



## Agenda for a Meeting of CLASSIS HAMILTON OF THE CHRISTIAN REFORMED CHURCH

**Date:** January 17, 2017      **Time:** 2:30 PM – 9:00 PM

**Venue:** Ebenezer Christian Reformed Church, 139B Talbot St E, Jarvis N0A 1J0

**Host Church:** Hagersville Community Christian Reformed Church

<b>Officers of Classis:</b> Chair: Kevin DeRaaf Vice Chair: Bruce Adema Stated Clerk: Dick Kranendonk	<b>Synodical Deputies:</b> James Dekker, Classis Niagara Ray Vanderkooij, Classis Huron Herman Praamsma, Classis Toronto
<b>Reporter:</b> Calvary CRC - Flamborough	<b>Ballot Committee:</b> Hagersville Community CRC, Hagersville
<b>Credentials Committee:</b> New Street CRC, Burlington Faith CRC, Burlington	<b>Overture Committee</b> None needed

### CREENTIALS:

1. The credentials shall be returned to the Stated Clerk by email no later than December 27, 2016 with CC: (copy) emailed to your delegates. Please note that there are additional questions on the credentials. Please fill them in where desired.
2. The credential questions and observations will be forwarded to the Credentials Committee so that they will be able to advise Classis. The Committee will email their report to the Stated Clerk by January 3, 2017. Their report will be emailed by the Stated Clerk to all the delegates.

### OVERTURES:

No overtures were received.

### EMAIL ADDRESS:

All communication to the Stated Clerk should go to: [clerk@classishamilton.ca](mailto:clerk@classishamilton.ca).

### MINISTRY SESSION:

Owing to the Classis exam of Wim DeVries in the evening, this round-table will serve as our abbreviated Ministry Session time, the one that normally occurs after dinner. Councils and delegates, please read the attached document at Appendix #6 titled **Classis Round-Table on Ministry to, with and by our Youth** and consider the issues raised so that you can be prepared to participate in the important time of discussion.

### EVENING SESSION:

The evening session is reserved for the examination of Candidate Wim DeVries. His preached sermon is included in this agenda at Appendix #7. Delegates and Synodical Deputies who wish to receive the other two sermons, one on the Heidelberg Catechism and the other on an Old Testament passage, may request a copy from the Stated Clerk: [clerk@classishamilton.ca](mailto:clerk@classishamilton.ca).

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## CLASSIS MEETING DETAILS

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2:30 PM OPENING WORSHIP AND EXERCIZES

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### OPENING DEVOTIONS

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|---|-------------------------------|
| 1. PRAYER TIME                            | KEVIN DeRAAF & MARIAN LENSINK |
| 2. DEVOTIONS AND SHARING OF MINISTRY      | Hagersville Community CRC     |
| 3. PRAYER FOR THE HOST CHURCH AND THE DAY | Bruce Adema                   |
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3:15 PM ADMINISTRATIVE SESSION

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| 4. CALL TO ORDER  | Kevin DeRaaf     |
| 4.1. Welcome and Approval of Agenda                                   |                  |
| 4.2. Attendance   | Mark Vandervliet |
| 5. CMT REPORT (INCLUDING CLASSICAL MINISTRY COMMITTEES) (Appendix #1) | Marian Lensink   |

**RECOMMENDED THAT:** Classis approve a forgivable loan to Femke Visser-Elenbaas for the spring 2017 semester in the amount of US\$2,255.

**RECOMMENDED THAT:** Classis approve the work of the CMT to date as reported to the churches in the Minutes and the attached report.

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| 6. INTERIM COMMITTEE  | Mark Vandervliet   |
| 6.1. Interim Committee Report (Includes Stated Clerk's report, Appendix #4)   |                    |
| 6.2. Election of Delegates, Functionaries and Committee Members (Appendix #5)   |                    |
| 6.3. Approval of Classical Interim Committee and Stated Clerk Work  |                    |
| <b>RECOMMENDED THAT:</b> Classis approve the work to date of the Interim Committee and of the Stated Clerk in so far as this has been disclosed in minutes previously distributed to the churches and in Appendix #4. |                    |
| 6.4. Balloting Committee Report   |                    |
| <b>RECOMMENDED THAT:</b> the ballots be destroyed.  |                    |
| 7. CREDENTIALS COMMITTEE REPORT   |                    |
| 8. EXTERNAL REPORTS   |                    |
| 8.1. PARTNERS WORLDWIDE   | Thea Voortman      |
| 8.2. NEW MISSIONS AGENCY  | James van der Laan |
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3:55 PM – 4:15 PM REFRESHMENT BREAK

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| 9. HOME MISSIONS COMMITTEE REPORT                  | Everett Vander Horst |
| 10. ROUND TABLE MINISTRY SESSION (See APPENDIX #6) | Youth Ministry Team  |
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6:00 PM – 7:00 PM DINNER

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| 11. EXAMINATION OF CANDIDATE WIM DEVRIES: |                  |
| 11.1. Introduction of Candidate           | Anthony Elenbaas |
| 11.2. <u>Practica</u> (No time limit)     | Anthony Elenbaas |

Inquiry into the Candidate's relationship to God and commitment to ministry

11.2.1. Questions by delegates and synodical deputies.

11.2.2. **Motion** to proceed.

