

Minutes of the 98th Meeting of Classis Atlantic Northeast of the Christian Reformed Church

Wednesday, March 1 and Thursday, March 2, 2023
Camp CONNRI, Ashford, CT

Wednesday, March 1, 2023

Article 98-1 Anthony Selvaggio, chair for this session, called the meeting to order. Credentials were presented, first-time delegates (*Diane Tiwow, Rose Hiskes, Dexter Green, Sue Bratt-Cok*) signed the *Covenant for Officebearers*, and delegates and guests were welcomed.

Delegates: (+ = Wednesday only; * = Thursday only)

Athens, ME – River of Life: Pastor-elect Joel Gagnon
Baldwinsville, NY – Community: no delegates
Bangor, ME – New Hope: Elder Jon Bergman
Binghamton, NY – Valley: Pastor Dan Wolters, Elder Marcus Doller
Douglas, MA – The River: Elder Kelly Johnson+, Elder Tim Johnson*
Dover, NH – Indonesian: Pastor Michael Lapian, Elder Benno Kalalo, Deacon Diane Tiwow
East Boston, MA – Resurrection (emerging): Pastor Justin Ruddy and Pastor Kaitlin Givens*
Farmington, ME – Summit Faith: Pastor Ryan Goding
Franklin, MA – New England Chapel: Pastor Heather Kempskie*
Goshen, NY: Pastor Sam Sutter
Goshen, NY – Iglesia Hispana: Pastor Gilbert Varela
Malden, MA – Spring Rain: Polo Kim*
Palmyra, NY – East Palmyra: Pastor Michael Saville, Elder Stan Starckenburg
Penfield, NY – Rochester: Pastor Anthony Selvaggio and Elder Sue Bratt-Cok
Providence, RI – The Neighborhood (emerging): Joe Paravisini
Richfield Springs, NY – Trinity: no delegates
South Windsor, CT – Avery Street: Pastor Dave Poolman, Elder John Hibma+, Elder Ron Straayer*, Deacon Rose Hiskes
Syracuse, NY – Chin Christian Church of Syracuse (emerging): David Lian and Emilia Sin, Elder Za Hu
Waltham, VT – Champlain Valley: no delegates
Wappingers Falls, NY – Immanuel: Elder Gary Nagelhout and Deacon Melissa Fischer
Webster, NY: Pastor Will Barham, Elder Clyde Williams
Whitinsville, MA – Fairlawn: Pastor Joel VandeWerken, Elder Dick VandenBerg, and Deacon Beth Banning
Whitinsville, MA – Pleasant Street: Pastor Matthew Burns, Elder Sue Cooper, Deacon Dexter Greene
Worcester, MA – Emmaus City (emerging): Pastor Michael Sullivan

Guests:

Nick Monsma, Karisa Paravisini (The Neighborhood), Bethany Miller (Rochester), Deibi Lapian (Indonesian), Brent and Diane Averill, Randy Engle* (synodical deputy, Classis Lake Erie), Paul VanDyken* (synodical deputy, Classis Hackensack—virtual), Gerrit Besteman* (synodical deputy, Classis Southeast US—virtual), Roger Sparks (STM, New Hope), Marco Avila (Resonate representative), Thalia Towle (classis treasurer), Josiah Chapman (chaplaincy candidate, Summit Faith), Lorriane Li (commissioned pastor from Classis Grand Rapids East), Emily Fortna (World Renew)

Article 98-2 Classis was constituted with the following officers:

Chair: Anthony Selvaggio
Recording Secretary: Will Barham
Stated Clerk: Dave Poolman

Article 98-3 A time of worship and singing was led by Sam Sutter, Matthew Burns and Will Barham. Dan Wolters led devotions based on Deuteronomy 6:4-9, reminding us that we are all disciple makers, called to help people move in the direction of loving God and following

Jesus Christ. The Deuteronomy passage was a reminder to God's people of who they really were, who they were meant to be. We are also called to remember that as a classis, too, and to know our calling is to invite people to love God more and more wholeheartedly.

Article 98-4 The chair appointed the following pro-tem committees for this meeting:

Balloting: Fairlawn delegates

Credentials: Pleasant Street delegates

Review minutes of the October 2022 meeting: Goshen delegates

Article 98-5 Treasurer's report

- 5.1 Classis Treasurer Thalia Towle reviewed the financial reports that were sent out ahead of the meeting. FY 2022 ended well; classis accounts are healthy, as are our investments, though they also were affected by a poor economy in the past year.
- 5.2 Thalia thanked the churches of classis for sending in their ministry shares.
- 5.3 Paramus Fund: Thalia reported that four grants were awarded this past year; more money is still available.
- 5.5 The VEMACONY Fund still has money available for helping with youth projects.
- 5.6 Classis has also been able to help some of our emerging churches with some small grants as well.
- 5.7 A motion to approve the work of the Treasurer was supported and **APPROVED**.

Article 98-6 Stated Clerk's report

- 6.1 Classis Stated Clerk Dave Poolman briefly reviewed the report he e-mailed with the agenda for classis. He thanks classis for its understanding in light of the damage to the facility where we meet and adjustments that had to be made regarding overnight accommodations. He briefly mentioned his experience at the Stated Clerks' Conference in California in January.
- 6.2 A motion to approve the work of the Stated Clerk was supported and **APPROVED**.

Article 98-7 Classis Interim Team (CIT)

- 7.1 Michael Saville highlighted the CIT report. A written report was sent to the pastors and churches of classis prior to this meeting; a copy of the report is filed with the minutes of this meeting.
- 7.2 CIT has sought to provide support to the three oversight committees currently functioning in classis.
- 7.3 Classis personnel appointments
 - 7.3.1 Michael Saville is now chair of CIT. The previous chair, Joel VandeWerken, continues to serve on CIT.
 - 7.3.2 Open positions still remain for Disability Concerns Advocate, Leadership Development Team (two people), Church Multiplication Team (one person), Church Renewal Team (one person).
- 7.4 Pulpit supply for vacant churches
 - 7.4.1 The River (Douglas, MA) requests continued pulpit supply on the third Sunday of each month.
 - 7.4.2 Trinity (Richfield Springs, NY) – no pulpit supply is requested.

