Professor of Missiology and Missional Ministry. This practical book challenges churches to ensure that worshipers' daily work "shows up" in the faith community's prayers and sermons, its songs and benedictions, and its testimonies and sacraments. In the words of the authors, *the fabric of faith and work needs to be slowly and intentionally woven back together over a lifetime of prayer and worship.*

I'm eager to have conversations to explore ways we can further partner with you! How can we work together to nurture and develop emerging leaders within your classis? What workshops might we 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!

CTS Fast Facts:

225 Degree Students
40+ Non-Degree Students
Students from 26 Countries
31 Canadians
43% CRCNA
33% Distance Learning (Online)
\$1.5 million in scholarships annually.

Based out of Peterborough, ON, I'm looking forward to the day when travel restrictions are eased and I can join you in-person! In the meantime, I'm always open to an email message, phone call, or Zoom chat! You can reach me as indicated below.

Pastor Shawn Brix

Canadian Church Relations Liaison

Calvin Theological Seminary

705-875-3566

sbrix@calvinseminary.edu

www.calvinseminary.edu

www.crcna.org/Canada

The Ministry to Seafarers

CLASSIS REPORT: Spring 2021

1. This ministry encountered a couple of different challenges to ministry over the past year. The year began with extensive protests at various port entrances, mainly over pipelines. Sometimes only 1 or 2 of the port entrances were affected. Other times it could be all 3. It made access to the ships for us very difficult at times; at times we were limited to merely walking into the port and to the terminals.
2. As the protests were winding down, COVID-19 broke out and brought other issues. For 4 months the seafarer centres were closed altogether. They are open again now (as of July 2020) but with only limited visits since many ships are still not allowing shore leave. Consequently, visits to both our centres were only about 25% of that in 2019 (3,305 visits, vs. 12,988 in 2019). Transporting of seafarers was also way down: just 825 seafarers transported in the vans, vs. 3,455 in 2019.
3. In contrast to the declines, however, our ship visits increased in number, since we were limited mainly to just visiting the crews, rather than welcoming them to the centres. Our number of visits increased by over 25% - 1,819, vs. 1,431 in 2019. For me personally, I visited 524 ships in 2020, compared with 463 in 2019. Many of the visits were also of shorter duration, since they have been largely limited to visits just at the top of the gangways, rather than going inside the accommodations. That has changed somewhat over the past few months, with some ships inviting us inside, but generally speaking visits have mostly still been shorter. A few urgent cases – a suicide, a bad accident, and a few other intense situations – have required longer visits, and the Christmas season also afforded some additional opportunities for longer visits.
4. We did distribute Christmas gifts again during the recent Christmas season. Over 1300 gifts were distributed to 68 ships over a period of about 1 month. As usual we delivered gifts on Christmas Eve to all the ships anchored in English Bay and the Inner Harbour. In addition, the Chamber of Shipping assisted with delivering gifts to ships anchored at Nanaimo and around the Gulf Islands on Dec. 22nd. The rest were delivered as ships docked at the various terminals.
5. We hired an intern in 2020, Rev. Vincent Ng, who served with us half-time for about half the year. He visited a total of 152 ships, so our overall impact for ship visits for the Ministry to Seafarers was 676 ship visits.
6. In February 2021 we are planning to hire Megan Apperloo, our intern in 2018, as our part time (8-10 hours/week) “Development Assistant.” With the changes in funding structures coming, we see the need to hire someone to assist with publicity and administration work for the Ministry. This will be an initial 1-year trial appointment.
7. Visits to churches to share about the ministry have obviously been very limited over the past year, and promotions have been moved almost entirely to virtual forms – Facebook, Instagram, short videos, and emailed newsletters. It would be very helpful if you would opt to like and follow, as well as promote in your congregations, our Facebook and/or Instagram accounts: “Ministry to Seafarers Vancouver”. Post-COVID I will begin once again to plan church visits for more sharing in person.
8. Other positive outcomes from the pandemic have been much greater cooperation between the various seafarers centres here in Vancouver, as well as much greater buy-in for support for our ministries from the likes of the Vancouver Port Authority, Chamber of Shipping, International Transport Workers Federation, ILWU, Transport Canada, Ship owners, Agents, and Terminal operators. The Vancouver Seafarers Welfare Committee (VSWC) was established in 2020 and continues to work hard to advocate on behalf of seafarers. The committee has worked hard to facilitate safe shore leave for those who are allowed ashore.

And more recently we have been working to supply better internet service to more ships visiting our port. We've also been very actively promoting safe and timely crew change for crew members at the end of their contracts, so that fewer and fewer are now having to overextend on their contracts.

9. The seafarers committee has appointed 2 new members, subject to the approval of classis. The two members are Evelyn Kersbergen of New Westminster CRC and Roberto Lim of The Tapestry.
10. Sadly, the Ministry in Port Alberni has closed its seafarers centre there ("The Upper Room") due to a substantial drop in the number of ships visiting that port and thus the number of seafarers utilizing the centre. However, the team there will continue to minister to seafarers through ship visits and other activities – if and when those become possible again. We have been supporting the Port Alberni centre for some years now and will continue to provide support for other types of ministry and outreach as requested and as we are able.

Respectfully submitted,

John Bandstra
Committee Chair

Gary Roosma
Chaplain

The Ministry to Seafarers

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Vancouver, BC, Canada, V6A 4G9
Phone: 604-253-4421
Email: crcvanportchaplain@gmail.com
www.ministrytoseafarers.com

Director of Canadian Ministries – Darren Roorda

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 years 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 classis 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 202??: 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 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,

Darren Roorda – Canadian Ministries Servant

droorda@crcna.org 289-208-9918

Administrator: Anna Bowes (abowes@crcna.org)

CENTRE FOR PUBLIC DIALOGUE

Update to Classis Alberta North, Winter-Spring 2021

Dear Classis Alberta North Churches and Delegates:

We are grateful for the opportunity to connect with you and to share about the work of the Centre for Public Dialogue (the Centre). Our work focusses on seeking justice and speaking hope in the name of Christ in Canadian public affairs. We do this through a program of research, advocacy, and citizen empowerment. The Centre's work is built on the faithful work of our steering committee: the Committee for Contact with Government (CCG) has served the CRC in Canada since 1968 by prayerfully striving after a faithful witness for justice. The CCG is made up of 6 members drawn from key CRC regions (Alberta included) who provide a wide and rich insights and experiences for deliberation that that shapes the work of the Centre for Public Dialogue. The Centre works closely with the justice and reconciliation staff team and partners with other CRC ministries and ecumenical groups in all of its work.

