

Minutes of Classis Huron

May 15, 2019 @ Clinton Christian Reformed Church

I. Opening of Classis

Rev. Ron Luchies welcomed delegates on behalf of Clinton Christian Reformed church and led in devotions based on Philippians 4. Delegates sang *In Christ Alone*. Rev. Luchies led in prayer.

II. Credentials Committee

Rev. Paul deWeerd presented on behalf of the credentials committee. Credentials from River City Church missing. Orangeville CRC not present due to a tragic death in the congregation.

III. Comments from the Chair

Rev. Amanda Bakale welcomed delegates and reported on a number of cancellations and changes to the agenda. A number of announcements and prayer requests were shared and delegates spent time in prayer for the Roorda family and Orangeville CRC, Stated Clerk Sharon Van Kampen, former Stated Clerk Vic VanderMolen, and Rev. Steven Tamming.

Motion to approve the amended agenda. *Approved.*

IV. The Bridge Report

Rev. John VanderStoep reported on The Bridge church plant in Fergus. The Bridge's vision is "Belonging to Jesus; sent to neighbour." Sometimes God calls us to particular people, just like God called Paul to go to Macedonia instead of Bythina. The Bridge meets weekly for a service of word and sacrament in a home in Fergus. Rev. VanderStoep models missional living by praying for his neighbours, doing works of service, and organizing social events in his neighbourhood. Founded "Churches Working 2gether" with pastor of Grace Bible Church to collaborate with other churches in Centre Wellington. John does not think The Bridge will become a church.

V. River City Church Report

Rev. Darrell Bierman reported on the River City Church organization process. RCC was approved to organize as an established church at the February meeting of Classis with four specific areas to work on in order to facilitate transition to organized status. RCC plans to start contributing to Ministry Shares in the 2019-2020 budget and increasing in coming years. RCC is updating a 2011 leadership/membership policy in order to bring it in line with CRCNA Church Order requirements. Board members are functioning as elders and have been installed and will be meeting with the council of Maranatha CRC for mutual learning and encouragement. RCC is also looking at buying a church building in the coming months.

VI. Mission Catalyzer Report

Elder Janet Ryzebol reported on behalf of the CHHMC. The approval of the Mission Catalyzer position is the result of years of visioning and prayer by the CHHMC. The Mission Catalyzer will connect with Resonate Global Missions on behalf of Classis and lead classis in visioning and encouraging missional living and outreach. Four very strong candidates have applied and been interviewed. CHHMC will have a recommendation for the position soon.

VII. Morning Refreshment Break

Rev. Henry Steenbergen offered a prayer for The Bridge, River City, and the CHHMC, and Classis took its morning refreshment break.

VIII. Financial Statements

John Bell presented the financial statements for 2018 and received questions.

Motion to approve the financial statements from 2018. *Approved.*

IX. World Renew/Diaconal Ministry

Mary Blydorp presented on the work of Diaconal Ministries Canada and World Renew. The Classis Huron Diaconal Conference Board meets once per year for fellowship, education, and ministry. Fred Vanderstaire and Len Bakelaar are Diaconal Ministry Developers for Classis Huron and are available for churches to consult. NewGround (formerly Operation Manna) also assists churches with Community Opportunity Scans as well as startup grants for diaconal initiatives, which several churches in Classis Huron have used for creative ministry. The Diaconal Ministry Canada website has great resources for deacons, including devotional resources.

World Renew extends their thanks to Classis Huron for their generous support already in the first quarter of this year. Many churches have also hosted Jeremy Benjamins as part of the “I Am Not My Own” tour, which has raised significant funds for World Renew. Mary was privileged to visit Cambodia and see the work that World Renew is involved with there. Mary shared the story of Savan, the new country consultant for World Renew in Cambodia, and his journey to faith. Mary also shared a few other stories of individuals and communities from Cambodia and Tanzania.

Churches can support World Renew through offerings, prayers, Discovery Tours, and Disaster Response Services.

Rev. John Medendorp offered a prayer for World Renew and the Thielke family.

X. Youth Ministry

Amy Baarda presented on the work of the Youth Champion and the Classis Huron Youth Ministries Team. The Youth Champion position was established in 2014 to connect churches across Canada for collaboration on youth ministry. In 2019, about half of US classes have appointed Youth Champions as well! Amy attended a Youth Champion retreat in Chicago hosted by Faith Formation Ministries and was encouraged to hear stories, joys, and struggles of youth workers across North America. Collaboration, creative thinking, and adaptive thinking are important tools for addressing the challenges of youth ministry today. Together, we can equip pastors and youth leaders to effectively minister to our young people by opening the door to deep conversations with young people. Pastor Bart Eisen at Bethel CRC in Listowel is a great example of a youth leader who has focused youth ministry on deep and difficult conversations with great success. Amy recommended a few helpful resources on youth ministry including the books *How We Read the Bible*, *iGen*, *Growing With*, and *The New Copernicans*.