- 7.4.3 Immanuel (Wappingers Falls, NY) requests periodic pulpit supply.
- 7.5 Incorporation of Classis Atlantic Northeast: Henry Lane reported that the required paperwork for the Commonwealth of Massachusetts is complete and has been filed. CIT is also in the process of reviewing the classis by-laws.
- 7.6 Church Order Article 12-c approval of Rev. Nick Monsma to be Campus Pastor at East Palmyra Christian School - Michael Saville provided some of the history and background to this request; Nick spoke about his role at the school, the growth the school has been experiencing in recent years, and his desire to help the school become a discipling community. There is a need for Nick's position because there are a lot of new families associated with the school who do not come from churches that are confessionally reformed. Nick answered some questions. Classis was reminded that CIT has already approved this, but it requires the approval of classis and the synodical deputies. A motion declaring that this position is consistent with the calling of a minister of the Word was supported and **APPROVED**. The Synodical deputies **CONCURRED**.
- 7.7 Joel Gagnon sustained an examination for Commissioned Pastor at our October 2022 meeting. At that time classis also required Joel to have a psychological exam completed before being ordained as a Commissioned Pastor. CIT was informed on February 15 that a psychological evaluation has been completed by a licensed psychologist, and notes that all requirements for ordination have now been fulfilled. Classis authorized the church counselor (Ryan Goding) to work with the River of Life council to proceed with Joel's ordination.
- 7.7 Information for first-time delegates – a handout called Welcome to CANE has been prepared and will be sent out with each meeting's agenda. The handout is designed to inform first-time delegates about classis and how it works, how it is structured, the various teams that report, etc.
- 7.8 CIT also worked with the Stated Clerk to set the agenda and make other arrangements for the March 2023 classis meeting.

Article 98-8

Church Renewal Team (CRT)

- 8.1 Sam Sutter read 1 Corinthians 15:58—*“Therefore, my dear brothers and sisters, stand firm. Let nothing move you. Always give yourselves fully to the work of the Lord, because you know that your labor in the Lord is not in vain”*—and spoke of how church leaders run the risk of not standing firm. It is possible for us to be distracted or discouraged by circumstances and tempted to believe that our work counts for little or nothing and we should give up. CRT's goal is to help churches become and stay healthy. Its best work is done proactively, before things fall apart. CRT invests some of the money of classis in things that matter through Paramus Fund (new outreach events), providing church project loans to help churches become more healthy, and through VEMACONY funds for helping youth ministries. Sam encouraged churches and pastors to reach out to CRT and to our regional pastors to talk, help with problems, etc.
- 8.2 Safe Church: Jodi Koeman - no report
- 8.3 Sam Sutter will be stepping down as chair of CRT; Nick Monsma has agreed to become the new chair. A motion to thank Sam for his work and approve Nick as the new CRT chair, effective July 1, was supported and **APPROVED**.

- 8.4 Counselors of vacant churches reports
- 8.4.1 The River (Douglas, MA): Dave Poolman reported that attendance has remained fairly stable, giving is good, and The River is receiving additional income from a local child care that rents space from the church. They request continued classis pulpit supply on the third Sunday of each month.
- 8.4.2 Trinity (Richfield Springs, NY): Sam Sutter reported that attendance at Trinity has been relatively static for years and remains so. Classis noted the faithful service of Harold and Carrie Philbrook and the fact that Carrie's health is a concern; prayer was offered for the Philbrooks and the ministry at Trinity.
- 8.4.3 Immanuel (Wappingers Falls, NY): Sam Sutter reported that Immanuel is doing well with pulpit supply. Two calls have been declined, so their pastor search team is starting over. They are experiencing some stresses associated with transition and vacancy, but the leadership wants to strengthen ties between Immanuel and other churches in classis. They also appreciate Sam's work with them.
- 8.4.4 River of Life (Athens, ME): Ryan Goding reported that Joel Gagnon's ordination has been pending while his psychological evaluation was in process, but now that is complete and they are ready to move forward. Ryan also noted Joel has a good support system around him.
- 8.4.5 Community (Baldwinsville, NY): Nick Monsma reported that he is in contact with them and will have an additional report at our October meeting.
- 8.5 Church Visitor reports
- 8.5.1 Pleasant Street (Whitinsville, MA): Mike Laird and Dave Poolman – Mike and Dave visited with Pastor Matthew Burns and several representatives of the council on December 1, 2022. They reported that things are much calmer at Pleasant Street and they feel that ministry there is being done with a good and positive spirit.
- 8.5.2 New Hope (Bangor, ME): Joel VandeWerken and Michael Saville – Michael reported that he and Joel had a Zoom meeting to talk about New Hope's financial situation and needs. Classis will consider this further when we get to matters from their credentials.
- 8.5.3 River of Life (Athens, ME): Matthew Burns and Joel VandeWerken – no report.
- 8.6 Oversight Team reports
- 8.6.1 Annika Bangma: Brent Averill, Joel VandeWerken, and Ann Roon – Brent reported that Annika and her family are now attending and active at The River; Annika is helping where she can. From a classis standpoint, this matter is complete. Classis thanked the oversight team for their work.
- 8.6.2 Jonathan Fischer: Tim Curtis, Mike Sullivan, Chris Fluit and Katie Watts – Classis moved into executive session for this discussion. (Note: Confidential detailed minutes of this session are included in a separate file with the minutes of Meeting #97 of Classis Atlantic Northeast) Mike Sullivan noted that Jonathan has indicated that he is resigning from ministry in the CRC and does not plan to return to the denomination;

he plans to enter a non-ministerial job. A motion to honorably release Jonathan Fischer from the ministry of the Word in the CRCNA (Church Order Article 14-c) was supported, discussed and **APPROVED**. The Synodical deputies **CONCURRED**. From a classis standpoint, this matter is complete. Classis thanked the oversight team for their work and voted to end executive session.

- 8.6.3 New Hope (Bangor, ME): Bill Johnson, Jodi Koeman, Ryan Goding, and Nick Monsma – Ryan Goding reported that the team has been anticipating the appointment of a Specialized Transitional Minister (STM). Roger Sparks has now arrived in Bangor to take on that role. New Hope has also developed and implemented a Safe Church policy as directed by classis. It is anticipated that the oversight team will remain in place until the time comes to make a recommendation to classis about New Hope’s readiness to extend a call (*Church Order Article 17-a, supplement, b.4*).