Governments, *as God's servants for our good* (Roman's 13: 4), have an incredibly challenging task in a complex world. Therefore, as we seek to honour leaders' callings, the Centre for Public Dialogue strives to provide thoughtful and constructive input that is helpful to legislators. For this reason we typically focus on a small number of justice and reconciliation issues. Today our core issues include:

- Reconciliation in Indigenous Education (implementing TRC Calls to Action 7-10);
- Supporting the settlement and integration of Refugees in Canada (Private sponsorship policy).
- Creation care and climate justice (with emphases on the linkage of Indigenous rights and just transition).

A small example of the impact of our work: Following the dramatic settlement efforts for Syrians in 2015-16 it became clear that repayment terms for travel loans (provided by governments to refugees) were a hardship that affected both refugee integration and the ability of sponsors to support more refugees. In collaboration with Mennonite Central Committee, Citizens for Public Justice and World Renew, we engaged in Parliamentary advocacy and encouraged citizen advocacy on the issue, and these efforts succeeded in a significant easing of the repayment terms. We continue to work with the same partners to address other barriers to refugee settlement and integration that come up.

The CCG and the Centre for Public Dialogue believe passionately that the Church's salt and light presence in the world, includes the pursuit of justice and the common good. For this reason we encourage acts of Christian citizenship with a range of helpful tools: information on justice issues via our [DoJustice blog](#); an [action centre](#) that provides easy-to-use tools for connecting with MPs; and a great range of [citizen advocacy training](#) resources. Our training resources have been adapted for digital-and-covid related realities too. Churches interested in any of these resources are more than welcome to connect with us at publicdialogue@crcna.ca or mhogeterp@crcna.ca for more information.

Respectfully submitted, Mike Hogeterp, Director

ECUMENICAL AND INTERFAITH RELATIONS COMMITTEE

Jim Joesse, Western Canada rep member to EIRC

Dear Officers and Delegates of Classis Alberta North,

Greetings on behalf of Chair, Dr. William Koopmans, and my fellow members of the CRCNA's Ecumenical and Interfaith Relations Committee (EIRC). Thank you for the invitation to present a brief report of the mandate, activity and some elements of the current Agenda and issues facing the EIRC.

The Committee:

The Ecumenical and Interfaith Relations Committee is a standing committee of the Christian Reformed Church in North America. It has 10 members, five from the U.S.A. and five from Canada, regionally appointed with an equal number of layperson and clergy. The Executive Director of the Denomination and the Canadian Ministries Director sit as ex-officio members. The Committee meets three times per calendar year, two times in person and one time electronically. In this COVID – 19 times, the last three meetings have been by ZOOM.

The Mandate:

The EIRC is appointed by Synod and is the structure by which the CRCNA seeks to engage and participate in the life of the global church, particularly, though not exclusively, interacting with churches and ecumenical organizations that share the Reformed understanding of the Christian Faith.

In 2009, Synod expanded the EIRC mandate to include interfaith dialogue “to foster better understanding between persons of different faiths”. To facilitate this work, there is a standing Synodically-appointed EIRC sub-committee called the Interfaith Relations Committee.

The Ecumenical functions of the Committee are governed by The Ecumenical Charter of the Christian Reformed Church. The Interfaith functions are outlined in the Interfaith Subcommittee Mandate. Both the Ecumenical Charter and the Interfaith Subcommittee Mandate, as well as numerous other resources can be found on the EIRC website at: <https://www.crcna.org/eirc>

The Work of the Committee:

The Ecumenical Work:

The ecumenical work of the Committee seeks to establish and maintain relations between the CRCNA and other denominations in world- wide Christendom. As broad as that sounds, there are different levels of engagement based on whether or not other denominations are churches within the Reformed family. Denominations which are historically Reformed may be characterized as Churches in Ecclesiastical Fellowship or Churches in Dialogue (We have many such Ecclesial fellowships , but examples are CRC Nigeria,, Reformed Churches in South Africa, and the Reformed Church in America). Denominations which are not historically Reformed but with whom we desire to establish or maintain contact are considered Churches in Other Ecumenical Relationships (Examples are Mennonite Church in Canada, Presbyterian Church of India).

In addition to its ecclesiastical relationships, the EIRC maintains memberships on a

number of Ecumenical Organizations, both Reformed and not Reformed, by which we might better carry out the CRCNA's ecumenical responsibilities. Examples of such organizations are The Evangelical Fellowship of Canada, The Canadian Council of Churches, and the World Communion of Reformed Churches. A full list of denominations and organizations with which we have established associations can be retrieved from the EIRC website.

The Interfaith Work:

The interfaith work is undertaken by The Interfaith Subcommittee which sits separately but reports to the EIRC. The work is often done in collaboration with other Christian denominations, (i.e. The RCA) or Ecumenical organizations, (i.e. the Canadian Council of Churches). The Subcommittee seeks to foster respectful friendships between Christian denominations and churches and other faith groups, typically, but not only, Jewish or Muslim groups and institutions. Collaborations are sought in areas of common concern; examples are race relations and issues concerning religious freedom within a pluralist society. Recently there has been a call to work collaboratively with our CRC Campus Ministers who encounter matters of Interfaith relations and dialogue on a daily basis.

Method:

The work of both the EIRC and the Interfaith Subcommittee is carried out in various ways, both formal and informal.

An example of formal ecumenical engagement is by the invitations to Churches in Ecclesiastical Fellowship to send fraternal delegates to the CRCNA Synod or other major assemblies. CRCNA sends delegations to the assemblies to similar invitations from our ecclesial fellows. In one case, involving the RCA, we have standing delegations to each other's Synods. The EIRC has the responsibility to schedule and execute such official interactions.

Another formal engagement is to assign members of the EIRC to the governance boards of Ecumenical organizations of which the CRCNA is a part. For instance there are two members of the EIRC on the Board of the Canadian Council of Churches.

There is a less formal, but just as important, engagement in the routine ecumenical correspondence between the offices of both the CRCNA Executive Director and the Canadian Ministries Director and their equivalent officers of other denominations and ecumenical organizations, all of which is reported to the EIRC.

Of special interest are those conversations that morph into ad hoc committees or working groups. An example that is very current arises from the conversations between CRCNA and the RCA on issues with which both denominations are currently engaged. This has resulted in an ad hoc but systemic Reformed Collaboration and various listening groups to learn lessons from the experiences of both denominations. Similar ad hoc activities are occurring in Canada between the Canadian Ministries Director and other Reformed/Presbyterian denominations in Canada.

The EIRC also works in collaboration with other denominational ministries. Examples are the regular collaborations with the Office of Social Justice in the U.S. and the Center for Public Dialogue in Canada, on issues of justice and pluralism.

Some Recent Developments

I cannot be exhaustive in outlining the ongoing specific work of the Committee and its officers. However I will provide a few examples of the types of activity that we hear about in our Committee meetings. The following examples are taken from our most recent meeting on February 8.

