

Press Release of Classis Niagara March 19, 2025

On behalf of the convening church of Dunnville East, Rev. Z. Vanderploeg opened the meeting in a Christian manner. When leading in opening prayer he remembered with thankfulness that Rev. D. Wynia travelled to and from Australia with his wife in safety, Rev. C. Bouwman and his wife are there currently and Rev. G. Wieske is in relatively good enough health following surgery this past fall to travel to Australia as well. He also noted the imminent departure of the Swavings and the associated vacancy in Smithville, the recent acceptance of the call extended by Lincoln to Rev. M. Jagt, the ongoing vacancy in Dunnville West, and the continued work of the CRTS.

After the credentials were examined, classis was constituted and the executive were appointed (Revs. R. Offringa as chairman, R.J. den Hollander as vice-chairman, and J. Louwse as clerk), the chairman thanked the convening church for its work and proceeded to lead the delegates through the adopted agenda, after having Rev. Z. Vanderploeg sign the Form for Subscription for Classis Niagara.

The churches were asked the three questions of Church Order Article 44. All churches confirmed that the ministry of the office-bearers is being continued and that the decisions of the major assemblies are being honoured. No churches requested the advice of Classis for the proper government of their church.

Two letters were received from the church at Smithville. The first was a request to be relieved of their appointment at Classis Niagara Dec.13, 2023 to investigate the truth of concerns that churches are not following the decisions of the major assemblies. They suggest that instead, any church which is concerned ought to communicate directly with the churches in question before bringing this to the broader assembly. Classis grants their request. The second letter was a request to approve the call which their minister Rev. C. Swaving accepted to the Hope Neerlandia Canadian Reformed Church as per Church Order Art.9. After reviewing the necessary documents, Classis approved the call. Smithville was then also granted their related requests that Rev. C. Bouwman be appointed as church counsellor as per Church Order Art.45 and that pulpit supply be granted for one Sunday a month beginning May 1, 2025.

Classis received a brief report from the Committee for Examinations that two students from CRTS, brothers Todd Linde and Marc Vermeulen requested preparatory examinations in June. Arrangements are being made to accommodate their request, awaiting the date suggested by this Classis.

Classis received the report from the Deputies for Contact with Neighbouring Classes/Presbyteries. It was noted with thankfulness that the Deputies had opportunity to visit several local Classis meetings of the URCNA over the last couple of years. Where unable to attend in person, fraternal greetings were emailed. Also noted with thankfulness is the continued good relationship with the Armor OPC in Orchard Park, NY. A brief discussion is held with the attending Deputy who sought clarity on their mandate.

In closed session church visit reports to the churches of Attercliffe, Dunnville East, Dunnville West, Grassie, Grimsby, Lincoln, Niagara South, Smithville and Tintern were received with thankfulness.

Classis appointed the Dunnville West Canadian Reformed Church to convene the next Classis Niagara on June 25, 2025 (alternate date: Sept. 17, 2025), and suggested officers for that Classis. Brother Fred VanderVelde was also appointed to serve as third alternate on the Committee for Appeals. Question period was offered and used, the chairman then ruling that censure according to Church Order Art. 34 was not necessary. The Acts were adopted and the press release was approved, Rev. Ruurd Offringa led in closing devotions. Classis was closed.

Pastor Rolf J. den Hollander (vice-chairman of this classis)