



**Minutes**  
**CLASSIS HAMILTON**  
of the CRCNA  
February 28, 2023  
9:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m.  
Hosted by Bethel CRC, Waterdown  
(616 Dundas Street E, Waterdown, ON)  
([agenda](#) and [addendum](#))

<b>Officers of Classis:</b> Chair: Michael Bootsma Vice Chair: Doug Nieuwstraten Stated Clerk: Ed W. Visser	<b>Synodical Deputies:</b> None Required
<b>Reporter:</b> Hagersville Community CRC	<b>Ballot Advisory Team:</b> Host Church
<b>Credentials Advisory Team:</b> Faith CRC, Burlington First CRC, Hamilton	<b>Overture Advisory Team:</b> Calvin CRC, Dundas Ebenezer CRC, Jarvis

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**GROWING AS A COMMUNITY OF BELIEVERS**

**9:00 a.m.**

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1. **Welcome & Opening Prayer by Doug Nieuwstraten, Chair of the CMT** (Classis Ministry Team)  
**It was good to Sing:** *Oh Worship the King, Guide Me Oh Thou Great Redeemer, May the Mind of Christ My Saviour*
  
2. **John Kemper of the host church, Bethel CRC, leads us in devotions.**
  - a. **1 Corinthians 10:31–11:1.** Whatever we do, do it for the glory of God. It's not about us, but seeking the good of others. Follow the example of Christ so others can follow us and be led to Jesus. So be mindful of who's following you, and who you're following. Whatever we do, even today, our speaking, our decisions, our leadership, it's not about us, but seeking the good of others.
  
  - b. **Sharing of Ministry of Bethel:** has experienced many challenges over the last several years.
    - i. **On the down side:** we've experienced Covid fallout, LGBTQ and Synods' decision; reluctance to sign the Covenant of Office Bearers, voluntarism is at an all time low, reluctance to serve, we have a pastoral vacancy.
    - ii. **On the up side:** live streaming, guest preachers, attendance is increasing. Ministries continue, AV, live stream, was expensive, but a donor helped. Thanks to Classis for help. We have Cadets, GEMS, Men on the Way, and Women on the Way, Profession of Faith class this year, prayer walkers, refugee team. We were invited by Community Church in Flamborough to partner with a vacation Bible School initiative. We hear God say, "Place your trust in me, I'm not finished with you yet". Leadership capable, committed people seeing to guide Bethel, To be a light on a hill, in an every changing environment. Refugee Team; welcomed a family of 3, mother and her two children, culminated after 7 years sponsorship effort. Both mother and children are doing well and adapting to their new environment. Now bringing a family of 6; Husband, wife and four children from Afghanistan.

- c. **Led by Shawn Brix; Crossroads Discernment Process.** Moving forward under the guidance of **CAT** (Crossroads Advisory Team). Using listening circles to begin the process of reconciliation and address some of the conflicts that are present in the church. Also to learning to listen to people’s voices concerning LGTBQ, and the struggle created by Synod’s 2022 decision.
- d. **CAT** has introduced us to prayer walkers, bless your neighbour initiative, and some social media efforts.
- e. We have formed a search team, looking for an STM (Specialized Transitional Minister) to help us discern what God has in mind for us.