Article 98-9 Church Multiplication Team (CMT)

- 9.1 Mike Sullivan reported on the CMT’s mandate to work with new or young churches and church planters in classis. They are also looking for emerging missional activity in New England in a time of spiritual dryness.
- 9.2 The Indonesian CRC’s first official service as an organized church was held on October 30, 2022. Michael Lapien’s ministerial credentials have been processed by Valley and the CIT and have been sent to the Indonesian Church.
- 9.3 Chin Christian Church of Syracuse: Michael Saville reported that he will be visiting with them on March 12, 2023. Brent Averill introduced three members of the Chin Christian Church who were present: Pastor David Lian, his wife Emilia Sin, and Elder Za Hu; Emilia and Za both spoke briefly. Pastor David and Emilia have been in Syracuse for about three years; they hope that eventually David will become a Commissioned Pastor. Their congregation meets in an RCA church in Syracuse. We look forward to deepening ministry and relationships with the church. Brent Averill prayed for God to bless and use them.
- 9.4 Church plant updates (*oral reports; written report in the fall*)
- 9.4.1 Emmaus City (Worcester, MA; calling church is Pleasant Street): Mike Sullivan reported that Jesus is steadfast and His people are steadfast. They have started doing Sunday School with five other churches of varying denominations. They have faced some tough situations, but the whole church is sharing the load (not just Mike as pastor). Mike has also been starting some ministry in the prisons in Shirley, MA, where Trevor Weaver serves as a chaplain and has been building a church in the prison there. Mike asked that we continue to pray for Emmaus City, especially at 9:38 each morning and evening, pleading with the Lord to send more workers into the harvest fields. Find out more about what’s going on at Emmaus City at jesuslovesworcester.com.
- 9.4.2 Resurrection CRC (East Boston, MA; calling church is The River): Justin Ruddy reported that “things are lovely” there right now. God is good and doing surprising things and answering prayers. They are now 4

years old and have a core of 80 people. They sense a real vibrancy in their community right now. The core group there was 85% white, 15% Asian American when they started, but have prayed that their demographics would increasingly reflect the neighborhood. Today they are 50% non-white, and growing especially in Latino and Spanish-speaking attendance. Worship services and communication is now done in English and Spanish. Justin asked that they pray for protection, preservation and expansion in the neighborhood/community. Find out more about what's going on at Resurrection at <https://www.resurrectionbos.org>.

- 9.4.3 The Neighborhood (Providence, RI; calling church is The River): Joe and Karisa Paravisini reported that The Neighborhood is made up of several intentionally-small home-based church communities that are linked together. Joe still working bivocationally and but also developing a home-based business. Their immediate family is doing well, but Joe's father had a stroke and is also in an advanced stage of Alzheimer's. They have been working with some seekers and seeing some of them, including one "hard core atheist," move toward faith; they are looking forward to several baptisms this summer including at least one adult baptism. Joe and Karisa asked that we keep praying for their church, family, and also people connected to The Neighborhood who are struggling with alcohol abuse. Find out more about The Neighborhood at <https://thenbhd.org>.
- 9.4.4 Spring Rain (Malden, MA; calling church is Avery Street): Polo Kim reported that their infant son Habakkuk is doing well in spite of some worries during pregnancy. His wife Dandan and their older son Micah are also doing well. He thanked classis for being part of the journey with him. He reported that their previous intern had to return to Germany because of visa issues, but they have a new from Malaysia who is very gifted for ministry. A new leadership team of five people is in place; they will have a retreat next week to reconsider and own the vision for multicultural ministry. They have launched new Family Groups to emphasize community relationships in the church and have also resumed Friday evening prayers. They are thrilled about a new convert, an Indonesian man who is the first convert at Spring Rain. They have experienced some spiritual warfare as well, but remain alert to the spiritual battles going on. They are also trying to learn how to minister to a homeless woman who has been coming to the mission house; she is clearly mentally ill and in spiritual bondage—they are learning to love her and find ways to bring her to Jesus. They are also large enough that they are looking for a bigger space because the house is no longer large enough. Polo asked for the prayers of classis for them.
- 9.4.5 Iglesia Hispana (Goshen, NY): Gilbert Varela spoke of how the church has been a blessing to him, noting that he expected things to happen little by little, but they have been happening more quickly and all at once. They started with 5 people, kept praying, and people started showing up. They started worship services last Easter and 35 people

came. They have witnessed tremendous blessings: baptisms, new members, and another group waiting to be baptized. They are focusing on developing their ability to reach into their community, develop leaders, and connect with each other. Gilbert also mentioned that his father passed away three weeks ago, which has been very tough on him. More information is available from Gilbert at gvarelas2000@gmail.com.

- 9.4.6 Classis closed this session with corporate prayers for our church plants and their pastors and their families.

Thursday, March 2, 2022

Article 98-10 A time of devotions was led by Matthew Burns. He read Psalm 113, a morning psalm, in English, and then asked Marco Avila to read it in Spanish and Deibi Lopian to read it in Indonesian. Matthew then read a prayer from Neil Plantinga's book *Morning and Evening Prayers*.

Article 98-11 Leadership Development Team (LDT)

- 11.1 Justin Ruddy reported that LDT continues to need some new members to help spread the load of their work. He worked with CIT and Joel Gagnon to complete the requirements for Joel's pending ordination as a Commissioned Pastor, and also communicated with a couple of other churches about processes for leaders in training. He communicated with the classis treasurer regarding student fund allocations and maintained contact with the three leaders we are supporting: Josiah Chapman, Peter Cho, and Blake Phillips.
- 11.2 Josiah Chapman introduced himself and gave some background information as he works toward chaplaincy in the U.S. Army. He is a chaplain candidate in the Maine Army National Guard, and is also working through the EPMC program at Calvin and on an online MDiv degree from Liberty University.
- 11.3 Justin welcomed Bethany Miller. She is receiving encouragement and help from Rochester CRC to move forward with obtaining a license to exhort. Classis anticipates that we will do a licensure exam with Bethany at our October 2023 meeting.
- 11.4 Lorraine Li was also invited to introduced herself. She is a graduate of Calvin Seminary, who went to China with Resonate after graduation. She and her husband returned to the States in 2014. She is a member of Church of the Servant in Grand Rapids, MI, and a Commissioned Pastor in Classis Grand Rapids East, but is interested in becoming a Commissioned Pastor in CANE because she is now working at First United Presbyterian Church in Cambridge, MA. Her husband, a former professor, is now ordained in the PCUSA. They have a small house church that meets on Fridays for a meal and study of the Heidelberg Catechism. She asked classis to pray for God's guidance for their future and how we can work together. The CIT was tasked to work with Lorraine to figure out mechanics of how to make this work and explore ideas for shared ministry.
- 11.5 Justin Ruddy will be stepping down as chair of LDT; Matthew Burns has agreed to become the new chair. A motion to thank Justin for his work and approve Matthew as the new LDT chair, effective immediately, was supported and **ADOPTED**.

