



# Minutes

Classis Hamilton of the Christian Reformed Church  
Meeting October 25, 2022 – 9:00 a.m. – 4:30 p.m.

**Hosted by Grace Community CRC**

(a.k.a. **Ancaster CRC**)

70 Garner Rd. E, Ancaster, ON

Minutes as Recorded by First CRC, Hamilton

<b>Officers of Classis:</b>  Chair: Rev. Michael Bootsma  Vice Chair: Rev. Joel Bootsma  Meeting Clerk: Hayden Regeling	<b>Synodical Deputies:</b>  Rev. M. Jeff Klingenberg (Niagara)  Rev. Gary van Leeuwen (Huron)  Rev. Sam Cooper (Toronto)
<b>Reporter:</b>  First Hamilton	<b>Balloting:</b>  Grace Community CRC, Ancaster
<b>Credentials Committee:</b>  Ebenezer CRC, Jarvis  Faith CRC, Burlington	<b>Advisory Committee:</b>  Calvary CRC, Flamborough  Calvin CRC, Dundas

## **GROWING AS A COMMUNITY OF BELIEVERS 9:00 a.m.**

1. Welcome & Opening Prayer: Rev. Gareth Harker offered opening words, acknowledging the difficulty of Synod 2022 decisions and encouraging us to remember the gospel that provides us the resources to love each other in the midst of our differences.

2. Devotions & Sharing of Ministry Grace Community CRC: Mark Verbruggen welcomed us to the newly renovated Grace Community Church and thanked those from Grace Community CRC who worked to welcome and offer hospitality to Classis Hamilton delegates.

Pastor Mark opened with devotions that were shaped around Ephesians 1:17-19, Psalm 42 and the Kingdom of God. We were led in singing *As the Deer in Want of Water*, *Open the Eyes of my Heart* and *Jesus Shall Reign*

Seibert VanHouten, chair of council, shared some of the good news that Grace Community has experienced. Grace has experienced God's faithfulness in the midst of saying farewell to Pastor Rita and welcoming Pastor Mark. As well as a large renovation building project. There is renewed energy during worship and fellowship as a community! God is good!

3. Joel Bootsma prayed for Grace Community Church.

## **ADMINISTRATIVE SESSION 10:00 a.m.**

1. Call to Order & Instructions for the Day Chair: Rev. Michael Bootsma
  - a. Attendance Meeting Clerk: Rev. Hayden Regeling
  - b. Covenant of Office-Bearers Chair
  - c. Approval of the Agenda Chair
2. Michael Bootsma read scripture from Romans 16:5-6, to help us as we proceed following the decisions of Synod 2022. Michael apologized on behalf of the CIC regarding the special note on the agenda, recognizing that it created more confusion. Michael invited the Mark Verbruggen, on behalf of the Credentials Committee forward, to take attendance and draw anything to our attention.
3. **Credentials Committee:**
  - a. Faith CRC: Re Special Note.
  - b. Faith CRC asked Classis Hamilton to not require officebearers to signify their agreeance to the Covenant for officebearers until they completed, as a community, the Next Step's Discernment process provided by the CRCNA Pastor Church Resources.
    - i. The response of the credentials committee is to commend Faith CRC in engaging with the Next Steps Discernment process but that they do not forgo requiring officebearers to indicate their commitment to the Covenant of Officebearers at this meeting. However, in seeking advice from Kathy Smith she advises those who have submitted gravamina to their councils, and those gravamina have been accepted, that these people may stand in commitment to the Covenant of Officebearers in good conscience. However, if folks are still in a discernment process and have not yet submitted gravamina to their councils, Kathy's advice to us is that in this meeting only, we may honour that and the discernment and recommend that those officebearers be able to stand in commitment to the Covenant of Officebearers.
    - ii. **This advice was moved, seconded, and opened for conversation. It was approved unanimously.**
  - c. Meadowlands Fellowship CRC: Sent in communication, calling into question the special note. **This comment was received for information.**
4. Michael Bootsma asked all the delegates to stand to signify their agreement with the Covenant of officebearers. There was still some confusion regarding those who submitted Gravamen to their council, whether they could stand in good consciences. This was eventually cleared up.
  - a. First, approval of Rev. Ed Visser as the stated clerk. William offered thanks to all those who have helped with clerk duties in an ad hoc basis during the absence of a stated clerk. **A motion was brought forward from CIC to accept Rev. Ed Visser as the Classis Hamilton stated clerk. This motion was seconded and carried unanimously.**
  - b. Second item, Jarvis CRC has requested a church counsellor, which comes with a recommendation that **Rev. Jack Kerkof be approved as the church counsellor for Jarvis Ebenezer CRC.** This motion was seconded and carried unanimously.
5. **Presentation and Approval of the 2023 Classis Hamilton Ministry Budget**
  - a. Ken Tigchelaar presented the 2023 Classis Hamilton Ministry Budget. To note, ministry shares are slightly up in 2023, mostly due to the cost of living increases as per COLA.
  - b. Questions from the floor:
    - i. Can we make this a narrative budget next year to be more descriptive?
    - ii. How many churches are meeting 100% of the ministry shares? A: All the churches are meeting them based on the number of members on record.
  - c. **Motion to accept the 2023 Classis Hamilton Ministry Budget, seconded. Carried unanimously.**

