



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

Date: March 22, 2016

Time: 7:30 PM

Venue: Ancaster Christian Reformed Church, 70 Garner Rd. E., Ancaster L9G 2B8

Officers of Classis: Chair: Everett Vander Horst Vice Chair: Jeff Vandermeer Stated Clerk: Dick Kranendonk	Synodical Deputies: William Koopmans Ray Vander Kooij Herman Praamsma
Reporter: Ebenezer CRC – Jarvis Daryl De Klerk	Ballot Committee: Ancaster CRC, Ancaster

EMAIL ADDRESS:

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DELAGATES AND ALTERNATES

Church	First Name	Last Name	Title
Ancaster CRC	Rita	Klein-Geltink	Pastor Delegate
Ancaster CRC	Rob	Fluit	Elder Delegate
Ancaster CRC	Dan	Hagen	Deacon Delegate
Meadowlands Fellowship	Everett	Vander Horst	Pastor Delegate
Meadowlands Fellowship	Hilda	Roukema	Elder Delegate
Meadowlands Fellowship	Ed	Van Beilen	Deacon Delegate
Meadowlands Fellowship	Nathan	Meyer	Elder Alternate
Hope	Andrew	Zomerman	Pastor Delegate
Hope	Willem	Vos	Elder Delegate
Hope	Tim	Vaandering	Elder Alternate
New Street	Joel	Bootsma	Pastor Delegate
New Street	Ted	Groenewegen	Elder Delegate
New Street	John	Dekker	Deacon Delegate
Faith	Homer	Lensink	Elder Delegate
Faith	Dave	Hook	Elder Delegate
Faith	Marge	Kloet	Deacon Delegate
Calvin	Rob	Koning	Elder Delegate
Calvin	Fred	Dykman	Elder Delegate
Calvin	Don	Koning	Deacon Delegate
Calvary	Jim	Vanderzwaag	Elder Delegate
Calvary	Joel	Wessink	Elder Delegate
Calvary	Rob	Schreuders	Deacon Delegate
Hagersville Community	Jeff	Klingenberg	Pastor Delegate
Hagersville Community	Henry	Hogeveen	Elder Delegate
Hagersville Community	Jane	Lise	Deacon Delegate
First	Chris	Schoon	Pastor Delegate
First	Mark	Devos	Elder Delegate
First	Nella	Sandrock	Deacon Delegate
First	Robert	Joustra	Elder Alternate
First	Will	Wiebenga	Deacon Alternate
Immanuel	Henry	Kranenburg	Pastor Delegate
Immanuel	Bob	Brown	Elder Delegate
Immanuel	Steve	McKnight	Deacon Delegate
Immanuel	David	Rumph	Elder Alternate
Immanuel	Enthony	Elenbaas	Pastor Alternate
Mt. Hamilton			Elder Delegate
Mt. Hamilton			Elder Delegate
Mt. Hamilton			Deacon Delegate
New Hope			Non-Voting Delegate
Ebenezer	Daryl	DeKlerk	Pastor Delegate
Ebenezer	Andy	DeJong	Elder Delegate
Ebenezer	Peter	Brouwer	Elder Delegate
Immanuel	Jeff	Vandermeer	Pastor Delegate
Immanuel	Mark	Vandervliet	Elder Delegate
Immanuel	John	Oosterveld	Deacon Delegate
Bethel	Bruce	Adema	Pastor Delegate
Bethel	Paul	Groen	Elder Delegate
Bethel	Henry	Vos	Deacon Delegate
Maranatha	Kevin	Vanderspec	Elder Delegate
Maranatha	Jeremy	Brouwer	Elder Delegate