Article 98-12 Denominational and Synodical matters

- 12.1 Election of delegates to Synod 2023 (*June 9-15 at Calvin University in Grand Rapids, MI*) - After discussion and voting, the following were elected as delegates to this year's synod:
- Minister delegate: Matthew Burns (Pleasant Street CRC)
 - Elder delegate: Clyde Williams (Webster CRC)
 - Deacon delegate: TBD
 - At-large delegate: Will Barham (Webster CRC)
 - Minister alternate: Michael Saville (East Palmyra CRC)
 - Elder alternate: TBD
 - Deacon alternate: TBD
 - At-large alternate: Joel VandeWerken (Fairlawn CRC)
- 12.2 Since we have only one Elder delegate and no Deacon delegates, the pastors in classis were asked to go back to their councils and seek nominees for the open positions above. Names of nominees are due to either Michael Saville or Dave Poolman no later than March 15.
- 12.3 Elections for denominational boards and committees: No nominations or elections for denominational boards or committees are required at this time.

Article 98-13 Denominational Ministry reports

- 13.1 CRCNA Council of Delegates (COD): Anthony Selvaggio reported on his experiences at the last COD meeting. Discussions included looking at membership trends and metrics, confessional exceptions, and the proposed Code of Conduct for ministry leaders which is being sent to Synod 2023 for approval.
- 13.2 Calvin University: Wayne Coleman – no report.
- 13.3 Calvin Theological Seminary: Kris Vos – no report.
- 13.4 Resonate Global Mission: Marco Avila explained some changes going on in leadership of Resonate since Zachary King became general secretary of the CRCNA. Resonate works on church planting and global ministry, including 16 new church plants. Active church planters will be meeting together in June in New Jersey; representatives of SEAPI churches also met together last year to pray, get to know each other, talk about working together, etc. Resonate also has a new full-time person to start Haitian church in Florida, as our ministry to Latinos is also growing very quickly. Diane Averill added comments about Coffee Break, the recent women's weekend retreat at Camp CONNRI where they had to turn people away because there wasn't enough room for everyone who wanted to come. Lots of new material is now available for Coffee Break. Diane also reported for the Connections Team and reminded delegates that Deibi Lapien helps out with SEAPI churches. Diane and Deibi passed out a "playlist" of resources that are available (this list will be attached to the minutes of this meeting when they are sent out). Marco also thanked the churches of classis for their ministry share contributions.
- 13.5 World Renew: Emily Boldenow Fortna (*a World Renew report dated January 2023 was distributed prior to this meeting*) – Emily introduced herself to classis; she is our new board representative. She shared a story from a trip to El

Salvador that illustrated the kinds of work and transformation World Renew gets involved in. She reviewed some of the current projects in Florida and Ukraine, as well as a response to the earthquakes in Turkey and Syria through local partners in those countries. She also briefly explained what Free a Family (mentioned on the report) is all about.

Article 98-14 Other matters and reports

- 14.1 Credentials committee – The delegates from Pleasant Street reported that the credentials provided for this meeting were in order, and noted the following:
- 14.1.1 The council of New Hope CRC (Bangor, ME) moved “*that classis provide \$5,000 of revitalization funds to New Hope Church to help offset the salary of a Specialized Transitional Minister (STM).*” The motion was supported. Grounds for this one-time request were presented and are found on a separate document filed with the minutes of this meeting. Discussion ensued about where to find the funding and setting a precedent. Ultimately classis decided to use money from the general fund of classis to meet this need. After discussion, the motion was **APPROVED**, and our classis treasurer, Thalia Towle, was authorized to arrange for payment.
- 14.1.2 The council of New Hope CRC (Bangor, ME) requested “*that classis create provision for revitalization funds going forward by establishing a line time for CRT revitalization requests in next year’s CANE budget, grant CRT the authority to review requests for revitalization efforts within CANE and grant funds when appropriate, and provide CRT guidance on how to evaluate revitalization requests.*” Grounds for this request were presented and are found on a separate document filed with the minutes of this meeting. A motion to refer this matter to CIT to discuss and bring a recommendation to the October 2023 meeting of classis was supported and **APPROVED**.
- 14.1.3 The council of Immanuel CRC (Wappingers Falls, NY) requested the assistance of classis with periodic pulpit supply. This was received for information; CIT is already working with Immanuel on this.
- 14.1.4 The council of Immanuel CRC (Wappingers Falls, NY) requested that classis discuss its “*view on the grassroots movement for reformation in the CRCNA.*” Discussion identified this “grassroots movement” as associated with the “Messy Reformation” podcast, which aims to promote reformation and a return to biblical faithfulness and reformed theology. Michael Saville (mrsaville@gmail.com) can be contacted for more information.
- 14.1.5 The council of Immanuel CRC (Wappingers Falls, NY) recommended that “*Elder Gary Nagelhout pursue becoming licensed to preach.*” This matter was referred to LDT for their assistance and guidance.
- 14.1.6 The council of Fairlawn CRC (Whitinsville, MA) communicated that “*we are concerned about the unity of the CRC in response to some conversations apparently happening in various parts of the CRC since Synod’s 2022 decisions about human sexuality. We discussed a potential communication to synod written by our pastor, but because it is not yet clear what overtures or communications may come to synod this year,*

we felt it was premature to set before classis a document which might only complicate these sensitive conversations. We wonder whether other congregations have similar concerns, and how we might best respond as churches and as a classis to these discussions as they may be proposed for the synod agenda or in other settings within the CRC.” Dick VandenBerg from Fairlawn’s council spoke about what went into this communication. The communication referenced above is not before classis, but the concerns behind the document are pertinent to the discussion going on from different groups in the denomination. Anyone interested in seeing the document can request it from Joel VandeWerken (jywerko6@gmail.com). A potential Zoom meeting to discuss these issues could be held in the future, inviting interested people in classis to join; this might help some of us respond intelligently to the issues in the day. Justin Ruddy pointed out two additional resources that can help congregations talk about these matters; they include *The Challenging Conversations Toolkit* available from Pastor-Church Relations (<https://www.crcna.org/pcr/churches/challenging-conversations-toolkit>) and also the *Human Sexuality Report & Synod FAQ* (<https://www.crcna.org/synod/hsr-faq>).