- We heard that our Canadian Director and one of our Committee members attended virtual meetings with Prime Minister Trudeau (via the CCC) and Canadian Public Health Officer Theresa Tam (by invitation to religious leaders) on the issues around the expectations and effect of the COVID related health measures on Religious bodies.
- In conjunction with The Evangelical Fellowship of Canada, continuing work from a religious/biblical perspective on reconciliation with indigenous communities.
- Issues around the question of the degree of alignment between our theology and that of other members of ecumenical bodies, necessary to the continued involvement of one of our delegates to that ecumenical body.
- Continuing dialogue and listening sessions between the CRCNA Executive Director and his corresponding officer in the RCA on issues around the ethics of Human Sexuality.
- An ongoing proposal received from a Venezuelan group of Churches working with the Consejo Latino, to establish ecclesiastical relationships.

The EIRC leadership produces an annual report to Synod each year and those reports can be recovered from the Agendas for Synod which are available on the CRCNA.org website.

The Evolution and Future of CRCNA Ecumenism

The work of ecumenism is evolving. When the EIRC was formed the emphasis was to establish ecclesial relationships with those denominations with which the CRCNA were confessionally and ethically most similar, with the view that such like denominations, in association, would hold each other to account for doctrinal and ethical verity.

In 2006, after intentional and prayerful discernment, Synod discovered that this exclusive view of ecumenical relations narrowed our ecumenical vision, and was not in keeping with global developments in ecumenism. A broader understanding of ecumenism resulted in the present Ecumenical Charter which expresses the idea that the EIRC ought to build on common interests and the commitments of others to the ministry of the gospel and the mission to which the gospel calls the church, even if we are not completely aligned on all theological and ethical issues. This has allowed a more robust engagement with fellow Christians across the spectrum of Christianity within the world-wide church.

MINISTER DELEGATE TO SYNOD - Eligibility Discussion

History:

Classis Alberta North (CAN) sends 4 delegates to Synod: one minister, one elder, and one deacon, and a fourth office bearer. CAN has determined that the 4th delegate will be a minister. Elders and deacons are nominated by their councils and elected at Classis. The selection of minister delegates is more involved. We appoint the first minister delegate on a rotation basis. Classis selects, by vote, a second minister delegate from all those who are eligible and have agreed to let their names stand.

The Nominations Coordinator works from an (inherited) list of pastors on a rotational basis. (There is no clear understanding of the basis for this rotation other than year of eligibility.) The first name on the list is meant to be the first minister delegate, and all following names, if the criteria* are met, are candidates for the second minister delegate role. Procedurally, the person with the most votes fills the role of second minister delegate, and the next highest votes would determine the 1st and 2nd alternates.

In the criteria* a pastor who has attended synod will not be eligible for another 4 years. Synod has recently encouraged classes to have at least some delegates serve for back-to-back meetings as this would support continuity and efficiency with roles and responsibilities.

The challenge:

1. How do we create a rotation of appointed 1st minister delegates that will provide a consistent and understandable approach?
2. How can we accommodate Synod's request to consider allowing/encouraging delegates to serve two Synods while also managing the importance of diversity and allowing the opportunity for learning?
3. Do we encourage 1st minister delegates to serve 2 years? May 2nd minister delegates be elected for 2 consecutive Synods?

The proposal:

Beginning in 2022, the rotation of pastors eligible to be appointed as 1st minister delegate, will be based on organized churches in alphabetical order (by name of church first, not city). If the church has more than one eligible minister, they and their councils will determine who will be appointed.

If a minister declines the invitation to be appointed as 1st minister delegate, the nominations coordinator will approach the next church on the alphabetical list.

The selection of 2nd minister delegates and alternates will continue to be by ballot listing those who are eligible and willing to let their names stand.

The process:

The CIC will engage the input from the spring 2021 meeting of Classis and draft a policy addressing the rotation and availability of pastors for presentation at the Fall meeting of Classis for implementation at the 2022 Spring meeting of Classis.

***Criteria**

Presently: to be eligible for being placed on the rotation list, the minister must meet the following criteria:

1. Must serve in regular parish ministry in Classis Alberta North (CAN), or serve in a specialized ministry sponsored by CAN.
2. Must have been in CAN as ordained minister for at least two years.
3. After having been a delegate to Synod for CAN, a minister's name will be re-entered on this schedule with the year of eligibility being determined by the last year of having been a delegate, **plus four**.

MINISTRY SHARE PLEDGES Classis Alberta North

(for discussion with Church Visitors and in church visitor cluster groups)

Name	City	2018 Ministry Share Giving	2019 Ministry Share Giving	Fiscal Year '21-'22 Pledge
Avenue CRC	Edmonton			\$0.00
Barrhead CRC	Barrhead	\$123.65	\$36.68	\$0.00
Bethel Community CRC	Edmonton	\$47,317.89	\$56,289.96	\$56,500.00
Bethel CRC	Lacombe	\$37,800.77	\$33,956.00	\$12,980.00
Bridge Church	Fort Saskatchewan			\$1,500.00
Centrepointe Community CRC	Edmonton	\$5,884.13	\$2,926.98	\$0.00
Covenant CRC	Edmonton	\$63,664.80	\$64,853.80	\$69,236.00
Covenant CRC	Rocky Mntn House	\$9,928.00	\$11,122.00	\$4,000.00
Ebenezer CRC	Leduc	\$61,180.00	\$71,813.72	\$72,000.00
Edson-Peers CRC	Edson	\$18,486.15	\$16,054.57	\$10,505.00
Evergreen Community Church	Fort McMurray	\$3,571.00		\$4,306.58
Faith Fellowship CRC	Fairview			\$0.00
Fellowship CRC	Edmonton	\$33,000.00	\$32,585.06	\$21,000.00
First CRC	Edmonton	\$47,780.00	\$40,865.44	\$38,470.00
First CRC	Red Deer	\$25,737.50	\$28,411.33	\$25,000.00
First CRC	Rocky Mntn House	\$58,000.00	\$53,886.00	\$53,886.00
Hope CRC	Stony Plain	\$1,150.51	\$989.12	
Inglewood CRC	Edmonton	\$64,907.04	\$63,904.72	\$50,085.00
La Glace CRC	La Glace	\$3,882.00	\$3,954.50	\$785.00
Lacombe-Woody Nook CRC	Lacombe County	\$129,503.52	\$128,645.16	\$129,039.00
Maranatha CRC	Edmonton	\$51,570.00	\$41,814.81	\$17,000.00
mosaicHouse Community CRC	Edmonton		\$2,250.00	\$2,500.00
Neerlandia CRC	Neerlandia	\$77,625.55	\$85,455.58	\$82,677.00
New Life Fellowship CRC	Red Deer	\$12,963.90	\$13,750.00	\$13,000.00
Rimbey CRC	Rimbey	\$9,475.00	\$12,950.01	\$10,000.00
Sonrise CRC	Ponoka	\$46,435.90	\$46,655.00	\$46,655.00
St. Albert CRC	St Albert	\$4,401.25	\$11,157.64	\$8,100.00
The River Community CRC	Edmonton			\$0.00
Trinity CRC of Edmonton	Edmonton	\$76,300.00	\$84,931.00	\$75,000.00
West End CRC	Edmonton	\$128,882.00	\$131,794.00	\$124,331.00
Wolf Creek Community CRC	Lacombe		\$5,318.40	\$3,000.00
Totals		\$ 1,019,570.56	\$ 1,046,371.48	\$ 931,555.58