CLASSIS MEETING DETAILS

7:30 PM	OPENING WORSHIP AND EXERCISES
OPENING DEVOTIONS AND MINISTRY IN CANADA	
1. OPENING DEVOTIONS	Rita Klein-Geltink
2. PRAYER FOR THE HOST CHURCH AND THE DELIBERATIONS	Jeff Vandermeer
7:45 PM	EXAMINATION SESSION
3. CALL TO ORDER	Everett Vander Horst
3.1. Attendance	Dick Kranendonk
3.2. Approval of Agenda	Everett Vander Horst
4. EXAMINATION OF CANDIDATE – ADAM VEENSTRA	
4.1. Introduction of Candidate	Bruce Adema
4.2. <u>Practica</u> (<i>no time limit</i>)	Bruce Adema
Inquiry into the Candidate's relationship to God and commitment to ministry	
4.2.1. Questions by delegates and synodical deputies.	
4.2.2. Motion to proceed.	
4.2.3. Concurrence by synodical deputies	
4.3. <u>Sermon Evaluation</u> (<i>no time limit</i>)	Willem Vos and Ken Benjamins
Written and preached sermons to be evaluated (see Appendix #1 for preached sermon).	
4.3.1. Questions by delegates and synodical deputies.	
4.3.2. Motion to proceed.	
4.3.3. Concurrence by synodical deputies	
4.4. <u>Biblical and Theological</u> (<i>minimum of thirty minutes</i>)	Andrew Zomerman
Inquiry into the candidate's biblical and theological judgement, competence and soundness.	
4.4.1. Questions by delegates and synodical deputies.	
4.5. Executive Session:	
4.5.1.1. motion to admit and preliminary consideration,	
4.5.1.2. prayer,	
4.5.1.3. synodical deputies leave for their own deliberations,	
4.5.1.4. delegates vote by ballot,	
4.5.1.5. synodical deputies return and present written statement.	
4.5.2. Executive Session ends	
4.5.2.1. Remarks	
4.5.2.2. presentation of certificate (if approved).	
5. ANNOUNCEMENTS	
6. ADJOURNMENT	
6.1. Closing prayer	
6.2. Dismissal	

NEXT CLASSIS MEETING:

Date: May 24, 2016

Place: Ebenezer CRC, Jarvis

APPENDIX #1 – PREACHED SERMON

Message: “Ignorance is Bliss?”

Luke 23:32-43

Adam Veenstra

Maranatha CRC; March 13, 2016

At the risk of starting out the sermon like a weather report, it seems as though we are finally, finally, maybe almost on the other side of winter! It was so nice to be able to plan to drive to York this weekend without having to check the weather or the highway forecast, and worry about getting caught in the snow. Because I can be a very nervous traveller! Sometimes I wonder if it would be better not to check the forecast, which usually isn't very accurate anyway, and just start driving. Maybe, as they say, ignorance is bliss?

Except that by doing so, there's the very real possibility that I could put myself in harm's way. I could cause very real damage to my car, and maybe even the people in it.

Now obviously this is a relatively trivial example, and speaks more to my personal anxieties than anything else. But I do think that we risk causing damage to ourselves and the people in our lives if we remain ignorant about anything. If we're blind to the truth, any bliss that we have is likely only temporary.

The truth that we encounter as we gather for worship comes to us from the word of God.

We'll be reading this morning from the book of Luke, chapter 23, verses 32-43. It can be found in your pew Bibles on page 1024, but will also be up on the screen if you would like to follow along. Now we are jumping ahead a bit in terms of the story of Lent and Easter. Although next week is Palm Sunday, our passage for this morning begins partway through the narrative of Jesus' crucifixion. He has been arrested and tried, and is now being led away towards his punishment.

And so we begin at verse 32:

“Two other men, both criminals, were also led out with him to be executed. When they came to the place called the Skull, they crucified him there, along with the criminals—one on his right, the other on his left. Jesus said, ‘Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they are doing.’ And they divided up his clothes by casting lots.

The people stood watching, and the rulers even sneered at him. They said, 'He saved others, let him save himself if he is God's Messiah, the Chosen One.'

The soldiers also came up and mocked him. They offered him wine vinegar and said, 'If you are the king of the Jews, save yourself.' There was a written notice above him, which read: *This is the King of the Jews.*

One of the criminals who hung there hurled insults at him: 'Aren't you the Messiah? Save yourself and us!' But the other criminal rebuked him. 'Don't you fear God,' he said, 'since you are under the same sentence? We are punished justly, for we are getting what our deeds deserve. But this man has done nothing wrong.' Then he said, 'Jesus, remember me when you come into your kingdom.' Jesus answered him, 'Truly I tell you, today you will be with me in paradise.'"

This is the word of the Lord. *Thanks be to God.*

It is difficult to transition out of a passage like this one, and into the sermon itself. Because the story of Jesus dying on the cross, whether we are telling it to our children in Sunday School or seeing it acted out in movies, or reading in the original text, is difficult. And once we've read it, it's hard to remain blissfully ignorant.