**3. Prayer for the Host Church**

**by Vice Chair of Classis: Doug Nieuwstraten**

**ADMINISTRATIVE SESSION**

**10:00 a.m.**

**4. Call to Order & Instructions for the Day**

**Chair: Michael Bootsma  
Stated Clerk**

- a. **Attendance:** all churches are represented as follows

<b>Congregation</b>	<b>Deacon</b>	<b>Elder</b>	<b>Minister</b>
Bethel CRC, Waterdown	Bette VanderGeissen	John Kemper alt Tess Tigchelaar	
Calvary CRC, Flamborough		John De Waard	Gareth Harker
Calvin CRC, Dundas	Don Koning	Sid Boonstra	Ken Benjamins
Ebenezer CRC, Jarvis	Dave Eigenbrood	Ron Haverkamp alt. Ralph VanBenthem	Jack Kerkhof
Faith CRC, Burlington	John Pham	John Wesselson	Cara Dehaan
First CRC, Hamilton	Theresia Stephens	George Van Kampen alt. Jessica Proper	
Grace Community CRC, Ancaster		Jason Taekema	Siebert VanHouten
Hagersville Community CRC		Jake Elgersma	
Hope CRC, Brantford	Gary Dykgraaf	Herb Grootenboer	Doug Nieuwstraten
Immanuel CRC, Hamilton	Mike Bax	Steve McKnight	Michael Bootsma
Immanuel CRC, Simcoe		Mark Vandervliet	Jeff Vandermeer
Maranatha CRC, York	Mark Millard	Frank Riewald	Ben Ponsen
Meadowlands Fellowship CRC, Ancaster		Judy Cook	Everett Vander Horst
Mount Hope Community CRC	Alex Demik	Len Moelker	Joel Bootsma
New Hope Church, Hamilton (emerging church)			Steve Dykstra
New Street CRC, Burlington		Richard Simmelink	

- b. **Roll call by table** is requested so we can identify each other **Chair**
- c. **Delegates are asked to stand** indicating their affirmation of the [Covenant of Office Bearers](#)
- i. A question was asked about some who didn't stand,
  - ii. The Chair asks if there are any delegates who didn't stand to affirm the Covenant of Office Bearers. It was determined that all and only delegates have stood to affirm their allegiance the Covenant of Office Bearers.
- d. **Classis is Declared Constituted** **Chair**
- e. A motion to **approve the agenda** as distributed including the addendum is ... **ADOPTED**
- f. **Among those present, the following are introduced,**
- i. General Secretary of the CRCNA, Dr. Zachary King,
  - ii. Interim Transitional Executive Director, Canada, Rev. Albert Postma
  - iii. Chaplain Dr. Michael D. Fallon (McMaster University), and Chaplain Melissa Kuipers, (Mohawk College)
  - iv. Rev. Willemina Zwart, director of SoCo Beach Project
  - v. Becky, Regional Catalyzer Canada East
5. **Selections of Delegates for Synod continues throughout the day**
- a. Elder Nominations received from the online Credentials form, but no deacon nominations were received
  - b. Minister Nominations submitted via the online form
  - c. We need a Minister Delegate and alternate, and a minister for the 4<sup>th</sup> delegate position and alternate. It is clarified that Classis Hamilton has decided that the 4<sup>th</sup> office-bearer will be a minister.
  - d. A question is raised whether we can just vote for two ministers, the highest is the first delegate and the second is the 4<sup>th</sup> office-bearer.
  - e. The Chair **RULES** that we will **vote one delegate at a time**, the highest is the delegate the second is the alternate.
  - f. Ballots are provided and results are **Counted by Host church**
6. **Consent Agenda** ([link to agenda](#))
- a. A request to not include the CIC and Stated Clerk's report is ... **RULED**
  - b. A motion to approve the Consent agenda is ... **ADOPTED**  
**Including these reports from the Addendum**
    - i. [Youth Champion Report](#) John Bijl
    - ii. **Chaplains' Reports**
      - (1) [McMaster](#) Michael D. Fallon
      - (2) [Mohawk Solid Rock Newsletter](#) Melissa Kuipers
    - iii. **Denomination Reports**
      - (1) [Canada Conversation January 28, 2023](#)
      - (2) [World Renew Press Release January 23, 2023](#) Peter Bulthuis