COMMISSIONED PASTOR JOB DESCRIPTION - Bethel

Bethel Community Church - Edmonton

Ministry title: Director of Youth Ministries 0.75 FTE

MISSION

Becoming like Christ and sharing Him with others

VISION

To be an intergenerational and multi-ethnic community empowered by the Spirit, growing in faith, bound together in love, meeting together in vibrant weekend worship and in small groups, serving one another with the gifts God has given us; and reaching out with the love and Good News of Jesus Christ to our church community, to our own communities, and to the world.

CORE COMMITMENTS

Communion – Walking with Christ

We experience this through the study of God's Word, prayer, and other disciplines.

Community – Loving one another

We experience this through worship, connecting with others in a house church or small group, and sacrificially using our time, talent, and treasure in service to others.

Calling – Impacting the world

We do this through:

Vocation: serving God through my work.

Witness: walking alongside of at least one other person in their journey toward faith in God.

Compassion and Justice: Loving God and others both in my circle of influence and around the world.

KEY RESPONSIBILITIES OF THIS POSITION:

Faith formation, mentorship, and discipleship of teenagers ages 12-18 through weekly Bible studies or activities and connections formed with families and the church community.

*Please note that many of the following responsibilities can be listed under more than one of the core commitments.

COMMUNION - Walking with Christ

Catalyst: focuses on discipleship through engaging with Scripture.

Responsibilities for this bi-weekly Friday night program include, but are not limited to: developing and teaching curriculum and overseeing volunteer led small groups.

Prayer

Engage in prayer for the ministries and people of Bethel, especially the youth, their families, and the volunteer leaders of the youth ministry.

Fall Retreat

Responsible for planning and executing a fall retreat that relevantly applies Biblical truth to youth's lives.

Mentoring

Promote and help facilitate mentoring of youth. This includes, but is not limited to:

- Connecting with students during and outside of youth programs, including visiting students at the schools they attend.
- Walking alongside, praying with, and helping students grow in their relationship with Christ.
- Teaching foundational Christian worldviews.
- Identifying, counselling, and referring students to experts when necessary.
- Training and equipping volunteers to do the same.

COMMUNITY - Loving one another

Outlet: focuses on building Christ-like community through games, activities, outings, and promoting local service projects for students in the Edmonton area.

Responsibilities for this bi-weekly Friday night program include, but are not limited to: event planning (set up/clean up), promotion, volunteer management and interacting with students.

Youth Leadership Team

- Maintain a team of volunteers who are passionate about discipleship of teenagers and sacrificially give their time to connect with teenagers inside and outside of youth ministry programming.
- Recruit, equip, and train volunteers and leaders through retreats, teaching, and other resources.
- Encourage and express appreciation to volunteers through yearly one-on-one check-in meetings, monthly or bi-monthly leadership meetings, gifts or letters of appreciation, etc.
- Ensure that Bethel's Abuse Prevention Policy is taught and maintained.

Intergenerational and Family Ministry

- Member of the intergenerational team; focused on strategizing how to effectively connect generations with one another so that all members of the church, young and old, love their church, feel welcome, and are learning and growing in Christ together.
- Connect with parents,
- As appropriate, engage parents in learning opportunities related to parenting youth and/or issues facing teenagers.

Communication and Vision

- Effectively communicate the vision and activities of the youth ministry with the Lead Pastor, Youth Ministry Volunteer Leaders, congregation, youth, and community.
- In all aspects of ministry, uphold and communicate Bethel's mission, vision, and values, and conduct yearly evaluations of youth ministry activities to see that they accurately reflect the vision.
- With staff, participate in decision-making, issue resolution, and short and long term planning.
- Annually submit a Ministry plan for the new budget year, and manage said funds in a transparent manner.
- Maintain a calendar for the youth ministry and ensure that the rooms needed for each event are booked with the Administrative Assistant.
- Maintain Bethel Youth website (www.bethelyouth.com), Instagram, Facebook page, and texting app.
- Maintain youth directory.
- No preaching at regular church services is required.

CALLING - Impacting the world

Spring Retreat

Responsible for planning and executing a spring retreat that relevantly applies Biblical Truth to Youth's lives.

Youth Missions

Plan and lead annual youth mission trip to Mexico. This includes fundraising, maintaining records of all documentation (i.e. consent forms, medical information, passports, etc.), communicating with parents, preparation of the team for the trip through meetings and devotionals, leading the team during the trip, and debriefing the team after they return to Canada.

Summer Ministries

Supervise a youth summer intern who oversees summer outreach programs, including two week-long summer camps, day activities or a weekend camping trip, and Tuesday night drop in programming (otherwise known as PLOT).

OTHER

Be available to serve in other areas as needed and requested by the Lead Pastor.

QUALIFICATIONS

- A love for God and for youth ministry with a deep-rooted desire for young people to grow and develop in their relationship with Jesus Christ
- Exhibits a mature Christian faith, character, and balanced lifestyle that includes: boundaries, appropriate rest, exercise and nutrition, leisure, hard work, nurtured relationships, and spiritual disciplines that honour God through obedience to the Word of God.
- Attends Bethel Community Church
- Must be in agreement with the statement of faith and creeds of the Christian Reformed Church and willing to uphold the mission, vision and values of Bethel Community Church
- Demonstrated expertise in vision casting and volunteer recruitment
- Strong communication, presentation, written, and interpersonal skills
- Competent computer skills (organizational and administrative)
- Joy and enthusiasm in serving
- Displays discernment, wisdom and discretion
- Able to encourage, recruit and network
- Able to manage time, budget and finances well
- Communicates effectively both verbally and written
- Maximizes existing and searches out new resources for effective ministry
- Acquire a successful Police and Vulnerable sector background check and adhere to all Safe Church Policies of Bethel Community Church

EDUCATION AND EXPERIENCE *The following are not mandatory but are considered an asset:

- Post-secondary education in Bible studies, Theology, Christian Ministry, or
- Post-secondary education in Youth Ministry, or
- Proven record of experience in Youth Ministry.