If we temporarily set aside the fact it is Jesus Christ, our Saviour, Messiah, and Lord being crucified, in our passage today there is still someone being crucified.

A human being. And an innocent one. Being brutally murdered and tortured.

Frankly, my writing and speaking capabilities are so entirely inadequate when it comes to even attempting to describe the horror of what's been happening in this scene. The blood shed and the tears cried. It's enough to make a person weep.

Because what they did to Christ on this day they also did to two other men. And this regime did the same to many, many others.

Now we are told that the two other men were criminals, and yes, we need to have justice and respect for the law. Obviously we are viewing this through a 21st century, North American worldview, and so it can also be problematic to start criticizing the ancient world's justice system. But what we see on display here goes far beyond simply justice, or crime and punishment.

When I first quickly glanced over the text in preparing for the sermon, it was a paraphrase online that substituted the word “divided” in verse 34 for “parted”. And I accidentally misread that as “partied”, and had to take a second glance.

But I don’t think I was actually that far off. Because we get the sense that there was almost a party atmosphere. The soldiers and onlookers had gotten themselves so worked up over this event, almost celebrating. They were like rubbernecks: not only could they not look away from the disaster, but they were revelling in it, benefiting from it.

They seemed to enjoy the fact that these men were being humiliated and reviled. And ignorant of the fact that the man in the center was actually their Saviour. Jesus himself says that “they do not know what they are doing.”

They had set that fact aside, and not just temporarily. They were blind to the truth, and blind to the sinful nature of their own actions.

They were having a good time! Another crucifixion! There was a morbid kind of bliss in their ignorance. They put up signs and offered him wine vinegar, all with a spirit of mockery, rather than compassion.

It’s been suggested that their ironic jeers show just how “comfortable” they are, and how much confidence they have in his execution.

In Christian tradition we often refer to Christ’s sacrifices as “The Passion”. And here we see a very different kind of passion on display, stemming from hate. Stemming from ignorance. Stemming from sin.

Decades later, another group of Roman soldiers would build their famous baths in the south of England, in the city appropriately called “Bath”. These were a centre of healing and restoration. And yet in baths historians have often found relics called “enemy tablets”: tablets of stone on which visitors, who had come for their own healing, would write down curses against their enemies, hoping they’d be struck down in some way.

We might not have enemy tablets today. And we might not ever hang anyone on a cross. But we do send hurtful text messages. We accidentally put down those we love. We spread gossip, and we make quick judgements. We get hurt and we hurt others because of hate, because of ignorance, because of sin. The place of crucifixion is now our schools, our workplaces, even our churches and our homes.

Long before he ever hung on the cross Jesus was living a human life, not entirely unlike you and me. And his enemies, those who caused him pain, wouldn't have been limited to those who crucified him. He would have been surrounded by bullies and negative talk his entire life. Simply because he was human, and that is unfortunately part of the human experience.

In his death and resurrection, that ignorance and negativity still persists. Towards Jesus Christ, and towards his children. So often today we deny the truth of who Jesus is in our words and our actions. And what happens is that these can become so frequent in our lives that we often don't even realize it.

Someone once told me that it takes three weeks for a habit to truly take hold in our lives. Which means that it could take as little as three weeks to convince ourselves that we are living in some kind of bliss.

In the Reformed tradition, we have a statement of faith that we subscribe to called the Heidelberg Catechism. Which, if you have attended the Christian Reformed Church for a while, you may be somewhat familiar with.

The document is divided into three sections, and the first is called "Human Misery", and it asks the question "How do you come to know your own misery?" How do we come to know about our sin? About the destructive habits that we have let take root in our lives? How do we come to know that this ignorance isn't bliss? Because "the law of God tells me".

When we hear the story of Christ's life and sacrifice, when we expose ourselves to any part of the Biblical narrative, we begin to discover the need for that sacrifice. We begin to discover the depth of our own sin, and the depths of our ignorance. Suddenly, it's not quite so blissful.

The depths of sin and ignorance seem to run deep when Jesus hangs on the cross in our passage today. He has experienced almost three stages of mockery: from the religious leaders, the Roman soldiers, and now the criminal that he hangs beside.