## 7. CIC and Stated Clerk Reports

### a. **Classis Interim Committee (CIC)**

**CIC Chair: Ken Benjamins**

- i. Ken reviews the task of CIC, and reviews some points from the report. Introduces the new stated clerk.
  - ii. **Questions** are asked about the validity of classis receiving only a summary report defined as “decisions of consequence”, *who makes the distinction who decides what’s of consequence? A summary seems brief without all the rationale behind the decisions.* **Answer:** *A summary report means that we do not include what time we started and ended, who led in devotions nor the content of those devotions, nor general discussion. What’s included in a summary report are the decisions that have to do with the business and ministry of classis. Additionally, much of the work of the CIC & Stated Clerk, is processing reports, scheduling speakers, arranging for host churches, etc, in short, establishing the framework and content of the agenda for classis.*
  - iii. Approval of **Doug Nieuwstraten** as Alternate Synodical Deputy
    - (1) A **question** was asked about how Doug was selected to be the Alternate. **Stated Clerk:** *upon instruction of the CIC, a letter was sent to all the ministers of classis Hamilton inviting them to submit their names to be alternate Synodical Deputy. There was no response from the ministers. At the next CIC meeting, the Stated Clerk offered to be the alternate, but Doug Nieuwstraten, who was present, was prepared to assume the role. And so his name comes before Classis for approval.*
    - (2) A **motion** to **approve** Doug Nieuwstraten as Alternate Synodical Deputy is... **ADOPTED**
  - iv. **CIC to review practice of producing a summary** of CIC’s work rather than including a full set of minutes with the agenda **Referred to the CIC**
  - v. A **motion** to **approve Anthony Elenbaas** as Church Counsellor for Bethel CRC is ... **ADOPTED**
  - vi. For **Canadian National Gathering** in May, in Ottawa, the delegates affirmed by CIC are:  
**Michael Bootsma, Cara DeHaan, Marcia Hosmar, & Christine Shepherd** **RFI**
  - vii. Volunteers to be **the next chair of Classis?** **Let CIC know**
- b. **Stated Clerk’s Report**, Ed W. Visser; no questions.
- c. A **motion** to **approve the work** of the **CIC** and the **Stated Clerk** is ... **ADOPTED**
- d. A **question** is asked if the minutes of the CIC are available. **Answer**, yes, of course.

## 8. **Classical Church Counsellor Reports:**

- a. **Hagersville Community CRC** – Ben Ponsen reports that their Call has been **accepted by Rev. Steve Eckersley** from Immanuel CRC, Cornwall. They are planning on an **installation on July 2, 2023**, with Pastor Ralph Koops leading the service.
- b. **Bethel CRC** – Anthony Elenbaas reports that the council is looking for an STM (Specialized Transitional Minister)
- c. **First CRC, Hamilton** - Anthony Elenbaas, looking for a second pastor.
- d. **New Street CRC** - Cara DeHaan reported that the New Street congregation has affirmed their Council's recommendation to move towards closure; many details are still being determined, including the date for their final worship service. Prayers for this congregation and its leaders are warmly encouraged!
- e. **Ebenezer CRC, Jarvis** - Jack Kerkhof reports that he is engaged as an interim. A pastor search team has been established, a profile has been submitted.
- f. **Rev. Jack Kerkhof** is asked to **pray for the churches** mentioned.

9. **Church Visitor Reports** ([Annual Church Visit Summary Reports 2021-2022](#)) **Discussion led by Ken Benjamins**
- a. Church Visitors' role is explained, quoting the church order, who are presently serving are named: Everett Vander Horst, Michael Bootsma, Ken Benjamins and elders Peter and Jerry Bulthuis. Ralph Koops is finishing his term.
  - b. Mentions that **New Street** is closing but engaging in this process with courage and wisdom and pastoral care.
  - c. **Referring to the Summary Report** and noting themes in common to all visits
    - i. **All visits were made in the context of Covid**, so the visits centred around the challenges of Covid, worship, pastoral care and so on.
    - ii. Need to address that we as churches of Classis **suffer from siloing**; all so close, and similar in many ways, even have families related, yet somehow not working together. Yes some neighbouring congregations have occasional joint services and ministries, but overall in classis, churches suffer from siloing.
    - iii. Challenge and questions concerning **member retention**. Typically, membership is down by 1/3 (not only in the CRC, but other churches and denominations that we know of). Let's face this.
  - d. **Discussion** involving members of classis covering many of the ideas, attempts at solutions, greater awareness of issues and experiences of handling conflict, fractures and membership decline, covid and challenges of LGBTQ. Congregations have engaged the Colossian Forum around conflict resolution, listening, understanding each other; especially with the struggle post Synod 2022 decision. Next Steps resource of PCR. Might be helpful to have a more formal conversions regarding these matters. The COD also has discussed these matters and have some suggestions.
  - e. **Ken Benjamins is thanked** for the presentation and leading the discussion