ACCOUNTABLE

Reports directly to the Lead Pastor

COMMISSIONED PASTOR JOB DESCRIPTION – Woodynook

In Partnership with North American Indigenous Ministries (NAIM)

Official Title: Minister of Discipleship Subtitle: Community and Youth Ministry

Rationale

Over the past few years Woody Nook CRC has felt God urging us to get more connected with Indigenous Peoples and the work of reconciliation. During the Truth and Reconciliation Commission we were involved in a number of projects to help raise awareness and participate in bringing people together. We hosted “The Creator’s Sacrifice” art exhibition, a number of different dancers and speakers to help us understand the issues. In 2016 we participated in another series on reconciliation, connecting with Louis Bull All Nations Church and inviting Mario Swampy to speak. We were then invited to participate in the Family Camp with Maskwacis, and about 25 people joined. This camp was instrumental in connecting Sean and Becky Folkerts with the leadership of Louis Bull and was one of the catalysts which led them into their current role. Since then we have continued a relationship with Louis Bull through family camps, a joint youth event, and joint services.

When you review this history, it is clear that God is continually moving us into more intentional ministry with Maskwacis, and we feel that this is the appropriate next step in that journey. We at Woody Nook have been supporting Sean and Becky Folkerts as missionaries with North American Indigenous Ministries in their work with Maskwacis. We feel God calling us to continue to embody the way of reconciliation by creating a Commissioned Pastor position for a Minister of Evangelism and Discipleship in Maskwacis. Creating this position causes us to be more intentional about our desire to connect with Maskwacis, and it also calls us to greater responsibility in the pursuit of reconciliation. It will provide both Woody Nook CRC and the person who fulfills this role with an increased level of support and accountability. The intent is that this position would initially be filled by Sean Folkerts, however the position is created with the intent of our increased involvement with the work of reconciliation and not just as a way to partner with Sean and Becky.

Job description

Spiritual Emphases - 90%

55% Youth Ministry

30% Community Ministry

15% Public Teaching

Administrative Emphases - 10%

65% Continued Education/Professional Development

10% Administrative Duties

20% Continued Support Raising

5% Representation

Spiritual Emphases – 90%

Overall Description:

1. Minister among the existing believers and the new converts - to help them grow in the Christian faith with the goal of establishing regular Bible studies and prayer meetings. (Discipleship)

2. Provide Spiritual Counselling to families and individuals in your assigned location with an emphasis on biblical instruction and prayer.
3. Encourage faith in Christ, preach and teach Christian doctrine, and welcome new people into the knowledge of and a relationship with Jesus Christ.
4. Lead spiritually formative programs for potential converts, and believers (e.g. youth outreaches and conferences, mission trips to Mexico, Biblical conferences and mission festivals, etc.) and provide follow up counselling

Key Result Area 1: Youth Ministry - 55%

- Run weekly teen boy's ministry
 - Pursue an appropriate relationship with youth
 - Engage youth in bible study
 - Engage youth in extra curricular activities.
- Joint Youth Events – Co-ed
 - Pursue an appropriate relationship with youth
 - Help facilitate and plan events
 - Engage youth in Bible discussions
 - Engage youth in extra curricular activities
- Camp Ministries – Winter & Summer
 - Help facilitate and plan youth camps
 - Teach youth appropriate skills to succeed at camp
 - Engage youth in Biblical discussion and studies

Key Result Area 2: Community Ministry – 30%

- Men's Ministry
 - Help facilitate and plan Men's Camps and Activities
 - Pursue appropriate relationships
 - Engage in Bible Study and Study topics
- Family Ministry
 - Pursue appropriate relationships
 - Engage in visitation of families within the area we work
 - Help facilitate and plan appropriate activities
- Woody Nook ministry
 - Find ways to connect members of Woody Nook CRC with the work being done in Maskwacis.
 - Provide regular updates to the congregation designed to inspire connection.

Key Result Area 3: Public Teaching – 15%

- Teaching and Preaching in the Local Church
 - Help Facilitate and plan Bible Studies
 - Prepare and share messages
- Teaching and Preaching in Supporting Churches
 - Prepare and share messages
 - Engage people in talks around Reconciliation

Administrative Emphases – 10%

Overall Description:

1. Occasionally asked to represent NAIM and their ministry in local churches.
2. Occasionally requested to preach, teach, and report in various CRC settings.
3. Continue professional development (e.g. theological/missiological upgrading, or other opportunities approved by supervisor).

4. Other administrative duties (reporting/documenting ministry progress and expenses, fundraising, entreat prayer support from churches and individuals).

Key Result Area #1: Continued Education/Professional Development – 65%

- Education in School
 - Participate in courses required by NAIM or the CRCNA
 - Participate in courses that provide a better understanding of Indigenous Culture
 - Participate in other courses as they seem helpful.
- Education outside School
 - Continue learning about culture through trusted friends in the community
 - Read books that help guide the work outlined by this job description as suggested by NAIM or the CRCNA
 - Continue to develop a working knowledge of Reformed theology and polity

Key Result Area #2: Administrative Duties – 10%

- Paperwork / Reporting
 - Do and submit the required paperwork for this position in a timely and professional manner – report/document all ministry, all expenses that are related to ministry, and any extra required paperwork incurred by NAIM that is for the ministry
 - Present written reports to the Council of Woody Nook CRC at least 3 times a year.
 - Connect with a staff mentor at Woody Nook CRC at least 6 times a year.

EARLY RETIREMENT REQUEST

Folkert (Frank) de Boer, Ordained May 2005
4807-43A Ave, Unit 202
Leduc, AB
T9E 8J6

Council of Ebenezer CRC and Classis Alberta North
February 2, 2021

Re: Retirement of Folkert (Frank) de Boer

Thank you for your consideration,

As you may know I separated from my last congregation at Iron Springs under article 17-a of the church order as of March 11, 2018. This happened upon the mutual request of the council of Iron Springs CRC and myself at Classis Alberta South and Saskatchewan which met March 9, 2018 with the concurrence of Synodical deputies. The weighty reason for this separation was the high stress level I experienced that led to health issues including extremely high blood pressure.

I am now requesting early retirement according to Article 18-a of the church order and its supplement Effective April 1, 2021. I am requesting this because the stressors affecting my health still exist which leaves me incapable of working full time as a minister of the word.

Article 18-a: "A minister who has reached retirement age, or who because of physical or mental disability is incapable of performing the duties of the office, is eligible for retirement.

Retirement shall take place with the approval of the council and classis and in accordance with synodical regulations.

Supplement, Article 18: Early Retirement Option - "Ministers of the Word shall be granted the privilege of retiring at the age of fifty-five years, with the approval of the classis involved, under the reduced pension scale adopted by Synod 2011. (*Acts of Synod 1993*, p. 579; *Acts of Synod 2011*, p. 813)"

If at some time in the future I am capable of carrying on as a full time minister we can deal with matters at that time.