- 14.2 Minutes committee – The delegates from Goshen reported that the minutes taken for the October 5-6, 2022 meeting of classis are in order.
- 14.3 Michael Lopian gave an update on his health and treatment for colorectal cancer. Chemotherapy has helped shrink the tumor; an upcoming CT scan will help determine its current status. Obviously, the hope is that the cancer is gone. Michael also spoke about how this experience has opened some new opportunities for ministry and conversation.

Article 98-15 Joel Gagnon concluded the meeting with prayer. Adjournment was at 12:20 p.m.

Upcoming classis meetings

Wednesday and Thursday, October 4-5, 2023

Deadline for the agenda for this meeting is September 6, 2023

Wednesday and Thursday, March 6-7, 2024 (*Ash Wednesday is February 14*)

Deadline for the agenda for this meeting is February 6, 2023

Wednesday and Thursday, October 2-3, 2024

Deadline for the agenda for this meeting is September 6, 2023

MINUTES OF CLASSIS GRANDVILLE

Wednesday, May 24, 2023

Meeting at:
Second Byron Center Christian Reformed Church
Byron Center, Michigan

Chairperson: Rev. Dan Kinnas

Stated Clerk: Rev. Dan Mouw

Article 1

OPENING WORSHIP

Opening worship was led by Diane Dykgraaf, classical prayer coordinator; Rev. Rick Vanderwal, pastor at Second Byron Center CRC; Rev. Rog Groenboom; and Rachel Bouwkamp, classical COD delegate. Worship included singing, a reading from Psalm 13, and circles of prayer for the upcoming meeting of Synod, 2023, including specifically the delegates from Classis Grandville.

Article 2

CREDENTIALS

The following office bearers served as delegates:

CHURCHES	MINISTERS	ELDERS	DEACONS
Byron Center			
First		Jeff Deppe	
Friendship	Dan Kinnas	*Mark De Vries	Ryan Steendam
Heritage	Bob Huisman	Jon Diekema	Brad Diekema
Pathway	Jim Heethuis	Matt Landheer	
Second	Rick Vanderwal	*Dave Hoppe	Tom Mulder
Dorr	Cedric Parsels	Randy Bosse	*Tim Poll
Grandville			
Fellowship	Tom Vander Ploeg	Mary Wood-Agents	Pam Kortman
Hanley	Joe Vanden Akker	Pete Bottema	Tim Hoffman
Ivanrest	Brandon Haan	Ruth Carr	Jim Heyboer
South Grandville		Jim Hoekstra	James Toebes
		Marc Faasse	
Wyoming			
Calvary		Shirley De Lange	*Barb Stone
Faith Community	Rog Groenboom	Joel Bosma	Scott Ouwinga
Hahn-In			
Hispana Emanuel			
Lee Street	Steve De Vries	Dave Veltkamp	Becky Veltkamp

MINUTES OF CLASSIS GRANDVILLE, MAY 24, 2023

[It was noted that deacon delegate and ministerial candidate Brad Diekema recently accepted a call from the Christian Reformed Church in Mount Vernon, Washington.]

*First-time delegates who stood to indicate their agreement with the Covenant for Office-bearers

Article 3

CHAIRPERSON

Chairperson for this meeting was Rev. Dan Kinnas. Vice-chairperson was Rev. Bob Huisman.

Article 4

INTRODUCTORY REMARKS

The chairperson welcomed delegates and guests. In addition to guest speakers mentioned below, he introduced Rev. Samuel Kim.

Article 5

SCHEDULE FOR THE DAY

The chairperson outlined the agenda for this evening meeting and appointed the delegates from Pathway CRC to serve as the Credentials Committee.

Article 6

SAFE CHURCH TEAM REPORT

Safe Church Team director Bryna Parsels encouraged delegates and councils to be 'the eyes and ears' in their congregation to ensure that everyone, rooted in Christ, will flourish. Bryna welcomed the churches to contact her with a question and/or a topic which she can include in a presentation planned for a classis meeting later this year.

She encouraged church leaders to reflect on the lyrics of the song, "Truth Be Told", by Matthew West, and ask themselves the question: "Who is singing this song in OUR congregation?"

Communications can be emailed to Bryna at grandvillesafechurch@gmail.com.

Article 7

EXECUTIVE TEAM REPORT

A motion was made and supported to approve the request of the First Byron Center CRC council that Classis Grandville renew the licensure to exhort of Mr. John De Leeuw.

ADOPTED.

The Executive Team received and endorsed the ministerial credentials of Rev. Rod Galindo, which were received from "Living Hope Community Church" in Fox Lake, Wisconsin, and Classis Wisconsin. These credentials were forwarded to church counselor Rev. Rog Groenboom so that South Grandville CRC can proceed with his installation as their next pastor.

Rev. Galindo has accepted a call to the South Grandville CRC in Grandville, Michigan, and he will be installed there on June 25, 2023.

MINUTES OF CLASSIS GRANDVILLE, MAY 24, 2023

Article 8

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT TEAM

Rev. Dan Kinnas updated classis on the ministry of the Albanian church plant as well as the initiatives of the Grand Rapids area church planting collaborative.

Article 9

HEALTHY CHURCH TEAM

New leadership is needed for this team.

Article 10

STEWARDSHIP TEAM

Rev. Rog Groenboom reported that the application process for classical grants is underway and the Grant Review Team will meet this summer to prepare recommendations to classis.

Article 11

LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT TEAM

Rev. Bob Huisman reported that the number of seminary students supported with student fund assistance has grown to five, with two more students being added in the fall. Since the number of students has grown appreciably in the past year, the current budget has insufficient funds to meet the necessary financial requirements. The Leadership Development Team will collaborate with the classical treasurer in requesting special offerings in each congregation for offset this shortfall.

A day-long retreat is being considered for the fall of 2023.

Article 12

STATED CLERK

The stated clerk's report in the printed agenda was received for information. A motion to approve the work of the stated clerk was adopted.