10. **REFRESHMENT BREAK**

**10:45 a.m.**

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**MINISTRY SESSION**

**11:00 a.m.**

11. **Classis Ministry Team (CMT)**

**CMT Chair: Doug Nieuwstraten**

- a. **Candidacy Committee** (no report) Hayden Regeling
- b. **Campus Ministry Committee** ([report in agenda](#)) additional oral comments, with this final exhortation: Please send this report to your church treasurer and chair of deacons, and please ensure that offerings go to the correct ministry- Chaplaincy of the denomination is a different ministry than that of Campus Ministry. Ensure that funds raised for Campus Ministry isn't sent to Chaplaincy of the Denomination nor to Resonate  
Anthony Elenbaas
- c. **Classical Home Missions Committee** Michael Bootsma
  - i. Need more people such as administrative work for the committee
  - ii. On going work in church planting, and the model is changing through Resonate, starting in homes, with focus is Stoney Creek
  - iii. New thing we're doing is being encouragers in the churches; what's happening in your church and how can we be in prayer for your church. "Taste and See"
  - iv. We do have some small grants to help your mission
  - v. **Suggestion from Cara** saying that since **Ken** had talked about **Siloing**, [see Church Visit Reports above] how about having a conversation at Classis, possibly directed by the Classical Home Missions Committee, sharing about how as congregations we might be engaged in siloing and discussing how we could better work together sharing resources, and mutual encouragement and so forth.

12. **Update on the SoCo Ministry** (South Coast Beach Project)

Willemina Zwart

- a. We have a look at the new property via video, most of the funds raised and some no interest loans
- b. Would you like to help, go to the SoCo housewarming registry, <myregistry.com> then look up, "SOCO Housewarming"

13. **Credentials Advisory Team: Reporting First & Faith**

- a. Two comments were submitted with the Credentials under CO Art 41:

- i. **In what aspect of your ministry would you like the assistance of classis?**

From New Hope Church (emerging church), New Hope has a unique ministry to urban poor living in the East End of Hamilton. Last year, we piloted an initiative to welcome members from other churches to join us in ministry. The intent is to have churches come around and support our congregation, but also offer some teaching and inspiration for Christians looking to develop ministries that engage the poor in their communities. We have the support, and some funds, from Resonate in order to make this happen. I would be eager for the opportunity to share about this opportunity again (as I had back in May 2022)... Steve Dykstra.

- ii. **What aspect of ministry would you like to discuss at classis?**

From Calvin CRC, Dundas, The council of Calvin Dundas CRC requests that classis review its budgeting process and requirements to ensure that classical financial commitments remain realistic in the light of the declining membership base of classis Hamilton. Council recognizes that this may involve some difficult decisions. Council therefore urges classis to begin this process sooner rather than later.

- b. Our responses to (i):

**We recommend that Steve be given 10 minutes to present about the New Hope internship at today's February Classis meeting.**

**RULED**

**Grounds:** As an opportunity within Classis, New Hope's internship deserves time on the floor of Classis. Steve prefers to give this presentation in February, not May.

Alternative: Schedule time for Steve at our May Classis meeting.

**We encourage New Hope to prepare a short video that can be shared with individual church Councils or congregations this spring** (in addition to the brochure created last year), in time for 2023-24 applications.

**Referred to Steve**

**Grounds:** We'd like to see advertising for this internship done more broadly than Classis delegations and in a mode that engages congregations more effectively than a written brochure.