Thank you for your consideration,

Folkert (Frank) de Boer

Support by Ebenezer CRC Council:

This correspondence is provided in support of Folkert (Frank) de Boer's request for consideration of early retirement. During his time at Ebenezer, Frank has worked diligently to be a contributing member, and continues to seek help in addressing his illness. The Ebenezer Council supports Frank's request. We pray for God's blessing on the upcoming Classis Alberta North sessions.

Gord Winkel
Chair, Ebenezer Council

OVERTURES regarding the Human Sexuality Report

NOTE: Since Synod 2021 will not meet, we will not be discussing these overtures at this meeting of Classis but they are left in this agenda package for your information. Churches may resubmit them for the March 2022 meeting of Classis or take more time to study and consider the human sexuality report before submitting a revised overture to Classis. Churches are encouraged to make use of [*The Challenging Conversations Toolkit*](#) prepared by Pastor Church Resources (PCR) to help small groups study and discuss aspects of the committee's report which may be controversial.

The Executive Summary of the Report can be found on the Classis website or at https://www.crcna.org/sites/default/files/summary_human_sexuality_report_2020.pdf

We will still have our discussion on the Report scheduled for the Friday evening session of this meeting.

1. To appoint a new study committee - Fellowship CRC

**Overture to Classis Alberta North
from Fellowship Christian Reformed Church, Edmonton
in response to the 2021 synodical report from the
Committee to Articulate a Foundation-laying Biblical Theology of
Human Sexuality**

That Classis Alberta North overture Synod to receive the synodical report on the Biblical Foundations of Human Sexuality for information, thank the committee for its work, and take the following action:

Appoint a new study committee which is not limited in the scope of its theological inquiry by adherence to the 1973 report. This committee will actively and appreciatively engage all perspectives on human sexuality and will seek input from the wide range of experiences in the CRC in order to help give direction to churches in ways that honour diverse perspectives and maintain the unity of the church. This committee will undertake a three-step process, with each step dependent upon and accountable to the previous step.

1. First, the committee will design and coordinate a denominational listening tour to create safe spaces in which to hear the lived experiences of sexual minorities and their families within the Christian Reformed Church of North America. The committee should take seriously the confessions of our church's shortcomings and failures as outlined in the 2021 Report on the Biblical Foundations of Human Sexuality, all of which conclude, "It is a sad truth that the Christian community, including our Christian Reformed denomination, has failed in its calling to empathize with, love, and bear the burdens of persons who are attracted to the same sex" (95). The committee must seek to navigate this tour with wisdom and grace, creating as safe a setting as possible (in line with 118 of report).

2. Secondly, in conversation with the findings from the listening tour, and perhaps as part of it, the committee will critically examine the processes, policies, and practices of the CRC, as well as the assumptions and biases, that have led to the previous study committee's overwhelming confession that since the 1973 report the CRC has failed to care for members who are attracted to the same sex:

The church has also harmed people who are attracted to the same sex by promoting the false expectation of orientation change, as if believers who are attracted to the same sex can expect to become attracted to the opposite sex as they are sanctified...Indeed, the church has not been the supportive, grace-saturated community it is supposed to be (95).

Despite repeated and strong exhortations of past study committee reports to love and care for brothers and sisters who are attracted to the same sex as equal members of the body of Christ, the church has all too often ostracized, shunned, or ignored such Jesus-followers (114).

These admissions, while remarkable in their honesty, beg for a collective self-examination about why the CRC has found it so difficult to fulfill the mandates and pastoral advice given to it by Synod.

3. Thirdly, in dialogue with, and accountable to, the findings of the first two steps, and with no responsibility to adhere to the conclusions of the 1973 synodical report on pastoral care to LGBT members, the committee will produce a new report on the biblical foundations for human sexuality with a particular focus on the question of inclusion for sexual minorities. The purpose of the new report will be three-fold:
 - a) To dialogue with and offer constructive criticism of the 2021 report. This critique will include examination and clarification of the report's hermeneutical starting point as well as a sympathetic and appreciative engagement with alternate and thoughtful biblical interpretations.
 - b) To engage more seriously and report more accurately the findings of new scientific research in the area of human sexuality.
 - c) To offer pastoral care recommendations that
 - promote non-shaming expressions of loving acceptance with a desire for individual and communal flourishing;
 - foster continued unity in the church as we work through an issue that threatens to be very divisive; and
 - focus on caring for congregations whose perspectives and experiences lead them to ministry practices that include full participation.

Grounds

1. A true desire to understand viewpoints of a diverse community requires authentic and open-hearted listening. The committee struck in 2016 was not free to listen well, having been constrained by the requirement that its members agree with the 1973 report. Voices that struggle with or disagree with the 1973 stance could not be heard. This fact is relevant not only to the credibility with which the final report is received, but also to pastoral care and justice concerns, where the commonly held aphorism, "nothing about us without us," is good practice.
2. This requirement of adherence to 1973 conclusions meant that though the committee was equipped to articulate the historical position of the CRC, it could not honestly engage alternative readings of Scripture. It was also ill-equipped to objectively perform one of its primary tasks: to engage in a "(d)iscussion outlining how a Reformed hermeneutic does or does not comport with readings of Scripture being employed to endorse what are, for the

historic church, ground-breaking conclusions regarding human sexual behavior and identification” (3).

3. The lived experience of congregations within the Christian Reformed Church requires an unencumbered examination of the best biblical, theological, and pastoral arguments for all perspectives regarding the inclusion of LGBT Christians in full membership before making decisions at a denominational level.
4. We in the CRC have long considered our denomination to be thoughtful, deliberative, and biblically-based. Honest denominational care of all Christians on a topic regarding inclusion/exclusion of brothers and sisters requires a report capable of taking seriously all biblical and theological arguments before making recommendations. The very existence of a variety of robust biblical and theological arguments for the inclusion of celibate *and* married LGBT Christians in the church signals that there is not theological consensus on this topic. An unencumbered report would display our denominational trust in God’s ability to reveal truth through Scripture and the Holy Spirit, and it would prevent us from engaging and making decisions from a place of fear.
5. The pastoral guidance offered for the care of sexual minorities is confusing and potentially harmful, and better guidance is needed, particularly for churches for whom caring for LGBT brothers and sisters is more than a hypothetical reality. For example, the report acknowledges the harm done in the past when same-sex attracted Christians were encouraged to change their orientation (95). The acknowledgment that a change in orientation is not a realistic expectation implies that same-sex attraction is not a choice. Yet the report also raises the point that “no ‘gay gene’ has yet been identified,” and that “the claim that attraction to the same sex has a biological cause has been seriously challenged by recent research” (93). The mixed messages are bewildering and call for a more thorough examination of the scientific research regarding gender dysphoria and same-sex attraction, with due consideration of the view that these may be core elements of one’s being.