XI. Council of Delegates Report

Rev. Ralph Wigboldus presented on the work of the Council of Delegates. The Council of Delegates convenes three times per year to oversee the work of the CRCNA between synod meetings. Canada and United States have very different ministry, national, and legal contexts and so some business is dealt with by the respective boards representing each country. Agencies of the CRCNA present on their work on a regular rotation. Resonate discussed the immigration crisis and ministry needs at the US-Mexico border and the creative ways that churches are responding to those needs. Ralph serves as vice-chair on the support services committee, and is able to see the financial picture of the denomination. It is also a blessing to see the ways that the US and Canada are able to learn from each other, as the US attempts to establish a national diaconate conference. The denominational headquarters in Grand Rapids will be exploring options for reducing the institutional footprint of the building complex there. A task force is exploring how to establish policies, procedures, and guidance for bivocational

ministers. Ralph encouraged churches to send delegates to *Inspire 2019* which will be meeting August 1-3 in Windsor, ON.

Q&A: Are there minutes that are made available to the churches if they want to follow up on something in the highlights?

There are minutes, but unclear whether they are made available to the churches.

XII. Pre-Lunch Prayers

Rev. Gary VanLeeuwen led in a prayer before lunch.

XIII. Post-Lunch Devotions

Rev. Ed Jaeger led in devotions on “mystical images” from John 13 and 19 and opened the afternoon session in prayer.

XIV. Credentials Committee

Rev. Kevin teBrake reported on behalf of the Credentials Committee. The following items were received on the credentials:

- from Clinton CRC: The Council of Clinton CRC has accepted the request of Rev. Ron Luchies to retire on September 1, 2019 according to Article 18 of the Church Order.

Motion that Classis approve the retirement of Rev. Ron Luchies. Approved.

The Stated Clerk will inform the denomination of Rev. Luchies pending retirement.

Clinton CRC will be added to the pulpit supply list beginning on September 8, 2019. Received for information.

Rev. Gary VanLeeuwen will serve as Church Counsellor to Clinton CRC as they seek to call a minister.

- from Clinton CRC: Request that the CRCNA establish an online database with draft policies for churches to adapt to their local settings. The credentials committee advised that the council of Clinton CRC draft a letter to the Canadian Ministries Director to be considered at the fall meeting of Classis Huron.
- from Owen Sound CRC: Rev. Sid Couperus has accepted a call to Owen Sound CRC and will begin in September.

A delegate will be sent to Owen Sound for the installation date.

Rev. teBrake offered a prayer for the churches in Owen Sound and Clinton.

XV. Synodical Delegates Report

Rev. Victor Laarman reported on behalf of the delegates to Synod 2019. Rev. Laarman, Rev. Carel Geleynse, Elder Albert Hovingh, and Deacon Jane VanderVelden are delegated on behalf of Classis Huron. Ms. Rebecca Bokma from Community CRC in Kitchener is also attending as a Young Adult Representative.

Victor drew the attention of delegates to the ongoing “Guide to the Agenda” publications by Gayla Postma from *The Banner*. A number of interesting ongoing conversations are being dealt with at this synod, including the process for enfolding immigrant churches who want to affiliate with the CRCNA, the Church Order article surrounding the office of Commissioned Pastor, and

a number of items brought by Classis Huron in previous years, including a standing committee to review Bible translations, and a plan for providing churches with resources around children's curriculum. Big-ticket items include the report of the Abuse of Power Committee, which includes a recommendation for mandatory training and a code of conduct for all people entering ministry in the CRCNA; the Reimagining Ministry Shares report, which shifts the ministry share system from a quota system to a pledge system guided by the classes; the interim report of the Committee to Study Human Sexuality, which lays a biblical and theological groundwork for a Reformed approach to human sexuality; and the Synod Review Task Force, which seeks to fine-tune the way that synod operates including training for all delegates, a registration fee paid by classes, and a requirement for classes to send a diversity of delegates. Classis Hackensack and Classis Southern California have asked synod to declare Kinism, which teaches that interracial marriage is contrary to God's Word, a heresy.

Rev. Gary Van Leeuwen offered a prayer for delegates to synod, and for members who are attending the Canadian National Gathering in Edmonton.