11.3. Sermon Evaluation (*no time limit*)

Everett Vander Horst & Elder

Written and preached sermons to be evaluated. The assigned text was 1 Timothy 4 with special emphasis on verses 9 and 10. (See Appendix #7 for the preached sermon).

11.3.1. Questions by delegates and synodical deputies.

11.3.2. **Motion** to proceed.

11.3.3. Concurrence by synodical deputies

11.4. Biblical and Theological (*minimum of thirty minutes*)

Chris Schoon

Inquiry into the candidate's biblical and theological judgement, competence and soundness.

11.4.1. Questions by delegates and synodical deputies.

11.5. Executive Session:

11.5.1.1. **Motion** to admit the candidate to the ministry of the Word in the Cristian Reformed Church and preliminary consideration,

11.5.1.2. Prayer,

11.5.1.3. Synodical deputies leave for their own deliberations,

11.5.1.4. Delegates vote by ballot,

11.5.1.5. Synodical deputies return and present written statement.

11.5.1.6. **Motion** to destroy ballots

11.6. Executive Session ends

11.6.1.1. Remarks

11.6.1.2. presentation of certificate (if admitted)

Prayer for the candidate

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8:50 PM Closing Devotions

Kevin DeRaaf

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## APPENDIX #1 – CLASSIS MINISTRY TEAM

### Classis Ministry Team Report (CMT)

#### **Classis Ministry Team Report—Winter 2016/17**

The Classis Ministry Team continues to serve Classis by providing focus and direction to our ministry as a whole. Our world is changing rapidly—which affects our local church ministries—but also the ministries of Classis. We have begun renewed discussions to see how we can improve our Classis meetings and the other activities of Classis. At our last CMT meeting we were blessed to have Darrin Roorda, our Canadian Ministries Director, with us. We had a lengthy discussion together regarding all matters Classical—including his role in and with Classis Hamilton. Marian Lensink’s role has a big role to play in all of this as well. She continues to navigate her role as our Ministries Director for Classis alongside her new role in the “Connections Project” of the denomination.

Ministries are going well. Seth Adema continues to faithfully serve as our interim chaplain at McMaster and Mohawk. See the more detailed Campus Ministry Report at Appendix #1.1 below.

We continue to pray for our students supported by our Candidacy committee: Mark Devos, Courtney Mooney, Ben Verkerk Josiah Bokma and Derek Ellens. Our Youth Committee continues to work on a new first for Classis: A classis wide youth retreat planned for the fall of 2017. See more details in the CHCC report at Appendix #1.2 below. Please also note the forgivable loan awarded in the amount of US\$2,255 to be awarded to Femke Visser-Elenbaas.

As for our churches: Mount Hamilton is busy with their exciting plans to move their location to Mount Hope. They are ready to move forward once the legal/lawyer issues are complete. Let us continue to pray for this congregation as they actively seek a new pastor. Ben Ponsen has accepted the call to York Maranatha. Congratulations to both! We congratulate Adam Veenstra and the Ancaster congregation as Adam was ordained on December 3, 2016.

Ken Benjamins  
Chair of the CMT

**Classis Hamilton Campus Ministry Committee  
Report to Classis Hamilton – at its January 17, 2017 meeting**

The Campus Ministry Committee has continued to meet regularly, and monitors the work being done at the McMaster University and Mohawk College campuses.

With Chaplain Dr. Michael Fallon taking a well-earned sabbatical for the 2016-2017 academic year, we have been very pleased to have Dr. Seth Adema serving as chaplain in an interim capacity. Since Dr. Adema was a student leader of the Campus Ministry while at McMaster University, he has a deep understanding of the culture of McMaster, and a tremendous grasp on the best practices for this ministry. It is also our observation that he has excellent rapport with the students and campus leaders. We are appreciative of Classis' reappointment of myself as member of the Campus Ministry Committee, and the first time appointment of Dr. Aaron Schat as a faculty member. Our committee is strong, with the voices of student leaders, faculty members, alumni, and pastors being heard and respected. Every week there are large group gatherings at each of the campuses. Solid Rock (Mohawk College) and All Things (McMaster University) have featured speakers on a great variety of topics, along with a meal to be shared by all. A special thank you to all who brought meals in for these key events (and there is opportunity – and need – for more to join in this ministry of hospitality and grace), and who have participated by speaking to the students in their areas of interest and expertise.