There is a dissonance in the report that leads to confusing and potentially harmful pastoral care. How can we as a church be inviting, loving, accepting—as the report rightly calls us to be—up until the point a person or couple desires to join our congregation, when we have to tell them that they are not in fact welcome as they are, but need to make changes before they can join? How could this not be devastating to both these people who have developed relationships within the church and to the elders or ministers who eventually have to have this conversation? If we are going to land where this new report lands, would it not be wiser and more kind to just be upfront at the beginning of a new relationship with gender dysphoric and same-sex attracted people, and tell them as kindly and clearly as we can that they are not welcome unless they agree not to act on their natural impulses? Though the pastoral care section of the report expresses a desire to be compassionate and welcoming, in the end this desire will seem by many to be incompatible with the committee’s conclusion that LGBT people who are not celibate may not participate fully in the life of the church.

6. Honest pastoral care takes into account the experiences, fears, hopes, and struggles of the individuals it is seeking to offer care to. By not taking seriously the voices of Christians who disagree with the traditional position, or feel devalued by it, the care that we offer is at risk of being more about caring for our leadership as we uphold the church’s stance than it is for caring for the individuals amongst us who think and feel differently. It is at this point that we also risk making our churches culturally irrelevant by not engaging in the very conversations in which our young people are immersed, both within and outside the church. This is why

more sincere listening, without an agenda or foregone conclusion, needs to be done at every level of the church. This is an opportunity for us to model trust in God as we engage in difficult conversations that we cannot control.

7. If we as a denomination are serious about confessing the systemic harms perpetrated against and suffered by LGBT members in our community (which the previous study rightly names), then it is our responsibility to engage in a humble and thoughtful assessment of our ecclesiastical culture, including the procedures, policies, and practices that have allowed this harm to continue. We thank the committee for naming these weighty confessions, but disagree with their assessment that we can simply choose to be better without an honest critique of the systems that have allowed for our on-going patterns of harm.

In the event that Synod does not accede to our request to embark on a new and more open process and chooses to consider the recommendations of the HRS report, we wish to communicate to Synod our objection to Recommendations D and E and urge Synod not to adopt those recommendations.

Grounds

1. These recommendations close the door on further theological study and reflection and assume that there is consensus on this matter when that is clearly not the case. Many faithful Christians interpret scripture differently and come to different conclusions. To break communion with them would be an affront to the Lord of the church who prayed for our unity.
2. To declare that beliefs about human sexuality have confessional status when that same status was denied the Belhar Confession, which addresses core biblical themes of justice, unity, and reconciliation, is to say that those are of less importance than a contested view of human sexuality.
3. The scientific study of human sexuality is a relatively recent field of inquiry, and new discoveries are bound to deepen our understanding of same sex attraction. We believe that the church should remain open to ongoing exploration and learning, and indeed is obliged to, as it cares for its diverse members and reaches out to others living in an ever-evolving culture. To declare confessional status would cause stagnation, irrelevance, and a disregard for the gift of science.
4. To declare that the report's beliefs about human sexuality have confessional status will have consequences for denominational agencies engaged in ecumenical partnerships as well as for office-bearers engaged in ecumenical and interfaith work (for example, campus ministers and hospital chaplains). These consequences should be considered.
5. To declare that this committee's interpretations are so thorough and reliable as to warrant confessional status is reckless and unnecessarily provocative, an attempt to draw a line in the sand foreclosing all further discussion. It is extremely divisive and will do irreparable harm to the church and its witness.

2. To delay consideration of the Report - Woodynook

Background:

We appreciate the hard work of the "Committee to Articulate a Foundation-laying Biblical Theology of Human Sexuality" which was released in November 2020. This is a great resource

for the councils and congregations of the Christian Reformed Church in North America for reading, review, and consideration.

The report has already initiated some very good conversations within our council, but we feel as though we are just touching the tip of the iceberg. 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.

One of the recommendations from the report is: 'That synod encourage the churches to make use of the curriculum prepared by Pastor Church Resources, in conjunction with members of the committee, to help small groups study and discuss aspects of the committee's report which may be controversial.' (Study Report, XVII.C)

The deadline for submitting overtures to our classis is February 5, 2021 leaving just weeks to develop and write (after careful reading and reflection) a response. This makes it very difficult to thoughtfully and prayerfully engage in a conversation together.

Overture:

The Council of Woody Nook CRC overtures Classis 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 at least a year to allow councils and congregations to read, study, and reflect on the material, giving them a fair opportunity to respond if desired.

Grounds:

- 1) The report was made public in November, with the claim that this report "is made available to the CRC congregations and classes for discussion and careful review". There actually is not sufficient time given for discussion and careful review.
- 2) The extraordinary circumstances of the current pandemic, in which restrictions limit interpersonal contact and meetings (in many places in North America), make it difficult to have meaningful and constructive conversation
- 3) Our church clerk didn't receive the correspondence regarding the reports for Synod until later in November, our Admin board discussed it in December, our Elders discussed it in early January, and the deadline to submit a response to our classis was Feb 5. This provided very little time to come up with a well thought out communication or overture to Classis, especially since Advent and Christmas is usually not a time to hold meetings and study groups.
- 4) The recommended training tool kit from Pastor Church Resources will take at least 6-8 weeks and requires a trained facilitator. Our church council has developed a Task Force to follow through with our commitment to facilitate further study and discussions. This discussion would feel much more genuine if Synod delays the process
- 5) The committee itself took almost four years to write this report, Classis Alberta North congregations and classes are given until February 5, 2021, a mere three months (including a Christmas break for church Councils) to discuss the 175 page report, a topic which few congregations have ever discussed together, and then put a response together for their Classis to consider, or an overture for Classis to act upon.

Council of Woody Nook CRC - Lacombe, Alberta
Miriam Doef, Clerk

3. To not process recommendation D until it has been clarified - WECRC Council

To Classis Alberta North,

The following overture comes from the Council of West End Christian Reformed Church (CWE) as approved by Council, February 1, 2021.

History: CWE received a request from 5 members of the congregation to submit an overture (COV) to Classis, which overtures Synod about Recommendation D of the "Human Sexuality" report (HSR); that COV has been submitted to Classis for its March, 2021 meeting as well. CWE did not believe it was in a position to make recommendations on the HSR, both because it had determined to send a letter to the Council of Delegates (COD) asking for the report not to come to Synod until 2022 in order to give Churches adequate time to review and discuss the report, and because it did not believe it had spent enough time with the report to endorse an overture asking for a specific vote on one of the recommendations.

Instead, CWE wrote an overture including the concerns raised by the 5, but in a manner intended to invite reflection and discussion re: Recommendation D. While we believe it is not possible simply to declare that 175 pages of material have confessional status without discerning what that specifically entails, we also believe that the only way forward — as identified in the approach of the PCR Challenging Conversations Toolkit — is by taking time to listen and engage and not simply cast votes, even when we feel 100% certain about our vote. This does not imply that CWE is against the COV; CWE simply did not feel it was in a place to either endorse or turn down the COV. It is in the method by which to approach the concerns re: Recommendation D in which the two differ significantly. CWE believes as we more overtly begin what will be an intense journey that we need to start in the way of inviting, listening and dialogue.