Article 13

EDUCATIONAL EVENT

Pastor Amy Schenkel from Resonate Global Mission led delegates and visitors with a presentation on the theme: "Sharing the Good News in a Way that Others Can Hear." Her slide presentation has been sent to each church, and delegates are encouraged to share her insights with fellow office-bearers and with their congregations.

Article 14

CLASSICAL DIACONAL MINISTRY

Suzanne Reinink submitted a written report. Volunteers in Service continues to communicate with the diaconates in classis; several meetings have taken place with deacons and several more meetings with local church diaconates are planned for the fall.

MINUTES OF CLASSIS GRANDVILLE, MAY 24, 2023

VIS is planning on two Deacon Orientations – Monday, September 18 at 1:00 p.m. and Wednesday, September 23, at 6:30 p.m. Locations TBA. Deacons are encouraged to attend one of these training sessions.

Article 15

CLASSICAL PRAYER MOBILIZER

Diane Dykgraaf reported on a denominational prayer gathering she attended on February 20-24 at All Nations CRC near Los Angeles, CA.

All members of the CRCNA are invited to join others across North American in 40 days of prayer for Synod, 2023.

Those who wish to participate in a Prayer Vigil during synod, but can't be present in person, are invited to sign up for half hour prayer time slots each day with a provided prayer guide. To access this prayer vigil, go online to crcna.org/synod/prayer.

A Great Lakes Prayer Gathering is being planned for November 7-9 (Tuesday – Thursday) at Maranatha Conference Center. The hope is that four people from each classis will attend. Registration will begin in August. If you are interested or have questions, you can email Diane at dianedyk@aol.com.

Article 16

REGIONAL PASTOR

Rev. Kent Rottman highlighted a pastors' gathering on Tuesday, June 6, at noon at Heritage CRC on "Sermon Application".

He encouraged open, honest conversations within councils and congregations.

Article 17

CHURCH COUNSELORS

- 1) Rev. Rog Groenboom reported that Rev. Rod Galindo accepted a call to become the next pastor at South Grandville CRC. Installation is scheduled for June 25.
- 2) Rev. Bryce Mensink sent a written report to classis. Rev. Kyung Phil Kim has accepted the position of pastor at the Hahn-In CRC in Wyoming. His ministerial credentials are in the Korean Presbyterian Church and he is in the process of meeting the requirements to receive a formal call to the CRC. In the interim the congregation will celebrate the 'inauguration' of Pastor Kim's pastoral ministry among them. An official installation will occur at a later date once all requirements have been met and a classical examination has been sustained.

Article 18

CHURCH VISITOR REPORTS

MINUTES OF CLASSIS GRANDVILLE, MAY 24, 2023

The written report from Rev. Ron Baker and Rev. Hank Vlaardingerbroek on their visit to the Pathway CRC was published in the agenda and received for information.

Article 19

OVERSIGHT TEAM FOR REV. A. J. GRETZ

Rev. Gretz intends to resign as an ordained minister of the Word in the CRC. This will be processed at the September, 2023 meeting of Classis Grandville.

Article 20

CREDENTIALS COMMITTEE

Pastor Jim Heethuis reported on behalf of the credentials committee.

The following communications were received from the Lee Street CRC for information:

- 1) "We hired Jonathan Gonzalez as a full-time Student Ministries Director. This is a replacement for our part-time Director of Faith Formation position. We will be working in cooperation with Young Life with this."
- 2) "The elders made a decision to open all church offices to women. We held a listening session for this. People spoke in roughly equal numbers for and against this. Several also wrote letters."
- 3) "Please pray for our church's path forward."

Article 21

CLASSICAL TREASURER'S REPORT

Classical treasurer Leon De Lange reported that Classis Grandville is in a sound financial situation, having received nearly 97% of ministry share commitments in the first quarter. Leon requested the churches to request their treasurer/accountant to submit to him, if they haven't yet done so, their churches annual ministry share commitment for the current fiscal year.

A motion was made and supported to approve the work of the classical treasurer. Adopted.

Article 22

CRCNA COUNCIL OF DELEGATES

Delegate Rachel Bouwkamp reported that she has accepted a second, final three year term to serve as Classis Grandville's representative to the COD.

The COD has combined nine denomination ministries of the rubric of 'Thrive'.

The COD is recommending that future synods no longer create a denominational approved offering list. Churches who wish to can contact Rachel for the current list.

Dan De Kam has been appointed to the position of Director of Ministry Operations in the U.S. A study is underway to assess future uses for the denominational building, as this facility is currently underutilized.

Article 23

WORLD RENEW

MINUTES OF CLASSIS GRANDVILLE, MAY 24, 2023

Delegate Marc Faasse is concluding seven years of service to World Renew as Classis Grandville's delegate. He reviewed briefly the impact World Renew continues to make across our world.

Article 24

CALVIN UNIVERSITY BOARD OF TRUSTEES

Delegate Carolyn Van Allen submitted a written report to Classis Grandville. She highlighted the Calvin's second campus inside the Handlon Correctional Facility in Ionia, Michigan, where recently 15 students received their bachelor's degree and an additional 11 earned an associate's degree in faith and community leadership.

An initiative is being studied which would establish vibrant educational programs housed in a Center for Community Education with a specific focus on meeting the educational needs of residents in the 49507 zip code and immediately adjacent neighborhoods. This initiative is currently in the research and development stage with hopes to deliver educational opportunities to residents beginning in the fall of 2024.

Article 25

ADJOURNMENT

Chairperson Dan Kinnas closed this session of Classis Grandville in prayer.

**Next meeting of Classis Grandville:
Thursday, September 21, 2023
Time and location to be determined**



CLASSIS NIAGARA OF THE CHRISTIAN REFORMED CHURCH



*To encourage, equip, and empower churches and ministries
to engage God's people in mission!*



Website: classisniagara.ca; e-mail: statedclerkniagara@gmail.com
123rd meeting of Classis Niagara
Wednesday, May 24, 2023 - held at Mountainview CRC

MINUTES

classisniagara.ca/may-2023 -- (not live yet)

Chair: Rev. Woodrow Dixon; **Vice-chair:** Rev. Steve DeBoer; **Stated Clerk:** Wendy de Jong

1. PRAYERFUL DEPENDENCE ON GOD

Engaging in prayer with expectant hearts and minds so that our classis, churches and individual members are prayerfully dependent on God.