6. **Youth Champion Position Review Study Committee**
  - a. The Study Committee appointed to complete this review share that they will be bringing their report to Classis during our meeting in February.
  - b. This study committee is not prepared to make a report at this meeting.
  
7. **Church Visitors Report**
  - a. Visiting Team A: Peter Bulthuis, Rev. Ralph Koops, & Everett Vander Horst\*
  - b. Visiting Team B: Jerry Bulthuis, Rev. Michael Bootsma, & Rev. Ken Benjamins
  - c. Michael Bootsma invited questions regarding the Church Visitors Report. No questions. Received for Information.
  
8. **Credentials Committee:** no further report.  
 We have only renewed Pastor Tom Van Milligen's contract as our Interim pastor until July 1/23, with the provision of extending the time as needed.
  
9. **Classical Counselor Reports:**
  - a. Hagersville Community CRC – Rev. Ben Ponsen. In good conversation with a candidate. Hagersville Community CRC asks for prayer regarding this process in calling a pastor.
  - b. Bethel CRC – No request for a counsellor yet.
  - c. New Street CRC – Rev. Cara DeHaan  
 Corrected 11/30/22: New Street CRC has renewed Pastor Tom Van Milligen's contract as their Interim pastor until July 1/23, with the provision of extending the time as needed. New Street CRC and Faith CRC have been collaborating on youth ministries which have been mutually beneficial. Representatives from New Street CRC and Bethel CRC are getting together to discuss doing ministry in the Burlington/Waterdown area.
  - d. First Hamilton CRC – Rev. Anthony Elenbaas  
 First Hamilton CRC is in the second round of applications. Prayers requested for this process as they seek to find the candidate God has called to their congregation.
  - e. Ebenezer CRC – Request is in Motion.
  
10. **Classis Ministry Team (CMT)**
  - a. **CMT Report:** Gareth Harker (Chair of CMT) was invited to provide an oral report on behalf of the CMT. Our Classis Youth Champion, John Bijl, continues to work diligently with churches and youth leaders. The Youth Retreat was a success, despite the fact that only two churches participated. Campus Ministry Committee made some changes to their mandate. None of these change effect the function of the committee but reflect more faithfully the Mohawk Ministry. Home Missions continues its' work, while asking questions about what role the Home Missions committee plays in the beginning of a Classis Hamilton sponsored plant. We did not spend any time discussing this. Gareth concluded that his time on the CML has come to an end and he has stepped down from the chair of the CMT. He was given a robust round of applause for all his work!
  - b. **Canada Wide Conversation, September 24, 2022**  
 Mark Vander Vliet was invited forward to provide a report on the Canada Wide Conversation. The representatives from Classis Hamilton were: Nick Kinkel, Mark Vandervleit, Rev. Anthony Elenbaas, and Rev. Everett Vander Horst. It was quite an uneventful conversation. The first half, there was an update on the restructuring that was taken place due to the SALT report. The second half was a challenging conversations practice. Participants were split into groups of 6-9 individuals from all across Canada. The Next Steps Discernment conversations were confidential and walked through four questions: What did you think when you heard about Synods decisions? What did you think about since? How was your church effected? What has been the hardest part for you? Following, there was feedback given to the Canada Corp. about where we are going with this. It was clear that conversations on sexuality will be challenging for the CRC in Canada moving forward.

**REFRESHMENT BREAK 10:45 a.m. MINISTRY SESSION 11:00 a.m.**

11. **South Coast Beach Project** Rev. Willemina Zwart

Rev. Willemina Zwart shared on a second successful summer of the South Coast Beach Project (SOCO). SOCO is a young adult summer intentional discipleship ministry. A video was played, sharing student experiences. Willemina has asked for more partnerships. ATTENTION CHURCH LEADERS: Willemina is eager to talk with us about what partnerships could look like. We were asked to promote SOCO! The reason why most of the young adults attend is because their shoulders were tapped by someone who told them they would benefit from it. Willemina was thanked by Classis Hamilton by a robust round of applause!