Other activities include men's and women's Bible studies, book study groups led by Dr. Adema (using "Creation Regained" by Dr. Al Wolters), social events and intramurals (with water polo [!] being a favourite), group hikes to Albion Falls and other places, a welcome barbecue at the start of the academic year and a Christmas party to celebrate the birth of our Lord.

A major event this Fall was the Student Summit, planned and led by Dr. Adema and the student leaders of our ministry. Around 55 students from six Ontario campuses with CRC Chaplaincies came together at Mount Mary Retreat Centre in Ancaster for workshops, special lectures, worship and fellowship. It was a wonderful time.

On behalf of your Campus Ministry Committee, I thank Classis for the vision for this ministry, for your strong support in finances and prayer, and for your encouragement into the future. Many people and churches of Classis have shown their support in numerous ways, and for them we are particularly grateful.

Respectfully submitted,



Rev. Bruce Adema  
Chair of Classis Hamilton Campus Ministry Committee

APPENDIX #1.2 – CANDIDACY COMMITTEE REPORT

Candidacy Committee Communication to Classis.

As a classis we are currently supporting two full time students at CTS and one EPMC student

**Derek Ellens:** 1<sup>st</sup> year at CTS ,

**Ben Verkerk:** 2<sup>nd</sup> year at CTS serving as student body President

**Femke Visser-Elenbaas:** officially starting in the spring semester, but already doing some of the work; has received an adapted EPMC process because her previous training; she hopes to candidate in 2017. The **CHCC is recommending** that her forgivable loan for the spring 2017 semester in the amount of **US\$2,255** be approved.

Here is an update on some of our recent graduates who have gotten support from our classis.

**Josiah Bokma:** currently serving as chaplain at Redeemer and also with CRWM and the Nehemiah Center; in progress with the candidacy material, will candidate at Synod 2017.

**Courtney Mooney:** is delaying as a candidate until 2018; still working at the church plant in Milton, ON with John Bowers; has a new 4-week old baby.

**Mark DeVos:** Has delayed his candidacy until next spring at which time he will need to make a decision.

**Nate Klingenburg:** waiting for immigration paperwork to begin a call to a church in Iowa. Currently available to preach in our classis.

**Wim Devries:** has accepted a call to Ebenezer CRC (Jarvis); Classical exam today.

We also currently know of two students who are in 2<sup>nd</sup> year at Redeemer who have indicated a desire to attend Calvin Seminary to pursue ordination, we are in regular communication with them.

Applications for requests for support for the new school year will be sent out shortly via the clerk to be included in your church bulletins after our January classis meeting. If you know of people who are interested in pursuing ordination in the CRC please direct them to contact Andrew Zomerma who is the chair of our committee.

**Seminary Sunday**

We have been in communication with Calvin Seminary regarding Seminary Sunday, and due to some staffing changes it will not be happening this year. We may pursue this further next year.

Andrew Zomerma  
Chair, CHCC

## APPENDIX #3 – CLASSIS STAFF REPORT

### **Classis Mission Director Report**

See, I am doing a new thing! Now it springs up; do you not perceive it? I am making a way in the wilderness and streams in the wasteland. Is.43:19

I've been reading a book by Craig VanGelder entitled the Ministry of the Missional Church. In this book he talks about the need for the church to be shaped not by tradition or even cultural relevance, but to be shaped by what the Spirit of God is leading us to do. I've been pondering that, not only for the churches themselves, but also for my own work. What are the ways that we can be more open to the leading of the Spirit? What are we trusting God for? What are we engaged in that really only God can do? Where is the Spirit of God at work?

I have experienced a measure of this in our own church as we've noticed that God is stirring in ways that we could not have orchestrated. The weaving together of our food based ministries, a church wide Alpha program and our midweek Coffee Break program is being used of God to bring a number of people into a place of seeking Him. We are amazed at what God is doing; we could not have planned the ways He is drawing people to Himself. He is doing a new thing; our job is to be faithful to His leading.

In my work with the Classis, I want to be open to His leading as well. I continue to work with the Youth Team, which is truly a place where God has been at work, breathing new life. You'll hear more from them as they will be leading a segment of the Classis Meeting. This group is vibrant and cares deeply about growing and supporting the youth ministry in our churches and Classis.

The Safe Church team meets three times a year. Currently I am in conversation with someone who is considering taking a lead role; it continues to be a challenge to develop the leadership of this group. However, our meetings provide helpful teaching and generate good discussions for those who attend.

In my new role as Resource Coach, with the Connections Project, I am working to connect churches with one another and with resources, as we work in various areas of ministry. Churches working to grow their small group ministry are meeting together. One church that is looking at strategic plans to move forward is connecting with some Classis Niagara churches. Another church is connecting into a cohort around the implications of staff led ministry. Still another group is considering ways to provide greater hospitality in worship. If your church is looking to explore an area of ministry, I'd be happy to have an initial conversation with your leadership to discern what some next steps might be.