- 1.1 Welcome & Opening Devotions:** The chair, Rev. Woodrow Dixon, opened the meeting with a reading of the Pentecost story from The Jesus Storybook Bible and offered prayer.
- 1.2 Roll Call and Report of the Credentials Committee:** Elder Henry DeKlerk of Smithville CRC presented the Roll Call on behalf of the Credentials Committee.

CHURCH	PASTOR	ELDER	DEACON
Bethany		Ray Van Huizen	Will Vanderwier
Bethel	Pastor Frank Engelage	Clarence Mulder	
Covenant	Rev. Janet Ryzebol	Pastor David Scholman	Henry Rauwerda
Grace	Rev. Mike Vandyk	Andy Heemskerk	Bev Kiers
Jubilee Fellowship	Rev. Woodrow Dixon	Karin Terpstra	
Mountainview	Rev. Erick Schuringa	PJ Vermeer	Nick Kiers
Providence	Pastor Mike Collins	Matt Van Staalduinen	
Faith Fellowship	Elder Bill Hoogland	Rick Meloen	Tena Schuyler
Riverside	Elder Kyle Wasylin	Jason Witteveen	Rick Hessels
Smithville	Elder Henry DeKlerk	Bert Hogeveen	
Trinity	Rev. John Vanderburgh	Rick Kok	Steve Teeuwssen
The Bridge	Rev. Steve DeBoer, Hans Branderhorst, credentials via Providence		
Village Church	Rev. Mark DeVos, Pastor Leah DeVos – credentials via Covenant		

1.3	The Table	Rev. Terence Schilstra – credentials via Covenant Other attenders for some or all of the meeting: Dr. Andre Basson, Karen Gerritsma, Hilda VanderKlippe, Diane Zantingh, Joanne Drenth-VanDyke, as well as guest speakers Peter Bulthuis, Tony Kamphuis and Aaron Snow. Constitution of Classis: The chair, Rev. Woodrow Dixon, read the <i>Niagara Declaration of Agreement</i> with the Beliefs of the Christian Reformed Church in North America, after which delegates rose to indicate their affirmation. Classis was declared constituted.
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2. COVENANTAL RELATIONSHIPS
Encouraging God's people to engage in the various relationships and activities of the church with accountability so that our institutional and relational obligations are met.

2.1	<p>Classis Ministry Council report – CMC Chair, Rev. Erick Schuringa, drew attention to the motions that arose from the CMC meeting of March 23 regarding changes in the rotation of chairpersons and how voting for Synod will be done in future.</p> <p>MOTION: Discontinue the rotation of pastors only to serve as Chairpersons and to instead invite gifted currently serving pastors, elders or deacons to chair Classis meetings: CARRIED</p> <p>MOTION: Change how voting is done for delegates to Synod as follows: The first round of voting only selects those who will be the pastor, elder and deacon delegate. In the second round of voting all remaining pastors, elders and deacons form the slate for the 4th delegate. Alternates are then selected from those with the next highest number of votes in each category. CARRIED</p> <p>MOTION: To approve the work of the Classis Ministry Council: CARRIED</p>
2.2	<p>Stated Clerk, Pulpit Supply and Classis Functionaries Report: Wendy de Jong gave a brief update on the pulpit supply list and the Functionaries report.</p> <p>MOTION: To approve the work of the Stated Clerk: CARRIED</p> <p>MOTION: To approve these nominations as per the Functionaries report: CARRIED</p>
2.3	<p>ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING: Rev. Woodrow Dixon relinquished the chair at this point and CMC Chair, Rev. Erick Schuringa, led the Annual General Meeting as required by the Ontario Non-Profit Corporations Act.</p> <p>2.4.1 MOTION: To approve the minutes of the May 25, 2022 Annual General Meeting as presented: CARRIED.</p> <p>2.4.2 MOTION: To approve the election of Members to the Board of Directors consisting of Erick Schuringa, Chair, Frank Engelage, Vice-Chair, Karen Gerritsma, Janet Ryzebol, and Terence Schilstra. CARRIED</p> <p>2.4.3 MOTION: To approve the Financial Statements for 2022 as presented, and to approve the work of the Treasurer: CARRIED</p> <p>2.4.4 MOTION: That Classis Niagara approve the audited 2022 Financial Statements: CARRIED</p> <p>2.4.5 MOTION: To waive having Grant Thornton, LLP, conduct an official audit: CARRIED</p> <p>2.4.6 MOTION: That Classis Niagara approve the appointment of Grant Thornton perform an engagement review for 2023: CARRIED</p> <p>REGULAR SESSION RESUMES</p>

2.4	Council of Delegates & Canada Corp board report: Wendy de Jong presented her final report as the Classis Niagara COD delegate, highlighting several matters covered at the May COD meeting and expressing appreciation for serving in this capacity.
2.5	World Renew Presentation: Peter Bulthuis gave an update on the work of World Renew responding to disasters such as the flooding in Abbotsford last year, working with local partners to provide food and humanitarian aid in Ukraine, Turkey, Syria, and other places. Peter illustrated how the Core Humanitarian Standard that World Renew has adopted, influences their approach to come alongside affected communities, asking what is needed and how they can help, so that the aid given doesn't unintentionally harm these communities. He expressed gratitude for the financial support of \$266,000 from the churches in Classis Niagara.

3. AUTHENTIC COMMUNITY

Encouraging God's people by intentionally sharing life and story together so that classis is being transformed into a community of grace and truth.

3.1	Authentic Community Team Report: Rev. Terence Schilstra introduced new team members, Devin Lunshof and Leah DeVos. As a newly formed team they met recently to pray over their mandate which is to plan annual classis retreats, encourage connections and foster community at Classis. Moving forward they will be presenting their desire to the CMC to work with other classis teams to organize a focused retreat style gathering each year.
3.2	Church Visitors: Delegates were referred to the written report on a visit to Providence CRC in the agenda.
3.3	Church Counselor & Oversight Committee reports: Rev. Erick Schuringa gave a brief update on the work of the Oversight committee regarding Rev. Darren Roorda. Attempts at mediation were unsuccessful and they are now awaiting his decision whether he wants to pursue another call. As counsellor for Providence, Erick reported they have hired Commissioned Mike Collins to serve as an interim pastor. Rev. Steve DeBoer, counsellor for Faith Fellowship, reported they are actively engaged in a calling process. They have also made an interim arrangement with a retired Presbyterian pastor for the summer months.
3.4	Pastor Church Resources (PCR) Video & Discussion: Regional Pastor, Dr. Andre Basson, briefly introduced a video from Pastor Church Resources in which they presented several themes or trends they have observed that are impacting churches and pastors. Some of these are the effects of the pandemic, shifting boundaries for pastors and their families, cultural winds affecting congregations, increasing polarization and less tolerance for differences, etc. After viewing the video delegates split into small groups of pastors, elders, and deacons, to consider what they heard, how it relates to their own situation, and whether some of the resources offered might be useful for their own congregation or council to consider. Andre closed the morning session with prayer after which delegates enjoyed a delicious meal of pulled pork on a bun and salads.

4. LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT

Providing opportunities to develop, equip and encourage lay and ordained leaders in every context and at every level to be on mission with God.

- 4.1 Leadership Development Team Report:** Karen Gerritsma gave an overview of what the team has been active with, naming several workshops and speakers they have arranged for Classis or local churches. They are considering their ongoing role and welcome input on the benefits of serving as a funnel or encouragement of denominational ministries or perhaps bringing in a streamlined Day of Encouragement. They are also discerning whether to refill the position of Youth Champion.
- 4.2 Classical Ministry Leadership Team:** Rev. Woodrow Dixon, Chair of the CMLT, reported that supporting the current students is on track. Only one student will be studying this summer. He also indicates a new Chair will be needed for the CMLT shortly.
- 4.3 Calvin University Presentation:** Tony Kamphuis, board member for Region 2 which includes Classis Niagara, gave a presentation and update on Calvin University. One new development is offering tuition for Canadian students at par with the US dollar, maintained at the amount set at the beginning of studies in an effort to reverse the steady decline of Canadians attending Calvin University. He also highlighted several other developments in sports, and their second campus at the Hanlin Correctional Institute which has contributed to significant improvements in morale at this and similar institutions.

5. DISCIPLES MAKING NEW DISCIPLES

Empowering and equipping churches and individuals to multiply ministries that will reach their local communities so that not-yet Christians may embrace Christ as Lord.

- 5.1 Disciples Making New Disciples Team Report:** Rev. Janet Ryzebol pointed delegates to the ways the DMD is encouraging new outreach possibilities such as their support of Dinner Church. She also mentioned that DMD offers a fund to support new missional development initiatives. The team is very appreciative of the many years Hilda Vander Klippe has served, who is now stepping back, replaced by new members Karen Schilstra and Karina Van Lochem.
- 5.2 Brock Campus Chaplaincy Ministry Report:** Rev. Zack DeBruyne was unable to report in person as he is currently attending a Christian Reformed Campus Ministers Association Retreat. Karen Gerritsma mentioned a few key items from his written report, giving thanks for the doors the Lord is opening at Brock for all kinds of ministries, including interactions with students of many different faiths, and some ideas Zack is pursuing regarding monthly worship services for emerging adults in Classis.
- 5.3 Niagara International Students Report:** Hilda VanderKlippe shared highlights from the connections being made with international students in Niagara, of whom there are between 7-8,000. They offer English language conversation circles, monthly dinners, and many social opportunities. Many of the students are extremely isolated and lonely. These social opportunities often open the door for faith conversations. Hilda asks that we join her in praying that God would grow his kingdom amidst these international students so more people groups hear the Good News of Jesus Christ.
- 5.4 Village Church Report:** Rev. Mark De Vos introduced “Summer for the City,” a new initiative underway at The Village Church. This is an internship program for young adults to spend the summer developing tangible redemptive entrepreneurship that blesses the community of Thorold. Aaron Snow, one of the interns, shared about a ministry he is currently brainstorming called “Soul Food” which provides meals for single moms in need with the hope of creating meaningful relationships and connections between the volunteers from the Village who prepare the meals, the

	interns who deliver it to the door, and the families benefiting from regular meals and the hand-written letters which would accompany the meals.
5.5	Dinner Church Report: Leah De Vos gave an update on this internship program. She is currently working alongside four interns, getting them acquainted with the rhythm of what Dinner Church is all about, teaching, practicing with evangelism tools, building connections, etc. so that these interns will be ready to launch their own Dinner Church at the end of the 8-month internship.
5.6	The Table: Rev. Terence Schilstra shared a poignant reflection he wrote recently, reflecting on the hard season of “walking into 100 nightmares”; of the heartache and struggles experienced by people he crosses paths with and for the glimpses of seeing the kingdom of God breaking in as lives are turned around and hope for a better day is expressed.
5.7	Bridge Church Plant: Rev. Steve DeBoer spoke about their focus on providing a daily free breakfast to those on the margins in downtown Niagara Falls and how this focus has restored some fractured relationships with their neighbours and opened doors to a growing network of relationships with churches, other community organizations and the city. He also shared their concern about demographic changes in the neighbourhood leading them to discern whether they should pursue purchasing land and larger facilities. While breakfast doesn’t change people’s circumstances, Steve told how many of their guests have expressed gratitude for the way this meal and daily interaction make a difference in how they live their day.
5.8	Diaconal Ministries Canada Report: Delegates watched a brief slideshow highlighting the way Diaconal Ministries Canada and New Leaf (formerly Operation Manna) contribute to lasting changes in some challenging neighbourhoods across the country.
5.9	Closing Prayer & Adjournment – Vice-Chair, Rev. Steve DeBoer, closed the meeting with words of encouragement and gratitude for the many good things heard about and were part of together. He thanked the CMC for how they set the table at each meeting, providing meaningful learning, interaction and dialogue, and also named that while Classis was calm on the surface, there is a fair bit of anxiety for the delegates and churches regarding Synod. He thanked the chair, Rev. Woodrow Dixon, who is wrapping up his ministry at Jubilee at the end of June and offered blessings for him and thanks for his contributions to Classis. Delegates formed a circle to offer prayer, after which the meeting was adjourned.

Next meeting: *October 25, 2023, held at Grace CRC, Welland*

Agenda Deadline: September 14, 2023

Chair: Rev. Steve deBoer; *Vice-chair:* Rev. Janet Ryzebol (*Tentative*)

Credentials Committee: Smithville (*Chair*); Trinity (*Reporting*)

Overture Advisory: Mountainview (*Chair*) and Grace (*Reporting*)

Following meeting: Wednesday, February 28, 2024, host church needed