RE: Report - Committee to Articulate a Foundation-laying Biblical Theology of Human Sexuality (2021)

The Council of West End Christian Reformed Church, Edmonton, AB overtures Classis Alberta North to overture Synod:

A. That Synod does not process recommendation D until it has been clarified, and sent to the churches for consideration, precisely which part of the 175 pages are already considered to have confessional status.

Grounds:

1. It is not clear what exactly within the Report would be considered confessional, assuming it is not every phrase of 175 pages. This would be important to determine for numerous reasons, not least of which concerns the signing of the Covenant of Office-bearers which identifies agreement with and defense of the Confessions.
2. With all the turmoil already in discussions about these matters, it would be helpful not to spend significant time in churches or Classis speculating as to what is considered to already have confessional status.
3. Once clarified, it would be important for the churches to have adequate time to review Recommendation D in order to both understand and consider responses.

B. That Synod consider the concerns and implications that have been a part of discussion re: Recommendation D. These are:

- Synodical decisions do not ordinarily have confessional status; examples of those that have not been given confessional status are the Committee to Study Homosexuality (1973) or the Creation Stewardship Task Force (2012).
- Synod 2016 accepted the minority report of the Committee to provide pastoral guidance re: same sex marriage but did not assume that this already had confessional status.
- Confessional status for the report will be difficult for those who are wrestling with scriptures especially with respect to committed same-sex relationships. This may make it difficult for office bearers, including pastors, to sign the Covenant for Office Bearers
- This recommendation by itself has the potential of causing severe division within the denomination.

Michelle Rooker, Chair of Council

David van Berkel, Clerk of Council

4. To not accept recommendation D - WECRC members

Dear Delegates of Classis Alberta North:

Greetings, strength, wisdom, and blessing as you lead our churches through these very challenging times.

In response to the report to Synod 2021 from the Committee to Articulate a Foundation-laying Biblical Theology of Human Sexuality, we, the undersigned, respectfully overture Classis Alberta North at its Spring 2021 meeting to take the action described below. We submitted a request to the council of West End Christian Reformed Church to adopt this overture as its own and to submit it to Classis. However, at its meeting of February 1, West End's council adopted an alternate overture that it has submitted to this meeting of Classis.

While the undersigned commend West End Council's overture for Classis' consideration, we believe that their proposed overture does not sufficiently address our concern. We ask that Classis take a stronger stand in overturing Synod 2021, asking Synod to reject outright the claim made in Recommendation D of its study committee on human sexuality "that the church's teaching on premarital sex, extramarital sex, adultery, polyamory, pornography, and homosexual sex already has confessional status" (Agenda for Synod, p. 149)." The overture to Classis submitted by the undersigned follows.

Overture to Classis Alberta North, spring 2021 session

Preface:

This overture does not express any opinion on whether the report to Synod 2021 from the Committee to Articulate a Foundation-laying Biblical Theology of Human Sexuality is correct in its views on whether same-sex sexual relations are biblically permissible or not. Many within the denomination will, no doubt, continue to debate that issue for a long time to come. What this overture does ask is that we keep this conversation within the bounds of respectful and loving dialog as we together struggle towards greater understanding. It asks that we do not allow the present majority opinion to exclude the minority from full membership in the denomination. And it seeks to prevent our denomination from once again committing the sin of tearing apart Christ's Body over our differences on pastoral matters.

Our Overture

In light of this, the undersigned overture Classis Alberta North to overture Synod 2021 not to adopt recommendation **D of the Report to Synod 2021 from the Committee to Articulate a Foundation-laying Biblical Theology of Human Sexuality**, which states: "D. That synod declare that the church's

teaching on premarital sex, extramarital sex, adultery, polyamory, pornography, and homosexual sex already has confessional status” (*Agenda for Synod*, p. 149)

Grounds for this Overture:

1. The assumption of the study committee that its understanding of what constitutes the church’s teaching on human sexuality has confessional status is factually and historically incorrect. That remains the case even if Synod 2021 decides to adopt their interpretation. Synodical decisions do not have confessional status unless synods specifically raise them to the level of a *status confessionis*. Most study committee reports adopted by synod have not been given that status, including, for example, the biblical positions advanced by the committee to Study Homosexuality (1973), the Creation Stewardship Task Force (2012), and a number of study committees with respect to women’s ordination which offered conflicting views.
2. Synod has elevated interpretations of confessions to confessional status a number of times in the past. A good example is Synod 1926’s decision regarding the Lord’s Day that was declared to be “binding for every officer and member of our denominational group” (*Acts of Synod, 1926*, art. 136, pp. 191,192). This demonstrates that when synods have developed the current CRC position on homosexuality, beginning with Synod 1973, and have placed that position in the framework of “pastoral advice,” they have deliberately avoided a declaration of confessional status. These synods have not made the same assumption that the committee now makes and recommends to synod. The supplement to Article 69-c of the *Church Order** (see below) also shows this. Synod 2016 agreed with the guidance given in the minority report of the Committee to Provide Pastoral Guidance re Same-sex Marriage. But Synod 2016 identified that as “pastoral guidance.” It did not just assume that this advice had confessional status and it did not raise this pastoral guidance to the level of *status confessionis*.
3. Synod 2021 must take into account the substantial number of CRC members and office bearers who either do not share the study committee’s views or who continue to wrestle with Scripture and the confessions, particularly with respect to same-sex committed relationships. By “assuming” that the interpretations of Scripture presented by the synodical study committees have confessional status, Synod 2021 would rule out what a large minority perceives to be an equally Reformed and obedient Spirit-led interpretation of Scripture.
4. If Synod 2021 adopts recommendation D and the committee’s views are taken to have confessional status, then a large number of CRC office bearers will be unable to sign the Covenant for Office-bearers. This will not only exclude them from major and minor assemblies but also prevent them from being ordained to office in their local church. This would include many pastors, who would need to find other employment or another denomination.
5. Such a drastic step of the (present) majority imposing its views on the minority would inevitably tear our denomination apart yet again—something that will further rend the Body of Christ against our Lord’s express command for us to remain one.

May God bless you with insight, wisdom, and discretion as you consider this very significant matter.

Yours in Christ,

Rick Mast
Tom Oosterhuis
Gordon Pols

Cecil Van Niejenhuis
Bob De Moor

* Supplement, Article 69-c

The pastoral guidance recommended to the churches by Synod 2016, found in the minority report of the Committee to Provide Pastoral Guidance re Same-sex Marriage (*Agenda for Synod 2016*, pp. 436-43), represents one example of how synod has determined that a marriage is considered to be in conflict with the Word of God (cf. *Acts of Synod 2016*, p. 918).