I pray that together we are open to the new thing that God might be doing in us. May God continue to show us where is already at work, and what he is doing in the world around us. May His kingdom come, on earth as it is in heaven.

Marian Lensink  
Classis Hamilton Mission Director  
Resource Coach, Connections Project  
[marian@classishamilton.ca](mailto:marian@classishamilton.ca)



#### APPENDIX #4 – CIC AND STATED CLERK’S REPORT

Following is a list of the significant items of interest from the CIC minutes since the last Classis meeting:

1. Henry Kranenburg reported that a majority of the classis diaconates had voted to approve the appointment of Karen Tigchelaar as the Classis Hamilton diaconal representative on the Shalom Manor and Gardens board of directors until May 2017. In future, and when needed, the deacon delegates at the May classis meeting will be asked to vote for a new diaconal representative on the Shalom Manor and Garden board.
2. Henry Kranenburg, Ken Benjamins, Ida Kaastra- Mutoigo, Mark Vandervliet, Gillian Bruce and Jake Ellens are elected to serve on the Board of Directors of the corporation until June 2017.
3. Asked the Church Visitors that they consider adding questions on the credentials to their list of questions that they might explore during their church visits and encourage the churches to include them in the credentials.
4. Although the practice of Classes giving support to the Pastor’s retreat - both to encourage attendance and to offset costs - has been longstanding, a question was raised as to the (legal) appropriateness of such giving and the accountability for it.
5. Henceforth the Chair of Classis will be considered a full member of the CIC and that ordinarily that person will be appointed as a member of the BoD.
6. Kevin DeRaaf has been appointed to the Board of Directors of the corporation to fill the vacancy left by the resignation of Henry Kranenburg.
7. Ken Benjamins was elected as President of the CIC. (The BoD has not yet met, so the vacancy in the corporate presidency remains.)
8. Mark Vandervliet was elected as Vice-President of the CIC.
9. The spring classis meeting and the corporate AGM will be held on Tuesday, May 16, 2017.
10. The Stated Clerk requested Pastor-Church Relations to send classis available templates and guidance as to how the decision on page 849 of the *Acts of Synod* regarding the **learning covenant for new pastors and the continuing education for pastors** can best be implemented (see item 12 below).
11. The Stated Clerk was asked to send a note to clerks of churches with vacancies reminding them of the need to have classis appoint a Church Counselor at the beginning of the calling process.
12. The Stated Clerk was instructed to send the continuing education for pastors document to: (a) the churches; (b) Church Visitors; and (c) the new Regional Pastors once they have been appointed. This document was sent under separate cover.
13. For 2017 only, the Stated Clerk send a request to all retired ministers asking for their availability and willingness to be placed on the ballot as nominees to attend Synod 2017 to in the two designated delegate positions to be filled by ministers.
14. The Stated Clerk will monitor the elections of elders and deacons and request the local church to extend the term of service of any elder or deacon who has been elected by classis to be a delegate to synod until the end of June of that year if their term would normally expire prior to that date. This is done to ensure that the synodical guidelines are met.
15. Appointed Daryl DeKlerk as Church Counselor for Hope CRC, Brantford.
16. Appointed Rita Klein-Geltink as Church Counselor for Immanuel CRC, Hamilton.
17. Approved the amendments to the mandate of the Classis Hamilton Youth Ministry Team as presented in the CIC minutes of December 6, 2016.

Dick L. Kranendonk – Stated Clerk,  
clerk@lassishamilton.ca

## APPENDIX #5 – DELEGATE, FUNCTIONARY AND COMMITTEE NOMINATIONS

Nominations for delegates to Synod 2017 will be accepted up to and including at the Classis meeting itself.

### DELEGATES NOMINEES TO SYNOD 2017

Ministers: Ken Benjamins; Kevin DeRaaf: \_\_\_\_\_

Elder: Judy Cook; Bob de Haan; Ida Kaastra-Mutoigo; Henk Vaarkamp; \_\_\_\_\_

Deacon: \_\_\_\_\_

### History of Synod Delegates:

YEAR	MINISTERS	ELDER/DEACON
2016	Chris Schoon Andrew Zomerman	Gary Sytsma/ Elder Gena Taylor/ Deacon
2015	Rita Klein-Geltink Henry P. Kranenburg	Martin W. Tigchelaar Fred Reitsma
2014	M. Jeffery Klingenberg Kenneth F. Benjamins	Adrian Guldemond Andy Miedema
2013	Kevin P. DeRaaf Henry P. Kranenburg	Jacob Ellens George Elzinga
2012	Paul Vanden Brink Kenneth F. Benjamins	Mark Vandervliet Henry Brouwer
2011	Zachary J. Olson M. Jeffery Klingenberg	Clarence E. Batterink Judy Cook
2010	Stephen F. Terpstra Kevin P. DeRaaf	Mark Vandervliet Timothy Sheridan
2009	Martin Dam William C. Veenstra	Neil Paul Adrian T. VanderVaart
2008	Kenneth F. Benjamins James E. Pot	Fred Reitsma John W.J. Glasbergen
2007	Jeffrey P. Janssen Shawn R. Brix	Al Martens George Bergshoeff