And so his own actions don't seem to quite match up with his setting. Despite all of our talk of sin and ignorance, what happens next is an incredibly beautiful thing. Because Jesus's attitude is then contrasted with the people's:

He is flanked by two criminals who, if they are hanging on the cross, are considered to be dangerous offenders, the lowest of the low.

And they are in a place whose name translates to “the Skull”. I don’t think you need me to point out that connotation!

He has been pushed to physical, mental, and spiritual extremes, and yet while everyone else is calling for blood, he calls for forgiveness. For grace. For love. He still makes time for his children.

Biblical scholars have said that in this moment, in verse 34, Jesus is fulfilling the “ethical standard” of loving all people, and showing compassion, the standard that he had come to reset.

It speaks to the need for discipleship, that these people might not truly realize who he is, and thus might not realize the extent of their sin.

Their ignorance does not necessarily excuse their sin, but perhaps it does help explain it. And it incites compassion from our Saviour, and speaks to the need for continued education, prayer, and discipleship.

Jesus’ words, calling for their forgiveness are incredibly impactful, because by his very actions that is what he is doing. It’s been said that “his blood speaks this” already, and now so does his voice. By hanging on the cross he dies to save them from their sin. By calling out to the Father he makes it unmistakable.

Our passage then narrows this down to one individual who receives forgiveness. One man, hanging on a cross next to him. A man whose eyes may have been opened to his sin, for the very first time.

In those days the cross was not the symbol that it is today. It was a symbol of torture, a far cry from something we would wear around our necks or put at the front of a church or decorate our homes with. And so this criminal is one of the first to recognize the power of the cross, even if he did not know it. Because he has insight into who Jesus really is. He is saved from his cross by the cross of Christ, asking for what Christ has given others.

We are all saved from our cross by the power of Christ. By his grace, by his forgiveness, and by his love. We all carry on our backs the sins that have been committed against us, but also the sins that we ourselves commit. The ignorance that we so often dwell in.

But we get to share in the forgiveness offered by Christ that day on the cross. The crowds are calling for him to save himself, unaware that he is actually saving them. He’s saving the criminal at his side. He is saving us. Forgiving us. Loving us. His lost, poor, and so often ignorant children.

In his book “Six Hours One Friday”, author Max Lucado examines three points that are solidified in Christ’s sacrifice. Three points that are vital to our being able to live in the freedom of a life with Christ, but three points that we so often forget:

- 1) My Life is Not Futile
- 2) My Failures are Not Fatal
- 3) My Death is Not Final

At times we may all feel as though our lives are amounting to very little. We might dwell long and hard on the mistakes that we have made. We might begin to fear the end.

But because of Christ’s words and deeds on the cross, we can have assurance that we matter. That we are forgiven. That we are loved.

I was reading a novel once that referred Christians as living under “the curse”, because they thought they could never be assured of their salvation, be assured of their forgiveness, because they could never fully know the extent of their own sin. But this isn’t something that we need to be afraid of, a curse that we need to live under. Because we read right here in our passage today that we are forgiven.

And that statement of faith, the human misery we talked about earlier, goes on to say that once we begin to understand our sin, we can begin to understand our deliverance from it. The freedom that comes from being saved from it. From being forgiven.

The thief is assured that today he will be with Christ in paradise. In true bliss. We get to experience that same paradise, that same bliss. The Kingdom come the Kingdom yet to come. The joy and wonder of a life united with Christ here on earth, in our lives today, and in the eternal life to come.

In our discussions on sin and ignorance, it’s easy for us to get anxious. To find ourselves worried that we might be living under the same kind of curse as the characters in that novel I was reading. But in preparing for this sermon, I also read that when fear or when pain or anxiety is triggered in a person hormones get pumped into muscles and the bloodstream, and blood drains from the skin’s surface, making us go pale, so that it can be diverted to larger muscles like legs for a quick getaway. And the heart starts to pound to help with that overdrive. And our eyes widen and our pupils expand to take in the maximum amount of information needed for a safe escape.

I think that when the criminal at Jesus' side asked for his forgiveness, his eyes were finally opened wide enough to see the extent of his sin, the extent of his ignorance. When we encounter Jesus on the cross, our eyes are opened wide enough to see the extent of our sin.

But they are also opened wide enough to see Jesus Christ, our Saviour and Redeemer, reaching out to us with his grace, his forgiveness, and his love.

Will you please pray with me.