- c. Our response to (ii):

**We recommend that the CIC review Calvin CRC's recommendation about budget review at an upcoming CIC meeting and make a plan for a review to be completed by a Classis team.**

**Grounds:** a budget review is a good idea, but we need CIC to do some pre-work to guide Classis in this process.

**Referred to CIC**

14. **Rev. Steve Dykstra Urban Ministry Opportunity with New Hope Church**

By God's grace, New Hope Church has been faithful to ministry Crown Point Neighbourhood for a decade, and continue to journey with those in our community... and we're inviting you to join us! We are offering a year-long ministry excursion project for members in Classis Hamilton. Join us to explore the connection between the church and neighbourhood, and how churches can enfold those living on the margins. The time commitment is September to June, Sunday mornings, plus 2-4 hours per week, The ministry would be ideal for an empty-nest couple, or past elder of deacon; someone who committed to their home congregation but wanting a change of pace for a season. Our goal is to build up the capacity of other churches to serve their own neighbourhoods! Email [steve@newhopechurch.ca](mailto:steve@newhopechurch.ca) for more information

15. **Overture Advisory Team Report (Regarding adopting the Belhar as a fourth Confession)**

- a. First CRC requests that Classis Hamilton overture synod 2023 to adopt the Belhar Confession as a fourth confessional standard in the CRC.

It is noteworthy that the CRC has already addressed this request in our recent past. After considerable debate, synod 2012 decided not to adopt the Belhar as a fourth confession. Although some praised the Belhar for its biblical, universal, and timeless themes, others raised concerns that it contains liberation theology and makes overly inclusive statements that can be misinterpreted. In 2017 synod finally decided to adopt the Belhar as a second “Contemporary Testimony” alongside “Our World Belongs to God.” Although the Belhar has many positive elements, it was agreed that office bearers will not be required to subscribe to the Belhar as part of their covenant for office bearers.

In order to revisit a former decision of synod, **Church Order Article 31 requires that new grounds** be provided. Our advisory team did not find sufficient new grounds to reconsider the synodical decision of 2017.

**Recommendation:**

That Classis not adopt the overture from First CRC of Hamilton.

**Grounds:** Synod has already addressed the Belhar as late as 2017. The Belhar already has the status of a “Contemporary Testimony.” First CRC did not provide sufficient new grounds to reconsider the status of the Belhar Confession.

Respectfully submitted:

Delegates from Ebenezer CRC of Jarvis, and Calvin CRC of Dundas.

- b. **Since the Advisory Team’s recommendation is to *not* adopt the overture**, First CRC, Hamilton, now has the opportunity to defend its overture. **The Overture is now before classis.**
- c. **First CRC addresses Classis;** speaks about divisions, fractures, bi-national issues, indigenous violence – we believe the Belhar will speak biblically and prophetically to these realities ...
- d. ***It is Moved That Classis Hamilton overture the 2023 Synod of the CRC to adopt the Belhar Confession as a fourth confessional standard of the CRC***
- e. **Questions:**
- i. what are the new grounds needed for Synod to elevate from Contemporary Testimony to a 4<sup>th</sup> confession. First CRC says what’s written is sufficient?
  - ii. what would the Belhar do more as 4<sup>th</sup> confession that it doesn’t do now as a contemporary testimony? First CRC answers the new status gives all the confessions a fuller spectrum.
- f. **Chair calls for the vote.** The **Motion** (to overture synod adopt the Belhar as 4<sup>th</sup> Confession) is ...  
**NOT ADOPTED**
- g. **Chair thanks** everyone for the discussion and comments, questions and answers.