### Nominee for the New Council of Delegates

The Nominating Committee polled all current members of the Board of Trustees, and the boards of the New Mission Agency and Back to God Ministries International, whose terms will conclude in 2018 and following. The following current board members from Classis Hamilton responded as indicated regarding their willingness to be considered for membership on the COD:

- Sarah De Moor (New Mission Agency) – Willing to be considered
- Garry Sytsma (Board of Trustees) – Willing to be considered
- Mark Van Beveren (Back to God Ministries International) – Willing to be considered
- Adam Veenstra (New Mission Agency) – Willing to be considered

Upon review of all potential nominees to the COD (currently serving on the BOT, BTGMI, and NMA boards), the Nominating Committee suggests that Classis Hamilton consider nominating Mark Van Beveren as the COD delegate—to provide transition from the Back to God Ministries International board on the COD.

## APPENDIX #6 – ROUND TABLE MINISTRY SESSION

### Classis Round-Table on Ministry to, with and by our Youth January 17, 2017 Classis Meeting

Youth ministry both excites and worries us. We raise our hands to God, both in praise for his work in our teens and in desperate cries for them. At the request of the Classis Interim Committee, the Classis Youth Ministry Committee will lead us, DV, in a discussion on ministry to, with and by our youth. We'll follow the outline below, which will include portions typical of a youth ministry evening ;-)

The seed questions / discussion primers are included below for you to ponder in advance and **\*\*\* to forward / discuss them with your youth leaders for their reflection and input.\*\*\*** Bring your 'quotable quotes' from them! Be prepared to report back to them on our discussion.

- A. Ice-breaker game to build Christian fellowship and get us thinking about the topic.
  - B. Summary of results (by the Classis Youth Ministry Committee) from a 10-question survey completed in the Fall of 2016 by each of our youth ministries.
  - C. Highlighting the good work of our local Youth Champion, John Bijl, and the denominational resources of Faith Formation Ministries, headed by Syd Hielema. For a preview check out: <https://www.crcna.org/FaithFormation/about-us>.
- A key question: How can our youth leaders be fostered, equipped and supported?
- D. "World Cafe": a quiet way to write our thoughts on poster-boards that each have a question on youth ministry.
  - E. Discussion at our tables on the four sets of questions below (each set followed by large-group feedback and interaction).
    1. Purpose: What are the spiritual needs of our youth? What questions and issues do they have in their faith life? Family? Social life? Academic and vocational lives?
    2. Process: How do organized 'youth groups' contribute toward youth discipleship? What curriculum options are ideal to meet their spiritual needs? What events engage them the most? What does individualized discipleship look like, both for those who come to youth group and those not coming? What do collaborative approaches between churches accomplish? What kingdom causes are they passionate about that we can help them with?
    3. Potential: How are whole congregations contributing to youth ministry and/or being served by our youth? How can we foster intergenerational connectedness? How can our youth ministries be inclusive to those in our communities (or how are they not and why)? What are best-practices for blessing and being blessed by our young adults?
    4. Prayer: What are best practices for helping to model prayer and foster the prayer life of our youth? We will close with time around our tables praying for our youth, youth leaders, young adults and congregations.

## APPENDIX #7 – EXAMINATION OF WIM DEVRIES – PREACHED SERMON

**Assigned Scripture Text:** 1 Timothy 4 [NIV 1984]

**Sermon Title:** “Guarding the Trustworthy Truth”

### Three Main Points

- I. Abandoning “the Faith” [4:1-5]
- II. Strain Against False Teaching [4:6-8]
- III. Cling to the Truth [4:9-16]

### Introduction

Brothers and Sisters in Christ, 1 Timothy 4 is a standout chapter in Scripture. It can stand on its own, and yet it beautifully summarizes the whole letter as well, since Paul begins and ends the letter with the call to the church to guard against godless and false teaching [cf. 1:3-7; 6:20-21] and to cling to the truth. And that’s the main focus of this chapter.

When you drive on the highway in your car, do you pay attention to negative signs – danger signs? For example, “sharp curve ahead,” or “low bridge” if you’re a truck driver. We’re trained to follow these signs. But yet, how often don’t we see a car flipped over on an off-ramp or hear about a truck jammed under a bridge? Sometimes I wish there was someone stationed at these signs, waving a caution flag or stopping us because often we zip right past and ignore them.