XVI. Safe Church Team

Atie Ott, the Safe Church Coordinator for Classis Huron, reported on behalf of the classical Safe Church Team. The Safe Church Team almost has a full contingent, but is still waiting for a representative from Collingwood CRC. Atie drew delegates attention to a number of resources that are available to churches including *Understanding Sexual Abuse*, *Responding to Abuse in Christian Homes*, and *Hush: Moving from Silence to Healing in Child Sexual Abuse*. The fourth Sunday in September is Safe Church Sunday, this year's theme is "Circle of Grace" which is an abuse prevention exercise for K-12. A number of churches in Classis have done this exercise and churches who are interested may contact the Safe Church Committee for further information. Atie encouraged all churches to regularly update their safe church policy. Ontario Bill 132 (on sexual harassment in the workplace) and the Ontario Police Check Reform Act both have important impact for churches which should be reflected in updated safe church policies.

XVII. Church Counsellors

Rev. Victor Laarman is serving as church counsellor for First CRC in Owen Sound. Since they have called a pastor, Victor's work with them has come to an end.

Rev. Gary VanLeeuwen is serving as church counsellor for Clinton CRC. After Ron's retirement, Clinton CRC is moving to a copastorate and is therefore searching for two pastors.

XVIII. Regional Pastors

Rev. Henry Steenbergen reported on behalf of the Regional Pastors. Rev. Norm Sennema and Rev. Steenbergen serve Classis Huron as Regional Pastors, offering encouragement and support to pastors in their ministry. Rev. Steenbergen encouraged elders and deacons to ask their pastors how they are doing on a regular basis. The Office of Pastor-Church Resources is looking at creating support for pastors through key transitions by creating expectations for mentoring, support groups, etc.—entering into their second charge, entering the final decade of ministry (55+), and preparing for retirement.

XIX. Church Visitors

Rev. Andrew deGelder, "chief" church visitor for Classis Huron, reported on church visiting in Classis Huron. We have five church visitors in Classis Huron, and are trying to establish a standardized method and approach to church visiting in this classis. Church visitors got together this past winter to discuss the "Church Visiting Process Guide" and "A New Approach to Church Visiting."

The report on Blyth CRC was received for information.

Rev. Martin Dam and Rev. John Medendorp reported on the church visits to Exeter CRC. Written reports are available through the CMC. Rev. Carel Geleynse and Rev. Medendorp visited Exeter CRC in the fall. Much of their visit was taken up by a significant faction within the church which was disappointed with the direction and decisions of the council. In response, the council asked for a follow-up visit to talk more about the regular ministry they are involved with. Rev. Geleynse and Rev. Dam followed up with a visit in the spring. The council of Exeter CRC was responding to concerns raised in the first visit in proactive ways. Rev. Dam highlighted three areas where Classis can learn from the ministry being done at Exeter CRC: 1) the deacons at Exeter CRC have been proactive about providing financial counselling and mentoring for families and individuals in economic distress by partnering with Christians Against Poverty for diaconal training and equipping; 2) a team from Exeter CRC has been involved with Churches Learning Change (formerly Ridder Church Renewal) and this team has been very proactive about equipping the congregation with what they have been learning through evening teaching services; 3) in response to the Forest City North satellite church plant in Exeter, the Exeter CRC council had a very proactive and collaborative dialogue with the leadership of Forest City North and communicated this decision to the congregation in a very positive and encouraging way that has allowed the church to respond to this new ministry with grace and hospitality.

Rev. Henry Steenbergen prayed for the church visitors, for the congregations in Exeter and Blyth, and our collaborative work as churches together in Classis Huron.

XX. Administrative Committee & Classical Ministries Committee Report

Rev. Martin Dam, Vice-Chair of the Administrative Committee, reported on behalf of the AdCom and the CMC.

Motion that the new policy for evaluating sermons of licensed exhorters in Classis Huron be adopted. *Approved.*

Motion that the following renewals for licensed exhorters be granted: a five-year renewal to Nick Kuiper and Frank Folkema, and a one-year renewal be granted to Steve Vogel. *Approved.*

Motion to ratify the work of the CMC, AdCom, and Stated Clerk. *Approved.*

Rev. Dam challenged delegates to consider how they might serve classis. There is a special need for volunteers on the Youth Ministry Team.

XXI. Closing Comments

Rev. John VanderStoep spoke briefly about the “Dreaming Exercise” introduced last year in Palmerston.

If churches have not sent the notes of their council's exercise, please send those along to Rev. VanderStoep.

Deacon Tilda Bosman closed in prayer for the upcoming All-Ontario Youth Convention and safe travels for delegates on their journeys home.