16. We sing **happy birthday to Tess Tigchelaar**- it’s her birthday today!

17. Chair leads our prayer of thanks and we break for lunch.

**LUNCH BREAK**

**12:15 p.m.**

*Note: 18-21 were done at different points throughout the meeting of Classis. The steps and decisions are gathered together and presented here.*

### 18. Selection of Delegates for Synod 2023

- a. After 3 ballots without a selection, there is,
    - i. A **Motion change the present process** and move to *voting for 2 of the 3 names so far, to determine 1<sup>st</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> minister delegates, and look for alternates later.*
      - (a) Chair states that our rules say that 1<sup>st</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> delegates are to be ministers.
      - (b) It is argued that it seems odd that the two ministers receiving the highest number of votes would be 1<sup>st</sup> delegate and alternate.
      - (c) the **question is called, and [18.a.i] is declared** **ADOPTED**
    - (2) show of hands called for - in favour: 24, opposed 15 **ADOPTED**
    - (3) called to vote 2 from **Ken Benjamins, Cara DeHaan, Michael Bootsma**
  - ii. A **motion to take the next two highest as alternates** is ... **ADOPTED**
- b. **Results of Voting**
  - i. **First Minister** Delegate, **Michael Bootsma**, alternate **Ken Benjamins**
  - ii. **Fourth Minister** Delegate, **Cara DeHaan**, alternate **Joel Bootsma**

### 19. Elder nominees are introduced to Classis

- a. Peter Bulthuis and Herb Grootenboer
- b. The Chair **rules** that the elder with the most votes will be our delegate to synod and the other will be the alternate.
- c. **Voting results: Peter Bulthuis is the Elder Delegate, and Herb Grootenboer is the alternate.**

### 20. A **motion to destroy the ballots** is ...

**ADOPTED**

### 21. Chair reminds us that we don't have any deacon nominees and invites Classis to consider what we will do.

- a. **After some discussion and since there were no nominations for a deacon delegated,** a **motion** that, *the Stated Clerk will send a letter to the churches inviting nominations for a deacon delegate. CIC will receive nominations from Councils, and CIC will decide which deacon will be delegated to Synod is ...* **ADOPTED**

### 22. **Dr. Zachary King**, General Secretary of the CRCNA addresses Classis "as a guest" saying that AI will also speak and hopes to leave about 15 minutes for Q&A

- a. Introduces himself especially his life and ministry prior to becoming General Secretary
- b. Gives us a reflection on Jeremiah 29:5-7, God's Call for us in a world where the church is irrelevant, things are eroding, unravelling, be on mission where you are, it's God's purpose for us in this context of destruction.
- c. **Zach reviews** the main points of our Denominational Ministry Plan; pray, spiritual disciples, listening to God, listening to all generations.



- d. **Al Postma** speaks as well, introducing self, task of stewarding the organization that supports the churches. Canadian National Gathering.
- e. **Zach** thankful for our Classis, our support, “we pray for you”.
- f. **Q&A**
  - i. Since starting your role, what one thing has surprised you? A pleasant surprise at how many pastor have Spiritual Directors, Classes with prayer catalysers, increased dependence on God’s Spirit
  - ii. Do we [Classis Hamilton] have a Prayer Catalyst? Maybe we should.
  - iii. You’ve heard some of our concerns, what are the challenges that you hear in other Classes in the USA, is Canada facing the same sort of issues? - sometimes the churches are in very different places, like think they are living in Christendom; but overall both Canada and USA church are in a massive disruptive change and shifting in culture, church in society, immigration issues - and how does the church live in such a context? Lots of anxiety about how we can show Christ’s love in the world.
  - iv. How are you doing as a person? Stress on family with travel, dual career, teenagers. Does sense some immense burdens, but has great support.
- g. **Chair** calls for a number of people to gather around Zack King and Al Postma, lay on hands, and he leads our prayer. **ADOPTED**

23. **Closing:**

- a. **Singing:** *Now Thank We all Our God, To God Be the Glory, Great Things He Has Done,*
- b. **Next Meeting of Classis**
  - i. **Agenda** Material Due **April 8, 2023**
  - ii. **Addendum** Material Due **May 16, 2023**
  - iii. **Calvary CRC, Flamborough, May 30, 2023**
- c. **Prayer** Chair
- d. **Singing:** *Praise God From Whom All Blessings Flow*
- e. **Chair Declares Adjournment** of Classis 2 P.M.

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