Are we also guilty of ignoring the signs in God’s word warning of danger ahead on the Highway of Holiness (cf. Isaiah 35:8)? Do we doubt the power of God to save us through the work of Christ? Yes, some do – and even end up abandoning the faith.

Tonight we’ll look closely at verse 1-5 and consider what abandoning the faith actually means. We will then turn to verse 6-8 and see how we can strain against false teachings. Finally we will consider the truth worth clinging to from verses 9-10: putting our hope in God the Savior.

### **Abandoning the faith**

One of the key statements in this chapter is verse 1 – “The Spirit clearly says that in later times some will **abandon the faith** and follow deceiving spirits and things taught by demons.”

First, let’s clarify what “later times” means. We may read this and zoom right over it because later is, well, later. But “later times” means right now; not because we’re near the end but because we’re in the period between Christ’s ascension and his return. Acts 2:17, 1 Peter 1:20; Jude 18 all refer to that period when speaking of “later times.” Look out, then! We’re right in the middle of it!

In later times people will “abandon the faith.” Maybe they know it, maybe they don’t. To abandon the faith means to “depart from within.” Paul says in Acts 20:30 to Timothy: “from your own number, men will arise and distort the truth in order to draw away disciples after them.” That’s from within the church! An abandoning means that a false teaching has sprouted based on some truth and then by deception turns people away from “the faith.”

God is warning us tonight that even within our own churches and denomination, there are those who seek to distort the truth and to turn God’s people from a complete confidence in the trustworthiness of the truth. [cf. Col. 2:18-23] Jesus says in Matthew 24:10, “at that time many will turn away from the faith and will betray and hate each other, and many false prophets will appear and deceive many people.” Sadly, abandoning the faith comes from within.

What does Paul mean by “the faith?” This refers to those central teachings of Scriptures that are necessary to saving faith; the sovereignty of God, the deity of Jesus Christ, the Holy Spirit, and redemption received by faith through the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. This is where we put our hope as Paul says in verse 10. This is “the faith” – salvation by grace alone through faith alone in Christ alone. Adding something is what our Belgic Confession (Article 22) calls an “enormous blasphemy against God.”

Verse one also tells us that people will follow deceiving spirits. What are some examples in our world today of teachings that come from deceiving spirits?

**[1] Sexual Libertarianism:** for example, take God's delightful design for marriage and sexuality between one man and one woman. In our day and age, it's being turned into something depraved, into whatever you want it to be and between whomever, whatever, and however many you'd like; this thinking comes from deceiving spirits.

**[2] Asceticism** (verse 3): coming up with extreme rules and regulations promoting severe self-discipline, self-restraint; abstaining from pleasure. Asceticism leaves out the work of Christ and focuses on human effort toward salvation. Living a disciplined Christian life is important but balance is the key, and we are not to reject God's good gifts [verse 4].

**[3] Hedonism:** for example, turning the grace of God in Jesus Christ into a license for immorality (Jude 4) comes from Hedonism – the idea that pleasure is the highest good. Romans 1:24-32 lists much of that immorality: sexual impurity, selfish living, living in envy, murder, strife, deceit, and malice, gossiping, slandering, hating God, disrespect, arrogance, boasting, and living in indecent sexual sin. Teaching that these lifestyle choices are acceptable before God, promoting them in any way, and approving of those who live like this is following deceiving spirits.

God is calling you Christian, to strain against them and to assess your commitment level to the pure and sufficient teachings of Scripture. No matter what the world around is doing or what the majority may think, we are called by God himself and by our historic creeds and confessions to put false teachings in their rightful place – in subjection to the truth of God's word. The very essence of the gospel of Jesus Christ is at stake. (cf. Belgic Confession, Article 7, paragraph 4).

### **Strain against False Teaching – Two ways**

[1] By seeking and encouraging good teaching (4:6)

Paul is talking to Timothy here as a minister it seems, but Paul uses a Greek word there to mean "servant." It should read then – "If you point these things out to the brothers, you will be a good **servant** of Christ Jesus." This verse then is speaking to all of us as servants of Christ, to seek and encourage good teaching.

Paul mentions Timothy's upbringing. He had been "brought up" in the truths of the faith. Paul mentions in 2 Tim 1:5 – how Timothy was nourished in the faith by his mother and grandmother. 2 Timothy 3:14 tells us how Timothy knew the Scriptures "from infancy." Key here is nourishing ourselves and all those under our care with the Holy Scriptures.

Some call this "indoctrination" – force-feeding our children the things that we believe, and not letting them come up with their own beliefs – as the world around us would have us do. It's not indoctrination – it's simply passing on godliness to the next generation.