12. **Council Of Delegates Report** Rev. William Koopmans

- a. Matters regarding to restructuring there is an overlap on the work of Rev. Al Postma. Canada Corp. is pleased with the way that restructuring is taking place. There is a team working to move the SALT report forward.
  - b. The Canada wide conversation was an avenue for feedback. Regarding synodical decisions on human sexuality, this meeting offered the challenging conversations for the participants and provided an opportunity for Canada Corp members to listen to the participants. There is another meeting for the Canada Corp board to discuss this meeting. It is scheduled for November 12, 2022. At a recent meeting, membership trends were discussed.
  - c. An expert was brought in to talk about what may be behind the membership decline in the CRCNA. One reason that can cause decline in church membership was related to income levels increasing. When income increases, participation in church tends to decrease. This is a trend especially in immigrant communities. The COD will talk about more about this and to listen to those in local churches regarding this decline. What are the stories?
  - d. A search team has been struck to find a new Canada Ministries Director for the Burlington Office.
  - e. COD endorsed a co-director model for ministries.
  - f. A report was received from the Dignity Team on abuse of power.
  - g. A report will be gathered for February on the new pledging system for CRCNA ministry shares
  - h. An update was heard on Inspire 2022
  - i. Our Journey 2025 was highlighted: The theme to help us in ministry together includes these milestones: Cultivate practices of spiritual disciples, listen to every generation, grow in diversity, share the gospel.
  - j. There is hope that a candidate for the Chief Operations Officer position will be brought forward to the COD soon.
- Rev. Koopmans was robustly thanked for his work with the CRCNA.

13. **Gathering's Request for Delegates**

- a. Rev. Al Postma was introduced to Classis as the transitional executive director for Canadian Ministry and shared about his work in this role. For the Canadian National Gathering in May, each Classis sending roughly 10 people to. However, the classis itself delegates 4 people this National Gathering. The rest of the 10 will be going because of other committee obligations. This gathering will be based on the foundation of the Hearts Exchanged journey but incorporates all sorts of ways that we can grow in community together.

14. **Coffee Break Ministries**

Marian Lensink was invited to share on Global Coffee Break. This is largely a women's evangelistic ministry but this is not always the case. Materials for Coffee Break are for all people to discover the Bible together. This is an opportunity to open the Bible with others and to come to know Jesus more deeply. Marian Lensink (mlensink@crcna.org) would like to

help churches use the resources of Coffee Break to help those in our churches to learn more about the God through the scriptures.

Rev. Michael Bootsma closed our morning in prayer and invited us to lunch.

**LUNCH BREAK 12:15 p.m. DENOMINATIONAL MATTERS SESSION 1:00 p.m.**

15. Rev. Al Postma & his role as the Transitional Executive Director: Rev. Al Postma's role with the denomination has changed, he is now the Transitional Executive Directory for Canadian Ministries. With that change Classis Hamilton needs to approve that this new role is consistent with the calling of a Minister of the Word according Article 12-c of the Church Order.

**Motion: Hope CRC recommended that Classis declare that this new role is consistent with the calling of a Minister of the Word according to Article 12-c of the Church Order is moved and seconded. Unanimously moved.**

The Synodical deputies Rev. M. Jeff Klingenberg (Niagara), Rev. Gary van Leeuwen (Huron), Rev. Sam Cooper (Toronto), have reviewed the evidence provided by the council of Hope CRC Brantford and have been satisfied that lines of accountability have been established in line with CO Art. 12c. and concur in the decision of Classis Hamilton on October 25, 2022 to approve the position of Transitional Executive Director as consistent with the Ministry of the Word. This position is to be filled by Rev Al Postma.

16. **Ministry Session**

- a. **World Renew Peter Bulthuis** was welcomed to by the chair to share an update from World Renew. Questions
- b. **Calvin University** (12 Minutes) **Rev. Shawn Brix** provided an update on behalf of Calvin Theological Seminary.
- c. **Abuse of Power** (75 Minutes) **Gina Taylor**  
Gina Taylor, Judy Cook, and Becky Jones led us in Abuse of Power training. Gina also provided us with a copy of the Code of Conduct for Officebearers. When our councils are reviewing this, we should pay attention to how subjective some of this is. We are the body who will be adjudicating this via Art. 5 of CO.

17. **Adjournment: Motion was made to adjourn the meeting. It was seconded and carried unanimously.** Michael Bootsma closed the meeting in prayer.

---

**Next meeting** February 28, 2023, @ Bethel CRC

**Agenda** January 17, 2023  
**Addendum** February 14, 2023