It's the same as teaching our children the elementary principles of math, language arts, or biology. We believe that 1+1=2 so we teach that as truth. If we believe Scripture and the gospel in verse 10, that God-given Repentance + Faith = Salvation, why wouldn't we want to pass that truth on to our children?

And this starts in our homes, around the dinner table, on the couch, during pillow-talk times with your kids and when you travel on the road together (Deut. 6:4-9), and then supplemented in our schools, Lord willing, and in our teaching and preaching here: serving up Christ to the people, and freely discussing teachings that are in error.

A good servant of Christ is willing to lovingly expose error. Every Christian wants the truth explained, but very few are willing to have their error exposed. E. Paul Hovey wrote, "Men do not reject the Bible because it contradicts itself, but because it contradicts them." Exposing errors and having our errors exposed is an uncomfortable business, albeit a necessary one.

The church of Jesus Christ is called to stand guard near the danger areas and point out false teaching and to promote and encourage good teaching. It does this to ensure that our people are not haphazardly heading into the danger of abandoning the faith.

[2] By seeking and encouraging Godly training (4:7-8)

God, through Paul, teaches us to train ourselves for godly living. This involves, first of all, ignoring godless myths and old-wives tales – horoscopes, lottery, crystal balls, Ouija boards, and speculation or obsession about matters not taught in Scriptures. We cannot allow the current issues of the day to distract us from a knowledge of the truth that leads to godliness (Titus 1:2). In 1 Timothy, Paul uses the word “godliness” 9 out of the 15 times it’s used in the New Testament. Godliness – following God’s will and his instructions, is a sure fire way to strain against false teaching.

The strain and effort that it takes for the human body to take the shape of a trained athlete has great value. Godliness has even more value but it cannot be achieved on the couch. In response to God’s mercy to us in Christ, we are to actively engage in training our hearts and minds through Scripture reading, prayer, fasting, partaking of the Lord’s Supper, giving generously through tithes and offerings, and looking for ways to engage in acts of mercy. Godliness then, is taking a natural step and also a firm stand within the world that we live in.

We’re going to celebrate the 500<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Reformation this year (2017). We’re thankful for people like Martin Luther who stood firm on God’s word and nailed the 95 theses to the door of the Wittenberg church. We even had Luther’s words on our church sign in October – “Here I stand, I can do no other.” Are you willing to stand firm on God’s way of salvation, and let come what may? Really? Look at what ISIS is doing – raping, pillaging, and murdering, even crucifying anyone who calls on the name of Jesus. Are you willing to endure that?

Are we standing at the threshold of such a time here in this land? Already Christians are facing subtle forms of persecution for speaking the truth of God’s word, increasingly known today as hate speech. Are you ready and willing to stand firmly upon God’s word and cling to the truth as Luther did – and keep the faith? Or will you waver and let the world around dictate what you will or will not say and believe – and abandon the faith?

Cling to the Truth 4:9-10

“...God, who is the Savior of all men, and **especially** of those who believe.”

What is the truth? Some claim that God will save all of humanity. This is Universalism and it does away with the trustworthy truth of John 3:16. Those who believe on Jesus will have eternal life – the implication here is: those who do not believe will not have eternal life. When some say that “God is the Savior of all men” – period, they are taking that part of verse 10 out of context. Teaching that God will save everyone is a false teaching, however desirable it is that God would save all.

The word “especially” here means “in other words” or “to be precise.” God’s desire is that all “men would come to a knowledge of the truth” (1 Timothy 2:4) and “everyone to come to repentance” (2 Peter 3:9). Matthew 25:41 tells us: “Then he will say to those on his left, ‘Depart from me, you who are cursed, into the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels.’” Romans 9:18 says, “Therefore God has mercy on whom he wants to have mercy, and he hardens whom he wants to harden.” From the revealed Word of God in passages like these we understand that God does not in fact, save all people.

Maybe you’ve heard the saying, “You can lead a horse to water but you can’t make it drink.” God brings all of humanity to the water, he offers us an eternal life giving drink. Sadly not all drink of that living water found in Christ alone.

Therefore, this is the trustworthy truth worth accepting and guarding to the end: God saves for eternity all those who believe and trust in the Lord Jesus Christ and his finished work of paying for their sin on the cross. That is the truth that we labor and strive for as Christians – this is what we exist for as the church (3:15), this is why we preach, and this is why God has called me to ministry – to guard, proclaim and administer this eternal life-giving truth.

In verses 11-16, Paul focuses in on Timothy's role as a minister. He gives him a shotgun blast of best practices on being an effective minister. Paul is speaking to Timothy, the minister, but also Timothy the Christian, and to you as a Christian today – young or old. The Holy Spirit is urging his church to ensure that we commit to command and teach the trustworthy truth, set an example in our conduct, and devote ourselves to the public reading of Scripture, to preaching and teaching, and so on.

A lot could be said about these 6 verses, but I will leave that for another sermon. However, we should note that it is simply ineffective for us to claim to be guarding the truth if we aren't living in **proper response** to the truth of the good news of salvation in Christ; in other words, bearing good fruit. [cf. Heidelberg Catechism, LD 24, Q/A 64]

Are we practicing what we preach? When I tell my kids, "No snacks right before bed," and then proceed to pull out a bag of chips to snack on after they've gone to bed, that's not practicing what I preach. Rather, it's hypocritical and my daughter can actually see me in the recliner from her bedroom window. It's the same with the trustworthy truth of Scripture. If we're not practicing the truth that we preach as preachers, or if you're not practicing what you preach or what you say you believe as servants of Christ, your witness is compromised, and the abandoning may be beginning.

### **Conclusion**

We began by contemplating negative signs – danger signs. On our roadways, thankfully, there are also many positive signs. In Toronto, along the DVP there was a sign with 3 words, "Life is precious!" It's an encouragement to pay attention to the other signs along the way for your safety. For our purposes tonight, I would say, "Life is precious... and so is **eternal** life." A positive sign for the church is acknowledging our need to pay attention to the signs that declare: false teaching down this road, or hypocrisy down that lane, or elevating culture's ideals over God's leads to deception down this alleyway. Let's make sure we're on the path of truth.

It's a positive sign when we are clinging to the truth of God's word in Christ. When we're doing so, things go well for the church, so that it can be the guardian of the truth. Clinging to Christ, it can fulfil its global mandate [Matthew 28:18-20] of taking the unadulterated gospel message of Jesus to the world. I read recently that there are nearly 2 billion people in the world who do not yet know of the free offer of reconciliation with the only true and living God through Christ's atoning work. 2 billion!!

Why does God encourage us tonight to cling to the trustworthy truth of verse 10? So that we can be effective as we bring Christ to all people. Verse 16 also answers: "so that you will save both yourself, and your hearers." Salvation hangs in the balance. We know from Romans 10:17 that "faith comes from hearing the message, and the message is heard through the word of Christ." May the Holy Spirit inspire us right now as his church and empower us to move forward confidently with an unshakable faith and an absolute trust in the truth of God as it climaxes in Jesus Christ. Let's not leave it till later! Amen – Let's pray together...

## APPENDIX #8 - REDEEMER UNIVERSITY COLLEGE

### **Report to Classis Hamilton of the Christian Reformed Church: Winter 2017**

Our campus is excited that another incoming class is off and running. The 206 students that make up the Class of 2020 also represent the first year-over-year increase in incoming students in four years! These students are benefitting from the exciting developments of our Redeemer 2020 strategic plan. Launched in 2014, the plan's three objectives are renewing Redeemer's curriculum, raising Redeemer's profile and responsibly managing Redeemer's resources.

Already our curriculum renewal efforts have resulted in the launch of a Media and Communication Studies program and a new Core curriculum that keeps Christ at the centre of every student's learning experience. In the next year, we will also launch the Centre for Experiential Learning and Careers and a renewed Ministry program. The renewal of Redeemer's curriculum will ensure the continued connection between our Christian liberal arts and science mission and relevant, meaningful careers and callings for students as they prepare to serve Christ in the world.

At the same time, a strategy to enhance Redeemer's reputation and reach is well underway. The Centre for Christian Scholarship is increasing the impact of faculty research and adding a Christian voice to public conversations about everything from environmental sustainability to church growth to popular culture. The transition to digital news and information platforms and investments into building relationships with Christian high schools are helping Redeemer reach more students. Learn more at [redeemer.ca/the-front-lines](http://redeemer.ca/the-front-lines).

Finally, our goal to ensure responsible financial management continues. We believe that the resources of students, donors and churches so generously shared with us are a trust that we must honour and invest in wise and stewardly ways. We continue to pay down Redeemer's long-term debt, plan balanced budgets, save interest costs and plan for tuition changes at or less than the rate increases of the public universities. This work has required difficult, painful decisions, but we are projecting that our debt by the end of this fiscal year will be declining to close to \$20M, down from above \$32M less than a decade ago.

Of course, although we have an exciting plan to see us through to 2020, this is a time of leadership transition at Redeemer as well. At the time of writing, I am happy to report that our board has already launched the search process for Redeemer's next president and our board intends to appoint an interim president before the end of the calendar year. Please join the Redeemer community and board in prayer as we undertake these efforts.

We are truly grateful for the support of the Christian Reformed Church and in particular the members of the churches in Classis Hamilton. You are helping us develop tomorrow's Christian leaders, today. Please visit [redeemer.ca/resound](http://redeemer.ca/resound) to read stories of the impact of your support. Thank you for your ongoing commitment to Christian higher education at Redeemer. May God bless your work on behalf of His Church.

Dr. David Zietsma  
Vice President, Marketing and Enrolment